

Local

Amir meets state officials, visiting Egyptian Speaker

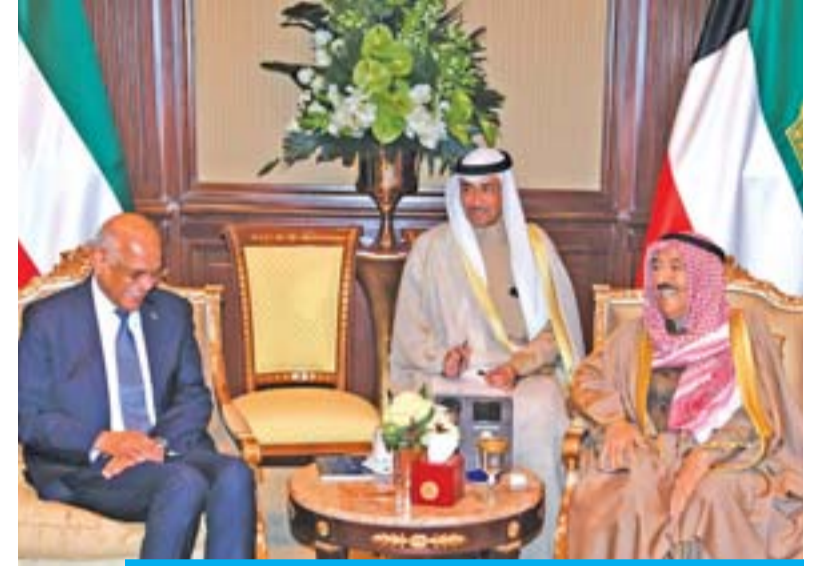
Sheikh Sabah sends condolences to Colombian, Mexican presidents, Ajman ruler



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



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



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Speaker of the Egyptian House of Representatives Dr Ali Abdelaal.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, who was escorting the visiting Speaker of the Egyptian House of Representatives Dr Ali Abdelaal and the accompanying delegation. His Highness the Amir then received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness the PM Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.

In the meantime, His Highness the Prime Minister received the visiting Speaker of the Egyptian House of Representatives and his accompanying delegation. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, head of the accompanying mission of honor MP Ali Al-Deqbasi and Kuwaiti Ambassador in Cairo Mohammad Al-Thuwaiakh attended the meeting. Furthermore, His Highness the Prime Minister received Kuwaiti Ambassador in Nigeria Abdulaziz Al-Besher.

Condolences

In other news, His Highness the Amir yesterday sent cables of condolences to Colombian President Ivan Duque over the victims of a car bomb attack against a police academy in Bogota, Colombia. In the cables, His

Highness the Amir voiced sharp condemnation of this terrorist cowardly act that targets innocents and disrupts the country's security and stability. His Highness the Amir reiterated Kuwait's principled stand that decries all manifestations and forms of terrorism, and stands side by side with Colombia in all security measures it is taking to fight such criminal acts. His Highness the Amir also wished mercy to the deceased and swift recovery to the injured. More cables of similar sentiments were sent by His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister to the Colombian president, while Speaker Ghanem sent cables of condolences to Speaker of the Colombian House of Representatives Alejandro Carlos Chacon and President of Colombian Senate Ernesto Macias Tovar.

Also yesterday, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of

condolences to Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez over victims of a pipeline explosion in north of Mexico City. In the cable, His Highness the Amir prayed for Allah Almighty to bestow mercy upon the dead and wished a speedy recovery for the wounded. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar cables to President of Mexico.

In addition, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of condolences to the member of supreme council and ruler of Ajman in the UAE Sheikh Hameed bin Rashed Al-Nuaimi over the demise of his sister Sheikhha Naela bin Rashed Al-Nuaimi. In his cable, His Highness the Amir prayed to God Almighty to bestow mercy upon the dead and bring solace to his brother Sheikh Hameed and his family. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar con-



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.



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



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Speaker of the Egyptian House of Representatives Dr Ali Abdelaal.

Amir's representative meets Lebanese PM-designate

KUWAIT: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, met yesterday with Lebanese Premier-designate Saad Al-Hariri. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the Arab Economic, Developmental and Social Summit held in Beirut.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also met yesterday with Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi and the Somali Foreign Minister Ahmad Essa Awad. On Saturday, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled met separately with Lebanon's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants Gebran Bassil, and Iraq's Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Al-Hakim. In the meantime, Kuwait's Ambassador to Lebanon Abdulal Al-Qenae held a banquet in honor of Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled at his home in Beirut Saturday evening. — KUNA



BEIRUT: Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Lebanese Premier-designate Saad Al-Hariri. — Amiri Diwan photos



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah meets with Iraq's Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Al-Hakim.



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah meets with Lebanon's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants Gebran Bassil.



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi.



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Somali Foreign Minister Ahmad Essa Awad.

Local

Zain Group introduces revolutionary HR policy embracing working mothers

Extending maternity leave period to 4 months, with flexible hours thereafter



KUWAIT: Bader Al-Kharafi with women champions from Zain operations during a recent conference in Kuwait.

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading digital lifestyle provider in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, has introduced one of the most progressive and innovative human resources policies in the region, providing female employees who become new mothers with four months of paid maternity leave, with a flexible schedule for returning to work.

This restructured leave policy, which falls under the Human Resources Policy Transformation theme, will be rolled out as a Group-wide initiative ensuring a unified approach to the program.

The new policy soon follows the creation of a new senior position within the organization, namely Chief Inclusion and Diversity Officer, to drive Empowerment initiatives that define, enhance and continue to cultivate an equitable work environment within all Zain operations.

The introduction of flexible working models has also been designed including six-hour work weeks for mothers with children up to four years old and an optional compressed working week enabling working mothers to work more hours over a compressed week to avail one day off.

The incoming flexible work program will complement Zain Group's recruitment, retention and development efforts, as the company shows itself to be an organization in tune with the needs of female employees to balance their careers with their family responsibilities.

The announcement follows the hosting of the second annual Gender Diversity (WE) conference held in Kuwait in November 2018, where Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi, the brainchild of the WE initiative, first announced the significant regional first regarding the application of flexible hours for working mothers with children up to the age of four years. Commenting on the new HR policy, Bader Al-Kharafi said, "As a leading innovative corporate entity in the region, it is incumbent on us to providing more supportive working environments for female employees and forging an inclusive working environment."

He continued, "There are very few companies globally that offer a uniform family leave policy and we are proud to be bringing new standards of human resources support and implementation to the region. As an organization we

are already well on the path to empowering our female counterparts on numerous levels, and this new maternity leave and flexible hours policy for working mothers will add further momentum to our efforts."

Once the new HR policy is fully implemented, Zain Group's Human Resources team will measure the impact and effect of the policy, through annual engagement surveys, the cost benefit involved such recruitment and retention and the number of returning mothers. Zain's WE program has already scored major successes in raising the profile of women in the organization, with the organization working towards increasing female leadership positions within the organization from 14.5 percent to 25 percent by 2020; and ultimately evolving towards a gender diverse workforce. Since Zain's WE initiative official launch in November 2017, it has achieved the following accomplishments:

- Female leadership, director and above at Zain Group has grown from 14.5 percent to 15.5 percent in one year.
- Female recruitment into Zain across all operations grew from 21 percent of total recruitment to 29 percent.

- The number of women at Chief level increased from 6 to 11, an 83 percent increase.

- 33 high potential female leaders have been identified to form the Centered Leaders program.

- 61 Women Empowerment Ambassadors have been onboarded and tasked with action planning.

- Zain signed up to the UN Women Empowerment Principles and communicated this to all 6,000 employees.

- Introduced a Women Empowerment communications app with 300 employees already using it.

- Women Empowerment embedded into the board of director's agenda and placed on CEO Scorecards.

- Two talented women from Zain operations sponsored to attend MBA programs at ESADE, Barcelona.

Bader Al-Kharafi concluded by reiterating his conviction in the WE initiative: "I firmly believe that championing gender diversity at Zain will create competitive differentiation, fast-track our strategic ambitions of unlocking the tremendous growth opportunities in the digital arena and at the same time improve the company's bottom line."



Construction of new Adan Hospital to finish by 2020

KUWAIT: Construction of Kuwait's new Al-Adan hospital is set to be completed by April of 2020, the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and

Development (SCPD) said yesterday. Construction works for the 232.12 million (\$766 million) medical facility have reached 39 percent completion, according to Suad Al-Awadh, who follows the progress of plans and programs at SCPD. The new hospital is part of broad healthcare reforms currently underway in Kuwait, she said in a statement. On the project, the official said it entails major renovations to the sprawling medical facility, making sure that the hospital is well-equipped to treat the influx of patients. The hospital contains special centers for surgery and physiotherapy, in addition to other departments, she pointed out. — KUNA



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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Kuwait City skyline during sunset. — Photo by Mohammed Sewilam (KUNA)

FFC participates in 2019 Horeca Kuwait exhibition



KUWAIT: On Monday, January 14, 2019 and for three consecutive days, Fresh Fruits Company (FFC), one of Yale Group's companies, participated in 2019 Horeca Kuwait, one of the most important annual hospitality exhibitions in Kuwait. FFC, established in 1988, has more than 30 years of experience in fresh produce and organic products. FFC has established its brand as a leader in this industry both inside and outside Kuwait. Fresh Fruits Company presented the most important exotic fruits and vegetables, as well as organic products, during the exhibition in a distinctive and interesting manner. The most important chefs and leading catering companies, who are interested in choosing the highest quality of fruits, vegetables and unique organic products for their clients, visited the company's booth. It is worth noting that FFC has three branches in Kuwait, two located in Shuwaikh Industrial area and one in Maidan Hawally.



Kuwait, Romania eye closer media cooperation

VIENNA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Romania Talal Al-Hajri held talks yesterday with the new Director General of Romania's National News Agency Claudia Nicolae. Talks addressed ways to boost media cooperation between AGERPRES and Kuwait News Agency, Hajri stated to the Kuwaiti state-run news agency. Hajri also conveyed an official invitation by KUNA's Chairman and Director General Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij Al-Sabah to Nicolae to visit Kuwait. KUNA chief intends to discuss with his Romanian counterpart joint coordination and media cooperation, in

addition to reviewing a draft on bilateral cooperation agreement, he added. Meanwhile, the AGERPRES chief affirmed keenness to boost and coordinate cooperation and expertise exchange with KUNA, said the Kuwaiti diplomat. She also welcomed Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij's invitation to visit Kuwait and vowed to meet it in the near future, extending a similar invitation to KUNA chief to visit Romania, he added. Established in 1889, AGERPRES is considered as one of Europe's oldest news agencies. It has a network of correspondents around key world capitals. — KUNA



Kuwait's Ambassador to Romania Talal Al-Hajri meets with the new Director General of Romania's National News Agency Claudia Nicolae.

185,000 jobs made available on Bayt.com

KUWAIT: The Middle East's largest jobsite, Bayt.com, announced that it ended the year 2018 with more than 185,000 jobs announced on the site. As reported by the jobsite, these numbers are just a portion of the hiring done by employers in the Middle East in 2018, as they exclude vacancies that were filled using the CV Search technology; through which companies browse the Bayt.com database and reach out to job seekers directly to interview and hire them. The Bayt.com database currently has 34,800,000 CVs, which are viewed by over 40,000 employers across the Middle East and North Africa and internationally.

"In 2018, we witnessed a clear growth in job availability from one month to the next, signaling companies' success and satisfaction with using

Bayt.com to hire top talent," said Omar Tahboub, General Manager, Bayt.com. "We have certainly multiplied our efforts to ensure we are making more jobs, and more diverse opportunities, available on our site. We aim to empower the very active job seekers who register on Bayt.com and visit our site regularly for their career building endeavors. As we kick start 2019, we should be well-prepared for an even larger volume of jobs and job search activities."

Hiring activity was not the only increase during 2018 on Bayt.com. More than 5,300,000 new job seekers joined Bayt.com during 2018. New and returning job seekers were very active in searching for new career options. In total, over 172 million visits were made to Bayt.com and nearly 18 million applications were submitted by the end of 2018.



Omar Tahboub

Local

Man dead after vehicle catches fire following accident on Abdali-Mutlaa Road

Search for man who dumped dead baby near dumpster

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: A driver died following a traffic accident reported yesterday on Abdali-Mutlaa Road. After receiving an emergency call, firefighters rushed to the scene located on the 19th kilometer mark of the road where the vehicle crashed into a concrete barrier and caught fire. Firemen battled the blaze and freed the trapped passengers. The driver was found in a critical condition and had lost a leg in the crash, but succumbed to his injuries on arrival at the hospital. Meanwhile, the person who was on the passenger's seat remains in hospital in a critical condition. An investigation was opened to determine the cause of the accident.



KUWAIT: A vehicle burning after an accident reported on Abdali-Mutlaa Road.



The scene inside an apartment after firefighters tackled a blaze there.

Families rescued

Firemen evacuated a building where a fire broke out in an apartment. Two families were rescued from the burning floor, then an elderly man was pulled out of the flames with burns on his face and body. A hydraulic ladder was used to rescue two persons from a neighboring apartment as they attempted to throw themselves out due to fear and thick smoke. In a separate case, Farwaniya firemen put out a fire which gutted a second floor apartment in Khaitan after evacuating the building. No injuries

were reported, as investigations are being conducted to find out the cause of the fire.

Case solved

Detectives solved the case of a newborn who was found dead near a dumpster. They found an African man got rid of the baby, and police are about to arrest him. Investigations and footage of surveillance

cameras in the area showed the suspect dumping the body, not realizing the cameras were recording his moves.

Fugitive caught

Criminal detectives arrested an armed Kuwaiti man after stiff resistance and attempts to attack police. The suspect was found wanted and considered dangerous,

and had been sentenced to eight years in jail. The car he was driving had stolen license plates and the ID he was carrying was forged. Detectives learned the suspect was in his Abdullah Al-Mubarak house, and that he carried a weapon at all times. A warrant was obtained and the residence was stormed despite the suspect's confrontation. Police also found drugs in his house.

Drug dealer arrested

Hawally police prevented a Kuwaiti man with a criminal record from distributing hashish to his customers. Police suspected him so he was stopped and searched, and the drugs were found along with a sensitive scale. He was sent to the Drugs Control General Department.

Justice ministry seeks to hire Kuwaiti typists

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) approved a request by the justice ministry to 'Kuwaitize' 581 administrative jobs at the ministry, including typists. But the justice ministry stressed that despite its keenness on replacing as many expats as it can with citizens, it will not cancel its current contract with a private company providing employees in administrative positions until substitutes are appointed. Meanwhile, well-informed sources expected a reshuffling of technical sector department managers at the Ministry of Electricity and Water soon, noting that the process will coincide with filling a number of leading positions after 35 citizens were recently referred to retirement.



The Civil Service Commission.



KUWAIT: Minister of Awqaf and Minister of State for Municipality Affairs Fahad Al-Shaala made his first field trip since taking office earlier this month when he visited the Mubarakiya Market yesterday, and oversaw plans to develop this area of high historical, cultural and touristic significance. Capital Governor Thabet Al-Muhanna, Municipal Council President Osama Al-Otaibi, Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmad Al-Manfouhi and other officials accompanied the minister on the tour.

Unlicensed parking shades

The Capital municipality inspection teams launched a campaign against unlicensed car parking shades built on government property at co-ops, ministries and state departments. Head of the team Zaid Al-Enezi said 16 warning notices were issued to co-ops in the capital and expressed hopes that these bodies will apply to the municipality to license those shades. Enezi added that conditions to build such shades include these being in parking areas outside ministries and government bodies, a single shade should be a maximum 3 m wide, 6 m long and 2 m in height, be in harmony with adjacent ones, have an approved design and be made of a light material approved by the municipality without closing the sides.

KD 1,300 per pilgrim

Head of the Kuwaiti hajj convoys union Ahmad Al-Duwaihi said the supreme hajj committee approved a proposal by the union to serve 2,000 Kuwaiti pilgrims equally distributed to 10 convoys at a fixed price of KD 1,300 per pilgrim. Duwaihi added that the decision was made in response to the call made by Minister of Awqaf Fahd Al-Shola to provide low-priced hajj services.

15 new gas stations

Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) plans to build 15 new gas stations to serve new residential cities to the north and south, Deputy CEO for Fuel Supplies Ghanem Al-Otaibi said. Otaibi added that

KNPC is cooperating with the Pan Arab Consulting Engineering (PACE) office to get the required governmental approvals after finalizing 90 percent of the stations' designs, adding that final approval is expected by the beginning of the first quarter of the fiscal year 2019-2020. Meanwhile, KNPC decided extending the deadline to receive bids for the Al-Debdeba solar power project to March 3 instead of the current deadline of Jan 29, 2019. The project is a major strategic initiative towards achieving His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's vision of providing 15 percent of Kuwait's needs of electricity from renewable resources by 2030. Notably, 28 companies have been so far qualified to bid for the project.

70% of acute respiratory failure patients at Adan Hospital survive

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Head of anesthesia and ICU at Adan Hospital Dr Huda Al-Foudery stressed Adan Hospital's ECMO (extra-corporeal membrane oxygenation) center had achieved remarkable results in the past two years, noting that 70 percent of acute respiratory system failure patients attended to at the ECMO center

survived. Speaking after returning from Cairo, where along with anesthesia and ICU consultant Dr Mohammed Shamsah she represented Kuwait at the sixth annual ELSO meeting held from Jan 15 to 18, 2019, Foudery said they spoke about the services provided to acute respiratory system failure patients in Kuwait, and that all attendants hailed the advanced levels of ECMO treatment in Kuwait.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) yesterday conducted a drill at Al-Seef Hospital, which mimicked an operation to evacuate the building in case of a toxic substance's leak. Senior KFSD officials attended the drill. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun



Transgender leader a star at massive Indian festival

Backlash in Nigeria as main candidates shun election debate

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TLAHUELILPAN: Aerial view of the scene where a massive blaze triggered by a leaky pipeline took place the night before in Tlahuelilpan, Hidalgo state, Mexico. —AFP

Mexico fuel theft in focus after blast

‘Blame lies with authorities who let them go there knowing it was dangerous’

TLAHUELILPAN: A blast at a gasoline pipeline in Mexico that killed at least 73 people has put renewed attention on the government's strategy to stop fuel theft, with some relatives saying fuel shortages stemming from the plan led people to risk their lives. Fuel thieves punctured the Tula-Tuxpan pipeline a few miles from one of Mexico's main refineries on Friday. Up to 800 people flocked to fill plastic containers from the 7-meter gasoline geyser that ensued, officials say. A couple of hours later, it exploded.

Half a dozen people interviewed by Reuters on Saturday said their relatives went to the leaking duct in Tlahuelilpan district in Hidalgo state because they struggled to find fuel elsewhere and were desperate to fill up cars to get to work or run their farms. “A lot of innocent people came here, perhaps their car didn't have enough gasoline for tomorrow, and they said I'm just going to go for a few liters,” said farmer Isidoro Velasco, 51, who was waiting for news of his nephew Mario Hidalgo, who he believed likely dead. Hidalgo turned 34 on Saturday. Late last month, President

Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador launched a program to shut down an illegal fuel distribution network that siphons off about \$3 billion worth of fuel annually from state oil firm Pemex. The plan, which involves shutting off pipelines compromised by gangs who fit valves to drain fuel, led to widespread gasoline shortages in central Mexico in January, including in Hidalgo, to the north of Mexico City. On Saturday, most gas stations in Tlahuelilpan were closed.

Scrutiny

Polls show the measures have until now enjoyed fairly broad public support, despite the difficulties and long lines at gas stations. The disaster in Tlahuelilpan, however, has brought renewed scrutiny of the strategy. Lopez Obrador has faced repeated questions about the disaster, demanding he explain why soldiers deployed to guard the duct did not chase people away from the leak and how quickly supplies to the duct were cut after Pemex detected the leak.

Pemex CEO Octavio Romero on Saturday said a valve had been closed at the pipeline once a drop in pressure from the leak had been noted, but he did not say at what time that happened. Fuel spurted from the pipeline for around two hours before it exploded, with no visible loss of pressure. Romero said about 10,000 barrels of high octane gasoline were in the section of the pipeline between the Tula refinery and the village when it blew up on Friday.

The defense ministry and Lopez Obrador said there were only 25 soldiers present and the army did not want to repress the crowd. Critics say authorities should have been firmer in controlling the crowd and sealing the area, and should have called for reinforcements. “Part of the blame goes to the people (at the ruptured pipeline) but the bigger blame lies with authorities who let them go there knowing it was dangerous,” said Velasco.

The Tula-Tuxpan pipeline delivers fuel to other central states, raising the possibility that its closure for repairs after the explosion could worsen fuel supply

problems, including in car hub Guanajuato. Romero said the pipeline had been out of service since late December as the government tried to secure it from gangs who had hit it 10 times in Tlahuelilpan municipality. Since they began reopening it on Jan 16 it had been hit four times he said.

In response to a question about whether cartels present in Hidalgo, which include Los Zetas and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, might have caused the disaster in revenge for the clampdown, the president said all possibilities were being investigated. However, one federal police source in Hidalgo said he believed the hole in the duct was made by local criminals not major cartels. Lopez Obrador said the disaster had hardened his resolve to fight fuel theft and the government was looking at ways to strengthen ageing pipelines to make it harder to illegally suck fuel from them. Meanwhile, he said, Mexico was buying more tanker trucks for road distribution. “Even though it hurts a lot, we have to carry on with the plan, to end fuel theft,” he said. —Reuters

Don't hijack Brexit, minister warns UK's parliament

LONDON: Parliament cannot be allowed to hijack Brexit, Trade Minister Liam Fox said yesterday, in a warning to lawmakers who want to take more control over Britain's departure from the European Union. With just weeks to go before Britain is due to leave the EU, Prime Minister Theresa May will return to parliament on Monday to set out how she plans to try to break the Brexit deadlock after her deal was rejected by lawmakers last week.

She will also speak to ministers on Sunday on a conference call, a government source said, as the prime minister tries to navigate a way through the competing visions for the future from a second referendum to staying in the EU. Time is running out for Brexit, Britain's biggest shift in foreign and trade policy in more than 40 years, but so far there is little that unites a divided parliament beyond its rejection of May's deal that envisages close economic ties with the EU. Britain's main opposition Labour Party is pressing for a new election and for May to rule out the possibility of a no-deal Brexit, while others in parliament are lobbying for anything from a second referendum to leaving without an agreement. Fox, a Brexit supporter, told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show that May's divorce agreement with the EU was still the best basis for a deal and warned lawmakers against trying to take more control of Britain's departure.

“Parliament has not got the right to hijack the Brexit process because parliament said to the people of this country: ‘we make a contract with you, you will make the decision and we will honor it,’” Fox said. “What we are now getting are some of those who

were always absolutely opposed to the result of the referendum trying to hijack Brexit and in effect steal the result from the people.” Britain voted with a 52 percent majority to leave the EU in a 2016 referendum that exposed deep divisions across the country, divisions that still split cities and towns, and the country's parliament, almost three years on.

Deadlock

After seeing her deal rejected by more than 200 lawmakers last week, May has opened talks with other parties to try to find a way to break the deadlock. But with Labour refusing to take part until May rules out leaving without a deal, some lawmakers fear those talks will change little and instead have said they will launch attempts next week to force the government to change course.

Several are trying to make sure Britain does not “accidentally” leave without a deal on March 29, a scenario some businesses say would be catastrophic for the economy. “What happens when you have a hung parliament is that power does pass from government ... to parliament and that's what we are seeing play out,” Nicky Morgan, a Conservative former minister, told Sky News.

She said she was backing a bill that would force the government to extend Article 50, which triggered Britain's two-year talks to leave the EU, if it cannot get an agreement approved by parliament by the end of February. Dominic Grieve, another Conservative lawmaker, is also looking at ways to stop Britain from leaving without a deal.

With much of the focus now on Labour, its Brexit spokesman Keir Starmer said there was now only really two options that could find majority support – a future close economic relationship with the EU or a second referendum – and that it was increasingly inevitable that Article 50 would be extended. “We've arrived at phase three and therefore we need to be realistic about what the options are,” Starmer told the BBC. “Let's ... reduce it to the options that are at least capable of getting a majority and that is a close economic relationship and a public vote.” —Reuters

Attack on base in Mali kills 8 UN peacekeepers

BAMAKO: Gunmen killed at least eight Chadian UN peacekeepers in an attack yesterday on one of their bases in northern Mali, multiple sources reported. The UN spokesman in Mali condemned what he described as a vile and cowardly attack and called for a “robust” response. “According to a new toll, still provisional, at least eight UN peacekeepers have been killed,” a source close to the MINUSMA force said.

The attack happened early Sunday at the Aguelhok base 200 kilometers north of Kidal and towards the border with Algeria, the source added. A diplomat in northern Mali told AFP that several of the attackers had also been killed. Mahamat Saleh Annadif, the UN's

special representative for Mali, condemned the attack in a statement. “Peacekeepers of the MINUSMA force at Aguelhok fought off a sophisticated attack by assailants who arrived on several armed vehicles,” he said.

The “cowardly” attack, he added, “illustrates the determination of the terrorists to sow chaos. It demands a robust, immediate and concerted response from all forces to destroy the peril of terrorism in the Sahel.” An attack at the same base last April killed two peacekeepers and left several others wounded. More than 13,000 peacekeepers are deployed in Mali as part of a UN mission that was established after Islamist militias seized northern Mali in 2012. They were pushed back by French troops in 2013.

A peace agreement signed in 2015 by the Bamako government and armed groups was aimed at restoring stability to Mali following a brief Islamist takeover in the north. But the accord has failed to stop violence by Islamist militants, who have also staged attacks in neighboring Burkina Faso and Niger. Earlier this month, both

France and the United States criticized the authorities in Mali for their failure to stem the worsening violence.

On January 16, France threatened to push for more targeted sanctions to be imposed on Mali after hearing a UN official report on worsening violence in the West African country. And Washington renewed its warning that it would push for changes to the peacekeeping mission in Mali, possibly a major draw-down, if there was no progress. In August, a panel of experts said in a report to the UN Security Council that inter-communal conflicts in the region were exacerbating existing tensions from clashes between jihadists groups and international and Malian forces.

Yesterday, France's Defense Minister Florence Parly told French radio that the G5 Sahel anti-jihadist force in the region was in the process of resuming operations. They were suspended after an attack on their headquarters in mid 2018. The countries working in the G5 force comprise Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad. —AFP

International

On road to 2020, New York's Gillibrand touts liberal cred

Criticized in the past by party left-wingers as too moderate

BOONE: US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand made her maiden voyage to the critical primary state of Iowa over the weekend, laying out her case that she is the best Democrat to challenge President Donald Trump in the US presidential election in 2020. In a series of intimate meetings, Gillibrand focused her message on economic issues, while also delivering a fiery denunciation of Trump as a racist and a liar who is "ripping the fabric of America."

Gillibrand, from New York, joins a small field of Democratic contenders that is expected to expand by over a dozen more, all vying for the party's nomination and the right to challenge Trump, if he is the Republican's 2020 nominee. Criticized in the past by party left-wingers as too moderate, Gillibrand repeatedly emphasized her support for a "Medicare for all" proposal to create a national health care system.

"When I said we need to dismantle ICE and rebuild them, I'm very serious," she said, referring to US Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Gillibrand has joined liberals in calling for a revamping of the immigration enforcement agency. A parade of candidates is already crossing Iowa that will hold the first primary contest in early 2020. Senator Elizabeth Warren from Massachusetts traversed Iowa in early January, followed by Julian Castro, a former US housing chief under former President Barack Obama.

Iowa voters, predominantly white and divided between rural and urban areas, have historically kicked off a months-long series of state-by-state contests to pick a nominee for president. Gillibrand, who had never previously visited the state of Iowa, drew crowds in rural and urban areas. Some locals attributed the turnout to pent-up frustration among Democrats eager

to begin the process of trying to replace Trump. Few vowed support for Gillibrand at this early stage. In the small town of Boone, she held a meeting on Saturday that drew about 25 locals who braved the snow. Penny Vossler, 62, of Boone, hasn't decided who she will support but attended to hear what Gillibrand said about issues like health care. "I'm going to give them all a shot," Vossler said.

