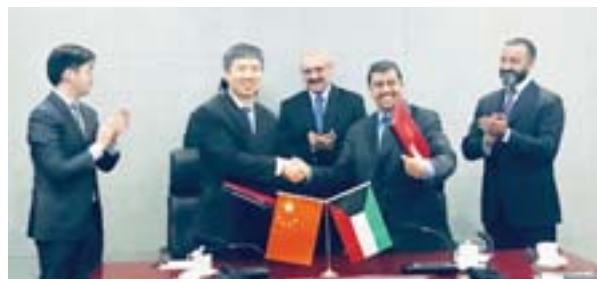




3 KFAED signs KD 9 million loan agreement with China



6 Jordan hits out at Israel's new airport near Red Sea



11 Zain recognized as 'Best Telecom Company in Kuwait' for 2018



28 Japan edge profligate Saudis to reach Asian Cup quarterfinals



Kuwait to boost spending as budget deficit hits KD 7.7bn

Hajraf vows fiscal reforms • Oil seen at \$55 per barrel • Non-oil revenues to increase

MP calls to expel 'bachelors' from Salmiya block 13

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Saleh Ashour yesterday called for immediately expelling all single men from block 13 of Salmiya because of the "danger" they pose to Kuwaiti families in the area and for putting public services under pressure. The lawmaker called on the government to form a committee from various ministries and government agencies to draw a plan for evicting them from the residential area. He said the presence of "unmarried" men in the area has created numerous problems for residents and contributed to the deterioration in the standard of public services in the area.



Saleh Ashour

Continued on Page 24

By Nawara Fattahova and Agencies

KUWAIT: Kuwait's estimated budget deficit for the 2019/2020 fiscal year could soar to KD 7.7 billion (\$25.3 billion), Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf said yesterday. Kuwait plans to spend KD 22.5 billion (\$74 billion) in total expenditure for the fiscal year 2019/2020 - a 4.7 percent rise - based on an average of \$55 per barrel of Kuwaiti crude oil, the minister told a press conference held at the Public Institution for Social Security.

Total revenues stand at KD 16.4 billion (\$54 billion), KD 14.5 billion (\$47.7 billion) of which are oil revenues, while non-oil revenues amount to KD 1.86 billion (\$6.1 billion), 5.4 percent higher compared to the current year's budget. Hajraf revealed wages and employee bonuses make up 71 percent of total expenditure, while capital spending accounts for 17 percent, with 12 percent forming other expenses. The budget projects state subsidies of KD 3.97 billion.

Hajraf said the estimated budget deficit of KD 7.7 billion takes into account revenue deductions of 10 percent earmarked for the Future Generations Fund, which is managed by the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA). KIA, a major global investor, manages about \$592 billion in assets, according to the Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute, which ranks it the world's fourth-biggest sovereign wealth fund.

The finance ministry said the fiscal deficit is expected to decline by 2.1 percent compared to current budget figures. Hajraf said the deficit will be totally covered by general state reserves. The 2019-2020 budget indicates a breakeven oil price range of \$75 to \$80 per barrel, based on an average daily oil output of 2.8 mil-



KUWAIT: Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf speaks during a press conference yesterday to announce the budget for the year 2019/2020. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

lion barrels. Brent crude oil futures traded around \$63 yesterday. "We should not depend completely on the rising price of oil, but decrease expenses. Oil expenses also increased due to spending on oil refining and development," Hajraf said.

The budget has been designed to stimulate economic growth through maintaining capital expenditure levels of 17 percent, Hajraf pointed out, suggesting a correlation between the completion of development projects and cutting unnecessary expenses. "We are firmly on the path towards fiscal reforms," he emphasized, cit-

ing stricter measures dealing with government debt collection, including a settlement of KD 341.4 million (\$1.1 billion) for the next fiscal year.

"This starts with cutting unnecessary expenses. Public institutions should all cooperate to reduce expenses," explained Hajraf. "We also will cooperate with the parliament to pass a new law on the rules of preparing the state budget. This will cause a boom in accounting systems, which will result in more precise financial expectations, actual performance and transparent results," he pointed out.

News in brief

Deportations fall by 45%

KUWAIT: An informed source said authorities deported nearly 17,000 expats in 2018 compared to 29,000 in 2017, a drop of 45 percent. The source said the drop in the number of residency violators is the main reason behind the drop in the number of deportees, in addition to instructions by the government to not deport any expat on malicious or illegal grounds. The source said 31,000 expats were deported in 2016 following several security campaigns in that period. He added that deportation is now quicker, as any person who is detained at the deportation prison does not remain there more than a week. He said the main reasons behind deportations are residency violations and felonies, especially those related to traffic. — Al-Qabas

WhatsApp limits text forwards

JAKARTA: Facebook Inc's WhatsApp messenger service is globally limiting the number of times a user can forward a message to five, in a bid to fight "misinformation and rumors", company executives said yesterday. "We're imposing a limit of five messages all over the world as of today," Victoria Grand, vice president for policy and communications at WhatsApp, said at an event in the Indonesian capital. Previously, a WhatsApp user could forward a message to 20 individuals or groups. — Reuters

Qatar to buy \$500m Lebanon bonds

DOHA: Wealthy Qatar said yesterday it will purchase \$500 million of government bonds in debt-ridden Lebanon. "Qatar will buy Lebanese government bonds valued at \$500 million," Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani said. The purchase would "strengthen the Lebanese economy", and the decision was taken after a meeting yesterday between Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and Lebanese President Michel Aoun, he said. — AFP

Indian man killed by lion

NEW DELHI: An Indian man was mauled to death by a lion after he scaled the wall of a zoo in northern Punjab state, officials said yesterday. The man climbed the six-meter wall of Chhatbir Zoo, home to four lions, on Sunday and entered the restricted area where he was attacked. Hearing his screams, the staff rushed to try and rescue the man. — AFP

Israel strikes in Syria in open assault on Iran

JERUSALEM: Israel struck what it said were Iranian targets in Syria yesterday in response to missile fire it blamed on Iran, sparking concerns of an escalation after a report that 11 fighters were killed. Israel announced the strikes against facilities it said belonged to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force as they were occurring, continuing its recent practice of speaking more openly about such raids. It said the strikes were in

response to a medium-range, surface-to-surface missile the Quds Force fired from Syria at the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights on Sunday, which Israeli air defenses intercepted.

"The air force struck a strong blow against Iranian targets in Syria after Iran fired a missile from there toward Israel," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said. "We do not allow such acts of aggression to pass by. We are acting against Iran and against the Syrian forces who are tools of Iranian aggression."

Iranian media quoted Air Force Commander Aziz Nasirzadeh as saying "our current and future generations are eagerly and full-heartedly ready for battling with the Zionist regime and eradicating them from the face of the earth".

Continued on Page 24

Philippines seeks peace with Muslim self-rule referendum

COTABATO: A decades-long push to halt the violence that has claimed some 150,000 lives in the southern Philippines culminated yesterday with a vote on giving the nation's Muslim minority greater control over the region. The poll is the final step in a peace deal with the Catholic-majority country's largest Muslim rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which has been a key force in a separatist insurgency that has raged since the 1970s.

Super blood wolf moon wows gazers

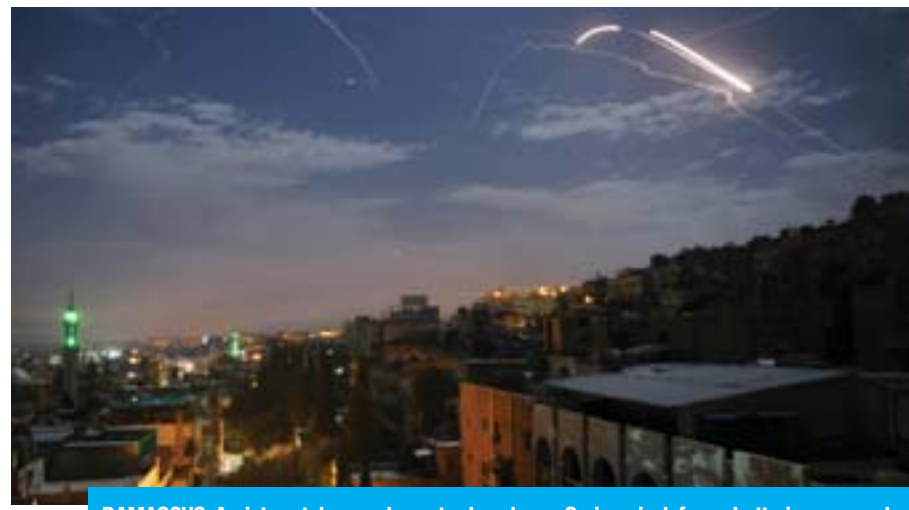
WASHINGTON: An unusual set of celestial circumstances came together over Sunday night and the wee hours of yesterday for sky watchers in Europe, Africa and the Americas, where the moon was fully obscured before lighting up again with a faint red glow. In the streets of Mexico City, Los Angeles and Paris and in the Moroccan desert, moon gazers turned to the sky to observe the phenomenon, around midnight in the

Americas, and shortly before dawn in Europe and Africa.

The eclipse lasted about three hours: During the first hour the full moon was gradually swallowed up by the shadow of the Earth, then an hour of total eclipse where it was not invisible but instead appeared tinted in hues of red, orange and pink, followed finally by its full reemergence, bright and shining. The full moon appeared bigger than normal because it was closer to the Earth - about 358,000 km away - earning it the nickname "supermoon".

Other monikers include a "wolf moon," a traditional way of coining an eclipse in the month of January, and a "blood moon" because of its rusty, red color.

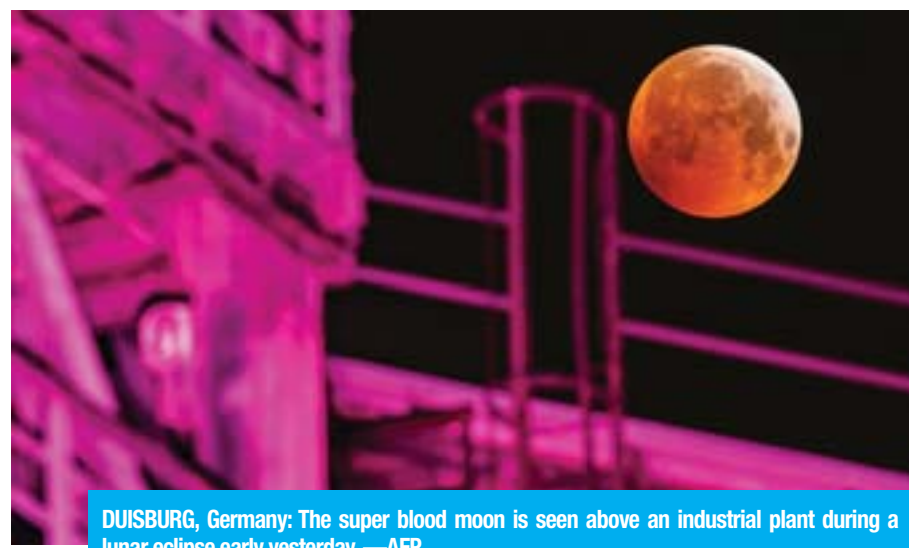
Continued on Page 24



DAMASCUS: A picture taken early yesterday shows Syrian air defense batteries responding to Israeli missiles targeting the capital. — AFP



COTABATO, Philippines: A woman shows her inked thumb at a voting precinct on the southern island of Mindanao yesterday. — AFP



DUISBURG, Germany: The super blood moon is seen above an industrial plant during a lunar eclipse early yesterday. — AFP

Local

Amir receives Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's new Board of Directors

Amir meets SME funds' board, Awqaf minister, Canada's Governor General



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Oil Minister and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel, Deputy Chairman and CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Hashem Sayyed Hashem, and KPC's new Board of Directors. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and State Minister for Municipality Affairs Fahad Al-Shola.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the Governor General of Canada Julie Payette.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan, the Director-General of Kuwait National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development Ibrahim Al-Kandari, and the fund's new Board of Directors.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Oil Minister and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel, Deputy Chairman and CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Hashem Sayyed Hashem, and KPC's new Board of Directors. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His

Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received the minister and new KPC board.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan, the Director-General of Kuwait National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development Ibrahim Al-Kandari, and the fund's new Board of

Directors. His Highness the Prime Minister received members of the fund's new board later yesterday.

In addition, His Highness the Amir received Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and State Minister for Municipality Affairs Fahad Al-Shola, who presented His Highness with a copy of the Holy Quran. Minister Shola also presented copies of the Holy Quran to His Highness the Crown

Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister. Also yesterday, His Highness the Amir received the Governor General of Canada Julie Payette, also Commander-in-Chief of Canadian Armed Forces, and her accompanying delegation. In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince received Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel and KPC board members.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel and KPC board members.



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



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and State Minister for Municipality Affairs Fahad Al-Shola.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and State Minister for Municipality Affairs Fahad Al-Shola.

Speaker holds official talks with Egyptian counterpart

KUWAIT: Speaker of Kuwait National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem held talks yesterday with Speaker of the Egyptian House of Representatives Ali Abdelaal and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, both sides confirmed the deep and strong bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries and ways to enhance cooperation in all aspects especially parliamentary field.

They also discussed subjects of mutual concerns and latest developments on the regional and international scenes.

The meeting was attended by Head of the accompanying honor mission MP Ali Al-Deqbasi, and parliamentary members Rakan Al-Nesf, Khalid Al-Shatti, Yousef Al-Fadalah, Askar Al-Enzi, Dr Khalil Abul, and Kuwait Ambassador to Egypt Tareq Al-Quni.

After the talks, Speaker Ghanem held a luncheon honoring the visiting guest and his accompanying delegation at the Grand Hall in National Assembly which was attended also by a number of parliamentary members. The Egyptian Speaker and his accompanying delegation had arrived in Kuwait on Sunday on a five-day official visit. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Speaker of Kuwait's National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with his Egyptian counterpart Ali Abdelaal. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait to implement five-year, first of its kind anti-corruption strategy

Complying with UN's anti-corruption agreement to achieve sustainable development

KUWAIT: Minister of Justice Fahad Al-Afasi briefed the cabinet yesterday about a five-year anti-corruption strategy based on rule of law and complete transparency. Afasi, also Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, said the 2019-2024 strategy, the first of its kind in Kuwait, includes four major objectives divided into 13 priorities which were distributed over 47 initiatives. The strategy, honoring the 'New Kuwait 2035' vision, aimed at complying with UN's anti-corruption agreement in order to achieve best sustainable development indicators, a government statement said. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who chaired the cabinet meeting, assigned all government departments to implement the strategy.

Meanwhile, the cabinet assigned Ministry of Information to launch a campaign aimed at shedding light on history of Kuwait's flag and how to respect the flag as a national symbol. They said all government departments should hoist Kuwait flag on their buildings and replace the damaged flags, as well as instructing public and private schools to raise the flag and conduct the morning flag ceremonies. The cabinet also assigned Ministry of Awwaf and Islamic Affairs to study a five-year strategy for the establishment of centers for the memorization of Holy Quran nationwide.

State budget
The government executives approved the 2019-2020 state budget which included KD 22.5 billion expenditures and \$16.4 billion revenues. On the other hand, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled



Cabinet approves 2019-2020 budget

Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the cabinet about his participation in the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit in Beirut, Lebanon, as a representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He talked about His Highness the Amir's initiative to launch a \$200 million fund to support technology and digital economy, and that Kuwait pledged \$50 million to the fund, which would be managed by Kuwait-based Arab



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the cabinet's meeting yesterday. — KUNA

Fund for Economic and Social Development. The cabinet expressed gratitude for His Highness the Amir for his initiative. The cabinet, meanwhile, assigned Minister of

Information and Minister of State for Youth to supervise Kuwait Anti-Doping Agency, and approved an air transport agreement with Canada. — KUNA

Kuwait, Germany eye closer investment cooperation

BERLIN: Germany's Federal Minister of Transport and Digital Infrastructure Andreas Scheuer expressed yesterday his country's desire to enhance cooperation prospects with Kuwait in commerce, industry, and technology. The German top official made his remarks during his meeting with Kuwaiti Ambassador to Germany Najeeb Al-Bader in Berlin, noting there is currently a steady growth in the German-Kuwaiti cooperation.

Meanwhile, Bader said that he expressed to Scheuer his country's aspiration for bigger German investments in the Kuwaiti market, adding that German companies could take advantage of the privileges and facilitations the country provides for foreign investors. The meeting also discussed ways to benefit from the German technology in Kuwait, as well as hopes that Germany contributes and takes part in the 'New Kuwait Vision 2030' through its pioneering companies in the Kuwaiti market, he said. It also addressed ways to expand investment opportunities between the two countries, in addition to bilateral cooperation in transportation and tourism, the Kuwaiti diplomat said, adding talks also focused on boosting cooperation in tourism due to the increased flock of Kuwaiti travelers to Germany recently.

In 2018, over 60,000 Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti tourists were granted visas to visit Germany, Bader noted, adding such a significant figure reflects Germany's popularity as a favorite tourist destination. Furthermore, Germany is an important strategic partner to Kuwait, especially since the GCC-member state has recently topped the charts in total investments inside the EU-member country, proving the two countries' desire to deepen their commercial and investment ties, he noted. — KUNA



BERLIN: Germany's Federal Minister of Transport and Digital Infrastructure Andreas Scheuer meets with Kuwaiti Ambassador to Germany Najeeb Al-Bader. — KUNA

Deputy FM meets UNICEF Palestine Rep

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah held talks yesterday with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund's (UNICEF) Special Representative in the State of Palestine Genevieve Boutin. The discussions, held in the presence of a number of Kuwaiti diplomats, revolved around UNICEF's efforts to provide urgent healthcare aid to Palestinian children. — KUNA



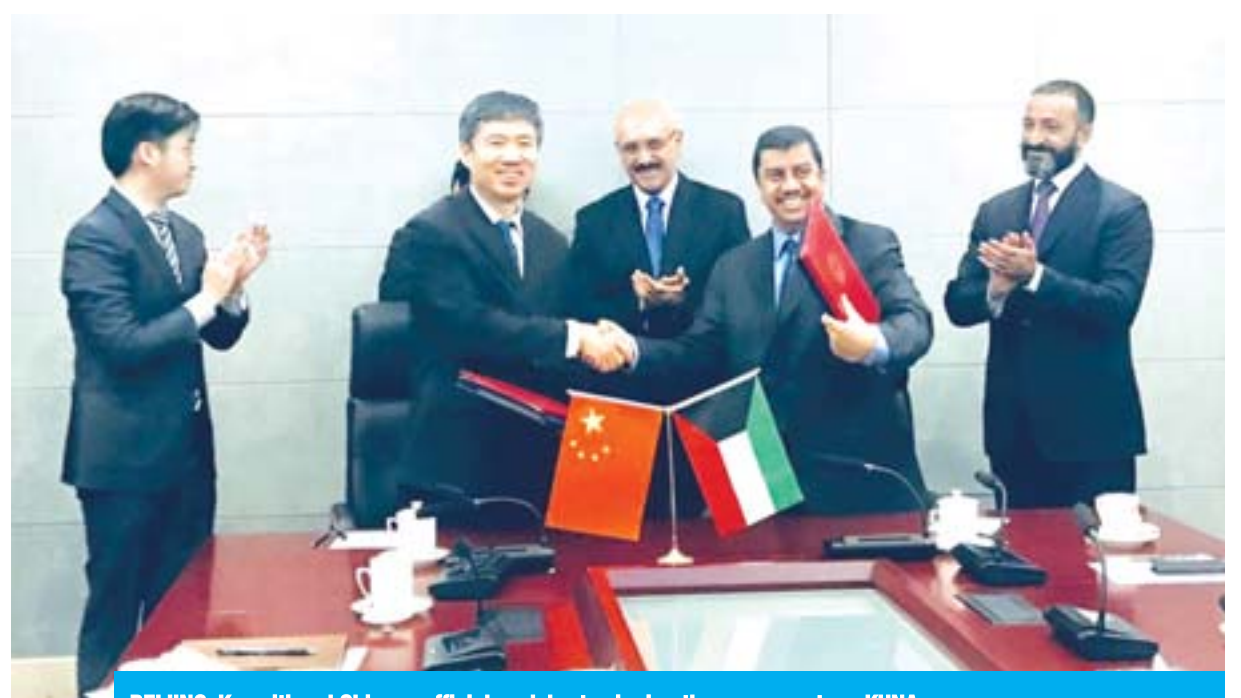
KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with the UNICEF's Special Representative in the State of Palestine Genevieve Boutin. — KUNA

Kuwait fund inks KD 9 million loan deal with China

BEIJING: The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed a KD 9 million (about \$30.6 million) loan agreement with the People's Republic of China worth to finance the expansion of the Guiyang II People's Hospital. The total cost of the project from the reserves of quantities, prices, taxes and interest during implementation is estimated at KD 28 million (about \$92 million), the fund said in a press release yesterday.

The loan will cover about 32 percent of the total project costs, while the Guiyang People's Government will cover the rest of its costs, it said. It said the project aims to contribute to covering the increasing demand for medical services, especially for neurological diseases in Guizhou Province and neighboring provinces, through the implementation of the expansion of the Guiyang II People's Hospital.

The project will contribute to supporting social development both in Guiyang Municipality and in the Guizhou Province and in neighboring regions in general. The agreement was signed on behalf of the Kuwaiti side by KFAED's deputy Director General Ghanim Al-Ghunaiman and on



BEIJING: Kuwaiti and Chinese officials celebrate signing the agreement. — KUNA

behalf of the Chinese side by Deputy Director General of the International Cooperation in the Finance Ministry

Wang Jong Jing, Kuwaiti Ambassador to China Sameh Johar Hayat attended the signing ceremony. — KUNA

68 percent Kuwaitis shop online: Study

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Over 68 percent of Kuwaitis prefer shopping online, which has become a necessity after it used to be just an option for shoppers, according to a recent academic study. The study, conducted by Kuwait College of Science and Technology (KCST) administration professor Randa Deyab on online shopping habits amongst local consumers, relied on a questionnaire answered by Kuwaitis, which showed that over 90 percent of them have Instagram accounts, 63 percent have Twitter accounts and 58 percent use online shopping apps instead of visiting websites.

The study also showed that 52 percent of the products and services purchased online are repeated five times a month, and that over 60 percent of the shoppers prefer purchasing garments and shoes online. The study also showed that cosmetics are the fewest items bought online. Deyab noted that being regional leaders of creativity and risk management, Kuwaiti entrepreneurs have full ability to satisfy consumers, which is a major success factor. She added that to satisfy consumers, it is very important to study their habits and trends to create a healthy economy.

Deyab also stressed that Kuwaiti consumers are the largest spenders both locally and internationally, as Kuwait has a high per capita income and GDP with the highest living standards in the region. Moreover, Deyab said traditional stores need to keep up with the new shopping trends, especially since Kuwaiti consumers are slowly and steadily refraining from traditional shopping methods and tend more to shop online.

Fire directorate begins inspecting high-rise buildings

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The prevention sector at Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) began an inspection campaign of high-rise buildings to make sure they meet prevention conditions, in the presence of Deputy Director General for Prevention Sector Maj Gen Khalid Abdullah Fahd, who personally supervised the campaign. Major Gen Khalid Abdullah said the choice of buildings that are over 150 m tall was to make sure they are safe and meet fire conditions. "We were keen on starting the campaign by inspecting the third highest building in Kuwait - KIP-CO tower - which is 270 meters high and contains all prevention requirements," he said.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Autism Center announced launching its training courses for teachers and trainers working at special needs schools for the 2018/2019 academic year.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A falcon caught flying in Al-Mutflaa desert. — Photo by Hatem Al-Sheikh (KUNA)

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Burgan Bank holds blood donation drive

KUWAIT: In keeping with its corporate social responsibility agenda, Burgan Bank recently organized a blood donation drive at its headquarters for the staff. The blood donation drive in partnership with the Kuwait Central Blood Bank took place under the theme of 'you too can save a life', and was aimed at raising awareness on the need for blood and the difference it can make in people's lives plus shed the light on the importance of donating blood all year long to support the Blood Bank. The initiative gathered 55 number of volunteers from the bank staff to deliver a total of 45 blood bags.

Burgan Bank's blood donation drive comes in line

with its long-standing commitment to improving and sustaining the overall healthcare sector as much as the banking sector. The bank highlighted that donating blood is a noble act, for both the donor and the recipient as it enhances community culture and wellbeing.

Burgan Bank's social responsibility framework revolves around launching and supporting humanitarian initiatives that help in uplifting the needs of various sectors in the society. The bank will continue to open more chapters in its dedication towards the social fabric of Kuwait through similar activities.

Burgan Bank's support of this initiative falls under its dynamic full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural and health driven initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a leading Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the community.



Bayt.com breaks record with 35 million registered professionals

KUWAIT: Bayt.com, the Middle East's #1 jobsite, just reported reaching a record of 35 million members in their database of job seekers and professionals. According to Bayt.com's recent report, 16,000 job seeking professionals are now joining the jobsite every single day.

The size of Bayt.com's database is now larger than the population of Saudi Arabia for instance. It is also three times larger than the entire population of the UAE. Based on these figures, more than 50 percent of the Middle East and North Africa's online labor force now have a Bayt.com account. Recently, Bayt.com also experienced an increased activity among the 4.5 million managerial and executive talent registered on the site.

At the same time, Bayt.com reported a sharp surge in online job availability, which increased by 104 percent during the year 2018. This also connects to the reports on traffic and job applications on this site.

Close to half a million visits are made daily to Bayt.com and north of 18 million job applications have been submitted via Bayt.com last year.

"Today Bayt.com hits a huge milestone," said Omar Tahboub, GM of Bayt.com. "The fact that the majority of the region's labor force trusts us with their career and actively uses our job site for finding opportunities is why we continue with our mission and dedication in the region. We want to empower more and more people with the tools and knowledge to build their lifestyles of choice. Reaching 35 million professionals and connecting them with opportunities sets our next challenge to reach and empower the rest of the MENA labor force."

Bayt.com was founded in the year 2000; a time of very low internet penetration in the region. It expanded its operations over the years and now works with over 40,000 companies, governments, and organizations. The jobsite partners with universities and educational institutions to onboard and prepare students to join the labor force. Likewise, Bayt.com proved to be popular among the seasoned professionals, with one million director and C-level professionals being members of the jobsite.



Omar Tahboub

Local

Ministry of Electricity and Water employees plan sit-in on Sunday

Demands include reconsidering working hours, approving allowances

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A number of Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) employees urged the minister himself to intervene and stop what they called 'abusing employees in some ministry sectors,' announcing plans to organize a sit-in on Sunday Jan 27 to voice their demands. The employees stressed that some of them work in extremely hazardous environments and are responsible for others' lives and safety, and thus they should be treated in a better way. They also made a list of their demands including reconsidering their working hours, explaining the point behind those set by the Civil Service Commission (CSC), getting allowances for food, hard work, overtime, and pollution, reconsidering CSC instructions on annual assessment, as well as what they described as 'abusive' and 'moody' treatment by some seniors. Notably, employees had decried a recent ministry decision to follow CSC instructions on extending official working hours to seven: from 7:30 am to 2:30 pm. Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Khaled Al-Fadhel was quoted in the press yesterday saying that the ministry will adhere to the CSC instructions, despite earlier promises to put the implementation on hold.

24 cases
Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah stressed that out of its responsibilities and constitutional duties, the foreign ministry takes all needed legal measures concerning cases related to Kuwait and its subjects. Responding to an inquiry made by MP Safaa Al-Hashem about the cases filed by Kuwaiti diplomatic missions against people slandering



Staff lament 'abusive', 'moody' treatment

Kuwait and its iconic figures, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled stressed that the ministry usually contacts the concerned bodies in various countries requesting taking legal action against slanderers on various media, adding that 24 such cases have been filed but no final verdicts had been passed yet.

New charters
Kuwait Municipality's deputy director for Capital and Jabra affairs Faisal Al-Jumaa said nine charters had been set and reviewed by the legal department pending referral to the Municipal Council for study and approval. Jumaa explained that the new charters include markets, shades, temporary tents, agriculture, stores, ads and road occupation. Jumaa added that charters on construction in private, residential, investment, commercial and industrial areas are ready and will be soon referred to the Municipal Council.

Replacement policy
Well-informed sources at the justice ministry said the ministry asked the CSC to appoint Kuwaiti youth in various vacant positions it had in various departments and courts in order to help implement the replacement policy. The sources stressed that applicants for these jobs should apply to the CSC and not to the ministry itself, especially after the circulation of some social media notes urging Kuwaitis with school leaving or intermediate school certificates to quickly apply to the justice ministry for immediate appointment as data entry clerks, typists and couriers, which was completely denied by



the ministry. Meanwhile, the sources said Minister of Justice and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Fahd Al-Afasi referred two ministry employees to the public prosecution for suspected manipulation of reports and delaying the execution of procedures in the real estate registration department.

Airport tender
The Ministry of Public Works (MPW) urged qualified contractors to file their bids for the tender of the second phase of developing Kuwait International Airport no later than March 24, 2019. Notably, 22

contractors qualified by MPW last June will be invited to a preliminary meeting on Feb 4, 2109. Meanwhile, informed MPW sources said the committee investigating streets that flooded during heavy rain was about to conclude its investigations and is expected to submit its final report to minister Jenan Bushehri by the end of this month. The sources added that the committee had questioned some KNPC specialists to make sure the bitumen (asphalt) substance was used in paving various roads, and that more officials will be questioned prior to issuing the final report.

Ministry approves 'facilitated hajj' proposal

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and head of the supreme hajj and umrah committee Fareed Al-Emadi announced that the committee approved the proposed 'facilitated Hajj' idea, which involves allocating 10 Hajj convoys serving 200 pilgrim each (total of 2,000 pilgrims) for KD 1,300 per pilgrim. Speaking in a statement to the press, Emadi said that the committee is keen on enabling the largest possible number of people to perform Hajj for fair prices, hoping that the new plan would succeed the way low-cost convoys for bedoons did. Further, Emadi said that a tender had been offered amongst convoys to select the top five which offer the least prices for bedoons, adding that bedoon pilgrims would also receive financial support from the Awqaf secretariat general and Al-Zakat House.

Food supplies
In collaboration with the awqaf secretariat general, Kuwait Food Bank continues to support needy families, orphans and widows by providing them with food supplies throughout the year. The bank's manager Salem Al-Hamar said that the bank's charity program known as 'Masraf Al-Asheyyat' continues to provide needy Muslim families with food supplies, adding that the bank has a constantly updated databank with information about such families and that supplies are delivered to them by teams of volunteers throughout Kuwait. Hamar added that unregistered needy families desiring to receive supplies and aid can apply at the bank's headquarters in Qurtuba, noting that distribution is usually done off camera to protect the dignity of the recipients.

Gas leak causes fire at labor residence

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Firemen fought a blaze in a room at a company's labor residence. Mina Abdullah firemen found the fire had gutted the room following a gas leakage. The building was evacuated and the fire was put out without any injuries.



KUWAIT: Damage seen inside the labor residence after the fire was extinguished.

Smuggling foiled
Nuwiseeb customs officers foiled a passenger's attempt to smuggle two pieces of hashish and illicit tablets into the country. Meanwhile, the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition destroyed 11 tons of spoiled fish that arrived from Iran.



