



2 Amiri Diwan launches 'Kuwait is Proud' project for youth



11 Zain launches new LIFE smart home security kit



19 'Roma', 'Favourite' lead Oscar nominations with 10 apiece



28 Ronaldo avoids jail but hit by hefty fine for tax fraud



UN names Kuwaiti economist Rola Dashti as ESCWA chief

Amir meets, congratulates former minister on appointment

MP threatens to grill Hajraf over deficit

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Opposition MP Riyadh Al-Adasani yesterday threatened to grill Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf over statements he made on Monday projecting a huge budget deficit for the 2019/2020 fiscal year. Adasani said Kuwait has an abundance of funds and has no budget deficit, but lacks efficient management of its wealth and financial resources, which leads to the budget shortfall. While unveiling the new fiscal year budget, Hajraf said Kuwait is projecting a deficit of KD 6.1 billion before the transfer of funds to the future generations fund and KD 7.7 billion after the transfer.

Kuwait has been posting a budget deficit since the 2015/2016 fiscal year due to the crash in the price of oil, from which Kuwait generates 90 percent of its total revenues. Adasani insisted that Kuwait has no budget deficit and on the contrary enjoys "billions in surpluses", and "all we need is an efficient and wise management of the budget". He claimed that supervision by government agencies and ministries over the budget has been deteriorating, adding that he intends to file to grill the finance minister in March if he did not take care of certain issues.

Continued on Page 24

NEW YORK/KUWAIT: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres announced the appointment of Rola Dashti of Kuwait as the next Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). She will succeed Mohamed Ali Al-Hakim of Iraq, to whom the Secretary-General is grateful for his commitment and dedicated service to the organization, Guterres said in a statement late Monday. The Secretary-General is also appreciative to Mounir Tabet, who will continue to serve as Acting Executive Secretary until Dashti assumes her position.

Dashti, a leading Kuwaiti economist and long-time champion of women's rights and gender equality, is currently serving as a member of the Supreme Planning Council in Kuwait. From 2012 to 2014, she was minister for planning and development and minister of state for parliamentary affairs. Dashti played a pivotal role in advocating for the decree to allow Kuwaiti women to vote and run for parliamentary elections, and in May 2009, she along with three other women became the first women to be elected to Kuwait's parliament.

She has also held key positions in research and development institutions such as the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research and worked for major local and international financial and development institutions such as the National Bank of Kuwait and the World Bank. Dashti holds a doctorate degree in population dynamics from Johns Hopkins University-Baltimore, a master's degree in economics and finance from California State University-Sacramento, and a bachelor of science in agriculture economics from California State University-Chico.

HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives newly-appointed Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Rola Dashti at Bayan Palace yesterday.— KUNA

Sabah received Dashti at Bayan Palace yesterday after her appointment. The Amir praised Dashti's selection to this senior post, an event that has made everyone in the country proud and also depicts Kuwait's high esteem and status. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received Dashti yesterday.

HH the Amir earlier addressed a cable of congratulations to Dashti on her appointment. The Amir, in the cable, said he was proud that a Kuwaiti citizen earned this prestigious post, noting that her appointment to

the senior position also signaled the high status enjoyed by Kuwait in Arab, regional and international quarters. HH the Crown Prince and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to Dashti.

National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem also cabled Dashti, expressing congratulations on her appointment as ESCWA chief. He affirmed that naming Dashti to this senior post reflected the high-level status of Kuwait at the international level and significant potentials of national cadres in general.—KUNA

News in brief

Foreign ministry warns against fraud

KUWAIT: Hackers are using the telephone number of the ministry of foreign affairs (22255555) to deceive citizens, the department warned in a press release yesterday. These swindlers have been calling individuals claiming that they represent the ministry and request fund transfers to fake and suspicious accounts of universities where they have been previously registered. Some of the hackers ask for remittances for accrediting academic certificates. The ministry called for caution against such acts of fraud, warning against dealing with any anonymous persons or phone numbers.—KUNA

MEW timings changed

KUWAIT: In a preemptive measure prior to a sit-in MEW employees plan to hold on Sunday, Minister of Electricity and Water and Oil Khaled Al-Fadhel announced that in collaboration with the Civil Service Commission, it was agreed to change MEW's working hours to start at 7 am and end at 2 pm and allow female employees to leave 15 minutes earlier. Notably, Fadhel had stressed MEW would not go back on the new timings and that it will be fully committed to the CSC decision. This made MEW employees declare plans to hold the sit-in, which made the minister, who has not completed his first month in office, to retreat.— A Saleh

Pompeo hails 'disruption' as Bolsonaro sells 'new Brazil'

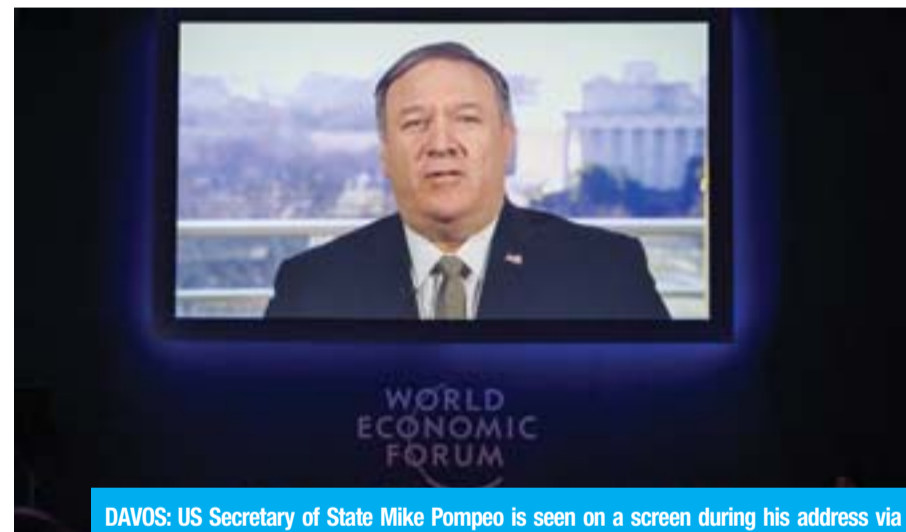
WASHINGTON/DAVOS: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo yesterday praised a wave of "disruption" in world politics, citing Donald Trump and Brexit but also pointing to elections in France and Malaysia. Addressing the world's business elite in the Swiss ski resort of Davos, Pompeo renewed Trump's criti-

cism of international institutions and the US president's calls for "strong borders" to protect national sovereignty.

"New winds are blowing across the world," Pompeo told the World Economic Forum, speaking by video after his trip was scuttled by the ongoing US government shutdown. "I'd argue that this disruption is a positive development," he said. Pompeo said that in recent years, "voters have tuned out politicians and political alliances that they thought were not representing their interests."

He cited Trump's 2016 election and Britain's referendum four months to leave the European Union - both of which stunned elites - as well as more recent election triumphs by Italy's anti-establishment Five Star Movement and

Continued on Page 24



DAVOS: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is seen on a screen during his address via satellite at the World Economic Forum (WEF) yesterday.— AFP

Malaysia PM cites Trump to defend Israeli athlete ban

VIENNA: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad yesterday defended Malaysia's ban on Israeli athletes, likening it to US President Donald Trump's plan to build a wall along the US-Mexico border. Malaysia sparked a row with Israel after saying it would not allow Israeli swimmers to compete in a tournament later this year that serves as a qualifying event for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics. "Every country has the right to accept or

refuse entry of anybody," Mahathir told a press conference in Vienna yesterday.

"You can see that in America now they are erecting a very high wall to prevent Mexicans from going to America," he said. "We have the same idea, that people who are undesirable for our country will be kept out of our country," Mahathir added. Last week Israel said the decision was motivated by "rabid anti-Semitism" on Mahathir's part. Mahathir, now 93 and in his second stint as premier, has in the past attracted criticism for verbal attacks on Jews.

Last week he denied accusations of anti-Semitism, saying: "It is my right to tell them they have been doing a lot of wrong things. Why can't we say anything against Israel, against the Jews?" Yesterday he branded Israel "a criminal country", adding: "If their people want to compete in sport, they can go to some other country."—AFP



VIENNA: Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (right) and Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz are seen at the start of a meeting yesterday.— AFP

UAE open to co-hosting World Cup

ABU DHABI: United Arab Emirates sports chief Mohammed Khalifan Al-Romaithi believes the Gulf nation would welcome an approach to co-host the 2022 World Cup if its deep political rift with Qatar is resolved. FIFA President Gianni Infantino has backed a proposal to expand the next World Cup from 32 to 48 teams and has suggested that neighboring countries could host matches. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt, however, launched a diplomatic and trade boycott of Qatar in June 2017. The countries accuse Qatar of supporting terrorism, which it denies.

"I think the right way is to solve the problem," Romaithi, who on Monday stood down from Abu Dhabi's Executive Council to focus on a bid to run Asian football, told Reuters in an interview yesterday. "Bring back the relationships, be brothers again like we were, and then we can support." There have been few signs of an end to the region's deepest rift in years, which Saudi Arabia and the UAE have said is not a priority. Qatar has said it would like to resolve the crisis, but does not need to.

"If the problem is solved I think the UAE would welcome the World Cup here, a group or two for example," the Chairman of the UAE General Sports Authority added.

Continued on Page 24



Khalifan Al-Romaithi

Cardiff striker Sala feared dead in plane crash

NANTES, France: Premier League club Cardiff City's record new signing, Argentine striker Emiliano Sala, is missing presumed dead after a light aircraft he was travelling in disappeared over the English Channel. Sala, signed on Saturday from French club Nantes for a reported fee of €17 million (\$19.3 million), was flying to Cardiff aboard a small plane that disappeared from radars around 20 km north of Guernsey on Monday night. French civil aviation authorities con-

firmed that 28-year-old Sala "was on board the plane". It is thought there was one other passenger on the aircraft.

A statement from police on Guernsey, a British island just off the coast of France, said the pilot had requested to lower his altitude shortly before air traffic control in neighboring Jersey lost contact with the plane. After a search was called off on Monday because of high winds, two helicopters, two planes and a lifeboat joined renewed efforts yesterday morning to find the single-propeller plane.

Continued on Page 24



Emiliano Sala

Local

Amiri Diwan launches 'Kuwait is Proud' project for youth

Public, private institutions invited to provide initiatives that serve youth

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Amiri Diwan announced the launch of a new project for the youth called 'Kuwait is Proud' at a press conference held yesterday at Seif Palace. This program is part of the National Youth Project, sponsored by the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Public Authority for Youth, Ministry of Information, General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development and the Kafo Project by the Amiri Diwan. The activities of 'Kuwait is Proud' are being held from Jan 21, 2019 to March 13, 2019, which is Kuwaiti Youth Day. The project will conclude with a ceremony held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Public and private institutions are welcome to participate in the activities of Kuwait is Proud by providing initiatives that serve the youth. A similar project for youth was held in 2012 and 2013 called 'Kuwait Listens', which achieved many goals for the youth that empowered them to participate in the development process. Kuwait is Proud aims to achieve many goals for the youth, including shedding light on success stories, highlighting the New Kuwait 2035 vision, introducing new youth personalities, awarding youth achievements and

supporting them and launching the future plan for youth among others.

The activities of the program include: Filming a documentary and publishing a booklet of achievements, awarding active youth and their sponsors through radio, TV and social media, involving the youth in activities, highlighting success stories through videos and ads on social media and announcing future opportunities for youth at participating institutions on the Kafo website. Registrations can be submitted through the website www.tinyurl.com/kuwaitisproud

Dr Yusef Al-Ibrahim, Consultant at the Amiri Diwan, said participation in Kuwait is Proud is open to youth of both genders and all nationalities aged 12 to 35. "This project was launched on the instructions of His Highness the Amir and it is the continuation of the previous project Kuwait Listens that was launched six years ago," he noted.

At the end of Kuwait Listens, participating youth submitted recommendations in 10 fields spanning health, economy, environment, administration and others. "These recommendations were presented to His Highness the Amir, who gave orders to the government to follow up the execution of these recommendations. During the past six years, many of these were achieved



KUWAIT: Dr Yusef Al-Ibrahim, Consultant at the Amiri Diwan (center), speaks during a press conference to announce the 'Kuwait is Proud' project. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

including forming a ministry for youth, forming the small and medium enterprises fund and many other projects and laws. This year as well, creative youth will be awarded and their recommendations will be taken into consideration," added Ibrahim.

Kuwait is facing development challenges. "We realize the responsibility of public institutions and the pri-

private sector, so the ministry of youth affairs in cooperation with various sectors has prepared a governmental work plan addressing youth and a national policy for youth affairs. It's the first of its kind in the region and ensures a decent life for the youth," said Mohammad Al-Jabri, Minister of Information and State Minister for Youth Affairs.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Science Club Chairman Talal Al-Kharafi (center) speaks during a press conference to unveil preparations for the 11th International Invention Fair of Middle East. — KUNA

Amir's patronage of Int'l Invention Fair key to its success

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's patronage of the 11th International Invention Fair of Middle East (IIFME) reflects his keenness on science, scientists and inventors, Kuwait Science Club Chairman said Monday. Talal Al-Kharafi, also chairman of the organizing committee of the fair, told a news conference that His Highness the Amir has been sponsoring IIFME since its launch in 2007, extending full support for Kuwait youth and inventors. He said the 11th IIFME, due on January 27-30, was the second globally following the Geneva Invention Exhibition.