House party

Gillibrand acknowledged she enters the race as a virtual unknown in Iowa. She barely registered in a December Des Moines Register/CNN poll of likely 2020 Iowa Democratic caucus-goers, which put well-known potential candidates like former Vice President Joe Biden and Senator Bernie Sanders at the top. At a "house party" in Sioux City, one voter asked her to explain her role in helping oust former Senator Al Franken from the Senate. Franken resigned from the Senate in 2017 in the wake of the #MeToo movement after being accused of harassing women.

Gillibrand was the most vocal of his colleagues to criticize him, which prompted blowback from other liberals who felt she had rushed to judgment. "It wasn't possible for me to remain silent, because what my silence meant was defending him, carrying his water, which I was unwilling to do," Gillibrand said.

At the same event, another voter asked her to explain why early in her political career she had received an "A" rating from the gun-rights group the National Rifle Association (NRA), a score reflecting its approval of her votes on gun laws. Gillibrand explained that growing up in rural New York state, she had never thought about gun control.



DES MOINES: US Sen Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) speaks to a large crowd at the state capitol for the third annual Women's March. —AFP

"I really only thought of guns through the lens of hunting. My mother still shoots the Thanksgiving turkey," she said, drawing laughter. But then she appeared to choke back tears as she discussed meeting

the family of a young woman who was a bystander when she was killed with a gun. As a result, she sponsored legislation to reduce gun trafficking. "I'm proud to have an F from the NRA," she said. —AFP

Saudi-led coalition's planes pound Yemen's capital

ADEN/SANAA: Saudi-led forces launched overnight air strikes on Yemen's capital, described by one resident on Sunday as the worst in a year, as the United Nations struggles to implement a peace deal. A spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition said its warplanes attacked seven military facilities used for drone operations in Sanaa, which is held by rival Houthi forces.

Yemen's nearly four-year-old civil war, which pits the Iran-aligned Houthi movement against the Saudi-backed government of Abd-Rabu Mansour Hadi, has killed tens of thousands and left millions on the brink of starvation. Saudi-owned Al Arabiya television said the overnight targets included Al-Dulaimi Air Base, a drone storage site, and military training sites.

Medical workers and residents told Reuters at least two civilians were killed, and others injured, and that the raids also damaged homes. Houthi-run al-

Masirah TV said on Sunday that the coalition had conducted 24 air strikes on Sanaa since Saturday evening, including four on the air base. It said a plastics factory was also hit, causing a large fire. Reuters footage showed a large crater next to the factory, and damaged homes nearby. "The raids were very violent, the likes of which we have not seen for a year," Sanaa resident Arwa Abdul Karim told Reuters. "The house shook so much we thought it would fall on our heads."

Fragile truce holds

The escalation in fighting, which follows a deadly Houthi drone attack last week on a Yemeni government military parade, augurs badly for a second round of U.N.-sponsored talks this month aimed at ending the war. Hadi was ousted from power in 2014, and the Sunni Muslim coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates intervened in 2015 to try to reinstate him.

The United Nations is trying to implement a ceasefire and troop withdrawal agreement in the port city of Hodeidah, the main entry point for most of Yemen's imports and aid. In the first significant breakthrough in peace efforts, a deal was reached in talks in Sweden last month to avert a full-scale assault on the port. The truce has largely held in Hodeidah, which is controlled by the Houthis with thousands of coal-



SANAA: An explosion crater is seen behind a destroyed factory after a reported airstrike by Saudi-led coalition in the Yemeni capital. —AFP

tion-backed forces massed on the outskirts. But the withdrawal of forces by both sides has stalled over disagreements over who would control the Red Sea city.

Rights groups have criticized the coalition for air strikes that have killed thousands of civilians at hospitals, schools and markets since 2015. They also criticize the Houthis for missile attacks on Saudi cities, including the

capital Riyadh. Western nations, including some which supply the coalition with arms and intelligence, have pressed Riyadh and Abu Dhabi to end the conflict that has pushed Yemen to the brink of famine. The conflict is largely seen in the region as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Shi'ite Muslim Iran. The Houthis deny receiving any help from Iran and say their revolution is against corruption. —Reuters

UK's Prince Philip back to driving - without seatbelt

LONDON: Britain's Prince Philip has been spoken to by the police for driving without a seatbelt — just two days after the 97-year-old was involved in a car crash. Images published in Sunday newspapers appeared to show him behind the wheel of a replacement Land Rover Freelander on his wife Queen Elizabeth II's private Sandringham estate on Saturday.

A Norfolk Constabulary spokeswoman said the force was aware of the photographs and that "suitable words of advice have been given to the driver". The advice was "in line with our standard response when being made aware of such images showing this type of offence." Meanwhile, a woman who broke her wrist in Thursday's crash near the royal country residence in Norfolk, eastern England, has reportedly complained about not receiving an apology from the Prince.

"I'm lucky to be alive and he hasn't even said sorry. It has been such a traumatic and painful time and I would have expected more of the Royal Family," Emma Fairweather, a passenger in the Kia which collided with the Prince's Land Rover, told the Sunday Mirror. A police family liaison officer however did call to pass on a message to Emma, who was in the vehicle with a friend and her nine-month-old baby, she said.

"The message he passed on didn't even make sense. He said, 'The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh would like to be remembered to you.' That's not an apology or even a well-wish," she added. The crash, which left the Prince's Land Rover on its side, happened as the royal patriarch pulled out of a side road onto a busy main road. The prince walked away from Thursday's crash shaken but uninjured, according to a passer-by who helped him out of the vehicle. The driver of the Kia sustained cuts to the knee.

In a statement on Friday, Norfolk Constabulary said: "As is standard procedure with injury collisions, the incident will be investigated and any appropriate action taken." Philip, known for his forthright manner and off-color jokes, retired from public life in 2017 and underwent a hip replacement operation last April. —AFP

2 dead from heart attacks as strong quake jolts Chile

SANTIAGO: A strong 6.7-magnitude earthquake hit north-central Chile on Saturday, the US Geological Survey said, with police reporting the deaths of two people from heart attacks. The quake struck at a depth

of 53 kilometers (33 miles) with an epicenter some 15 km southwest of Coquimbo, USGS said. An elderly man and an elderly woman from Coquimbo suffered cardiac arrests as a result of the quake, police said, while there were several landslides reported on national highways.

The earthquake, which hit at 0132 GMT (Sunday), was felt in Valparaiso, O'Higgins and the region of the capital Santiago, as well as in Atacama and Coquimbo up north. Thousands of homes lost power, which showed how intense the quake was, according to Ricardo Toro of the National Emergency Office. Residents in Coquimbo and neighboring Serena, a

coastal region about 500 kilometers from Santiago, evacuated to high ground even though authorities quickly ruled out a tsunami, according to local media.

The Coquimbo region experienced a tsunami in September 2015 after an 8.3 magnitude earthquake struck, killing a dozen people. Chile is one of the world's most earthquake-prone countries. The 1960 Valdivia earthquake in Chile was the strongest ever recorded, at 9.5, on the magnitude scale, according to the USGS. Chile lies on the Ring of Fire — an arc of fault lines that circles the Pacific Basin and is prone to frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. —AFP

Diocese sorry after students mock Native American

WASHINGTON: A US diocese has apologized and vowed to take action after videos emerged showing boys from a Catholic private school mocking an elderly Native American man at a rally in the capital Washington, triggering widespread criticism. The incident occurred on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on Friday when the annual anti-abortion March for Life coincided with a rally by indigenous communities calling for their rights to be respected.

In footage captured on multiple phone camera videos that swept social media on Saturday, a student from Covington Catholic High School in Kentucky wearing a Make America Great Again hat is seen smirking as he stands extremely close to Nathan Phillips, a Native American Vietnam war veteran, who beats a traditional drum while chanting. Other teens, many also

wearing clothing bearing President Donald Trump's political slogan jeered, jumped and appeared to mock the man.

The Diocese of Covington and Covington Catholic High School issued a statement rebuking the students after their displays drew widespread derision. "We condemn the actions of the Covington Catholic High School students towards Nathan Phillips specifically, and Native Americans in general, Jan. 18, after the March for Life, in Washington, DC," the statement said.

"We extend our deepest apologies to Mr Phillips. This behavior is opposed to the Church's teachings on the dignity and respect of the human person. The matter is being investigated and we will take appropriate action, up to and including expulsion." Kaya Taitano, a witness to the incident, was quoted by CNN as saying Phillips had decided to intervene with a "healing prayer" when the school teens got into a verbal altercation with a group of African American youths who had been preaching about the Bible nearby.

An emotional Phillips gave his reaction in a separate video. "I heard them saying, 'Build that wall, build that wall.' We're not supposed to have walls here, we never did. 'I wish I could see



BOSTON: Challinaru Dones shows her Native American ancestry and performs during the 2019 Women's March at Boston Common. —AFP

that energy of that young mass of young men...into making this country really, really, great. Helping those that are hungry."

Deb Haaland, one of the first two Native American women elected to Congress in November, linked the students' behavior to rising levels of racial

intolerance under the Trump administration. "This Veteran put his life on the line for our country," she wrote on Twitter. "The students' display of blatant hate, disrespect, and intolerance is a signal of how common decency has decayed under this administration. Heartbreaking." —AFP

Iranian women protest US arrest of state TV journalist

TEHRAN: Dozens of women staged a protest in Tehran yesterday calling for the release of an Iranian state TV journalist arrested in the United States. The demonstrators waved pictures of Marzieh Hashemi at the rally in front of the Swiss Embassy which handles US interests in the Islamic republic. US-born Hashemi, who works for Iran's English-language Press TV, was held on arrival at St Louis Lambert International Airport on January 13, according to family and friends cited by Press TV.

Hashemi, a Muslim convert who changed her name from Melanie Franklin, had reportedly been visiting her ill brother and other family members. A US court on Friday confirmed the arrest, saying her testimony is required over an unspecified case but that she is not accused of a crime. At a hearing in Washington, a judge ordered the partial unsealing of an order on Hashemi.

It said that Hashemi was arrested on "a material arrest warrant" and would be let go after she gave testimony to a grand jury investigating unspecified "violations of US criminal law". The protesters in Tehran, including students and female members of the paramilitary Basij militia, shouted slogans such as "we are all Marzieh" and carried posters with the hashtag #FreeMarziehHashemi. —AFP

International

Regional powers back Tshisekedi as new DRC leader despite dispute

Election dispute has raised fears of fresh bloodshed

KINSHASA: Regional powers hailed Felix Tshisekedi as DR Congo's incoming president yesterday, despite claims by his opponents of an election stitch-up and the African Union earlier warning of "serious doubts" over the result. Announcing the final results of the much-delayed poll, the Constitutional Court threw out a legal challenge by runner-up Martin Fayulu in an overnight declaration early yesterday.

It declared Tshisekedi the winner, paving the way for him to take over from the country's longtime leader Joseph Kabila, 47. The election dispute has raised fears of fresh bloodshed in the vast and volatile central African nation. The chairman of the African Union (AU), Rwandan President Paul Kagame, was due in Kinshasa today after the AU questioned the election results. The bloc had called for the final results to be delayed. But the 16-nation Southern African Development Community congratulated Tshisekedi yesterday for being declared president-elect and called for a peaceful handover of power.

"The SADC reiterates the need to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the DRC," its chairman Hage Geingob, president of Namibia, said in a statement. "SADC calls upon all Congolese to accept the outcome, consolidate democracy and maintain a peaceful and stable environment." Hundreds of Tshisekedi's supporters celebrated by blowing whistles and horns near his party headquarters in the capital Kinshasa, where the atmosphere was otherwise calm yesterday.

Fayulu alleges 'coup'

Fayulu has described the outcome of the vote as an "electoral coup". He called for peaceful protests, though no major incidents were reported across the country yesterday. Fayulu has alleged that Tshisekedi promised to protect Kabila's political and financial interests in return for helping to ensure his victory.

"I ask the entire international community not to recognize a power that has neither legitimacy nor legal standing to represent the Congolese people," he said of Tshisekedi. The winning candidate called for unity. "This is not a victory for one side or the other," Tshisekedi said in a video message. "The Congo we are going to build will not be a Congo of division, hate and tribalism — it will be a Congo that is reconciled, a strong Congo, looking towards development, peace and security for all."

Tshisekedi's victory was provisionally announced earlier this month by the Independent National Election Commission (CENI) but it was challenged both at home and abroad. Yesterday, the Constitutional Court, which is made up of Kabila's allies, said Fayulu had failed to prove any inaccuracies in the figures. It described his call for a recount as "absurd". The court declared Tshisekedi as the "president of the Democratic Republic of Congo by simple majority".

The Financial Times and other foreign media have reported seeing documents that confirm Fayulu as the winner. The influential Roman Catholic Church, which says it deployed 40,000 observers to monitor the poll, has also dismissed the official outcome.

Fears of bloodbath

Awaiting Sunday's court announcement, hundreds of Tshisekedi's supporters gathered outside the court holding placards saying "No to interference" and "Independent country" as riot police stood nearby. Leader of the country's oldest and biggest opposition party, the Union for Democracy and Social Progress, 55-year-old Tshisekedi has never held high office.

The dispute has raised fears that the political crisis that began when Kabila refused to step down at the end of his constitutional term in office two years ago could turn into a bloodbath. The vast country lived through two regional wars in 1996-97 and 1998-2003. The previ-



KINSHASA: Opposition presidential candidate in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Martin Fayulu, flanked by his officials, speaks during a press conference on January 18, 2019 at his party headquarters in the capital Kinshasa after the African Union called to suspend the announcement of final results from presidential elections. —AFP

ous two elections, in 2006 and 2011, were marred by bloody clashes.

Doubts over vote result

At a summit on Thursday, AU leaders said there were "serious doubts" about the election figures and called for the final results to be delayed. DR Congo government spokesman Lambert Mende had snubbed the demand, saying: "I don't think it is the business of the government

or even of the African Union to tell the court what it should do." He said the new president would "probably" be sworn in tomorrow along with a new legislature — dominated, according to official election results, by Kabila allies. Ahead of Kagame's visit, the European Union said it joined the AU in inviting "all the Congolese players to work constructively with this delegation to find a post-electoral solution which respects the Congolese people's vote". —AFP

Pope heads to Panama for giant youth meeting

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis will make his first trip to Panama on Wednesday for a gathering of more than 150,000 young Catholics from across the globe at the World Youth Day festival. The 82-year-old pope will use the major event on the Catholic calendar to address the problems of poverty, corruption and migration in his native Latin America, church officials said.

"Our youth, particularly in Central America, need opportunities," said Panama Archbishop Jose Domingo Ulloa. Often, their "hard reality" was a choice between emigration or "falling into the clutches of drug traffickers," said Ulloa, in Rome for a preparatory visit. It will be Francis' third World Youth Day event, having presided over the gathering in Rio de Janeiro shortly after his election as pope in 2013 and again in Krakow, Poland in 2016. In Poland, he challenged conservative governments in Central and Eastern Europe to soften their resistance to migrants seeking refuge from conflict in the Middle East.

A voice for migrants

In a similar way, he is expected in Panama to stand up for migrants from El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras

who make up the majority of those traveling in caravans to the US border, despite the opposition of President Donald Trump and the American right. "Many of the young people who are participating in the WYD are immigrants themselves," Vatican spokesman Alessandro Gisotti said. Hundreds of thousands of Central Americans cross the border into Mexico every year, heading north in search of a better life. Millions more have fled economic collapse and political repression in Venezuela, straining social services in neighboring countries. "The recent image of migrant caravans from Central America, with all their suffering, will be very much in mind," said Ulloa.

Youth 'can change the world'

In an advance message to the event, Francis said many young people, both believers and non-believers, had "a strength that can change the world." On Friday, he said in a separate video message to the World Indigenous Youth gathering in Soloy, Panama, to hold on to their cultures and roots by fighting marginalization, exclusion, waste and impoverishment.

"Return to native cultures. Take care of the roots, because from the roots comes the strength that will make you grow, prosper and bear fruit," he told hundreds of young indigenous Catholics who will join the WYD gathering next week. Fighting poverty will be a key theme. Extreme poverty in Latin America hit its highest level for nine years in 2017, according to a report by the UN's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. —AFP

Backlash in Nigeria as main candidates shun election debate

LAGOS: Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari and his main challenger yesterday faced accusations of arrogance, disrespect and elitism, after they failed to turn up for a debate between election hopefuls. Buhari, of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), and Atiku Abubakar, from the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), were supposed to have been among five candidates at the set-piece discussion on Saturday night.

But Buhari stayed away, citing his "busy and hectic official and campaign schedules" and because he had already taken part in a live, televised question-and-answer session. Abubakar returned from the United States and headed to the venue in Abuja but "at the last second he decided not to appear", debate moderator Mark Eddo announced. Abubakar, referred to across Nigeria as "Atiku", later blamed Buhari, saying the president's absence was "a slight on all of us and our democracy".

"We came here for a Presidential debate, not a candidacy debate, and I, Atiku Abubakar, cannot challenge or question an administration where the man at the helm of the affairs of the nation is not present to defend himself or his policies," he added. Nigeria goes to the polls to elect a new president on February 16 in what is expected to be a close race between the two main parties. The PDP was in power for 16 years from 1999, when democracy was



LAGOS: A man walks past a campaign billboard for Nigeria's incumbent president and candidate to his re-election for the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) President Muhammadu Buhari, and Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo, at Ilupeju. —AFP

restored after decades of military rule. Buhari's victory in 2015 was the first for an opposition candidate.

'Utter disgust'

The other three candidates at the debate all said Buhari and Abubakar's absence was not surprising and both were from the old ruling class. Retired army general Buhari, 76, headed a military government in the 1980s, while Abubakar, a wealthy businessman four years his junior, was vice-president under Olusegun Obasanjo from 1999 to 2007. All three are among a number of ageing politicians to have dominated Nigeria for decades in a country

where some 60 percent of the population of more than 180 million is aged under 30.

Oby Ezekwesili, a former education minister, of the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria, said: "I think it's important for us to acknowledge that there is a political class that simply needs to fade away from our country. The idea that the will of people will be subject to the whims and caprices of our politicians should be a total anomaly," added the ex-World Bank vice-president. Fela Oluwatoye, an entrepreneur and motivational speaker, of the Alliance for New Nigeria, accused Buhari and Abubakar of acting like "rulers (who) don't explain to their subjects what they're going to do". —AFP

Suspected car bomb explodes in N Ireland

LONDON: A suspected car bomb exploded in the Northern Irish city of Londonderry on Saturday, police said, with leading politicians alleging the blast was terror-related. The Police Service of Northern Ireland tweeted a photograph of the scene outside a courthouse as it warned that evacuations were taking place due to a second suspect vehicle in the British province's second city.

"Police are in attendance at the scene of an incident in Derry/Londonderry city centre," the PSNI tweeted. "We would ask for patience and co-operation of the public and the business community as we carry out our initial inves-

tigations." "Bishop Street closed. Stay away. Suspected car bomb," an earlier tweet said.

The force added on Facebook: "As far as we know no one injured. There is another car we are not happy about. There are ongoing necessary evacuations," it posted. Politicians from all sides on the island of Ireland condemned the incident. Former Northern Irish first minister Arlene Foster, who heads the province's Democratic Unionist Party, referred to it as a "pointless act of terror", while the Republic of Ireland's foreign minister Simon Coveney called it a "car bomb terrorist attack".

The three decades of sectarian bloodshed in Northern Ireland, known as the Troubles, were largely brought to an end under the 1998 Good Friday peace accords. Car bomb attacks were responsible for some of the worst atrocities. Foster, who leads the pro-British DUP, said: "This pointless act of terror must be condemned in the strongest terms. Only hurts the people of the city. Perpetrated by people with no regard for life." —AFP

Russians protest strategic Kuril isles handover to Japan

MOSCOW: Hundreds of Russians protested against a feared giveaway of strategic islands to Japan yesterday, two days before a key summit between the countries' leaders in Moscow. Between 300 and 500 people gathered on Suvorovskaya Square, just outside Moscow city centre, for an authorized rally called by several nationalist politicians, opposed to any move to cede any of the four islands claimed by Tokyo.

The Soviet army claimed four islands, the so-called south Kurils, in the closing days of World War II. The dispute over their sovereignty prevented the two countries from signing a peace treaty, a situation President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sought to rectify last year. Abe is set to hold talks on the issue with Putin on Tuesday, following a meeting last week between foreign ministers Sergei Lavrov and Taro Kono.

Moscow has said the islands' sovereignty is not a bargaining chip and the Kurils will remain Russian territory, but many people distrust official rhetoric and suspect a different line of negotiations behind the scenes.



MOSCOW: Protestors hold a protest in Moscow yesterday, demanding to stop talks on assigning Kuril islands to Japan. —AFP

Some protesters carried signs saying "The Kurils are Russian land" and "Giving away the Kurils is state treason", an AFP correspondent observed. The Kremlin has ridden a wave of nationalism following Moscow's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, and any attempt to structure an agreement with Japan around a territorial compromise would likely be poorly received.

Protester Svetlana Fedosova, 26, said ceding the islands would be seen as a "weakness" by

Russia's enemies and would lead to Russia's undoing. "Other countries will also demand readdressing the results of World War II," she said. "Then we'll have to give away Karelia, Kaliningrad, and all the lands we've conquered," she told AFP, referring to Russia's western regions that previously belonged to Finland and Germany. "People demand a stop to backstage talks with Japan", one of the rally's organizers, leftist politician Sergei Udaltsov, wrote on Twitter after the rally. —AFP

International

From pariah to demi-god: Transgender leader a star at massive Indian festival

‘After centuries down the line, it was when the community finally got its due’

PRAYAGRAJ: In a desert tent guarded by armed police and a thick-set bouncer, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi is blessing a constant stream of pilgrims, who garland her with marigolds and kneel to touch her feet. Tripathi, a tattooed transgender leader and a former reality TV star, has become an unlikely icon at India's Kumbh Mela, a huge religious festival being held on the banks of the Ganges river in the city of Prayagraj. Up to 150 million people are expected to attend by the time the festival ends in March.

On Tuesday, her religious movement, called the Kinnar Akhara, became the first transgender group to bathe at the confluence of the holy Ganges and the Yamuna rivers on the first day of the ancient festival, traditionally reserved for reclusive Hindu priests, almost all of whom are men. "After centuries down the line, it was when the community finally got its due," Tripathi told Reuters, seated on a pedestal next to her Michael Kors bag, juggling calls on an iPhone.

Many at the festival cheer Tripathi for reclaiming the lost place in Hinduism for India's "third gender", known as the hijras, worshipped as demi-gods for thousands of years, but ridiculed and sidelined during British colonial rule. A law passed in 1871 classed the hijras as "criminals". Little changed after independence and hijras were pariahs, living in tribes, begging or soliciting for sustenance and harassed by police.

It was only in 2014 that the Supreme Court officially recognized transgender people as a third gender. Tripathi is one of the best known. But her support for building a controversial Hindu temple on the site of a demolished mosque has angered some in the LGBT community, who allege she is courting support from India's powerful religious right to further her own influence.

Fall and rise

The place of hijras in Indian culture dates back to the Ramayana, a more-than 2,000 year-old Hindu epic poem venerated and performed across India. In the text, the god-king Ram is exiled from the holy city of Ayodhya, with the entire kingdom following him into the forest. He orders them to turn back, but returning after 14 years, finds the hijras waiting for him in the same spot. Impressed by their devotion, he grants them the power to invoke blessings and curses on people.

For centuries, hijras their lives were far from easy, hijras held a special role in India's royal courts, tasked with guarding harems and rising to influential positions. Today, despite their legal recognition, many still face prejudice in what is a conservative country, forced into

sex work or seeking alms at weddings and births, a long-held practice among hijras. Hate crimes against them are common and HIV prevalence within the community is many times higher than the general population. "The ritual seeking of alms is now seen as begging," said Anindya Hajra, a transgender activist at the Pratyay Gender Trust. "It criminalizes and pushes an already vulnerable community to its very brink."

Colorful life

Born in 1979 in Thane, a suburb of India's financial capital Mumbai, Tripathi says she had a difficult childhood scarred with abuse by a close relative. A sickly child who was bullied at school for being feminine, she grew in confidence after learning Bharatanatyam, a classical Indian dance. "I chose not to remember the prejudice," she said. "Rather I think (about) the good things that have happened to me, and be a flamboyant rainbow."

Long recognized as one of the most influential figures in the LGBT community in India, she became famous across the country when she appeared on reality TV show "Bigg Boss" in 2011. She was a petitioner in the landmark court ruling that recognized transgender people. In 2015, she founded her Akhara and began a campaign to have hijras represented at the at the first "Shahi Snan", or royal bath, of the Kumbh Mela. "It all started to reclaim the lost position in the dharma," Tripathi said, referring to the Hindu cosmic law underlying correct behavior and social order. "I was not very religious until 2015 - life changed."

Ancient tradition

Devout Hindus believe bathing in the waters of the Ganges absolves people of sins and doing so at the time of the Kumbh Mela, or the "festival of the pot", brings salvation from the cycle of life and death. At the festival, 13 religious orders, or Akhara, set up camp on the banks of the Ganges. The umbrella body overseeing the Akharas initially refused to recognise the Kinnar Akhara as the 14th order. But Tripathi has forged close bonds with the largest of the other holy orders at the Kumbh Mela, the Juna Akhara. They agreed to bathe together.

On the first royal bathing day on Tuesday, Tripathi rose at 4 a.m., dressed in a saffron sari and applied her makeup. She and her dozens of disciples then began the long procession to the river on a fleet of elaborately decorated trucks. At the banks of the Ganges, they waited for their turn to bathe. Tripathi met with Hari Giri, the leader of Juna Akhara. Her Kinnar Akhara



ALLAHABAD: In this photograph taken on January 14, 2019, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi (C), a transgender rights activist and chief of the Kinnar Akhara monastic Hindu order made up of transgender members, meets with Hari Gigi (centre R), head of the Hindu sadhu community Juna Akhara at the Kumbh Mela festival. —AFP

"was there, is there, and will always be there", Giri told Tripathi. Shortly after sunrise, she plunged into the waters, to the cheers of the crowds who gathered to watch.

Divisive figure

Tripathi has courted controversy with support for the building of a temple dedicated to Ram on the site of a former mosque in Ayodhya which was demolished by hardline Hindus in 1992, leading to riots in which thousands died. Many Hindus claim the mosque was built over an ancient temple that marked the birthplace of Ram, and the row is expected to be a major issue in a general election due to be held in the country by May. Many activists of India's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party have been agitating for the construction of a temple at the site, alarming the country's sizeable Muslim minority.

"There has been an attempt by the right to co-opt trans voices to suit a certain version of history," said Hajra, the activist. "Our apprehension is also that some are trying to further (their) own personal career moves." A letter signed in November by hundreds of transgender people and rights groups accused Tripathi of fuelling "the right-wing politics of communal hatred". She is unrepentant. "Where my Lord Ram was born, there the temple has to come," she said.

The Mughals "brought (the temple) down and then they enslaved us all", she said, referring to the Muslim emperors who ruled India in the 16th and 17th century. Tripathi plans to spend the rest of the Kumbh festival at her Akhara, receiving visitors among her colourful band of followers, who have little in common with the holy men living monastic lives in the other camps. "We are not celibate," she said. "We are demi-gods, not saints. We have our own rules." —Reuters

Shock resignation rocks Australia's embattled govt

SYDNEY: Australia's minister for women is set to retire from politics, a major blow for the embattled minority government amid accusations it has a problem with female representation ahead of crucial national elections. Cabinet minister Kelly O'Dwyer — the latest in a string of female politicians to quit the ruling Liberal-National coalition — said Saturday she would not recontest her lower house seat at the

upcoming poll, due by mid-May.

Just a few months ago, O'Dwyer was reported by Australian media as warning in a closed meeting that the Liberals were widely viewed by voters as "homophobic, anti-women, climate-change deniers". O'Dwyer — one of six women in the coalition's 23-person frontbench — said her decision was made for personal reasons and that she wanted to spend more time with her children. "There will be some who try and use my announcement today to advance their own agendas and I absolutely do not want that," she told reporters.