Drugs found with a passenger who tried to smuggle them through the Nuwiseeb border outlet.



A shipment containing spoiled fish being destroyed shortly after it arrived from Iran.

News in brief

Driving licenses transactions online

KUWAIT: A police source said the traffic sector has completed the installation of advanced systems to process driving licenses online, as several employees received training courses to receive transactions online and process them. The source said that only citizens' transactions will initially be accepted online when the system is launched tentatively within two months, and expats' applications will be accepted later. The source said this move has special attention from Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Khalid Al-Jarrah in order to eliminate paperwork. The interior ministry signed earlier a contract with a Polish company specialized in issuing smartcards for this purpose. — Al-Anbaa

Environmental case

Police authorities in Mubarak Al-Kabeer responded to a call from a man about a couple burying a "corpse" near a power transformer in Masayel. Detectives, police and forensic officers who went to the site were surprised to find the carcass was that of a dog. The couple will be summoned for questioning, as the environmental police are those concerned with such cases. — Al-Anbaa

Thief caught

Sulaibiya detectives are questioning a citizen with regards to five thefts he committed before being sent to the central prison to serve a seven-year jail sentence for earlier offences. Detectives arrested the suspect after he attempted to escape on foot. He confessed to committing the five thefts - three from camps and two vehicles. — Al-Anbaa

Fishermen union welcomes imported fish marking



KUWAIT: Ministry of Commerce inspectors oversee the process of marking imported fish at the fish market in Sharq on Sunday. — KUNA photos



By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Kuwaiti Fishermen Union Thaher Al-Suwayyan welcomed the decision to cut part of the tailfins of imported fish to mark them, and stressed that many consumers also share the same opinion as this helps fight cheating and commercial fraud. Suwayyan called for more control in local markets to fine violators displaying imported fish for sale without cutting the fins.

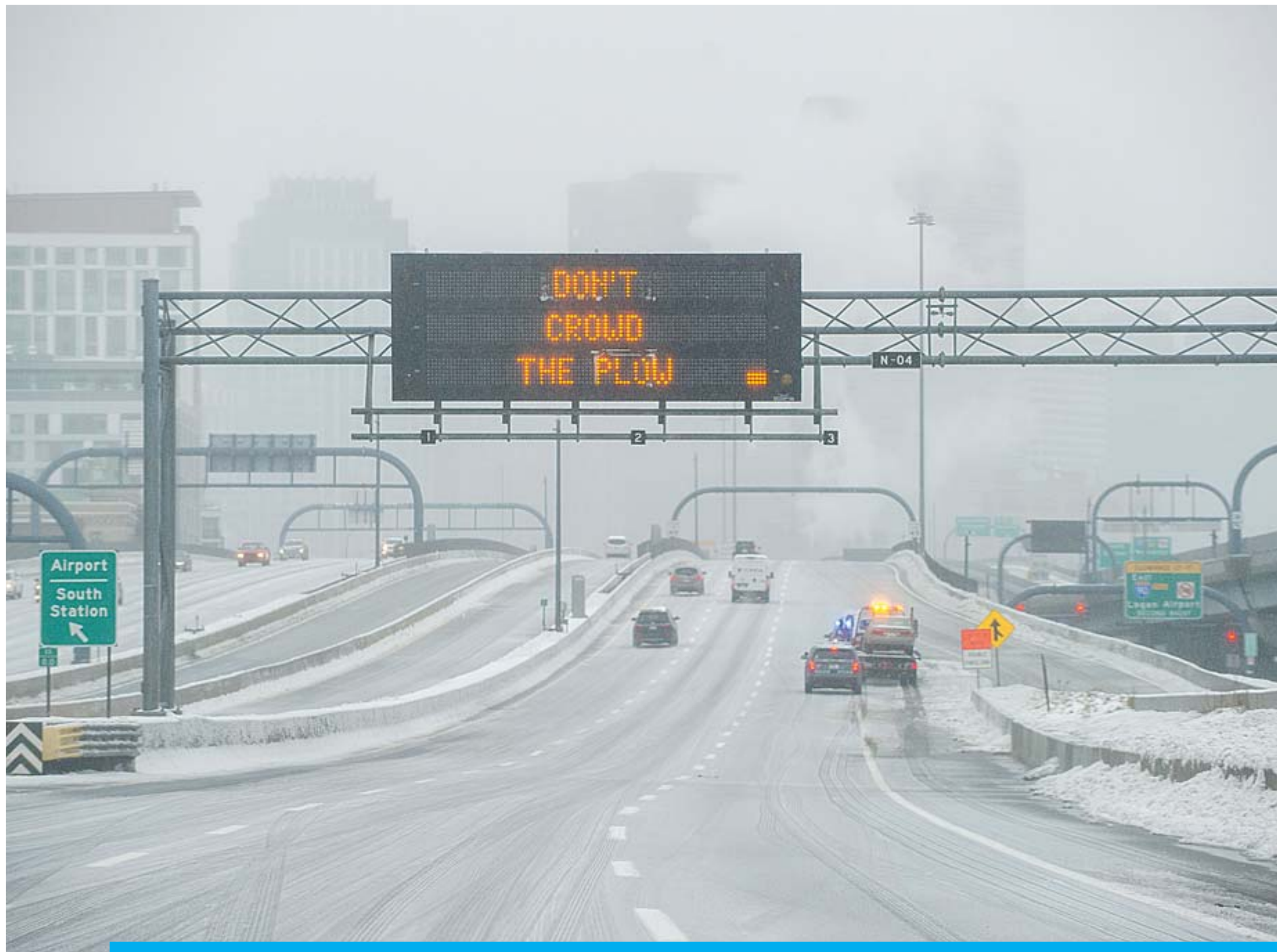


Taliban attack on Afghan security base kills over 100

Car bomb linked to the New IRA rattles Northern Ireland

Page 8

Page 9



BOSTON: Ice and snow cover Interstate 93 through the city during Winter Storm Harper. —AFP

'Life-and-death' cold grips US

'Minnesota and Wisconsin will see temperatures in the negative 20s'

BOSTON: Winter winds brought extreme cold and iced roads to the Midwestern and Eastern United States yesterday, with the US Martin Luther King Jr Day holiday and an ongoing government shutdown allowing many to heed official advice to stay indoors. The arctic blast of frigid air has followed a January storm that dumped more than a foot of snow and sleet across the Northeast, which started melting Sunday.

Temperatures fell to single-digits Fahrenheit (about -20 C) from New York City to Boston and through northern New England and froze melting snow late on Sunday and early Monday, said Marc Chenard at the

National Weather Service's Weather Prediction Center in College Park, Maryland. Winds up to 30 to 40 miles per hour (48-64 kph) added possibly deadly wind chill.

"This is definitely dangerous, life-and-death kind of weather happening," Chenard said. "Minnesota and Wisconsin will see temperatures in the negative 20s." "Boston will be just 3 degrees (Fahrenheit) this morning, with wind chills of minus 12 or more," he said. "New York City and DC will be in that same range, maybe hitting the teens later today. It'll be record or near-record cold."

The NWS issued wind-chill advisories and warnings

for more than 10 states, from North Dakota and to East Coast metropolitan centers. High temperatures for Monday are forecast at 17 Fahrenheit (minus 8 Celsius) for New York City and 12 F (minus 11 C) for Boston. Many Americans had the day off work on Monday, either because of the holiday or because they are among the furloughed federal government workers who find themselves in the longest shutdown in U.S. history, caused by an impasse over funding U.S. President Donald Trump's plans to build more barriers on the U.S.-Mexico border.

More than 6,000 flights were delayed, mostly in

New York and New England, according to FlightAware.com, down from more than 14,000 on Sunday. More than 500 flights were canceled early Monday compared with more than 2,000 Sunday, the website reported. Tuesday's weather will be only slightly warmer, Chenard said, with temperatures reaching the low 20s Fahrenheit in the Northeast. By Wednesday, some areas such as Boston will be in the high 30s or low 40s. Washington D.C. temperatures might reach 50 degrees, he said. But the relatively warmer temperatures won't last. Another arctic blast is on its way in time for next weekend. —Reuters

China's population growth slows down despite two-child policy

BEIJING: China's population grew at a slower rate last year despite the abolition of the one-child policy, official data showed yesterday, raising fears an ageing society will pile further pressure on an already slowing economy. China's government raised the limit to two children in 2016 to rejuvenate the world's most populous country, which has nearly 1.4 billion people, and experts say it may remove the cap next year. But the change does not seem to have inspired couples to have more children, partly due to urbanization and the higher cost of living in the world's second biggest economy, according to experts.

"Decades-long social and economic transformations have prepared an entirely new generation in China, for whom marriage and childbearing no longer have the importance as they once did for their parents generation," said Wang Feng, a sociology professor at University of California, Irving. There were 15.23 million live births in 2018, a drop of two million from the year before, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed. With 9.93 million deaths, this led to a growth rate of 3.81 per thousand in 2018, a dip from 5.32 per thousand the previous year.

Population growth is at its second-lowest since the founding of the People's Republic of China, Wang said, adding that the lowest ever growth was in 1960, when the country was going through a famine. Still, China's total population rose by 5.3 million in 2018 to 1.395 billion people, retaining its title as

the world's most populous nation. NBS commissioner Ning Jize said population growth had peaked, but said the country still had huge potential. "China's labor participation rate is not considered low worldwide, more than 700 million of our 900 million people (of working age) are employed, and there is still room (for growth)," he said.

Workforce decline

China's workforce — those aged between 16 and 59 — was 897.3 million last year, a 4.7 million drop from 2017, NBS data showed. This is the seventh consecutive year of decline, noted He Yafu, an independent demographer based in the southern Guangdong province. The workforce is on track to decline by as much as 23 percent by 2050. "The low birth rate has led to a seriously ageing population. On one hand, families are getting smaller, reducing support for the elderly; on the other hand, the elderly population to workforce is growing, which increases the burden on the working population," he said.

Signs of China's falling population growth had emerged when data released by some local authorities indicated a significant drop in births last year. In Qingdao, a city in eastern Shandong province — one of China's most populous regions — births between January and November decreased by 21 percent to just over 81,000 compared to the previous year.

Introduced in 1979, the one-child policy was mainly enforced through fines but was also notorious for forced abortions and sterilizations, which caused birth rates to plummet. Exceptions were made for rural families whose first-born was a female, and for ethnic minorities. In a draft of China's new sweeping Civil Code, due to be introduced in 2020, all mention of "family planning" has been removed, suggesting that the limit on family sizes could be lifted. But the rising cost of living has discouraged many of child-bearing age, He said, adding that like with many countries around the world, fertility rates in rural areas are high but less so in the cities. —AFP

Israel opens new airport near Red Sea

RAMON AIRPORT: Israel inaugurated a new international airport yesterday in its desert south meant to boost tourism to the nearby Red Sea and serve as an emergency alternative to Tel Aviv's Ben-Gurion airport. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attended the inauguration ceremony at the sleek, glassy terminal, arriving on the ceremonial first flight. "Ramon airport, this is Arkia 683, we're very excited," Netanyahu said from the cockpit on arrival in an exchange with the tower relayed over loudspeakers. Initially Ramon Airport will handle only domestic flights, operated by Israeli carriers Arkia and Israir. A date has not yet been given for the start of international flights.

The new airport, named after Ilan Ramon, Israel's first astronaut who died in the crash of the space shuttle Columbia, will in future host jumbo

jets from around the globe. Its website says that it will be able to initially handle up to two million passengers annually, but will be able to expand to a capacity of 4.2 million by 2030. It says that it has a 3,600-metre-long runway and apron parking space for nine "large and wide-body aircraft". It also has freight-handling facilities.

Anti-missile fence

It will also replace Eilat's small municipal airfield, where for decades arriving aircraft have swooped past hotel towers. Construction costs for the new airport have been put at 1.7 billion shekels (\$455 million, 395 million euros). Work began in 2013 but original specifications for the project were revised to allow for upgrades.

The Israel Airports Authority (IAA) has said that the plans for the Ramon project were revised in light of lessons learned during the 2014 Gaza war. "In an emergency, not only will Israel's entire passenger air fleet be able to land and park there, but also additional aircraft," the IAA says. After a rocket fired by Hamas militants in Gaza hit near the perimeter of Ben Gurion

airport in 2014, international carriers suspended flights.

Jordan slams move

Jordan hit out at Israel's move to open a new international airport along their shared border close to the Red Sea, saying it would threaten the kingdom's airspace. "Jordan rejects the establishment of the Israeli airport in its current location," head of Jordan's Civil Aviation Regulatory Commission Haitham Misto said, according to state media.

Misto said the airport violated "international standards regarding respect for the sovereignty of airspace and territory of other countries". Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attended the opening ceremony earlier in the day of the Ramon Airport, meant to boost tourism in the Jewish state and serve as an emergency alternative to Tel Aviv's Ben-Gurion airport. Initially, the sleek new terminal will handle only domestic flights operated by Israeli carriers. A date has not yet been set for the start of international flights. Jordan first voiced its objection to the new Israeli airport when construction began in 2013. —AFP

International

Democratic Senator Kamala Harris jumps into 2020 White House race

Her slogan will be “For the People”

WASHINGTON: First-term Democratic Senator Kamala Harris of California, a rising party star and outspoken critic of President Donald Trump's immigration policies, launched her 2020 campaign for the White House on Monday by touting her prior career as a prosecutor. Harris, 54, the daughter of immigrants from Jamaica and India, enters the race with the potential advantage of being the Democratic candidate who looks most like the party's increasingly diverse base of young, female and minority voters.

“I have the unique experience of having been a leader in local government, state government and federal government,” she said in an appearance on ABC's Good Morning America. She timed her announcement for the US Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday honoring the slain civil rights leader, saying he was an aspirational leader. “We are the best of who we are when we fight to achieve these ideals,” she said on ABC. “We are flawed, we are not perfect, but we are a great country when we think about the principles upon which we're founded.”

The former California state attorney general has become popular with liberal activists for her tough questioning of Trump administration appointees and officials, including Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh and former Attorney General Jeff Sessions, during Senate hearings. Her campaign will focus on reducing the high cost of living with a middle-class tax credit, pursuing immigration and criminal justice changes and a Medicare-for-all healthcare system. She

has said she will reject corporate political action committee money.

Harris' campaign will be based in Baltimore, with a second office in Oakland, California. Her slogan will be “For the People,” in a nod to Harris' roots as a prosecutor, aides said. She will hold a launch rally in Oakland before the end of the month. As one of the earliest congressional critics of President Donald Trump's immigration policies, Harris has pushed hard for a deal to protect from deportation those immigrants who came to the country illegally as children, a group known as Dreamers.

Harris is the fifth Democrat to enter what is shaping up to be a crowded battle for the nomination to challenge Trump, the likely Republican candidate. She and other Democrats will have to navigate the party's debate about whether an establishment figure who can appeal to centrist voters or a fresh face who can energize its increasingly diverse and progressive base offers the best chance to beat Trump in 2020. Harris, who made history in 2016 as the first black woman elected to the U.S. Senate from California, has embraced the party's diversity ahead of a Democratic nominating campaign where minority voters and liberal activists are expected to have an outsized voice.

Former prosecutor

She has pushed back against critics of “identity politics,” who she says are using the term as a pejorative to marginalize issues of race, gender and sexual orienta-

tion. “It is used to try and shut us up,” Harris told a conference of liberal activists last summer. The former San Francisco prosecutor drew notice when her rapid-fire grilling of Sessions during a 2017 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing caused him to complain. “It makes me nervous,” Sessions said.

In September, she was among a handful of Democrats who aggressively questioned Kavanaugh at his Supreme Court confirmation hearing about his views on abortion and on the special counsel probe into potential Russian meddling in the 2016 election. In the Senate, she has introduced a bill to give lower-income families cash payments and tax credits to help battle wage stagnation and rising housing costs, and has been a strong advocate of criminal justice reforms.

Harris launched a book tour in early January to promote a memoir, making a series of media appearances that helped bolster her visibility ahead of her campaign announcement. Her campaign could be aided by the schedule for the state-by-state party nominating process that is scheduled to begin in February 2020. The kickoff state of Iowa, which launched Barack Obama's presidential bid in 2008, has a strong base of liberal activists, and the race will then quickly move to more diverse states such as Nevada and South Carolina. Her home state of California also has moved up its primary to increase its influence.

But political foes will pore over her record in California, where she has come under scrutiny for declining as attorney general to prosecute OneWest,



LOS ANGELES: A person holds a poster of US Sen Kamala Harris as people take part in the annual Women's March. —AFP

the bank once headed by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, for alleged foreclosure violations. Harris, who voted against Mnuchin's confirmation as head of the Treasury, has said she “followed the facts” in declining to prosecute.

She also has been criticized for saying she was not aware of sexual harassment allegations against one of her top aides, who resigned in December after a California newspaper asked him about a 2016 harassment lawsuit. Xavier Becerra, who replaced Harris as attorney general, settled the lawsuit in May 2017 for \$400,000. —Reuters

One family fights to keep Trump's wall off property

MISSION: In this yard in the Texas town of Mission, they played as children, learned how to fish, picked cotton and gathered watermelons. But because it's on the border with Mexico, the Cavazos family could lose their property — to Donald Trump's border wall. They are not going down without a fight. In his sister Eloisa's dining room, Jose Alfredo Cavazos — who goes by Fred — displays the numerous letters sent by the federal government.

“Our property right now is in... danger of being no more,” says the 69-year-old, who lives next door to his sister, and uses a wheelchair to get around. Construction seems inevitable: financing for the portion of the president's much-awaited border wall that would pass through the Cavazos' property in the Rio Grande valley was approved by Congress in March 2018.

It is separate from the wider debate about border wall funding that has roiled Washington for weeks, sparked a showdown between Trump and Democratic lawmakers, and led to the longest government shutdown in American history. The federal government has already surveyed the land, which mainly belongs to Eloisa — the first step towards construction. The family opposed the move, and the government filed suit, winning the initial case. The Cavazos clan is not giving up just yet, though. They have appealed the initial

decision, and are being represented on a pro bono basis by the Texas Civil Rights Project.

Raison de vivre

Fred Cavazos runs his hand over the maps attached to each official document in the pile. If the wall is built as planned, it will run along the levee that keeps the land from flooding — and will block his access to his land, where he tends a small herd of cattle and goats. His other worry is that the family will lose revenue earned by renting out small riverside homes, often used as weekend getaways. Fred says the family makes about \$35,000 a year from rentals, and they cannot live without it.

After all, who would want to come spend a relaxing weekend staring at a giant concrete wall, or even towering steel slats? Would tenants even be allowed to cross back

and forth? “It's an unknown to us,” says Rey Anzaldua, a cousin of the Cavazos siblings and Fred's best friend. “It would still be our land... but it wouldn't have any value at all.”

Beyond the financial strains, the very real possibility of seeing the family land split up has upset the entire clan. Since their ancestors came from Spain and settled here in the 18th century, the family has “been losing land for so many years,” said Anzaldua, who turns 74 this month. With a Vietnam veteran cap and a sticker on his Jeep that says “No border wall,” Anzaldua is bitter: “This land to us is worth more than money — we have an actual love for the land.” To boot, Fred is “totally disabled. This land is actually what keeps him alive,” Anzaldua said. Cavazos manages to get by despite his physical issues, helping Eloisa to collect the rent. “If he didn't have this, I don't think he'd last very much longer,” Anzaldua said.—AFP

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International

Car bomb linked to the New IRA rattles Northern Ireland

Seeking to exploit the current political turbulence

DUBLIN: Northern Ireland police yesterday questioned four men over a car bomb linked to a dissident republican group that has heightened concerns about the risks of Brexit disrupting a hard-won peace in the British province. The bomb detonated at 8:10 pm (2010 GMT) on Saturday outside the courthouse in the border city of Derry. Police have said they believe a paramilitary group calling itself the "New IRA" was behind the blast.

"We haven't seen a device of this nature function for quite a while. It's a high-risk tactic," Mark Hamilton from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) told BBC radio. Hamilton said the New IRA has recently mainly been linked to vigilante incidents and the bombing was "probably the most significant attack in recent years".

A 1998 peace deal largely brought an end to three decades of sectarian bloodshed between republican and unionist paramilitaries, as well as British armed forces, in Northern Ireland in a period known as "the Troubles". Some 3,500 people were killed in the conflict — many at the hands of the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Hamilton said on Sunday that the New IRA was "determined to drag people back to somewhere they don't want to be".

'Nerves are shattered'

There are concerns the attack could be a sign of paramilitaries seeking to exploit the current political turbulence over the status of Northern Ireland and its border with the Republic of Ireland, caused by Brexit. "Dissident

bomb fuels fear of return to terror after Brexit", ran a headline on the Irish Independent yesterday.

"Incidents such as the Derry bombing remind us that the danger of a 'hard' or visible border would really be a target for these mindless yobs who want to haul us all back to our recent dark past," the paper said in an editorial. "This danger must galvanize all our political leaders to do everything they possibly can to avoid such a possibility." German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, speaking in Brussels, cited the Derry bombing as a warning sign that Brexit must not disrupt the Northern Ireland peace process. "I think it's important that there aren't any decisions that ultimately lead to a hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland because, as we have seen at the weekend, nerves are shattered there as well," he said.

Irish Times security and crime editor Conor Lally said police officers and politicians had been warning Brexit could become "a rallying call for dissident republicans". Police received a telephone tip-off that the device had been planted and an evacuation was nearing completion when the explosion occurred. There were no casualties. Two men in their 20s were arrested in the early hours of Sunday morning. Later in the day two other men, aged 34 and 42, were also arrested in the city. All remain in custody, a PSNI spokesman told AFP. The event has been condemned by political parties across the traditional republican and unionist divide in the province, as well as by leaders in the Republic of Ireland. Prime Minister Leo Varadkar called it "an appalling, reckless and cynical act of terror". — AFP



DERRY: Police forensic officers inspect the aftermath of a suspected car bomb explosion. —AFP

Germany, France sign the Treaty of Aachen

AACHEN: Today a new treaty on Franco-German Cooperation and Integration, will be signed by Federal Chancellor Merkel and President Macron in the city of Aachen in Germany. Proof of this friendship between France and Germany, can be seen in Kuwait: It is the only place in the world, where the French and German Embassy share the same floor of a high rise building. The offices are side by side and common office spaces, like the reception, meeting rooms and the kitchen are shared. The synergy effects are huge, the ambassadors can communicate in person on a daily basis, administration is less for each side and costs are shared.

The close cooperation between Germany and France started with the Elysee Treaty, a treaty of friendship between France and Germany, signed by President Charles de Gaulle and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer on 22 January 1963 at the Elysee Palace in Paris. On this occasion, Germany and France drew the lessons from their past by concluding the historic Elysee Treaty, setting out a major new course for their relationship. What for centuries had been regarded as a traditional enmity was able to develop into Franco-German friendship. The confrontation, that time and again, led to wars which wreaked havoc on Europe, became the engine of European integration. The new "Treaty of Aachen", that will be signed today, builds on, but does not replace, the Elysee Treaty of 1963.

Preparing for the future together

Germany and France firmly believe that closer cooperation does not come at the cost of national sovereignty, but instead makes countries stronger together. They will thus not only remain committed to the success story that is European integration, but also lay the foundations for the next generation to continue on this path. The Treaty will significantly intensify cooperation with France on foreign and security policy, topics concerning the future, culture, education and cross-border collaboration. Germany and France aim to work even more closely together than before in the EU and United Nations. The priority of the Treaty of Aachen is to safeguard the future together. As a venue for dialogue and an interface between politics, business, research and civil society, a Franco-German forum for the future will develop joint answers to new challenges or needs for regulations.

Focus on border regions

Integration between border regions will be a priority in the future. The main aim is to reduce the disadvantages arising from a peripheral location by carrying out cross-border projects. Decision-makers in the border regions are to be given scope to go beyond the existing possible types of cross-border cooperation. The focus will be on tangibly improving people's daily lives in border regions, such as the work of companies and administrations, day care for children, health-care, schools and vocational training, cross-border job placement services and transnational infrastructure projects. The goal is to identify solutions for daily life in border regions that could point the way forward for European integration.

German Ambassador Karlfried Bergner said:

"We are living proof that neighboring countries, that used to be at war with each other, can overcome the past and be really close friends. By setting this example, we are hoping to inspire more countries at war or in conflicts with neighboring countries to choose collaboration and consultation over rivalry and conflict. This is of political importance in many hotspots around the globe."

French Ambassador Marie Masdupuy said:

"The human factor in relations between countries is of paramount importance. In Europe, we see it with all our neighbors, but without the closest relation we succeeded to establish between France and Germany, it would not make sense! Here in Kuwait, the human factor in relations between neighbors is also very well understood." But how can countries become friends? You have to enable and encourage the people of both countries to come together. The "Franco-German Youth Office", for example, has enabled 9 million young people from France and Germany to participate in 320,000 exchange programs since 1963!

Today there is also a huge civil-society network between Germany and France, for example, there are 2,220 towns and cities in Germany who have a French partner city. People from the different cities visit each other throughout the year. Be it choirs, sports club or the mayor, they meet up with their counterparts and discover the other side has very much in common with them. This is where personal Franco-German friendships are born.

Diggers struggle to reach toddler who fell in well

MADRID: Diggers trying to reach a two-year-old boy who fell into a deep well in southern Spain a week ago saw their progress slowed by harder rock on Sunday, though experts still held out hope he could still be alive. There has been no contact with Julien Rosello since he fell down the narrow shaft, some 100 meters deep, on January 13 while playing as his parents prepared a picnic nearby in the town of Totalan near Malaga.

After abandoning an initial plan to reach the boy with an angled tunnel because of repeated collapses and landslides, workers turned to the possibility of drilling a vertical shaft parallel to the well. When they reach a depth of 60 metres, a team of eight expert miners will be lowered down the shaft to start digging a horizontal

tunnel to the location where they believe the toddler is. But the new effort slowed as diggers hit hard granite and rescuers now expect they will only complete the vertical shaft "at the end of the night" if they are able to keep working at the same pace, engineer Angel Garcia Vidal who is overseeing the operations, told reporters late on Sunday. "We continue to work intensely, nonstop, and we hope to reach our desired goal very soon," he added.

'Find him alive'

Rescuers used probes to explore the bottom of the well that came back with strands of hair matching the child's DNA, as well as a bag of sweets that he was carrying when he went missing, providing confirmation that he is down the hole. "Professionally we believe in what we are doing, we believe in the possibility of finding him alive and we are all fighting to find him alive. That is our hope and our goal," said the head of the civil protection service in the southern province of Malaga, Rafael Galvez.

Experts told Spanish media that there are slim chances that Julien



TOTALAN: Jose Rosello (L), father of Julien who fell down a well, cries as rescue efforts continue to find the boy. —AFP

could still be alive, explaining that cold weather slows a body's metabolism, so it needs less energy and can survive with abnormally low breathing and blood flow. "The cold has a double edge. On the one hand it's negative, because it can cause multiple consequences," Ivan Carabano, a paediatrician at Madrid's Hospital 12 de Octubre, told the El Pais daily.

"But in this case we all hope for

its better outcome: with it you gain time to survive because at lower temperatures the human metabolism slows and tissues are preserved." There have been cases similar to Julien's in which a person survived 10 days in a semi-conscious state that needed less oxygen, the head of the Andalusian Federation of Speleology, Jose Antonio Berrocal, told reporters in Totalan last week. — AFP

Troops repel attacks from Boko Haram

KANO: Nigerian soldiers have fought off Boko Haram jihadists in separate attacks, the army and military sources said yesterday, as clashes persist while elections approach. The army said troops "successfully defeated Boko Haram terrorists" who tried to attack a military base in Buni Yadi in Yobe state, northeast Nigeria, on Sunday.

On Saturday, soldiers "inflicted devastating man and equipment casualties" on the group in the Baga area of Borno state, on the shores of Lake Chad, killing five. Two Islamist fighters were also killed in operations in the Mafa district of Borno, it added in a series of statements. The government's record on tackling Boko Haram is under increased scrutiny as the country heads to the polls to elect a new president and parliament on February 16.

President Muhammadu Buhari, a former military ruler, was elected in 2015 on a pledge to

defeat the group, whose insurgency has killed more than 27,000 since 2009. He has said Boko Haram is "technically defeated" but attacks have not stopped, and a faction backed by the Islamic State group has increased its strikes on military positions. Last week, six soldiers were killed when Boko Haram gunmen attacked Kamuya village near the native home of Nigeria's army chief, Lieutenant-General Tukur Yusuf Buratai.

Two military sources said the IS-allied faction — Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) — was behind the weekend attacks in Baga, Kareto and Buni Yadi. The sources both said four soldiers were killed as they repelled the attack in Buni Yadi during "intense" fighting that involved air strikes. Nigerian troops returned to Baga on January 9 after a wave of ISWAP attacks against two military bases in late December that forced more than 30,000 civilians to flee.

Some 10,000 other people displaced by the conflict were also forced to flee after another attack in the remote town of Rann last week. The movement has increased pressure on aid agencies providing humanitarian assistance. It has also raised questions about how elections can be held in areas hit by fighting. — AFP



MAIDUGURI: Women sit outside their house at the Sajeri village on the outskirts of the Borno state capital. — AFP

EU sanctions Russia military intel chief

BRUSSELS: The European Union slapped sanctions on the two most senior officers in Russian military intelligence yesterday and identified the two agents accused by Britain of carrying out a chemical attack. Along with the measures against the four GRU officers, EU member states also imposed asset freezes and travel bans on five Syrians linked to strongman Bashar Al-Assad's chemical weapons program.

The EU accused the Russians — two agents and the head and the deputy head of the GRU — of orchestrating the "possession, transport and use" of the nerve agent used in Salisbury, England last March, in a failed attempt to assassinate a defector. The agents are accused of travelling under the pseudonyms Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov, but the sanctions order confirms reports that identify them as Anatoly Chepiga and Alexander Mishkin, both 39 years old.

These identities had previously been revealed by the British-based Bellingcat investigative group, which pieced together evidence from leaks and online data trails to find two decorated GRU field officers. Their listing was expected, but the decision to target the GRU leadership — identified as agency chief Igor Kostyukov and his first deputy Vladimir Alexseyev — ups the stakes in the dispute. "This decision contributes to the EU's efforts to counter the proliferation and use of chemical weapons which poses a serious threat to international security," a statement said, after EU foreign ministers met.

Full details of those targeted were to be placed in the EU Official Journal later yesterday. "I'm confident member states took the decision on a very strong legal basis," said EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, stressing that the measure would "resist the tests of the courts". British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt welcomed the decision, the first under a new EU sanctions regime focused on halting the use and spread of banned chemical weapons. "Today's new sanctions deliver on our vow to take tough action against the reckless and irresponsible activities of the Russian military intelligence organization, the GRU," he said. — AFP

International

Taleban attack on Afghan security base kills over 100

Captured Humvee packed with explosives rams training base

KABUL: A Taleban attack in central Afghanistan yesterday killed scores of security personnel, officials said, with some estimates putting the death toll at more than 100, amid government silence about one of the most deadly insurgent attacks in months. Attackers rammed a captured military Humvee packed with explosives into a training centre of the National Directorate for Security in Maidan Wardak province, west of the capital Kabul. At least two gunmen followed up, spraying the compound with gunfire before they were shot down.