This year will witness participation of the UN cultural agency, UNESCO, said Kharafi. IIFME, he added, would include a panel to be held at Chamber of Commerce and Industry over the marketing of inventions. Inventors from 41 countries will participate in IIFME,

which would feature over 150 inventions. The fair, he added, was highly regarded regional and internationally.

Salam Al-Ablani, director of Scientific Culture at Kuwait Foundation for Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), said IIFME was one of the major events that KFAS support every year. IIFME, he said, succeeded in attracting the industrial sector in Kuwait as well as major inventors from around the world. David Farouqi, chairman of the judging panel, this was the 11th time he took over the judging panel which was part of the 'serious and effective' cooperation between IIFME and Geneva Invention Exhibition. The panel, he said, comprised over 40 high-qualified judges. The panel, he added, followed the same criteria at Geneva Invention Exhibition, like quality of invention, marketability and importance for the public. — KUNA

KFH participates in Int'l Invention Fair in Middle East

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the 11th International Invention Fair in the Middle East to be held from Jan 27 to 30, 2019. On the sidelines of a press conference held at the Kuwait Science Club premises to announce the fair's kick off, Executive Manager Group Public Relations and Media at (KFH), Yusef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh affirmed KFH keenness to participate in the international invention fair that is being held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. This comes in line with KFH strategy in supporting the scientific research and inventions, while underlining the capabilities of innovators in the Kuwaiti society.

Ruwaieh added that KFH plays key role in supporting the inventors and giving them the opportunity to display their initiatives in such a great event. "KFH puts creativity and innovation as a pillar in its business model. The bank's strategy of corporate social responsibility prioritizes scientific research and invention in different fields. This contributes in the development of the country and the society," he added.

It is worth noting that the winning inventions will receive valuable prizes. "The total value of the prizes is around \$50,000. The main prize is \$15,000, KSC's prize is \$10,000, the International Exhibition of Inventions of Geneva presents a \$5,000 prize and the GCC Patent Office presents 50,000 Saudi riyals, in addition to a prize presented by the World Intellectual Property Organization and another prize by the International Federation of Inventors' Associations.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Science Club Chairman with KFH officials.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Science Club Chairman with sponsors.

Khaitan's new library open to the public

By Jeri Al-Jeri

KUWAIT: The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) celebrated the opening of Khaitan's new public library yesterday. During this joyous occasion, I remembered the words of T S Eliot: "The very existence of libraries affords the best evidence that we may yet have hope for the future of man." Finally, Farwaniya governorate has a modern public library since public library affairs were transferred to

NCCAL from the ministry of education.

The library opens its arms to all who would like to present lectures and seminars that are for non-profit causes or apolitical, with advanced tools for conducting any type of educational event. Khaitan's new library, as well as other public libraries, are now more capable to help researchers and students with a larger selection of quality books and documents.

I personally believe that NCCAL can never achieve any actual result if the masses

do not read. In my opinion, NCCAL should not fight the cyber world's supremacy in offering more efficient and convenient research tools with newer buildings, but should open an official governmental public library that functions as a "source material center" for every student, linking it with universities and schools. I personally view this as the way forward for the New Kuwait Vision 2035, because in the long run, Eliot's quote won't be accurate anymore with an Internet connection.



KUWAIT: A photo gallery featured during an event held to honor the memory of the late Redha Al-Feeli. — KUNA

Al-Qurain Festival honors memory of late Redha Al-Feeli

KUWAIT: Veteran journalist Mohammad Al-Sanousi on Monday paid tribute to the late Redha Al-Feeli who had outstanding achievements at the media and management levels. During an event to honor Feeli held at Kuwait National Library on Monday as part of Al-Qurain Cultural Festival, Sanousi said Feeli was a pure citizen who paid no attention to any political nor sectarian issues. "The deceased was a lover for his nation and fully aware of the national identity and heritage," he

added. Feeli's last position was an assistant undersecretary for TV at the Information Ministry, and contributed to many media projects, he said. Dr Khaled Al-Qahs, Mass Communication professor at Kuwait University, briefed the attendees about the history of Feeli starting from his education through his relentless TV programs until management of media institutions. A documentary was shown about the life of Feeli and then a photo exhibition about the deceased. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri and NCCAL officials are taken a tour around Khaitan's new public library following its inauguration yesterday. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



Local

Amir receives new ambassadors' credentials in Bayan Palace ceremony

Amir hosts deputy chief editor of Russian TV network



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Ethiopia to Kuwait Abdel Fattah Abdullah Hassan. —Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Venezuela to Kuwait Ron Alfredo.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of China to Kuwait Meng Fang.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Slovakia to Kuwait.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with first vice chief editor of 'Russia Today' television network Alexi Nikolov.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, at a ceremony held in Bayan Palace yesterday, received credentials of four foreign ambassadors to the State of Kuwait. The newly assigned envoys who handed over their papers represented Ethiopia, Abdel Fattah Abdullah Hassan, Venezuela, Ron Alfredo, China, Meng Fang, and their Slovak colleague.

The ceremony was attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Amiri Diwan Undersecretary and Amiri Diwan Director Ahmad Fahad Al-Fahad, Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohammad Abdullah Abulhassan, Head of

Protocol at the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocol Affairs Ambassador Dhari Ajan Al-Ajan and Chief of the Amiri Guard Major General Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Zaid.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received the first vice chief editor of 'Russia Today' television network Alexi Nikolov, and his accompanying delegation. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem also received separately the staff of the Moscow-based television network.

His Highness the Amir further received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah; who also met separately with His Highness the Crown Prince. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince

received President of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah cabled Afghan President Ashraf Ghani expressing deep condolences to victims of the terrorist explosion that targeted a military base for special forces in Afghanistan's central Maidan Wardak province. His Highness the Amir, in the cable, expressed robust denunciation of this blatant and criminal act that targeted innocent lives. 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 addressed cables of similar content to the Afghan president. —KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with first vice chief editor of 'Russia Today' television network Alexi Nikolov.

Kuwait, UK mark 120th anniversary of 1889 agreement

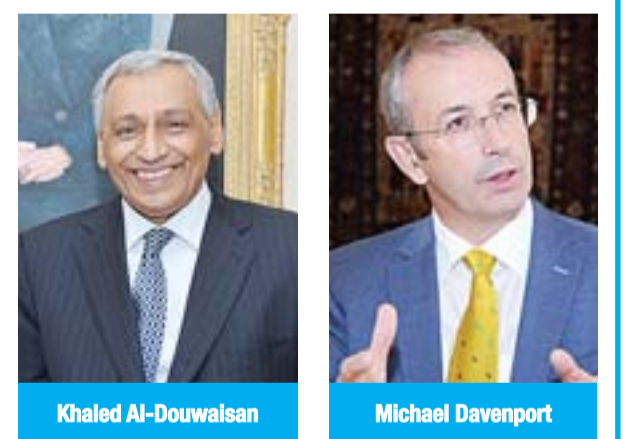
LONDON: The United Kingdom and the State of Kuwait mark today the 120th anniversary of the signing of the Anglo-Kuwaiti Agreement of January 23, 1889. The agreement, which was canceled on June 19, 1961, was signed on the account that the then British Empire would provide Kuwait with protection from regional and international threats. In that period, the Ottoman Empire had claims on Kuwaiti lands, inciting nearby tribes to create fuss and threaten Kuwait. Germany also wanted to acquire a portion of Kuwaiti lands to expand its Berlin-Baghdad railway project, a request vehemently opposed by then Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah.

In celebration of the anniversary, Kuwait and Britain will be holding various functions and activities in their respective countries. Regarding the festivities, Kuwaiti Ambassador to the UK Khaled Al-Douwaisan said that celebrations will be held in London probably in mid-2019. The Kuwaiti diplomat affirmed that both countries were keen on celebrating the treaty's anniversary, which was part of a long tradition of friendship and solidarity. Even after the canceling of the treaty, Britain remained a strong ally to Kuwait for years, providing various modes of political and economic support and assistance.

The strength of relations was evident in the UK opposition of the Iraqi invasion of 1990 and the subsequent participation of British troops in the liberation of 1991. Kuwaiti-British relations continue to consolidate and strengthen throughout the years, said the Ambassador who indicated that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit in 2012 left a lasting impression on the ties with the establishment of the UK-

Kuwait joint steering group. He affirmed that the group helped to further bolster relations and such notion was clearly seen in the step to exempt Kuwaiti nationals from obtaining visiting visa to the Britain. The Ambassador also noted that the Kuwaiti diplomatic mission in the UK consisted of 44 diplomats, which is also another indication of the strong bilateral ties.

Meanwhile, British Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport said that it is a special honor that Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah will address a reception to be held tomorrow by the Ministry of Information to mark this important occasion. He indicated that Kuwait and Britain stood 'shoulder-to-shoulder' on numerous occasions when the treaty was signed, revealing that the British Royal Air Force was involved in operations in 1920 and 1961 to repel external aggression against Kuwait. Ambassador Davenport said that his country remained committed to fend off aggression against Kuwait even after the canceling of the



Khaled Al-Douwaisan

Michael Davenport

treaty and that this was evident in British troops' participation in the operations to liberate Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion. The British diplomat also commended the 2012 visit by His Highness the Amir to his country, saying that it contributes to the bolstering of bilateral relations. —KUNA

Romania supports Kuwait's mediation efforts in region

BRUSSELS: Romania, which holds the current European Union Presidency, underlined its strong support to the mediation efforts of Kuwait in the region and described the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as a pillar of security. "I know and very seriously appreciate the efforts of mediation by Kuwait to find a final solution in the GCC. We are strongly supporting this effort," Romanian foreign minister Teodor Melescanu said in Brussels yesterday. He was replying to a question by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) during his presentation of the foreign policy priorities of the Romanian EU Presidency at an event organized by the think-tank European Policy Center. "From our viewpoint the GCC countries are the most important economic partner of Romania in the Middle East. Secondly the GCC used to be a pillar of security in the region. That is why from our point of view, we

have a direct interest in trying to contribute to the adoption of solution in the GCC," he stated.

Melescanu voiced his strong support to bring again the problems of the Middle East and in particular Palestine which he said is 'the most important (problem)' back on the international stage. "We cannot envisage at arriving at a solution without the participation of other countries including the US," he said. Melescanu said that during the Romanian EU Presidency "what we do intend to do is try to organize some events with the countries of the region on issues like transport, energy from the Middle East region to Europe."

"There is no intention whatsoever for Romania to come with a peace plan for the Middle East. We are looking forward and waiting for a promised peace plan which was announced by the President of the United States Donald Trump and we are still waiting for it," he said. The Romanian foreign minister ruled out the relocation of his country's embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. "There is no decision in moving of our embassy in any way. Other countries who do it is their problem. But we cannot do things without having a serious analysis of this issue," he clarified. He said Romania is among the few countries that have

recognized the Palestine state since 1988 and continuously has very good relations with them. "We also have very good and solid relations with Israel. Ten percent of the population of Israel migrated from Romania," he said.

At the same time, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians studied in Romania and some of them have married there and there are lot of mixed families, he noted. "There is no country in Europe that is so interested like we are in finding a political solution to the Palestine problem," he stressed. "From our point of view the only way out is looking into the possibility of two states living in peace and security in the region. And when finally these things will be solved and put on paper we have to tackle the issue of Jerusalem which is the jewel of the crown. It is a very complicated problem," he added.

Melescanu said the Romanian EU Presidency will focus on four dimensions, more convergence, a safer Europe, a stronger global posture and more robust common values in the EU. Romania assumed the six-month rotating EU Presidency on 1 January for the first time since it became an EU member in 2007. The six-member GCC includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. —KUNA



BRUSSELS: Romanian foreign minister Teodor Melescanu speaks at the event in Brussels yesterday. —KUNA

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A general view of Kuwait City. — Photo by Nourah Edhbayah (KUNA)

KAC official carrier of Horeca participants



KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) sponsored Horeca Kuwait 2019, which was held at Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref in the period of January 14-16, 2019. KAC took part as the official carrier of participants, visitors and members of the cooking competitions' jury panel.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Minister of State for Economic Affairs Marian Al-Aqeel, KAC Board Chairman Yousif Abdul Hameed Al-Jassem, head of the organizing committee and Leaders Group General Manager Nabila Al-Anjeri, diplomats and managers of local hotels.

In this regard, KAC's public relations and media manager Fayeze Al-Enezi said that sponsoring Horeca Kuwait comes to emphasize KAC's keenness on supporting exhibitions that help highlight Kuwait's role in tourism, hospitality and catering services in a way that helps turn the country into a



regional commercial hub.