The surprise departure of the senior MP is a massive setback for Prime Minister Scott Morrison and his coalition, already reeling from poor opinion polls, criticisms about its lack of gender diversity and numerous scandals. Most recently, married Nationals

MP Andrew Broad said he would not recontest his seat after becoming embroiled in a scandal involving a "sugar baby" online dating service — where an older man pays to maintain a high-end lifestyle for a younger, beautiful companion.

Former deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce, who was the Nationals leader, stepped down from his leadership roles in February after the married father-of-four had an affair with one of his young advisers. Veterans' Affairs Minister Darren Chester, a Nationals MP, denied O'Dwyer was fleeing a sinking ship, but admitted his party also needed to choose and keep more women candidates. "I actually accept the point that we need to attract more women into our party... We need to do more in that regard," he told national broadcaster ABC Sunday, adding that a woman had been chosen to run in Broad's seat.

O'Dwyer was a supporter of former moderate PM Malcolm Turnbull, who was ousted by the more right-leaning Morrison in a party coup in August. Since then, Morrison's government has lurched from crisis to crisis, and lost its one-seat parliamentary majority in October after losing Turnbull's vacated seat in a by-election to an independent. Its hold on power was further eroded when one of Turnbull's supporters, Liberal MP Julia Banks, said she was quitting the party to become an independent. Several high-profile Liberal women had also said during the battle to oust and replace Turnbull that they were bullied and threatened to vote a certain way. Another prominent moderate female MP, foreign minister Julie Bishop, also left her position after contesting and losing the leadership battle. —AFP

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Popcorn in hand, EU watches Brexit show but frets for its future

EU Brexit negotiators are "watching the BBC and eating popcorn", in the words of one of them, as Britain's domestic rows over leaving make for compelling TV but frustrate Europe's hopes for a clean break. Unsure whether Britain will crash out of the European Union 10 weeks from now, prolong the agony in the hope of salvaging an orderly divorce or even change its mind and stay, its neighbours are torn between "Brexit boredom" and a worry it is distracting from their own pressing problems as campaigning gets under way for EU parliament elections in May.

Hours after a packed and rowdy House of Commons tore up the deal Prime Minister Theresa May spent two tortuous years arguing over, only a few dozen of their 751 counterparts in Strasbourg showed up on Wednesday to hear EU negotiator Michel Barnier tell them all he could do is wait for Britons to make up their minds. Several in the debate praised Britain's democratic history and were bemused by its poisonous meltdown over Brexit. Among them was Dutch conservative Esther de Lange: "Collectively, they don't know what they want," she said of watching the Commons in action. "But, boy, do they hold great speeches about it."

Compared to a full house to mark the 20th anniversary of the euro, the EU currency Britain snubbed, the hundreds of empty seats around her were a mark of Europe's weariness with Brexit. But it also belied anxiety that paralysis in London will distract and divide leaders on other EU problems, from a slowing economy amid global trade disputes to deep divisions over money, migrants and Brexit-inspired Brussels-bashing by many members.

French President Emmanuel Macron says he does not want to "waste time" on Brexit as he presses to reshape the euro zone and the broader Union after the European elections in four months' time. His EU affairs minister Nathalie Loiseau said Brexit took up a third of her time: "It's too much," she said. "Because we have many other things to do in Europe than dealing with a divorce."

Time to move on

Manfred Weber, an ally of German Chancellor Angela Merkel who is leading the center-right campaign, said that "Europe's door is still open" should Britain decide to stay. But he told Reuters: "It is now time to move on and get Brexit over with." Weber complained that a "never-ending Brexit process" had taken "huge amounts of time, money and expertise" from the EU. "It has consumed valuable political energy, especially in this election year," he said. "And has held us back from shaping a real positive European agenda for the future."

Nearly three years after Britain's shock referendum vote to leave put supporters of European integration on the back foot, a push to regain momentum lies behind a summit of the remaining 27 leaders to be held in the Romanian town of Sibiu on May 9. It was intended by EU chief executive Jean-Claude Juncker to focus minds on a future without one of Europe's three biggest economies and two nuclear military powers, and be the culmination of efforts to end divisions threatening EU cohesion. During last month's EU summit, which they hoped would be the last on Brexit, leaders were visibly weary of it: "The fatigue was palpable," said one diplomat in the room. "They don't want to be bothered with it. They want to get it over with."

United on Brexit, divided on Europe

If there has been a positive from Brexit, leaders say, it has been the exceptional unity the 27 have shown in negotiation - though a scary end-game could yet test that togetherness. Many also believe turmoil in Britain has dampened appetites to follow suit, with European voters warning to the Union and eurosceptic governments, such as in Italy, Hungary and Poland, stressing their criticisms of the EU do not presage an exit.

Yet Sibiu and the EU elections on May 26 are set to expose continuing schisms on how to move the Union forward. Founders France and Germany disagree over tightening monetary union, as do Italy and its northern neighbors over sharing out migrants arriving by sea. Rich contributor states and the ex-communist east are split over filling a Britain-sized hole in the EU budget and over some eastern governments' maneuvering to stifle their opponents.

"On Brexit, the EU has shown exceptional unity - if only we could show the same kind of unity on everything else," lamented one diplomat involved in preparing the summit. One result of May's troubles could be that Britain is still a member come Sibiu and the EU elections - a new headache that makes some wary of extending the Brexit deadline. Few, however, seem willing to force Britain out against its will - yet.

Prolonging the process, though, is bad news, said an envoy to Brussels from a non-EU country. Leaders have tried to drive it down their list of priorities and ring-fence the negotiations in Barnier's task force: "But Brexit sits around like a bad penny," he said. "You can't ignore it. It's in your face and will continue to be in your face until it's resolved." — Reuters



Venezuela's National Assembly president Juan Guaido (right) speaks before a crowd of opposition supporters during an open meeting in the Caricua neighborhood in southwest Caracas on Saturday. — AFP

Democratic transition in Venezuela possible

After an election victory slammed as fraudulent by the opposition and international community, Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro has begun a new term that will see him in office until 2025, his grip on power seemingly firmer than ever. So why are analysts talking up a hope for political change? Step in Juan Guaido, a 35-year-old industrial engineer who took charge of the opposition-dominated National Assembly on Jan 5, breathing new life into the body that had been rendered virtually impotent by Maduro's constitutional maneuvers.

"It's almost like a rebirth. The opposition has emerged more unified than ever before," says Geoff Ramsey, vice president for Venezuela at WOLA, a research center on Latin America based in Washington. "For the first time in many months... Maduro is on the defensive," wrote Andres Oppenheimer, a noted journalist on Latin American affairs.

Weeks into his new job, Guaido has managed to get the assembly's opposition majority to officially declare Maduro a usurper and denounce his re-election as a fraud, while promising an "amnesty" for all military and government officials that disavow the president. That achievement eluded his predecessors, who have been exiled, imprisoned or disqualified.

Pathways to power

Guaido upped the ante in a Washington Post column

Tuesday, invoking articles of Venezuela's constitution that call on its people to reject regimes that violate democratic values, adding: "I am fully able and willing to assume the office of the presidency on an interim basis to call for free and fair elections." Michael Shifter, director of the Inter-American Dialogue think tank, agreed Guaido wresting power from Maduro would be in accordance with the law. "What is happening in Venezuela is not a coup d'etat," he said. "The National Assembly and its current leader Guaido are totally legitimate, and have the law and Constitution on their side." But, he added, the limits of the opposition's new-found strength are soon to be tested.

Facing a regime-loyalist-dominated Supreme Court that annuls all its decisions, the opposition has three main pathways, argues veteran diplomat Michael Matera, director of the US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies. "The support of the military, the Venezuelan people and the international community will be essential to allow Guaido to assume (office) officially as president and to step into a role that now Maduro is trying illegitimately to hold to," he said.

To that end, the National Assembly this week boldly extended a hand to the military: it promised to grant amnesty to all those who support a return to constitutional order. Guaido will also require the support of moderate

followers of Maduro's predecessor Hugo Chavez to break for him, added Ramsey.

International Pressure

International pressure on Caracas has been growing since Maduro's reelection last May, but it surged with the arrival in power of the far right in Brazil: New President Jair Bolsonaro agrees with his US counterpart Donald Trump that Maduro is a "dictator". Bolsonaro, whom Maduro called a modern-day Hitler, Thursday met at Planalto Palace with Miguel Angel Martin, president of the Supreme Court of Justice of Venezuela in exile, appointed by the opposition majority Assembly. A top adviser of Organization of American States chief Luis Almagro also was present.

Meanwhile, Brazilian Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo met with Venezuelan opposition members and representatives of the United States and the Lima Group, a bloc of countries critical of Maduro. After the meeting, the Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Brazil's willingness to support a Guaido "interim presidency". Though Maduro has a few allies in Latin America and around the world, most of the international community would welcome a democratic transition in Venezuela, according to Shifter. "This process needs to be managed skillfully and be very clear-eyed about the obstacles that stand in the way," he said. — AFP

Clash brewing as Luckin takes on Starbucks

When Starbucks came to China two decades ago it promised to open a new store every 15 hours. Now a homegrown rival, Luckin Coffee, plans to build a high-tech-driven shop every three and a half hours to dethrone the US giant. The Chinese upstart is burning through millions of dollars to lure customers with steep discounts, challenging Starbucks' dominance by targeting office workers and students who prefer to have their java on-the-go or delivered to their doorstep.

While Starbucks and British rival Costa Coffee offer lounging spaces for people to work or meet friends, most Luckin outlets are more like "delivery kitchens". The shops are no bigger than a studio apartment, with no tables, display counters or even cash registers because all payments are made using mobile phones. Luckin's no-frills approach means consumers pay about a third less for a cup compared to other global brands. A tall-sized latte costs 31 yuan (around \$5) at Starbucks, but only 24 yuan at Luckin.

Customers who walk into one of Luckin's blue-and-white outlets need only spend a few minutes there - to scan a code and pay for their coffee that has been pre-ordered through the company's smartphone app. "I like the convenience, there are no long queues, or having to sit alone while your coffee is brewed," said Yu Qian, a financial analyst in Beijing. "The coffee itself is a little sweeter, more like the sweet milk tea that is popular in China."

Luckin's aggressive strategy mirrors tactics used by other Chinese startups that have dislodged Western brands from one of the world's top consumer markets. "The big advantage for us of having pickup stores versus the big stores is that in terms of rental costs, we pay significantly less than our competitors," Luckin's chief strategy officer, Reinout Schakel, told AFP. After only a year in business, the company announced plans earlier this month to open 2,500 outlets by the end of the year, which would push its total store strength to 4,500. By comparison, Starbucks has some 3,600 stores across the country.

Playing catch-up

The US behemoth has an 80 percent

stake in China's \$3.4 billion coffee shop market, according to research group Euromonitor. But Schakel sees room for growth. Chinese consumers currently drink just four to five cups of coffee per year, compared to about 300 cups in neighboring Japan or South Korea, which were also traditionally tea drinking markets, he said. China is Starbucks' fastest-growing and second biggest market after the United States. Its Reserve Roastery in Shanghai, which opened in late 2017, is the company's biggest store in the world.

But it was a latecomer to China's huge food delivery industry. The Seattle-based company partnered with Chinese e-commerce firm Alibaba's delivery service element only after Luckin started eating into its market share in July. "Our delivery service today covers more than 2,000 stores across 30 cities, within three months of its launch," Derek Ng, communications director for Starbucks China, told AFP.

Competition has also prompted Starbucks to focus on its more upmarket Reserve brand of rarer coffees from around the world, said Hu Yuwan, an analyst at Daxue Consulting in Shanghai. But the US chain has recently started doing discounts, Hu said, adding the coffee rivalry reminded her of the discount wars between Uber and its local rival Didi Chuxing, which later dislodged the American ride-hailing giant from the Chinese market. Schakel - who is also Luckin's chief financial officer - says the startup can afford to burn money to grab market share over the next few years. "Are we competing with Starbucks? Probably to some extent. We don't care whether the demand is coming from new coffee drinkers or from Starbucks coffee drinkers," he said.

China's first coffee unicorn

Luckin's caffeine-fueled expansion has been funded by investors including Centurium Capital, a private equity fund founded by the former China head of Warburg Pincus, and GIC, Singapore's sovereign wealth fund. The company raised about \$400 million in two rounds of funding last year and says it has been valued at \$2.2 billion, making it the first coffee unicorn to come out of China. Schakel declined to comment on rumors that Luckin was seeking a listing on the Hong Kong stock exchange. But China's landscape is littered with start-ups that have gone belly-up after bleeding money on discounts and aggressive advertising. "Am I worried whether we are going to go down that path? Absolutely not," Schakel said. "Even if we sell our products at a discount at the right scale (it can) be profitable." — AFP

Chips are down as US moves toward new ban

US authorities have begun an effort to ban all forms of internet gambling, reversing course from a 2011 decision and imperiling a burgeoning online wagering sector in several American states. The Justice Department earlier this month released a legal opinion stating that any form of online betting, not just sports betting, would be a violation of the federal Wire Act. That could shut down online poker, casino and lottery offerings launched in a handful of states since a 2011 decision by the Obama administration to refrain from prosecuting any online betting that is not sports-related.

"It could have a significant impact but it will depend on whether the DOJ strictly enforces its new interpretation," said Jennifer Roberts, associate director of the International Center for Gaming Regulation at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. Roberts said a very strict interpretation could shut down fantasy sports leagues that have grown in recent years and potentially any online wagering even if confined to a single state where betting is legal. "Even if the betting takes place in a jurisdiction where it's legal, if the communication is routed into another state that could trigger the Wire Act," Roberts told AFP.

The Wire Act is a 1961 law that bars the use of telecommunications for gambling as part of an effort to crack down on organized crime. Since the 2011 interpretation, various forms of online gambling have begun in Nevada, Delaware, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, with a handful of other states considering legalization. While there is no comprehensive breakdown of US online gambling revenues, total wagers were up near 22 percent to \$298 million last year in New Jersey, which has the largest internet segment.

90-day window

In the latest opinion, the Justice Department stopped short of indicating how far it would go in enforcement. But in a January 15 memo, deputy attorney general Rod Rosenstein said prosecutions could begin after 90 days. "A 90-day window will give businesses that relied on the

2011 ... opinion time to bring their operations into compliance with federal law," Rosenstein said. "This is an internal exercise of prosecutorial discretion; it is not a safe harbor for violations of the Wire Act."

For many years, online gambling was opposed by the US casino industry, but recently some traditional gaming operators have joined the move to internet wagering. Casino operators including Caesars Entertainment and Golden Nugget now take online bets where legally allowed, making it as easy to wager as tapping on a smartphone.

Betting on the future

The new Justice Department policy follows a lengthy lobbying campaign by the Coalition to Stop Internet Gambling, a group backed by Las Vegas casino owner Sheldon Adelson, a prominent backer of President Donald Trump.

The group applauded the new policy guidance, repeating its concerns that online wagering could get consumers, including minors, hooked on gambling. "Countries around the world offer a perilous preview of where our nation was headed absent today's action from the federal government," the coalition said in a statement. "In the UK, which is the epicenter of the epidemic... over half of 16-year-olds have gambling apps on their smartphones. Further, the iGaming industry obtains more than half of its profit from problem gamblers."

Senator Lindsey Graham, head of the Judiciary Committee, also welcomed the decision. "Restoring the original interpretation of the Wire Act takes great strides to protect children and society's most vulnerable," Graham said in a statement. But Michelle Minton, a senior fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, said the move would just force gamblers to go to illegal sites with fewer scruples. "Prohibition has never worked," Minton said. "It just turns law-abiding citizens into lawbreakers and reduces the level of trust in government."

Minton said the new legal opinion is likely to create further confusion, and may dissuade states from authorizing new internet gambling operations. It is likely to lead to spate of legal challenges over online betting in various state, she added. "They may choose to not prosecute, knowing it will never hold up in a court of law, and as a result the uncertainty in the law would persist," she said. "My bet is that there won't be prosecutions." — AFP

Business

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Annual Meeting



Staff set the light in the congress centre ahead of the opening of the 2019 World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting yesterday in Davos, eastern Switzerland. Fabrice COFFRINI — AFP

Has Davos made the world better?

Resentment is rising against pro-business Davos agenda and corporate bias

GENEVA: Klaus Schwab, who founded the World Economic Forum (WEF), has said his childhood during World War II inspired him to build an organization that would make the world a better place.

His foundation, which hosts many of the world's most powerful, famous and wealthy people at its annual meeting in the Swiss ski resort of Davos, has clearly made an impact. But questions have grown about whether the organization is meeting its declared goal of "improving the state of the world", with resentment rising against the pro-business Davos agenda, and voters turning instead to populist leaders. One persistent criticism is that WEF meetings, including this week's main annual gathering in Davos, have simply created a safe space for the corporate world to lobby governments without oversight.

Schwab was not available for an interview with AFP but the WEF's managing director, Adrian Monck, said in an email that the organization "subscribes to the highest standards of governance".

'Fragile authority'

Schwab, born in Ravensburg, Germany, in 1938, was a little-known business professor at the University of Geneva when in 1971 he founded the WEF's precursor, the European Management Forum.

He later broadened the conclave by inviting US business leaders, assembling a prestigious Rolodex as he turned the gathering into a showcase for networking and exchange of ideas. In a 2018 book, two Stockholm University professors chronicled the WEF's evolution, as over time politicians joined the business executives in Davos to give the forum the air of a United Nations, with a few celebrities thrown in.

"Against the backdrop of what is perceived to be malfunctioning global governance institutions and stalled international policymaking, the WEF presents itself as offering an alternative," Christina Garsten and Adrienne Sorbom write in "Discreet Power: How the World Economic Forum Shapes Market Agendas". Over the

years, success has bred success for the WEF as many of the world's movers and shakers vie to rub shoulders in the Swiss Alps at panel discussions and apres-ski socialising. Newer regional meetings have joined the Davos calendar.

The WEF's "fragile authority" relies on proving "that if you want to be part of the global nobility, then you have to be here," Sorbom said.

Good or bad?

She said the organization appears to offer something lacking in other international bodies: a venue where the heads of business and government can meet "and possibly come up with some good ideas".

But it has "troublesome aspects", she added. With dozens of heads of state and government coming to Davos each year, the WEF can be seen as a body "without a legal mandate to influence global governance yet with an ambition to do so", Garsten and Sorbom write. Oliver Classen of the Swiss NGO Public Eye, which has spearheaded protests and other campaigns to counter the Davos meet-

ing, said the WEF has always been "fully dependent" on the 1,000 companies that support the foundation.

Membership to the Forum ranges from the equivalent of \$60,000 (53,000 euros) to \$600,000, fees that allow company representatives to attend Davos and other meetings throughout the year.

"Schwab seems to have a firm belief that making people talk to each other is an objective that justifies pretty much everything," Classen said. "What he does not realize is that... when the large majority of those people have commercial interests then it is about deal-striking and nothing else." Monck, however, said that for the WEF, "multi-stakeholder engagement... means respecting the opinions and interests of others". The Davos meeting reportedly faced an existential threat in the early 2000s after sustained protests stretched the patience of the local community. In response, Schwab opened the meeting to more civil society groups while widening media access to an event that had previously been mostly held behind closed doors. —AFP

Cigar Room beckons cigar lovers to fancy and cozy café in Salhiya

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Cigar lovers can now enjoy their favorite smoke at a fancy and cozy café in the tony Salhiya area in Kuwait City. Smoking anything else other than cigars or pipes is forbidden at the Cigar Room, whether it's a cigarette or its electronic counterpart. "This is our high-end branch. We are seven Kuwaiti partners operating the Cigar Room. We started a year ago with our first branch in Ardiya. Most of us educated ourselves about cigars by researching them or attending programs abroad. We have one of the biggest humidors (the rooms where you store the cigars), as we have to keep the cigar at a certain temperature and humidity to keep it fresh for smokers," Saud Al-Yaqout told Kuwait Times.

"The difference between retail shops and our shop is that one of the partners is always on the floor. So when someone walks in, and he is new to cigars, we teach them how to smoke and how to enjoy the cigar in a friendly environment. Most people are worried about how to hold the cigar and smoke it. They have read only read about it on the Internet and may feel shy," he added.

According to Yaqout, cigars are completely different from cigarettes. "One cigarette has around 250 chemicals, and this is why there is an addiction, while with cigars there isn't any addiction. A cigar is completely natural with no chemicals added. So it's not addictive as cigarettes - it's 100 percent tobacco. It contains natural nicotine not added nicotine. Also, you only puff on the



cigar and not inhale the smoke, so the risks are minimum compared to cigarettes or others," he stressed.

"We acquire cigars vintage and new from all over the world. Habanos or the producing company in Cuba does regional additions for each country. We require these regional additions in addition to the cigars we have. We also have non-Cuban cigars - we are the official retailers for other companies. For example Royal Danish cigars made the first Kuwaiti-addition cigar ever introduced last year. We also have Optimos cigars," Yaqout noted.

"Then we have accessories from various companies, and we are their official retailers in Kuwait. This year we will try to get more companies. Our non-Cuban cigars are from Nicaragua, Dominican Republic and other places. Tobacco is just like coffee - it can be planted in tropical temperatures, especially in Central American and South American countries," he explained.

The price of a good cigar starts from around KD 5 per piece up to a few thousand dinars, depending on the make. "For instance, Davidoff cigars from the 1960s will cost around KD 15,000 per box, and people buy it like



KUWAIT: The seven partners of Cigar Room pose for a photo. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

wine. If we store the cigar at the optimum temperature and humidity, it will last for years with the same taste. We have cigars from 2004 here at the store, which are the oldest available. There are vintage cigar banks all over the world such as Girard in Geneva, and we work with them in addition to other retailers," said Yaqout.

"We are a friendly and prominent cigar café in Kuwait where you can come and enjoy a cigar and get all the

information from the partners, who are very well educated in cigars to teach the public. It's a very small market in Kuwait," he concluded.

The seven partners are Abdulrahman Al-Muraikhi, Saud Al-Yaqout, Nashmi Al-Ajmi, Abdulrahman Al-Terkait, Abdullah bin Awadh, Sayel Al-Ajmi and Yasser Al-Arbash. The Cigar Room is open from 8:00 am till midnight.

Business

NBK Money Markets Report

British parliament rejects Brexit deal in major setback for May

US govt shutdown begins to take a toll on economy

KUWAIT: British lawmakers officially rejected PM Theresa May's Brexit deal last week in the worst defeat in modern British history. The 432-202 crushing defeat triggered a confidence vote in May's government which she narrowly secured the next day. This leaves May with an uphill battle to renegotiate another deal with parliament and the EU in only 10 weeks.

The resounding rejection of May's deal has done little to bring clarity over the path ahead for Brexit. All options remain on the table, including the potential of a no deal, a general election and a second referendum. One prospect in the very near term is that Article 50 might need to be extended in order to give time to reach parliamentary consensus. UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond supported this view by not ruling out seeking an extension to the Brexit negotiating deadline.

Bank of England governor Mark Carney said the reaction of financial markets in the wake of the vote showed a degree of confidence that a no-deal Brexit was unlikely to happen March 29th. The pound bounced back against the dollar amid optimism that article 50 would be extended and that the prospect of a disorderly exit from the EU had receded. "Public market commentary, consistent with our market intelligence, is that a rebound appears to reflect some expectation that the process of resolution would be extended and that the prospect of no-deal may have been diminished," said Carney. However, market volatility is still expected to continue until a clear direction from parliament is seen.

Inflation slows in the UK

British inflation fell to its lowest level in two years in December as fuel prices dropped, leaving the Bank of England under no pressure to carry on raising interest rates as uncertainty over Brexit

dominates the economic outlook. Consumer prices rose at an annual rate of 2.1 percent in December, slowing from 2.3 percent in November, in line with economist expectations. The rise was also the smallest since January 2017.

The Bank of England has raised interest rates twice since 2017 and had said it planned to gradually increase borrowing costs. Economists said that although inflation remained just above the BoE's 2 percent target, it is expected to drop below that level soon reducing the urgency for a BoE hike.

The inflation figures could be seen as a relief for British consumers who have been pressured by high inflation since the British pound dropped more than 10 percent after the 2016 Brexit referendum. Inflation peaked at a five-year high of 3.1 percent in November 2017 but has since fallen while wages have grown at their fastest in a decade in the same period.

Slowdown in Europe

The euro had been pressured in this period due to two main reasons. First, the continuing uncertainty revolving around Brexit is shaking investor confidence and second, a slowdown is expected in the Euro area for 2019. European Central Bank President Mario Draghi highlighted some of these reasons last week during a testimony in front of the European Parliament. Draghi mentioned two types of causes for the slowdown, some temporary and others permanent. The temporary causes stem from weaker momentum due to temporary factors, and are specific to sectors and certain countries such as the slowdown in the car industry. On the other hand, the effects of the more permanent causes are going to continue. One of which, is that 2017 was an exceptional year when compared with historical averages. And so, a return to a lower growth path is natural.

Finally, Draghi cautiously showed his optimism when he stated that this in fact



was a temporary slowdown and not the start of a recession. However, he did mention that the period maybe more prolonged and dependent on external factors. The external factors being: geopolitical uncertainties including a global trade war, the slowdown in China, and Brexit.

Government shutdown and trade

The US government shutdown is now officially a record breaker past 29 days, and is starting to take its toll on the US economy. Historically, shutdowns have had only short-lived economic effects, but Fed Chair Powell warned last week that a dispute that outlast past deadlines, has the potential to change the picture for the worse. The most immediate impact will spur from the reduction in work done by federal employees. Recent updates from the White House economists suggest that the effect of work not being done by 380,000 furloughed federal workers will cut 0.08 percent off real GDP for every week of the shutdown. In addition, and extra drop of 0.05 percent will come due to the loss of work done by federal contractors. Another impact of the shutdown will be a temporary drop in US employment data, as the furloughed staff will be classified as unemployed in the January jobs data.

Despite this, we saw some strength in the US dollar last week on growing optimism of progress in the China-US trade dispute. A Wall Street Journal report on Thursday said that US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin had considered easing



tariffs imposed on Chinese imports. However, a treasury spokesman later denied the report. Despite this, sentiment was still lifted slightly considering China's chief trade negotiator is planned to visit the US at the end of the month for the next round of talks.

China moves to support trade

China's top lawmaking body has fast-tracked approval of a foreign investment bill, in a sign that President Xi Jinping wants to implement policy moves that will support trade negotiations with the US. China says the law would create administration measures to protect the intellectual property of foreign investors and protect them from forced transfer of technologies. The National People's Congress Standing Committee has scheduled a special session to consider the bill January 29th, right before China's trade negotiator is planned to visit the US.

Global stocks jumped to their highest in more than a month on Friday after the WSJ report suggested progress was being made to resolve the trade dispute between the United States and China. US

stocks rose around 0.6 percent even after the report was denied. This implied that traders still believed there was a degree of credibility to the report. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan added 0.75 percent while the Shanghai Composite index was up 1.4 percent. European stocks also followed to their highest since early December, with the pan-European STOXX 600 index up over 1 percent.

Commodities

Oil prices rose by spiked higher on Friday after a report from OPEC showed its production fell sharply last month, easing fears about prolonged oversupply. OPEC said that its oil output fell by 751,000 barrels per day in December to 31.58 million bpd, the biggest month-on-month drop in almost two years. Brent crude and West Texas Intermediate were both up 4 percent to \$62.58 and \$53.91 per barrel respectively.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30330
The USDKWD opened at 0.30330 yesterday morning.

Bayt.com weekly report

Thinking of relocating for a job? Read this

The world is full of opportunity, but the opportunity that you're looking for might not be within your geographical area, but thousands of miles away. But, that definitely shouldn't pull you back. You can't just sit there and expect an opportunity to come knocking on your door, life doesn't work that way, you have to look for it and pursue it.

You might have just gotten a new job offer or a promotion that needs you to relocate to a new place or maybe you just want to move far, far away and start a new life. Whatever the reason, making a decision on whether or not to relocate for a job is rarely an easy decision.

Forget about weighing the pros and cons for now, and think with more of a holistic approach about your happiness and contentment. You'll need to consider various aspects that aren't just related to your new job, but your lifestyle as well. How will this relocation impact you family? Will you be able to find a suitable community to belong to?