"We have information that 126 people have been killed in the explosion inside the military training centre, eight special commandoes are among the dead," said a senior official in the defense ministry in Kabul, speaking on condition of anonymity. Local officials also said that scores of troops and NDS personnel were killed in the attack but there was no official confirmation of the casualty toll, with officials ordered not to talk to media for fear of damaging morale. "I have been told not to make the death toll figures public. It is frustrating to hide the facts," said a senior interior ministry official in Kabul.

The complex attack on a highly secured base underlined the heavy pressure facing Afghan security forces as increasingly confident Taleban fighters have stepped up operations, even as diplomatic efforts to agree a peaceful settlement to the conflict have begun. Taleban insurgents, fighting to drive out international forces from Afghanistan and reintroduce their version of strict Islamic law, claimed responsibility for the attack, which spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said killed 190 people. The attack, the most serious against Afghan forces in months, occurred on the same day that Taleban representatives met Zalmay Khalilzad, the US special envoy for peace in Afghanistan,

in Qatar. Last week, Taleban fighters set off a car bomb outside a highly fortified compound killing at least five people and wounding more than 110 in the capital, Kabul but casualties from Monday's attack appear to have been far higher.

Many dead bodies

Sharif Hotak, a member of the provincial council in Maidan Wardak, said he saw the bodies of 35 members of the Afghan forces in the hospital. "Many more were killed. Several bodies were transported to Kabul city and many injured were transferred to hospitals in Kabul," said Hotak, adding that "the government was hiding the accurate casualty figures to prevent a further dip in morale of the Afghan forces."

Yesterday's attack caused the biggest casualty total suffered by Afghan forces since August 2018, when the Taleban overran central Ghazni province. That confrontation killed 150 Afghan security forces and 95 civilians dead, as well as hundreds of Taleban fighters, said officials then. President Ashraf Ghani's office said in a statement the "enemies of the country" had carried out the attack and had killed and wounded "a number of our beloved and honest sons".

In recent years the Afghan government has stopped releasing detailed casualty figures but US commanders have said repeatedly that the losses being suffered by Afghan forces are "unsustainable". Last year Ghani said 28,000 Afghan police officers and soldiers had been killed since 2015. The British embassy in Afghanistan said Monday's casualties were "a stark reminder of the sacrifice the Afghan security and defense forces make for their country". —Reuters



KABUL: An Afghan military vehicle is seen near a site after a car bomb attack on a military base in the central province of Maidan Wardak. —AFP

Probe begins on heinous Pakistani police killings

LAHORE: Pakistani authorities yesterday opened an investigation into the police killing of four people, including a woman and a child, in an encounter with a suspected militant leader that has drawn accusations from the public of police brutality. Counter-terrorism officers said an Islamic State leader in Punjab province, Zeeshan Javed, was killed when police fired on a car he was travelling in on Saturday, in the town of Sahiwal.

Three passengers - grocery store owner Muhammad

Khalil, his wife and their 12 year-old daughter — were also killed, police said. Police said Javed fired on officers first and weapons were found in the car. That account has been disputed by witnesses, including Khalil's other three children who survived with minor wounds. The killings triggered protests on Sunday in Lahore, Pakistan's second biggest city, and renewed a debate over extra-judicial killings and police impunity in the South Asian nation where such encounters are not uncommon.

Prime Minister Imran Khan said he was "shocked at seeing the traumatized children who saw their parents shot before their eyes", and promised the state would care for the survivors. "The grief & anger ... is understandable & justified," Khan tweeted on Monday, referring to the public outrage. He said anyone found guilty would be handed "exemplary punishment". "I will review the entire structure of Punjab police & start process of reforming it," he said.

Police investigators were expected to deliver a report on Wednesday, police said. "The policemen involved in the shooting have not been identified. JIT will identify those involved," said Nabeela Ghanzafar, a police spokeswoman, referring to the investigation team. Officials said Javed was an Islamic State operative. Punjab law minister Raja Basharat told reporters on Sunday a "large quantity of explosives" were found at Javed's home and "two suicide vests, eight hand grenades, two pistols and bullets" were recovered from the car.

Basharat said officers from the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) intercepted the car after a tip-off and Javed fired first. However, videos circulating on social media appear to raise doubts about that. Khalil's brother, Jalil, told Reuters the Punjab government had offered 20 million rupees (\$144,000) compensation for the killings. "I told the government 'I'm ready to give you back 25 million rupees in return for justice,'" he said. "We don't want money." —Reuters

Hong Kong failing to tackle wildlife smuggling epidemic

HONG KONG: Hong Kong must do more to crack down on illegal wildlife smuggling by ending legal loopholes and lenient sentences, conservation groups said yesterday, as they detailed the city's role in the lucrative trade. Despite its comparatively small size, the bustling southern Chinese transport hub plays a "disproportionate" role in wildlife crime, researchers said, accounting for around a fifth of all global ivory seizures and nearly half of all pangolins seized in the last decade.

Yet authorities do not list wildlife trafficking offences under the city's organized crime legislation targeting drug traffickers and triad gangs — and the few who are caught rarely face stiff penalties, the report's authors warn. "Wildlife crime in Hong Kong remains under-policed and under-investigated," said Amanda Wilfort, a professor at Hong Kong University's Faculty of Law and one of the report's authors. "Wildlife smuggling is not regarded as organized and serious crime under Hong Kong law," she added.

The study by Hong Kong Wildlife Trade Working Group (HKWTWG), a coalition of local groups, offers one of the most detailed analyses yet on smuggling rackets in the city. Researchers compiled and analyzed 379 seizures from government departments, court cases, media reports and NGOs from January 2013 to December 2017 to assess the extent of the trade. Researchers said the amount of parts seized in the city for three major trafficked species since 2013 could equate to the deaths of "3,000 elephants, 65,000 pangolins and 51 rhinoceroses". But they warned the actual volume being trafficked through Hong Kong could be 5-10 times the size of seizures. —AFP

31 Rohingya in limbo on Bangladesh-India border

DHAKA: Thirty-one Rohingya Muslims including 17 children remained stranded on the India-Bangladesh border after three days, Dhaka officials said yesterday, as both sides refuse to accept them. As many as 1,300 Rohingya Muslims have crossed into Bangladesh from India in recent weeks as fears of deportation to Myanmar spark an exodus. The latest group crossed barbed-wire fences along the Indian part of the border, but

Bangladesh border guards stopped them from entering their territory. "They are now living in two tents provided by Indian border forces on the border's zero line," Mannan Jahangir, a local government official at the Bangladeshi border town of Kasba, told AFP. Lieutenant Colonel Golam Kabir, a Bangladesh border guard commander, said the group first arrived at the border from the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir on January 18.

Senior officials from both sides held a meeting on Sunday, with Dhaka insisting that New Delhi take the refugees as they had Indian health cards and documents issued by the UN refugee agency. New Delhi has faced sharp criticism for turning members of the persecuted minority over to Buddhist-majority Myanmar in recent weeks, including from the United Nations and rights groups. India, which is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention, arrested 230 Rohingya in 2018 — the most in years as Hindu hardliners

called for mass deportations.

Bangladesh is already hosting around a million Rohingya in giant refugee camps in the country's southeast, three-quarters of whom fled a Myanmar military crackdown in August 2017. UN investigators have said senior Myanmar military officials should be prosecuted for genocide in Rakhine state, but the country insists it was defending itself against militants.

Nayana Bose, a spokeswoman for the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), which includes UN agencies, said last week the pace of new arrivals from India had escalated since January 3. Some 40,000 Rohingya are living in India. Police said those who arrived in Bangladesh had been living in India for years. Rohingya for decades have faced persecution and pogroms in Myanmar, which refuses to recognize them as citizens and falsely labels them "Bengali" illegal immigrants. —AFP

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At China university, 'confessions' strike fear into students

In late December, on the leafy streets of China's prestigious Peking University, a handful of students held up banners to protest against a takeover of the campus Marxist society by the Chinese Communist Party-affiliated Student Association. Within an hour, police rushed at the group and dragged them into a nearby building, where, barricaded in classrooms, they were shown videos of recent graduates, including one from their own university, "confessing" to working with an "illegal organization" to arrange protests in southern China, students involved told Reuters.

Yesterday, a solidarity group that has been calling for the activists to be released posted online statements decrying the videos as "slander". Friends of the activists told Reuters that the videos distorted facts and were an attempt to threaten those who have been calling for the release of dozens who have been detained since August. The private screening was part of efforts by Chinese authorities to stem a groundswell of activism on China's university campuses, with students taking up causes from #MeToo to the rights of migrant and factory workers.

Chinese authorities have in recent years made increasing use of video "confessions" to seize the public narrative in politically charged cases and to make an example of those detained as a warning to others, rights groups say. A Peking University spokeswoman declined to comment due to the university currently being on winter break. China's Public Security Ministry did not reply to a faxed request for comment.

The videos shown to the students last month focus on events in July 2018, when Chinese police quashed protests by workers from a welding equipment manufacturer in the southern city of Shenzhen who wanted to form a labour union with leaders of their choice. Around 50 students and activists from across China had flocked to support the workers, sparking waves of further detentions that spread to China's top university campuses, including Peking University, informally known as Beida.

The videos featured four activists in their 20s, all recent graduates, saying that they had spread "false information", founded organizations that intended to "overthrow" the government and worked in concert with foreign media. Shen Mengyu, Zheng Yongming and Gu Jiayue - all of whom had supported workers at Jasic International, the welding equipment firm - said they had been assigned by an unnamed "organization" to organise the worker protests.

Yue Xin, a Beida graduate who first made headlines in April 2018 for her vocal #MeToo activism, said that the Shenzhen protests had been "politically motivated" and created a "negative impact on society". Yue also renounced her earlier efforts, inspired by the global #MeToo movement, to force Beida to divulge information about a decades-old rape case. "At the time people placed too much importance on public disclosure," she says in the video, according to students who have seen the clip, adding that "foreign forces fixated with China's bad side" had exploited this desire to "provoke troubles". It was not possible to contact Yue, Gu, Zheng or Shen for comment.

'Invert black and white'

The versions of events given by the activists in the video are radically different from how close friends recall the incidents described, four of them told Reuters, declining to be named for fear of reprisals from the authorities. "There has been no news of these classmates since they went missing in August. No one, whether family or lawyers, has been allowed to see them. Where they are being held, what they have suffered, we don't have a clue," one of the friends said.

The reference in the videos to an "illegal organization" that orchestrated the protests was an attempt to "invert black and white", given it was the workers' protests that drew activist support, not the other way around, the same source said. "The leftwing students and the support group's actions are guided by Marxism, are answering Chairman Xi Jinping's call and are in line with Socialist ideas," another said, referring to Xi's calls for China to stick with Marxist theories. Since 2012, when Chinese President Xi Jinping took office, law enforcement authorities in China have made increasing use of "confessions", often delivered via state media, during politically charged cases, sometimes involving foreign citizens.

Tool of 'terror'

Gu and Zheng are being held in a form of detention known as "residential surveillance at a designated location", or RSDL, according to notices sent to their families and seen by students. The controversial measure allows police to interrogate suspects for six months without legal representation and is meant to be reserved for severe crimes such as "endangering national security", "terrorism" or serious bribery crimes.

Rights groups say that the lack of oversight gives police carte blanche in their interrogations, allowing torture and forced confessions, including those that can then be publicly released. China aired nearly 50 such confessions between 2013 and 2018, according to RSDL Monitor, a group run by Madrid-based rights activist Peter Dahlin, who featured in one such video himself, aired by China's state broadcaster in 2016. — Reuters



Foreign detainees are pictured behind bars at an immigration detention center in Bangkok yesterday during a visit organized by authorities for journalists. — AFP

Thais prodded towards refugee policy reform

On a television set in a grim, overcrowded Bangkok detention center refugees closely followed Saudi woman Rahaf Mohammed Al-Qunun's quest for resettlement, as the 18-year-old asylum-seeker's case spurred hopes of a major policy turn from Thailand - a country that does not recognize refugees. Qunun fled her family to Bangkok, barricaded herself in an airport hotel room and staved off deportation with her Twitter feed, ultimately gaining refuge in Canada on Jan 12.

Thai authorities were initially caught flat-footed by the young Saudi's bold social media campaign. But in the days since they have promised to address some of the lingering issues of indefinite detention and deportation of asylum seekers. Yesterday, Thai authorities signed an MoU to end the detention of all child refugees and asylum seekers. It was welcomed by the UNHCR as a "positive example" of the kingdom's increasingly humane approach to the issue.

Rights groups have for years condemned Thailand, which is not a signatory to the UN's convention protecting refugees, for its hostility to asylum seekers - often trapping them on a carousel between detention and work in the black economy. An estimated 900 adults remain in grubby immigration detention centers (IDCs) hoping to be resettled like Qunun but fearing an endless extension to their months, or years, of limbo.

Nazir, a Pakistani-Christian in Bangkok's biggest IDC, said he watched Qunun's case unfold on the news, discussing the twists and turns with his wife over the phone. He shook his head in amazement at the "days" it took for Qunun's refugee status to be determined by the UNHCR before Canada stepped in with the asylum offer, while he

has been locked up for several months. "My wife is alone with my daughter outside...they are very sad," Nazir, whose name has been changed to protect his identity, told AFP.

Despite its headline to asylum seekers, Thailand's lax visa rules, multiple entry points and graft-prone officials have made it an easy staging-post for those escaping conflict, persecution and poverty. The kingdom wants that reputation to change. But in the wake of Qunun's case immigration police chief Surachate Hakparn has also vowed to recalibrate the detention policy, saying the kingdom will no longer deport anyone "involuntarily". Knocking the issue over to the UNHCR, which finds countries to resettle asylum seekers, Surachate says the agency must speed up its processes. "Otherwise they have to live in anxiety and spend six to seven years (here)."

Yesterday he led a rare media tour of the Bangkok IDC to boost faith in his pledge to change the system. Detainees played sports behind a high grill as the media tour began, while others queued to call family members — opportunities available just twice a week to the scores packed into the center.

'Holding on'

At the end of 2018 there were around 1,000 asylum seekers in Thailand compared to more than 7,000 in 2014. The UNHCR cites the drop as evidence of faster processing of cases to resolve the backlog. But less than one percent of the world's refugees are resettled each year while the number of places available "continues to decline", according to a UNHCR spokesperson. Ahmed, a refugee from Somalia, was locked up at the Bangkok IDC with his

brother. Like Qunun, he too hopes to be resettled in Canada. But the similarities end there - he has been in detention for four, long years. "Nothing is moving forward," he told AFP. "But we are holding on."

Others have given up hopes for resettlement. Lama, a Syrian, fled the war-ravaged country four years ago while pregnant with twins. She and her husband sold their belongings and bought a plane ticket to Thailand. They obtained UN refugee status in 2017 but were placed in detention centers to await possible resettlement. The monotonous, overcrowded life in the IDC wore them down and they decided to give up their quest for asylum in early January and head back to Syria. "It's very hard to be here again," Lama told AFP from Damascus. "We never leave home (because of) security issues... but at least we are all together."

'So quick'

Inside the Bangkok IDC the fast-tracking of Qunun's case - and the accompanying scrutiny of Thailand's immigration policy - has offered a glimmer of hope for change. In Nazir's case, he and his wife Shamim were granted UN refugee status three years after fleeing Pakistan when Shamim converted from Islam to Christianity and married Nazir in secret. In Thailand they lived on the margins but enjoyed happy moments, including the birth of their daughter, until an immigration crackdown saw Nazir swept into detention for visa overstay. His wife now lives with her daughter in a small one-room apartment in a Bangkok suburb, visiting Nazir every week. The Saudi "case was so quick... (I have) never seen (anything like it) before. She is very lucky," Shamim said. "But our lives are being wasted." — AFP

The world cupped: The inside story

It rarely sees the light of day but the upscale bra is the most tested, sweated over and highly engineered piece of clothing of all. AFP went behind the scenes at some of the most famous French lingerie houses to draw back the veil on the almost exclusively feminine world of bra making. No other item of clothing provokes such fierce emotions. Some swear by traditional bras, others prefer the structural minimalism of modern bralets and crop tops, while a growing feminist minority entirely reject what they see as a symbol of female oppression.

Designed these days using 3D modeling, bras made by most big French brands are sewn to the millimeter and samples are worn by testers before going on sale. It takes up to two years from the first preparatory sketches for a new model to end up in the shops, according to their makers. Prototypes are on average remade and altered around 40 times. The width of a pencil mark can often be the difference between two cup sizes, they say.

In the high-end family-owned Simone Perele lingerie house, new products are road tested by 80 of the bra makers themselves, said Stephanie Perele, the granddaughter of the label's founder. They wear them for three days, washing them every night to see how the materials hold up before making up to 10 adjustments in the lead up to the final test. These multiple dry runs on real women explain why there is no such thing in Paris as a male "corsetier" working on commercial women's bras.

A women-only world

And it is also why even the most sensitive male fashion designers have their work cut out reimagining a piece of notoriously intricate apparel that has between 20 and 30 parts. The managing director of Aubade, Martina Brown, said that for its latest collaboration it asked the Dutch haute couture house Viktor & Rolf to come up with 12 shades of its trademark fuchsia color for a new range. In the end

Aubade went for their 13th suggestion, she told AFP.

"They had limitless ideas, some of which unfortunately weren't doable. We had to drop the frills and the bows on the bonnet - but we did manage to get them into the embroidery. We also had to say no to their neoprene fabric, which was very cute but which scratches," German-born Brown added. "Comfort is what it is all about now," said Alain de Rodellec, head of the French lingerie industry body, Promincor. It has organized a huge "Lingerie Rocks" show Sunday to mark the halfway point of Paris fashion fortnight. "The bra is the first thing many women put on in the morning, and it is against the skin all day long," he noted.

Seduction is not a priority for most women. "Push-up bras are losing ground in favor of a more natural hold," Rodellec said. More and more innovative bras are being made without underwiring, which can be a challenge for the "corsetieres" particularly when dealing with more ample bosoms. However, only one in four women in France take a D cup or bigger, while more than half fit into a C.

A genius girl and girdles

The world-famous French lingerie industry was launched in the 1820s. The corset soon became commonly worn by pretty much all women, regardless of their class. But by the end of the 19th century, as more women took up sport and other leisure activities, their needs changed. Francois Auguste Gamichon made the first big technological breakthrough with an elastic meshed bra made with a mix of materials including vulcanized rubber. He and his nephew Paul-Maurice Kretz, who brought into his firm, Chantelle, in 1898, won gold medals for their patents at the world fairs in Paris, Milan and London.

But it was a woman, Herminie Cadolle, who in 1889 came up with the key idea of supporting the chest from above with shoulder straps. Her company, Cadolle, is still a leading brand. By the start of the 1930s, when dresses became thinner and more body-hugging, bras began to reflect women's natural proportions. The golden age of French bra making followed World War II, with the dawn of Christian Dior's "New Look" in 1947. New brands multiplied including Empreinte, Simone Perele, Lise Charnel and Aubade in 1958. — AFP

Privatize Nigeria oil industry? Easier said than done

A leading contender in Nigeria's presidential election next month has pledged to privatize the country's oil industry, but that's a promise that might prove hard to keep, some observers say. Atiku Abubakar, the main opposition party contender, has vowed to break up the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC), which he called a "mafia organization".

The NNPC and other state-run organizations have been widely criticized as becoming slush funds for successive governments, particularly around election time in the African OPEC state. Abubakar, who served as vice-president to Olusegun Obasanjo between 1999 and 2007, made his latest remarks at a conference on the economy in Nigeria's economic capital Lagos last week. "I said unless we dismantle these mafia organizations, we cannot progress, let's privatize them," he said. "I am committed to these privatizations, as I have said. I swear even if they are going to kill me, I will do it."

Sitting president, Muhammadu Buhari, who is running for a second term in office, made the fight against corruption a keystone of his first election campaign. His junior minister for oil, Emmanuel Kachikwu, told AFP: "In terms of corruption, he (Buhari) has done his very best."

Climate of fear

But it was Kachikwu himself who in late 2017 denounced what he called the "climate of fear" at the heart of the NNPC since the president appointed one of his close associates, Maikanti Kacalla Baru, as group managing director. Last April he also spoke out against the state subsidies to cut the cost of petrol for motorists, saying it cost the

government \$3.9 billion every year. In fact, the NNPC, which has total control of distribution, has been accused by many campaigners of overestimating the number of litres used by an exorbitant amount in order to rake back in more money to the government.

"(The) NNPC monopoly on fuel distribution is not an ideal situation and will have to end," said Kachikwu. "And then part of the corruption in the area will also end." But he warned: "If we are not fixing it, we are going bankrupt." Kachikwu reports directly to Buhari, who as well as being head of state has taken on the oil minister portfolio himself. Buhari takes much the same line on corruption as his main rival to the presidency, Abubakar.

At an election campaign meeting Wednesday, Buhari promised an overhaul of the NNPC to claw back billions of dollars in looted public funds. Kachikwu came into Buhari's government as a political novice but as an expert in the field. He previously served as ExxonMobil's deputy chief for Africa. He reckons that to reinvigorate the country's oil industry and increase production to four billion barrels a day it would take between a 25 and 30 billion dollars' investment.

The only way that is going to happen, he says, is via the privatisation of the NNPC and the liberalization of the sector as a whole. "Nobody needs the government to do their business," he said. "(The) NNPC is overseeing the whole chain of production, from the pipelines to the exportation or distribution." It also seems powerful enough to have successfully blocked all political attempts to reform an organization which carries about a million barrels a day - 50 percent of the total volume of oil output in Africa's top oil producer.

"To talk of privatizing the NNPC is campaign talk directed at foreign investors," said Benjamin Auge, an analyst at the French Institute for International Relations. But it is not a vote-winner and has no impact of the real root of the corruption - the allocation of rights to sell petrol, he added. Every year, the NNPC allocates a series of traders to handle crude oil exports. — AFP

Business

TUESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2019

12 Mutawa AlKazi Company displays GAC Motor at Kuwait Motor Show**13** Choose France? Macron woos business chiefs**14** Equities to outperform bonds as global economy to grow

Zain recognized as 'Best Telecom company in Kuwait' for 2018

Company awarded at the 6th annual International Finance Awards in Dubai

KUWAIT: For the second consecutive year, leading regional business magazine International Finance recognized Zain Kuwait as the 'Best Telecom Company in Kuwait' for the year 2018 at the prestigious Achievement Awards held in Jumeirah Emirates Hotel, Dubai. The International Finance Awards recognize and reward outstanding success and innovation across various industry sectors in the region.

Waleed Al-Khashti, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer, received the award on behalf of Zain during the ceremony, where the company was singled out for this year's honor given its relentless pursuit of excellence and innovation with the aim of achieving superior digital lifestyle transformation.

Zain expressed its pride and appreciation for this recognition, as well as in the interest International Finance Magazine shows in the achievements of Kuwaiti organizations on particular. The 2018 awards honored leading companies and institutions that have delivered success, innovation and excellence, as well as those that have made a vital contribution to the vibrancy of business within Kuwait and the region.

Zain is deeply invested in the fabric of the Kuwaiti society, and its corporate sustainability and social responsibility activities speak for themselves in this regard. Keen to encourage and uplift the youth, Zain has a series of initiatives and programs aimed at engaging with youth in Kuwait, and allowing them to develop their talent and find expression to their ideas.

As one of the most recognizable brands in

Kuwait, was recently awarded the 'Best Brand for Telecom' accolade for 2018 at the prestigious Telecoms World Middle East Awards gala event held in Dubai. This marked a record fifth consecutive year that Zain has won this award. The company was also recently awarded the 'Best Mobile Operator' and 'Best Internet Service Provider' in Kuwait from Service Hero for the sixth time.

Zain also recently received four titles as part of the Advertising Creativity Award 2018 in the Special Award category, the National Campaigns Award category, the Corporate Sustainability Creativity Award category, as well as the Creativity in Public Relations Award category.

The recognition Zain received from International Finance Magazine further strengthens the company's role as a leading private sector company, and reinforces Zain's commitment in maintaining the values of its brand. The company is motivated to continue its pledge in providing exclusive services to meet the needs of its customers as well as to facilitate their personal, professional, and business needs.

Zain always aspires to new levels of excellence in all services it offers to its customers. The company affirms its continuous efforts in meeting customers' needs and aspirations, and deliver its promise to offering the best services and latest technologies. Zain constantly looks at ways to improve the experience of its customers, including providing them with the latest solutions to better serve their needs through the biggest and most advanced network in Kuwait.



DUBAI: Waleed Al-Khashti receives the 'Best Telecom Company in Kuwait' award at the prestigious Achievement Awards ceremony in Dubai.

IMF warns trade confrontations, uncertainty threaten growth

DAVOS: The US-China trade confrontations, Brexit and other uncertainty are threatening to drag down global growth even further, the International Monetary Fund warned yesterday.

In an update to its global economic forecasts that was even more pessimistic than those released just three months ago, the IMF emphasized that risks dominate the outlook. The World Economic Outlook cut the global GDP forecast for this year to 3.5 percent from the 3.7 percent projected in October. And for 2020 the estimate was trimmed to 3.6 percent.

And due to slowing momentum in latter part of 2018, from trade tensions and rising fears on global financial markets, growth last year was expected to come in at just 3.7 percent, two-tenths slower than the October forecast.

The fund released the report at the annual gathering of economic and financial leaders from around the world and once again urged cooperative action to defuse the risks. "With momentum past its peak, (and) risks to global growth skewed to the downside ... policies urgently need to focus on preventing additional deceleration," the IMF urged.

Several major economies saw sharp downgrades to the GDP estimates, including Germany, Italy and Mexico, along with a smaller cut for France amid the yellow vest demonstrations that have afflicted the country. However, the world's two largest economies, currently the source of most of the risk to global growth, did not see further downward revisions.

The US is expected to grow 2.5 percent this year and 1.5 percent in 2020. China GDP is forecast to expand 6.2 percent in both years.



DAVOS: International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Christine Lagarde gives a press conference on IMF World Economic Outlook ahead of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting yesterday in Davos. — AFP

Weakened global economy

With growth already weakened by the tariffs imposed on hundreds of billions of dollars in annual trade, mostly between the US and China, the global economy is more susceptible to additional risks.

An "escalation of trade tensions ... remains a key source of risk to the outlook," the IMF warned, pointing to the sharp decline in global financial markets in the final weeks of 2018.

Washington and Beijing declared a 90-day truce on December 1, but the risk remains that tensions will flare up again in the Spring and "casts a shadow over global economic prospects." Another major concern is the potential for a more severe slowdown in China, which would have repercussions throughout Asia.

"As seen in 2015-16, concerns about the health of China's economy can trigger abrupt, wide-reaching sell-offs in financial and commodity markets," the report said. So far, China's fiscal stimulus has cushioned the impact of the trade disputes. As in October, the fund urged countries to negotiate a solution that will not inflict economic damage.

The main policy priority is for countries "to resolve cooperatively and quickly their trade disagreements and the resulting policy

uncertainty, rather than raising harmful barriers further and destabilizing an already slowing global economy."

Brexit, Shutdown and Yellow Vests

Beyond the trade risks, other sources of political uncertainty also have the potential to slow growth in major economies, including the month-long US government shutdown, and the possibility of a no-deal Brexit. In the case of Germany, the growth forecast for 2019 was cut 0.6 points to just 1.3 percent due to the impact on business and private consumption following new auto emissions standards-likely a one-time hit.

In France, the impact of massive street protests could trim growth even further than the 1.5 percent forecast for this year. The WEO also forecast 1.5 percent 2019 growth for Britain, the same as in October, but warned the estimate is fraught with uncertainty since "as of mid-January, the shape that Brexit will ultimately take remains highly uncertain."

Meanwhile, Mexico saw sharp downward revisions of 0.4 and 0.5 this year and next, to 2.1 percent and 2.2 percent, and crisis-stuck Venezuela is likely to see an "even more severe contraction." —AFP

Modi mulls cheap loans, other help for small industry ahead of elections

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is considering offering cheap loans and free accidental insurance coverage to millions of small businesses, two government sources with direct knowledge of the matter said, as he tries to placate a key voter bloc ahead of a general election due by May.

Small business groups have been critical of the Modi government in the past year after many firms were squeezed by a shock move to ban high-value currency notes in 2016, followed by a hasty implementation of a nation-wide goods and services tax (GST) that raised their compliance costs.

In a bid to win them back, and following election losses in five states last month, the government run by Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) recently announced GST concessions and tweaked an e-commerce policy in favor of small traders.

More measures are now being planned, said the sources, who declined to be named as the information was not public. A spokesman for the Ministry of Finance did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

The sources did not quantify the amount the series of measures would cost the government, as details are still being worked out. The government is working on offering a discount of 2 percentage points on loans for businesses with annual sales of less than 50 million rupees

(\$701,754), the sources said, and would compensate banks for costs.

Small businesses with a top credit rating can get loans from banks at about 9-10 percent, while lower-rated businesses can be charged around 13-14 percent.

But only about 4 percent of the 70 million small enterprises in India have access to bank credit, said Praveen Khandelwal, secretary general of the Confederation of All India Traders. He said 30 percent of their loans come from the country's shadow banking sector, while more than half are provided by private money lenders at rates as high as 25 percent a month.

One of the sources said the government may also ask banks to open a special window for increasing the credit flow to small businesses, which will ensure greater availability of loans. The government is also planning to provide free accidental insurance coverage of up to 1 million rupees to small businesses with annual sales of up to 100 million rupees, the sources said.

"Employees of small traders may also get discounts on opting for state-backed insurance schemes," one of the sources said. The government has not yet decided if the moves would be announced before the interim budget on Feb. 1, the sources said. The government is also considering a pension program for retired traders registered with the government, and a further discount on interest rates paid on loans to women traders. — Reuters

Business

Mutawa AlKazi Company displays GAC Motor at Kuwait Motor Show



KUWAIT: The Mutawa AlKazi Company, authorized and exclusive distributor of GAC Motor in Kuwait, participated in Kuwait Motor Show at 360 Mall under the sponsorship of the Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

The opening ceremony was attended by the Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, the Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Li Minggang, CEO of the Mutawa AlKazi Company Omar Sulaiman AlKazi, Economic Consultant to the Embassy of China Shang Yang Ro, and Sales Director of the Mutawa AlKazi Company Ahmad Abulhuda. The participation of the Mutawa AlKazi Company in such an event affirms its keenness to introduce its signature vehicles the "GS4", "GS7", "GAS" and "GS8" models to curious buyers and driving enthusiasts. The company pointed out in a statement that the Kuwait Motor Show is the largest annual car event in the country, as the world's leading brands come together under one roof to showcase their top models and unveil the latest and exclusive vehicles to the visitors of the mall and the public.

During the event, the Mutawa AlKazi team introduced their promotional campaign launched under "Grab the Chance to Win Twice! -Exceptional Prizes + Valuable Gifts". The campaign offers buyers the opportunity to enter a draw on the 2019 GS8 and many gifts including iPhone devices. Furthermore, the company reiterated its keenness to participate in major public events to strengthen its presence in the local market. The company invites all to visit the Kuwait Motor Show to learn more about the features of the new GAC vehicles, giving them the opportunity to book a test drive, as well as offering the best prices while benefiting from special after-sale services.