Enezi added that Horeca Kuwait 2019 gathered an elite group of local, regional and international hospitality companies,

which presented a great opportunity for KAC to probe the latest in hospitality in order to improve the services provided to passengers before and onboard its flights.

Commerce Minister meets Jordanian counterpart

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Services Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan discussed yesterday with Jordanian Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Dr Tarek Al-Hamouri means of joint cooperation. Both sides stressed the importance of economic integration between both countries, hailing the deep-rooted bilateral ties and joint inter-

ests, Ministry of Commerce and Trade said in a press release. They discussed means of wiping out obstacles hampering the process of improving joint trade cooperation, which would contribute to increasing trade exchange between both nations, it added. They also considered boosting trade and investment ties and means to enhance them in various fields, it said. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Services Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan meets with Jordanian Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Dr Tarek Al-Hamouri. — KUNA

Kuwaiti charity sends relief to refugees in Jordan

AMMAN: Kuwait's Al-Najat charity has sent in a convoy boarding food and heating materials to aid 3,000 Syrian refugees in the kingdom. Badr Al-Sharrah, the head of the charity humanitarian mission in Jordan, said yesterday that the dispatched supplies were specialized for Syrian refugees suffering from catastrophic humanitarian conditions at randomly-built camps. The association will send in more charity convoys throughout the year to relieve the refugees, in a campaign themed 'warmness and safety.' Tens of thousands of refugees have recently taken the brunt of a fiery storm that demolished their tents and belongings. They are suffering from severe shortage of food and medical supplies, movement difficulties and lack of jobs. Sharrah, who appealed for donations to help the underprivileged refugees, said the charity delegation held a meeting with the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Jordan Aziz Al-Daihani. —KUNA



Local

Court holds first hearing in case to halt Sawaber Complex demolition

Architects filed lawsuit to preserve Kuwait's architectural identity

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Young Kuwaiti architects filed a lawsuit to preserve Kuwait's architectural identity by halting the demolition of Al-Sawaber Complex. Many supporters attended the judicial hearing yesterday at the Palace of Justice in Kuwait City. The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) has issued an official directive halting further demolition works at Sawaber prior to its delivery to the contractor according to law no. 11/1960 that classifies the complex as a modern heritage site which must be preserved.

During the hearing, architect Faisal Al-Mjali explained to the judges the importance of Sawaber Complex to Kuwait's modern architectural identity. He said he is just one of many architects who are interested in architectural and heritage buildings in Kuwait that have a historical dimension. He said negligence by the Ministry of Finance and Kuwait Municipality led to the deterioration of the site without any justification, despite the fact that meetings were held with various entities stating the urgency and necessity of preserving the site.

"We started this movement and met officials at the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters as the

competent body according to the law, because they have the ability to determine whether buildings should be preserved or not. They responded quickly and conducted studies and examinations of Al-Sawaber, and addressed the ministry of finance, municipality and other concerned departments," Mjali told Kuwait Times.

"All of them supported us at first, but we were surprised that the next day they violated the law, when the site was handed over to a demolition contractor and demolition began. We are an important group in the society. There is a law that protects us and the constitution is our guarantee. Unfortunately, this law is not implemented in government institutions and they do not care about the NCCAL, which represents us. We demand the implementation of the antiquities law no. 11/1960 that classifies the site as a modern heritage site," he added.

Mjali said there is a period in the history of Kuwait called the era of modernity. This historical period is part of its heritage, as seen in post-oil buildings over the past 40 years. "In 2015, a conference was held in the presence of UNESCO and under the auspices of the NCCAL about urban areas related to modern heritage in Arab countries. Among the tours that the

“Govt's negligence led to site's deterioration”



Al-Sawaber Complex

government of Kuwait held for the delegations included Sawaber Complex, so Kuwait is aware of the importance of this building, but they choose to ignore it," he said. "We believe in the fairness of the court

and we are optimistic the demolition will stop until the case is heard. We accept the justice of the court, and we have resorted to the courts only after the indifference shown by government institutions."

KPC keen on achieving risk management strategy



KUWAIT: A group photo of participants in the conference. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Chief Executive of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Hashim Sayed Hashim affirmed yesterday the corporation is keen on continuing to implement its 2040 risk management strategy. This statement came during the opening of the fifth Kuwait comprehensive risk management conference, held between January 22 to 24. The conference will discuss a number of initiatives of the organization in fields of governance,

human resource operations, and technology. Hashim stressed that the corporation continued to organize this conference since 2012 with the aim to bring together thinkers and practitioners in risks management field to discuss most prominent issues. He affirmed that the risk management constantly develops where the corporation keeps abreast of the ongoing developments of the techniques and tools used in this field. —KUNA

Govt responded to 77% of MPs' inquiries

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The government has so far responded to 77 percent of parliamentary inquiries filed by lawmakers since the beginning of the 15th parliamentary term, ie 2,895 responses versus 3,525 inquiries. The government did not respond to 443 inquiries and asked for grace periods to respond to 185 others.

New charity law

The Ministry of Social Affairs' acting under secretary and assistant undersecretary for social development affairs Hana Al-Hajeri announced completing discussions of the new charity law with the concerned parliamentary committee pending referral to the National Assembly. Hajeri said the new law

provides enough protection to humanitarian work in Kuwait and will be reflected on the charity work for which Kuwait is well known.

Sand mining

Public Authority for Industry (PAI) Director Abdul Kareem Taqi demanded expanding sand mining areas to the south of Kuwait. In a letter he sent to Kuwait Municipality, Taqi reminded that since three sand mines were shut down in Mina Abdullah area, sand prices have skyrocketed, increasing the costs paid by contractors in both governmental and non-governmental projects. He also stressed PAI's keenness on providing sand at regular prices and accordingly asked to expand the sand mine in Bnaider to help cover the shortage.

Nursing staff

The Civil Service Commission approved a national program plan to develop the performance of nursing staff for 10 years and including this approval in the scholarships program for 2019-2020. Meanwhile, the health ministry announced withdrawing and sus-

pending the use of the 'Jusprin 81 mg' drug at various public and private medical facilities after the country of origin - UAE - did the same on Jan 15, 2019.

Medical committees

Director of the public authority for the disabled Shafiq Al-Awadhi said the total number of disabled citizens registered with the authority is 45,547, in addition to 6,700 non-Kuwaitis. Awadhi added that medical committees will be soon automated and that the authority had contacted the Civil Service Commission requesting increasing the number of doctors in these committees. She also noted that the authority has completed connections with various concerned bodies. Awadhi said losing sight in one eye is not considered a disability and that this rule is followed worldwide and not only in Kuwait.

Penal measures

Ministry of Education's assistant undersecretary for administrative affairs Fahd Al-Ghais announced that employees who had received penal disciplinary measures would be excluded from promotions in 2019.

Municipality 'cleans up' Jleeb



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality's public relations department said Farwaniya cleanliness and road occupancy team in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh carried out raids against open-air markets and removed abandoned cars in the area. Director of the Department Saad Al-Khraj said all centers continue field tours to remove what he described as "anything

that distorts the view." Khraj said the tour resulted in the removal of eight half-lorries' load of vegetables, fruits and food supplies, as well as two half-lorries' load of clothes and used electronic devices and other goods. The goods were sent to the municipality landfill. Six roaming vendor violations were detected, and citations were issued accordingly. Meanwhile, ten abandoned vehicles were removed after the legal period on the warning sticker expired.

Ministry regulates subsidized food distribution at suspended co-ops

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) regulated the mechanism to be followed in case of suspension of distribution of subsidized supply goods at any given co-op society, setting a number of reasons to do so as well as alternatives to be used to enable beneficiaries to get rations. A statement by MoCI stressed that the Ministry of

Social Affairs had been contacted to circulate the new regulations that included suspending the rations if a given co-op branch is found in violation of safety or health conditions or in violation of Public Authority for Food and Nutrition regulations, or if the co-op owes debts to a government body. MoCI added that in such cases, beneficiaries will be referred to the main co-op or to nearby co-ops to get their rations.

Deliverymen robbers arrested in Salmiya

KUWAIT: Criminal detectives arrested a Kuwaiti man and his girlfriend who used to break into deliverymen's cars and steal mobile phones and computers. The deliverymen used to go to the address given to them, but once inside the building, they found the address was wrong. When they returned to their cars, they discover they were broken into and expensive items were stolen. The arrest was made in Salmiya and both suspects were in an abnormal condition. Both

confessed to targeting deliverymen of mobile phone companies and committing several thefts. They were detained for further legal action. Meanwhile, detectives arrested a Kuwaiti man who broke into an Egyptian man's car and stole smartphones and accessories worth KD 5,000. Detectives were able to identify the suspect through the security cameras of a nearby store and arrested him. He confessed to committing the crime. In a separate case, police are looking for an ex-convict who insulted a detective verbally after he failed to beat him. The detective was surprised when left his work by a man trying to hit him, but was able to avoid him. The suspect then shouted indecent insults and escaped. The detective said he had previously arrested the suspect over several cases and it is possible he wanted to take revenge. The suspect has a record of drugs-related crimes, thefts and muggings. — Al-Rai



Bangladeshi 'Tree Man' dreams of cure as rare skin disease returns

France, Germany strengthen treaty ties to tackle EU crisis

Page 8

Page 9



BULAWAYO: A Zimbabwean soldier watches shoppers lining up, in Bulawayo on January 17, 2019 as order is slowly restoring. —AFP

Zimbabwe prez struggles to draw line

'Chaos and insubordination will not be tolerated. If required, heads will roll'

HARARE: Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa vowed yesterday to investigate security forces over their deadly crackdown on protesters, as he returned to the country and scrambled to fend off a barrage of criticism. The crackdown has shattered Mnangagwa's claims to have turned a fresh page after the violently repressive era of Robert Mugabe, who was ousted from power by the military 14 months ago.

"Violence or misconduct by our security forces is unacceptable and a betrayal of the new Zimbabwe," Mnangagwa said on Twitter. "Chaos and insubordination will not be tolerated. Misconduct will be investigated. If required, heads will roll." He also condemned the protests last week that were marked by rioting and looting. "Everyone has the right to protest, but this was not a peaceful protest. Wanton violence and cynical destruction," he said. "This is not the Zimbabwean way."

Mnangagwa issued his statement after cutting short a foreign tour to seek much-needed investment. The protests, which were sparked by the government's more than doubling of fuel prices, were met with a ruthless

response from the army and police. Yesterday, the government-appointed Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission issued a highly critical report, saying at least eight people had been killed. It said that armed soldiers and police had visited many homes at night to give "indiscriminate beatings" to men and boys as young as 11. "Torture was perpetrated through beating the men with baton sticks on their backs while they lay on the ground," it said, adding that attack dogs were used and victims were often too scared to seek medical attention.

'Regrettable and tragic'

Other civil society groups say at least 12 people were killed in the crackdown and scores treated for gunshot injuries, as well as reporting hundreds of incidents of assault and torture. About 700 people have been arrested, officials say. Mnangagwa, 76, who was Mugabe's former deputy, said raising fuel prices "was not a decision we took lightly. But it was the right thing to do." "What followed was regrettable and tragic," he

added. He had visited Russia, Belarus and Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan before scrapping his planned attendance at the Davos summit of world leaders this week.

Mnangagwa has repeatedly pledged that Zimbabwe entered a new era when he came to power in November 2017 after Mugabe was toppled, ending a 37-year bloody authoritarian reign that saw the country's economic collapse. But Zimbabweans have seen little evidence of the promised economic revival or increased political freedoms. The president's election victory in July was tainted by accusations of fraud — and outrage when troops opened fire on protesters in Harare, killing several, before the results were announced.

The UN human rights' office last week also criticized the government's reaction to the latest protests, which were fuelled by daily shortages of banknotes, fuel, food and medicine, as well as mass unemployment. The army and police have denied any wrongdoing, saying some assailants raiding homes and beating people were

wearing official uniforms to pose as security personnel. Five MDC opposition party lawmakers have been detained and refused bail, the party said yesterday.

Internet block eases

"We don't trust his word. We don't regard him as an honest leader," MDC lawmaker Morgen Komichi told reporters after Mnangagwa's announcement of an investigation into the security forces. Human rights lawyers said 28 people seeking treatment after the crackdown at a medical centre in Harare were arrested yesterday.

The High Court in the capital ruled Monday that government had no powers to order the shutdown of the internet that was imposed as protests swept across the country. Internet and social media appeared to be returning to normal yesterday. Mugabe, now 94, ruled Zimbabwe with an iron fist from independence from Britain in 1980 until November 2017. The military, fearing that Mugabe's wife Grace was being lined up to succeed him, seized control and forced him to resign before ushering Mnangagwa to power. —AFP

Ex-PM Tymoshenko launches bid for Ukraine presidency

KIEV: Former Ukrainian prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko yesterday officially launched her bid for the presidency, with polls showing her as the frontrunner for the post. Tymoshenko has been a leading figure on the Ukrainian political scene for the past two decades, coming to international prominence through her role in the 2004 Orange Revolution.