So, before you pack your bags and leave, experts at Bayt.com have prepared a list of 5 things you should consider before relocating to help you make more of an informed decision.

1. Cost of living

A new job offer or promotion can mean you'll start making more money, but this big gain can be diluted in higher costs of living. What good will a higher salary do you if you're going to end up spending more on living expenses.

You'll need to do your research and make some sort of feasibility study on the area you're moving to, and make sure to include items such as rent and transportation. Is the pay increase worth the move? Will you and your family be able to live there comfortably?

2. Your relationships

If you are currently single, then this might not so much of an issue for you. But, if you're in a relationship and/or have kids, you're not just changing the course of your own life, but the lives of others as well.

How is the move going to impact the lives of your loved ones? Your family, your

spouse or significant other. You'll have to take their lives and careers into consideration. Does the job market at the new location doing well? Or will you spouse/ partner struggle to find a job?

You'll certainly need to sit down with your partner and discuss how you can make this work. One way is to research the job market at the location you're intending to move to and review jobs that will fit your partner's interests and skillset.

3. Your Job security

You don't want to go through all the stress of moving to a new place for a job and then ending up getting laid off after a short period of time because the company went bankrupt.

In order for you to not run into that kind of situation, you'll need to look into the company or office that you're relocating to. Are they currently growing or are they facing problems with diminishing returns?

You should only take the offer if you are confident that the company you're relocating to is stable for at least the next 5 years, especially if it is a start-up. You should research online for any financial statements that they might have released. If not, you might want to ask them if they can give you access to them. You can easily do this with the Bayt.com Company Search tool. This tool literally gives job seekers the ability to stalk companies online, in order for them to get an idea of what the company does, as well as a taste of their culture.

You should also consider digging into the industry in that certain area, this should be relatively easy to find online by searching for market outlook reports.

4. Taking a trip

Sometimes pictures and videos aren't enough, if you want to get a real feel on how it would be like to actually live and work there, then you should consider going there for a visit. Try to plan a trip that is longer than just the weekend, you're going to work there, so you'll also need a feel of how things are during working days, in order for you to get more of a hands-on experience.

5. Having a safety net

Relocation doesn't always work out, you might take the job, relocate then end-up hating it there. Which is why you should certainly consider having a backup plan just in case things don't go as planned. Being precautions won't do you no harm. And if you ever find yourself in that situation and don't have a backup plan, you can always use Bayt.com to find over 20,000 international opportunities.

Wall Street wary of progressive Democrats on House panel

WASHINGTON: Wall Street is bunkering down for a wave of intense scrutiny as a group of progressive Democrats, including social media star Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, have joined a powerful House of Representatives committee overseeing banking activities.

"It's a huge victory," said Ocasio-Cortez, at 29 the youngest member of Congress and a self-described socialist—a word that shocks conservatives, who brandish it as a dire threat.

"I cannot stress how important this moment is. Dems are putting members who rejected corporate campaign money on a committee overseeing Wall St.," she tweeted.

Ocasio-Cortez, often referred to by her initials AOC, will bring public attention to the ordinarily drab committee via her strong social media presence that includes 2.5 million followers on Twitter.

Wall Street is trying to figure out the goals of the Democrats, now in charge of the House of Representatives after eight years of control by President Donald Trump's Republicans.

While the Senate remains in Republican hands and ready to block dramatic changes, Democratic control of the House promises at least to make life difficult for bankers, with tighter industry oversight and lengthy public hearings.

The symbolism is already striking. The

panel is headed by Maxine Waters, 80, a regular target of Trump's barbs who is the first woman and the first African American to head the committee.

Waters has warned the financial sector that the days of banking deregulation and lax oversight are over.

'Wall Street running amok'

In her first speech as committee chairwoman on January 16 she said the 2008 financial crisis "was a result of Wall Street running amok, with abusive institutions peddling toxic products... with no agency responsible for prioritizing consumer protection." Ultimately, the economy was sent tumbling into the abyss," she said. "Our fear," a banking source told AFP, "is that she (Waters) will reinforce oversight of big banks."

The source expects to see "more CEO hearings in Congress" with the Democrats in charge.

Half of the new committee members belong to the Progressive Caucus, the left wing of the Democratic party. Several made a splash when they ran for office in the November 2018 election.

They include Ayanna Pressley, the first African American congresswoman from Massachusetts, and Rashida Tlaib, the first Palestinian American and one of the two first female Muslim lawmakers in Washington.



Tighter banking oversight

The newcomers favor tighter banking oversight, but also promise to fight for easier access to credit, more industry diversity, and against housing discrimination. "I'm looking forward to digging into the student loan crisis, examining for-profit prisons/ICE detention, and exploring the development of public & postal banking. To start," Ocasio-Cortez tweeted. "Public banking" are two words that send shivers down the spine of Wall Street.

Nevertheless, "Cortez won't set the agenda of the committee, Chairwoman Walters will," a second banking source said. "We have a lot of differences with her (Waters) but she's been in that committee for 30 years. We know her, she knows us," the source said. "There are bipartisan issues we can work on." The alliance of progressive Democrats extends into the Senate, where they can count on support from Elizabeth Warren, who has announced her interest in running for president in 2020.

Even though she is confined to the opposition, the 69-year-old senator can make bankers and government officials squirm with tough questions from her perch on the Senate finance committee.

"With Republicans in control of the Senate, Waters' best hope for the next two years is to keep financial issues in the limelight in the hope they influence the election next year," wrote FTN analyst Chris Low. Having Ocasio-Cortez on the committee "will bolster that goal," he said. —AFP

Business

Global Finance awards KFH 'Best Trade Finance Provider' in Kuwait

Award another testimony to quality of KFH products, services

KUWAIT: Global Finance Magazine has awarded Kuwait Finance House (KFH) the "Best Trade Finance Provider" award in Kuwait 2019. The award is another testimony to the quality of KFH products and services that strengthen its position as a world leading Islamic financial institution.

The regional and global winners were revealed at an award luncheon in London during the BAFT Europe Bank-to-Bank Forum. Selection of KFH was made by the highly professional team of Global Finance, after extensive consultations with bankers, corporate finance executives and analysts throughout the world. The Quantitative criteria of giving the award included growth in assets, profitability, geographic reach, strategic relationships, new business development and innovation in products. Among the subjective criteria considered were reputation, customer satisfaction, and the

opinions of analysts and others involved in the industry.

On receiving the award, Group Chief Treasury Officer at KFH- AbdulWahab Al-Roshood, said that the award reiterates the appreciation of the international institutions, the financial experts, and practitioners in finance industry to KFH. KFH's focus on core banking business contributed in achieving highest levels of efficiency and superior service quality, while offering competitive and innovative financing products. KFH provides customers with advice and solutions to mitigate risks and succeed in their international business.

Al-Roshood added that KFH plays key role in supporting the country's development plan. KFH supports the Kuwaiti companies and the international companies operating in Kuwait to execute and complete their projects. The Bank

offers a wide range of financing services to corporate and retail customers. This encompasses different sectors such as infrastructure, energy, transport, IT services etc.

The editorial review board of Global Finance selected the best trade finance providers based on input from industry analysts, corporate executives and technology experts. Criteria for choosing the winners included: transaction volume, scope of global coverage, customer service, competitive pricing, innovative technologies as well as entry submissions from banks and other providers.

Global Finance, founded in 1987, has a circulation of 50,050 and readers in 192 countries. Global Finance is headquartered in New York, with offices around the world. Global Finance regularly selects the top performers among banks and other providers of financial services.



Al-Roshood receiving KFH awards

China set to post slowest growth in 28 years in 2018, more stimulus seen

BEIJING: China is expected to report yesterday that economic growth cooled to its slowest in 28 years in 2018 amid weakening domestic demand and bruising US tariffs, adding pressure on Beijing to roll out more support measures to avert a sharper slowdown.

Growing signs of weakness in China—which has generated nearly a third of global growth in the past decade—are stoking worries about risks to the world economy and are weighing on profits for firms ranging from Apple to big carmakers. Chinese policymakers have pledged more support for the economy this year to reduce the risk of massive job losses, but they have ruled out a "flood" of stimulus like that which Beijing has unleashed in the past, which quickly juiced growth rates but left a mountain of debt.

Analysts polled by Reuters expect the world's second-largest economy to have grown 6.4 percent in the October-December quarter from a year earlier, slowing from the previous quarter's 6.5 percent pace and matching levels last seen in early 2009 during the global financial crisis.

That could pull 2018 gross domestic product (GDP) growth to 6.6 percent, the lowest since 1990 and down from a revised 6.8 percent in 2017. With stimulus measures expected to take some time to kick in, most analysts believe conditions in China are likely to get worse before they get better, and see a further slowdown to 6.3 percent this year. Some analysts believe real growth levels are already much weaker than official data suggest. Even if China and the United States agree on a trade deal in current talks, which is a tall order, analysts said it would be no panacea

France pushes Japan to accept merger of Renault-Nissan

TOKYO: Japanese media reported yesterday that France wants a merger between Renault and Nissan following the arrest of former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn, but according to France's economy minister changing the current set-up is "not on the table".

Ghosn headed a powerful alliance between Nissan, Mitsubishi and Renault before his arrest in November on charges of financial misconduct. A delegation including Martin Vial—a Renault director designated by the French government—made the merger request at talks with Japanese officials in Tokyo. Kyodo News reported, citing sources close to the matter. The French government is the biggest shareholder in Renault with a stake of more than 15 percent, while Renault owns 43.4 percent of the Japanese carmaker Nissan with voting rights. A merger between the two is favored by French President Emmanuel Macron, Kyodo said.

Japanese business daily Nikkei also reported the merger request by the French delegation, saying Nissan had been opposed to giving Paris greater sway over the Japanese carmaker. According to Nikkei, the delegation also said Renault wants to name Nissan's next chairman—a post that has remained vacant since Ghosn was ousted on his arrest in November. But the reports appear to contradict comments French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire made to Le Journal du



BEIJING: Construction workers buy snacks at a food stall in Beijing's central business district yesterday. China's economy grew at its slowest pace in almost three decades in 2018, analysts said. — AFP

for the sputtering Chinese economy unless Beijing can galvanize weak investment and consumer demand.

Chen Xingdong, chief China economist at BNP Paribas, said investors should not expect the latest round of stimulus to produce similar results as during the 2008-09 global crisis, when Beijing's huge spending package quickly boosted growth.

"What China can really do this year is to prevent deflation, prevent a recession and a hard landing in the economy," Chen said. On a quarterly basis, growth likely eased to 1.5 percent in Oct-Dec from 1.6 percent in the preceding period.

China will release its fourth-quarter and 2018 GDP data on Monday (0200 GMT), along with December factory output, retail sales and fixed-asset investment.

Since China's quarterly GDP readings tend to be unusually steady, most investors prefer to focus on recent trends. Surprising contractions in December trade data and factory activity gauges in recent weeks have suggest-

ed the economy cooled more quickly than expected at the end of 2018, leaving it on shakier footing at the start of the new year.

Sources have told Reuters that Beijing was planning to lower its growth target to 6.5 percent this year from around 6.5 percent in 2018.

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

Some factories in Guangdong - China's export hub - have shut earlier than usual ahead of the long Lunar New Year holiday as the tariff war with the United States curtails orders. Others are suspending production lines and cutting back on workers' hours. If the trade war drags on, some migrant workers may not have jobs to return to. Trade negotiators are facing an early March deadline and Washington has threatened to sharply hike tariffs if there are no substantial signs of progress. — Reuters



TOKYO: Motonari Otsuru, chief lawyer of former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn, arrives at the Tokyo district court. — AFP

Dimanche (JDD) newspaper, published Sunday.

"A shareholder rebalancing, a change in cross-shareholdings between Renault and Nissan is not on the table," he told the French weekly. Contacted by AFP, a French economy ministry spokesman had no comment to make on the Japanese media reports.

A 'stable relationship'

Macron last month held talks with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Argentina, at which they only agreed to ensure a stable relationship within the three-way alliance, which also includes Japan's Mitsubishi Motors.

Abe reportedly stressed the importance of all three companies "maintaining their stable

relationship" at the summit talk. But the Japanese premier reportedly also said the fate of the group should be decided by "private businesses" and "governments should not commit to how the alliance should operate going forward", according to a senior government official quoted by Kyodo.

Last week, Renault said it had launched the search for a successor to Ghosn, after a Tokyo court quashed his appeal for bail as he faces three charges of financial misconduct.

But Le Maire also said in his interview with the JDD newspaper: "The principle of the presumption of innocence must apply" to Ghosn. But over and above Ghosn's case, "there are also the interests of Renault and of the alliance", he added. "A business of this scale needs solid and stable governance." — AFP

Thousands protest in Berlin against industrialized agriculture

BERLIN: Thousands of protesters, backed by a procession of farm tractors, marched in Berlin Saturday for environmental protection and against the industrial agriculture lobby. Police put the number of demonstrators at over 12,000, while organizers said 35,000 turned out.

While the "Grüne Woche" international agricultural fair was taking place in the German capital, the protesters took aim at government policy which prioritized large-scale farming, deemed damaging to health

and the environment, to the detriment of small farmers and bio-growers.

"This protest... shows that the desire for a different agricultural policy is now undeniable," said Green party co-leader Robert Habeck, who took part in Saturday's demonstration.

Conservative Agriculture Minister Julia Klöckner has received "an unequivocal message" from the street, said Saskia Richartz, spokeswoman for the protest organizers. "We can't feed the whole world if we reduce industrial agricultural production," the agriculture minister responded, while admitting that the sector needs to be "more efficient and respectful of the environment".

More than 100 organizations took part in Saturday's colorful march, with 171 tractors descending on Berlin from several parts of the country. The ministerial quarter around Brandenburg Gate remained partially blocked for several hours before the protest broke up peacefully. — AFP

Does the corporate debt mountain pose an avalanche risk?

PARIS: During the years of ultra-cheap money, companies loaded up on debt but now the concern is whether they will be able to handle the mountain of debt as interest rates rise.

Until last year, companies basked in the sun of low interest rates while economies were expanding at a steady clip. They had no real reason not to borrow. But in 2018 the clouds set in: political uncertainty, market volatility, deteriorating growth prospects, in particular in China, and most importantly a tightening of monetary policy as central banks ended the stimulus measures taken to tame the 2007-08 financial crisis.

At the end of last year the US Federal Reserve estimated that private US companies held nearly \$15 trillion (13 trillion euros) in debt. In Europe, non-financial companies hold some 12 trillion euros (\$13.8 trillion), according to Pierre Verle, head of credit at asset manager Carmignac.

"In absolute terms, the debt of non-financial companies accounts for around 70 percent of gross domestic product in the United States and in the eurozone it is above 100 percent: these are elevated levels, but not explosive," said Isabelle Mateos y Lago, managing director and chief multi-asset strategist at BlackRock Investment Institute.

She said such levels "don't say much about the capacity of firms to repay their debts."

Instead Mateos y Lago pointed to another indicator: the ratio of net revenue to debt payments. In the United States, net revenues are nine times higher than debt payments, while in Europe the ratio is 12, she said.

'Fallen angels'

In recent months, concern in the United States has focused around so-called leveraged loans, which former US Federal Reserve head Janet Yellen recently called a systemic risk. These loans, estimated by experts to be worth some \$1.3 trillion, are made to companies with high debt loads or with poor credit histories, or both. These loans are

riskier as there is a greater risk the borrower will default, but as they carry higher interest rates, they can be attractive to investors seeking returns.

A portion of these loans have been resold to investors, much as the high-risk "sub-prime" mortgages that caused the 2008 financial crisis.

"In Europe the problem is less acute as investors accept less readily debt levels that are too high and the trauma from the 2008 crisis is more present," said Vincent Marioni, who heads up credit investments in Europe for Allianz Global Investors.

There are less than 300 billion euros in repackaged leveraged loans, according to Verle. Another subject of attention has been the rise in the number of companies that are just holding onto their investment grade credit rating. A downgrade into what ratings agencies call a speculative debt rating—and investors call junk bonds—means companies will have to pay more interest to borrow.

These companies which tumble into junk territory are called "fallen angels," and if there are too many then it could spook investors and cause them to dump the bonds.

'Dark Cloud'

This risk "hovers like a dark cloud over investors", said Claudio Borio, head of the monetary and economic department at the Bank of International Settlements, when presenting its latest quarterly report in December. Others are less concerned. "It is in the best-rated tranches that there were the most excesses these past years," said Verle, but if "in each credit cycle there are excesses, that doesn't mean that the system will collapse."

Meanwhile Felix Orsini, who is global co-head for corporate debt markets at French bank Societe Generale, said that he believed the number of fallen angels would be limited. "In gaining a bit of perspective, the return of volatility in 2018 was a return to normal after years during which the markets were on central bank life support," he said. — AFP

Business

CBK's Al-Najma is the largest prize-linked Bank account: Guinness World Records

Commercial Bank hosts grand celebration at Avenues



The representative from the Guinness World Records hands over the Award



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait recently hosted a grand celebration at the Avenues where it held raffle draws to pick the Al-Najma Account's grand prize winner of "A millionaire and Half" and a Range Rover for the 'Your Salary & More' campaign. The festivity was aired live on Nabd Al-Kuwait radio station (88.8) and posted on various social media networks. The event was attended by MOCI's representative, Abdul Aziz Ashkanani.

CBK officials and an official representative from the Guinness World Records also attended the event that sprang many surprises. On the occasion it was declared that Al-Najma Account as the largest prize-linked bank account payout handed out to a draw winner by a bank worldwide.

The winner of the world's largest bank account prize of KD 1.5 million was Abdul Jaleel Sayeed Hussein Al-Tabtaba'e while the Range Rover winner was Zainab Abdul Razzaq Dashti. The winners of the prizes equal to double their salaries were Fahad Ali Mubarak Al-Mutairi and Hind Abdullah Saleh Al-Mulla.

Speaking on the occasion, CBK's individual banking services manager, Hameed Ibrahim Salman said that CBK is always keen on rewarding its clients with the best exclusive offers. CBK's Deputy Manager for Corporate Communication Amani Al-Wera congratulated the winners.



Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi account draw

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

The lucky winners are:

1. Abdulrahman Jamal Abdulkader
2. Saeed Radam Ali
3. Hakimaldin Ali Hussein
4. Veronica Patrick Mills
5. Ahmad Samir Mohamed Elawam

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

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

Ooredoo Kuwait participates in 2nd Gulf Entrepreneurship Forum

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait participated in the Gulf Entrepreneurship Forum, organized by the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs which took place last week at Four Seasons Kuwait with the attendance of experts from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. The forum featured eight workshops and four seminars with the aim of raising public awareness about entrepreneurship and to encourage the youth to actively participate in this vital domain. Topics discussed included exploring the means to capitalizing and utilizing the available tools possessed by the youth who are interested in entering the world of entrepreneurship.

The main goals of the Gulf Entrepreneurship Forum are to enhance awareness of entrepreneurship, hold specialized workshops that supports the essence of the forum, to boost the roles of both the private and public sectors in supporting entrepreneurs, and to allow entrepreneurs to benefit from the experiences of their colleagues on both the GCC and international levels. The topics included ones related to creating business models, Marketing, Branding and Corporate Identity, Strategy, Product Development, Accounting, acquiring business license, and Customer Service.

Commenting on this forum, Ooredoo Kuwait's Senior Director of Corporate Communications noted that the forum is reflective of the core values at Ooredoo, which is empowering youth. He noted that the support for youth-centric initiatives reflects the company's wishes to embrace the directions of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who noted on several occasions the importance of investing in youth and supporting them reach their potential.



Health & Technology

Bangladesh 'Tree Man' returns to hospital as condition worsens

'I made a mistake by leaving the hospital'

DHAKA: A Bangladeshi father dubbed "Tree Man" for the bark-like growths on his body returned to hospital yesterday after his condition worsened, he told AFP. Abul Bajandar has had 25 surgeries since 2016 to remove the growths from his hands and feet at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Doctors were on the verge of declaring their treatment a success before a sudden relapse prompted Bajandar to flee the clinic in May without notifying staff. But yesterday

he was readmitted to the hospital after his condition deteriorated, with the growths now covering almost the entirety of his hands and feet, the 28-year-old said.

"I made a mistake by leaving the hospital. I sought alternative treatment but could not find any. I now I understand I should have stayed and continued the treatment here," Bajandar said. Samanta Lal Sen, a plastic surgeon at the hospital, said doctors would resume treatment "very

soon", adding the growths had spread to other parts of his body. "I requested Bajandar to return as soon as possible. Now we have to start from the very beginning. We'll have to conduct more surgeries," Sen told AFP. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had promised free treatment for Bajandar after his plight captured the sympathies of the country.

He lived in the hospital's expensive private cabin with his wife and daughter for nearly two years during his first round of treat-

ment. The father of one suffers from epidermolytic hyperkeratosis, an extremely rare genetic condition also known as "tree-man syndrome". Sen said that fewer than half a dozen people worldwide have the disease. His hospital also treated a young Bangladeshi girl suffering from the condition in 2017. Doctors declared her surgery a success, but her father later said the growths had returned in even greater numbers, prompting the family to halt treatment and return to their village. — AFP

'World's oldest man' dies in Japan at 113

TOKYO: "World's oldest man" Masazo Nonaka, who was born just two years after the Wright brothers launched humanity's first powered flight, died on Sunday aged 113, Japanese media said. Nonaka was born in July 1905, according to Guinness World Records—just months before Albert Einstein published his special theory of relativity.

Guinness officially recognised Nonaka as the oldest living man after the death of Spaniard Francisco Nunez Olivera last year. "We feel shocked at the loss of this big figure. He was as usual yesterday and passed away without causing our family any fuss at all," his granddaughter Yuko told Kyodo News. Nonaka had six brothers and one sister, marrying in 1931 and fathering five children.

He ran a hot spring inn in his hometown and in retirement enjoyed watching sumo wrestling on TV and eating sweets, according to local media. Japan has one of the world's highest life expectancies and was home to several people recognized as among the oldest humans to have ever lived. They include Jiroemon Kimura, the longest-living man on record, who died soon after his 116th birthday in June 2013. The oldest verified person ever—Jeanne Louise Calment of France—died in 1997 at the age of 122, according to Guinness. — AFP



ASHORO, Japan : This file photo shows Masazo Nonaka of Japan, then aged 112, smiling after being awarded the Guinness World Records' oldest male person living title in Ashoro, Hokkaido prefecture. — AFP

Insomnia treatment may help ease depression during menopause

NEW YORK: Women going through menopause may have fewer symptoms of depression when they get treatment for insomnia than when they don't, a recent experiment suggests. Researchers recruited 117 menopausal women with insomnia for the study and randomly assigned them to three groups. One group received cognitive behavior therapy (CBT). Another group received a component of CBT known as sleep restriction therapy. The third group only received education on so-called sleep hygiene, or habits that can make it easier to fall and remain asleep.

Overall, 4.3 percent of the women had moderately severe depression. Both forms of insomnia treatment helped ease depression symptoms for these women, but sleep hygiene education did not. "We can add targeted cognitive behavioral treatment of insomnia to the current arsenal of treatments available to alleviate menopausal associated insomnia and with this treatment we have the added benefit of reductions in depressive symptoms which frequently co-occur with sleep disturbance associated with menopause," said senior study author Christopher Drake of the Henry Ford Health System in Detroit, Michigan.

"We hope to one day show that targeting insomnia symptoms early when depression is mild or yet to develop can prevent depression from ever developing in the first place," Drake said by email. Women typically go through menopause between ages 45 and 55. As the ovaries curb production of the hormones estrogen and progesterone, women can experience symptoms ranging from vaginal dryness to mood swings, joint pain and insomnia. CBT can train people to use techniques that address the mental (or cognitive) factors associated with insomnia, such as the "racing mind," and to overcome the worry and other negative emotions that often accompany inability to sleep. CBT can also help people with poor sleep establish a healthy bedtime routine and

improve sleep patterns, previous research has found.

Sleep restriction therapy can be done on its own, or as a component of CBT for insomnia. This intervention is designed to limit how many times people awaken during the night and reduce the total amount of time spent in bed; it doesn't aim to restrict the total amount of time people spend asleep. Women in the study who received CBT completed six face-to-face therapy sessions with a registered nurse specializing in behavioral sleep medicine. Sleep restriction therapy was briefer, and involved two face-to-face sessions as well as three phone sessions.

Sleep Medicine

The control group of patients assigned to sleep hygiene education, meanwhile, got six weekly emails with tips on how to create better nighttime routines and information on the connection between sleep and a variety of health problems and lifestyle habits. Right after insomnia treatment, women with depression who received CBT experienced moderate to large reductions in symptoms of the mood disorder, researchers report in Sleep Medicine.

Patients also reported moderate improvements in depression with sleep restriction therapy, but these effects didn't occur until six months after treatment ended, the study also found. One limitation of the study is that it excluded women diagnosed with major depression, so it's not clear how well these insomnia treatments would work for these women, researchers note. Differences in the duration and form of treatment between the types of insomnia therapies tested may have also impacted the results.

Researchers also didn't look at hot flashes - a common menopause symptom that can keep women from sleeping well - and it's possible addressing this aspect of menopause could impact both mood and sleep, said Dr. Mary Jane Minkin, a researcher at Yale University School of Medicine in New Haven, Connecticut, who wasn't involved in the study. The study also didn't examine the impact of hormone therapy, which doctors may prescribe to help ease a variety of menopause symptoms. Minkin said by email. "Hormone therapy usually has a significant impact on sleep," Minkin said. "It is good to know of the benefits of CBT for insomnia, which is always potentially a valuable adjunct," Minkin said. "But clinicians should never forget to think about the potential role of hormone therapy." — Reuters

NASA and China collaborate on Moon mission

WASHINGTON: The space-agencies of the United States and China are in touch and coordinating efforts on Moon exploration, NASA said yesterday as it navigates a strict legal framework aimed at preventing technology transfer to China. "With the required approval from Congress, NASA has been in discussions with China to explore the possibility of observing a signature of the landing plume of their lunar lander, Chang'e 4, using our @NASAMoon spacecraft's instrument," NASA's associate administrator for the science mission directorate, Thomas Zurbuchen, said on Twitter.

Zurbuchen's tweet confirmed a similar statement made Monday by the deputy chief commander of China Lunar Exploration Program, Wu Yanhua. NASA shared information from a US satellite while China told the Americans about the latitude, longitude and time of the landing "in a timely manner," he said. The hope was that NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) could observe the historic touchdown of the Chinese lander on January 3.

NASA provided the planned orbit path of LRO to China, but it turned out the spacecraft was not in the right place at the right time. "For a number of reasons, NASA was not able to phase LRO's orbit to be at the optimal location during the landing, however NASA was still interested in possibly detecting the plume well after the landing," the agency said in a statement. "Science gathered about how lunar dust is ejected upwards during a spacecraft's landing could inform future missions and how they arrive on the lunar surface."

Such observations could help astronauts prepare for future missions to the Moon. NASA's lunar orbiter will pass over the Chang'e 4 landing site on January 31 and will snap pictures, as it did for the Chang'e 3 in 2013. The agency said significant findings resulting from the cooperation would be shared with the global research community in February at a United Nations space gathering in Austria. — AFP

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Kuwait Times

248 33 199

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- ◆ Stomach Balloon Insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
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- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
- ◆ Canadian Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
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- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care

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Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo - Rectal Surgeon

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Laposcopic and Bariatric Surgery

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

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

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228 Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building

What's On

Diplomatic Women's Committee visits Defense Ministry's camp



The Diplomatic Women's Committee (DWC) visited the spring camp of the Ministry of Defense upon a generous invitation from the ministry. The Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Kuwait Samargyul Adamkulova, the head of the committee, and the members were welcomed by the public relations' women's committee of the Ministry of Defense, who gave a brief background about the camp, its cultural, social and entertaining activities. They also took the members of DWC on a tour around the camp including the diwanya, the children's spectacular playground, and tasting traditional Kuwaiti cuisine which all the members have enjoyed. At the end of the visit, and in the name of the DWC, the Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan thanked the public relations' team for their warm welcome and presented a bouquet to them.