GS4 - Advanced Technology

The GS4 2019 is characterized by the best performance achieved due its powerful engine with advanced technology, which is produced under strict quality control systems based on the strategy of GAC Motors Group, which puts consumers and customers at the top on its list of priorities.

The vehicle is designed for consumers looking for an advanced driving experience, with strong procedures to ensure a distinctive driving with the most advanced and efficient power system in the world. The car is characterized by a sophisticated and secure system of self-locking and self-brakes in emergency situations, multi-level strategies and a warm-out warning system,

which automatically detects the vehicle's deviation from the path through sound warning. When the vehicle exceeds 30 km / h, the front impact system is activated automatically, depending on the different severity levels, provided with a speed-stabilizer system to maintain a safe distance between the vehicles at all times.

The vehicle also has a strong feature, a new design, remote operation and monitoring experience, intelligent security service, and a new and unique rescue and emergency service, providing high-speed remote operation that allows one-button car control.

The GS4 meets all needs. Its luxurious cabin comes with fine Napa leather seats, cooling and heating features, a multifunctional screen, three-dimensional sound & navigation system, and a multi-functional steering wheel among other great technological features that cater to the driver's needs. With its sporty appearance, strong performance, spacious and comfortable cabin, and splendid modern design it has seized the admiration and appraisal of all with its various technological merits and power.

GS8 - Luxury

The design of the new GAC Motor GS8 2019 three-piece headrest is butterfly-shaped giving a great sense of head cover, effectively reducing fatigue, and natural Napa chairs with specific and exclusive lining technology to show elegance, distinctive refinement, brilliance and luxury.

The GS8 is equipped with intelligent identification technology with welcoming lights, automatic driver identification, and multiple functions such as automatic lighting, remote control with welcoming lights and various functions such as automatic lighting, wireless mobile charging with an electro-magnetic charging function. The GS8 can quickly interconnect with all smart phones (Apple and Android). The vehicle also possesses as 10-inch full color LCD central control screen enabling smooth switch of vehicle information. GAC Motor's GS8 reflects world-class luxury and robustness in the world market with a unique style, with powerful measures to ensure superior driving with the most advanced and efficient power system in the world.

GAS - A Strategic Choice

GAC Motor is always keen on the comfort of its users, the design of GAS car seats came with many features and specifications that make it more than a car, it is a strategic choice for those looking for a car that combines strength, comfort and luxury.

The GAS car expresses power as a high-end commercial car

that has reached the peak with a world-class luxury and a 200 horsepower turbo motor and 2000 CC engine. The GAS is considered the car of businessmen and those who search for comfort and luxury at one go. Due to a powerful launch, GAC Motor keeps up with the highest quality standards. The car has a fine and luxurious appearance, with an independent 4-wheel suspension system with censored steering which can effectively isolate vibrations from the road. In addition to a top engineered chassis platform technology, giving the driver a first class comfortable driving experience.

The power system in the GAS is considered the most advanced and sufficient worldwide. Ensuring powerful energy, low fuel consumption, high safety and quality. Furthermore, its 6-speed transmission achieves smoothness in transition of gears making the energy group system ideal.

The GAS provides an ample luxurious area. Made with the finest natural Nappa leather. Its interior is made of high quality and environment-friendly materials. It also has a power curtain of the rear window operated by one touch to efficiently prevent UV rays from entering, to maintain an ideal temperature inside the vehicle. Moreover, it has a special refrigerator with an independent high quality compressor, and it lies in the rear central hand cushion. The GAS is sure to grant one comfort, elegance, and a first class driving experience.

GS7 - A Smooth Driving Experience

The 2019 GS7 is a mid-size 4x4 SUV filled with options and features with an embodiment of redefined prestige and aesthetic design. The GS7 is a 5-seater with a wide body structure making it spacious and comfortable for all passengers. Similar to the GS8, it has the feature of smart wireless charging for smartphones, and a smart 7 inch color LCD central control screen. The central control screen displays real-time images of blind spots on the rear side while lane changing and doubling during high speed driving. GAC has maintained its strength and performance by providing quality products in compliance with the highest standards of the automotive industry. As they are committed to ensure the safety of drivers and passengers. Furthermore, the elements of luxury, safety, durability, and high performance fit harmoniously to create the perfect car, and can only be experienced when driving and getting a closer look in person. Mutawa Alkazi strives to constantly provide high quality in order to reciprocate customers trust and satisfaction.

AUB launches electronic recycling program in partnership with Enviroserve

KUWAIT: Following the 2018 launch of a Plastics Recycling initiative, Ahli United Bank is now pioneering the recycling of electronic waste through a strategic partnership with Enviroserve.

Enviroserve specializes in the re-cycling of electronic waste through recycling the bank's electronic devices to serve as other environment-friendly equipment rather than disposing them in the traditional way. This step is a continuation of the bank's success that started in 2018 with a strategic partnership with "Omnia Factory for Recycling of Plastic." In 2018, Ahli United Bank recycled 1,934 kgs of plastic through this partnership.

Commenting on this step, Sahar Dashti, General Manager of the Customer Protection, and who is responsible for the social responsibility program at Ahli United Bank said: "AUB has a responsibility as part of the Kuwaiti society, to assist in keeping Kuwait's environment healthy and clear from pollution. It is also our obligation to honor the vision of our leader and father, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah, 2035 for a better Kuwait, and for Kuwait to have a leader, for its clean and healthy environment."

Dashti added: "We, at Ahli United Bank, have started our recycling journey last year focusing on the recycling of plastic. And decided to add electronic waste as a new initiative to diversify and expand the re-cycling process for a healthier environment. Our strategic partnership with Enviroserve will help us achieve this important objective, by minimizing the negative impact of electronic waste on the environment and to benefit from the dismantled objects.

Dashti invited the community to participate in such campaign by collecting electronic wastes to be recycled, she emphasized that every step in caring for the environment will certainly have a positive impact on Kuwait's progress and prosperity and eventually the whole world.

Ahli United Bank will continue to initiate ideas to support the protection of our environment. More initiatives are being planned through 2019 to support this important cause.



Sahar Dashti

CBK receives grand prize winner of KD 1.5 million

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) received the winner of Al-Najma Account's grand prize of KD 1.5 million, Abdul Jaleel Sayyed Hussein Al-Tabtaba'e at its headquarters. Tabtaba'e was received by CBK's CEO, Elham Mahfouz and a number of the bank's executives.

Speaking on the occasion, Tabtaba'e expressed his joy with the unexpected prize noting that all his family members have CBK accounts and that he himself had been a CBK client for long years. He also expressed his satisfaction with the outstanding banking services CBK provides. CBK CEO Elham Mahfouz congratulated Al-Tabtaba'e and thanked him for his years of trust in CBK and underlined that CBK is keen on providing creative banking services to all its clients. Also speaking on the occasion, CBK's individual banking services manager, Hameed Ibrahim Salman wished the winner the best of luck and stressed that chances are still open for CBK clients to double their winning chances with Al-Najma Account in 2019. He said the account offers weekly KD 5,000 prizes, monthly KD 20,000 and biannual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the grand prize of KD 1.5 million.



Warba Bank announces 5 winners of Al-Sunbula draw

KUWAIT: Warba Bank, "the Best investment Bank" and "Best Corporate Bank" in Kuwait, held its weekly 3rd draw for Al-Sunbula Account. The draw announced the 5 lucky winners in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Bank officials. The bank proudly announces the lucky five winners who received KD 1000 each are: Hussain Ali Hussain

Yousef Ali, Emad Khaled Barjas Al-Barjas, Batoul Redha Najjar Pour, Dharah Abdulrahman Ebrahim Al-Yatama and Saleh Saleh Abdulhadi Al-Ajmi.

Al-Sunbula Account is the perfect choice for all customers who wish to save money and achieve steady returns while simultaneously have the opportunity to win cash prizes throughout the year. Due to the high traffic on this account, for its offerings of unparalleled opportunities, Warba Bank has worked on enhancing Al-Sunbula account to provide customers with more benefits. Such enhancements include increasing the number of winners and the frequency of the draws. Now, on every Thursday the Bank holds draws for five weekly winners of KD 1,000 each. In addition, stay tuned for the new innovative Sunbula draws for the year 2019.

As for the chances for winning, each customer is eligible to enter the draw against each KD 10. It is noteworthy, that Warba Bank has

Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 20th January 2019 announcing the names of its winners for the week from the 13th January till the 17th January 2019, in which five winners will receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners this week are:

- Nermin Mohammed Al-Anwar Raghab
- Maha Hamad Abdullah Alhumaidi
- Tareq Ahmed Ali Albannay
- Walid Mahdi Hussein Al-Qallaf
- Mohammed Arif Butt Pola Butt

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

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

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

recently launched the Al-Sunbula Fixed Deposit, which provides depositors with high returns of up to 3.5%, as well as getting chances to win in Al-Sunbula Account draws. Furthermore, Warba Bank has launched its latest Customer Onboarding solution, in line with its ambitious five-year strategy that enables non-Warba Bank customers to request opening Al-Sunbula account in an easy electronic manner through the Bank's website without having to visit any of the Bank's branches, by following 5 simple steps that might take up to 5 minutes. New customers will be able to request opening the account at anytime, anywhere, and the Bank will receive, process and pass the new application for approval through whole new and unique electronic system used to implement this service. Warba Staff will then contact the customer to determine the appropriate time to visit the branch to get required signatures, verify the customer's identity, deliver his/her debit card, and activate the account.

Business

Choose France? Macron woos business chiefs

PARIS: As Emmanuel Macron prepares to pitch a dynamic new France to dozens of business leaders yesterday, many are wondering if the former banker can first win over his opponents.

Macron is gathering 150 top executives at the sumptuous Versailles palace for the second edition of his "Choose France" summit, to show off reforms aimed at drawing more foreign investment. Executives from blue chips like GE and Microsoft to tech darlings like Uber and Snapchat are expected to attend before heading to the Davos forum this week in Switzerland.

Last January the young centrist was basking in the success of labor and tax law overhauls and stressing how he had delivered on promises to make France more competitive and attractive.

This year, however, the unnerving images of street fighting and vandalism during two months of fiery "yellow vest" rallies against him could make such claims a more difficult sell.

Still positive?

"It's a completely new picture—Macron is all alone and facing serious opposition," said Jean-Paul Betbeze, an economist who has watched several governments grapple with reform drives. Last Saturday's protest, the 10th since November, drew 84,000 people, and sporadic clashes again broke out against the 80,000 police deployed nationwide. "The country's attractiveness has collapsed," Frederic Sanchez, head of international activities for the Medef employers' federation, said earlier this month. "When you're watching from the US, you'd think France is in the middle of a civil war."

The government insists the protests haven't dented the

country's appeal as the second-biggest recipient of foreign investment in Europe, behind Germany but ahead of Brexit-bound Britain.

It points to an update in December and early January of the annual survey by the Business France promotional agency, which showed the violence had not shaken that conviction. Foreign investments in France surged nearly 40 percent last year to 44 billion euros, statistics office Insee says, with the government touting new projects by Google, Toyota, Facebook and Novartis.

"Overall foreign executives remain positive on France's attractiveness, and the progress made over the past 18 months hasn't been called into question," the Finance Ministry said last week.

France is also banking on multinationals coming to France in the wake of Brexit, particularly from the financial sector. "For now nobody is telling us they're cancelling a move to Paris because of the yellow vests," said Robert Ophel, head of the French markets regulator AMF.

"However they are wondering about the consequences of this movement, and how long it will last," he said. Economic growth has already slowed markedly in recent months and is expected to reach just 1.5 percent for 2018 according to the Bank of France, after 2.2 percent in 2017.

The decline reflects in part the toll taken by the protests, which saw dozens of stores looted in Paris and other cities and forced others to board up their windows during the crucial holiday shopping weekends. Already before Christmas the FCD retailing association had tabled lost revenue for the sector at some two billion euros. "Growth had already slowed and is going to slow further, meaning unemployment could rise—and that's when the Macron 'machine' risks stalling," Betbeze said.

Macron's promise to restore the French public finances to health has also taken a hit after he tried to quell the anger of the "yellow vests" by offering 10 billion euros of wage increases and tax relief for low earners and retirees. That will push France's budget deficit above the EU-mandated three-percent limit of GDP, and companies are likely to be targeted to help make up the shortfall. —AFP

Global FDI skids 19% on Trump tax reform

GENEVA: Global foreign direct investment (FDI) fell 19 percent last year to an estimated \$1.2 trillion, largely caused by U.S. President Donald Trump's tax reforms, the United Nations trade and development agency UNCTAD said yesterday.

FDI, comprising cross-border mergers and acquisitions (M&A), intra-company loans and investment in start-up projects abroad, is a bellwether of globalization and a potential sign of growth of corporate supply chains and future trade ties. But it can also go into reverse as companies pull investments out of foreign projects or repatriate earnings.

The lowest net global FDI since 2009 was the result of US firms repatriating \$300 billion or more in accumulated earnings to take advantage of Trump's tax break. Net investment flows into Europe slumped by an unprecedented 73 percent to \$100 billion, a level not seen since the 1990s, as U.S. firms pulled years of profits out of affiliates in Ireland, Switzerland and elsewhere.

UNCTAD investment chief James Zhan told reporters that US repatriation of profits had slowed down and an FDI rebound was possible this year, but there were also growing risks.

"It's what we call the potential trade-investment-technology war that will affect global investment, and we see that the rising protectionist measures of a number of countries and the prospects for global economic growth are worsening," Zhan said. The United States remained the top destination for FDI in 2018, attracting \$226 billion, 18 percent less than in 2017. —Reuters



BBK announces the appointment of its Kuwait Branch Chief Executive



Reyadh Sater



Jehad Al Qabandi

BBK, Bahrain pioneer in retail and commercial banking, announced the appointment of Mr. Jehad Al Qabandi, as Chief Executive of its Kuwait Branch, effective January 20th, 2019.

Mr. Al Qabandi has an extensive experience spanning over 25 years in the Investment Industry. He held senior positions in leading organizations in Kuwait, last of which the role of Executive Director at The Kuwait National Fund for Small & Medium Enterprise Development. Mr. Jehad Al-Qabandi holds an MBA from City University of London and completed in 2004, a Senior Executive Programme for Middle East from Harvard Business School.

Mr. Reyadh Sater, BBK's Chief Executive welcomed Mr. Jehad Al Qabandi onboard the BBK Group, and was delighted of the new appointment. On this occasion, he said:

"BBK has always been very proud of its presence in Kuwait, having entered the market in 1978 as the only non-Kuwaiti Bank. Since then, the Kuwait branch has contributed greatly to the Bank's success and today, with the appointment of Jehad, I am confident that BBK Kuwait will continue on its path of achievements.

Mr. Al Qabandi's extensive expertise will be of great value to BBK Kuwait Branch and to the Group in general, and I seize the opportunity to welcome him onboard and wish him success and growth at BBK."

Mr. Jehad Al-Qabandi thanked Mr. Reyadh Sater and the Bank's management for their confidence in entrusting him the Bank's Kuwait Branch. "I'm very proud to be joining a lead-

ing organization such as BBK, that succeeded over the past 48 years, to build a name and reputation respected locally and internationally. I'm looking forward to working with the board of directors and the executive management toward continuous growth and expansion of this great financial institution", added Mr. Jehad Al-Qabandi.

"We are proud of this appointment of a Kuwaiti National of high caliber in the position of Chief Executive, which emphasises BBK's role in boosting Kuwaitisation in the private sector" added Mr. Reyadh Sater

About BBK

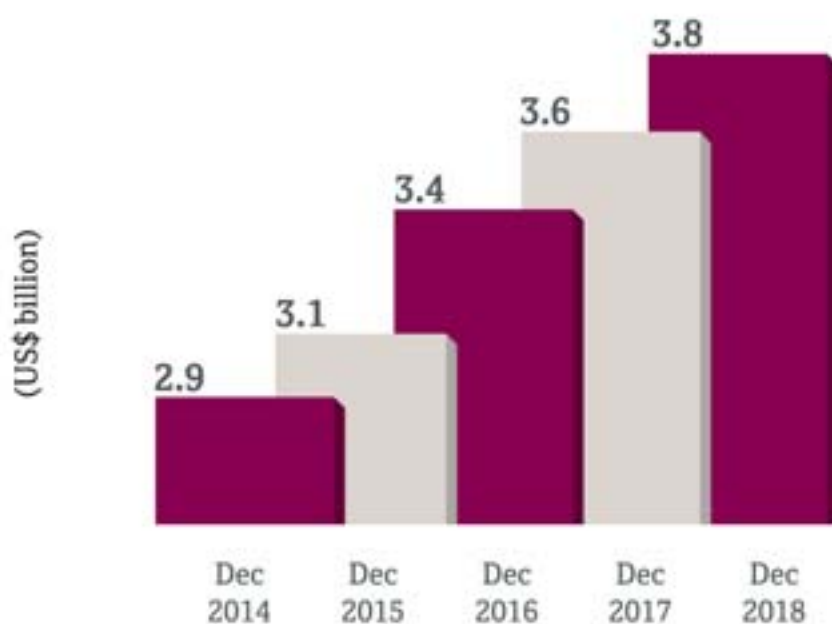
BBK has been the pioneer in Commercial Banking for 48 years in the Kingdom of Bahrain. As a revolutionary market leader, BBK has built a name and reputation which is respected locally as well as internationally. To maintain this reputation, BBK has been at the forefront, incorporating the latest technologies to provide the finest services. One example of which is the e-banking solutions offered by BBK, which provide new generation services through its user friendly award winning website www.bbkonline.com, along with the telebanking, cash depositary machines and automated teller machines services. BBK is proud to be honored for

its Corporate Governance by the "Hawkamah Institute for the 4th consecutive year. This award

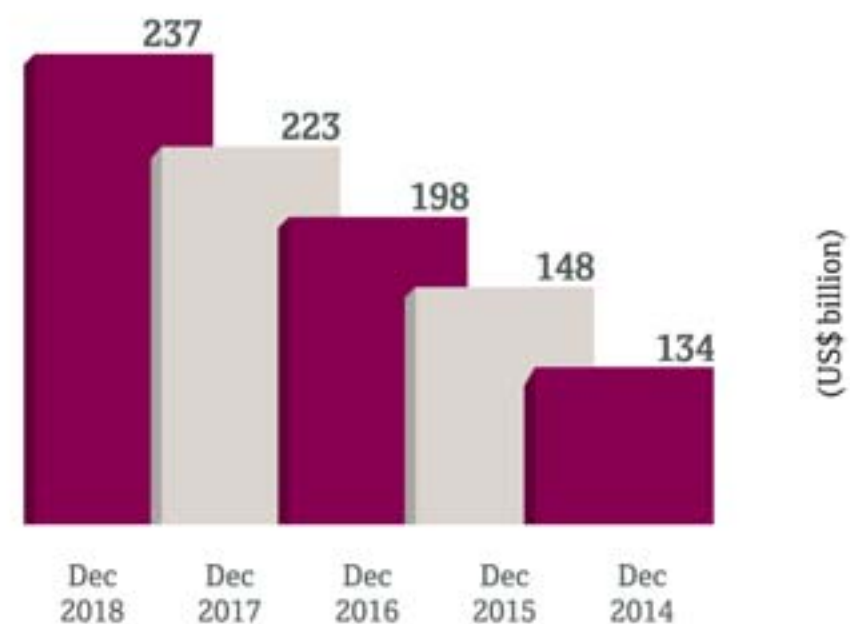
has become a prestigious, competitive and highly coveted bank award that highlights the industry's strong commitment to good corporate governance.

QNB Group, the largest financial institution in the MEA region delivers another record result in 2018

Net Profit US\$3.8 billion,
up by 5% from last year



Total Assets US\$237 billion,
up by 6% from last year



QNB Group achieves record financial results for the year ended 31 December 2018.

- QNB Group, the largest financial institution in the MEA region, is currently present in more than 31 countries across three continents
- QNB Group staff exceeds 29,000 serving more than 23 million customers through 1,100 locations and 4,400 ATMs
- QNB Group enjoys one of the highest credit ratings: Capital Intelligence AA-, Fitch A+, Moody's Aa3, Standard & Poor's A

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Business

Equities to outperform bonds as global economy expected to continue growing

Barclays releases Q1 2019 'Compass' Report

KUWAIT: Barclays has released its Q1 2019 "Compass" report, which examines major asset classes globally, and provides tactical recommendations on portfolio asset allocations. The report outlines that carefully calibrated risks can help investors steady their ships after a turbulent 2018. In particular, the report highlighted how investors will be well served by leaning towards a diverse pool of developed and emerging market equities, while considering the importance of maintaining a well-diversified long-term core investment portfolio.

The report, prepared by Barclays, shares the latest views on their long-term Strategic Asset Allocation (SAA). It also highlights short-term tactical adjustments recognizing investment opportunities emerging from shorter-term cyclical views on asset classes and markets across the world.

Commenting on the report, Bjorn Holderbeke, Head of Investment Advisory, Middle East and

North Africa, said: "Our first 'Compass' report of 2019 points to the main themes we anticipate across investment portfolios this year and that we continue to expect equities to outperform bonds. With the volatility in Q4 2018 a wake-up call to many investors, it is important to note that the anomaly was the low volatility witnessed in 2017. Throughout 2019, volatility will likely revert to historical averages in an environment of slower but ongoing global economic growth in the later stages of this economic cycle."

He added: "Equities remain the most attractively priced asset this year, as we believe investors are currently overly pessimistic. We see opportunities in Blue Chip stocks globally, where brand image, market share and technological leadership give companies an edge in a potentially inflationary environment. In emerging market Equities, we like the risk/reward following the strong underperfor-

mance in 2018, and Asia is our preferred region.

For their part, bonds provide a slightly more appealing shelter from potential volatility. As investment allocators, we think investors will be best served by a strategic mix of assets, coupled with active, expert portfolio management to achieve long-term returns."

The latest edition of Compass shows an overweight position on Developed Markets Equities. Leading indicators related to this asset class currently indicate mid-to-high single digit percentage returns for the year ahead, with dividend yield and earnings growth offsetting possible revaluations.

Emerging Markets Equities also maintain an overweight allocation in the moderate risk portfolio as a leveraged exposure to the continued the global growth. Asian markets remain as the preferred region, with Korea, Taiwan, China (offshore) and India showing the most promise on a long-term basis.

Allocation to Commodities and Real Estate moved up from underweight to neutral benchmarks in 2019 Q1. As suggested by Barclays' current tactical and strategic asset allocation studies, Developed Government Bonds and High Yield & Emerging Market Bonds also assume neutral positions.

Meanwhile, Alternative Trading Strategies, Investment Grade Bonds and Cash and Short-Maturity Bonds are all classified as underweight in the latest report, with more favorable investment opportunities awaiting investors.



Bjorn Holderbeke

NBK offers Al-Shabab customers exclusive discounts in collaboration with Eureka

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait continues to introduce new services, products and rewards exclusively for its Al-Shabab Package Customers, ensuring they are tailored to cater to their unique lifestyles. In line with that commitment, NBK partnered once again with Eureka to offer its Al-Shabab customers unique discounts and end 2018 on a high note with large discounts on the latest Apple Watch Series 4.

Launched at the end of the month of December, the offer lasted for one day and received great engagement and response from Al-Shabab customers. "We are always launching campaigns and special offers that reward our younger customers, ensuring that these offers are in line with what interests them the most and add value to their daily lives, such as enabling them to enjoy the coveted Apple Watch Series 4 at very attractive value," said Bedoor Al-Adsani, Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait. "We are very pleased with the response we've received from our customers and promise them to continue introducing new offers exclusively for Al-Shabab Customers during the year. Customers can follow our social media accounts to stay up to date with our latest offers."

Commenting on the offers, Eureka Sales Manager, Tarek Bou Fakhreddine, said: "We are very happy to be partnering with NBK to offer their customers special discounts. The offers launched throughout 2018 were very successful and the response even greater. We look forward to partnering with NBK in the near future on new offers that suit Al-Shabab customers."

Al-Shabab Package provides many services and benefits with specific offers and discounts designed for those who transfer their student allowance to NBK and hold an NBK Al-Shabab Prepaid Card. These discounts include 50 percent off when ordering from Talabat.com on specific days, periodical discounts of up to 50 percent on electronics from Eureka when shopping on its website, and 50 percent discount on cinema tickets valid at Cinescape during the weekend (Friday and Saturday).

NBK Al-Shabab Prepaid Card also provides a wide range of exciting features such as the ease and safety for online shopping. Customers may also use their prepaid cards to withdraw cash, without fees, from any NBK ATM.

Al-Adsani added: "Al-Shabab Package offers unlimited benefits and is designed in a way that meets the interest of young customers and their fast-paced lifestyle. Al-Shabab Customers are able to enjoy the many banking services in easy steps thanks to NBK Mobile Banking App and can always expect new services that specifically target them and make their banking experience all the more convenient."

Al-Shabab Customers enjoy services that include the NBK Quick Pay for a fast and easy method to receive money, pay their bills and transfer due amounts to friends, anytime and anywhere, even on weekends and official holidays. They can also benefit from the newly enhanced ATMs and Cash Deposit Machines (CDMs) through which they can enjoy cardless withdrawals by simply using their mobile number or Civil ID, and also use the NBK Tap & Pay Debit Card or any NFC-enabled debit card to withdraw or deposit money with only a tap and without inserting their card in the machine.

In addition to these features, customers can benefit from the ITM machine available at The Avenues to complete many of their transactions such as the instant replacement of their debit card. NBK's Airport Branch is also available 24/7, the only bank in Kuwait to be open round the clock for both departure and arrival areas.



Bedoor Al-Adsani

Careem: Moving to transform and simplify lives in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Careem, a transportation network company based in Dubai, operates with a motto to transform and simplify the lives of people - both captains and customers. It believes in providing quality services, addressing market needs and creating impact. Careem believes these values will give it the desired results, said Khaled Nuseibeh, the General Manager of the Careem GCC, in an interview.

Kuwait Times: How is Careem in Kuwait? When did it start and who are the current customers?

Answer: The Kuwaiti market is a promising market with a lot of potential. We have managed to be part of solving leading problems in Kuwait such as congestion and parking issues. We started our services in Kuwait in May 2017 and like other markets we serve a mix of expats and Kuwaiti nationals.

KT: So this is basically just like a famous grab taxis in other countries right? How can you differentiate the services to grab taxi, Careem and the normal taxi out there?

A: Careem welcomes healthy competition from both local and international companies. However, quality services, proactive communication, community outreach, and constant support to captains and customers have always helped Careem remain at the top of its game. Our motto is to transform and simplify the lives of people - both captains and customers. We believe in providing quality services, addressing market needs and creating impact. We believe these values will give us the desired results.

KT: So is this like a personal business to people who have cars with the license from your company, how can an individual register and do the business? Can I register for example? What are the qualifica-

tions? In that way you are actually creating job for people, probably extra income for individual car owners?

A: To abide with the Kuwaiti local laws and regulations, Careem in Kuwait works with selected Taxis based on certain quality standards set by Careem. We also offer a Business car type through a local supplier. If an individual is interested in being a part of Careem through our Business car type, they can reach out to our business supplier.

KT: What about the issue of license and the fact that in Kuwait, you are accused of illegally transporting people without license...how do you handle this?

A: We are a licensed company in Kuwait and we operate legally. As per the ministry of interior we are allowed to work with Taxi companies and private limousine companies only at this stage.

KT: Careem as Tech Company... how does it work? Why do we trust your company for the safety of my kids for example women passengers?

A: Safety and Security is at the top of Careem's agenda. We have and will continue to invest millions of dollars every year in bringing in the best talent and providing the best protection for Customers and Captains across our network. In 2018 alone, we have committed to spending over \$3.5 million on safety and security. The spend has gone towards improved technologies for captain screening, real-time driving behavior tracking, call masking, 24/7 safety and security operations center, piloting new tech like facial recognition and providing cover for all our rides through in ride insurance for customers and Captains. We also have on the ground S&S response teams that manage incidents in real time as required.

KT: Careem promotes mobility and affordability (transportation solutions) How will you determine the fare per passenger, per destination?



Khaled Nuseibeh



A: Careem is metered, our fares are monitored and measured as per the Kuwaiti laws. Through our technology, Careem users are able to choose the car type that suits them, know the fare before booking the ride and see the estimated time of arrival of their Captain (Careem calls their drivers "Captain" as a sign of respect).

KT: How do you see the company in the coming months/years? Any plan for expansion? In other countries?

A: We just launched Al-Jahra city a month ago and we currently cover all major areas in Kuwait. Our main focus at the moment is to provide our customers with a variety of options to cover their everyday needs such as taxi and business.

Nissan Al-Babtain brings festive offers this Hala February



KUWAIT: This Hala February, Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Company's (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Nissan vehicles in the State of Kuwait, welcomes its loyal customers to enjoy the irresistible offers it has in store during the annual festive period. Ensuring everyone is a winner with Nissan Al-Babtain during the most celebrated month of the year, the automotive leader invites its fans to start experiencing the excitement simply by visiting the showroom - as the fully loaded Nissan Pathfinder comes with a whopping cash back of 7000 \$ including an instant gift which is the iPhone X while the Nissan Kicks, X-Trail and Maxima are up to 1000 \$ cashback inclusive of the latest Samsung Note 9 as an instant gift. Followed by the Nissan 370Z with a 3,300 \$ cashback and an iPhone X as bonus gift and the Nissan Patrol Y62 which still comes with 7 year free service also comes with the new iPhone X as instant gift. The Nissan Super Safari comes with 500 KD cashback and iPhone X while the remaining Safaris come with 350 KD cashback and the Samsung Note 9. Not ending here, Nissan Al-Babtain also brings attractive prices on the Nissan Sunny and Sentra starting from 2,999 KD and 3,999 KD respectively. Nissan Al-Babtain welcomes its customers to visit its designated showrooms in Al-Rai and Ahmadi to discover the wealth of offers and amazing prizes that await each.

KFH launches 'Explore The World with KFH Visa Cards' campaign

KUWAIT: In a move that reflects its continued excellence in launching first-of-its-kind campaigns, KFH launched "Explore The World with KFH Visa Cards" Campaign that gives customers life time experience. This campaign is part of KFH's strategy to focus on customer recognition and reward, while continuously enhancing its innovative services and products that meet the customer's expectations and strengthen the Bank's global standing.

The winning customer is eligible to receive a prize package for himself/herself and 1 companion. Based on their choice, KFH Visa cardholders will get the chance to win travel packages ranging between: Asia (Hong Kong, Tokyo, Seoul) or (Mumbai, Colombo, Maldives), South America (Buenos Aires, Mendoza, the Lake District, El Calafate), North America (New York, Cancun, Orlando, Miami) or (San Francisco, Hawaii, Los Angeles, Bora Bora), Africa (Mauritius, Sun City, Cape Town), Australia & New Zealand (Brisbane, Hamilton, Island, Sydney, Queenstown, Auckland). Moreover, they can choose from Scandinavia package (Stockholm, Oslo, Copenhagen, Amsterdam).

Part of the experience the winners will get two Business class tickets, not to mention business class tickets on the domestic flights to several cities in the continent, 5-star hotel accommodation including transportation from and to airport, and KD 2000/- pocket money will be credited to each winner's account.