"I'm running for the presidency," she told a session of her nationalist Batkivshchyna (Fatherland) party to cheers from the crowd. The 58-year-old, a highly divisive figure in Ukrainian politics, admitted she had "made mistakes" in her political career, which has seen her become premier twice and also serve time in jail. "Maybe sometimes I'm wrong, but I'm wrong sincerely," she told an audience waving yellow-and-blue Ukrainian flags. "Today we are entering a new era — an era of success, of happiness, of enlightenment... today we begin Ukraine's journey towards real and powerful greatness." She spoke following video endorsements by the likes of Brazilian novelist Paulo Coelho and former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili. In a speech which lasted more than 90 minutes, the ex-premier promised membership of NATO and the European Union would be her main foreign policy objectives. On the domestic front, she said a new constitution would be needed to battle endemic corruption.

Comedian in the running

Tymoshenko is favorite to win the March 31 vote according to the latest polls, but no candidate yet has an unassailable lead. The 58-year-old has 16 percent support going into the two-round election, according to surveys, ahead of incumbent President Petro Poroshenko with 14 percent. In third place is Volodymyr Zelensky, a comedian who once played



KIEV: Yulia Tymoshenko delivers her speech during a congress of her Batkivshchyna (Fatherland) party. —AFP

the country's president in a TV show but has promised to refresh Ukraine's political system.

Tymoshenko, long recognisable by her braided hair heaped atop her head in traditional style, served as prime minister twice under her protest co-leader Viktor Yushchenko. But her fortunes changed after she lost the 2010 presidential election to pro-Russia Viktor Yanukovich. The following year she faced a string of criminal investigations and was sentenced to seven years in jail, of which she served three. She was released in 2014 on the same day that pro-Europe, anti-corruption protests forced Yanukovich's ouster. Tymoshenko contested that year's presidential election but came a distant second to Poroshenko, who had served in her cabinet. Since then Tymoshenko has largely limited her political activity to criticism of Poroshenko. She has ditched her Ukrainian peasant hairstyle for a less eye-catching ponytail. —AFP

'Bikini Climber' social media star dies after ravine fall

TAIPEI: Taiwanese rescue teams were trying yesterday to retrieve the body of a dead hiker who became famous on social media for taking selfies on top of mountain peaks dressed in a bikini. Gigi Wu — dubbed the "Bikini Climber" by fans — used a satellite phone on Saturday to tell friends she had fallen down a ravine in Taiwan's Yushan national park and badly injured herself.

Rescue helicopters struggled to reach her because of bad weather and officials eventually located her lifeless body on Monday. "The weather conditions in the mountains are not good, we have asked our rescuers to move the body to a more open space and after the weather clears we will make a request for a helicopter to bring the body down," Lin Cheng-yi, from the Nantou County Fire and Rescue Services, told reporters.

Officials said Wu had told friends she was

unable to move the lower half of her body after a fall of some 20-30 meters but was able to give her coordinates. She is the latest in a string of social media adventure seekers who have met an untimely end. Last week, the bodies of an Indian couple were found at the bottom of a popular overlook in California's Yosemite National Park after hikers alerted officials to their camera equipment at the top of the cliff.

New Taipei City native Wu, 36, built up a sizeable social media following through photos of herself at the top of mountains dressed in bikinis. She usually wore hiking clothes to scale the mountains, only changing into a bikini once she reached the top. In an interview with local channel FTV last year, she said she had scaled more than 100 peaks in four years.

"I put on a bikini in each one of the 100 mountains. I only have around 97 bikinis so I accidentally repeated some," she said.

When asked why she did it, she replied: "It just looks so beautiful, what's not to like?" While Taiwan is a largely tropical country, it boasts a spine of towering peaks down its middle that regularly top 3,000 meters. In the winter, temperatures routinely drop well below freezing on the mountain slopes. Lin said their top rescue team hiked for 28 hours to reach the body, only sleeping for three hours because they knew temperatures were rapidly plunging. —AFP

International

Little chance of quick end to long, painful month-long US shutdown

Historic crisis weighing on the nation's economy and morale

WASHINGTON: The United States yesterday enters the second month of a partial government shutdown over a lack of congressional funding, with no quick end in sight to the historic crisis weighing on the nation's economy and morale. Since December 22, a quarter of the government has been paralyzed because of an impasse between opposition Democrats in Congress and the White House over funding for a wall to block illegal immigration at the border with Mexico.

President Donald Trump refuses to endorse a budget that does not contain \$5.7 billion to build the barrier, the foundational promise of his 2016 election campaign. Democrats oppose the wall, calling it "immoral," costly and ineffective. They want the government reopened before any discussion of the matter. On Saturday, the Republican president made a new proposal which he said aimed to break the logjam. It offered to extend temporary protection to about a million immigrants facing expulsion, in return for the \$5.7 billion he wants. Although it was rejected by Democrats — and even by some anti-immigrant voices — the offer could serve as a basis for new discussions.

Visible impact

The shutdown directly affects 0.5 percent of the labor force but has started to indirectly hit the morale of more than half of consumers, according to a survey by the University of Michigan. Experts say it is also pressuring the world's largest economy, against the backdrop of already slowing global growth. In the most sensitive government agencies, including the departments of Homeland Security, Transport and the State Department, the number of affected employees has been kept to a minimum. Elsewhere, the impact is clear.

National Parks no longer have security guards, numerous museums are shut, and some airport security checkpoints have been closed. About 800,000 federal workers, from FBI agents to scientists and some food inspectors, are furloughed or working without pay while trying to meet their routine financial obligations. US Coast Guard

Commandant Admiral Karl Schultz wrote in a Twitter post on Monday that "Our #USCG members sail across the world to protect U.S. national interests while their loved ones cope w/ financial challenges & no pay at home."

The longest ever

An economist for the Internal Revenue Service in New York, Carol Lopilato, 59, has been effectively unemployed since December 23. With the IRS since 1987, she was lived through other shutdowns and said: "I never thought it would go on this long — never." Lopilato told AFP that she is "lucky in a sense" because so far she has not faced financial difficulty. But "the longer it lasts, the more anxiety there is."

She and others will eventually get backpay but more than one million contractors for the government don't even have that to hope for. "I'm about to lose my Medicaid, my car insurance" and driver's license, said Yvette Hicks, 40, a contractor with the Smithsonian museum complex. The single mother of two added: "Right now, this shutdown is really destroying me and my family." Hotels and bars have stepped in to offer free rooms and complimentary snacks. There have been fund collections, and food banks — which normally serve the most down-and-out — have opened up their services.

'Unacceptable'

The longest shutdown in US history is also beginning to have a political price. A majority of Americans hold the Republicans and the White House responsible, according to several polls. The political cost would have been even greater if Trump had followed through on threats to declare a national emergency in order to build his wall. Faced with likely court challenges, he backed off.

With his offer on Saturday, Trump held out protection from deportation for two categories of immigrants: 700,000 so-called "Dreamers," children of people who settled illegally in the United States, and who have become a favorite cause of the Democrats, as well as 300,000 other immigrants whose protected status is expiring.



EL PASO, TEXAS: A man walks past a mural. —AFP

But House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the top Democrat in the House of Representatives, refused this "compilation of several previously rejected initiatives, each of which is unacceptable and in total, do not represent a good faith effort to restore certainty to people's lives." Trump, at the same time, alienated the fringe of his electorate opposed to what they saw as tantamount to an amnesty for the undocumented migrants.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell plans to sub-

mit Trump's proposal for a vote this week. He will have to convince several Democrats of its merit in order to pass the text which, in any case, has little chance of being endorsed by the House. For the Republicans, the Senate vote should at least allow a resumption of discussions, and the text can be amended. But according to a senior House Democrat, James Clyburn, it is essential to first reopen the government because "these negotiations could take three or four weeks." —AFP

Venezuelan military group arrested after call to disavow Maduro

CARACAS: A group of 27 soldiers rose up against Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro at a command post in Caracas on Monday, but they were quickly arrested after posting an appeal for public support in a video. "We are the professional troop of the National Guard against the regime, which we completely repudiate. I need your help, take to the streets," a man who identified himself as the group's leader said in a video circulated on social media.

Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino issued a statement saying the soldiers had been arrested. Before the attack on a National Guard command center in northern Caracas where they were captured, the men had assaulted another security post, taking four prisoners and making off with "weapons of war," the statement said. "During the arrest, stolen weapons were recovered and (the mutineers) are providing useful information to intelligence services and the military justice system," added Padrino, who said the rebels would "face the full force of the law." The small, short-lived rebel-

lion triggered outbreaks of protest in support of it.

In the districts of Cotiza, Los Mecederos and elsewhere in northern Caracas, people threw rocks and bottles at riot police, who responded with tear gas and rubber bullets. Several demonstrators were reported injured. As night fell, in several areas of Caracas people banged pots and pans — a traditional method of grassroots protest in Latin America. A major avenue in downtown Caracas was blocked and protesters shouted "this government is going to fall." Riot police dispersed the crowds with tear gas.

Maduro's right-hand man and head of the Constituent Assembly, Diosdado Cabello, said 25 soldiers were arrested at the site, and two more were detained elsewhere. Cabello identified the rebel leader as Sergeant Major Luis Bandres Figueroa. The Supreme Court, which is dominated by regime loyalists, later took aim at the opposition-controlled National Assembly, declaring its leadership illegitimate and its decisions invalid. Last week, the assembly had declared Maduro an "usurper," and offered members of the military and the government amnesty if they broke with Maduro. It also called for a day of protests against the president on Wednesday.

'Neutralized, surrendered, captured'

The mutiny unfolded in the early hours of the day and culminated at the National Guard's Cotiza command, which was later surrounded by police and troops. "They were neutralized, surrendered and cap-



CARACAS: Riot police hold a shield during clashes with anti-government demonstrators in the neighborhood of Los Mecederos. —AFP

ured in record time," Cabello tweeted. "They are already confessing details and the first thing they said is that they were offered villas and castles but were left alone, they were tricked. We will win," he added, without specifying who allegedly made the offer.

The armed forces fired tear gas to disperse protesters who gathered outside the command post, banging pots and blocking roads with burning garbage in support of the uprising. "If they unite with our country, we're with them, we're going to stay in the streets. Freedom!" shouted one woman, who declined to be

identified. "We want Maduro to go, we're fed up," added a man.

National Assembly president Juan Guaido, who has engaged Maduro in a power struggle since being elected to lead the legislature earlier this month, spoke out in support of the mutinous soldiers. "What is happening in the National Guard in Cotiza is a demonstration of the general feeling that reigns within" the armed forces, Guaido said on Twitter. "Our military knows that the chain of command has been broken by the usurpation of the presidential office." —AFP

China rebukes ex-ambassadors over detained Canadians

BEIJING: China yesterday lashed out at a group of former diplomats and academics who signed an open letter to President Xi Jinping calling for the release of two Canadians detained on national security grounds. Former diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor were on December 10 arrested for activities that "endanger China's national security" — a phrase often used by Beijing when alleging espionage.

Their detentions are thought to be in retaliation for Canada's arrest on a US request of Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou, who is facing fraud charges linked to violations of Iran sanctions. Written in English and Chinese, the letter said both Kovrig and Spavor worked to improve understanding of China and to promote better relations with the world.

"Kovrig and Spavor's detentions send a message that this kind of constructive work is unwelcome and even risky in China," read the page-long letter, which had 143 signatories from 19 countries. But China reacted angrily, with foreign ministry spokeswoman

Hua Chunying calling it a "great disrespect" that also interferes with China's sovereignty and judicial process. "It is a call to exert pressure, to demand the Chinese side to release two Canadian citizens who have been investigated by the relevant departments according to the law," Hua told a regular press briefing. "Do they want China's 1.4 billion people to sign an open letter to the Canadian leader?"

'Serious mistake'

The letter comes amid heightened diplomatic tensions between Ottawa and Beijing since Meng's arrest. A Chinese court last week sentenced a Canadian man to death for drug trafficking following a retrial, a drastic increase of his previous 15-year prison sentence. On Monday, Canada's ambassador to the US David MacNaughton said Washington will be formally requesting Meng's extradition, the Globe and Mail reported. Officials have until January 30 to file the request but have not specified when they would submit the paperwork. Hua called on both countries to drop the case, saying Meng's arrest was a "serious mistake". "It is not an ordinary criminal case. It's an abuse of the bilateral extradition treaty between the United States and Canada," Hua said.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau welcomed the letter, pointing out that Canada stands for the rule of law. "It's a very clear principle that has served us well over the past decades, that we have systems of



BEIJING: This picture taken on December 5, 2017, shows Canadian and Chinese flags prior to a meeting with Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and China's President Xi Jinping at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse. - AFP

justice that are independent from political interference and Canada will always defend that," he told journalists in Ottawa.