ICSK Junior participates in beach clean drive

On January 13, 2019, over 250 enthusiastic students from ICSK Junior participated in a beach cleaning drive organized in association with Kuwait Dive Team (affiliated with the Environmental Voluntary Foundation) at the beach area near Kuwait Towers. The event was organized as a part of the continuing golden Jubilee celebrations of ICSK.

Taking part in a beach clean is an excellent way of encouraging young people to connect with their local environment, take community responsibility and enjoy the great outdoors. Not only that, beach cleaning is an opportunity to take learning outside the walls of the school and into the local environment.

The energetic Juniors were welcomed by the dedicated team members of the Kuwait Diving Team headed by Waleed Al-Fadhel. Kuwait Diving Team protects marine systems through salvage operations, community cleanups and environmental education around Gulf and the globe. The introductory talk by Latifa from the team shed light on the importance of cleaning Kuwait's coasts and the need to take care of its sea life and the great danger posed by plastic waste to marine environment. The marine wildlife is under threat from the waste and litter in our seas, with hundreds of species accidentally eating or becoming entangled in litter. The students were also given guidelines and safety precautions to follow while cleaning the beach.

Armed with hand gloves and carrying huge yellow plastic covers and braving chill weather, the little ones



moved with gusto filling their bags with all sorts of abandoned waste like glass, plastic, clothing etc. They joined hands and pulled out rugs and nets that were struck deep in the wet sand, reminding everyone about the saying, 'Unity is Strength.' After returning to school they expressed their day's experience on a five-meter-long chart and articulated their learning outcomes by writing slogans, drawing pictures of the extraordinary day they enjoyed to the brim.



Symphony Style Kuwait obtains Green Key once again

Symphony Style Kuwait, a Radisson Collection Hotel, has been recently awarded the Green Key certification again. The certification is given to establishments that set a high standard in environmental requirements.

Obtaining the Green Key certification shows the level of commitment displayed by the hotel's management and staff to provide an environmentally friendly experience for guests as well as making the world we live in more sustainable.

The Green Key eco-label is a standard of excellence in the field of environmental responsibility and sustainable operation within the tourism industry. Green Key has been awarded to 2,700 establishments in 56 countries, making it one of the largest international tourism ecolabels for tourism accommodation.

On obtaining Green Key certification, General Manager of Symphony Style Kuwait, Peter Schuler commented: "We are proud to receive our Green Key certification for the second time. The level of commitment and hard work that has been displayed by members of Symphony Style Kuwait, both in management and staff, has been instrumental in obtaining this certification, and it is one that the Hotel holds dearly. I'd like to extend my thanks to them for helping us receive such a prestigious award." He continued, "At Symphony Style Kuwait we care about our guests and their experience, yet we also believe that it is our responsibility to look after and protect the environment."

At Radisson Hotel Group responsible business approach is reflected in the actions taken throughout the year by all hotels and is based on main three pillars: Think People, Think Community and Think Planet, in true translation to its belief "Every Moment Matters."

Symphony Style Kuwait, a Radisson Collection Hotel is proud to be awarded the Green Key certification once again and is committed, from management to staff and as part of the Responsible Business mandate, to applying sustainable, environmentally friendly practices towards a more sustainable future.



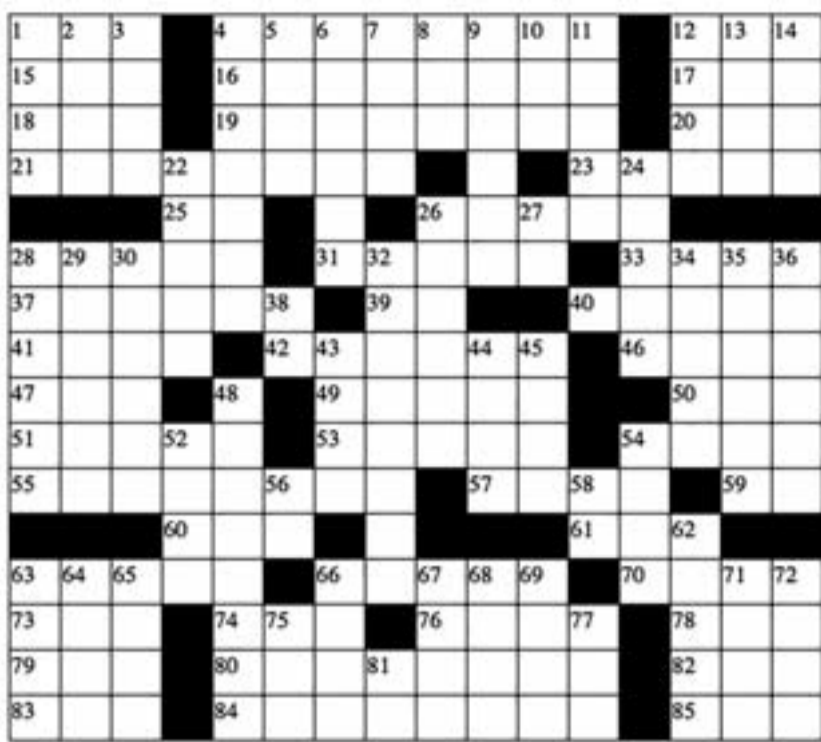
BSK hosts Thai students for cultural exchange

On Sunday, January 13, 2019, the British School of Kuwait (BSK), working alongside the Royal Thai Embassy, played host to a group of six students

visiting Kuwait on a cultural trip from Thailand. The Thai students spent time with our Kuwaiti students from Year 7 and Year 8 who introduced them to a typical day at school, as well as giving them a tour of the school campus. BSK students were given a marvellous presentation of Thai culture by the visiting students who were then taught about the different forms of Arabic calligraphy. All students had a very enjoyable time, rounding off the visit with some traditional Arabic food hosted by the BSK Founder and Director Vera Al-Mutawa MBE and Principal Paul Shropshire. It is hoped that a lasting partnership will be forged between BSK and the Thai Embassy.

Stars

CROSSWORD 2115



ACROSS

1. Extremely pleasing.
4. A member of a people of India living in Maharashtra.
12. A digital display that uses liquid crystal cells that change reflectivity in an applied electric field.
15. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
16. Evergreen mat-forming shrub of North America and northern Eurasia having small white flowers and red berries.
17. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
18. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
19. Extinct order of jawless vertebrates.
20. (informal) Roused to anger.
21. A person loved by another person.
23. God of wealth and love.
25. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
28. A small unit serving as the nucleus of a larger political movement.
31. An important god.
33. One thousandth of a second.
37. A chronic disease of the nose characterized by a foul-smelling nasal discharge and atrophy of nasal structures.
39. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
40. God of justice.
41. Any of a group of Indic languages spoken in Kashmir and eastern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan.
42. A Japanese shrub that resembles members of the genus Spiraea.
46. Baby bed with high sides.
47. A kind of person.
49. Jordan's port.
50. Any of various coarse shrubby plants of the genus Iva with small greenish flowers.
51. In such a manner as could not be otherwise.
53. A person who gives private instruction (as in singing or acting).
55. A group of mostly extinct primitive bony fishes characterized by armor-like bony scales.
57. Not far distant in time or space or degree or circumstances.
59. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
60. Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
61. Having undesirable or negative qualities.
63. A cruel and brutal fellow.
70. A short labored intake of breath with the mouth open.
73. How long something has existed.
74. The sound made by a pigeon v l.
76. (the feminine of raja) A Hindu princess or the wife of a raja.
78. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
79. Being five more than one hundred fifty.
80. (formerly) A horse-drawn wagon that delivered ice door to door.
82. A light touch or stroke.
83. Serving as an essential component.
84. Of or relating to Namibia or its people.
85. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. A piece of information about circumstances that exist or events that have occurred.
2. Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
3. Used as a Hindi courtesy title.
4. A town in southern Texas on the Rio Grande.
5. A river in central Italy rising in the Apennines and flowing through Florence and Pisa to the Ligurian Sea.
6. A chronic emphysema of the horse that causes difficult expiration and heaving of the flanks.
7. Tear down so as to make flat with the ground.
8. Of southern Europe.
9. Without force or sincere effort.
10. A slight amount or degree of difference.
11. Jordan's port.
12. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
13. A steep rugged rock or cliff.
14. An informal term for a father.
22. Worn or shabby from overuse or (of pages) from having corners turned down.
24. Relating to or containing or affecting blood.
26. The mountain peak that Noah's ark landed on as the waters of the great flood receded.
27. A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
29. Any of numerous ornamental shrubs grown for their showy flowers of various colors.
30. Become dark or darker.
32. The state of being everywhere at once (or seeming to be everywhere at once).
34. Any of a number of tiny parallel grooves such as.
35. Capital of Armenia.
36. An esoteric or occult matter that is traditionally secret.
38. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
43. Liver or meat or fowl finely minced or ground and variously seasoned.
44. Very dark black.
45. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
48. A hallucinogenic compound obtained from a mushroom.
52. Trailing grass native to Europe now cosmopolitan in warm regions.
54. (informal) Exceptionally good.
56. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
58. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
62. (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
64. Look at with amorous intentions.
65. A group of girls or young women.
66. A composition written in metrical feet forming rhythmical lines.
67. Lacking in liveliness or charm or surprise.
68. Medium-sized tree having glossy lanceolate leaves.
69. Small buffalo of the Celebes having small straight horns.
71. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
72. A metabolic acid found in yeast and liver cells.
75. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
77. A hotel providing overnight lodging for travelers.
81. A midwestern state in north central United States.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

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.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

What a great day to spend some time with those you love. Enjoy some time sitting around with friends and family. You may find taking a walk down memory lane will bring much laughter into your life today. You live and learn. You have had your share of both. Good times are yours for the taking. You may find yourself extremely sensitive to the needs of others. You find yourself very understanding. Others seem drawn to you today. You are the friend others want to have.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

With your mind set on a hair trigger, you could find yourself making some hasty decisions. Careful not to find yourself in conflict. Tense energy and unusual thoughts may come your way today. You may find that you are indecisive. This is a day best finding ways to relax and slow your roll a bit. Hit the gym. Nervous energy can work to your advantage with pumping iron or doing cardio. Always look for a positive outlet. This is not the day to make any purchases. Leave this for later as you may find that you change your mind over and over today. You may not be sure what you want today, so choose relaxation.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are making a difference in the lives of more people than you realize. You could qualify as a GREEP. That's a good thing, a compliment. It is an acronym for Constantly Ready to Encourage Every Person. You tend to focus on the other person, not on yourself. You send the message "You are enough." Don't change the way you relate to people. Keep doing what you are doing. You don't have to work at it. It comes naturally for you.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Don't be surprised if you cross paths today with someone who just doesn't sit right with you. You have a feeling that something about them just isn't right. You may feel as if you want to get away from this person as soon as possible. Your virtues are simple. You prefer this way of life. Today may be a day you are having difficulty with focus and performing your daily tasks. You seem in a dreamy mood and unable to snap back. Deep in thought you seem to have too much on your mind. This may be a good time to sit back and reorganize and restructure your surroundings and goals. You are in a way shutting down due to an emotional overload.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You may not get much praise for the work you are doing. The reasons are more about other people than about you. Don't be discouraged. The important thing is that you will do the work and learn from it. It will not be wasted. The things you learn will serve you in good stead in the future. Be sure your hard work and dedication will pay off.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

When you hear the phone ring today, answer it. You have a friend in need and you are just the person to help them out. You are understanding. There is no issue too personal that your friend feels they can not discuss with you. Your guidance and knowledge are priceless to this person. The first person they feel they need to run to when things go wrong. Be careful to not take on emotional baggage when offering your advice. This is not your circus and these are not your monkeys. You have to remember there is a difference between sympathy and empathy. Use caution, Libra. The weight of the world does not belong on your shoulders.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may be feeling a strong desire for change, a need for something new and different. It may be time to throw out the old and start fresh. Let your creative side be your guide. Step above and beyond the boundaries you have allowed yourself to become so comfortable with and let your hair down. You may find those close to you are drawn to the new and different version of you and find great ease when communicating with them. This could be a great time to study and take some time to broaden your intellectual horizons. Reach out to a love one whether by a phone call or possibly a letter. You may find they are very open to what you have to say and old barriers between you have since dissolved.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Don't be surprised if you cross paths today with someone who just doesn't sit right with you. You have a feeling that something about them just isn't right. You may feel as if you want to get away from this person as soon as possible. Your virtues are simple. You prefer this way of life. Today may be a day you are having difficulty with focus and performing your daily tasks. You seem in a dreamy mood and unable to snap back. Deep in thought you seem to have too much on your mind. This may be a good time to sit back and reorganize and restructure your surroundings and goals. You are in a way shutting down due to an emotional overload.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today is a great day to spend with someone you love. You may find yourself very emotional and deep in thought. You are focused on the meaning of life and what your true purpose in this life is. You will find great satisfaction and peace with where you are in life and comfort in the arms of your love one. This should prove to be a very satisfying day for you and one that is overall productive. Barriers may be crossed in your relationship and you may feel you have reached a new level with this person. Your ability to speak and truly be heard will play a major role in this connection being made today.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

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



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This could be an open mouth, insert foot kind of day for you. Be sure and think before you speak. This will help you enjoy a more peaceful day. You may find getting your point across to be a little difficult today. This is not a problem you can't overcome. Take the time to truly listen when others speak to you. Choose your words carefully. This could be a simple case of your mind running faster than your mouth can speak. Slow down and think before you speak.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Shakespeare: Macbeth

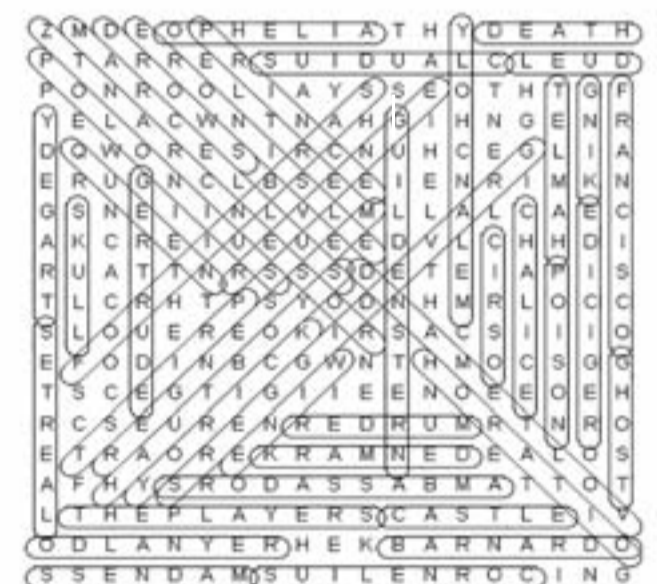
Find and circle all of the words relating to Macbeth that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a quotation from Macbeth.

Note: MACBETH and LADY MACBETH are hidden separately and do not overlap.



- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| ANGUS | DAGGER | IRELAND | REGICIDE |
| APPARITIONS | DOCTOR | LADY MACBETH | ROSS |
| BANQUO | DONALD | LADY MACDUFF | SCONE |
| BIRNAM WOOD | DUNCAN | LENNOX | SCOTLAND |
| BLOOD | DUNSNANE | MACBETH | SEYTON |
| CAITHNESS | ENGLAND | MADNESS | SEWARD |
| CAPTAIN | FLAANCE | MALCOLM | SLEEPWALKING |
| CASTLE | GENTLEWOMAN | MENTETH | SOLLOQUY |
| CAULDRON | GLAMIS | MURDERERS | THANE |
| CAWDOOR | GUILTY | NORWAY | WEIRD SISTERS |
| COLMEKILL | HEATH | PORTER | |
| CONSCIENCE | HECATE | PROPHECY | |
| CUMBERLAND | INVERNESS | QUEEN | |

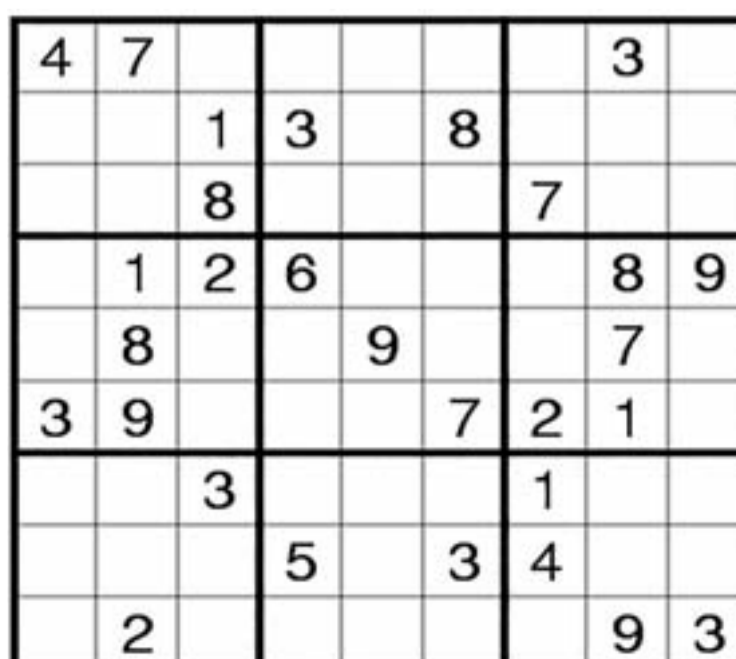
Shakespeare: Hamlet



- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| AMBASSADORS | FRANCISCO | MARCELLUS | REGICIDE |
| BARNARDO | GERTRUDE | MELANCHOLY | REVENGE |
| CASTLE | GHOST | MESSENGER | REYNALDO |
| CHALICE | GRAVEDIGGERS | MURDER | ROSENCRANTZ |
| CLAUDIUS | GULDENSTERN | OPHELIA | SKULL |
| CORNELIUS | HAMLET | OSRIC | SWORD |
| DEATH | HAUTBOYS | POISON | THE PLAYERS |
| DENMARK | HORATIO | POLONIUS | TRAGEDY |
| DUEL | KING | PRIEST | VOLTEMAND |
| ELSNORE | LAERTES | PRINCE | WINE |
| FORTINBRAS | MADNESS | QUEEN | YORICK |

Hidden sentence: THE PLAY'S THE THING WHEREIN I'LL CATCH THE CONSCIENCE OF THE KING

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

MONDAY, JANUARY 21, 2019



A model presents a creation by Henrik Vibskov during the men's ready to wear fashion shows for the 2019/20 Fall/Winter collection in Paris. — AFP

SAUDI MUSIC FESTIVAL SPOTLIGHTS PRE-ISLAMIC HERITAGE

Bathed in light, musicians belt out melodies among pre-Islamic desert ruins in northwestern Saudi Arabia, a heritage trove at the center of efforts to put the reclusive kingdom on the tourism map. Hosted by the Al-Ula governorate—where Nabatean tombs and art are chiseled into caramel-hued rock—"Winter at Tantara" is the latest music carnival in the Islamic kingdom, where such events were unheard of just two years ago. Spread over eight weekends until February 9, the main events are hosted in an auditorium made of mirrored glass that has drawn international artists, from Lebanese singer Majida El-Roumi to French classical violinist Renaud Capucon.

And it shines a spotlight on a long-isolated area seen widely as an open-air museum. "Saudi Arabia is turning a new page," said Zainab Al-Kadadi, a Riyadh-based banker. The 29-year-old attended a musical weekend that also included sand dune bashing—an adventure sport that involves driving across challenging desert landscapes — and a tour of an Ottoman-era train station. The festival is seen as a soft opening of Al-Ula, an area roughly the size of Belgium that is being touted as the centerpiece of Saudi attractions, as the conservative petro-state prepares to open up to international tourists.

Building a tourism industry from scratch is at the heart of a government plan to prepare the Arab world's biggest economy for a post-oil era, an ambition fraught with challenges. The austere kingdom, which forbids alcohol and has a strict social code, is already seen by many as a hard sell for tourists. Recent events that drew international censure—notably the gruesome murder last year of critic Jamal Khashoggi and a sweeping crackdown on dissent—appear to have made the challenge more acute.

"Saudi has great tourism potential, but after what happened it's hard to come here and say 'Everything is wow, everything is amazing,'" said a Westerner who was among a group of global social media influencers invited by the kingdom for an all-expenses-paid trip to Al-Ula. "When I went to collect my (Saudi) visa, my



French solo violinist Renaud Capucon speaks with journalists before a performance at the first "Winter at Tantara" music carnival in the ruins of Al-Ula.

friends joked: 'Hope you return alive!'" The October 2 murder of Khashoggi, whose body was dismembered by a team of Saudi agents inside the kingdom's Istanbul consulate, triggered global outrage.

Kingdom of 'fun'

If Al-Ula were in another country, it would be an easier sell, others in the group suggested. "The biggest obstacle is stereotypes," said Kyle Mijlof, a 30-year-old travel photographer from Cape Town. A liberalization drive by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, known as MBS, has brought new cinemas, concerts and sporting extravaganzas. While it is yet to offer tourist visas, the country fast-tracked electronic permits for visitors to attend the festival. The kingdom organized a similar process in December for a motor sports event in Riyadh, where performances by artists like Enrique Iglesias and David Guetta—and thumping after-parties—were on offer.

"We live in a Saudi Arabia where by day children may be told that music is forbidden but by night they are taken to music concerts," said a Saudi artist, highlighting a social dichotomy. In a country where two-thirds of the population is under 30, amping up entertainment that allows citizens to have fun aims ostensibly to blunt public frustration over an economic down-

turn and soaring youth unemployment. "MBS may have borrowed from the playbook of the ancient Roman empire, which hoped 'panem et circenses'—bread and games—would be enough to make citizens acquiescent," said Cinzia Bianco, a Middle East analyst at Gulf State Analytics. "The belief is that if they are engrossed in worries about making money and having fun, they will have no interest in politics and dissent."

'Changing the narrative'

Preparations for the Al-Ula festival "accelerated" after the Khashoggi crisis erupted, as authorities have been keen to turn the page on his murder, a Western consultant close to the organizers told AFP on condition of anonymity. An official close to the organizers denied that it was a diversionary tactic, saying planning for the festival was in the works well before the murder. Saudi Arabia is seeking to preserve heritage sites that predate Prophet Mohammed's life in the seventh century. The sites have long been neglected or vandalized, because glorifying them is considered blasphemous by religious conservatives.

With French support in Al-Ula, archaeological teams are undertaking a massive survey of key sites, which includes scanning via helicopters, satellites, drones and a remote sensing technology called Lidar. Five-star resorts are being planned to accommodate thousands of tourists. Local residents are being trained as guides, offering them some respite from rampant joblessness. Al-Ula is expected to fully open up to foreign tourists within three to five years, an official from the Royal Al-Ula Commission told AFP.

He added that the project aims to revive the glory of Saudi Arabia's ancient past, a topic that has scant coverage in local history textbooks. "For years we were stereotyped as people who have pools of petrol in their backyards," the official said. "We are changing that narrative. This (project) is about national pride." — AFP



French solo violinist Renaud Capucon along with accompanying pianists salute the audience during the first "Winter at Tantara" music carnival.



A view of a musical performance by French solo violinist Renaud Capucon during the first "Winter at Tantara" music carnival.



French solo violinist Renaud Capucon performs with pianists during the first "Winter at Tantara" music carnival, at the purpose-built Maraya (Arabic for "Mirror") concert hall in the ruins of Al-Ula, a UNESCO World Heritage site in northwestern Saudi Arabia. — AFP photos



French solo violinist Renaud Capucon performs with pianists during the first "Winter at Tantara" music carnival.



A view of the facade of the new purpose-built Maraya (Arabic for "Mirror") concert hall hosting the first "Winter at Tantara" music carnival in the ruins of Al-Ula.



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



Thom Browne goes for spectacle at Paris Fashion Week

Thom Browne provided the biggest spectacle on a relatively quiet day at Paris Fashion Week as some fashion houses decided to switch presentation dates or showing times to avoid Saturday's yellow vest protesters who took to the streets in the French capital and beyond. Here are some highlights of the day's fall-winter menswear shows in Paris.

A quiet Saturday

Dior Men quietly moved their Saturday-listed show to Friday after the Paris Fashion Federation held top level meetings with police over the threat posed by yellow vest protesters. It was the movement's 10th consecutive week of demonstrations but the first Paris Fashion Week date to coincide with them since they began Nov. 17. In previous weeks, yellow vest protesters had brought parts of France to a standstill and smashed luxury Parisian boutiques.

The protesters - known for the neon safety top they don - began demonstrating against President Macron's fuel tax hike but shifted to encompass broader complaints against the French political system and the country's elite. Thom Browne moved its Saturday afternoon show to the morning, as did Rochas.

Thom Browne's bubbles

An off-kilter universe awaited guests at Thom Browne's ever-inventive show that was covered in bubble wrap. A highly-styled model with a giant white quiff, a sort of bubble version of Edward Scissor Hands, stepped out in an all-white, tight layered sartorial look consisting of a suit and tie, turned up pants and brogues. He marched slowly past a long line of bubble wrapped dolls on sticks to an eccentric soundtrack that included the lyrics: "We wish we were a bubble man." What ensued in the 38-piece show was a motley array of designs.

Figure-hugging woolen dresses with fur cuffs bore trompe l'oeil images of a suit, shirt and tie. Deconstructed checks from several different-colored suits were sewn together, unraveling over the shoulder. Cricket whites morphed into a skirt-and-pinstriped suit. Little seemed to make sense in the gender-defying display but the sheer eccentricity of the proceedings somehow made it work. — AP



Lifestyle | Fashion



Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Kuwait, Rami Tahboub (fourth left), spouse of Palestinian Ambassador Rima Al-Khaldi (left), member of the Palestinian Women's Union and President of the Palestinian Heritage Center in Kuwait, Siham Abu Ghazale and (second right) Dr Ghada Al-Hijawi Qadoumi, President of the World Crafts Council - Asia-Pacific Region are seen during cutting of the cake. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



A group photo showing models presenting the famous embroidered Palestinian dresses with some of the guests.

'PALESTINIAN CULTURAL DAY' ORGANIZED BY IWG AND THE PALESTINIAN EMBASSY

By Faten Omar



Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Kuwait, Rami Tahboub giving a speech during the event.

The International Women's Group (IWG) in cooperation with the Palestinian Embassy organized a "Palestinian Cultural Day" yesterday at Crowne Plaza Hotel in Farwaniya. Ambassador of Palestine to Kuwait Rami Tahboub spoke about the history of Palestine and presented a documentary about tourism in Palestine and archaeological and heritage sites.

Dr Ghada Al-Hijawi Qadoumi, President of the World Crafts Council - Asia-Pacific Region, made a visual presentation of Hebron as a city of international handcrafts, which represents the historical and cultural depth of the identity of the Palestinian people. Qadoumi is the first

woman to hold this post from the Asian region and holds a doctorate degree in the history of Islamic art and architecture from Harvard University.

Member of the Palestinian Women's Union and President of the Palestinian Heritage Center in Kuwait Siham Abu Ghazale then spoke about embroidered Palestinian dresses, where every city in Palestine has its own unique style. The ceremony ended with a performance by Shireen Hattar. She presented a song about Jerusalem, with a beautiful melody specially dedicated to this event. Members of IWG also got an opportunity to watch the famous Nabulsiyan kunafa being prepared. All the women left the event with valuable mementos from the Palestinian Embassy.



A group photo.



A group photo showing models presenting the famous embroidered Palestinian dresses.



A woman wearing embroidered Palestinian dress presenting handmade embroidered crafts.



Guests are seen during the event.

French actress Deneuve to auction personal YSL clothing next week



A visitor checks Yves Saint Laurent's creations.



In this file photo taken on January 22, 2002 French fashion designer Yves Saint-Laurent (center) salutes the crowd with French model Laetitia Casta (left) and French actress Catherine Deneuve (right) at the Centre Georges Pompidou national museum for modern art in Paris, during Saint-Laurent's last fashion show.



A visitor checks Yves Saint Laurent's creations.



A woman takes pictures at the Christies auction house in Paris during a presentation of Yves Saint Laurent's clothes that belonged to French actress Catherine Deneuve.