By spending a minimum of KD 100 on total purchase transactions during the campaign period, KFH Visa cardholders will get the chance to win a 14 days' travel package for the continent of their choice. The campaign is valid for VISA credit and prepaid cards purchases transactions used locally and internationally, as well as the debit cards purchase transactions used internationally.

With eligible KFH Visa Debit, Credit and Prepaid cardholders, the campaign will be valid till 15 March 2019. KFH Group General Manager Retail Banking, Fadi Chalouhi said: "KFH continues its leadership with the exclusive campaigns that meet customers' expectations and fulfil their ambitions. As the first to kick-

start more exciting campaigns coming this year, this campaign is also part of continuous series of offers and campaigns launched in partnership with Visa."

He added: "Coinciding with the beginning of the year 2019, this campaign emphasizes the Bank's commitment in providing customers with a unique banking experience and opportunities to win, using KFH cards, which adds value and excellence to the Bank's products."

He pointed out that in 2018 KFH successfully launched several campaigns: most importantly "Once in a Life Time Travel Experience in a Private Jet to London" campaign that awarded 6 winners and their companions a unique 6-day trip to London in a private jet, in addition to accommodation in a 5-star hotel premium suite, luxury car with chauffeur service and KD 2000 cash credit for enjoying a unique shopping experience.

KFH also launched Card Summer Campaign themed "Your KFH card, the key to your house in Turkey". 3 customers won a house of their choice in Turkey with furniture and home appliances, in addition to business class air ticket to Turkey with a companion and stay in a 5-star hotel for 5 nights for using any of "KFH" Visa cards (Debit, Credit or Prepaid) to pay for domestic or international purchases.

Chalouhi stressed the continued efforts of the partnership with Visa, especially after the success of KFH's campaigns and services, which was widely welcomed by market and customers. He underlined the efforts being made to continuously achieve a qualitative leap in the business, services, and rewards programs which strengthen KFH's position as a world leading Islamic financial institution, while increasing customer satisfaction.

Ankush Devadason, Kuwait Country Manager at Visa, commented: "We are delighted to collaborate on the launch of yet another distinctive campaign by KFH. 'Explore The World' campaign will offer KFH customers the unique opportunity to win a once in a lifetime experience of travel and leisure. At Visa, we want to ensure that KFH customers not only have access to these exclusive experiences but are able to enjoy and cherish those experiences in the most seamless and secure way."



Fadi Chalouhi

Health & Technology

Second Chinese woman carrying genetically-edited baby: Report

BEIJING: A researcher who claimed to have created the world's first genetically-edited babies will face a Chinese police investigation, state media said yesterday, as authorities confirmed that a second woman fell pregnant during the experiment. He Jiankui shocked the scientific community last year after announcing he had successfully altered the genes of twin girls born in November to prevent them from contracting HIV.

He had told a human genome forum in Hong Kong that there had been "another potential pregnancy" involving a second couple. A provincial government investigation has since confirmed the existence of the second mother and that the woman was still pregnant, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

The expectant mother and the twin girls from the first pregnancy will be put under medical observation, an investigator told Xinhua. The provincial government probe found He had "forged ethical review papers" and "deliberately evaded supervision," according to Xinhua.

He had "privately" organized a project team that included foreign staff and used "technology of uncertain safety and effectiveness" for illegal human embryo

gene-editing, it said.

Investigators told Xinhua that the scientist was "pursuing personal fame" and used "self-raised funds" for the controversial experiment. Eight volunteer couples-HIV-positive fathers and HIV-negative mothers-signed up to He's trial, investigators found, with one couple later dropping out.

Details of the experiment-which has not been independently verified-triggered an immediate backlash from the global scientific community and the Chinese government ordered a halt to He's research work days after it was publicly announced.

Speaking at the genome summit in Hong Kong in November, He said he was "proud" of altering the genes of the babies, given the stigma affecting AIDS patients in the country.

But such gene-editing work is banned in most countries, including China.

He will be "dealt with seriously according to the law," and his case will be "handed over to public security organs for handling," Xinhua said. The scientist was educated at Stanford University in the US and recruited back to China as part of Beijing's "Thousand Talents Plan" to reverse brain drain, according to a copy of He's resume



He Jiankui shocked the scientific community last year after announcing he had successfully altered the genes of twin girls born in November to prevent them from contracting HIV. —AFP

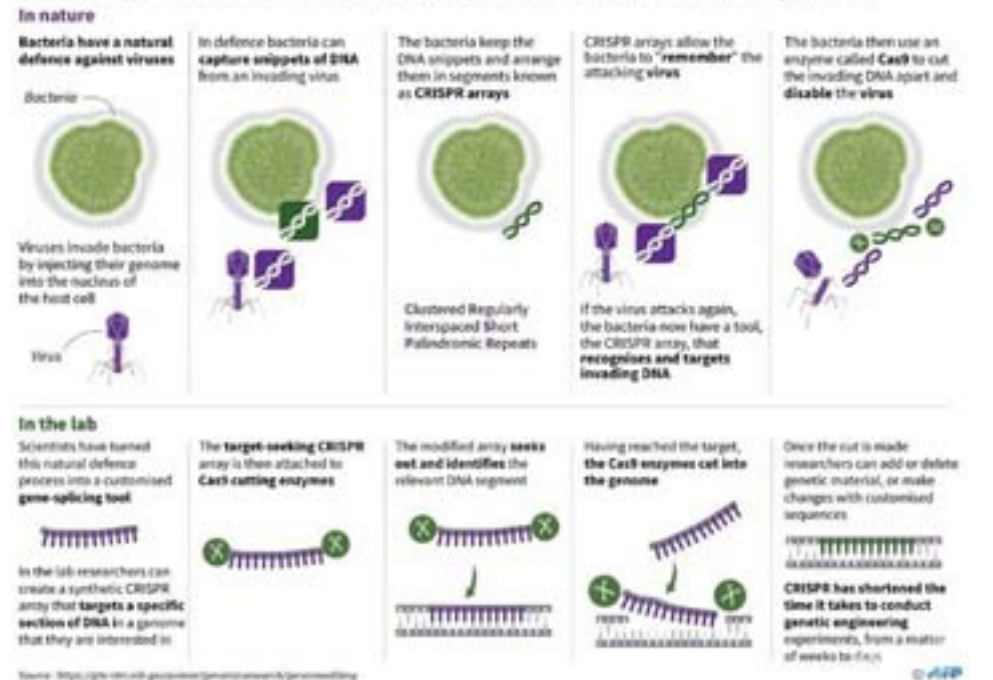
published on the website of the Southern University of Science and Technology in Shenzhen.

He's university has distanced itself from the researcher, saying he had been on unpaid leave since February and had "seriously violated academic ethics".

He said the twins' DNA was modified using CRISPR, a technique which allows

Gene-editing with CRISPR/Cas9

The technique which vastly cuts down the time needed for genetic experiments derives from a bacterium's natural defense against viruses



scientists to remove and replace a strand with pinpoint precision. Experts worry meddling with the genome of an embryo could cause harm not only to the individual but also future generations that inherit these same changes. — AFP

Kabul chokes on dirty air as temperatures plunge

KABUL: Kabul residents have long run the gauntlet of suicide attacks and bombs. This winter, however, they face another deadly threat: air pollution. For weeks a thick layer of toxic smog has blanketed the sprawling city as cold air traps pollution caused by people burning coal, wood, car tyres and even garbage to stay warm.

The choking contamination peaks in evenings and early mornings when temperatures plunge below zero. Dangerous particulate matter, including toxins like sulfate and black carbon, hang in the air like a thick curtain, reducing visibility and making breathing difficult. Residents complain the

air is getting worse—a view supported by doctors who report a sharp rise in respiratory illnesses.

"In previous years 30 to 40 percent of our patients were suffering from acute respiratory infections, but this year it has jumped to 70 or 80 percent," said Akbar Iqbal, a doctor in the intensive care unit (ICU) of the Indra Gandhi children's hospital in Kabul. "I believe the cold and pollution are the main causes." A seasonal lack of rain and snow in Kabul, coupled with a fast-growing population, fume-belching vehicles, and proliferation of diesel-fuelled generators, are contributing to the deteriorating air quality.

A former official at the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) described this winter's pollution as "deadly". "This can cause stunting and mental development problems in children as well as miscarriages and can lead to many forms of cancer," said Abdul Hadi Zhemem, who until recently was the spokesman for NEPA.

Kabul's air pollution exceeds the World Health Organization's (WHO) safe levels on

any given day in winter. Recently the city of five million people has ranked among the most polluted in the world, according to the AirVisual network. The air quality index reading is often above 300, while at night it can top 600. Recent snow and rain offered some respite, but readings still remain well above the WHO's limits.

Any reading over 100 is considered unhealthy. Long-term exposure to air pollution can cause strokes, heart disease, lung cancer and respiratory illnesses, WHO said. Authorities have turned to media to educate people on air pollution and encourage the use of face masks, even though they often provide poor protection. "On the most polluted days we advise people to stay indoors... when the pollution level is at its highest," said Mohammad Kazem Homayoun, NEPA's chief for Kabul.

In a country where most people are illiterate and healthcare is limited, the information is unlikely to help many. Doctors are also falling victim to the toxic air.

Sohrab Noori, head of the ICU at Wazir Akbar Khan hospital—where the number of



In this photograph taken on January 17, 2019, an Afghan resident rides a bicycle along a road amid heavy smog conditions in Afghanistan's capital Kabul.

admissions for respiratory-related problems has increased—said he had developed a "winter cough" for the first time. "I think it's an allergic reaction to the air pollution," Noori said as he walked past patients hooked up to oxygen cylinders. "If it (air pollution) continues in the long term, in two to three months we might have a big health crisis." — AFP

CLINIC

PAGE

248 33 199

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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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- ◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
- ◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass
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Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad
Surgery Department
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo - Rectal Surgeon

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DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
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- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
- ◆ Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

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What's On



Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn Al Thuraya City win a total of 19 medals in Horeca 2019

A number of chefs from different Hotels and restaurants in Kuwait competed in a series of live culinary shows judged by a large panel of International chefs from all over the Middle East and Europe. The Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn Kuwait Al Thuraya City's skilled Chefs secured 6 gold, 3 silver and 4 bronze medals during multiple live cooking competition at the Horeca 2019 culinary event,

with beautifully put together dishes using exclusive ingredients.

Horeca is the largest culinary festival in Kuwait which takes place each year, and includes exhibitions, live competitions as well as seminars and workshops - Alongside the various food vendors' stands - our only "Hotel stand" and the culinary art Competitions such as live meat, open basket, choco-

late and ice carving, pasta and sandwich making.

As for the bed making competition - where our talented housekeepers showcased their precision in making the perfect bed at the fifth edition of the Bed Making Competition, securing 5 gold medals and 1 silver. From the exotic to the metropolitan, Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn Kuwait Al Thuraya City help plan and execute dining innovations, in the exact way

you've envisioned it; all unparalleled in the industry.

With over 510 bright and modern rooms combined, we want you to have it all - to boost your productivity, to energize your body and feel inspired. During your stay, meeting or event our expert staff is here for you with the little things that make you feel human again. Al Thuraya City, everything you need from a Hotel.

Egyptian speaker visits Kuwait



Dr Magdi Al-Jubaili and Mr Hussein Abdul Rahman: from Al-Kharafi group, strongly hailed the recent visit of the Egyptian speaker, Dr Ali Abdul Aal and his accompanying delegation to Kuwait and stressed that the visit reflects the deep-rooted Kuwaiti-

Egyptian relations in various fields. Following a meeting with Dr Abdul Aal, Al-Jubaili said that there is a joint political and economic cooperation between both countries based on the principles of supporting Arab and regional stability.

Safir Fintas Hotel win medals, certificates in HORECA 2019

Safir Fintas Kuwait Hotel participated in HORECA Kuwait for the fifth consecutive year. The annual exhibition has become a hallmark across the hospitality, catering and food industry in Kuwait and the region. Safir Fintas Kuwait Hotel culinary team was recognized as a winner in 8 categories, bagging 1 Silver, 4 Bronze medals and 6 Merit Certificates. The winners of the competition walked away with several prizes and accolades.

Chef RafaBou Hamdan won a Silver Medal in the "Best Burger" Category, Chef Manikqandan Srinivasan won a Bronze Medal in the "Best Burger" category, both Chef Menshawi Barakat & Chef Ramadan Awed won each in the "Kuwaiti Traditional Dish" category, and Chef Srinivasan Dassin the "Asian Cuisine" category.

The hotel's participants from the culinary team also won six merit certificates:

Shinoj Othayoth won the "Cold or Hot Sandwich Challenge", Pubudu Senarathne won the "Wedding Cake", Peter Rebello won the "Bread Creations (Best Baguette)", Ishara Madushan won the "Best Croissant", and both Manjala Senarathana & Pabudu Senarathne each won in the "Nespresso Café Gourmand" category. The management of Safir Fintas Kuwait Hotel is always keen to involve the chefs in various types of culinary competitions to present their innovations, creations and talents in the food industry and hotel hospitality alike. In an invitation initiated by Saif Eddin Mohammed - General Manager, the culinary team along with the family of Safir Fintas Kuwait Hotel headed by the Executive Sous Chef - Wissam Kasdallah celebrated their achievements with appreciation certificates and valuable prizes.



Within the activities of the 25th Al-Qurain Cultural Festival, a grade A Lebanese folklore concert was held last Thursday at Abdul Hussein Abdul Redha theatre for the Syrian artist, Yousef Bara. The concert was attended by NCCAL assistant secretary general for arts, Dr Bader Al-Doweesh and many other senior officials. Bara sang a number of songs from Lebanese folklore icons such as Wadee' Al-Safi and Zaki Naseef, which filled the ambience with Dabkeh tunes which the audience greatly enjoyed. On concluding the concert, Bara received a special honoring trophy from Dr Al Doweesh.

Embracing the world

Sri Mata Amritanandhamayi Devi, lovingly known across the world as "AMMA" (mother), is a true humanitarian in many ways. Amma's organization, the Mata Amritanandamayi Math is the first of a few organizations that responds to any disaster-stricken area providing relief work, medical care, and solace to the affected. AMMA's response be it earthquakes in Kashmir, Nepal, Haiti and Japan, cyclones in West Bengal and Philippines, and hurricanes in the US is commendable.

After the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, AMMA acted quickly, providing concrete homes for the homeless within six months after the disaster. AMMA has dedicated more than \$75 million in disaster relief work since 2005. Popularly known as the hugging saint, AMMA easily draws thousands of people of all age, ethnicity, color and faith during her programs throughout Europe, the United States, Japan, Africa, Australia, South America, Singapore, Malaysia and other countries on six continents.

During the past 30 years AMMA has spoken at many international forums, including at the United Nations and the Parliament of World's Religions. Most recently, she was invited to Abu Dhabi by His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zaid Al Nahyan, Crown prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed forces, to be the keynote speaker at a two-day conference focused on "Child dignity in the digital world". In her speech, Amma stressed the need for

humanity to awaken compassion and to cultivate restraint.

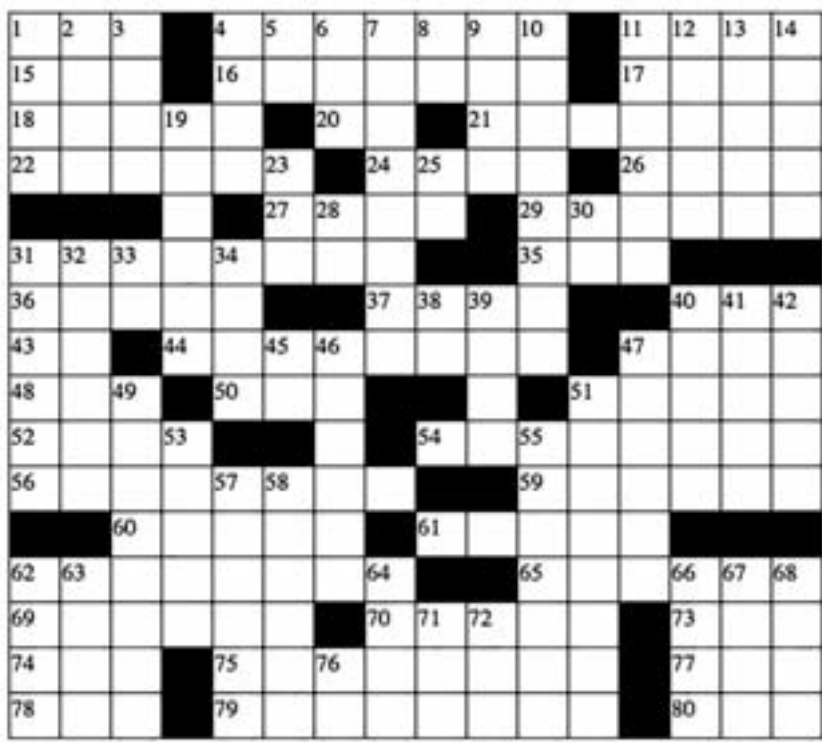
Heading AMMA's mission and serving as the Vice Chairman of the Math is Swami Amrita Swaropananda Puri. He is also the President of Amrita Viswa Vidyapeetam, which is the top private Indian University according to QS BRICKS University rankings. He is AMMA's head disciple and has been living in her Amritapuri Ashram since its inception in the late 1970's.

Swamiji holds a master's degree in philosophy and is a renowned author and translator, having written The Color of the Rainbow, Compassionate Leadership, as well as two biographies of AMMA. He has also translated into English more than 10 volumes of conversation between AMMA and devotees, for which he also served as a compiler. He is an inspiring speaker, magnificent singer and a composer of devotional songs, and has travelled around the world more than 30 times with AMMA in her service.

AMMA's strength are her children, she says. Her followers drawn by her simplicity, accessibility, and strong conviction for humanitarian cause are from all walks of life and from all faiths. For the past 45 years, AMMA has spent every day receiving all who come to her, listening to problems and blessing them with her warm, motherly embrace. In this manner AMMA has embraced more than 39 million people throughout the world. She has also formed a strong youth force AYUDH or Amrita Yuva Dharma Dharawhich is the youth wing of Mata Amritanandamayi Math aiming to use the powerful force of young people to globally perpetuate natural harmony, social justice, and personal empowerment.

Stars

CROSSWORD 2116



ACROSS

- The portion of the vertebrate nervous system consisting of the brain and spinal cord.
- Pierced with with a pointed weapon.
- A town and port in northwestern Israel in the eastern Mediterranean.
- (informal) Informed about the latest trends.
- A salt or ester of oxalic acid.
- An industrial city is southeastern Austria.
- (Greek mythology) One of the mountain nymphs.
- A rare polyvalent metallic element of the platinum group.
- Make use of.
- Of or relating to or near the coccyx.
- English essayist (1775-1834).
- A feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause).
- A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
- A republic in southern Europe on the Italian Peninsula.
- Red Asian weaverbirds often kept as cage birds.
- Game in which matchsticks are arranged in rows and players alternately remove one or more of them.
- The dialect of Ancient Greek spoken in Thessaly and Boeotia and Aeolis.
- Other than what is under consideration or implied.
- A soft gray ductile metallic element used in alloys.
- A native or inhabitant of Vietnam.
- (computer science) A coding system that incorporates extra parity bits in order to detect errors.
- Take in solid food.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- Any connection is denied.
- A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
- A river in Nebraska that flows eastward to become a tributary of the Missouri River.
- Fig tree of India noted for great size and longevity.
- Being eight more than fifty.
- One of four subclasses or superorder of Monocotyledones.
- Improved or corrected by critical editing.
- A explosive device used to break down a gate or wall.
- Any of a group of heavenly spirits under the god Anu.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- Be seated.
- A cephalosporin antibiotic (trade name Ultracel).
- An orange-brown antelope of south-east Africa.
- The compass point midway between northeast and east.
- To a severe or serious degree.
- (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.

DOWN

- Colloquial British abbreviation.
- Roman Emperor notorious for his monstrous vice and fantastic luxury (was said to have started a fire that destroyed much of Rome in 64) but the Empire remained prosperous during his rule (37-68).
- A detailed description of design criteria for a piece of work.
- A sodium salt of carbonic acid.
- The second largest state.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- Tall grass with smooth bluish leaf sheaths grown for hay in the United States.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- Small ornamental ladies' bag for small articles.
- Some held in custody.
- Bright with a steady but subdued shining.
- Shrimp-like planktonic crustaceans.
- A river of southwestern Africa that rises in central Angola and flows east and then north (forming part of the border between Angola and Congo) and continuing northwest through Congo to empty into the Congo River on the border between Congo and Republic of the Congo.
- A chronic disease of the nose characterized by a foul-smelling nasal discharge and atrophy of nasal structures.
- Apathy and inactivity in the practice of virtue (personified as one of the dead-virtue sins).
- Being four more than fifty.
- A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
- A light strong gray lustrous corrosion-resistant metallic element used in strong light-weight alloys (as for airplane parts).
- Large high frilly cap with a full crown.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- An inflammatory disease involving the sebaceous glands of the skin.
- A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
- An antidepressant drug that acts by blocking the reuptake of serotonin so that more serotonin is available to act on receptors in the brain.
- A geometric element that has position but no extension.
- A military trainee (as at a military academy).
- Relating to or used in or intended for trade or commerce.
- A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
- King of the Huns.
- A state in the United States in the central Pacific on the Hawaiian Islands.
- Solitaire with two players using separate packs.
- Make solid or more solid.
- Any plant of the genus Erica.
- Pig iron containing manganese.
- An ancient area on the Ionian Sea that flourished as a kingdom in the 3rd century BC.
- Twist or braid together, interlace.
- One of a pair of long straps (usually connected to the bit or the headpiece) used to control a horse.
- A republic consisting of 26 of 32 counties comprising the island of Ireland.
- The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
- Very dark black.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- Primitive predaceous North American fish covered with hard scales and having long jaws with needle-like teeth.
- Water frozen in the solid state.
- Broadcasting visual images of stationary or moving objects.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

It seems as if a need for nurturing is stronger than usual in your life. You feel a strong desire to not only care for others, but to have others care for you in return. You have a gift when it comes to sensing the needs of others. Finding someone who is the friend to you that you are to them is a deep desire for you. This is a time you may feel as if some changes need to be made in your world. Out with the old and in with the new seems very appealing to you. This is a time when you feel at your best when you are on the go.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Out with the old and in with the new. Your focus is on ambition, security, and responsibility are areas in your life where you have placed major focus. There are big decisions in your life concerning these areas that need to be made. Knowing you have fallen short of goals in the past has you extremely determined at this point in your life. The easy way is not always the best way. You may reap great reward from your determination. Remember, you can only count on yourself to accomplish your goals. We live in a "what's in it for me" kind of world.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This is a time of emotional change for you. You may feel two ways at once. You will not be fully committed to either way of thinking. You do know you have a deep desire for change. A change of habits or a change of surroundings. You may feel like hitting the road and taking a little road trip. A clear mind and a soothed soul may be just what the Dr. ordered. You are happiest when you are on the go. Do it. There is nothing to hold you back today. Gemini. Enjoy the ride.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are feeling some financial stress. That's because you have trouble distinguishing between "Needs" and "Wants." Solve the problem by listing your expenditures in the two categories. To assure objectivity, you may want to enlist the help of a friend to verify the lists. (Utilities are Needs, that new purse is a Want.) Set aside money for Needs, including payments on current debts. Allow yourself the balance to spend on wants. Resisting the temptation to spend more than you have will be difficult at first, but it will soon become habit. And you will be surprised at how quickly you will feel freer, less stressed.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Today finds you talkative and ideas are flowing freely. What a great time to let your creative juices flow! You may find yourself feeling overloaded with ideas and others may not be able to keep up or totally understand what you have to say to them. Don't forget to step back and take a breath. You may find yourself easily excitable and over emotional as these ideas run through your head. Even though your communication skills may not be on point today and you may find yourself at odds with those close to you, your day will be very productive and self-satisfying. Leo. Today would be great for writing or journaling. These are ideas you value and want to make note of.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You are special to many. You may feel as if your good deeds go unnoticed. This is a time you have a deep desire to be noticed, admired, and loved. You may ask yourself if you are the friend you want others to be to you. If so, you are on the right track. If the answer is no, strive to become that person. We tend to receive what we give in life. Choose your company wisely and surround yourself with positive people. This is a time in your life where taking a chance can bring great reward. Make a plan and go for it!



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You are special to many. You may feel as if your good deeds go unnoticed. This is a time you have a deep desire to be noticed, admired, and loved. You may ask yourself if you are the friend you want others to be to you. If so, you are on the right track. If the answer is no, strive to become that person. We tend to receive what we give in life. Choose your company wisely and surround yourself with positive people. This is a time in your life where taking a chance can bring great reward. Make a plan and go for it!



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may find yourself over confident today. You could easily find yourself taking on more than you can handle. You may experience what is best defined as an inner peace today. You find your clear mind and level of peace make it very easy to solve problems in the workplace and make very clear decisions. You are focused and determined and may find others seeking your advice. Today is a very good one. You will be able to find a sense of clarity in the big scheme of things. You will really be able to discover what drives you. This may be the beginning of much progress for you as you have a deeper understanding of what you truly desire.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You are making a difference in the lives of more people than you realize. You could qualify as a CREEP. 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. You are the friend others wish to have in their lives.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Understanding is a good word to represent what today may bring to you. A deep understanding of yourself, your thoughts, and your moods! A day of understanding of those who surround you. An ability to communicate and captivate all who are in your presence. Life is becoming uncomplicated and simple to you. From dreams to the super natural all these things stir deep emotions within you Capricorn. Today is a great day to let your creativity flow. The more you open up to others the more they seem to be willing to open up to you.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Just because something is easy doesn't mean it is the right thing to do or the right way to handle a situation. You may find yourself involved in a situation you need to put great thought into before you act. Actions have consequences. Be sure you are ready to face them. Hard work and determination will help you acquire your goal. Remember, avoid taking the easy way out.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This may be a great day to enjoy a good book or catch a movie. An escape from reality may be just what you need. This could clear your mind and leave you feeling refreshed and rejuvenated. You feel your most secure when surrounded by friends. You may be feeling a real need for a change in your life. You may feel as if you want to throw out the old and bring in the new. You have had this on your mind for a while and today seems the day you really begin to act on it. It seems a change in the right direction may bring great reward into your life. You will send enjoy world you have no desire to escape from.

Wordsearch Puzzle

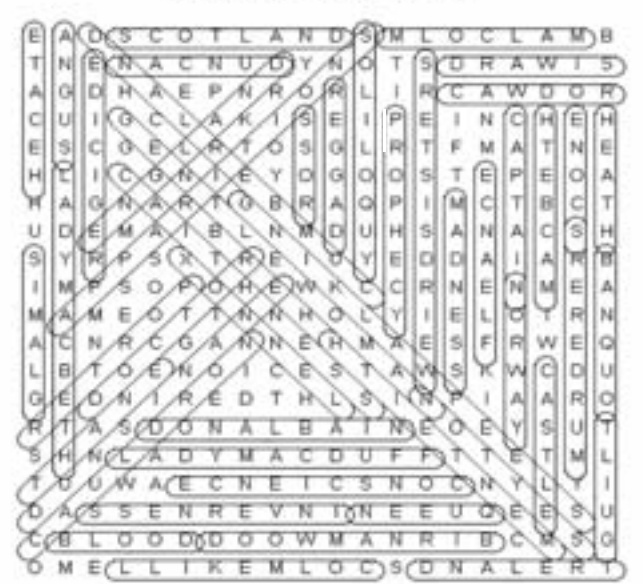
Soccer

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 37 letters spell a secret message.



- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|
| ASSIST | FORMATION | MATCH | SLIDE TACKLE |
| BALL | FORWARD | OFFENSE | SOCKS |
| CAPTAIN | FOUL | OFFSIDE | SPORT |
| CHEERING | GAME | PENALTY KICK | STOPPAGE TIME |
| CLEATS | GOALIE | POSITION | STRIKERS |
| CLUB | GOALS | PRACTICE | SUBSTITUTE |
| COACH | GRASS | RED CARD | SWEEPER |
| COIN TOSS | HALVES | REFEREE | THROW-IN |
| CORNER KICK | HAT TRICK | SCORE | TOUCHLINE |
| DEFENSE | HEADING | SHIN GUARD | WALL |
| FANS | JERSEY | SHOOT-OUT | WORLD CUP |
| FIELD | JUGGLING | SHORTS | YELLOW CARD |
| FFA | KICK-OFF | SHOT | |

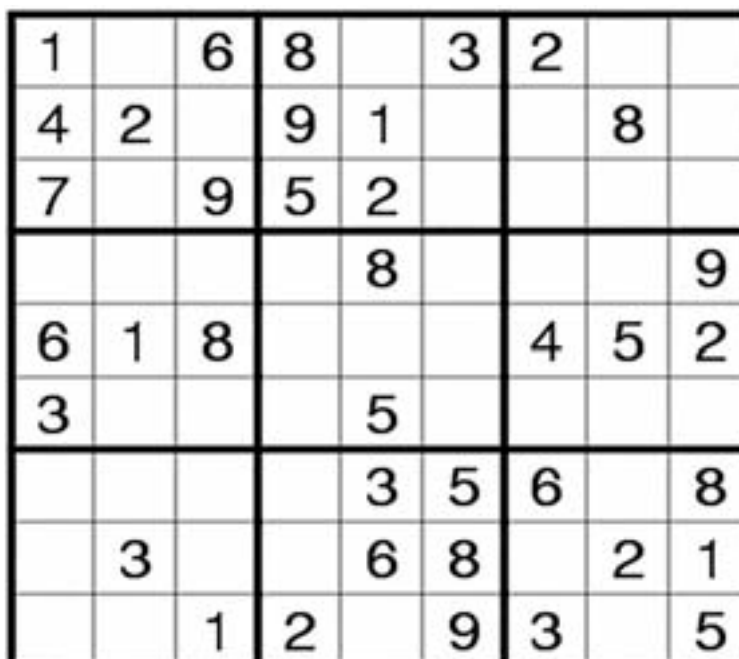
Shakespeare: Macbeth



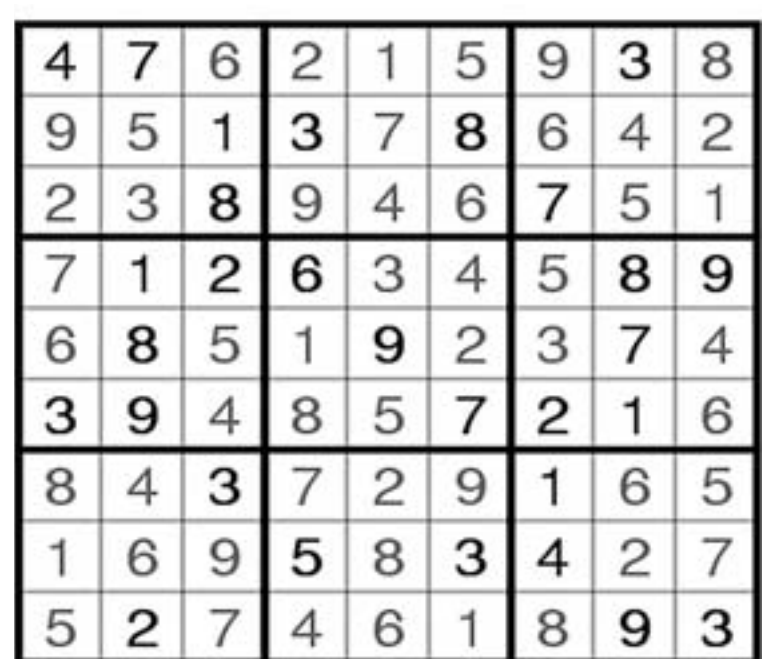
- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| ANGUS | DAGGER | IRELAND | REGICIDE |
| APPARITIONS | DOCTOR | LADY MACBETH | ROSS |
| BANQUO | DONALD | LADY MACDUFF | SCONE |
| BIRNAN WOOD | DUNCAN | LENNOX | SCOTLAND |
| BLOOD | DUNSMUNE | MACBETH | SEYTON |
| CATHNESS | ENGLAND | MADNESS | SIWARD |
| CAPTAIN | FLEANCE | MALCOLM | SLEEPWALKING |
| CASTLE | GENTLEWOMAN | MENDEL | SOLLOQUY |
| CAULDRON | GLAMES | MURDERERS | THANE |
| CANDOR | GUILT | NORWAY | WEIRD SISTERS |
| COLMEKILL | HEATH | PORTER | |
| CONSCIENCE | HECATE | PROPHECY | |
| CUMBERLAND | INVERNESS | QUEEN | |

Hidden sentence: BY THE PRICKING OF MY THUMBS, SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

TUESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2019



A composite photo shows all the phases of the so-called Super Blood Wolf Moon total lunar eclipse on Sunday January 20, 2019 in Panama City. The January 21 total lunar eclipse will be the last one until May 2021, and the last one visible from the United States until 2022. — AFP

ABRACADABRA! GERMAN EXECUTIVES TURN TO MAGIC TO UP THEIR GAME

Harold Voit takes out his wallet, extracts a wad of 50-euro bills and gazes at it calmly as the cash goes up in flames. Slamming the billfold shut, Voit puts out the fire and opens it again to reveal the money intact and ready for spending. A room full of wide-eyed magic students erupts into applause. Most of these apprentices of the dark arts are not budding cabaret or YouTube stars, however, but business executives and other professionals hoping to put a few new tricks up their sleeves. "Learning magic isn't just about picking up a couple of gags—it's about developing your own personality, your own way of presenting, speaking and moving," said Voit, 70, founder of the Magic Academy in Pullach, a wealthy Munich suburb.