The missive was signed by six former Canadian ambassadors to China: Fred Bild, Joseph Caron, Earl Drake, David Mulrone, Guy Saint-Jacques and Robert Wright; former US ambassadors Gary Locke and Winston Lord; and Hong Kong's last British governor Chris Patten. Former ambassadors to China from Germany, Mexico, Britain and Sweden also lent their names, along with

many of the world's leading China academics.

Worse off

The letter is meant to send a message that China's current action will alienate much of the world, said Jan Weidenfeld, head of European affairs and business strategy at the Mercator Institute for China Studies, one of the letter's signatories. "It's not clear whether China is playing by the rules at the end of the day... who's to tell me that I, or a colleague won't be next?" he said. —AFP

Trump: Students 'unfairly treated' over Native incident

WASHINGTON: Boys from a Catholic school in Kentucky were treated unfairly in a rush to judgment, President Donald Trump said on Monday after allegations the students had mocked a Native American elder. "Looking like Nick Sandman & Covington Catholic students were treated unfairly with early judgments proving out to be false - smeared by media," Trump tweeted. As in many cases, Trump's tweet appeared to be triggered by Fox News, as he cited the network's Tucker Carlson saying new footage showed "media" were wrong about the encounter.

Footage captured on multiple phone camera videos that swept social media on Saturday showed a white Covington student standing silently with his lips taunt, extremely close to Nathan Phillips, a Native American Vietnam war veteran, who beats a traditional drum while chanting. The student wears a red cap bearing Trump's slogan, "Make America Great Again." Other students are jumping up and down, chanting. The chanting turned out to be their school chants they sang during sports events.

The incident occurred on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on Friday when the annual anti-abortion March for Life coincided with a rally by indigenous communities calling for their rights to be respected. The Diocese of Covington and Covington Catholic High School issued a statement rebuking the students after their displays drew widespread derision. One of the first two Native American women elected to Congress in November, Deb Haaland, linked the students' behavior to what she called rising levels of racial intolerance under the Trump administration.

Kaya Taitano, a witness to the incident, was quoted by CNN as saying Phillips had decided to intervene with a "healing prayer" when the school teens got into a verbal altercation with a group of African American youths who had been preaching about the Bible. Phillips gave his reaction in a separate video. "I heard them saying, 'Build that wall, build that wall.' We're not supposed to have walls here, we never did."

But US media including The New York Times and The Washington Post later reported that the encounter was more complicated than it first appeared. The African American youths were Hebrew Israelites, who reportedly insulted both Native activists and the students. The extended video captures footage of these insults in which the Israelites were calling the students "crackers" and "fa**ots". This too was ignored by major media outlets. Both the Times and the Post quoted Phillips as clarifying that he had moved towards the students. CNN quoted the student at the center of the initial video, Nick Sandmann — the spelling used by major news media — as saying that his group only used "school spirit" chants, and did not express support for a border wall or say anything racist. —AFP

International

France, Germany strengthen treaty ties to tackle EU crisis

The treaty pledges stronger political, economic and defense ties

AACHEN: France and Germany yesterday signed a new friendship treaty to deepen their alliance at a time of crisis for the EU, drawing fire from the far right which President Emmanuel Macron slapped down for "spreading lies" about the pact. Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel inked the accord to deepen ties as Britain prepares to leave the European Union and tensions rise with populist leaders.

The treaty pledges stronger political, economic and defense ties and restates their commitment to the European Union. The document has come under attack from the far right, which accuses the pair of signing away national sovereignty. The leader of France's National Rally, Marine Le Pen, accused Macron of "an act that borders on treason". And a co-chief of Germany's far-right AfD party, Alexander Gauland, charged that Paris and Berlin were seeking to create a "super EU".

"We as populists insist that one first takes care of one's own country," said Gauland. "We don't want Macron to renovate his country with German money." Macron condemned the allegations, saying that "those who forget the value of French-German reconciliation are making themselves accomplices of the crimes of the past". "Those who... spread lies are hurting the same people they are pretending to defend by seeking to repeat our history," Macron said the treaty "shows that our friendship between France and Germany, our common project and our ambition for Europe are what really protect us, and what allow us really to take back control of our lives and to build our destiny".

'Macron, resign'

Yesterday's signing ceremony took place in the German city of Aachen, on the Dutch and Belgian borders — a place rich in European symbolism as the seat

of power of Charlemagne, the 9th-century European emperor. It was held on the anniversary of a friendship pact signed in 1963 by Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer.

The new accord aims to strengthen the "Franco-German motor" seen as the driving force behind European integration. It commits France and Germany to closer military ties, including possible joint deployments — in the event of a terror attack, for example. The two countries could also cooperate more closely on procurement, such as the purchase or development of new tanks or fighter jets. While both leaders underlined the two countries' friendship that was painstakingly built up in the decades following World War II, policy differences remain.

The divide was laid bare during a dialogue with citizens. Merkel and Macron were asked about issues upon which they differ — from Germany arms sales embargo on Saudi Arabia to its phase-out of nuclear energy, which remains France's main power source. Both have also faced domestic discontent in recent months.

Macron took office in May 2017 promising major EU reforms to restore faith in its institutions and quell rising populism. But his ideas met only lukewarm support from Merkel and other EU leaders. Paris and Berlin have also differed on other issues including how to tax big internet firms. Macron's hand has been further weakened by more than two months of "yellow vest" protests in France. In Aachen, he was greeted by boos and calls of "Macron, resign" from dozens of protesters who had travelled across the border.

Merkel is on her last lap as the leader of Europe's biggest economy, having announced she would step down as chancellor in 2021. Her departure may be hastened if her party returns poor scores at European Parliament elections in May, as well as in



AACHEN: French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel exchange the French-German friendship treaty during the signing ceremony. — AFP

three crucial state polls in eastern Germany, the AfD party stronghold.

Good intentions

Some observers believe the treaty is all the more important given the headwinds facing both economies. "We're seeing an existential crisis in terms of European integration, with Brexit and the expected strengthening of nationalists at the next European elections," said Claire Demesmay, a political scientist

at German research institute DGAP.

"In this context, confirming this belief in Franco-German cooperation has symbolic value," she told German public radio. But others note their differences will hinder any real steps forward in cooperation, even if there is a will to do so. German magazine Spiegel Online noted that while the treaty "is full of good intentions, it lags far behind what is necessary". "After all the crises and upheavals of recent years, Merkel and Macron have failed to rekindle the fire of European enthusiasm." — AFP

Alleged US spy received Russian 'state secret' without knowing

MOSCOW: A US former Marine charged with espionage in Russia was handed a USB drive containing state secrets without knowing what it contained, his lawyer told journalists yesterday after a hearing extending his client's custody. Paul Whelan, 48, was taken into custody on December 28 by the Russian FSB security service, which said he was caught "while carrying out an act of espionage". His lawyer Vladimir Zherebenkov said Whelan was handed a USB drive containing state secrets but he had thought it was information about Russian culture.

"On a USB drive, Paul received information that... I confirm is a state secret," Zherebenkov told journalists, insisting that Whelan did not know what it contained. "In reality, Paul was supposed to receive from the person information that is not a state secret," he said, indicating he was expecting to be given cultural material and photographs. "He couldn't look at it because he was detained. He was waiting for information that was cultural, nothing more."

The lawyer did not identify the individual who gave Whelan the USB drive. Wearing a neat blue shirt and dark trousers, Whelan appeared in a glass cage at a hearing at Moscow City Court, as is usual for suspects in custody in Russia. Judge Dmitry

Pronyakin threw out his appeal against being detained in custody. Whelan, who followed the proceedings through an interpreter, did not respond to questions shouted by journalists about his prison conditions. A man wearing plain clothes and a balaclava stood next to the cage in a case led by the FSB. Zherebenkov said the defense would appeal yesterday's decision.

"Paul behaved with great dignity today. He spoke well. He explained in detail what happened and in principle contradicted the position of the prosecution," the lawyer said after the hearing, most of which was closed to the press and consular officials. Analysts have speculated Whelan was arrested to pave the way for a possible spy swap with a Russian agent arrested abroad, but Zherebenkov refused to comment on the possibility.

'A friend of Russia'

Some believe he may have been detained in retaliation for the US arrest of a Russian woman called Maria Butina, a gun rights campaigner who was convicted in December of being a "foreign agent" and likely faces six months in jail. Moscow has rejected the idea Whelan could be exchanged for any US prisoner, saying it does not treat people as "pawns" in diplomatic games. — AFP

Putin, Abe hold summit to break island impasse

MOSCOW: The leaders of Russia and Japan were meeting in Moscow yesterday for talks over a disputed island chain that has long prevented agreement on a peace treaty to formally end World War II. But recent rhetoric has dampened hopes of a breakthrough. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit marks the 25th time he and Russian President Vladimir Putin have met since 2013, a reflection of their efforts to build cooperation despite their territorial disagreement.

The Soviet army seized the four Kuril islands, between the Sea of Okhotsk and the Pacific Ocean, in the last days of World War II. Tokyo's refusal to recognize Moscow's sovereignty there has been a barrier to peace for more than seven decades. Ahead of closed-door talks, Putin told Abe that diplomats on both sides have "worked a lot... on the issues surrounding the peace agreement," while Abe responded that he is interested in developing ties. But despite their good personal rapport and a flurry of diplomacy since November, when the two leaders agreed to accelerate peace talks, recent statements from both capitals suggest a compromise is still far off.

'Drawn out' process

Moscow responded furiously to a New Year's message from Abe in which he said Russians living on the islands should be helped to accept that the "sovereignty of their homes will change". Last week, Russian



MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe walk during their meeting at the Kremlin. — AFP

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Japan should stop referring to the islands as its "Northern Territories" in legislation and described Tokyo's military alliance with Washington as problematic. Tokyo needed to recognize Russia's sovereignty over the Kurils, said Lavrov.

"Why is Japan the only country in the world that cannot accept the results of World War II in their entirety?" he asked. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the negotiations would likely be a "drawn out" process — further cooling hopes for a quick resolution. Abe's Moscow visit is the first leg of a trip to Europe, which will also include a speech at the Davos forum in Switzerland on Wednesday.

'Powerful public opinion'

Kremlin spokesman Peskov said on Monday that Japan had not so far made any official proposals based on claiming just two of the islands in the chain. This possibility was

mooted by the Soviet Union in the 1950s, prior to Tokyo's alliance with the United States. Japan's Kyodo news agency, citing government sources, said Abe was leaning toward accepting this framework for a peace deal. But it is not clear whether the Kremlin would be keen to transfer sovereignty even for the two smaller islands, Shikotan and Habomai, which is actually a group of uninhabited islets.

The chain ensures Russia's strategic control of the Sea of Okhotsk, and some southern islands in the chain are less than 10 kilometers from Japan's Hokkaido island. Giving away even uninhabited islands would be poorly received in Russia, where World War II is hugely symbolic and post-war territorial gains are seen as non-negotiable. Yesterday, a small group of protesters holding leftist red flags gathered near the Japanese embassy in Moscow. Leftist politician Sergei Udaltsov wrote on Facebook that 11 people were detained by police. — AFP

No public mood for compromise as Brexit gulf widens

LONDON: There is "no compromise" on Brexit that commands majority public support in Britain, with opposition to Prime Minister Theresa May's deal the only point of agreement, a leading pollster said yesterday. "No procedural or substantive option appears to be both widely popular and capable of bridging the Brexit divide," said the University of Strathclyde's John Curtice. "Our politicians are constantly being told that you should be seeking the centre ground. The problem with Brexit is that the centre ground of politics is rather thinly populated," he said, presenting a report entitled "Brexit and Public Opinion 2019" in London.

The report, drawn from collated polls, highlights the challenge facing prime minister May as she tries to resurrect the deal she struck with the European Union after it was comprehensively rejected by MPs. A slim majority of the public are in favor of her renegotiating the deal, but none of the

possible outcomes of that renegotiation enjoy majority support, according to the polls. At either end of the spectrum, leaving without a deal and holding a second referendum both command strong partisan support, but largely cancel each other out on the national stage. A "soft" Brexit that seeks to remain part of some EU institutions appears to please neither side, according to the report's findings. "A 'soft' Brexit is a Remainer compromise that runs the risk of being little loved," said Curtice.

'Pronounced' division

An ICM poll published on Sunday revealed that leaving with no deal was the most popular option when put up against another referendum, a general election and May's deal, but still only commands 28 percent support. The campaign for a second referendum has gathered pace in recent months, but Curtice found little rising public appetite.

With public opinion so divided, Curtice suggested that "maybe the message our politicians need to take away is that to govern is to choose". Part of the problem revealed by the polls is that Brexit has now become "a new source of political identification" transcending party loyalty, making it a daunting task for political leaders to unite their traditional support base behind any plan. — AFP

Italy takes fight to new generation in Mafia sting

ROME: Anti-mafia police said yesterday they had dealt a fresh blow to Italy's Cosa Nostra, arresting seven suspected rising-star mobsters after two of the organized crime group turned state witnesses. The raids followed a major swoop against the resurgent Sicilian mafia in December when a jeweler was captured just before he was due to be officially anointed "boss of bosses" of the reconvened Mafia Commission or Cupola.