French screen legend Catherine Deneuve's personal clothing collection designed by her friend Yves Saint Laurent will be auctioned in Paris next week. Deneuve, 75, is auctioning her clothing by the late fashion icon after selling her country home in northern France where she kept a wardrobe full of Saint Laurent items. "These are the designs of such a talented man who designed only to make women more beautiful," Deneuve said in a message last October shared by the auction house Christie's, which is handling the sale.

Hundreds of items, including coats, dresses

and accessories—some of them unique pieces designed for Deneuve—will be auctioned in an open sale on January 24 and online. One of the highlights of the auction is a beaded evening dress from a 1969 collection which she wore when meeting director Alfred Hitchcock in the same year, as well as an evening dress with pink ostrich feathers. Deneuve was often described as a muse for Saint Laurent and was a leading figure in the designer's circle of glamorous female friends which included Princess Grace of Monaco, Wallis Simpson and Paloma Picasso. After meeting when she was only 22, Deneuve

enjoyed an intense 40-year friendship with Saint Laurent until his death in 2008, telling him at a major exhibition of his work in 2002 that "my biggest ever love affair is you".

Oscar-nominated Deneuve hit the headlines in January when she signed an open letter objecting to the #MeToo movement that has seen women worldwide go public with allegations of sexual assault and rape. The star of the classic 1967 film "Belle du Jour", in which she plays a bored housewife who spends her afternoons as a prostitute, wrote in favor of men's freedom to "hit on" women. — AFP



Visitors chat at the Christies auction house.



A creation by Yves Saint Laurent at the Christies auction house.



Yves Saint-Laurent's creations are displayed at the Christies auction house.

Lifestyle | Features



This photo shows Lee Ching-chang (left) with his wife Huang Pi-huang working at their Chinese herbal medicine shop in New Taipei City. — AFP photos



Traditional Chinese herbal medicine at a shop in New Taipei City.



Lee Ching-chang (left) and his daughter Lee Chia-ling (right) working at their Chinese herbal medicine shop in New Taipei City.

TAIWAN'S TRADITIONAL MEDICINE STORES STRUGGLE ON LIFE SUPPORT

Traditional medicine store owner Gu Cheng-pu knows her dispensary can only stay open as long as her ailing father-in-law lives, their careers hostage to a quirk in Taiwanese law that is killing off the industry. At the back of her shop in New Taipei City, Gu tips a plate of freshly cut Chinese liquorice roots into a wok of boiling honey, the first step in preparing one of her many traditional remedies. "Chinese herbal medicine stores are a unique cultural icon," the 36-year-old explains. "They are not just a place where you come when you are sick to pick up medicine."

But shops like hers are dying out—with some 200 closing their doors every year—even though traditional medicine remains wildly popular in Taiwan. Authorities have not issued any new licenses since 1998 and those that exist cannot be passed down to younger generations. Gu's father-in-law is the license owner but he recently suffered a stroke and she now fears the worst. "If I am forced to close shop, the biggest regret for me other than losing our livelihood, is losing our tradition," she laments.

Red tape

The license shortage stems from an attempt by authorities in the 1990s to better regulate the largely artisanal industry and bring traditional remedies into the purview of the professional medical community. By refusing to issue new licenses, authorities hoped professional doctors would offer traditional medicine options in a more regulated and scientific capacity. "In Taiwan the simultaneous use of Western and Chinese medicine among the public is very prevalent and we need trained medical personnel to make sure they don't interact with harmful consequences," Chen Pin-chi, division chief of Chinese Medicine and Pharmacy at the Health and Welfare Ministry, told AFP. "We initially hoped that professionally trained Chinese medicine doctors or pharmacists might slowly take over the running of Chinese herbal stores," she added.

But things did not turn out as planned. The lower pay and profits struggled to attract young doctors and pharmacists while patients kept going to the mom-and-pop dispensaries they trusted. The average age of a traditional



Bottled ginseng and herbs at a traditional Chinese herbal medicine shop in New Taipei City.

medicine store license holder is now 61 while the number of remaining stores has halved in the last 20 years to just 7,900. Taiwan's approach contrasts with that of the China and Hong Kong where authorities have pushed policies to boost and export traditional medicine.

'Experience counts'

According to the Compendium of Materia Medica, the sixteenth-century text that is the lodestar for traditional practitioners, there are more than 1,500 different kinds of herbs used in Chinese medicine. The average store might stock between 200 and 500 herbs, roots, animal parts and minerals — 355 of which are classified as medicine in Taiwan. Traditional medicine also permeates Taiwan's cooking—the island's signature beef noodle soup dish usually contains at least eight herbal ingredients—meaning ingredients are just as likely to go in the cooking pot as they are a tincture.

Lee Chia-ling, 42, has worked alongside her father in their family shop for more than 10 years, learning remedies from him. "It was very hard work in the beginning," she said. "You need to get your hands dirty. Sorting, washing, chopping and slicing, lots of work goes into processing raw herbs and roots ready for use," she said. "And even



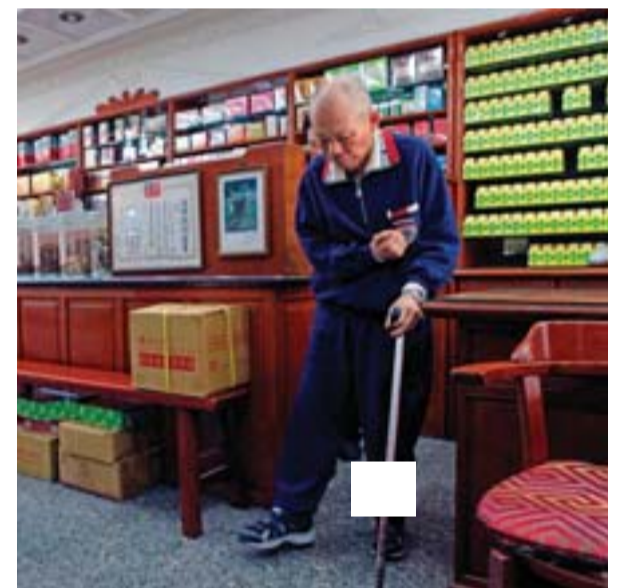
Various ingredients on offer at a traditional Chinese herbal medicine shop in New Taipei City.

now, I am still learning new things from my father," she added. Her father Lee Ching-chang, 69, said it takes three to five years to learn to distinguish the basic ingredients and how they react with each other.

"This is very much a profession where experience counts," said the older Lee, who entered the trade when he was 15 years old. "If the government will not issue any new licenses then the second generation cannot carry on with the shop," he lamented. The license shortage has prompted protests on the streets of Taipei and the government is in talks with industry leaders to try to find a way forward. "The Health and Welfare Ministry is well aware of the urgency of the matter and is actively trying to seek a solution," Chen Ping-chi said. "Hopefully we can come up with something soon that would allow Chinese herbal medicine shops to continue to be operated by the younger generation," she added. Gu is painfully aware the last 20 years have produced no solution and fears a change to the law may come too late for her family. "If this situation continues," she warned, "there won't be any Chinese herbal stores left in Taiwan." — AFP



A traditional Chinese herbal medicine store in New Taipei City.



Hsu Ping-jen, the licensed owner of a traditional medicine store, in his shop his children now manage in New Taipei City.



This handout photo shows Thai-born director Tom Waller (right) on location during the filming of 'The Cave' in central Thailand.



US actor Bobby Gerrits playing the role of a US Army rescuer on location during the filming of 'The Cave' in central Thailand.



Canadian cave rescue diver Erik Brown on location as an actor during the filming of 'The Cave' in central Thailand. — AFP photos

First Thai cave rescue film due out on mission anniversary

Thai-born director who took just weeks to shoot the first film about the dramatic cave rescue of the "Wild Boars" football team says his focus is on authenticity and the mission's "unsung" heroes, with book publishers and Hollywood studios jostling to make their versions of the saga. Tom Waller says "The Cave", which is aiming for Thai release for the July anniversary of the operation, will be a "genuine" retelling of the gripping mission to extract the 12 boys and their coach from the waterlogged Tham Luang cave.

Its cast features more than a dozen of the real-life rescue heroes as well as extras such as the cooks who provided food round-the-clock for officials and the world's media massed at the cave entrance. The "Wild Boars" spent more than a fortnight trapped in the dark before divers rescued them in an mission of unprecedented complexity—diving the boys out through twisting passageways while they were heavily sedated. Waller, a Thai citizen with an Irish father and whose work includes "The Last Executioner", said he did not immediately think he would take on the project despite its real-life dramatic arc. "I thought it was going to be just a magnet for vultures who wanted to cash-in," he told AFP at the office for De Warrenne Pictures in Bangkok.

But then he started dwelling on all the people involved in the extraction, the volunteer spirit of the rescue, and the "unsung" heroes that weren't in the newspapers. "So for me it was almost a question of either make the film now or shut up and wait until Hollywood's made the film and enjoy it like everyone else," Waller hopes his Thai background may also give him an edge over bigger name foreign directors, while the swift turnaround meant memories are still fresh in the minds of those who took

part in both the rescue and the movie.

But challenges remained during the shoot. The real Tham Luang cave, in northern Chiang Rai province, is off limits so locations recreating the waterlogged, claustrophobic conditions had to be scouted across the country. "The Cave" also broad-brushes over some of the scandalous strands of the drama, which have led to law suits and angry social media squabbles. "People keep asking, who is playing Elon Musk?" Waller said, referring to the Tesla CEO's attempt to provide a submarine and his legal battles with a rescuer whom he insulted on Twitter.

'100 percent true'

The trailer will be launched at the Berlin Film Festival next month, getting out ahead of bigger, better-funded projects believed to be in the works that may have a wider reach outside of Thailand. The cave saga has been hungrily-eyed as a money-spinner, with foreign-scripted books and films lining up to gain official approval from the ministry of culture to shoot or interview the boys at the heart of the drama. Seven months since the rescue at least six books about the rescue are listed on Amazon while speculation is rife that "Crazy Rich Asians" director Jon M. Chu may enter the fray.

But while large Hollywood studios may stack the cast with A-listers and tinker with the plot for dramatic purposes, Waller's film prides itself on its tethering to reality. "Everything in the movie is 100 percent true," said Jim Warny, 36, a Belgian who lives in Ireland and belongs to the niche world of cave divers who were called on to help, and who starred as himself in "The Cave". An electrician by training, Warny told AFP that the period after the rescue was intense, with rescuers inundated with offers, including a request to take reality TV presenters cave diving. Waller built a different level of trust with him and the verite vision appealed to him. "A lot of people just wanted to buy life rights or exclusivity, and waving a contract at you and not really focusing on the story before giving you a big lump of cash," said Warny. "That was something Tom didn't do." — AFP



US actor Mitch De Young playing the role of a US Army Captain rescuer on location during the filming of 'The Cave' in central Thailand.



Cave rescue divers Jim Warny (left) of Belgium and Mikko Paasi (right) of Finland involved as actors on location during the filming of 'The Cave' in central Thailand.

'Rambo' producer Vajna dies aged 74

Andrew G. Vajna, the Hungarian movie producer behind "Rambo", "Evita" and other international hits, died in his Budapest home on Sunday following a long illness, the Hungarian National Film Fund said. Vajna produced 59 films in all, including the 1996 Evita starring Madonna and Sylvester Stallone's first three Rambo movies. He was born in Budapest in 1944 and at the age of 12, when Hungary's 1956 revolution against Soviet rule was crushed, he fled the country and emigrated to Canada with the help of the Red Cross. He was reunited with his family in Los Angeles.

His 1997 comedy, based on a play titled Out of Order by English playwright Ray Cooney, holds the record for ticket sales among Hungarian movies produced over the past two decades. Since 2011, he had worked as a government commissioner under Prime Minister Viktor Orban, presiding over a revival of Hungarian cinema. "We are bidding farewell to the greatest Hungarian film producer. Hasta la vista, Andy! Thank You for everything, my Friend!" Orban said on his Facebook page. Movies during his term as commissioner won hundreds of international awards. They included "Son of Saul", which won an Oscar for its portrayal of life in a Nazi concentration camp. As part of Orban's efforts to expand his influence over the domestic media, Vajna also acquired one of Hungary's main commercial television channels and had stakes in the commercial radio market. — Reuters

Classifieds

Monday, January 21, 2019



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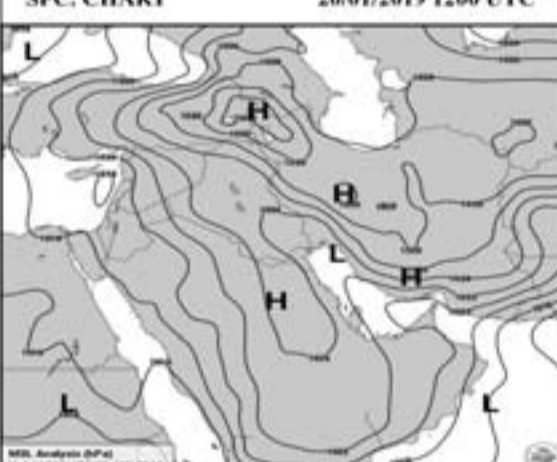
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Very cold with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h.

BY DAY: Cold and Partly cloudy with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 20 km/h.

| WEATHER WATCH | | | Frost | |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|--|--|
| STATION | MAX. REC. | MIN. EXP. | SFC. CHART 20/01/2019 1200 UTC | |
| KUWAIT CITY | 16 °C | 09 °C |  | |
| KUWAIT AIRPORT | 15 °C | 03 °C | | |
| ABDALY | 16 °C | 03 °C | | |
| BUBYAN | -- °C | -- °C | | |
| JAHRA | 16 °C | 05 °C | | |
| FAILAKA ISLAND | 15 °C | 08 °C | | |
| SALMIYAH | 15 °C | 10 °C | | |
| AHMADI | 14 °C | 09 °C | | |
| NUWAISIB | 16 °C | 05 °C | | |
| WAFRA | 16 °C | 04 °C | | |
| SALMY | 13 °C | 01 °C | | |

| 4 DAYS FORECAST | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------|--|--------------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| DAY | DATE | WEATHER | Temperatures | | Wind Direction | Wind Speed |
| | | | MAX. | MIN. | | |
| Monday | 01/21 | Cold and Partly cloudy | 16 °C | 03 °C | VRB | 06 - 20 km/h |
| Tuesday | 01/22 | Cool | 17 °C | 04 °C | VRB | 06 - 20 km/h |
| Wednesday | 01/23 | Cool | 18 °C | 06 °C | VRB | 06 - 20 km/h |
| Thursday | 01/24 | Cool and some scattered clouds will appear | 19 °C | 06 °C | VRB-SE | 06 - 26 km/h |

| TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES | |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Fajr | 05:19 |
| Sunrise | 06:42 |
| Zuhr | 11:59 |
| Asr | 14:57 |
| Sunset | 17:16 |
| Isha | 18:36 |

| RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| MAX. Temp. | 14 °C |
| MIN. Temp. | 03 °C |
| MAX. RH | 83 % |
| MIN. RH | 28 % |
| MAX. Wind | N 36 km/h |
| TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR. | 0 mm |

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP0 2019/01/20 14:23 UTC V1.00 T24 8-1/2

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

Airlines

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

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| Arrival Flights on Monday 21/1/2019 | | | | Departure Flights on Monday 21/1/2019 | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------|-------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|------|------------|-------|
| Airlines | Flt | Route | Time | Airlines | Flt | Route | Time |
| KAC | 286 | Dhaka | 14:30 | RBG | 554 | Alexandria | 14:45 |
| KAC | 364 | Colombo | 14:30 | QTR | 1079 | Doha | 15:00 |
| JAI | 572 | Mumbai | 00:15 | KNE | 382 | Taif | 15:00 |
| THY | 766 | ISL | 00:30 | IRA | 666 | Esfahan | 15:10 |
| JZR | 254 | Amman | 00:40 | FDB | 060 | Dubai | 15:10 |
| KAC | 504 | Beirut | 00:45 | GFA | 222 | Bahrain | 15:25 |
| JZR | 734 | Cairo | 00:50 | KAC | 673 | Dubai | 15:40 |
| THY | 772 | Istanbul | 00:50 | SVA | 501 | Jeddah | 15:45 |
| KAC | 102 | London | 00:50 | KAC | 775 | Riyadh | 15:50 |
| JZR | 722 | Alexandria | 00:55 | KAC | 743 | Dammam | 15:55 |
| PGT | 858 | Istanbul | 01:00 | KNE | 530 | Jeddah | 16:00 |
| DLH | 625 | Dammam | 01:25 | KAC | 615 | Bahrain | 16:05 |
| RJA | 642 | Amman | 01:35 | KAC | 619 | Doha | 16:10 |
| UAE | 853 | Dubai | 01:45 | KAC | 563 | Amman | 16:10 |
| THY | 764 | Istanbul | 01:50 | ETD | 304 | Abu Dhabi | 16:20 |
| IGO | 1757 | Kochi | 01:55 | KAC | 283 | Dhaka | 16:30 |
| GFA | 211 | Bahrain | 02:30 | OMA | 646 | Muscat | 16:35 |
| PGT | 818 | Istanbul | 02:40 | KAC | 785 | Jeddah | 16:40 |
| QTR | 1086 | Doha | 02:40 | ABY | 128 | Sharjah | 16:45 |
| OMA | 643 | Muscat | 02:55 | SAW | 706 | Damascus | 17:00 |
| KKK | 1268 | Istanbul | 03:05 | KAC | 342 | Abu Dhabi | 17:00 |
| ETD | 305 | Abu Dhabi | 03:05 | SYR | 306 | Colombo | 17:35 |
| MSR | 612 | Cairo | 03:15 | KAC | 361 | Dubai | 17:40 |
| JZR | 502 | Lahore | 03:35 | FDB | 052 | Dubai | 17:40 |
| QTR | 1076 | Doha | 04:00 | UAE | 858 | Dubai | 17:45 |
| IGO | 1751 | Chennai | 04:10 | QTR | 1073 | Doha | 17:50 |
| KAC | 418 | Manila | 04:25 | KAC | 331 | Trivandrum | 18:00 |
| KAC | 784 | Jeddah | 04:30 | JZR | 721 | Alexandria | 18:00 |
| DHX | 170 | Bahrain | 04:35 | JZR | 733 | Cairo | 18:10 |
| FDB | 069 | Dubai | 05:00 | SVA | 511 | Riyadh | 18:15 |
| KAC | 382 | Delhi | 05:05 | GFA | 216 | Bahrain | 18:20 |
| KAC | 1544 | Cairo | 05:10 | KAC | 621 | Doha | 18:25 |
| JZR | 404 | Hyderabad | 05:10 | JZR | 127 | Dubai | 18:35 |
| THY | 770 | Istanbul | 05:10 | FDB | 052 | Hyderabad | 18:40 |
| KAC | 284 | Dhaka | 05:15 | UAE | 858 | Amman | 18:40 |
| JZR | 112 | Doha | 05:25 | QTR | 1073 | Doha | 18:40 |
| KAC | 346 | Ahmedabad | 05:30 | KAC | 381 | Delhi | 18:55 |
| KAC | 332 | Trivandrum | 05:40 | FDB | 064 | Dubai | 19:20 |
| KAC | 344 | Chennai | 05:50 | UAE | 876 | Dubai | 19:30 |
| JZR | 402 | Mumbai | 06:05 | MSR | 621 | Cairo | 19:30 |
| KAC | 302 | Mumbai | 06:10 | QTR | 1081 | Doha | 19:55 |
| KAC | 678 | Dubai | 06:55 | ABY | 124 | Sharjah | 20:05 |
| BAW | 157 | London | 07:05 | GFA | 218 | Bahrain | 20:15 |
| KAC | 354 | Bengaluru | 07:35 | JZR | 1735 | Cairo | 20:20 |
| FDB | 053 | Dubai | 07:50 | KAC | 357 | Kochi | 20:30 |
| KAC | 384 | Delhi | 08:00 | FDB | 058 | Dubai | 20:35 |
| KAC | 358 | Kochi | 08:05 | KAC | 345 | Ahmedabad | 20:40 |
| UAE | 855 | Dubai | 08:35 | KNE | 232 | Riyadh | 20:50 |
| ETD | 301 | Abu Dhabi | 09:05 | KAC | 353 | Bengaluru | 20:55 |
| ABY | 125 | Sharjah | 09:05 | KAC | 301 | Mumbai | 20:55 |
| QTR | 1070 | Doha | 09:30 | JZR | 401 | Mumbai | 20:55 |
| FDB | 055 | Dubai | 09:40 | OMA | 648 | Muscat | 21:20 |
| GFA | 213 | Bahrain | 10:40 | DLH | 624 | Dammam | 21:30 |
| AXB | 395 | Kozhikode | 10:50 | DHX | 171 | Bahrain | 21:50 |
| JZR | 702 | Asyut | 11:05 | QTR | 1089 | Doha | 22:00 |
| AXB | 889 | Mangalore/Bahrain | 11:10 | ETD | 308 | Abu Dhabi | 22:10 |
| JZR | 122 | Dubai | 11:20 | KAC | 1543 | Cairo | 22:15 |
| QTR | 1074 | Doha | 11:35 | MEA | 403 | Beirut | 22:20 |
| JZR | 216 | Jeddah | 11:45 | ALK | 230 | Colombo | 22:25 |
| MEA | 404 | Beirut | 11:55 | GFA | 220 | Bahrain | 22:30 |
| JZR | 714 | Sohag | 12:35 | AZQ | 4566 | AJF | 22:30 |
| UAE | 871 | Dubai | 12:50 | KAC | 383 | Delhi | 22:30 |
| MSR | 610 | Cairo | 13:10 | KLM | 445 | Bahrain | 22:50 |
| QTR | 1078 | Doha | 13:35 | KAC | 783 | Jeddah | 22:55 |
| KAC | 774 | Riyadh | 14:00 | UAE | 860 | Dubai | 23:00 |
| RBG | 553 | Alexandria | 14:05 | JAI | 573 | Mumbai | 23:00 |
| KAC | 204 | Lahore | 14:05 | ETD | 310 | Abu Dhabi | 23:05 |
| KNE | 231 | Riyadh | 14:10 | QTR | 1083 | Doha | 23:25 |
| IRA | 667 | Esfahan | 14:10 | SVA | 515 | Riyadh | 23:30 |
| FDB | 059 | Dubai | 14:20 | SVA | 503 | Jeddah | 23:45 |
| KAC | 672 | Dubai | 14:25 | | | | |

Trump, Pelosi again butt heads but others see possible paths

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump bitterly attacked top Democrat Nancy Pelosi yesterday and she again insisted that he end the government shutdown before border security talks can begin, but there were hints of possible movement in coming days. Trump lashed out on Twitter a day after Pelosi, speaker of the House of Representatives, dismissed as a "non-starter" his offer to extend temporary protection to about a million immigrants in return for \$5.7 billion for the wall he wants on the Mexican border.

"Nancy Pelosi has behaved so irrationally & has gone so far to the left that she has now officially become a Radical Democrat," the president tweeted. "She is so petrified of the 'lefties' in her party that she has lost control. ...And by the way, clean up the streets in San Francisco, they are disgusting!" he added, in a seemingly gratuitous aside, Pelosi's congressional district overlaps with San Francisco.

Pointedly ignoring his personal comments, Pelosi on Twitter emphasized the need to end the partial government shutdown, which has inflicted increasing pain around the country as it entered its 30th day. "800,000 Americans are going without pay," she tweeted. "Reopen the government, let workers get their paychecks and then we can discuss how we can come together to

protect the border. #EndTheShutdown."

'Good-faith compromise'

While Pelosi and other Democrats dismissed Trump's offer, Republicans insisted that it represented actual movement by the president. Vice President Mike Pence, who has been leading the administration's contacts with Congress, said the Senate would put the proposal to a vote as early as Tuesday. He called it "a good-faith compromise". The planned vote also reflects a shift by Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell. He insisted previously that he would not take up any shutdown bill unless both Trump and Democratic leaders backed it.

"In a very real sense, what President Trump did here was he set the table for a deal," Pence said on "Fox News Sunday". The bill's fate was far from clear. Republicans hope to lure the votes of a few Democrats from Trump-friendly states to reach the 60 votes needed, but they may lose some hard-line conservatives in the process.

Most blame Republicans

The Trump administration - increasingly blamed by Americans for the shutdown - is trying to thread a needle between those hard-liners and Democrats who adamantly oppose

spending the \$5.7 billion Trump wants for a wall. They have offered something over \$2 billion for a range of other border-security measures. Democrats assailed Trump's new offer as cynical, noting that it was the president who - by moving earlier to end the DACA program protecting 700,000 young immigrants and to expel some 300,000 others in a separate program - had placed in jeopardy many of those for whom he now offers temporary protection.

But anti-immigrant voices also attacked Trump's offer as tantamount to amnesty for the undocumented - a toxic concept for many conservatives. "No, Amnesty is not a part of my offer. It is a 3 year extension of DACA," Trump said in another tweet. DACA was former president Barack Obama's program to shield undocumented immigrants who entered the country as children. Trump said that there would be "no big push" to remove the 11 million people in the country illegally, before warning: "but be careful, Nancy!"

Still, both sides appeared to be casting about cautiously for a road ahead. "The vote this week (in the Senate) is not to pass the bill," said Senator James Lankford, a Republican. "It's to open up and say, can we debate this? Can we amend it? Can we make changes? Let's find a way to get the



Nancy Pelosi



Donald Trump

government open." Representative Bennie Thompson, a Democrat who chairs the Homeland Security Committee, said that "I would not rule out a wall in certain circumstances."

He suggested that Democrats were amenable to negotiating if Trump would stop demonizing the party and its leaders and provide assurances that he would not suddenly shift positions. "The notion that we have come from a (focus on a) wall to some other thing is moving it along," he told ABC's "This Week," "but we have to sit down and talk."

Representative Tulsi Gabbard, who recently announced plans to seek the presidency in 2020, told CNN it was urgent that both sides "come together and have a real conversation and hash out the differences."

But Representative James Clyburn, the third-ranking House Democrat, insisted that the government must first be reopened. "I can't see us keeping federal employees, 800,000 people, out of work while we go back and forth on negotiations. These negotiations could take three or four weeks," he said on Fox. — AFP

Bomb blast rocks Damascus as Syria and Israel trade fire

DAMASCUS: A bomb blast hit the capital of war-torn Syria yesterday and a "terrorist" was arrested, state media said, in a rare attack in the city that has been largely insulated from violence. The explosion came as another bomb in the northern city of Afrin killed three people and wounded nine others, according to a war monitor, on the first anniversary of a Turkish offensive on the Kurdish-majority region. Also yesterday, Israel said it intercepted a rocket fired from Syria after Damascus accused the Jewish state of carrying out air raids on the south of the country.

State news agency SANA said a "bomb blast" had

hit southern Damascus "without leaving any victims". "There is confirmation of reports that a terrorist has been arrested," it said. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor reported, however, a "huge explosion" near a military intelligence office in southern Damascus that left a number of people dead and wounded.

"The explosion took place near a security branch in the south of the city," and was followed by shooting, said the monitor which relies on a network of sources inside the country. "There are some people killed and injured but we could not verify the toll immediately," it added. It was unclear if the blast was caused by a bomb that was planted or a suicide attack, according to the monitor. There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Syria is locked in a civil war that has killed more than 360,000 people and displaced millions since a brutal crackdown on anti-government protests in 2011 spiralled into full conflict. With key military backing from Russia, President Bashar Al-Assad's forces have retaken large parts of Syria from rebels and jihadists,

and now control almost two-thirds of the country. The Syrian regime in May reclaimed a final scrap of territory held by the Islamic State group (IS) in southern Damascus, cementing total control over the capital for the first time in six years.

Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said yesterday's blast appeared to be the first attack in Damascus since a car bomb over a year ago that caused no casualties. Damascus has been largely spared the worst of the violence during the country's nearly eight-year war, but several bomb attacks have shaken the city. In March 2017 a double suicide attack claimed by Al-Qaeda's former affiliate in the country killed 74 people, including dozens of Iranian pilgrims visiting religious sites in the historic Old City. That was followed a few days later by bombings claimed by IS at a courthouse and restaurant that killed 32 people.