Voit, who has worked for more than half his life as a professional magician and instructor, said that was part of why so many busy career people sought out his courses. "Most of my students don't quit their day jobs. I've had everyone from young interns to an 80-year-old priest from a monastery," said Voit, who has a neatly trimmed beard and a conspiratorial twinkle in his eye. "You'd be amazed how many situations there are in which magic can help," he said, offering examples ranging from flirting to closing a business deal.

Harry Potter mania

Germany's fascination with sorcery goes back centuries but saw a strong revival in the post-war years, when a weary population sought entertainment and escapism in popular nightclub acts. The current boom has two decades of Harry Potter mania to thank, as well as a growing recognition that a bit of wizardry can go a long way in real life. The country's biggest magic stars, the Ehrlich Brothers, fill football stadiums. German illusionist Marc Weide, 27, won

best parlor magic performer at July's world championship in Busan, South Korea with a card trick—beating a rival who could make 10 doves and four sheep vanish and reappear. Second place went to another German, Axel Hecklau.

Voit, who abandoned a career with the foreign intelligence service to take up a magic wand, said his night school offered Germany's first state-recognized certificates for illusionists. But most pupils who commit to two years of weekly classes for a 750-euro (\$860) fee came to him seeking something more elusive than a rabbit to pull out of a hat. The course motto is "Conjure yourself into the spotlight". One of the pupils present on a recent night in the classroom was entrepreneur Marco Hafenrichter, 46, who runs a successful construction business.

As he practised a classic trick involving the seamless coupling and uncoupling of ropes, he said that learning how to trigger a sense of wonder in an audience had attracted him to magic school. "I was looking for some balance in my life," he said.

"At the moment my biggest fan is still my son but by the end of the course, I'd like to have six or seven routines down that I can always perform." IT industry manager Marianne Hofmann, 67, said magic had given her a touch of star power and not just with her eight grandchildren. "I head up a choir and everything I learn about human psychology here I can use there, especially how you command the attention of an audience," she said. Hofmann said that in sometimes staid German corporate culture there seemed to be a real hunger for fantasy. "Maybe we're just a bit too rational otherwise and are longing to have a few dreams."

Taking the stage 'naked'

Thomas Fraps, 51, holds a doctorate in physics but

caught the magic bug during his studies. Fraps, who has written extensively on illusions and stagecraft, has performed monthly for nearly 25 years in what he calls Germany's longest running magic act. He noted that cherished writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe—who penned the poem "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" later popularized by Walt Disney—gave each of his grandchildren a box of tricks in the 18th century. Then, illusions were seen as a tool to advance Enlightenment thinking because magic, once understood, could serve as a mirror on perception and its fallibility—the stuff that makes us human.

A century earlier, books detailing how illusions could be performed were credited with helping to stop witch burning, Fraps said. "The irony is that as more people learned about magic, it helped demystify things that they saw and couldn't understand," he said. "Now for company bosses or physicists, it's great to plunge into another world. When you have a trick, you don't have to take the stage 'naked', unlike a standup comedian who's only got his jokes."

Voit said online instructional videos, which count hundreds of thousands of fans, have only stoked interest in magic schools like his. "There's no replacement for learning it live," said Voit. Just as technological innovations like self-driving cars make the impossible commonplace, Voit said the best magic tricks were, like Harry Potter books, simply based on a great story. "With a trick, you come up with the best fairy tale you can," he said. "Magic is the joy that comes from the special delight in being fooled." — AFP



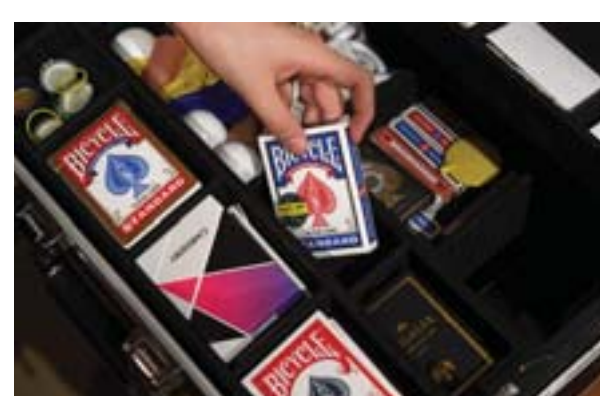
Harold Voit, owner of the Magic Academy in Pullach near Munich, southern Germany. — AFP photos



Harold Voit, owner of the Magic Academy in Pullach near Munich, southern Germany, performs.



Students of the Magic Academy in Pullach near Munich, southern Germany, learn magic knots on ropes.



Playing cards, accessories for magic tricks, are pictured at the Magic Academy in Pullach.



Ropes and cards, accessories for magic tricks, are pictured at the Magic Academy in Pullach.



Students of the Magic Academy in Pullach near Munich, southern Germany, pose for a picture.

French say 'lingerie rocks' even in age of #MeToo

Fourteen top French lingerie labels staged a huge rock concert cum fashion show Sunday in the city which invented sexy underwear. The musical extravaganza in Paris called "Lingerie Rocks" set out to show that in the era of #MeToo lingerie "was about making women feel good about themselves". Creations by five rising young designers were also featured in the song-and-dance spectacular which aimed to showcase what is an almost completely female-dominated industry.

Karine Sfar, of the French lingerie federation, told AFP that women wanted comfort more than anything-whether they

wore lingerie for seduction or support. Sales of push-up bras and G-strings have been on the slide as women go for a more natural feel and look, according to the industry, which has a turnover of nearly two billion euros (\$2.2 billion) in France alone. "All women regardless of their body shape have the right to feel beautiful and feel good about themselves. Lingerie helps you feel at ease," Sfar said.

Sales of French lingerie are growing and Sfar said the industry prides itself on elegance, two centuries of know-how and designing for women of all shapes. New fabrics, 3-D design and rigorous testing on "real women"-with bra makers

themselves road testing new models at home-mean that most garments now "felt like a second skin", Sfar argued. "The aim is that a woman might even forget what she is wearing," she added. "Lingerie Rocks", only the second joint show that the French industry has ever staged, came right in the middle of the first Paris fashion fortnight of the year. — AFP



A model presents a creation of French lingerie during the fashion show 'Lingerie Rocks' in Paris on Sunday. — AFP



Models present creations by Kenzo during the men's Fall/Winter 2019/2020 collection fashion show.

Slimane goes super skinny in Paris Celine men's debut

Paris men's fashion week finished late Sunday with superstar designer Hedi Slimane's first menswear collection for Celine, which has up to now only dressed women. The "sultan of slim", who previously sent revenues soaring at Dior Homme and Saint Laurent, is credited with inventing the skinny look. And in Sunday night's show in a mirrored pavilion Place de la Concorde at the foot of the Champs Elysees, Slimane stayed true to his tight ultra-tailored style. Rake-like male models, often in black shades, wore a panoply of Slimane staples, 1960s-style English suits with pencil-thin ties, black Nehru tunics, leather jackets and trousers a bright yellow leopard pattern coat to add to the retro rock-star chic.

The skinny sixties theme had earlier been picked up by the veteran Britain tailor Paul Smith, who sent out a sassy and colorful collection. Slimane also lowered the suit hem, a move away from the pinched jackets now a la mode. The reclusive French creator and close friend of pop star Lady Gaga is regarded as the second most powerful creator in fashion, after Karl Lagerfeld of Chanel. "The Kaiser" once famously shed 41 kilos (90 pounds) to squeeze into Slimane's skinny jeans.

But his slash-and-burn takeover of Celine-previously led by popular British feminist designer Phoebe Philo-took a kicking from critics in his first women's show in October. They railed at his retrograde "crotch-skimming cocktail dresses" for wafer-thin teenage vamps. Hugely vocal Philo fans known as "Philophiles" also branded Slimane the "Trump of fashion" for taking down her collections from the label's website. An Instagram account dedicated to her work at Celine soon clocked up nearly 200,000 followers and sales of her clothes rocketed on resale sites.

The RealReal, the world's biggest of these resale sites, said prices had also spiked as Philo's minimalist creations became collector's items "We are finding people to be extremely loyal to her," the US site said. Paris haute couture week starts Monday. The highly select shows of hand-made creations happen only in the French capital and are sustained by a small number of the world's richest women.

Kenzo designer's roots

Psychedelic Peruvian paintings covered panel upon panel of Kenzo's fall menswear show that celebrated of one of the designer's Chinese-Peruvian heritage. The set, painted by artist Pablo Amaringo, evoked scenes inspired by the hallucinogenic Amazonian "ayahuasca" drug - with multicolor space ships, jungle, parrots and deer merging into one - and had some fashion guests squinting amid fluorescent lighting. Designer Humberto Leon's family is Tusan, a Peruvian people whose ancestors arrived in Latin America in the 19th century from Guangdong province in China.

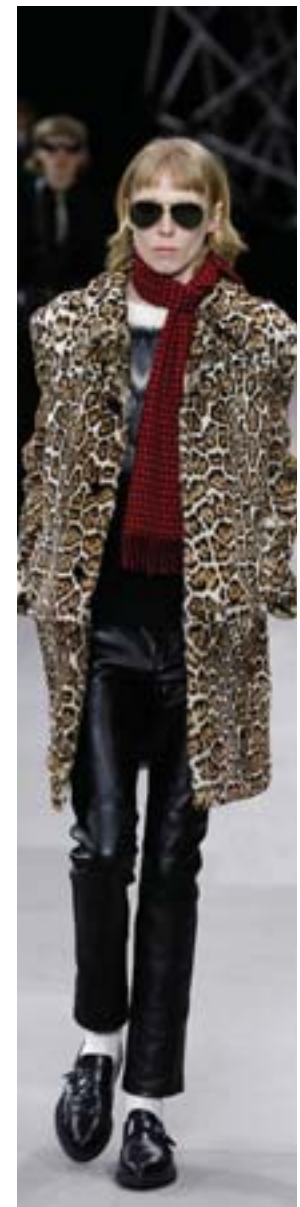
The theme provided a rich fashion tapestry in the clothes - from Andean mountaineering styles with woolies, fun hiking boots, utilitarian rucksacks and amassed layering, to ethnic textiles in flashes of bright color. Beyond the encyclopedic theme, there were some trendy touches in deconstruction - such as a series of cross jackets with Asian-style cinched waists that sported the inner sleeve lining on the outside.

Hermes' luxury

Hermes has become a byword for simple, unpretentious luxury. Veteran menswear designer Veronique Nichanian proved this again Saturday in a classy, color-rich and masculine showing for fall. There was no far-flung muse or gimmick, unlike in many Paris shows, simply because none was needed. Nichanian has been at the helm of this family run business since, incredibly, 1988, and is an expert at letting the clothes do the talking.



Models present creations by Celine, during the men's ready to wear fashion shows for the 2019/20 Fall/Winter collection in Paris. — AFP photos



A loose coat in midnight blue was paired tastefully with shimmering blue leather pants. Elsewhere, yellow leather pants in a carrot shape looked soft against a marl knit sweater. Geometric motifs on leather bomber jackets, sexy sheeny shirts and sweaters were this season's added ingredient. This geometry recurred in large, square utilitarian pockets on outerwear, oversize zippers or as motifs on bags. It was on-trend, but never heavy handed.



Models present creations by Hermes during the men's ready to wear fashion shows for the 2019/20 Fall/Winter collection in Paris.

Lifestyle | Features



Socks and tights are seen arranged in a drawer in small boxes at a home in Washington, DC, as recommended by Japanese tidying expert Marie Kondo.



T-shirts are seen "filed" in a drawer at a home in Washington, DC, as recommended by Japanese tidying expert Marie Kondo, creator of the "KonMari" method.



Clothes at a home in Washington, DC, are seen piled up and ready to be sorted according to Japanese tidying expert Marie Kondo's "KonMari" method.

Japanese tidying guru sparks joy with cluttered Americans



In this file photo Author and series host Marie Kondo poses before taking part in Netflix's "Tidying Up With Marie Kondo" screening and conversation in New York City. — AFP photos

After experiencing homelessness in 2011, Sarah Eby found herself constantly collecting things so she would never again feel she had nothing to call her own. "When I moved into my apartment, it just felt empty," the mother-of-one from Arvada, Colorado told AFP. "I got everything I could to try and make it feel like I had a home." But as Eby moved house over the years, the clutter built up. Now, inspired by the Japanese home organizing guru Marie Kondo, the 27-year-old says she has banished the chaos for good. And she's hardly the only one.

Kondo is small in stature, but her tidying philosophy has reached stratospheric heights. Her book, "The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up," has earned a cult following since its publication in the United States in 2014, with millions adopting her suggestions for a neater, happier existence. But it is the 34-year-old's new Netflix show, "Tidying Up with Marie Kondo"—released on New Year's Day, when everyone is keen to reinvent themselves and motivated by their resolutions—that has everyone talking.

"I love mess," Kondo proclaims in the show, which sees her visit American homes—flanked by

her interpreter—to implement her trademarked "KonMari" method. The idea is simple: gather your things one Kondo-defined category at a time and go through them one by one, keeping only those that "spark joy," and giving them a place in your home. As for the rest, a KonMari convert thanks his or her used items and tags them for donation or the garbage pail.

At the end, most converts find they have far fewer possessions, and a happier outlook. "I think it plays an integral role with my relationship to things," said Eby, who watched one episode of the show before diving into the book. "I was never messy or unclean or untidy—I just had too many things. And so the part that I connected with most would be the letting go of the things that don't bring me joy."

Overnight icon

Almost overnight, Kondo has emerged as a cultural icon—she is the subject of countless viral tweets and memes, and a flurry of think pieces unpacking the show in surprising, somewhat disconcerting depth. Her method however is not without controversy: advice to donate old books has

infuriated bibliophiles on social media. But for Den Kovacs, a video games journalist and KonMari disciple, Kondo—with her gentle, judgment-free encouragement—is a welcome antidote to harsh reality TV, not to mention American chaos.

"People really do feel ... chaotic, they feel overwhelmed," said the 23-year-old from Livonia, Michigan. "So when they see someone who comes in, and she's like, 'I can fix this! We got this!' ... people are like 'Yes, I need this in my life.'" Social media users have already reported a "Kondo effect" at local thrift stores, with more goods pouring in for resale—although a national spokesperson for Goodwill told AFP it is "too soon to tell." And as viral trends go, KonMari-ism is one that could actually be good for people: according to a 2016 study, too much clutter can be bad news for wellbeing.

"The more clutter you have ... the less your sense of home, the less your sense of life satisfaction," explained DePaul University psychologist Joseph Ferrari, a co-author of the study. "That's contrary to what people might think. They think that you have to have more, and people with abundance are happier people. No."

'It feels really good'

Kondo's fans are earnestly reporting the benefits of going clutter-free. "It feels really good," says Kovacs, who explored other tidying approaches, but found KonMari to be the most effective. "I really decluttered my mind. It felt like I had less stress, less to focus on ... I could focus on myself." Meanwhile, for Olgunye Fernandez-Fraga, a 27-year-old nutritionist from Miami, Kondo has boosted her social life. "Before it would be like 'Oh, can we invite so and so over?'," and it was like 'No, look at the house!'," Fernandez-Fraga explained.

"Whereas now, it's like yeah, they could come in the next 10 minutes if they want to." And in the digital age, it turns out even email inboxes and social media friends can be "KonMari-ed." "I just went down the (Facebook) list and asked myself, 'Does this person spark joy?'" Kovacs explained. "As soon as you start to ask that about someone, you suddenly realize the people that add value to you," he said. "You certainly appreciate them a lot more than you did before." — AFP

Ghana art popularity stokes calls for national gallery

Veteran artist Ablade Glover measures spaces on a canvas with a palette knife, then dabs on vibrant blue paint while the morning light pours into his Accra studio. The 84-year-old artist, educator and founder of the Artists Alliance Gallery in Ghana's capital has won national and international recognition for his work. He set up the gallery 25 years ago and moved it to its current location, a three-storey building on the beachfront 11 years ago. The premises are open to the public, offering local people and tourists the chance to see contemporary art, mostly from Ghana itself.

When Glover started out, there was little support for local artists and most needed to hold down day jobs to make a living. But in recent years there has been a huge swing. More artists are making a living from their work as a result of galleries like Glover's, festivals, collectors and art professionals.



Traditional wooden sculptures are displayed at one of the showrooms inside the Artist Alliance Gallery.

Ghana vs Picasso

One of Glover's works hangs in Seth Dei's private gallery, on a quiet street in a leafy suburb of Accra. The 73-year-old businessman has been an avid supporter of Ghanaian artists for several decades. He has seen them struggle and slowly build up their reputations. He said he would much rather have a painting by a Ghanaian in his living room than a Picasso. "I like to be surrounded by paintings that I can understand, that reflect who I am," he told AFP, looking at Glover's rendering of a forest in vivid orange and red.

The work is one of about 550 pieces of art spread between his home, gallery and in storage. Dei, who co-founded Ghanaian fruit

export company Blue Skies, started collecting local art in 1993 and says, at that time, artists were not well-supported. "The artists in our society found themselves a bit ignored and lonely and in the society as a whole we didn't have a lot of people buying art," he reflected.

He did what he could to help, buying art and encouraging the artists to keep producing. "It got to a point where artists would come and say, 'I painted this and I think you should have it in your collection,'" he said. "Even if I didn't have money I would pay it off, little by little." As a result, he saw the careers of Wiz Kudovor, Larry Otoo and Kofi Setordji build up to the point where they have international reputations. "People are getting used to the idea of pricing works in USD, which would have been impossible a few years ago, and art prices are rising," said Dei.

National gallery?

The increasing popularity of Ghanaian art is a double-edged sword, for a lot of it has left the country, as expatriates or companies buy works. Glover said he wants to see a public institution invest in keeping work in Ghana for Ghanaians to appreciate, hoping the government will step in and create a national art museum. While both he and Dei have their spaces to exhibit—and for Glover, to sell—they are keen for the government to take a similar interest. Both say creating a national art gallery would be a good place to start. Dei said he would be happy to see his collection form part of it, so everyone can enjoy the nation's talents.

Venice Biennale

Nana Oforiatta Ayim has been promoting Ghanaian artists through curating exhibitions, a mobile museum and working to develop artists since 2002. The writer, art historian and filmmaker has held exhibitions in Ghana and Britain. Oforiatta Ayim moved back to Ghana from Britain in 2011 and wanted to use her network of contacts to find ways for local artists to live and work and get global recognition.

"I had seen the older artists do their work here but (they) didn't have such successful international careers," she said. "So, my whole point was I want them to have the same start as an artist in London would." This month Oforiatta Ayim and Ghanaian-British architect David Adjaye announced that Ghana would have a pavilion at this year's Venice Biennale in May. Plans are also afoot for art to be exhibited in Ghana, said Oforiatta Ayim after the glitzy announcement in Accra, which was attended by British supermodel Naomi Campbell. "David and I have been working on the Venice Biennale as part of a wider initiative to create awareness and infrastructure within Ghana for art," she said. "And we are working very seriously on that in conversation with government." — AFP



View of the building hosting the Artist Alliance Gallery in Labadi neighborhood in Accra.



Seth Dei, art collector and founder of Blue Skies Ghana Limited, poses for a portrait at Dei Centre.



Ablade Glover, Ghanaian artist and educator, poses for a portrait in his showroom inside the Artist Alliance Gallery in Accra. — AFP photos



Paintings and statues are displayed at one of the showrooms inside the Artist Alliance Gallery in Accra.



A man walks past paintings by Ghanaian artists Kojo Ani (left) and Hacajaka inside the Dei Centre art gallery in Tesano neighborhood.



Ghanaian Papa Essel work, entitled "The hen knows it is morning but it waits for the cock to crow" is showcased at Dei Centre gallery art.

Lifestyle | Features



This file photo shows Italian actress Asia Argento arriving for the closing ceremony of the 71st edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

#MeToo's Asia Argento to model in Paris fashion show

Italian actress and #MeToo campaigner Asia Argento is to be a model in a haute couture fashion show in Paris. The 43-year-old, who helped start the movement by accusing Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein of rape, will lead out Antonio Grimaldi's spring summer collection.

Grimaldi, who like Argento is based in Rome, praised her "audaciousness" and said her "anti-conformist personality works perfectly with the collection, which is inspired by the Greek myth of Ariadne." In a teaser photo for the show, the heavily tattooed Argento appears in a short sleeveless black dress with a heart motif that plays off her body art. The designer used the first Saudi Arabian couture model Taleedah Tamer in his last Paris show in July.

Haute couture shows, staged only in Paris, are regarded as the pinnacle of fashion, with their handmade creations aimed at Hollywood royalty and the super-rich. Argento had to fight claims in September that she had sex with an

underage American actor while playing his mother in the 2004 film "The Heart Is Deceitful Above All Things". She said that Jimmy Bennett—who was 17 at the time—"jumped on me". But after the #MeToo movement began to gather pace she said he contacted her again to demand \$3.5 million (three million euros) to keep quiet.

Her late boyfriend, celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain, who she said wanted peace, reportedly had paid him \$250,000 by last June, when Bourdain committed suicide. Argento then suspended the payments. The daughter of "Suspiria" director Dario Argento, Argento is best known for the Vin Diesel blockbuster "xXx", Sophia Coppola's "Marie Antoinette", the horror film "Land of the Dead", and her own "Scarlet Diva" (2001), which she wrote and directed herself. — AFP



Undated handout illustrations show concept designs of a new £288 million concert hall in the heart of London. — AFP

'Truly great' plans unveiled for new London concert hall

Renowned British conductor Simon Rattle yesterday unveiled ambitious designs for a new £288 million (\$370 million, 326 million euros) concert hall in the heart of London. The London Symphony Orchestra music director said it was "wonderful" to finally present the plans for a new hall. "The idea that there can be a new cultural centre in London... is very exciting," he said. "A sign of London as a dynamic cultural city, at a time when we are going to need this more and more."

The plans will see the current site of the Museum of London, which is relocating nearby, transformed into an ultra-modern concert space encased in glass, reflecting the orchestra's mantra of "transparency and access". The 2,000 seat, in-the-round hall will echo a geological formation, with the lines of steps and seating mimicking rock strata.

Huge transparent pods at the top will allow visiting children to watch rehearsals, at the request of Rattle. Elizabeth Diller, founding partner of the Diller Scofidio + Renfro design studio tasked with the plans, said the space would be "informal by day and very glamorous by night". The building will also house commercial space, workshops, public areas and eating places. The pinnacle of the

wedge-shaped building will be another performance space to host jazz, with St Pauls providing a spectacular backdrop through a huge window.

There will be "no hierarchy" in seating, according to Diller, with all seats meant to offer clear views. The project has the enthusiastic backing of the City of London Corporation, the local governing body, and the Barbican Centre, which will run the venue. The main stumbling block now remains "putting a business plan together and a private fundraising contribution," Barbican managing director Nicholas Kenyon told AFP. "This is a big ask, it's an ambitious project, we think it's absolutely great with a visionary design, but we are not saying at this moment that all the resources are there. We've got another year to plan that."

The concert hall would take four years to build, once the occupants of the current site have moved out, he added. Rattle has complained that the Barbican Centre concert hall where the LSO is currently based only allowed him to put on 80 percent of the works he would like to play. The project for a new concert hall has suffered a series of setbacks, including the withdrawal of government funding. — AFP



Russian row over 'Siege of Leningrad' black comedy

A "blasphemous" re-telling of one of the darkest moments in Soviet history or a much-needed comment on modern Russia? A new comedy set during the Siege of Leningrad has divided the country's viewers. "Prazdnik" or "Holiday" tells of the Voskresensky family, whose Communist Party connections allow them to live a life of luxury in a city encircled by Nazis. During a siege in which some 800,000 people starved to death on official rations of 125 grams of bread a day, they pile their table high with chicken and champagne to celebrate New Year 1942.

A slick comedy of manners ensues when the two Voskresensky children bring home unexpected guests, and the family are forced to explain how their table is laid with a festive spread. Award-winning director Alexei Krasovskiy told AFP the film was made to draw attention to inequalities and injustices in Russia today, rather than make light of the siege. He released "Prazdnik" online only after deciding not to apply to the ministry of culture for a distribution license following attacks from lawmakers. "I chose this subject because today we're also living under blockade, we just pretend that we can't see it," he said. "We don't see how living standards are declining, how people are being prosecuted for what they share online or for taking part in peaceful protests."

The project ran into controversy back in October, when it was first reported that a comedy set during the siege was going to appear. Sergei Boyarsky, a lawmaker for the ruling United Russia party, described the idea as "blasphemy" and said he would do everything possible to prevent its release. "I haven't watched the film and I'm not going to," he said when contacted by AFP. Another senior official from the party, Andrey Turchak, appealed to the culture ministry to block the film from cinematic release.

The ministry has form when it comes to blacklisting movies with sensitive subjects—the British comedy "The Death of Stalin" was banned last year after officials labelled it offensive and "extremist". Krasovskiy said a third official even offered him money to destroy the master copy of the film. On Sunday, YouTube removed "Prazdnik" from his account with no explanation but the link was restored several hours later. Google did not give the reasons for the temporary deletion when asked to comment.

Close to sacred

Krasovskiy's previous film, The Collector, had a national release in 2016 and won several awards. But he made "Holiday", which has racked up over a million views since its January 3 online release, on a shoestring budget of private funding. Viewers are invited to make donations, which Krasovskiy said were 3.5 million rubles (\$52,000; 46,000 euros) in the first weeks of release—almost the cost of making the film. Some commentators below the video said they understood why MPs would want to ban the film. "It's clearly an allegory for the current regime, when officials get anything they want on the backs of others' poverty," one wrote.

The 1941-1945 Siege of Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg) remains extremely sensitive in Russia, where around 20 million people died during World War II and the conflict is promoted by authorities as close to sacred. In 2014, the main cable TV distributors said they would stop carrying the opposition-leaning Dozhd TV channel after it ran a survey questioning the value of resistance during the siege. "Would it have been worth handing over

Leningrad to the Nazis in order to save millions of lives?" it asked.

'The toughest of times'

Some who lived through the blockade told AFP they were horrified by the concept of the film. "I just can't imagine that there could be a comedy about the siege," said Lidia Ilyinskaya. "I'm 88 years old and I cry every



In this file photo Russian military cadets rehearse for January 27 military parade marking the 75th anniversary of the lifting of the Nazi siege of Leningrad, at Dvortsovaya Square in Saint Petersburg. — AFP photos



In this file photo young military musicians walk through heavy snowfall to attend a rehearsal for January 27 military parade.

time I remember what we lived through. The word 'comedy' in that context, it's just a blasphemy." Meanwhile Nikita Lomagin, a Saint Petersburg European University historian who has researched the siege, said Krasovskiy's film contained "a number of historical inconsistencies". "It is true that during the siege of Leningrad, there was a hierarchy in terms of food products.

"But this subject needs a proper analysis that respects the complexity of the problem, and not this easy provocation," he said. Krasovskiy, however, rejected the interpretation of the film as a period drama. "It's a story about people who, in the toughest of times, were able to live better than anyone else. They existed then, they exist now, unfortunately they always will exist in Russia. In order to change this in some way, we shot this film." — AFP



In this file photo Russian servicemen dressed in historical uniforms rehearse for January 27 military parade marking the 75th anniversary of the lifting of the Nazi siege of Leningrad, at Dvortsovaya Square in Saint Petersburg.

CIA agent Tony Mendez, hero of film 'Argo,' dead at 78

Former CIA agent Tony Mendez, who engineered a creative way to smuggle US hostages out of Iran in 1980 and was immortalized in the Hollywood film "Argo," died of complications from Parkinson's Disease, his family said. He was 78. Mendez, who will have a private burial in Nevada, died on Saturday, his literary agent Christy Fletcher said via Twitter, relaying a family statement.

"The last thing he and his wife Jonna Mendez did was get their new book to the publisher and he died feeling he had completed writing the stories that he wanted to be told," the family statement read. It added that Mendez had been suffering from Parkinson's for the past 10 years.

Faux Sci-Fi Movie

When Iranian revolutionaries seized the US embassy in Tehran in 1979, a handful of diplomats managed to escape through a back door and took refuge at the Canadian embassy. Mendez, a specialist in covert operations, came up with an original plan to rescue them: set up the production in Hollywood of a faux science fiction movie titled "Argo," travel to Iran to scout out locations, then return to the United States with the hostages masquerading as the film crew. The six US diplomats, armed

with fake Canadian passports, slipped out of Iran and to safety on January 27, 1980.

The story served as inspiration for the film "Argo," which won three Oscars in 2013 including for best motion picture. Fifty-two other Americans were not as lucky, and were held hostage by the Iranian revolutionaries for 444 days. Secretary of State and former CIA chief Mike Pompeo described Mendez as "an extraordinarily gifted intelligence officer" and "truly an American hero." Actor Ben Affleck, who starred as Mendez in the Hollywood production, described the ex-agent on Twitter as "a man of extraordinary grace, decency, humility and kindness ... I'm so proud to have worked for him and to have told one of his stories." Mendez's latest book, co-authored with his wife Jonna—also formerly with the CIA—is due out in May and titled "The Moscow Rules: The Secret CIA Tactics That Helped America Win the Cold War." — AFP



In this file photo Tony Mendez attends the "Argo" Washington, DC Premiere at Regal Gallery Place Stadium 14 in Washington, DC. — AFP

Classifieds

Tuesday, January 22, 2019

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Cold and Partly cloudy with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 24 km/h.