Among the dozens rounded up last month were two who quickly turned supergrass. They spilled the beans to police about clan leaders who were allegedly part of the Cupola. "Like never before, within a month (of the December arrests) we had two new state witnesses. And not any old members, but two from the upper echelons," Palermo's chief prosecutor chief Francesco Lo Voi told journalists. "Both confirm that (the new Commission) was not a 'half Cupola' or 'small Cupola', it was not a case of some old has-been getting back into the game, but the rebirth of the Commission with experienced individuals," he said.



PALERMO: Leandro Greco (C), grandson of famed mobster Michele Greco, blows a kiss as he leaves the Carabinieri's headquarter yesterday in Palermo, after his arrest. — AFP

'Pope and Baron'

Police cuffed Leandro Greco, grandson of famed mobster Michele Greco — dubbed "The Pope" — and Calogero Lo Piccolo, the son of a powerful boss nicknamed "The Baron". "They come from a family with a strong Mafia lineage. These are men of high standing, young men, which confirms our theory of a renewal which is rooted in historical and familial tradition," Lo Voi said. But the decision by the two grasses to break their vow of silence, and so quickly, shows "there is no future, something that those who still belong to Cosa Nostra should understand".

The latest arrests included Giovanni Sirchia, who was accused of ferrying both mobsters and secret messages back and forth, as well as four others accused of mafia extortion. Italy's Interior Minister Matteo Salvini thanked the police for "further weakening the new Cupola". The informants described the attempts to breathe fresh life into an organisation nicknamed "the octopus" for its tentacled reach into all areas of society. "Blood ties, tradition and family continue to be the principles that inspires Cosa Nostra," said police commander Antonio Di Stasio. — AFP

International

Bangladeshi 'Tree Man' dreams of cure as rare skin disease returns

'I hope doctors will be able to cure me fully this time'

DHAKA: A Bangladeshi dubbed "Tree Man" because of bark-like growths on his skin will need aggressive surgery to remove them, doctors said yesterday, after dozens of attempts failed to cure the extremely rare genetic condition. It is believed fewer than half a dozen people worldwide have "tree-man syndrome" — epidermodysplasia verruciformis — but the condition is particularly aggressive in Abul Bajandar, who has already undergone 25 bouts of surgery since 2016 to remove the greenish-grey gnarled protuberances from his skin.

The former rickshaw puller, whose case has made headlines around the world, has not worked in years because the growths have left him unable to use his hands. More than once, doctors believed the 28-year-old was cured, hailing their treatment as a milestone in medical history. But the growths kept returning. Most recently, in May, the condition flared up on parts of his body previously spared and he fled the Dhaka Medical College Hospital without notifying staff.

26th round of surgery

"The growths have sprouted even in new parts of my feet and hands. I made a mistake leaving the hospital, but I hope doctors will be able to cure me fully this time," Bajandar told AFP on Monday. Once-optimistic

doctors concede his case is more complicated than previously thought and have ordered more tests. An emergency medical panel said yesterday that Bajandar would undergo his 26th round of invasive surgery on Saturday to cut away the growths.

"Around 40 percent of Bajandar's growths have returned since he left the hospital in May. We have to keep carrying out surgery to remove them," Samanta Lal Sen, the head plastic surgeon at the hospital, told AFP. The condition has left Bajandar's family — he has a wife and young daughter — destitute and he is treated free of charge by doctors at the hospital, which is the top medical facility in the Bangladeshi capital.

His plight has captured hearts around the world, and the government has ordered he receive the best care. Despite the rarity of his condition, he is not alone in Bangladesh. The same Dhaka hospital also treated a young Bangladeshi girl suffering from the condition in 2017. Doctors also declared that surgery a success but her father later said the growths returned in even greater numbers. The family halted treatment and returned to their village. Bajandar does not want to return home, and is desperate for a cure. "I have received love of the countrymen and our prime minister," he said. "I strongly believe someday I will be able to live like a normal man." —AFP



DHAKA: Abul Bajandar, dubbed the Bangladeshi "Tree Man", shows his hands at Dhaka hospital. —AFP

Indonesia reviews release for Bali bombing cleric

JAKARTA: Plans to free a radical cleric linked to the deadly Bali bombings are under review, Indonesia has said, after the surprise decision drew sharp criticism. Abu Bakar Bashir, once synonymous with militant Islam in Indonesia, was tied to a terror network behind the 2002 attacks that killed more than 200 people, mostly foreign tourists.

Last week, Indonesian president Joko Widodo said he had given the green light for the early release of Bashir — believed to have been a key figure in militant group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Widodo said the 80-year-old preacher was "old and sick". The plan was slammed both at home and abroad, with objections across Indonesian social media and from Australian leader Scott Morrison, who warned that Bashir was still a threat. Dozens of Australians were killed in the Bali attacks.

In an apparent backtrack on Monday, Indonesia's Chief Security Minister Wiranto said the president had ordered a "thorough and comprehensive study" of Bashir's release from prison. "We can't act hastily or spontaneously," the minister told reporters. He did not say when a final decision would be made. Yesterday, Widodo said Bashir must agree to pledge his loyalty to the state in order to win parole — something the cleric has previously said he would not do.

"This is parole — not an absolute release. These conditions must be fulfilled," the president told reporters. Bashir was sentenced to 15 years in jail in 2011 for helping fund a paramilitary group training in the conservative Islamic province of Aceh. The firebrand preacher was previously jailed over the Bali bombings but that conviction was quashed on appeal. He has repeatedly denied involvement in terror attacks. —AFP

Indian girls forced into sex work despite ritual ban

CHENNAI: Young girls in south India continue to be "dedicated" to village temples and then forced into prostitution despite laws banning the ancient ritual, researchers said yesterday. The devadasi system, which involves putting a beaded necklace around girls and often leads to a life of sex work and slavery, goes unchecked in Karnataka state, according to two reports released this month.

Laws banning the practice are poorly implemented and the rituals are now being done undercover, said the devadasi reports, published by the National Law School of

India University and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. "It is like an open secret," said Bincy Wilson, a researcher at the law school in Bengaluru and co-author of one of the reports. "The entire community knows when a girl has been dedicated but it is not seen as a crime but more as a social problem that continues to be accepted as part of the culture."

The practice of dedicating young girls to the service of a deity began in ancient India, but over time the custom degenerated into an excuse for their sexual exploitation by men. Karnataka banned the practice in 1982, calling it a "social evil" that led women to prostitution. Data on the current number of devadasis is difficult to find but in 2007-2008 the government estimated that there were 46,660 living across 14 districts in Karnataka. "We are dedicated to ending this crime and will look into the concerns raised in the two reports," said C Vasundhara Devi, a Karnataka official responsible for stopping the rituals.

"We are running many schemes to help families of for-

mer devadasis to ensure the tradition does not continue." There were only two cases of girls being pushed into the ritual last year, said Devi, adding that stopping secret dedications was a bigger challenge. The practice was traditionally a public event accompanied by festivities, where the girl was dressed up as a bride. A devadasi dedicated her puberty to a deity, lived in the temple and even learnt classical Indian dances to perform for the gods.

Since the ban, the tradition now takes place in homes, followed by a small ritual at a temple at night, said Sharon Menezes, co-author of one of the studies. The girls involved are usually from the lower-caste Dalit community, have little or no land, and live in drought-prone areas, one report said. "Anybody resisting the practice immediately stands out in the community and is singled out, which is why it continues," said Menezes. "All the women we interviewed during the research talked about being in pain and their inability to resist the dedication or abuse. It is clearly not a system they have accepted." —Reuters

Deadliest attacks in Afghanistan

KABUL: The Taliban attack on an Afghan intelligence base on Monday in which dozens were killed is among the deadliest since the fall of the group's regime in 2001. Here is a summary of the deadliest attacks, which have all occurred after 2007:

- 2018**
 - December 24: An hours-long bomb and gun attack on a Kabul government compound kills at least 43 people. The Taliban denies responsibility.
 - November 20: A suicide bomber blows himself up among religious scholars inside a Kabul wedding hall, killing at least 55 people and wounding 94 others.
 - April 22: An Islamic State bomber kills 57 people, including women and children, and wounds more than 100, all civilians, outside a voter registration centre amid preparations for legislative elections in October.
 - September 11: A suicide attack on Afghans protesting the appointment of a local police chief in the eastern province of Nangarhar kills at least 68 people and wounds another 165.
 - January 27: An ambulance packed with explosives detonates in a crowded street in the heart of Kabul, killing

more than 100 people, mostly civilians. The attack is claimed by the Taliban.

- 2017**
 - October 17: Two separate Taliban suicide and gun attacks on police and soldiers leave 80 dead and scores wounded. The deadliest, which claims 60 lives, is on a police compound in the city of Gardez in Paktia province where militants disguised as police detonate bomb-filled vehicles that clear the way for gunmen to enter. Another 15 security officials and five civilians are killed in a separate ambush in the neighbouring province of Ghazni.
 - May 31: More than 150 people are killed and hundreds wounded when a massive truck bomb rips through Kabul's diplomatic quarter, shattering windows hundreds of metres away.
 - April 21: Taliban militants in soldiers' uniforms enter a military base in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif and open fire on unarmed troops at close range in the mosque and dining hall. At least 135 are killed.
 - March 8: Gunmen disguised as doctors storm Afghanistan's largest military hospital in Kabul in a six-hour attack claimed by the Islamic State. The official death toll is 50 but security sources and survivors say it exceeds 100.
- 2016**
 - July 23: Twin explosions rip through crowds of Shiite

Hazaras in Kabul, killing at least 85 people. It marks the first major Islamic State assault on the capital.

- April 19: A truck bomb followed by a shootout leaves 64 people dead and nearly 350 injured in central Kabul in a Taliban-claimed attack.
- 2011**
 - December 6: An attack in Kabul targeting the Shiite minority on the holy day of Ashura kills 80 people. A second attack in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif kills another four. The Taliban deny responsibility.
- 2008**
 - July 7: 60 people, including two Indian diplomats and two Indian guards are killed in a suicide car bombing on the Indian embassy in the capital. The Taliban say they were not involved.
 - February 17: 140 boys and men, including more than 50 auxiliary police officers, are killed in a suicide attack among a crowd at a dogfight in the southern city of Kandahar. The Taliban deny responsibility.
- 2007**
 - November 6: 79 people are killed, including 59 children and six parliamentarians, in a suicide attack on a delegation of VIPs visiting a sugar factory in Pul-i-Khumri north of Kabul. The Taliban deny involvement. —AFP

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ESTABLISHED 1961

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Editor-in-Chief
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EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
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Basra British-era shipyard going strong a century on

Began in 1918 by British troops, Basra's shipyard is surviving into old age with little maintenance, relying on its vintage machinery and the skill of its workers to keep going. Thousands of ships, including former dictator Saddam Hussein's yacht, have passed through the Iraqi shipyard's three docks, where a giant steam engine hauls them out of the water and up the century-old wooden tracks. There are no spare parts and no written manuals.

Mohammed Adnan, who has been operating the huge steam engine for six years now, says it is not easy. It requires expertise and intuition to maintain the right pressure in the boilers, and to prevent the engine from overheating. "British manufacturing is great quality ... but it is because of Iraqi expertise that we have managed to keep it going," said 56-year-old Adnan. The only instructions in the boiler room are those inscribed on a steel plaque: "Flag Signals: Yellow heave, blue lower, red stop."

Workers say the wooden tracks seem to grow stronger each year. "They say they [the British] brought in the wood from Burma... we tried to drill a 1.5 inch nail into it once, we couldn't," said Jassim Hussain Sabour, the shipyard's longest-serving worker. "It is like stainless steel, not wood."

Fishing and oil smuggling during the nineties when Iraq was under sanctions kept all three docks busy with ships coming in for repairs. In its heyday the shipyard handled nine ships every month. In 2018, it repaired eight boats in total, most owned by the state-run ports and waterways authority. The shipyard was built by the British after their campaign to capture Baghdad from the Ottoman Turks during the First World War. It suffered some damage during the 1980-1988 Iran Iraq war, and looting in 2003, but survived the Gulf Wars largely unscathed. — Reuters

Somalis turn profit by transforming their scrap plastic

As the rubbish built up on the rubble of Mogadishu's wrecked streets, Ahmed Abdullah saw a business opportunity. He recruited a team of workers - many of them refugees from Somalia's long conflict - and sent them out to collect plastic bags, bottles and wrappers to turn into roof tiles and other recycled goods. "They cannot break, you see," Abdullah said as he threw some of his tiles onto the floor to show their strength. "They are made of the recycled plastics and soil."

Years of fierce fighting in the coastal city have destroyed its infrastructure and left the surviving buildings pocked with bullet holes. The cash-strapped government is struggling to control a vast, divided country where Islamist militants from the Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab group still launch regular attacks on the capital. Regular rubbish collection is way down the state's list of priorities.