One of the most high-profile attacks in the capital saw a bomb kill Assad's brother-in-law Assef Shawkat - a top security official - and the minister of defense at a command center in July 2012. Since reclaiming con-

rol of Damascus and surrounding regions, security forces have removed many of the checkpoints that dotted the city. Government troops have largely pushed remaining rebel and jihadist forces into the northwestern province of Idlib, while IS holds a few dwindling pockets of territory.

The Afrin blast was the result of a bomb placed in a bus in the center of the city, according to the Observatory. Turkish troops and allied rebel groups seized the Afrin region from Kurdish forces in March last year after a two-month air and ground offensive.

Israel meanwhile said a rocket fired from Syria's Golan Heights had been intercepted by its "Iron Dome" air defense system. It came after SANA, quoting a Syrian military source, said anti-aircraft defenses went into action after Israel yesterday launched air strikes on the south of the country. Israel has pledged to stop arch foe Iran from entrenching itself militarily in neighboring Syria and says it has carried out hundreds of air strikes there against Iranian targets and those of Tehran's Lebanese ally Hezbollah. — AFP

Israel and Chad renew ties as...

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"We are making history and we are turning Israel into a rising global power," Netanyahu's one-day visit follows Deby's November trip to Israel. Netanyahu is seeking re-election in April 9 polls. He also risks being indicted in corruption investigations in the coming weeks.

In comments to journalists after his meeting with Deby, Netanyahu said this was his fourth visit to Africa in the past two years. Deby said that despite the renewal of ties with Israel, "Chad remains attached to the peace process

between Israel and Palestine". Both sides should prioritize dialogue and negotiation towards a lasting peace "in conformity with United Nations resolutions", he added.

The two leaders signed defense and security cooperation agreements yesterday, but no details were released to the media. They have in the past declined to comment on whether their talks have included arms deals. But 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.

It forms part of the G5 force fighting jihadist fighters in the Sahel region, along with Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso. 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 to lead the country of some 15 million people. — AFP

forced returns while a Syrian peace deal remains elusive, and refugees often say they fear conscription into the army. Lebanese leaders had hoped to reach a deal to form a new government before the summit after months of political gridlock. But talks have failed amid fears for the Lebanese economy. Several hundred people protested in the streets of Beirut yesterday, blaming politicians for growing economic troubles.

Secretary General of the Arab League Ahmad Abul-Gheit announced yesterday that speeding up the elimination of poverty is the optimal way to dry out the sources of terrorism and extremism. Speaking at the summit, he said 20 percent of the Arab population lives under poverty, indicating that the General Secretariat of the Arab League, in collaboration with the UN, has issued a report that includes an Arab strategy to eliminate poverty.

He believed that the Arab population includes large masses of youth who could pose burdens to their countries' economies and become easy victims of religious and political extremism, unless they are correctly exploited. Abul-Gheit said economic growth is still insufficient to achieve the desired change because of the political and security circumstances in the past few years. The summit declaration stressed the importance of continuing progress of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area hoping to reach a joint market and address all difficulties. The declaration announced the approval of a charter to develop small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and micro-enterprise to guarantee Arab economic integration in order to create a competitive environment that will contribute to terminating unemployment.

The Arab leaders meanwhile declared the approval of the Arab strategy for sustainable energy of 2030 to achieve sustainable development in economic, social and environmental dimensions. Arab leaders have stressed in the declaration on the importance of committing to the resolutions and programs that were adopted in the previous summits, affirming terrorism has negative impacts on Arab society.

They called for collaboration of efforts to defeat terrorism which led to the increase of refugees, in addition to unemployment, thus more focus was required to achieve UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030. The Beirut summit declaration affirmed that investing in humans is the fastest way to achieve economic growth, noting that one of the SDGs was decreasing poverty by 50 percent by 2030. The declaration emphasized the importance of investing in potentials and encouraging creativity in order to build better and more productive human beings that will contribute to building a society compatible with sustainable development. Arab leader decided to hold the next Arab Economic and Social Summit in 2023 in Mauritania. — Agencies

Graham calls for meeting between...

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"I'm going to urge him (Trump) to meet with the prime minister as soon as practical," Graham told reporters, saying he believed Khan and Trump would "hit it off" because they have "similar personalities". "Prime Minister Khan is the agent of change that I've been looking for," he added. Ties between Washington and Islamabad have soured recently, with US officials repeatedly accusing Pakistan of turning a blind eye to or even collaborating with the Afghan Taliban, which launch attacks in Afghanistan from alleged havens along the border between the two countries.

Trump has repeatedly lashed out at Pakistan's alleged duplicity, saying late last year that Islamabad does not do "a damn thing" for the US. Khan has been equally critical of Trump, saying before 2018's election in Pakistan that a potential meeting with the US president would be a "bitter pill" to swallow. The US lawmaker's trip to Pakistan comes as American officials

have held several rounds of talks with Taliban representatives. Graham said a meeting between the two leaders was vital to carve out a potential deal in Afghanistan. "They actually need to meet and come up with an agenda that will push a resolution to the war in Afghanistan," the senator added. Graham - once a potent critic of Trump - has transformed in recent months into an ardent defender and influential ally of the president. The senator's arrival also overlapped with an ongoing trip by US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, who has been shuttling around the region for months to build support for the peace initiative.

Khalilzad was in Kabul last week and then flew to Pakistan where he also met with the prime minister Friday as news reports in Pakistan suggested Islamabad was open to hosting the next round of talks with the insurgents. The Taliban, however, has threatened to suspend the fledgling peace efforts, accusing Washington of changing the agenda of the talks and "unilaterally" adding new subjects. Graham's trip also comes after US officials announced in December that Trump intends to withdraw as many as half of the 14,000 US troops deployed in Afghanistan. The meetings are the latest in a flurry of diplomatic efforts aimed at bringing the Taliban to the table for negotiations with the Afghan government on ending the conflict which began with the US invasion in 2001. — AFP

Kuwait announces plan for...

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The summit declaration later valued the significance of IHH the Amir's initiative in creating the fund to support technology and digital economy. It noted that the \$200 million fund, with Kuwait and Qatar each contributing \$50 million, is set to be handled by Kuwait-based Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development.

Meanwhile, Arab states called on world powers to step up efforts to enable Syrian refugees to return home. The United Nations says that 5.6 million Syrian refugees live in five neighboring countries - Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq - and it is not yet safe for them to return. Since conflict broke out in Syria in 2011, more than 1 million people have fled across the border to Lebanon, where aid agencies say most live in extreme poverty.

Lebanese officials have called for refugees to go home after Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad reclaimed most of the country with Russian and Iranian help. "We call on the international community to take its responsibility to curb the misery," Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil said, reading a statement which the summit agreed. It asked for a doubling of efforts "to strengthen favorable conditions for the displaced and refugees to return in line with international law". Divisions among Arab states over Syria, and internal disputes in Lebanon, have overshadowed the summit even before it began, with several leaders staying away. A key point of contention has been whether to bring Syria back into the Arab League, more than seven years after its membership was suspended. Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah, which has helped Assad's military defeat rebels and militants, wants rapprochement with Damascus. Its critics oppose this, insisting the United Nations must oversee any repatriations.

Lebanese President Michel Aoun, a political ally of Hezbollah, had called earlier at the summit for safe refugee returns "without tying that to reaching a political solution". He also proposed the creation of an Arab bank for reconstruction and development "to help all affected Arab states overcome adversity and contribute to their sustainable economic growth".

Under deals Hezbollah has helped to broker, tens of thousands of refugees have left Lebanon for Syria in the past year - a drop in the ocean compared with the scale of the refugee crisis. Rights groups have warned against

In Jerusalem's Old City, conflict...

Continued from Page 1

from father to son since the 13th century - as proof of his innocence.

Joudeh says he sold the property to another Palestinian in 2016 for \$2.5 million and cannot be held responsible if it was passed on to settlers, who moved there in late 2018. But the building he once owned is not the only one triggering Palestinian concerns. The land conflict between Palestinians and Israelis is also a battle over Jerusalem and its Old City, home to sites holy to Jews, Muslims and Christians.

Israel took over mainly Palestinian east Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed it in a move never recognized by the international community. It now considers the entire city its capital, citing the Jewish historical and biblical connection there. The Palestinians see east Jerusalem, which includes the Old City, as the capital of their future state. They consider each property sale to Israeli settlers there as another blow to their cause.

Some 320,000 Palestinians live in east Jerusalem, while the Israeli settler population there has now grown to 210,000. Israel bars the Palestinian Authority from operating in Jerusalem, but it seeks to maintain influence, however limited. Such sales can in theory carry the death penalty under PA law. In one high-profile case in recent weeks, an American-Palestinian man, Issam Akef, was sentenced to life in prison by a PA court in the occupied West Bank over a property sale in the Old City.

Akef's lawyer, Oday Nawfel, said he was simply trying to help another Palestinian family sort out inheri-

tance issues with the building, down the street from the one Joudeh sold. Akef's case has drawn criticism from David Friedman, the US ambassador to Israel, who has been a supporter of settlements and has called for Akef's release. It also led to calls in Israel for authorities there to act. Following Akef's arrest, Israel detained the Palestinian governor of Jerusalem a number of times over suspicions of involvement in the affair.

Another 32 Palestinians were arrested by Israeli forces on similar grounds that they were supporting the PA in the matter, but eventually all were released. Akef was reported to have been released this past week on condition he leave for the US, though neither his lawyer or the US embassy confirmed the deal. In a separate case in November, the highest Muslim authority in Jerusalem, Grand Mufti Muhammad Ahmad Hussein, refused to allow a Palestinian killed in a car accident to be buried in a Muslim cemetery over suspicions he had once sold property to Jews.

Israeli settler groups push to make deals happen as part of their efforts to increase the Jewish population in east Jerusalem, sometimes offering exorbitant sums to pressure owners to sell. The groups use a variety of means such as middlemen or shell companies, anti-settlement activists say. "These are not open, transparent transactions," said Yudit Oppenheimer, who heads Ir Amim, an Israeli anti-settlement NGO focused on Jerusalem.

Daniel Luria of Ateret Cohanim, which works to increase the Jewish population of east Jerusalem, defended its actions. "Everyone should be able to buy and sell" in areas under Israeli sovereignty, said Luria. Joudeh displays documents that he says show the PA validated the sale of his home to another Palestinian. He says the buyer "betrayed me, betrayed the Palestinian Authority and Palestine". The Palestinian who in 2016 bought the house, Khaled Al-Atari, refused to speak with AFP citing an ongoing investigation on the Palestinian side. Regardless of who was responsible, neighbors fear more such sales are ahead. — AFP

Sports

Federer, Kerber stunned as Nadal powers into Australian Open quarters

Barty downs Sharapova to fire Australia's Open dreams

MELBOURNE: Defending champion Roger Federer was stunned by fiery Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas who ended his bid for a record seventh Australian Open yesterday on a day of upsets that also saw second seed Angelique Kerber crash out.

The Swiss master caved in under the energy and pressure of a man 17 years his junior to tumble out 6-7 (11/13), 7-6 (7/3), 7-5, 7-6 (7/5) in the last 16 on Rod Laver Arena. World number two Kerber was also sensationally bundled out by a woman playing the event for the first time, with American Danielle Collins humiliating the Wimbledon champion 6-0, 6-2 in under an hour.

The man Federer beat in last year's final, sixth seed Marin Cilic, was also sent packing by Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut, who now plays Tsitsipas in the quarter-finals. Five-time Grand Slam winner Maria Sharapova was another to fall, but there was no such drama for a rampant Rafael Nadal who powered into the last eight with a straight sets win over Tomas Berdych.

Federer was gunning for a 21st Grand Slam title but had a battle on his hands from off against the 20-year-old, touted among the new generation of young stars as a future champion. "I'm the happiest man on Earth right now, I cannot describe it," said the 14th seed, who is the first Greek in history to reach the quarter-finals of a Slam.

"I've been idolising him (Federer) since the age of six. It was a dream come true for me just being on Rod Laver facing him. Winning at the end, I can't describe it." The Swiss great was gracious in defeat, saying "I lost to a better player who was playing very well, who hung in there and stayed calm".

Wimbledon winner and 2016 champion Kerber, the bookies' favourite along with Serena Williams

after defending champion Caroline Wozniacki was ousted early, was no match for Collins, ranked 35 in the world.

Collins is little known after playing much of her tennis in the US college system and was making her debut in the main draw at Melbourne Park. She had never won a Grand Slam match before this year.

"I may not have won a Grand Slam match before this but I tell you, it's going to keep happening," said the 25-year-old. "I better have many more of these."

Chipping away

Men's second seed Nadal, returning from foot surgery, barrelled past former world number four Tomas Berdych 6-0, 6-1, 7-6 (7/4) as he stays on track for an 18th Grand Slam title.

"I always say the same when I am back for injury," said the Spaniard. "I don't expect negative or positive things. I just try to do my work every day and just be with (the) right attitude every single day."

He will play world number 39 Frances Tiafoe for a place in the semi-finals after the young American celebrated his 21st birthday by grinding his way past Grigor Dimitrov 7-5, 7-6 (8/6), 6-7 (1/7), 7-5.

Hometown hero Ashleigh Barty also made the last eight after muscling past Sharapova and will next meet Petra Kvitova. Sharapova claimed her biggest scalp since completing a drugs ban in 2017 when she rolled Wozniacki in round three and looked on track to carry the momentum forward.

The 30th seed won the first set but then fell to pieces, eventually succumbing 4-6, 6-1, 6-4. "I knew I had to keep chipping away—in a sense, trust the work we've done. I know that I can match it with the best," said Barty, seeded 15.



MELBOURNE: Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas hits a return against Switzerland's Roger Federer during their men's singles match on day seven of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

Next up for the diminutive 22-year-old is Kvitova, who beat Barty in the final of the warm-up Sydney International this month. The two-time Wimbledon champion beat 17-year-old Amanda Anisimova 6-2,

6-1 to match her best performance at a major since being slashed in a terrifying attack at her home in late 2016 that left her with lasting nerve damage in her fingers. — AFP

Tearful Vonn says 'possibility' Cortina Super-G her final race

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO: American ski star Lindsey Vonn said there was a "possibility" yesterday's World Cup Super G at Cortina d'Ampezzo, which she failed to finish, would be her final race. "There's only so much my body can take," a tearful Vonn, 34, told journalists after a disappointing return from a knee injury in the Italian Dolomites where she has won a record 12 times.

"My body is inhibiting me for doing what I want to do, I'm just not able to ski the way I want to and know I can," said the former Olympic champion who competed with braces on both her knees. "I really don't know what to think at this point. Definitely it isn't the way I had hoped that things would go."

"I've been able to fight through a lot of injuries in my career but I think my injuries might get the better of me at this point." Vonn, with 82 World Cup wins to her name, has set herself the challenge of overhauling Swedish great Ingemar Stenmark's all-time record of 86 World Cup wins before retiring at Lake Louise in December.

It was her final race down the Olimpia delle Tofane piste, where she took her first World Cup podium in 2004, but she admitted it could possibly be her final race altogether. "I'm not sure," she said. "I'm going to give it a couple of days and make some decisions." She had been due to compete in Garmish next week where she has won nine times—including a downhill double last season—and then on to the world championships in Sweden from February 5.

"It's more emotional than I expected," said Vonn, who



CORTINA D'AMPEZZO: USA's Lindsey Vonn competes in the Women's Super G event of the FIS Alpine skiing World Cup in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italian Alps, yesterday. — AFP

finished 15th and ninth in the downhills staged in Cortina on Friday and Saturday. "I know the end is coming but that doesn't make it easier. It's a great place for me, I have amazing memories and was hoping for more amazing memories, but things didn't go as I expected."

Vonn was comforted in the finish zone as Olympic downhill ace Sofia Goggia, one of her best friends on the circuit, gave her a bunch of flowers. "I cried," said Vonn. "I don't expect things like that. The ski club gave me a nice trophy and made a video."

"To have that in my last race (in Cortina) means more to me." American ace Mikaela Shiffrin won on Sunday, ahead of Tina Weirather of Liechtenstein and Austrian Tamara Tippler. It was 23-year-old Shiffrin's 54th World Cup triumph, and just this season she has won five slaloms, two giant slaloms, three super-G's and a parallel giant slalom and may well beat the record of 14 wins in a single season

set by Vreni Schneider in 1989. Shiffrin and Vonn have both won 12 in a single season. "I told her 'congratulations and awesome skiing,'" said Vonn, who won her last downhill in Cortina last January. "It's great that there's another American on top of the podium."

Shiffrin said: "It must be incredibly emotional for Lindsey. Her last race in Cortina and possibly her final one. "She has had such an incredible career, so many wins, so many emotions, all those memories coming back today."

"She's been inspiring for a lot of racers and athletes coming up in the US team and around the world." The 29-year-old Weirather, a super-G specialist, praised Vonn who she said "has defined women's alpine racing". "Her mentality was something you've never seen before. "She was never afraid to say she's the best and wanted to be the best. "Europeans think that's very arrogant, but she never thought about that, she raised the sport to a new level." — AFP

Jones wary of Ireland star Sexton's 'bat phone' to referee

TWICKENHAM: England coach Eddie Jones believes Jonathan Sexton has a "bat phone to the referee" as he suggested the Ireland star receives preferential treatment from match officials. Jones' side have the toughest possible start to their Six Nations Championship campaign, away to Grand Slam reigning champions Ireland on February 2.

Fly-half Sexton, the World Player of the Year, is currently out of action with a knee tendon injury but is expected to be fit for the match at Dublin's Lansdowne Road. "Sexton is a reasonably big player who has the bat phone to the referee," said Jones in a reference to the device police used to summon Batman in the American television series based on the comic book hero.

"He is the only one allowed to pick up the red phone to talk to the referee." "Targeting" an opposition No 10, who is usually the main playmaker in any rugby union team, is standard practice. Many Ireland fans feel that, consequently, Sexton is often on the receiving end of late tackles while, by contrast, opponents have suggested their legitimate challenges on him result in unfair punishment.

Technically a captain is the only player on the field who, under rugby's rules, is allowed to initiate a conversation with the referee. But Jones said Sexton-whose Ireland skipper is Ulster hooker Rory Best-had earned his 'hot-line' because of the excellence of his play, as now retired former New Zealand World Cup-winning captain Richie McCaw had done before him.

"When he (Sexton) talks, the referee listens. That is because of his status in the game—you earn that, like Richie McCaw did," Jones explained.

Meanwhile Jones also entered into the row sparked by an admission from Marcelo Bielsa, the manager of English football's second-tier leaders Leeds United, that he has had their divisional rivals watched in secret by a member of his backroom team this season.

Jones, a former coach of both his native Australia and Japan, said that while such 'spying' had been commonplace in rugby, it had now been made obsolete in rugby by modern technology. "Fifteen years ago we used to send people out in costumes to watch training," he said.

"I can remember sending a coach who is now in a very senior position in a costume to go and watch one team play and he got chased out of there. "He was dressed up like a swagman, wearing one of those hats with corks."

"Now you don't need to do that because you see everything in the game. I have been coaching for 20 years and it has always been going on. If you want to do that you can do it. "I can say with a hand on my heart we don't do it anymore. We just don't see the value of it because we can glean most of the stuff from the games." — AFP



Group picture of winners.



Duaij Al-Otaibi hands Sheikh Thamer a memento with Sheikh Maryam looking on.

Late Sheikh Ali Sabah Al-Salem shooting tournament concludes

By Abdellatif Sharara

KUWAIT: Tournament of the late Sheikh Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah was concluded Saturday after three days of fierce competition by a large number of shooters from the club, National Guard and shooters from Qatar, in the skeet and trap events.

The closing ceremony was attended by Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Sheikh Maryam Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem, President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations, KSSC Assistant Secretary Eng Muhammad Al-Ghurba, and board member Nayef Al-Daihani. Engineer Duaij Al-Otaibi welcomed guests and shooters, adding Kuwait shooting is honored to organize the tournament due to the status of the man it is named after among the shooting community.

The tournament saw skeet shooter Eman Al-Shammaa make a new world record by scoring 123 out of 125.

Tournament patron Sheikh Thamer Al-Sabah said after the ceremony "we congratulate the winners, and wish those who missed out good luck next time. He said this tournament was distinguished by breaking a world record

by a female shooter."

He said we support such sports, and see now developments every year due to the efforts of board members, as Engineer Duaij Al-Otaibi continued the efforts after being deputy chairman to the now Honorary President of KSSC Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, and continued their winning ways in the Gulf, Arab, international and Olympic arenas, besides the unlimited support by HH the Amir.

Results of the tournament are as follows:
Skeet men: Rashid Masoud from Qatar first, Abdelaziz Al-Saad second, and Saud Habib third

Trap men: Talal Al-Rashidi first, Abdelrahman Al-Faihan second, Nasser Al-Miqled third.

Skeet women: Eman Al-Shammaa first, Fatima Al-Zaabi second, Munira Al-Sbaiti third.

Trap women: Shahad Al-Hawal first, Asmaa Al-Qatami second, Sarah Al-Hawal third.

Skeet juniors: Hamad Al-Ablani first, Salem Al-Rashidi second, Salem Al-Rashidi third.

Trap juniors: Yousuf Al-Rashidi first, Salah Al-Rashidi second, Khalid Al-Rashidi third.



Eman Al-Shammaa new record holder.

Sports

Thunder edge Sixers in thriller, Irving, Celtics rally past Hawks

Pacers drop Mavericks as Doncic ejected

PHILADELPHIA: Paul George scored 31 points, including a go-ahead four-point play with 5.1 seconds left, to lift the Oklahoma City Thunder to a 117-115 win over the 76ers on Saturday in Philadelphia. George's heroics came just moments after Jimmy Butler put the 76ers in front with a steal and a layup with 6.9 seconds remaining. It was Oklahoma City's 19th consecutive win over the 76ers. The Thunder have not lost to Philadelphia in more than a decade. Russell Westbrook finished with 21 points, 10 rebounds and six assists but fouled out with 14.9 seconds left when he fouled Joel Embiid shooting a 3-pointer at the top of the key. Westbrook and Embiid were each critical of the other when speaking to reporters postgame, with Westbrook saying defiantly that the two weren't "cool."

KINGS 103, PISTONS 101

Buddy Hield tossed in a 3-pointer at the buzzer, and Sacramento erased a 13-point, fourth-quarter deficit to edge host Detroit. Hield finished with 35 points, nine rebounds and three assists. De'Aaron Fox had 14 points and 10 assists, and Marvin Bagley III also scored 14 points. Blake Griffin led Detroit with 38 points, and Luke Kennard contributed 19 off the bench.

CELTICS 113, HAWKS 105

Kyrie Irving continued his hot shooting, scoring 32 points to lead visiting Boston over Atlanta. Boston won its third straight game, ended a three-game losing streak on the road and has beaten the Hawks three times this season. The Celtics outscored the Hawks 30-16 in the fourth quarter and pulled away in the final minutes. Things got testy in the third quarter after Marcus Smart was dealt his second technical foul and ejected. The Celtics guard charged after DeAndre' Bembry, with whom he had exchanged words, and needed to be held back by his teammates, Hawks players and the referees.

BUCKS 118, MAGIC 108

Eric Bledsoe's season-high 30 points led visiting Milwaukee past Orlando. Giannis Antetokounmpo added 25 points, 13 rebounds and five assists, and Malcolm Brogdon had 18 points for Milwaukee. The Bucks own the NBA's best record and have won four straight, outscoring opponents by an average 19.3 points during the stretch. Nikola Vucevic led the Magic with 27 points, and Terrence Ross added 16 points off the bench. Orlando has lost three straight after blowing a 21-point, second-quarter lead against the Brooklyn Nets and falling to the Detroit Pistons in overtime.

HORNETS 135, SUNS 115

Kemba Walker led a balanced attack with 21 points, and Charlotte rolled to an easy victory over visiting Phoenix. Jeremy Lamb added 18 points for the Hornets, and six others also scored in double figures. Nicolas Batum scored 15; Marvin Williams and Tony Parker scored 14 each; Bismack Biyombo had 11 points, 13 rebounds and five blocked shots; and Michael Kidd-Gilchrist and Miles Bridges chipped in 10 each. Devin Booker led the Suns with 32 points, including 22 in the first half, and 11 assists. Phoenix also got 24 points from Kelly Oubre Jr., 16 from T.J. Warren and 10 from Deandre Ayton.

RAPTORS 119, GRIZZLIES 90

Danny Green scored 21 of his season-best 24 points in the third quarter and matched his career-best with eight 3-pointers as Toronto defeated visiting Memphis. Serge Ibaka added 18 points for the Raptors, who have won seven of their past eight games and nine straight home games. Pascal Siakam added 17 points and eight rebounds, Norman Powell 14, CJ Miles 13 and Kyle Lowry had 12 points and seven assists for the Raptors. Jaren Jackson Jr. had 16 points and nine rebounds for the Grizzlies, who have lost 11 of their past 12 games. Ivan Rabb added 13 points and 11 rebounds, Shelvin Mack had 14 points and Mike Conley added 10 points for Memphis.

PACERS 111, MAVERICKS 99

Domantas Sabonis scored 10 of his 16 points during a second-quarter runaway, helping Indiana ease past Dallas at Indianapolis in a game that featured rookie star Luka Doncic's first career ejection. Sabonis completed a double-double with a team-high 11 rebounds, and Tyreke Evans led five Pacers in double figures with 19 points. Making his first NBA visit to Indianapolis, Doncic was ejected after getting nailed with a second technical foul for somewhat politely kicking the ball into the stands with 3:00 remaining in the third quarter.

HEAT 117, BULLS 103

Josh Richardson scored a game-high 26 points as Miami sent host Chicago to its 10th straight defeat. The game marked Dwyane Wade's last visit to his hometown of Chicago as an active player. The 37-year-old shooting guard is retiring after this season. Wade had 14 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists off the bench. The Heat also got a season-high 21 points from reserve shooting guard Dion Waiters, who had complained earlier this week about a lack of playing time. — Reuters



PHILADELPHIA: Joel Embiid #21 of the Philadelphia 76ers shoots a three point basket against the Oklahoma City Thunder on Saturday at the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia. — AFP

NBA results/standings

Denver 124, Cleveland 102; Houston 138, LA Lakers 134 (OT); Atlanta 105, Boston 113; Toronto 119, Memphis 90; Chicago 103, Miami 117; Detroit 101, Sacramento 103; Indiana 111, Dallas 99; Orlando 108, Milwaukee 118; Charlotte 135, Phoenix 115; Philadelphia 115, Oklahoma City 117.

| Eastern Conference | | | | Western Conference | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-------|--------------------|---------------|----|----|-------|
| | W | L | PCT | GB | | | | |
| Milwaukee | 33 | 12 | 0.733 | - | Golden State | 32 | 14 | 0.696 |
| Toronto | 35 | 13 | 0.729 | - | Denver | 31 | 14 | 0.689 |
| Indiana | 30 | 15 | 0.667 | 3 | Oklahoma City | 27 | 18 | 0.600 |
| Philadelphia | 30 | 17 | 0.638 | 4 | Portland | 28 | 19 | 0.596 |
| Boston | 28 | 18 | 0.609 | 5.5 | Houston | 26 | 19 | 0.578 |
| Brooklyn | 24 | 23 | 0.511 | 10 | San Antonio | 27 | 20 | 0.574 |
| Miami | 22 | 22 | 0.500 | 10.5 | Utah | 26 | 21 | 0.553 |
| Charlotte | 22 | 23 | 0.489 | 11 | LA Clippers | 24 | 21 | 0.533 |
| Detroit | 20 | 25 | 0.444 | 13 | LA Lakers | 25 | 22 | 0.532 |
| Washington | 19 | 26 | 0.422 | 14 | Sacramento | 24 | 22 | 0.522 |
| Orlando | 19 | 27 | 0.413 | 14.5 | Minnesota | 21 | 24 | 0.467 |
| Atlanta | 14 | 31 | 0.311 | 19 | New Orleans | 21 | 25 | 0.457 |
| New York | 10 | 34 | 0.227 | 22.5 | Dallas | 20 | 25 | 0.444 |
| Chicago | 10 | 36 | 0.217 | 23.5 | Memphis | 19 | 27 | 0.413 |
| Cleveland | 9 | 38 | 0.191 | 25 | Phoenix | 11 | 36 | 0.234 |

Marchessault hat trick powers Knights past Pens

LAS VEGAS: Jonathan Marchessault scored his second career hat trick and Marc-Andre Fleury had 34 saves and also garnered his 17th career assist to lead the Vegas Golden Knights to a 7-3 victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday night in Las Vegas. Fleury picked up his league-leading 27th victory. William Karlsson and Max Pacioretty each added a goal and an assist, and Oscar Lindberg and Shea Theodore also scored goals for Vegas. Paul Stastny and Colin Miller both finished with two assists. Phil Kessel, who scored the game-winning goal in overtime on Friday night at Arizona, Sidney Crosby and Dominik Simon scored goals for Pittsburgh, while Jake Guentzel finished with two assists. Casey DeSmith finished with 28 saves for the Penguins, who went 2-3 on their five-game, 12-day Western road trip before heading into the All-Star break.