BY NIGHT: Very cold and Partly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 26 km/h.

WEATHER WATCH			Frost	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 21/01/2019 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	17 °C	10 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	16 °C	04 °C		
ABDALY	17 °C	04 °C		
BUBYAN	** °C	** °C		
JAHRA	17 °C	05 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	16 °C	08 °C		
SALMIYAH	15 °C	11 °C		
AHMADI	14 °C	09 °C		
NUWAISSIB	16 °C	07 °C		
WAFRA	17 °C	03 °C		
SALMY	15 °C	03 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	01/22	Cool	18 °C	05 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Wednesday	01/23	Cool	18 °C	06 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Thursday	01/24	Cool and some high clouds will appear	19 °C	08 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 26 km/h
Friday	01/25	Mostly Sunny with a chance for fog forming at night	21 °C	10 °C	VRB-SE	10 - 30 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:19
Sunrise	06:42
Zuhr	11:59
Asr	14:57
Sunset	17:17
Isha	18:37

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	15 °C
MIN. Temp.	02 °C
MAX. RH	86 %
MIN. RH	28 %
MAX. Wind	N 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UPO 2019/01/21 02:54 UTC V1.00 T2.4 ٢٠١٩/٠١/٢١

NOTICE
 November 29, 2018

Mr. Akshay Harikesan son of Mr. Harikesan Parmupillai Kottarathil, resident 12 8th A Cross, 1st floor, KHB Road, New KB EXTN, RT Nagar post, Bangalore - 560032, Karnataka and Ms. Akshaya Antony daughter of Mr Antony Parekade, resident of 205, S S Towers, 14th cross, Ejjipura, Bengaluru, Pin: 560047, Karnataka, both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (welfare2@indembkwat.gov.in, welfare2@indembkwat.org) / letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22533125)

(Yashwant Chetpallwar)
 Second Secretary (Cons) and Marriage Officer.
 Embassy of India, Kuwait.
 Email: welfare2@indembkwat.gov.in

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
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FLIGHT SCHEDULE

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Tuesday 22/1/2019					Departure Flights on Tuesday 22/1/2019										
JZR	254	Amman	00:05	KAC	774	Riyadh	14:00	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	KAC	059	Dubai	14:20	MSC	502	Alexandria	00:05	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
THY	766	ISL	00:30	KAC	672	Dubai	14:25	FDB	072	Dubai	00:40	KAC	412	Asyut	13:30
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40	JZR	409	Delhi	00:50	JZR	113	Doha	13:30
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	KAC	618	Doha	14:40	JZR	707	Luxor	01:00	MSR	123	Dubai	13:40
JZR	722	Alexandria	00:55	SVA	500	Jeddah	14:45	JAI	571	Mumbai	01:15	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	KAC	692	Muscat	14:55	JZR	111	Doha	01:45	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
KAC	102	London	01:20	KNE	529	Jeddah	15:05	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:10	KAC	285	Dhaka	01:55	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	KAC	417	Manila	02:20	QTR	8512	Doha	15:25
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	FEG	441	Asyut	15:25	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:25	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	JZR	222	Riyadh	15:30	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30	KAC	673	Dubai	15:40
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	OMA	645	Muscat	15:35	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:55	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	562	Amman	15:35	IGO	1758	Kochi	02:55	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	304	Mumbai	15:40	THY	767	ISL	03:05	KAC	743	Dammam	15:55
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	JZR	732	Cairo	15:50	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:05
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	SYR	341	Damascus	16:00	RBG	212	Sohag	03:45	KAC	619	Doha	16:10
JZR	1736	Cairo	03:00	JZR	152	Mashhad	16:00	OMA	644	Amsterdam	03:55	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
RBG	211	Luxor	03:05	ABY	127	Sharjah	16:05	ETD	304	Muscat	03:55	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	KAC	118	New York	16:05	FEG	342	Istanbul	04:00	FEG	342	Sohag	16:25
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC	516	Tehran	16:20	QTR	1087	Doha	04:00	KAC	283	Dhaka	16:30
MSR	612	Cairo	03:05	KAC	502	Beirut	16:30	KKK	1269	Istanbul	04:00	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
LMU	5510	Cairo	04:00	KAC	542	Cairo	16:30	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:40
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	QTR	1072	Doha	16:35	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:45
KAC	414	Bangkok	04:00	FDB	051	Dubai	16:40	LMU	5511	Cairo	05:00	JZR	105	Bahrain	16:55
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	JZR	612	Tbilisi	17:10	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10	SYR	342	Damascus	17:00
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	JZR	114	Doha	17:10	JZR	101	Bahrain	05:20	FDB	052	Dubai	17:40
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30	FDB	070	Dubai	05:50	QTR	1073	Doha	17:50
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	JZR	214	Jeddah	17:45	KAC	303	Mumbai	06:10	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	UAE	875	Dubai	18:00	JZR	713	Sohag	06:15	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	FDB	063	Dubai	18:15	JZR	121	Dubai	06:35	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	JZR	124	Dubai	18:20	THY	771	Istanbul	06:40	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:15	QTR	1080	Doha	18:30	KAC	623	Doha	06:50	JZR	253	Amman	18:15
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	MSR	2620	Cairo	18:30	RJA	167	Paris	07:10	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:30	RJA	640	Amman	19:00	GFA	643	Amman	07:15	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	KAC	744	Dammam	19:00	JZR	212	Bahrain	07:15	JZR	501	Lahore	18:40
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25	KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:10	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
KAC	362	Colombo	06:10	RBG	555	Alexandria	19:25	KAC	165	Rome	08:20	KAC	381	Delhi	18:55
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:25	KAC	616	Bahrain	19:30	KAC	173	Munich	08:20	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
THY	6376	Istanbul	06:30	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:30	THY	6376	Dubai/Istanbul	08:35	JZR	721	Alexandria	19:20
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	NIA	0161	Cairo	19:30	FEG	442	Asyut	08:40	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
BAW	157	London	07:05	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30	FDB	054	Dubai	08:50	MSR	2621	Cairo	19:30
JZR	708	Luxor	07:15	FDB	057	Dubai	19:50	KAC	501	Beirut	09:00	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
KAC	358	Kochi	07:35	JZR	106	Riyadh	19:50	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:05	RJA	641	Amman	20:00
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	KAC	166	Rome	20:10	KAC	613	Bahrain	09:05	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05
FEG	241	Alexandria	07:40	KAC	620	Doha	20:15	JZR	731	Cairo	09:10	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	647	Muscat	20:20	BAW	156	London	09:15	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	546	Cairo	20:30	KAC	691	Muscat	09:20	JZR	1735	Cairo	20:20
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:25	KAC	674	Dubai	20:35	JZR	141	Al Najaf	09:25	NIA	0162	Cairo	20:30
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	QTR	1088	Doha	20:35	KAC	541	Cairo	09:30	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:45	KAC	561	Amman	09:40	KAC	301	Mumbai	20:55
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KAC	174	Munich	21:15	KAC							



A picture taken yesterday shows a frost-covered landscape on the banks of a lake in Schwerin in eastern Germany. —AFP

After IS, Trinidad boys leave Syria with Pink Floyd help

QAMISHLI, Syria: Syria's Kurds handed two children from Trinidad and Tobago to their mother yesterday, four years after their father brought them to the Islamic State group's "caliphate", a lawyer said. Ayyub Ferreira, 7, and his brother Mahmud, 11, were to leave Syria after Pink Floyd singer Roger Waters helped fly their mother to meet them, lawyer and rights activist Clive Stafford-Smith said. "The two children were kidnapped by their father from Trinidad and brought 4,000 miles (6,000 km) over here" in June 2014, he said.

IS overran large parts of Syria and neighboring Iraq that year, declaring a "caliphate" and attracting thousands of foreign militants. It has since lost most of that territory to various offensives, including to one led by Kurdish fighters and backed by the US-led coalition. "The two children were freed from the Raqqa area several months ago," said Fener Al-Qait, a foreign affairs official with Syria's semi-autonomous Kurdish authorities. An IS fighter, "the father was married to another woman. He was killed and his wife fled," he added.

Stafford-Smith said he tracked down the children's mother. "I was talking to Roger Waters, the founder of Pink Floyd, the famous rock and roll band... He agreed to pay for it all and flew the mother over from Trinidad,"

the US-British lawyer said.

Cricketer or footballer

Once the boys are out of Syria, "we're going to make sure that they get on with a really productive, decent life," he said. "One of them said he wanted to be a professional cricketer, and the other one said he wanted to be a professional footballer." Kurdish-led forces have rounded up hundreds of foreigners who allegedly fought for IS, but they also hold more than 1,200 children and 500 women related to them.

The Kurds have repeatedly called on their home countries to take them back. But Western governments have largely been reluctant, with public opinion against it after a series of IS-claimed attacks in Europe. Stafford-Smith advocated for bringing other children home. "When you look at the 1,248 children that are currently in custody here, obviously we've got to do the same for them," he said. And, he said, "we cannot just take children back without taking their parents". Syria's war has killed more than 360,000 people since it started in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests, before evolving into a complex conflict including foreign powers and militants. — AFP



QAMISHLI, Syria: A member of an NGO accompanies two Caribbean children and their mother (right) as they prepare to leave this northeastern Syrian Kurdish-majority city yesterday. — AFP

Philippines seeks peace with...

Continued from Page 1

In a frightening close call just as polls opened early yesterday, a grenade was lobbed into a voting center entrance in the regional hub of Cotabato City, but failed to detonate. "I was afraid, I was thinking about backing out (of voting)," said a tearful Leticia Mangharal, who was meters away from the explosive. "But this won't stop me." The government and MILF hope that a new, stable Bangsamoro will attract investment to a region where brutal poverty and perennial bloodshed has fuelled recruitment by radical groups. President Rodrigo Duterte, who also hails from Mindanao, has long backed the creation of an autonomous region for the island's Muslims.

Under the terms of the law which lays out the region's powers, Bangsamoro will get \$950 million in development funds over the next 10 years, as well as a chunk of the tax revenue generated within its borders. The national government will keep control over the police, though the leadership of the autonomous area will be closely involved in security matters. Final results are expected to be released within four days of the voting, with an approval triggering the demobilization of a third of MILF's fighters, which the group says number 30,000.

A handful of smaller areas, which were not included in yesterday's vote due to administrative delays, are set

to vote on Feb 6 on whether to join the Bangsamoro. Muslim rebels have long been battling for independence or autonomy on Mindanao, which they regard as their ancestral homeland dating back to when Arab traders arrived there in the 13th century. In fact, the new entity would enlarge and replace a similar autonomous zone in the same part of the southern Philippines, which struggled to complete development projects and was plagued by violence.

The proposed region includes the city of Marawi, which was seized by militants flying the black IS flag in 2017 and who were only dislodged by a five-month battle that flattened swathes of the town. Experts say the expanded devolution of powers to the region is one of the best opportunities in recent memory to bring down the persistently high levels of lawlessness in the Philippines' south.

However, corruption and mismanagement are perennial problems across the nation of 105 million, and doubts remain over whether resources promised for development would find their way to Bangsamoro projects. "This is not the end of our struggle," MILF leader Murad Ebrahim told journalists at the group's sprawling base near Cotabato City, predicting victory. "This (transition to governing) is another layer of our struggle which will be more difficult because maybe our enemy will be ourselves," he said. "It's a historic chapter in our long, long journey towards our right to self-determination, it's history in the making." Mohagher Iqbal, the MILF's top peace negotiator, told Reuters by telephone. "Our hope is this will bring justice. Violent extremism won't thrive if there are no longer grievances with the government, it will have no support if there is no legitimacy. "This will be a very, very important and hard won victory," he said. — Agencies

MP Thamer Al-Suwait meanwhile submitted a draft law calling for the naturalization of at least 2,000 people in the course of the current year. The proposal aims at paving the way for the government to grant Kuwaiti citizenship to thousands of bedoons or stateless people. The National Assembly has been passing such laws every year for the past several years, but the law has not been implemented.

But this proposal is different from previous laws, since if approved, it obliges the government to grant Kuwaiti citizenship to at least 2,000 people. Around 120,000 bedoons live in the country, but the government says only 34,000 of them qualify for consideration to secure citizenship, while the rest have nationalities of other countries.

The constitutional court yesterday set Jan 27 to issue its verdict regarding an objection filed by MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei against last month's ruling in which the court considered article 16 of the Assembly's internal charter as unconstitutional. Article 16 was used by the Assembly to retain the membership of Tabtabaei and MP Jamaan Al-Harbash after they received jail terms for storming the Assembly building in 2011.

Super blood wolf moon...

Continued from Page 1

Hence the name for this year's event: A "super blood wolf moon". At its peak, where night skies were clear of clouds, Venus and Jupiter shone brightly in the night sky. Not everyone was fortunate: In London, for example, astronomy enthusiasts' hopes were dashed by a cloudy night.

During a lunar eclipse, the moon appears red because the light of the sun no longer directly illuminates it, since earth is passing in between the moon and sun. "The color is due to Rayleigh scattering - where

the sun's blue light is scattered off molecules in Earth's atmosphere - which also happens at sunsets," explained the Royal Astronomical Society of Britain. "The sun's red light is scattered much less by air, and is bent by earth's atmosphere in a process called refraction, traveling all the way through it to light up the moon's surface."

Total or partial lunar eclipses happen at least twice a year on average, Florent Deleflie, an astronomer at the Observatory of Paris-PSL told AFP. It's just that they are not visible everywhere. It's a rare event when a total lunar eclipse is visible on so many parts of the earth's landmass, as was the case yesterday. Europeans last saw a total lunar eclipse in July 2018. The next chance for a glimpse at a lunar eclipse will be in 2022, but the entire continent won't be able to see the totality of a lunar eclipse again until 2029. North Americans may get their next glimpse of a blood moon in 2021 along the West coast and 2022 on the East coast. — AFP

Israel strikes in Syria in open...

Continued from Page 1

"We assure the Iranian people that we are ready to retaliate against any threat," he was quoted as saying, though it was not clear if he spoke before or after the Israeli strikes.

Israel said targets included munitions stores, a site at Damascus International Airport that was allegedly the Quds Force's main logistics hub in the country, an Iranian intelligence installation and an Iranian military training camp. It said it also hit Syrian air defense batteries in response to dozens of missiles fired from them. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said at least 11 pro-regime fighters, including two Syrians, were killed.

Russia, which like Iran is a key backer of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad in the country's war, said the Israeli strikes killed four Syrian soldiers and wounded six, while damaging Damascus airport infrastructure. The Observatory said air strikes and ground-to-ground missiles hit targets around the capital including near the Damascus airport, as well as near the Thaala military airport in Sweida province to the south of the capital. The targets included weapons depots belonging to the Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah and Iranian fighters, it added.

The chain of events leading to the strikes began Sunday. Damascus initially accused Israel of carrying out raids in southern Syria. Syrian state news agency SANA quoted a military source saying Syria's air defenses went into action after Israel launched the air strikes. In those strikes, the Russian army said Syrian air defenses had destroyed seven Israeli projectiles, after four of the Jewish state's F-16 mili-

tary planes "fired rockets into Syrian territory".

Shortly afterwards on Sunday afternoon, Israel said it had intercepted what it then called a rocket fired at the Golan Heights from Syria. Video spread online of skiers on Mt Hermon in the Israeli-controlled Golan watching air defenses fire to intercept the missile. The ski center was closed yesterday. Israel then early yesterday announced it was striking Quds Force targets in Syria while SANA reported that Syrian air defense systems had responded to "enemy" fire.

Israel has pledged to stop its main enemy Iran from entrenching itself militarily in neighboring Syria. It has carried out hundreds of air strikes there against what it says are Iranian military targets and advanced arms deliveries to Tehran-backed Hezbollah. Its warplanes have been targeted by anti-aircraft fire during such raids, but it has rarely faced surface-to-surface missile fire in response.

Netanyahu and other Israeli officials have been speaking more openly about the country's strikes in Syria in recent days, which some analysts partly attribute to the premier wanting to burnish his security credentials ahead of April 9 elections. Others say it carries a strategic military purpose as well by sending a stronger message. But Israel also risks an escalation with Syria and Iran, as well as possibly further angering Russia at a time when the United States is seeking to withdraw its forces from Syria.

Military coordination between Israel and Russia in Syria took a hit after a friendly fire incident in September that led to a Russian plane being downed by Syrian air defenses during an Israeli raid. The incident angered the Kremlin and complicated Israel's operations in Syria, particularly after Moscow's delivery of the advanced S-300 air defense system there in response. On Thursday, Israeli military officials concluded a series of talks with their Russian counterparts aimed at improving their coordination there. More than 360,000 people have been killed and millions displaced since the start of Syria's civil war with the brutal repression of anti-government protests in 2011. — AFP

MP calls to expel 'bachelors'...

Continued from Page 1

Ashour cited crowding at the area's public clinic, traffic congestion and substandard cleaning services, in addition to social and security problems facing residents resulting from the presence of "bachelors". The lawmaker said the presence of bachelors in the area is a violation of the law and several official statements stating that evicting single men from residential areas is in the interest of the public.

Ashour urged authorities to immediately start ordering bachelors to leave the area and cut electricity supply from houses leased to single men. The Municipality and interior ministry agencies have in the past launched campaigns to evict single expatriates living in so-called model areas mostly inhabited by Kuwaitis.

Sports

Serena outslugs top seed Halep as Djokovic battles to stay on course

Cool Raonic ignores Zverev tantrum to reach last eight

MELBOURNE: A fired-up Serena Williams slugged past world number one Simona Halep yesterday as she inches ever closer to a 24th Grand Slam title, while Novak Djokovic survived a battle to stay on course for a record seventh Australian Open crown.

In a towering performance, the American great scored her biggest win since having a baby to grind down the Romanian top seed 6-1, 4-6, 6-4 and move into a quarter-final against seventh seed Karolina Pliskova. Czech Pliskova is another form player, winning the warm-up Brisbane International and easing past two-time Grand Slam winner Garbine Muguruza 6-3, 6-1 to set up the Williams clash. "I'm such a fighter, I never give up," declared Williams after the epic encounter.

"It was an intense match and there were some incredible points but I love playing tennis and being out here and I love this court, it's really cool to be back." While Williams stayed calm, highly-rated German fourth seed Alexander Zverev lost the plot against Canadian Milos Raonic, crashing 6-1, 6-1, 7-6 (7/5) and demolishing a racquet in a massive meltdown.

And Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta also let the pressure get to him, ranting at the umpire after a disputed call when leading the final tiebreak 8-5 against Japan's Kei Nishikori. He failed to win another point and was booed as he stormed off Margaret Court Arena, angrily throwing his kit bag after losing a 5hr 5min marathon 6-7 (8/10), 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-4, 7-6 (10/8).

Nishikori will now play six-time champion Djokovic, who dropped a set for the second match in a row before seeing off 15th-seeded Daniil Medvedev 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-3.

"It was definitely a physical battle. It was difficult to get through him," the Serbian world number one said.

"In these kinds of matches you just have to hang in there." Dominant Williams overshadowed them all and is overwhelming favourite to win an eighth Australian title, with defending champion Caroline Wozniacki and second seed Angelique Kerber already out. She has been in ominous form at Melbourne Park as she seeks one more major title to put her alongside Margaret Court's record 24, and it looked like French Open champion Halep would be another easy scalp after a first set rout.

But the nuggety Romanian isn't world number one for nothing and she bounced back to set up a huge power struggle that Williams finally won with a break in the seventh game of the third set.

"I really needed to elevate my game. She's a great player," said Williams.

Fourth seed Naomi Osaka, meanwhile, was composed as she beat crafty Latvian Anastasija Sevastova, emerging from an error-strewn first to win 4-6, 6-3, 6-4. "I think the biggest thing for me is the belief. I think I believe in myself more this year than I have last year," said the bubbly 21-year-old, who beat Williams in the US Open final last year.

She next faces ambitious sixth seed Elina Svitolina, who needed to dig deep to overcome 17th seeded Madison Keys 6-2, 1-6, 6-1. Svitolina was a quarter-finalist at Melbourne Park last year and has set her sights high after her breakthrough in winning the WTA Finals Singapore, targeting a Grand Slam win and world number one.

Earlier on Rod Laver Arena, Zverev self-destructed to slump out at the hands of Raonic. The German has routinely been anointed as the flag-bearer for the next generation, but again failed to live up to his reputation and has now missed out on making the last eight of a



MELBOURNE: Serbia's Novak Djokovic hits a return against Russia's Daniil Medvedev during their men's singles match on day eight of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne early yesterday. — AFP

major 14 times in 15 attempts.

So furious was he with his form, the 21-year-old had a major temper tantrum in the second set, whacking his racquet into the ground eight times to leave it a crum-

pled mess. "I just tried to stay composed and it worked out well for me today," said cool 16th seed Raonic, who will now face Frenchman Lucas Pouille after he battled past Croat Borna Coric in four tough sets. — AFP

Stefanos Tsitsipas, a Greek tennis god in the making

ATHENS: Conqueror of his idol Roger Federer in the last 16 of the Australian Open, the rise of Greek youngster Stefanos Tsitsipas is one that appears destined to carry him to the top of the tennis world.

He made no secret of his immense respect for the Swiss star, whose posters coated the walls of Tsitsipas' bedroom as a child, but the 20-year-old Athenian didn't allow sentiment to stand in his way.

"He's a legend of our sport," Tsitsipas said ahead of his clash with the 20-time Grand Slam champion. "If I thought about it now it's insane I'm in this position where I can actually play him. It's really emotional."

But Tsitsipas showed scant regard for the world number three—the double reigning champion in Melbourne—on Sunday, playing the brand of tennis that has propelled him to 15th in the rankings after barely two seasons on tour.

He will climb yet further following his best performance to date at a Grand Slam, and the Greek intends to continue building on a breakthrough year in 2018. His reward for felling Federer is a quarter-final, he is the first Greek ever to reach this stage of a Grand Slam, on Tuesday against Roberto Bautista Agut.

Tsitsipas burst onto the scene by reaching his first

tour-level final at Barcelona last April, and then finishing runner-up to Rafael Nadal at the Rogers Cup in Canada where he claimed four top-10 scalps.

Those impressive runs ultimately led to a maiden title at Stockholm in October, the first-ever for a Greek player on the ATP circuit. "I always thought it would take me longer to get there. But I've worked hard and it's not a surprise to me," a confident Tsitsipas said at the time.

It's not just the physical prowess of the 1.93m (6ft 4in) Tsitsipas that sets him apart. "Stefanos is in the process of acquiring a great mindset, which is largely down to difficult wins he's earned," his father and coach Apostolos Tsitsipas told AFP recently.

While he joined the Mouratoglou Academy, a renowned producer of elite players located on the Cote d'Azur, in 2015, Apostolos has stayed at his son's side and remains a pivotal figure in his career.

"A very special connection" links father and son says Stefanos, for whom family provides a welcome respite from the rigours of professional tennis. Armed with a formidable one-handed backhand and a powerful serve, the Greek's trajectory has been carefully overseen by his father, a coach at a club in a chic Athens suburb, but also by his mother, a former professional player in the Soviet Union.

Julia Salnikova is the daughter of an Olympic football gold medalist, and she too is fully integrated into the sporting culture that permeates the Tsitsipas family. The secret "is to gradually set goals and make the player aware of his responsibilities to make them progress" repeats Apostolos.

Stefanos, the eldest of four siblings, first tasted suc-



Stefanos Tsitsipas

cess in 2016 when he won the Wimbledon boys' doubles title and rose to the top of the junior rankings.

He is a young man seemingly without limits, personified by the #TsitsiFast hashtag—a favourite of the Greek's on social media. The angelic-looking Tsitsipas also runs his own Youtube channel, offering a glimpse into his life behind the scenes while also transporting his fans from tournament to tournament.

His fledgling "A Greek Abroad" podcast gives further insight and Tsitsipas is an aspiring photographer as well. He documents his work as "Steve the Hawk" on Instagram, a username befitting one soaring towards the summit of men's tennis. — AFP

Nadal faces Tiafoe test as Tsitsipas eyes semi-final

MELBOURNE: Relentless Rafael Nadal will aim to snuff out the challenge of young giant-killer Frances Tiafoe today, while young Greek Stefanos Tsitsipas has eyes on a maiden Australian open semi-final after knocking out Roger Federer.

The Australian Open hits the quarter-final stage in Melbourne with 17-time Grand Slam winner Nadal emerging as a strong title favourite. The Spaniard has not dropped a set and demolished former world number four Tomas Berdych 6-0, 6-1, 7-6 (7/4) in the fourth round in an awesome display.

Lying in his path is American Tiafoe who has already accounted for the fifth seed Kevin Anderson and become a fans' favourite with his exuberant LeBron James style celebrations and inspiring life story.

The son of immigrants from Sierra Leone, Tiafoe turned 21 on Sunday and celebrated his birthday by beating 20th seed Grigor Dimitrov to reach a Slam quarter-final for the first time. "I wasn't a normal tennis story," he told reporters, revealing he had already managed to buy his mother a house in Maryland and help his janitor dad.

"The beginning of my career I was trying to do everything for my family. Obviously now I put them in a great place. Now I'm trying to do it for me. "I'm so excited to play Rafa. We're going to have some fun, going to have some long rallies."

Nadal said he was aware of the young world number 39, and would be on his guard against a man he had never played. "He has everything," said the 2009 champion who is aiming to become the only man in the Open era to win all four Grand Slams at least twice.

"He's a very dynamic player, aggressive one. Of course, he's dangerous. He's in quarter-finals." Tsitsipas was thrust into the global spotlight after ending double defending champion Federer's quest for a record seventh Australian Open.

The gifted 20-year-old has already secured his place in history as the first Greek to reach a Grand Slam quarter-final. He held off 12 break points before flummoxing the Swiss master in four sets.

"This win is a good milestone, let's say good first step to something bigger," said the exciting 2018 NextGen Champion. "I'm really pumped and excited to be competing in the quarter-finals. I'm really waiting for that moment."

He faces another Spaniard, the in-form Roberto Bautista Agut. The 22nd seed beat Novak Djokovic on his way to the title in Doha earlier this month before ending Andy Murray's hopes, and possibly his career, in the first round in Melbourne.

Bautista Agut is looking to extend his 2019 win streak to 10 matches and a potential all-Spanish semi-final against Nadal. "Tsitsipas is doing very well," said Bautista Agut. "He's one of the top players in the world. He will be one of the best, for sure. He's playing at a very high level." — AFP

How cricket helped tennis star Barty over sticky wicket

MELBOURNE: Australia's Ashleigh Barty believes a decision to take a break from tennis and play professional cricket revived her career, giving her the drive to reach a Grand Slam quarter-final in Melbourne this week. Barty will become the first local hope to play in the last eight at the Australian Open in a decade when she faces Czech rival Petra Kvitova today.

The 22-year-old has already claimed her biggest scalp yet with a three-set triumph over five-time major champion Maria Sharapova on Sunday in front of a frenzied Melbourne Park crowd. But Barty's career was in crisis a few years ago, when the Queenslander walked away from the sport she had played since she was a toddler.

Jaded with the constant travel and loneliness of being on tour, as well as the pressure from Australian fans desperate for Grand Slam success, Barty decided tennis was not for her. She retired and in 2014 made the stunning announcement that she would instead play professional cricket in Brisbane, preferring a team sport over tennis' gladiatorial ethos.

"There's never a lonesome moment on the field if you're struggling," she said at the time. "There's 10 other girls that can help you out and get you through the tough times." Barty played for the Brisbane Heat in the Women's Big Bash League, scoring 39 runs from 27 deliveries on debut against the Melbourne Stars.

She eventually returned to tennis but credits her brief foray at the cricket crease with rekindling her love for the sport that has now made her a household name in Australia. "I needed to take that time away," she said after downing Sharapova.

"For me, having that 18 months off was vital. I feel like I came back a better person on and off the court, a better tennis player." Barty, seeded 15 at Melbourne Park, maintains a keen interest in cricket and said after winning in the third round that she planned to watch a one-day match between Australia and India at the neighbouring Melbourne Cricket Ground. "Ice bath, physio, coffee, cricket—I'm good," she said when asked about her post-match plans. —AFP



Al-Ayoub awarding one of the winners.

Ooredoo Kuwait platinum sponsor of West Gulf Race

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait announced that it was the platinum sponsor of the West Gulf Race, which took place last Saturday at the Scientific Center, and is considered to be the most important race in Kuwait. The sponsorship comes as a reflection of Ooredoo's strategy in enabling youth and supporting them in reaching their potential. The West Gulf Race is considered to be an important race that aims to challenge participants and raise health and fitness awareness and to create a new sports culture built on ethics, discipline, and sportsmanship. During the final ceremony, the winning participants were inaugurated and were awarded with valuable prizes based on their ranks in the race. More than 2000 participants from different nationalities took

part in the West Gulf Race which where segmented into the family race, men and women below 16 years of age, and the 10 kilometer race.

Ooredoo Corporate Communication Senior Director Mijbil Al-Ayoub awarded the winners during the ceremony. Al-Ayoub noted that Ooredoo and the West Gulf Race both believe in enabling youth and supporting them in reaching their potential, which is one of the biggest pillars of the company's CSR strategy. He said, "This sponsorship comes in tandem with our belief in supporting youth initiatives and athletes in Kuwait, and we continuously offer our full support for youth and aspirations". We are proud to be sponsors of the West Gulf Race, and we are especially proud of all the participants who took part in the race. Al-Ayoub further added, "Empowering youth is among Ooredoo's top priorities through its CSR strategy".

It is considerable to mention that Ooredoo recently sponsored the Flying Start Triathlon and currently sponsors and supports several young Kuwaiti athletes who are the company's brand ambassadors such as Abdulaziz Al-Rashed, Najlaa Al-Jeraiwi, and Rakan Al-Hassawi.

Sports

Patriots to face Rams in Super Bowl 53 after over-time NFL thrillers

'This is crazy, that was a hell of a game, It's unbelievable'

WASHINGTON: Five-time champion Tom Brady guided the New England Patriots into their third consecutive Super Bowl, where they will face a Los Angeles Rams squad that advanced Sunday in dramatic but controversial fashion.

The only day in NFL playoff history with two overtime thrillers saw the Patriots win 37-31 at Kansas City on Rex Burkhead's 2-yard touchdown run in the American Conference final. "Over-time, on the road, against a great team, it required everything," Brady said. "This is crazy. That was a hell of a game. It's unbelievable." The Rams edged host New Orleans 26-23 on Greg Zuerlein's club playoff record 57-yard over-time field goal in the National Conference final, their rally from 13-0 down the best in team playoff history.

"Unbelievable. Can't find the words," Rams quarterback Jared Goff said. "To be down 13-0, the defense to play the way they did. And our kicker made a 57-yard field goal. Unbelievable."