"A lot of rubbish like plastics, paper bags ... are thrown outside the city," said Abdullah. When the piles get too big, he added, people start dumping it in the ocean. So, in June 2018, he and others founded their company, Green Plastic. Muslimo Aden Ali said he gets paid 3,000 Somali shillings (\$0.18) for every kg of waste he brings in. "We carry the rubbish on our heads and backs. It is a nice job. We survive on this," he said.

Maryam Abdullahi, a 35-year-old mother displaced by fighting, said she walks more than 10 km a day searching for plastic. "I cannot sleep at night because of back ache but this is the only way I can raise food for my children." — Reuters



This photo taken on Dec 5, 2018 shows residents playing mahjong in a recreation area at the Yanyuan community for senior citizens, on the outskirts of Beijing. — AFP

China elite live golden years in style

A gated community for Chinese senior citizens, retired military personnel, filmmakers and top university professors settle into a new routine: Ballet lessons, weightlifting and catered dining. As China's population ages rapidly and the one-child policy left parents with only a single child to help them in their old age, the upper crust of Chinese society are spending the last years of their lives in luxury.

A grand piano backlit by floor-to-ceiling windows stands in the Yanyuan community's clubhouse living room. Brightly colored artworks commissioned from Israeli artist David Gerstein adorn public spaces. "This is our home now," said Li Ying, a 71-year-old resident who spent more than 30 years in the military. "Special circumstances notwithstanding, we are prepared to live here until the end."

Though high-end institutions like Yanyuan, which boasts an on-site hospital and on-call staff, are still few in China, they are part of a growing industry as the country races to develop enough elderly care support for its exploding population of senior citizens. By 2050, one in three people in China, or 487 million people, will be over the age of 60 - more than the population of the United States - according to the official Xinhua news agency. In the past, parents could count on their children for care in their twilight years under Chinese traditions of filial piety.

Ageing crisis

But as China reckons with its one-child policy, which was aimed at curbing population growth, Chinese couples are now burdened with raising their own children while supporting both sets of parents - without the help of siblings. "The idea that children should take care of their ageing parents is an old logic spanning thousands of years," explained Li. "As society develops, this is changing."

To tackle the country's looming ageing crisis, the Chinese government is trialing a number of policies, including preferential tax policies for elderly care service providers. The push to grow China's elderly care capacity has encouraged more private companies, from real estate developers to insurance firms, to seize on business opportunities in the industry, such as nursing homes where residents enjoy five-star accommodations and professional medical support.

At Yanyuan, which is run by insurance giant Taikang, residents can either buy into the company's two million yuan (\$290,000) pension plan or make a down payment



A resident makes his way back to his apartment in an electric powered wheelchair at the Yanyuan community.

of one to two million yuan (\$145,000 to \$290,000) on top of monthly living expenses of at least 6,000 yuan (\$870), not including the food budget. Publicly-run nursing homes, on the other hand, can cost less than \$1,000 a month or offer subsidies to residents but are often viewed as a last resort for China's more destitute senior citizens.

"Whether or not China's elderly care industry can satisfy the needs of (China's) rapidly ageing populace depends on who is paying for it," says Chen Youhua, a professor at Nanjing University who has studied China's elderly care industry. If it's paid for privately, there could be an overabundance of facilities and beds, but "if it's the government or society who pays... then the current elderly care services industry cannot satisfy such needs", he added.

Not alone

Some industry experts are wary that private firms will focus on providing lavish retirement villages for long-term residency, rather than creating last-mile nursing homes for those who cannot take care of themselves. Vivian Lou, an associate professor at the University of Hong Kong, who studies long-term care suggested

healthy 60-year olds could enter such villages for seniors, and remain there for 20 years, during which time no one else could take their spot. "This then becomes a housing solution," she explained.

Still, for residents at Yanyuan, socializing with peers - and simply not being alone - is one of the greatest benefits of staying in the retirement community. In the past, the entire family lived together, "joyous and harmonious", said Ge Ming, who heads operations at Yanyuan. "But over the course of urbanization, the (family) structure has changed". Young workers from all over China migrate from rural areas in search of higher wages and work opportunities - they are no longer home to care for their parents or grandparents.

For China's ageing elite, many of whom already live in the major cities, their children may be living overseas or simply too busy building their own high-powered careers to look after relatives. "I can't rely on them," said Zhu Mingyi, an 82-year-old retired professor, who used to teach languages. His daughter lives in Beijing working for an international broadcaster, while his son is in Japan. He added: "They have their own careers and family. They don't have the time, money, or energy to take care of you." — AFP

'Welcome' refugees in Kansas celebrate American birthdays

Many of nearly 100 excited children running around a community center in Kansas City over the weekend had two things in common. They were refugees, mostly from conflict-torn regions in Africa and the Middle East. And most were there to celebrate the same thing - a Jan 1 birth date. Far from a strange coincidence, the date is usually assigned to immigrants who arrive in the United States without birth certificates, as refugees often do.

Some refugees may have never even celebrated a birthday back in their native countries and do not know when they were born. So to mark their new, government-issued birthdays, several religious-based organizations in the Midwestern city have for the last four years organized a group birthday party. This year's event took place Sunday, complete with colorful balloon animals, cake and carnival games. "We find the people welcome us. They are friendly and helpful," said Zainab Abed, an Iraqi refugee who fled four years ago with her husband and three young sons after Islamic State group extremists threatened to kill them.

Jewish Vocational Services (JVS), a resettlement agency, joined with three synagogues to put on the party each January for the Christian and Muslim refugees resettled in the near-geographic center of the continental United States. "The event says, 'we are happy you are

here, and we are happy you are part of our community," said Monica Kleinman, a rabbi at the Congregation Beth Torah synagogue in a Kansas City suburb.

'These are our values'

The annual tradition is in contrast to the message many refugees in the US have received in the last two years. The administration of President Donald Trump has sought to limit the number of refugees admitted into the country and has restricted travel from several predominantly Muslim countries. Parts of the US federal government remain shut down due to lack of funding, as Democrats in Congress and Republicans led by the White House are at a stalemate over whether to build Trump's promised wall along the US-Mexico border, intended to crack down on illegal immigration.

"From the Jewish standpoint... it's reiterated time and time again that we need to welcome strangers and regard those who have joined us as part of the community," said Kleinman. "With all the national rhetoric going on, it's really important that we say, 'No. These are our values. And this is how we're going to live those values.'"

The number of refugee families JVS has helped resettle in Kansas and neighboring Missouri has declined from nearly 600 in 2016 to 160 last year. But birthday party organizers say they are undaunted in their commitment to make refugees feel



Parents sing "Happy Birthday" to their children during the 2019 Refugee Birthday Party at the Della Lamb Community Center on Jan 20, 2019 in Kansas City, Missouri. — AFP

welcome and to help them adjust to their new American lives. For Sunday's event, volunteers bought gifts for the children, decorated the gymnasium in cheerful multi-colored balloons, and provided an inflatable "bouncy house" for youngsters to jump in until they were dizzy.

'Very welcome'

The annual event is also an opportunity for refugees to meet each other. "We like (the party). We want to meet new friends and have good food," said Thomas Welongo, 16, who is from Tanzania, where he said birthdays are celebrated by having water poured on top of one's head. The refugees made the

birthday party their own, as well. Teens used a basketball to play soccer. And while some kids came in jeans and party dresses, others sported a hijab, the traditional Muslim head covering. Instead of macaroni and cheese, hamburgers or pizza - which might feed revelers at a typical American birthday party - the food on offer included traditional dishes from a local Somali-American restaurant. "I feel like the event, it teaches people to be friendly with other people and teach people how to interact with people from other religions," said Zaid Alrikabi, Abed's 14-year-old son, who treasured the balloon parrot that he received. "I feel very welcome," he said. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2019

13 IMF pessimism + trade tensions = sickly stocks**14** First 5G call in the MENA successfully tested between Ooredoo Kuwait and Ooredoo Qatar**15** High-level of pollution lowers people's happiness in China

Global Situation Space



DAVOS: Participants attend a session during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting yesterday in Davos, eastern Switzerland. — AFP

Zain launches innovative Zain LIFE smart home security kit

Kit features security cameras and smart doorbells from Ring

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the launch of a new smart home security kit as part of its Zain LIFE smart home portfolio of innovative solutions. The new kit features a number of unique security devices from global smart home leader Ring.

Zain launched the new kit under its Zain LIFE portfolio of innovative solutions and in line with its strategy to transform into an integrated digital lifestyle provider, which is centered around digital transformation leadership and empowering the community to enjoy a smarter portable lifestyle, as well as using advanced technology solutions to enable an easier and more flexible life.

The new kit, which comes with FREE installation, features a number of the latest outdoor security devices from global smart home leader Ring, which were designed to provide a unique home security experience through several surveillance solutions that monitor the outdoor area and notify the user as soon as any unusual activity outside the home is identified.

The Ring kit includes 4 smart devices, including an outdoor video doorbell that works wirelessly, and features a high-quality camera with motion detection, night vision, and two-way audio. The kit also includes an indoor chime device that also works as a Wi-Fi extender, as well as two



outdoor smart cameras that feature high-quality recording, motion detection, night vision, and two-way audio. The cameras immediately alert the user whenever movement is detected.

The Smart Homes sector is one of the main aspects of

the digital transformation journey undertaken by telecoms around the world, particularly with respect to securing homes and protecting them against theft with the use of modern technology. Zain is continuously working on designing new plans to match these transformation processes to be included in Zain LIFE in addition to its existing portfolio of smart solutions.

Zain always aspires to new levels of excellence in all services it offers to its customers. Through the launch of this new kit, Zain affirms its continuous efforts in meeting its customers' needs and aspirations, and deliver its promise to offering the best services and latest technologies.

At Davos, China slowdown is 'no disaster'

DAVOS: The slowdown in Chinese growth has become the latest looming cloud over the global economy, but at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the advice from Beijing was not to worry.

"China is slowing down but it's not going to be a disaster," said Fang Xinghai, vice-chairman of China's Securities Regulatory Commission, a key government watchdog. Fang's affirmation of the Chinese economy, and the deep worries of outsiders, came just days after the government reported that China grew at its slowest pace in almost three decades in 2018. At 6.6 percent growth, the state of the Chinese economy became a world concern, a sentiment not helped by the festering trade war with the US that has destabilized world markets.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang vowed the government would not let the economy "fall off a cliff", using words that hinted that a crisis may not be far off.

But China is simply different, said Fang on a Davos panel that was supposed to survey the global economy, but got bogged down on discussing the troubled Asian powerhouse. For Fang, the structure of the Chinese government—where the central, communist party holds so

much control—made fixing the economy easier. "China has been able to avoid financial crisis in the last 40 years. We have a very top down approach to financial risk management," he said.

"If there is any risk accumulated in the system, the government will step in and order the risk to be reduced," he said. Economists and analysts roaming the halls of the Davos congress center, where the world's business elite meet every year, echoed the optimistic assessment. Governments in China don't have the kind of surprises that lurk in Western democracies, including independent regulators or central banks.—AFP



DAVOS: (From left) Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum Klaus Schwab, Swiss President Ueli Maurer, Hilde Schwab, King Philippe of Belgium and Queen Mathilde attends opening ceremony of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting, yesterday in Davos, eastern Switzerland. — AFP

Huawei warns of action against hostile markets

DAVOS: Chinese tech giant Huawei said yesterday it could pull out of partnerships in hostile countries as it seeks to counter security concerns in the West over its 5G technology.

Liang Hua, chairman of the telecommunications equipment provider, said at the World Economic Forum in Davos that Western governments were welcome to tour Huawei facilities if they had concerns about the equipment potentially being misused for espionage.

Echoing Huawei's reclusive founder Ren Zhengfei, Liang also expressed "every confidence" in Canada's legal system after the arrest of Ren's daughter—a senior Huawei executive—on a US extradition request. The subsequent arrests in China of two Canadians, seen widely as a reprisal by Beijing against Ottawa, "has no relation with Huawei", Liang told reporters in Davos.

And he said "we fully comply" with local laws, after the Wall Street Journal said the US Department of Justice was in the "advanced" stages of a criminal probe that could result in an indictment of Huawei.

Several Asia-Pacific countries have heeded Washington's call for a ban on Huawei technology, but the picture in Europe is more nuanced, not least because Huawei's 5G capabilities are seen as market-leading and good value. "We do not pose a threat to a future digital society," Liang said, adding the United States had not put forward any evidence to justify its claim that Huawei equipment could serve as a Trojan horse for Beijing's security apparatus.

But if Huawei gets barred from certain markets and customers start to shun it, "we will transfer technology partnerships to countries where we are welcome and where we can have a collaboration", he added.