FLAMES 5, OILERS 2

Mark Giordano, Johnny Gaudreau, Mikael Backlund, Oliver Kylington and Sean Monahan each scored as visiting Calgary handed Edmonton a defeat. Goalie David Rittich made 22 saves for the Western Conference-leading Flames, who won on consecutive nights and are on a 7-0-1 run. Calgary had lost five straight in Edmonton prior to Saturday's win.

WILD 2, BLUE JACKETS 1

Goals by Jordan Greenway and Zach Parise 89 seconds apart late in the first period were all the offense Minnesota needed for a victory over Columbus in St. Paul, Minn. Wild goalie Devan Dubnyk made 19 saves for the much-needed victory, as Minnesota had just one win in four previous outings as it's in the thick of the wild card battle. Greenway, the Wild's second-round draft pick in 2015, opened the scoring at 16:07 of the first period.

PANTHERS 4, PREDATORS 2

Vincent Trocheck and Aaron Ekblad each had a goal and an assist to lead visiting Florida to a win over Nashville. Frank Vatrano and Jared McCann also scored, and Colton Sceviour notched two assists for the Panthers. The win was the 800th in Florida franchise history.

FLYERS 5, CANADIENS 2

Nolan Patrick scored twice and Carter Hart made 33 saves as visiting Philadelphia earned a win over Montreal. Patrick's eighth and ninth goals of the season came in the third period, sealing the Flyers' third consecutive victory. After enduring a 24-game goal drought, Patrick now has four goals in his last three games. The center also had two goals against the Minnesota Wild on Monday. Hart improved to 6-5-1 after 12 career NHL games, as the rookie continues to stabilize Philadelphia's goaltending situation. Hart has a 2.66 goals-against average in his young career.



DALLAS: Ben Bishop #30 of the Dallas Stars blocks a shot on goal against Blake Wheeler #26 of the Winnipeg Jets in the third period at American Airlines Center on Saturday in Dallas, Texas. —AFP

LIGHTNING 6, SHARKS 3

Steven Stamkos had two goals and an assist while Alex Killorn and Yanni Gourde both snapped goal droughts as Tampa Bay entered its bye week on a positive note with a victory over visiting San Jose. The Sharks played without star defenseman Erik Karlsson. Killorn went 10 games without a goal before putting the NHL-leading Lightning up 2-0 with 2:09 left in the first period on his 11th of the season.

BLUES 3, SENATORS 2

Carl Gunnarsson scored the tie-breaking goal with 7:44 left in the third period for the host St. Louis, which hung on to edge Ottawa. Vladimir Tarasenko and Vince Dunn also scored for the Blues, who snapped a two-game losing streak in their final home game of the month. St. Louis is scheduled to embark on a five-game road trip spanning the All-Star break before returning to Enterprise Center on Feb. 9. Rookie Jordan Binnington recorded 28 saves to improve to 4-0-1 as an NHL starter.

RANGERS 3, BRUINS 2

Mika Zibanejad scored twice, and Henrik Lundqvist made 27 saves to move into sole possession of sixth place on the NHL's all-time wins list as visiting New York skated to a victory over Boston. Tuukka Rask, who was bidding to become the Bruins' all-time winningest goaltender, sustained a concussion with 1:28 remaining in the first period following a collision with Filip Chytil. The Rangers forward was credited with a goal despite barreling into Rask after being tripped by the stick of Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy. Rask, who won the 2013-2014 Vezina Trophy, remained on the ice for several minutes before being helped to his feet by the training staff. The 31-year-old Finn made six saves before being replaced by Jaroslav Halak, who turned aside 11 shots as Boston fell for the third

time in four games (1-2-1).

STARS 4, JETS 2

Tyler Seguin had a goal and an assist, and John Klingberg and Esa Lindell each had a pair of assists as Dallas outlasted visiting Winnipeg in the final game for both teams before the NHL All-Star break. The victory snapped a four-game losing streak for Dallas. It was just the Stars' second game in their past eight that they scored more than two goals. Dallas dominated early, scoring three times in the first 33 minutes and outshooting the Central Division-leading Jets 28-12 in the first two periods.

AVALANCHE 7, KINGS 1

Colorado erupted for six goals in the second period in its win against visiting Los Angeles. Tyson Barrie had a goal and two assists, Mikko Rantanen scored twice before leaving with an upper-body injury, and Carl Soderberg and Gabriel Landeskog each tallied a goal and an assist for Colorado in the opener of a five-game homestand. Sheldon Dries and Colin Wilson also scored for the Avalanche. Nathan MacKinnon and Matt Calvert each had two assists, and Semyon Varlamov made 30 saves.

DUCKS 3, DEVILS 2

Troy Terry had a goal and an assist, his first two points in the NHL, as Anaheim defeated the New Jersey in Newark, N.J. Daniel Sprong and Derek Grant also scored for the Ducks, who won their second in a row after snapping a monthlong, 12-game losing streak with a 3-0 victory Thursday at Minnesota. Goaltender John Gibson made 29 saves. Marcus Johansson and Jesper Bratt scored for the Devils, who lost their third in a row. Mackenzie Blackwood had a light workload, stopping 11 of 14 shots. — Reuters

Son trounces Chen in Malaysia badminton final

KUALA LUMPUR: South Korea's Son Wan-ho put on a masterful display of badminton to easily beat China's Chen Long 21-17, 21-19 and clinch the Malaysia Masters title yesterday. Chen appeared no match for Son throughout their showdown, with the South Korean hitting impressive baseline smashes and pushing his opponent to make a series of unforced errors.

After Son cruised through the opening game, third seed Chen put up more resistance in the second-but the South Korean stood firm to clinch victory. Son, seeded fourth in the Kuala Lumpur tournament, benefited from an extra rest day after his semi-final opponent Liew Daren conceded a walkover Saturday due to an injury.

"Matches against Chen Long are always tough, so I am honoured to become champion," said Son, who takes away \$26,250 for the win. "I have played him many times, but the final environment can be tricky sometimes."

Malaysian badminton ace Lee Chong Wei, who recently returned to training after recovering from nose cancer, presented prizes to the winners. In the women's singles, Ratchanok Intanon successfully defended her title with a 21-9, 22-20 triumph over Spain's Carolina Marin.

The Thai ace was totally dominant in the first game. Marin fought back in the second, racking up seven consecutive points but Ratchanok kept her at bay and took the match. "I just tried to be relaxed and enjoy the occasion as defending champion," she said.

"I noticed that (Marin) was struggling to control the shuttle, and I thought that I had to play my best. Today is my day." In the men's doubles, world number one pair Marcus Fernaldi Gideon and Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo of Indonesia were outstanding in their 21-15, 21-16 win over Malaysian duo Ong Yew Sin and Teo Ee Yi.

Results (x denotes seeding)

Men's singles
Son Wan-ho (KORx4) bt Chen Long (CHNx3) 21-17, 21-19
Women's Singles
Ratchanok Intanon (THAx6) bt Carolina Marin (ESPx4) 21-9, 22-20
Men's Doubles
Marcus Fernaldi Gideon/Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo (INAx1) bt Ong Yew Sin/Teo Ee Yi (MAS) 21-15, 21-16
Women's Doubles
Yuki Fukushima/Sayaka Hirota (JPNx1) bt Greysia Polii/Apriyani Rahayu (INAx4) 18-21, 21-16, 21-16
Mixed Doubles
Yuta Watanabe/Arisa Higashino (JPNx1) bt Dechapol Puavaranukroh/Sapsiree Taerattanachai (THAx2) 21-18, 21-18. —AFP

Sports

Man City ease past Huddersfield Town to cut Liverpool's lead

Kevin De Bruyne and Sergio Aguero return to starting line-up

HUDDERSFIELD: Manchester City reduced Liverpool's lead at the top of the English Premier League table to four points as they eventually found top gear to win 3-0 away to basement club Huddersfield Town yesterday. This was by no means City's most outstanding display of the season but, ultimately, goals from Danilo, Raheem Sterling and Leroy Sane ensured they did not trip up in the latest leg of their quest to keep the Premier League title-race alive.

Liverpool's captivating 4-3 victory over Crystal Palace on Saturday ensured this was a crunch fixture for Pep Guardiola's side, yet any hopes Huddersfield could pull off a shock win never materialised.

The embarrassment of riches available to City manager Guardiola meant Gabriel Jesus, who had scored seven goals in three matches, dropped to the bench alongside David Silva while Kevin De Bruyne and Sergio Aguero returned to his starting line-up.

That depth of quality would be difficult for any side to counter, especially a team struggling as much as Huddersfield are at present.

They parted company with manager David Wagner on Monday, a mutual decision but a sad one for Terriers' fans who will always remember him as the man who not only secured promotion to the Premier League for the Yorkshire club but also kept them in the top-flight last term.

A repeat of that looks highly unlikely this season and this match pitted the Premier League's highest scorers against the lowest, with Huddersfield having netted just 13 times going into this encounter and having lost eight of their last nine league games.

Huddersfield made six changes for the game but did manage to match reigning English champions City early on. After 12 minutes, Sterling felt he was denied a penalty after Terence Kongolo's

heavy challenge in the box.

But City's wait to break the deadlock lasted just six more minutes as Danilo's fierce shot was deflected past Jonas Lossl by Christopher Schindler. The goal was City's 100th of the season in all competitions, a statistic underlining their potent attack, but they were surprisingly lacklustre in the remainder of the first half.

One clumsy Kyle Walker foul on Chris Lowe might have been worthy of a red card but the England international escaped with a booking.

EMOTIONAL MESSAGE

An emotional message from Wagner was broadcast on the big screen at the John Smith's Stadium during the half-time interval and that comfortably eclipsed most of the entertainment offered in the opening period.

Yet after the break, City finally upped the tempo and were soon out of sight. After 52 minutes, De Bruyne's pass found Sane on the left and his pinpoint cross was met by Sterling who finished off a diving header with some aplomb.

City's afternoon soon got even better when Sane then scored a wonderful team goal that demonstrated how City had finally woken up. Danilo pumped a ball forward and Aguero steered a fantastic cushioned header into the path of Sane who slipped the ball past Lossl.

Immediately, it felt as if Huddersfield would need to enter damage-limitation mode to stop City from running riot as they did in the 6-1 reverse fixture victory at the Etihad Stadium in August.

But to the credit of Huddersfield caretaker coach Mark Hudson, he implored his team to keep on trying to attack despite being three goals down. However, Huddersfield never really looked like con-



HUDDERSFIELD: Manchester City's Brazilian defender Danilo (L) shoots past Huddersfield Town's English midfielder Jonathan Hogg (R) but over the bar during the English Premier League football match between Huddersfield Town and Manchester City at the John Smith's stadium in Huddersfield, northern England yesterday. —AFP

cluding up a miracle comeback as Stevie Mounie resorted to attempting to score from 30 yards but with little effect.

A close-range header from Mounie was also well

saved by Ederson towards the end. But that incident was the City goalkeeper's first real piece of action, which said everything about the lopsided nature of this contest. —AFP

Demand for answers after Australia football women's coach sacked

SYDNEY: There were calls for answers yesterday over the sudden sacking of Australia's women's football coach Alen Stajcic just five months from the World Cup, as his assistant resigned in protest against the decision.

Football Federation Australia chief David Gallop said Saturday when announcing the governing body's decision that he had lost faith in the 45-year-old Stajcic, while concerns over "workplace" and "player welfare" issues were also cited.

The sacking followed two recently conducted confidential FFA surveys to evaluate the standard of the team environment and culture. Gallop said the results, along with interviews with players and staff, had led the FFA to determine that the team environment was "unsatisfactory" and change was needed.

No specific details of the problems were given by the FFA, and the Football Coaches Australia body criticised the treatment of Stajcic and called for transparency. "It is important that the decision-makers in the sport make decisions for the right reasons. In this instance, that evidence has not been forthcoming," FCA president Phil Moss said in a statement.

"The broader process used to end Alen's tenure was highly questionable." The newly established FFA Women's Council said it was not consulted or made aware of the decision to sack Stajcic.

The council's independent chair Ros Moriarty told national broadcaster ABC she would "request full details of how stakeholder surveys escalated to a sudden sacking". "I would like to understand what specific feedback has left our national women's team in a World Cup year, without the leader who has orchestrated their success over the past few years," she said.

Prominent former Soccerroo Robbie Slater also called for clarity, writing in a column for Sydney's Sunday Telegraph that "the Australian public deserves a real answer why such a successful coach has been sacked". "You don't have to be an insider to see that this is an astonishing decision," he wrote. "It's unfair for the FFA to hide behind 'confidential' reviews—that will only inflame the whispering campaign, and in the process further ruin Stajcic's reputation." —AFP

Atletico shoot for football future in cricket-mad Pakistan

LAHORE: Spain's Atletico Madrid are taking on a challenge tougher than winning La Liga—developing football in cricket-mad Pakistan, where bat and ball are king, pitches come with stumps not goalposts, and even the prime minister is a former World Cup winner.

During a recent session at the club's new facility in Lahore—the country's first European football academy—a cabal of Spanish coaches watched as a new class of young Pakistani hopefuls fired off penalty kicks.

"We are not looking for players for Atletico Madrid because we know that this is going to be very difficult... Our target is to improve the football here," coach Javier Visea told AFP. To succeed in carving out a place for football, they will need to overcome marginal government support, poor infrastructure and a troubled history with FIFA that has resulted in multiple bans for violating the body's rules.

PSG claim record home win with thrashing of Guingamp

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe and Edinson Cavani both scored hat-tricks as Paris Saint-Germain romped to their biggest-ever home win with a 9-0 Ligue 1 thrashing of Guingamp on Saturday. The runaway league leaders exacted sweet revenge on bottom club Guingamp, who had ended their bid for a sixth straight League Cup title earlier this month in Paris.

It was PSG's largest victory at the Parc des Princes, beating an 8-0 win over Dijon 12 months ago, but fell narrowly short of equalling their biggest win in total—a 10-0 French Cup thumping of Cote d'Ivoire in 1994.

The capital club, who lead second-placed Lille by 13 points with two games in hand, have dropped just four points in their opening 19 matches of the season as they bid for an unbeaten league campaign.

Neymar also scored twice as PSG's front three took their combined tally for the season to 58 goals, while Mbappe extended his advantage in the Ligue 1 scoring charts having netted 17 times in only 14 appearances.

Coach Thomas Tuchel did see Marco Verratti forced from the field with what he

later described as a "serious injury", with the Italian now a doubt for PSG's Champions League last-16 tie against Manchester United next month.

"It's possible he'll miss a few weeks," said the German. "Marco's injury changes everything. Playing without Marco is completely different, I think it's serious. It's hard." PSG wasted little time in forging ahead, with a wonderful 11th-minute goal by Neymar doing the damage.

His former Brazil international teammate Dani Alves picked out the world's most expensive player with a sumptuous pass over the top, and Neymar flicked the ball over Guingamp right-back Jordan Ikoko and slotted in his 19th goal of the season.

Neymar was involved as PSG all but ended the game as a contest eight minutes before half-time, playing a neat one-two with Mbappe which allowed the World Cup winner to side-foot into the corner of the net.

Mbappe added another goal on the stroke of the interval, as Cavani's pass found him in acres of space inside the Guingamp box. The game was even more one-sided after the restart, with Cavani tapping in Juan Bernat's low cross just before the hour mark, before nodding Di Maria's swinging delivery past helpless Guingamp goalkeeper Marc-Aurele Caillard.

CAVANI WINS HAT-TRICK RACE

Guingamp were totally unable to deal with the reigning champions, as Mbappe sent Neymar racing clear to slide the ball under Caillard in the 68th minute. Cavani



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Neymar (R) vies with Guingamp's French defender Christophe Kerbrat (L) during the French L1 football match Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) vs Guingamp (EAG), on Saturday at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. —AFP

won the three-man race to a hat-trick by miskicking a rebound in off the post, with the goal awarded by VAR, before the Uruguayan's square pass was diverted into an empty net by Mbappe to seal his own treble.

There were still 10 minutes remaining as PSG looked to match their record winning margin, and full-back Thomas Meunier got in on the act to make it nine

in the 83rd minute. A lack of injury-time was the telling factor in the hosts' failure to reach double figures, as Guingamp desperately clung on to avoid further ignominy.

"We were drowned, we made beginners' mistakes," bemoaned Guingamp coach Jocelyn Gourvenec. "It was like watching an Under-19s team against a Ligue 1 team." —AFP

'Coach whisperer', mind guru propel Aussies at Asian Cup

AL-AIN: If Australia successfully defend their Asian Cup title in the United Arab Emirates, two people will be quietly celebrating behind the scenes: a self-styled 'coach-whisperer' and the team's in-house mind guru.

Coach Graham Arnold is an adherent of Bradley Charles Stubbs, the colourful motivator who has worked with several big names including Wallabies handler Michael Cheika and England's Eddie Jones.

Meanwhile Mike Conway, one-time managing director of Australian children's band The Wiggles, is on hand as the Soccerroos "emotional agility and mental coach" during the tournament in the United Arab Emirates.

It's perhaps no coincidence that positive vibrations have been a feature of the Australian campaign—even to the extent of grating on the opposition. Arnold was accused of arrogance after his bold assertion that Australia "expect to win" their opening game against Jordan—a fixture they lost 1-0.

But Arnold, 55, was merely quoting from a Stubbs mantra, which holds that unwavering self-belief is the key to success. Long-time observers say the formerly gruff coach is far more relaxed and open since he started working with Stubbs during his time at Sydney FC,

where he won the 2016-17 A-League title with only one loss. Similar results followed Stubbs' work with Cheika, who unexpectedly took Australia to the 2015 Rugby World Cup final, and Jones, who led England to a Six Nations clean sweep in 2016.

Stubbs, who did not want to be interviewed when approached by AFP, developed his programme and wrote his book, "The Science of Belief", after suffering a mental breakdown when a car accident ended his burgeoning surfing career.

He has some unusual ideas, including tapping the power of the universe. His programme, which reportedly costs about \$4,000 for an hour-long session, builds on the theories of neuro-linguistic programming, which holds that using certain language can trigger a desired psychological response. —AFP



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

| SPANISH LEAGUE | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| SD Eibar v RCD Espanyol | 23:00 |
| beIN SPORTS HD 3 | |
| ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE | |
| Genoa CFC v AC Milan | 17:00 |
| beIN SPORTS HD 4 | |
| Juventus FC v AC Chievo Verona | 22:30 |
| beIN SPORTS HD 4 | |
| ASIAN NATIONS CUP 2019 | |
| Japan v Saudi Arabia | 14:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Australia v Uzbekistan | 17:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| United Arab Emirates v Kyrgyzstan | 19:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |

25 Federer, Kerber stunned as Nadal powers into Australian Open quarters



26 Thunder edge Sixers in thriller, Irving, Celtics rally past Hawks



27 Man City ease past Huddersfield Town to cut Liverpool's lead



DUBAI: Vietnam's midfielder Hung Dung Do (C-L) is marked by Jordan's forward Yaseen Bakheet during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup Round of 16 football match between Jordan and Vietnam at the Al-Maktoum Stadium in Dubai yesterday. —AFP

China roar back to reach last eight

Shoot-out sees Vietnam beat Jordan, reach Asian Cup quarters

AL-AIN: China flirted with disaster before mounting a second-half revival as they fought back from behind to beat Thailand 2-1 and reach the Asian Cup quarter-finals yesterday. The giant nation were all at sea as they fell behind to Supachai Jaidee's opener but they hit back after the break through substitute Xiao Zhi and Gao Lin's well-taken penalty.

It meant China live to fight another day under Marcello Lippi, who is expected to step down after the Asian Cup, while Thailand exit with their heads held high. In an open start, Theerathon Bunmathan saw a free kick tipped over and Wu Lei had an attempt smothered by Thai goalkeeper Siwarak Tedsungnoen before Thailand went ahead on 31 minutes. From a corner, in front of Thailand's drumming and singing fans, Thitiphan Puangjan's miscued shot fell to Supachai Jaidee, who turned and rammed it past Chinese goalie Yan Junling from close range.

The chances were falling thick and fast for Thailand and the "Thai Messi" Chanathip Songkrasin was adjudged to have fouled Feng Xiaoting as he jinked his way into a scoring opportunity.

China looked distinctly rattled, but they nearly hit back

just before half-time when Yu Dabao flashed his header wide from Hao Junmin's free kick. China's star man Wu Lei, who missed their final group game with a shoulder injury, missed a series of chances after half-time, including one when he embarrassingly sliced an easy shot well wide.

But China were piercing the Thai defence again and again and on the hour mark, only Siwarak's legs preserved Thailand's lead when he parried Yu's goal-bound shot from point-blank range. China finally scored midway through the second half when substitute forward Xiao, three minutes after coming on, headed straight at Siwarak before prodding home the rebound.

The onslaught didn't stop and after Gao was brought down by Chalermpong Kerdkaew, he nervelessly swept the spot-kick high into the net for a 2-1 lead. Thailand weren't going down without a fight and in injury time, Teerasil Dangda wasted a good chance and Pansa Hemviboon had Yan at full stretch with a powerful shot.

But ultimately it was China who joined Vietnam in the last eight, after the Southeast Asian champions stunned Jordan on penalties after a tense 1-1 draw in Dubai.

It ends a rollercoaster tournament for Thailand, who sacked their coach Milovan Rajevac after their 4-1 drubbing by India but recovered to reach the last 16.

Earlier, Vietnam emerged victorious from a penalty shoot-out with Jordan to become the first team to reach the Asian Cup quarter-finals yesterday-after being the last side to scrape into the round of 16. After extra-time finished at 1-1, BT Dung rolled in the decisive spot-kick for a 4-2 penalties win and saluted the crowd after Baha Faisal and Ahmed Samir had missed for Jordan.

The dramatic win upset the odds after Jordan were the first to qualify for the knockouts, and Vietnam only went through because of their disciplinary record after they finished with an identical points and goals record to Lebanon.

However, the Southeast Asian champions came back from a goal down to force extra time, and they were on balance the stronger and more positive team over the 120 minutes.

Vital Borkelmans' Jordan came into the game as the form side and they spurred a number of chances before opening the scoring six minutes from half-time.

Baha Abdel-Rahman, taking a free kick from the right

edge of the penalty area, hit it just right as the ball bent around the wall and flew into the top corner. However, the goal stung Vietnam into action and they nearly hit back when Hung Dung's dipping shot was tipped over by Jordan goalkeeper Amer Shafi.

Vietnam, who won Southeast Asia's Suzuki Cup in December, levelled six minutes after the break, when Cong Phuong showed great technique to steer home a volley from close range. On the hour-mark, Van Duc nearly snatched it for the Vietnamese but his dink over Shafi was hacked off the line by Anas Bani-Yaseen.

And Jordan's Yaseen Bakheet had a great chance to grab the win in the first period of extra time, but from a high ball into the box he ballooned his volley over. Dubai's Al Maktoum Stadium was thick with tension for the spot-kicks and when Faisal hit the bar and Van Lam saved from Salih, Vietnam were very much in the driving seat.

Shafi, diving low, saved Minh Vuong's attempt but it was only delaying defeat as Dung coolly netted the winner, giving a military salute in celebration before being mobbed by his team-mates. —AFP

Pacquiao batters Broner in lopsided welterweight bout

LAS VEGAS: Manny Pacquiao put on a master class in elite boxing Saturday with a 12-round demolition of Adrien Broner, defending his welterweight title in his first fight on US soil in two years—and his first as a 40-year-old.

Pacquiao easily won with an impressive display of superior hand speed and destructive power that landed him a unanimous decision victory over the much younger American at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas.

The Filipino star almost knocked Broner down twice in the seventh and ninth rounds and showed that he can still be a force in the highly-competitive division despite turning 40 last month. "I really don't believe my career is over. I proved it in my last fight against (Lucas) Matthysee," Pacquiao said. "And now I prove it again at the age of 40."

In his 70th fight as a professional, Pacquiao retains the lesser version of the WBA's two welterweight belts and possibly sets the stage for a rematch with Floyd Mayweather, who watched the bout from ringside.

Pacquiao improved to 61-7-2 with 39 knockouts, winning on all three judges' scorecards, including by one tally of 117-111. The other two judges also had it one-sided at 116-112.

Pacquiao started the onslaught in the seventh round by

hitting the 29-year-old Broner with a left hook then immediately doubling it up. Broner went into a shell mode, absorbing more blows but managed to hold on to the end of the round.

Pacquiao landed his best punch in the ninth with a blistering left on the chin that sent Broner back peddling towards the ropes. But Broner showed he can take a punch as he stayed on his feet and survived another punishing round.

Pacquiao is now hoping to avenge his 2015 loss to Mayweather which became the richest one-day sporting event in history. Immediately after the fight Pacquiao called out Mayweather. "Tell him to come back to the ring and we will fight," Pacquiao said. "I am willing to fight again Floyd Mayweather. If he is willing to come back in boxing."

Mayweather, who helped promote Saturday's boxing card, was non-committal when asked if he would get back in the ring with Pacquiao. "Right now I am living the happy life," he said. Mayweather also visited Pacquiao in his dressing room before the fight. "He just said hello. Wished me luck," Pacquiao said.

Pacquiao went to work from the opening bell on executing the fight plan he put together after reuniting with his long-time trainer Freddie Roach. He was the more active of the two boxers and it didn't take long for Broner to get frustrated with Pacquiao's speed as Broner delivered a right forearm shiver to his opponent's jaw at the end of the second round.

Pacquiao did a good job of setting up solid head and body shots with well-timed head fakes and jabs. His most effective punch in the early rounds was a body shot and then a left hook to the face as Broner ducked down to protect his midsection.

Pacquiao had a good sixth round but got caught at the end with an uppercut and left hook on the chin—though even that wasn't enough for Broner to win the round. Pacquiao's best rounds were seven through nine but the only blemish on his night was he couldn't get his second knockout in a row.

"I can still be a greasy fighter and give my best at the age of 40," he said. "I wanted to be more aggressive but (trainer Buboy Fernandez) told me to counter and wait for opportunities." Broner seemed content to simply flail away for most of the fight with a slapping jab that hardly connected.

Broner said after the fight he was pleased with his performance and disagreed with the scoring. "You all know I beat that boy," Broner said. "They trying to get that money again with Pacquiao and Floyd but it's cool. I ain't worrying about that."

Mayweather won the 2015 bout with Pacquiao in a contest that generated \$600 million in revenue and a record 4.6 million pay per view buys but failed to live up to its "Fight of the Century" hype. Pacquiao was hampered after suffering a torn right rotator cuff while training for Mayweather.

Mayweather, who turns 42 next month, recently earned \$9 million for knocking down a Japanese kick boxer three times in the first round of a New Years Eve spectacle in Japan. Pacquiao last fought in July, 2018, when he scored his first knockout in six years with a seventh-round stoppage of Argentina's Matthysee in Kuala Lumpur.

It is his first bout in the US since a unanimous decision win over Jessie Vargas in Las Vegas in November 2016. Since then, Pacquiao's career had followed an uncertain trajectory, with a shock defeat to Australia's Jeff Horn in Brisbane in 2017 followed by a year-long absence from the ring. —AFP



LAS VEGAS: Manny Pacquiao celebrates after defeating Adrien Broner by unanimous decision during the WBA welterweight championship at MGM Grand Garden Arena on Saturday in Las Vegas, Nevada. —AFP