New England will face Los Angeles in Super Bowl 53 on February 3 in Atlanta in the NFL championship spectacular. The Patriots seek their third title in five years in their ninth Super Bowl trip in 18 seasons under Brady, who at 41 could surpass 39-year-old Peyton Manning as the oldest starting quarterback to win a Super Bowl and become the first to do it six times.

"It feels pretty sweet," Brady said. "We earned it and I'm really happy for us. It was awesome. What a game." Brady became the first quarterback in NFL playoff history to go 3-0 in over-time, having won all three on the opening drive of the extra session.

This one came after four lead changes in the fourth quarter and a dramatic fightback drive by Kansas City to force the first extra-time American Conference final since 1986.

"The players just competed really hard today," Patriots coach Bill Belichick said. "You can't buy these. You've got to earn them and they earned this one." Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes will not become the youngest Super Bowl champion quarterback at 23,

but he served notice he could trade dramatic late-game drives with Brady, the sport's master of such heroics.

'NEVER GET OVER IT'

The Saints, meanwhile, were livid over the lack of a late-game penalty call when Rams defender Nickell Robey-Coleman ran into Saints receiver Tommy Lee Lewis on a third-down pass. New Orleans lost a chance to run down the clock and make a last-play short field goal try.

"They blew the call," Saints coach Sean Payton said. "I don't know if there was ever a more obvious pass interference call." "It's a tough way to lose a game, especially when you're in a position like that to win it," Payton said. "We'll probably never get over it."

The Saints received the ball to begin over-time but Rams linebacker Dante Fowler hit Brees as he threw and safety John Johnson picked off the awkward lob while falling onto his back, the lone New Orleans turnover setting up Zuerlein's winner.

"I was crying on the bench," said Rams defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh. "I've never been this excited." Rams coach Sean McVay, who turns 33 on Thursday, became the youngest coach to reach the Super Bowl.

"It's a credit to the people you have around you," McVay said. "Our team demonstrated great mental toughness. It was a tough start. We had confidence and we got it done. It was a great win." The Rams seek their fourth NFL crown but their first for Los Angeles in the Super Bowl era. The team won NFL titles in 1945 based in Cleveland, 1951 based in Los Angeles and by winning the 2000 Super Bowl while based in St. Louis. The franchise lost two other Super Bowl trips in 1980 (Los Angeles) and 2002 (St. Louis).

DRAMA AT KANSAS CITY

At Kansas City, there were four lead changes and a conference-finals record 38 points scored in the fourth quarter. Brady marched the Patriots 65 yards in 34 seconds and New England seized a 31-28 lead thanks to



KANSAS CITY: Rob Gronkowski #87 of the New England Patriots makes a catch in overtime against Eric Berry #29 of the Kansas City Chiefs during the AFC Championship Game at Arrowhead Stadium on Sunday in Kansas City, Missouri. — AFP

Rex Burkhead's 4-yard touchdown run with 39 seconds remaining.

Mahomes then drove the Chiefs into position for Harrison Butker's 39-yard equalizer field goal with eight seconds remaining. The Patriots took a 14-0 half-time lead on Sony Michel's 1-yard touchdown run 8:05 into the game and Brady's 29-yard touchdown pass to Phil Dorsett with 27 seconds to play in the second quarter. Mahomes answered 2:04 into the second half

on a 12-yard touchdown pass to Travis Kelce but the Patriots answered on Stephen Gostkowski's 47-yard field goal.

Damian Williams scored three fourth-quarter touchdowns for the Chiefs on catches of 1 and 23 yards from Mahomes and a 2-yard run. Brady, 72-1 as a starter when up by 14 or more, marched the Patriots for rookie Michel's 10-yard touchdown run and Burkhead's go-ahead and winning touchdown runs. —AFP

Toews notches hat trick as Blackhawks crush Capitals

CHICAGO: Jonathan Toews finished with three goals and two assists while Patrick Kane added two goals and two assists as the Chicago Blackhawks snapped a six-game losing streak with an 8-5 victory over the visiting Washington Capitals on Sunday afternoon. The Blackhawks scored four goals in the first 23 minutes and then added four more in the third period while slumping Washington twice sliced the lead to one. The Capitals have dropped five in a row, the first time that's happened since early in the 2014-15 season. Washington simply couldn't stop Toews (five points) and Kane (four) as Chicago finished with at least three goals in two of the three periods. The Capitals have fallen out of first place in the Metropolitan Division during their skid. Coach Todd Reirden tried to get the offense going by shaking up his lines, including dropping top-line center Evgeny Kuznetsov to the third line, but the defense couldn't hold on.

ISLANDERS 3, DUCKS 0

Robin Lehner recorded 19 saves as surging New York notched its second straight shutout with a win over visiting Anaheim. Cal Clutterbuck scored twice in the first period for the Islanders, who have won five straight and 15 of 18 to move into first place in the Metropolitan Division. It was the sixth career two-goal game for Clutterbuck and his first since Jan. 4, 2018. Leo Komarov scored in the final minute of the second period for the Islanders.

CANUCKS 3, RED WINGS 2

Elias Pettersson scored a goal and added an assist in his first game back from a knee injury as host Vancouver came back to beat Detroit. Antoine Roussel scored the winning goal at 13:13 of the third period as he tipped in Jake Virtanen's pass into the middle. That came less than



CHICAGO: Artem Anisimov #15 of the Chicago Blackhawks shoots past Matt Niskanen #2 of the Washington Capitals at Phoenix Copley #1 at the United Center on Sunday in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

six minutes after Bo Horvat tied the game at 2-2. The Canucks earned their second straight win while handing the Red Wings their second consecutive loss. Frans Nielsen and Thomas Vanek each had a goal and an assist for Detroit.

COYOTES 4, MAPLE LEAFS 2

Vinnie Hinostroza scored the go-ahead goal in the third period as visiting Arizona defeated Toronto. It was the fifth goal this season for Hinostroza, who had not scored since Nov. 11, a 21-game drought. Mario Kempe, Clayton Keller and Lawson Crouse also scored for the Coyotes, who have won five of their past seven games. Derek Stepan added

two assists. Travis Dermott and John Tavares scored for the Maple Leafs, who have lost seven of their past 10 games and six of seven at home.

HURRICANES 7, OILERS 4

Nino Niederreiter scored two first-period goals in just his second game with Carolina in a victory against host Edmonton. Niederreiter joined the Hurricanes last week in a trade with the Minnesota Wild. He made his Carolina debut in Friday night's home loss to the Ottawa Senators. Lucas Wallmark also had two goals for Carolina. Andrei Svechnikov, Brock McGinn and Jordan Martinook had the other goals for the Hurricanes. — Reuters

New Aus women's football coach 'in weeks' after shock sacking

SYDNEY: Football Federation Australia will appoint a new women's team coach in two weeks following the shock sacking of Alan Stajcic, the governing body's chief said yesterday. Stajcic, who had coached the Matildas since 2014, was dumped by the FFA on Saturday over concerns about "workplace" and "player welfare" issues. Calls have since grown for more detailed explanation of his sudden dismissal.

FFA chief David Gallop said at the weekend he had lost faith in the 45-year-old, but speaking to reporters Monday did not give specific further details. The FFA's own newly established Women's Council said it was not consulted or made aware of the decision.

Stajcic's removal followed two recent, confidential FFA surveys to evaluate the team environment and culture, along with interviews involving players and staff. Gallop told reporters he had met with the Matildas playing group twice on Monday and said he stressed that the move to terminate Stajcic's contract was not just based on

the surveys but also on a "range of reasons and a range of information".

"These matters are accumulative and there was a real view that things had deteriorated in recent times, then it gets to a critical point where a decision needs to be made with preparation time in mind and that's why the decision was taken," he said.

"I think further information was only available to us in the last week or so. These are cumulative views that are taken, taking into account a range of factors." Gallop said the players did not call for Stajcic to be reinstated, and added that the FFA were looking to appoint a new coach "in approximately two weeks' time" to allow the squad to prepare for the Cup of Nations tournament on home soil ahead of the World Cup.

The Cup of Nations will see the Matildas take on Argentina, South Korea and New Zealand in late February and early March. The women's World Cup takes place in France in June and July. — AFP

History against England in W Indies

LONDON: England may be third in the Test rankings and the West Indies eighth, but history will be against Joe Root's tourists when a three-match series gets underway in Barbados tomorrow.

Only two England sides have won Test series in the Caribbean during the past 52 years. Below AFP Sport looks back at those most recent England campaign triumphs, which both featured members of the Jones family-left-arm quick Jeff Jones starring in 1968, with the Welshman's son, Simon, a right-arm paceman, playing in 2004.

1967/68: West Indies 0 England 1 (five-match series)

This series went England's way thanks mainly to a seven-wicket win in the fourth Test in Trinidad.

England were left to score 215 in two-and-three quarter hours following a sporting declaration by West Indies captain Garry Sobers.

But England, with captain Colin Cowdrey making 71, follow his first-innings 148, and opener Geoffrey Boycott 80 not out, got the runs just in time.

There was one more twist to come in

the fifth Test in Guyana when, with England nine wickets down, No 11 Jeff Jones survived the last over of the match to secure a draw that sealed the series win.

2003/04: West Indies 0 England 3 (four-match series)

England made a spectacular start to win the first Test in Jamaica by 10 wickets and never looked back.

Fast bowler Stephen Harmison, inflicting the kind of damage associated with legions of West Indies' quicks, took an extraordinary seven wickets for 12 runs in 12.3 overs as the hosts collapsed to 47 all out in their second innings.

But after further convincing wins in Trinidad and Barbados, they were denied a 4-0 clean sweep in Antigua.

West Indies captain Brian Lara regained the world record for the highest individual Test score with an innings of 400 not out in a colossal total of 751 for five declared.

But by batting so long on a placid pitch, Lara reduced the time available for his bowlers to take 20 wickets and England captain Michael Vaughan, albeit his side followed on, made 140 as the match ended in a draw. —AFP

Wolves' Rose beats buzzer to bury Suns

MINNEAPOLIS: Derrick Rose buried a 20-foot, tie-breaking jumper with nine-tenths of a second remaining Sunday night, delivering the Minnesota Timberwolves a 116-114 victory over the Phoenix Suns in Minneapolis. The Timberwolves trailed 110-106 before Rose capped a 31-point performance by scoring eight of Minnesota's final 10 points over the closing 3:25. Karl Anthony-Towns shot 13 for 13 from the free throw line in a 30-point, 12-rebound double-double for Minnesota, which snapped a two-game losing streak. T.J. Warren had a team-high 21 points for the Suns, who completed a winless four-game trip with two losses in two days. Phoenix lost at Charlotte on Saturday.

CLIPPERS 103, SPURS 95

Tobias Harris poured in 27 points, and Patrick Beverley scored 18 points and grabbed 12 rebounds as Los Angeles held on to defeat host San Antonio. The win snapped a season-worst five-game losing streak for the Clippers, who controlled the game even without injured stars sixth man Lou Williams and forward Danilo Gallinari. LaMarcus Aldridge led all scorers with 30 points and pulled down a game-high 14 rebounds for the Spurs, who saw their two-game winning snapped while losing their second straight home game.

PACERS 120, HORNETS 95

Victor Oladipo scored 21 points as host Indiana won its second straight game and avenged a 127-109 loss at Charlotte in November. The Pacers, who have won 18 of their last 23 games, jumped out to a 16-point lead in the first quarter, led by 15 at halftime, and stayed in control the rest of the game. Kemba Walker had 23 points and seven assists to lead the Hornets, who had a three-game winning streak snapped. They were looking for their first four-game winning streak of the season. — Reuters

Patterson earns late call-up for SL tests

BRISBANE: Australia have called up Kurtis Patterson for their two-test series against Sri Lanka starting in Brisbane on Jan 24 after the New South Wales batsman scored two centuries in a warm-up match against the tourists.

The uncapped Patterson unbeaten knocks off 157 and 102 for a Cricket Australia XI in Hobart last week. "Kurtis has joined the squad in Brisbane today to commence our preparations for the first test starting on Thursday," national selector Trevor Hohns said.

"We have been asking batters around the country to score hundreds if they want to be considered for selection. "Given Kurtis's consistent performances for NSW and his two unbeaten centuries in last week's tour match against our upcoming opponent, Sri Lanka, we believe he deserves to be added to the test squad." Patterson has played 58 first-class matches, scoring 3,813 runs with six centuries and 26 half-centuries at an average of 41. Australia squad: Tim Paine (captain), Jhye Richardson, Joe Burns, Pat Cummins, Marcus Harris, Travis Head, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Will Pucovski, Matt Renshaw, Mitchell Starc, Peter Siddle, Kurtis Patterson. — Reuters

Sports

Last-gasp Dembele wins derby for Lyon as Marseille halt slide

It was an excellent derby' says Lyon coach Bruno Genesio

PARIS: Moussa Dembele grabbed a stoppage-time winner for Lyon in a 2-1 victory over bitter foes Saint-Etienne on Sunday, while Marseille snapped a wretched run of nine games without a win as they beat Caen 1-0 in Ligue 1.

Romain Hamouma headed Saint-Etienne into the lead on 21 minutes at the Stade Geoffroy Guichard, but Nabil Fekir converted a second-half penalty to haul Lyon level following a handball by Loic Perrin. An unmarked Dembele headed over in the dying stages after coming on as a substitute, but the forward made no mistake with another chance moments later to floor the hosts in the 95th minute.

"We do this job for this kind of feeling," said Lyon coach Bruno Genesio. "It was an excellent derby. Both teams got properly into it." Lyon goalkeeper Anthony Lopes had earlier pulled off a stunning triple save to keep the visitors in the game, twice denying the in-form Wahbi Khazri before tipping away Hamouma's follow-up.

Saint-Etienne again had a chance to win the match in a frantic goalmouth scramble but Remy Cabella was thwarted by Lopes and Leo Dubois produced a vital block to repel Loic Diony's subsequent effort. "Honestly, I knew this job was cruel but today was a bit of a knockout blow," said Saint-Etienne coach Jean-Louis Gasset. "We gave everything. Both teams had chances and would have each deserved a point."

A pitch invasion by angry home fans caused a lengthy stoppage when Lyon won 5-0 last season, and tempers again briefly threatened to boil over following the final whistle on Sunday.

Lyon climbed back above their rivals into third place after dealing Saint-Etienne a first home loss of the season. Earlier, Marseille recorded a first win since late November despite losing the influential Dimitri Payet to a knee injury after just 24 minutes. Morgan Sanson, on as a substitute

for Payet, guided home a header from a Kevin Strootman cross two minutes after the interval to earn Marseille a welcome three points.

Caen played most of the second half with 10 men after Frederic Guilbert was dismissed for a second booking. Marseille had faced angry supporters in heated exchanges following last weekend's 1-1 home draw with Monaco, the culmination of a dismal run that included a humiliating French Cup defeat by fourth-tier amateurs Andrezieux at the start of the month.

"I'm not relieved. I'm happy for the players because it confirms the good things we'd done in the last two matches against Monaco and Saint-Etienne," said Marseille coach Rudi Garcia, who again faced calls to resign from Marseille fans in the away section.

He also provided an update on Payet, saying he was unsure whether he would be available for next week's visit of Lille. "I don't know. It's never good when it's the knee," said Garcia.

"He felt it all of a sudden... I think it was a Caen player who fell on top of him, or something like that, when he was on the ground." Marseille moved up to seventh and to within six points of the Champions League spots after inflicting a fifth home defeat in six outings on a Caen outfit with just three wins all season.

Kylian Mbappe and Edinson Cavani both scored hat-tricks on Saturday as Paris Saint-Germain romped to their biggest-ever home win with a 9-0 thrashing of bottom side Guingamp.

Meanwhile, Thierry Henry's nightmare spell in charge of Monaco took another turn for the worse as Cesc Fabregas gifted Strasbourg a goal and fellow new signing Naldo was shown a seventh-minute red card in a 5-1 home humbling. — AFP



SAINT-ETIENNE: Lyon's French forward Moussa Dembele (3rd L) scores during the French L1 football match between Saint-Etienne (ASSE) and Lyon (OL) on Sunday, at the Geoffroy Guichard stadium in Saint-Etienne, central-eastern France. — AFP

Cristiano flashback as Iran book Asian Cup q-finals spot

ABU DHABI: Title-chasing Iran survived a first-minute penalty in a chaotic start to eventually dispatch Oman 2-0 and reach the Asian Cup quarter-finals on Sunday. Beantpole goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand saved from the spot before goals from Alireza Jahanbakhsh and Ashkan Dejagah in Abu Dhabi sent Iran through to face China.

Beiranvand saved a Cristiano Ronaldo penalty at last year's World Cup and plunged to his right to brilliantly deny Oman captain Ahmed Al-Mahajiri, preventing Oman taking a shock lead moments into the game.

"To be honest, I thought of Cristiano for a fraction of a second before the kick," Beiranvand told AFP. "I didn't want people to think that save in Russia was a fluke. But saving penalties is my job and my responsibility is to help the team." Iran, who are looking to end a 43-year-old Asian Cup title drought, broke through after 32 minutes when Brighton forward Jahanbakhsh latched onto a hopeful long ball to poke the ball past Oman goalkeeper Fayez Al-Rusheidi.

"Team Melli" captain Dejagah lashed home a penalty four minutes before the break after Mehdi Taremi had been brought down. Beiranvand produced an acrobatic save to keep out Muhsen Al-Ghassani's long-range strike just before the half-time whistle.

Sardar Azmoun-dubbed the "Iranian Messi"—twice fluffed his lines after the interval when it looked easier to score. Taremi subsequently squandered two gilt-edged chances, but Iran were never seriously troubled by an error-prone Oman side.

"It's the first time in my life one team has conceded a penalty in the first minute," said Iran coach Carlos Queiroz. "We need to play with a killer instinct. It's important to kill the game when you have the opportunity," added the former Real Madrid boss.

"Football is a hell of a job for players and coaches to be honest with you." Oman coach Pim Verbeek paid

tribute to his players after the Gulf champions reached the Asian Cup knockout stage for the first time.

"I'm very proud of my players," said the Dutchman. "They had a fantastic tournament and should not be ashamed to lose to a team like Iran." But China, runners-up in 1984 and 2004, hit back through substitute



ABU DHABI: Players vie for the header during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup Round of 16 football match between Iran and Oman at the Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Sunday. — AFP

Chelsea manager in Jose Mourinho would have been proud of, Maurizio Sarri left no one in any doubt where he placed the blame for an insipid performance at the Emirates.

The Italian lambasted his players' desire and commitment, labelling them "difficult to motivate". Sarri must also, though, accept his measure of responsibility with Eden Hazard and N'Golo Kante again struggling in unfamiliar positions.

Not many Chelsea managers have taken on the dressing room and succeeded in Roman Abramovich's reign. Sarri is just six months into a three-year contract, but they have tended to matter for little under Abramovich and he may be the latest in a string of illustrious coaches that does not last long at Stamford Bridge.

SOLSKJAER REAPS RASHFORD REWARD

Arsenal's victory closed the Gunners to within three points of Chelsea in the fight for a top-four finish, but it is a rejuvenated United who look even more likely to beat Sarri's men to Champions League qualification.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has now masterminded a magnificent seven straight wins since taking charge as caretaker boss. An 11-point gap to the top four when Mourinho was sacked little over a month ago is down to three and United will have the chance to erase it when Chelsea visit Old Trafford towards the end of the season.

A 2-1 win over Brighton was not the Red Devils' best display under the Norwegian, but his influence was still decisive as Marcus Rashford's stunning solo goal proved the difference between the sides. Finally afforded a run of games in a central role up front, Rashford has now scored in four straight Premier League games for the first time in his career.

WINKS RALLIES SPURS' WALKING WOUNDED

Shorn of Harry Kane, Dele Alli and Son Heung-min, Spurs needed Harry Winks' first goal since 2016 to see off struggling Fulham 2-1 at Craven Cottage. Winks' header with virtually the last action of 93 pulsating minutes ensures Spurs maintain a seven-point cushion over Arsenal and United.

Xiao Zhi and Gao Lin's thumping penalty 20 minutes from time to set up a meeting with Iran.

"I'm happy with the reaction of the players," said Lippi, who is expected to step down after the Asian Cup. "We're in the quarter-finals which is an important step—now let's see." — AFP

England boss Southgate cools Man United talk

LONDON: Gareth Southgate insisted on Sunday his work as England manager was far from done as he indicated he had no interest in taking charge at Manchester United any time soon. A recent report in Britain's Sunday Telegraph said Southgate was on a shortlist being drawn up by Old Trafford chiefs as they sought a permanent replacement for the sacked Jose Mourinho.

But with Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, the caretaker manager, having won his first seven games in charge of United, the Red Devils may have a ready-made successor in their former striker. In any case Southgate, who last year in Russia took England to their first appearance in a World Cup semi-final since 1990, and has since guided them to qualification for the inaugural Nations League finals, has unfinished business with the Three Lions.

The former England centre-back made that clear when, at a Football Writers' Association dinner in London on Sunday he was asked, following the United speculation, if he felt fulfilled by the England post.

"I'm the England manager and it's a privileged position to be in," Southgate told Sky Sports. "We've had the best year for 28 years and we've got a semi-final this summer and a European Championship that's predominantly at Wembley, providing we take care of business to qualify."

"So it's a hugely exciting time with the team. I don't think we've progressed as far as we can yet. I think there's room for us to grow." The 48-year-old added: "I am still a young coach. I've managed less than 200 matches, so, for me, it's an honour to be in the role I'm in and I thoroughly enjoy it."

As for Sunday's event, staged in honour of Southgate, his England squad and staff, he said: "When you're having tributes, you're thinking, 'Well, the job is not done for us yet, there's a lot for us to go for and a lot of improvement for us to make.'"

England captain Harry Kane, the Golden Boot winner in Russia, has been a key member of Southgate's side. But Kane has been ruled out until March after suffering an ankle injury during Tottenham Hotspur's 1-0 loss to Manchester United last weekend. — AFP

Klopp seeks solutions for defensive crisis

LONDON: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp has taken his "warriors" to Dubai for a warm-weather training camp where he will search for a solution to his defensive dilemma. The Premier League leaders, four points ahead of Manchester City, are not in action this coming weekend because they were knocked out of the FA Cup in the last round.

But James Milner's sending-off in Saturday's 4-3 win over Crystal Palace leaves Klopp with a headache at right-back for next week's visit of Leicester. Joe Gomez, sidelined with a broken bone in his foot, will step up his recovery in Dubai and could have an outside chance of making the game but Trent Alexander-Arnold is still a couple of weeks away from fitness.

Fabinho would have been an option in a position he has played for Brazil but he came off injured late on against Palace and even if fit he may be needed in midfield, with Georginio Wijnaldum out with a hamstring problem. Klopp gave 18-year-old Rafael Camacho his Premier League debut for the final few minutes at the weekend and he may be a one-off answer against Leicester.

The Liverpool boss, who has no intention of seeking a solution from the transfer market, told liverpoolfc.com: "Now we need the time to recover obviously, because we had a few injuries. 'Hopefully we can bring a few back. 'Millie' (Milner) will be out for sure, unfortunately, but we will see, as long as we have enough players we will find a solution. 'These boys are real fighters,' added the German. "It's a bunch of proper warriors—I love that. They all stick their leg in or whatever." — AFP

Five things we learned from Premier League weekend

LONDON: Liverpool are one step closer to a long-awaited Premier League title, but only just after a seven-goal thriller against Crystal Palace at Anfield, while Chelsea imploded in losing 2-0 to Arsenal.

Manchester United and Tottenham were also victorious as the race for a top-four finish tightened and Manchester City were routine 3-0 winners at Huddersfield to remain just four points adrift of Liverpool. Here, AFP Sport looks at five things we learned from the Premier League weekend:

LIVERPOOL GET LUCK CHAMPIONS NEED

For the second consecutive week Liverpool got the job done by a solitary goal, but in stark contrast to a dogged 1-0 victory at Brighton last weekend, Jurgen Klopp's men needed their forwards to come to the party and a touch of fortune to see off Crystal Palace 4-3.

Trailing 1-0 at half-time, the Reds turned the game around in the space of eight minutes at the start of the second period thanks to deflections that favoured Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino.

Palace hit back to level again at 2-2, but the leaders biggest break came when 39-year-old goalkeeper Julian Speroni, playing for the first time in 13 months due to injuries to Wayne Hennessey and Vicente Guaita, fumbled a simple James Milner cross towards his own goal and Salah slammed into an empty net. Another hurdle cleared, Liverpool are now 15 games from a first title in 29 years.

WILL SARRI BE SHORT-LIVED?

With a post-match thrashing of his players a former

Live		Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
ASIAN NATIONS CUP 2019			
South Korea v Bahrain	16:00	beIN SPORTS	
Qatar v Iraq	19:00	beIN SPORTS	

25 Serena outslugs top seed Halep as Djokovic battles to stay on course

26 Patriots to face Rams in Super Bowl 53 after over-time NFL thrillers

27 Last-gasp Dembele wins derby for Lyon as Marseille halt slide



AL-AIN: Australia's defender Trent Sainsbury (L) vies for the ball with Uzbekistan's forward Eldor Shomurodov during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup Round of 16 football match between Australia and Uzbekistan at the Khalifa bin Zayed Stadium in Al-Ain yesterday. — AFP

Australia see off Uzbekistan in SO

Japan's Tomiyasu sends Saudis spinning out of Asian Cup

AL AIN: Goalkeeper Maty Ryan earned champions Australia a quarter-final place in the Asian Cup yesterday as he made two saves in a shootout to see off Uzbekistan with a 4-2 win on penalties after 120 goalless minutes.

The Brighton & Hove Albion keeper Ryan denied Islam Tukhtakhujaev and Dostonbek Khamdamov to leave Mathew Leckie to score the winning spot kick and take the Socceroos into the last eight.

The result was no less than the Australians deserved after dominating the second half and most of extra time in the 0-0 stalemate as they kept their hopes of a second successive title on track.

It was Uzbekistan, however, who had made the early running and Ryan was called into action just 10 minutes into the game as Eldor Shomurodov burst past Trent Sainsbury to force the Premier League keeper to block his close-range shot. Australia carried little threat, with Aziz

Behich registering his side's only attempt on goal in the opening 45 minutes when he tried his luck from outside the area, but Ignatiy Nesterov had few problems.

Javokhir Sidikov flashed his long-range attempt narrowly wide of Ryan's goal and Khamdamov should have done better when he was found by Shomurodov with time and space. The Socceroos pressed in the second half, with Rhyen Grant heading over from an acute angle when Milos Degenek's diagonal ball found him unmarked behind the Uzbekistan defence having moments earlier sent another header into the hands of Nesterov.

Uzbekistan's goalkeeper was now seeing all the action, and he was forced to deny Leckie nine minutes after the Hertha Berlin winger came off the bench before pushing Tom Rogic's deflected strike from outside the area wide for a corner.

Australia continued to be frustrated when the game

went into extra time with Chris Ikonomidis, Leckie and Rogic all going close before the added period drifted towards penalties.

In the shootout, Behich saw his penalty saved by Nesterov before Tukhtakhujaev's attempt was kept out by Ryan, and the Australia keeper denied Khamdamov in the penultimate round to leave Leckie to confirm the win. Earlier, Takehiro Tomiyasu's lone strike sent Saudi Arabia crashing out of the Asian Cup as Japan beat the three-time champions 1-0 to reach the quarter-finals yesterday.

Tomiyasu's first-half header was enough to seal it for Japan as the last-16 game between two teams with seven titles between them failed to live up to its billing.

Japan, record four-time winners of the Asian Cup, march on to a quarter-final with Southeast Asian champions Vietnam despite not yet hitting top form at the tournament. Saudi Arabia were in the ascendancy early on but it

was Japan who snatched the advantage with a straightforward goal from a set piece on 20 minutes.

From a corner, Belgium-based defender Tomiyasu climbed above his marker and nodded firmly into the bottom corner for his first of the tournament.

The Saudis twice came close with headers as they strived for a way back, and Hatan Bahbri curled one just off-target as he went for the top corner. Yoshinori Muto's shot was blocked on the hour-mark but most of the chances were falling to Saudi Arabia, who will rue some wasteful finishing.

Bahbri's shot from outside the box crept narrowly wide and Ali Al-Bulaihi powered a strong header over when the ball was knocked back into the area after a free-kick.

But despite a late flurry it remained another goalless outing for the Saudis, who haven't hit the net since scoring six goals in their first two group games. — Agencies

UAE sink Falcons at Asian Cup

SHARJAH: Hosts United Arab Emirates ended Kyrgyzstan's fairytale with a controversial extra-time penalty to reach the Asian Cup quarter-finals yesterday as holders Australia and Japan also advanced.

A knee-wobbling, chest-thumping Mathew Ryan saved two penalties as the Socceroos beat Uzbekistan's White Wolves in a shootout, while the Japanese bundled out Saudi Arabia.

Substitute Ahmed Khalil was UAE's hero on an angst-ridden Abu Dhabi night as he blasted home from the spot in the first additional period to set up a meeting with the Socceroos in the last eight.

Less than a quarter of an hour earlier Kyrgyzstan substitute Tursunali Rustamov had stunned the home side when he snatched a dramatic stoppage-time equaliser at the end of a nail-biting contest.

It had taken the Emirates just 14 minutes to break through as Khamis Esmael headed in an

Ismail Matar corner. Plucky Kyrgyzstan refused to go unnoticed on their Asian Cup debut, however, and the White Falcons equalised midway through the first half when Mirlan Murzaev squeezed the ball in from a seemingly impossible angle.

Kyrgyz captain Valery Kichin then gave UAE a scare when his curling shot crashed against the crossbar. But Ali Mabkhout volleyed the 2015 semi-finalists back in front with his third goal of the tournament after some horror defending from Mustafa Iusupov.

That looked to have ended Kyrgyz defiance until Rustamov headed home in the dying seconds to force extra time. But after Mabkhout had tumbled in the box under minimal contact, the Asian Cup hosts were awarded a penalty that was hotly disputed-for the second time in this tournament.

Khalil kept his cool though and drilled home the spot kick on 103 minutes to give UAE a shot at avenging their semi-final defeat by Australia four years ago. There was still time for Bakhtiyar Duishobekov and Rustamov to hit the woodwork, but the Emirates somehow clung on to give themselves a shot at avenging their semi-final defeat by Australia four years ago. — AFP



ABU DHABI: Kyrgyzstan's forward Vitaliy Lux (R) is marked by United Arab Emirates' midfielder Khamis Ismail during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup. — AFP

Qatar confident before Iraq final

ABU DHABI: Qatar were the surprise package in the group stage of the Asian Cup but coach Felix Sanchez has been drilling it into his players that their early form will count for nothing in their first knockout clash against Iraq today.

With their hosting of the World Cup only three years away, the Qataris were desperate for a good showing in the United Arab Emirates to indicate they are on the right path for 2022.

Sanchez's side delivered in the opening round, scoring 10 goals and conceding none in victories over three-times champions Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and North Korea. The Spaniard is convinced that taking on Iraq, who made a fairytale run to the title in 2007, in a winner-takes-all last-16 encounter with a quarter-final against South Korea or Bahrain on the line will be an altogether tougher proposition.

"What we achieved in the group stage is a good result, but it doesn't count for anything," he told reporters on Monday. "This is one match and we will play Iraq, which is a wonderful team with talented players and they showed that in the group stage. — Reuters