'Where we are welcomed'

The chairman did not specify which types of partnerships, but Britain's Oxford University, for example, has decided to forgo new funding for research contracts or philanthropic donations from Huawei. "We will focus not just on countries but on where we are welcomed by customers. Because ultimately customers have the choice to make decisions," he said. "We offer better services to our customers on 5G. It is the customers' choice if they don't choose Huawei and we will focus our efforts on those customers who do choose us." In any case, Liang said, Huawei will plough on with planned investment of \$20 billion in each of the next five years as it rolls out 5G base stations to promote radically faster internet speeds.—AFP

Business

KAMCO Economic Report

Non-oil GDP to drive GCC growth in 2019-2020; oil GDP may drop

IMF lowers global growth forecast for 2019 and 2020

KUWAIT: Global real GDP growth is estimated to decline to 3.5 percent in 2019 and pick up marginally to 3.6 percent in 2020, as per IMF's latest World Economic Outlook update. Growth projections for 2019 and 2020 were trimmed by 20 bps and 10 bps from estimates published by the IMF in Oct-18. The drop in real GDP growth expectations for 2019 was driven by broad-based reductions to growth in most economies, with very few economies expected to grow faster than estimates in Oct-18.

Growth for Advanced Economies is now seen to be lower in 2019, driven mainly by a lower growth rate for the Euro Area than estimated last year. Emerging Market & Developing Economies also saw their growth reduced for 2019, as most regions barring Emerging and Developing Asia are expected to grow slower than estimated in Oct-18.

Global growth for 2018 left unchanged from Oct-18: The IMF retained its global real GDP growth estimate of 3.7 percent for 2018 from Oct-18, in its latest World Economic Outlook Update in January-19, despite a 10 bps drop in the growth of Emerging Market & Developing Economies to 4.6 percent y-o-y in 2018, and a similar drop in the growth of Advanced Economies, now estimated at 2.3 percent (-10 bps) for 2018. Growth for 2018 was weaker in Europe and Asia, as per the IMF. The slowdown of growth in H2-18 is expected to continue for the next few quarters, and have led to the lower growth forecasts for 2019 and 2020.

Non-oil growth

Saudi Arabia's real GDP growth for 2018 at 2.3 percent y-o-y comes in above the earlier forecast from Oct-18 (+2.2 percent), as per the IMF, largely driven by a pickup in non-oil activity for the year. Real GDP expectations for 2019 was brought down by 60 bps, to 1.8 percent from October-18 estimates, which we ascribe to a drop in oil GDP. KAMCO Research had estimated IMF's real oil-GDP estimates for the GCC in 2019 (IMF REO: Nov-19) to be on the

higher side, as the forecast had factored in an oil production growth of 0.58 mb/d from 2018.

For 2020 however, IMF raised Saudi Arabia's GDP growth higher by 20 bps to 2.1 percent from Oct-18 (1.9 percent). KAMCO Research expects non-oil economic activity in the region to continue to develop in the near term, while oil-GDP forecasts have room for downward revisions, if OPEC+ countries announce an extension to the oil production cut agreement post H1-19.

Fiscal funding flexibility

IMF assumes average oil prices to decline in 2019 (\$58.95/bbl) based on oil price futures; from an average of \$68.58/bbl achieved over 2018. In 2019, however, a marginal decline to \$58.74/bbl is forecast. Oil markets are still faced with fragile factors like OPEC+ production output, global trade, Iran sanctions and the economic situation in Venezuela, and these factors would keep oil prices under check and in a tight range during 2019. Having said that, non-oil economic growth in the GCC is expected to continue going forward against the backdrop of stabilizing oil prices and an expansion in budget spending. Moreover, fixed income markets remain conducive for GCC sovereign issuers in 2019 for primary market issuances, if they decide to take that route, given the expectation of slower pace of interest rate hikes in 2019 by the US Fed as compared to 2018, and the inclusion of the five GCC countries into the JP Morgan Emerging Market Bond Index (EMBI).

Growth of advanced economies lowered

Advanced economies are now forecasted to grow at 2.0 percent (-10 bps) in 2019, while the forecast for 2020 was left unchanged at 1.7 percent, as per the IMF, as US growth forecasts remained stable over 2019 (+2.5 percent) and 2020 (+1.8 percent). Euro Area growth was brought down by 30 bps for 2019 to 1.6 percent, driven by a downward revision (-60bps) to growth for Germany (1.3 percent) from lower pri-



private consumption, weak industrial production from the introduction of the revised auto emission standards, and muted foreign demand.

The IMF expects weak domestic demand and higher borrowing costs in Italy to drive growth down to 1.5 percent (-10 bps) in 2019, while France's GDP growth was reduced to 0.6 percent (-40bps) from the impact of protests and lower industrial production. Global trade growth for 2018 (4.0 percent) is estimated to have been lower than Oct-18 expectations (4.2 percent), and the IMF expects the actual trade data to possibly have been helped by front-loading of imports, ahead of US-China tariff hikes. Growth of global trade in terms of volumes of goods and services was left unchanged at 4.0 percent each for 2019, while the corresponding growth for 2020 was brought down by 10 bps, as trade volume growth for Advanced Economies was lowered by 10 bps to 3.3 percent.

Emerging Market and Developing Economies sees downward revision of 20 bps for 2019 Real GDP growth forecasts of Emerging Market & Developing Economies were lowered to 4.5 percent (-20bps) in 2019, but left unaltered for 2020 (4.7 percent), by the

IMF. The lowered forecast for 2019 was mainly driven by a 130 bps downward revision of growth for Emerging and Developing Europe to 0.7 percent, which in turn is expected to be driven by a contraction in Turkey's economy. Growth for Emerging & Developing Asia for 2019 and 2020 was kept stable from October-18 estimates, as China's growth expectations was left unchanged for 2019 and 2020 at 6.2 percent for each year.

India's real GDP growth for 2019 was raised by the IMF to 7.5 percent (+10 bps), on gains from lower oil prices, easing inflation and slower monetary tightening. Growth for Latin America is now expected to be lower by 20 bps each for 2019 (+2 percent) and 2020 (+2.5 percent). Key drivers for the downward revision are lower growth for Mexico over 2019-20, a more severe contraction in Venezuela, and a contraction of Argentina's economy in 2019, as tighter policies slow domestic demand.

For the MENA region including Afghanistan and Pakistan, growth was lowered by 30 bps to 2.4 percent in 2019, from lower oil GDP, tightening financing conditions in Pakistan and US sanctions on Iran, while growth for 2020 was left unchanged.

Earnings Review by Arqaam Capital

Earnings momentum continues for NBK driven by retail in Kuwait and int'l

KUWAIT: International operations and Boubyan remain key growth drivers for NBK, with international accounting for 35 percent of earnings growth in 2018. International earnings represented 29 percent of group (28 percent in 2017), increasing at a faster rate of +19.0 percent y/y compared with +13.6 percent for Kuwait book. Kuwait earnings were mainly driven by consumer banking, +11.6 percent y/y and making up 42 percent of group earnings (44 percent in 2017). This more than offset the decline in NBK's corporate book, -56.3 percent y/y - now representing 12 percent of earnings vs. 32 percent last year. Egypt (+20 percent growth in 2019e) and Boubyan (+15 growth) will continue to drive NBK earnings momentum into 2019e.

Benign CoR drives earnings beat

Earnings beat of 5 percent in Q4 and 1 percent in FY was mainly driven by lower CoR of 106bps during 2018 vs. 116bps in 2017 and our expectation of 123bps. We see room for improvement in CoR as Kuwait implements IFRS 9 in FY 19e as NBK could benefit from some release in provisioning. We pencil in CoR of 106bps for 2019e and expect it to trend downwards to 92bps afterwards. NPL ratio was broadly stable at 1.4 percent, while coverage fell to 228 percent from 287 percent in 2017.

Decent loan growth

NBK continues to outperform the sector driven

by i) large tickets, ii) Boubyan stake and iii) international operations, with loan book growing at 5.9 percent y/y. Deposit growth was softer at 4.0 percent, increasing LTD to 104.5 percent from 101.6 percent in 2017. Despite limited NIM flex in Kuwait, NBK managed to slightly improve its NIM by 8bps to 2.71 percent in 2018 as 50bps increase in asset yield offset 46bps increase in CoE. Kuwait interest rates are well below US LIBOR and unlikely to reverse trend unless excess liquidity is mopped up.

This in turn depends on passing of the debt law. Fee/forex income strong, but investment losses at Boubyan level limited non-NII. Positive JAWs. OpEx growth was limited to 4.1 percent y/y during 2018 as NBK continues to carefully manage its cost base - positive JAWs of 3.3 percent.

Strong capital, increased DPS while maintained payout. CET1 declined to 13.8 percent in 2018 from 14.2 percent in 2017 on RWA growth of 8.1 percent and stable payout. NBK proposed DPS of 35fils in 2018 (and bonus share 5 percent) vs. 30fils in 2017 (bonus share 5 percent), but maintained its payout at c.60 percent, offering a yield of 3.9 percent. During Q4 NBK recognized losses of KD 35 million on its FVOCI debt investments and forex losses of KD 9 million but benefitted from forex gain of KD 12 million from derecognition of associates in its OCI.

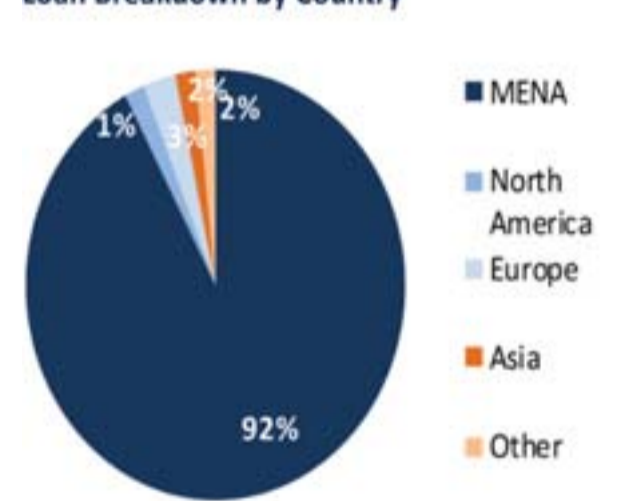
Reiterate CORE Buy, valuation remains compelling

NBK remains the best positioned to exploit the project spending in Kuwait, given best access to wholesale funding, and highest maximum single party exposure and low deposit costs. NBK's business model is the most diversified in Kuwait in terms of corporate/retail and Kuwait/outside - with exposure to Egypt and KSA - further supported by its dominant franchise in Kuwait. Recent removal of FOL should continue to support share price.

Loan Breakdown by Sector



Loan Breakdown by Country



EU fines Mastercard 570m euros in anti-trust action



BRUSSELS: The European Union has fined global credit card giant Mastercard 570 million euros (\$647 million) for limiting competition between banks offering cheaper payment fees. "By preventing merchants from shopping around for better conditions offered by banks in other member states, Mastercard's rules artificially raised the costs of card payments, harming consumers and retailers," EU competition commissioner Margrethe Vestager said.

After Visa, Mastercard is the second largest credit card issuer in the European market. It has been the subject of an EU anti-trust investigation since April 2013, and has cooperated with the probe. When a customer pays a retailer with a credit card, the store's bank pays a fee to the cardholder's bank.

The retailer's bank passes on this fee to the store, which increases costs for customers. Prior to 2015, the level of these "interchange fees" varied widely across Europe, but Mastercard's rules at the time obliged banks receiving card payments to apply the fee set in their home country. "This led to higher prices for retailers and consumers, to limited cross-border competition and to an artificial segmentation of the single market," the EU Commission said in a statement.

"On this basis, the Commission concluded that Mastercard's rules prevented retailers from benefitting from lower fees and restricted competition between banks cross border, in breach of EU antitrust rules. "The infringement ended when Mastercard amended its rules in view of the entry into force of the Interchange Fee Regulation."

The fine would have been higher, but Brussels reduced it by 10 percent to thank Mastercard for cooperating. The company did not dispute the fine. "This decision relates to historic practices only, covers a limited period of time of less than two years and will not require any modification of Mastercard's current business practices," it said.

"Mastercard sees the closure of this anti-trust chapter as an important milestone for the company," it added. —AFP

Renault board to replace Ghosn tomorrow

PARIS: French carmaker Renault said yesterday that it would hold a board meeting tomorrow to name a replacement for its boss Carlos Ghosn, who remains in custody in Japan over alleged financial misconduct. Sources close to the discussions told AFP that the company would put forward Thierry Bollere to replace Ghosn as chief executive and Michelin chief Jean-Dominique Senard as board chairman. Ghosn currently holds both roles.

Renault, part of a powerful alliance with Japanese carmakers Nissan and Mitsubishi, officially declined to comment on Ghosn's replacement, beyond confirming Thursday's board meeting.

A trade union source said the meeting would take place at 10:00 am (0900 GMT) tomorrow. Ghosn has already been stripped of his positions as chairman of Nissan and Mitsubishi in the wake of the allegations.

The French government, Renault's biggest shareholder with a stake of more than 15 percent, is particularly keen to see the company appoint a new leader. Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire had last week demanded a board meeting "in the coming days" to name Ghosn's successor.

The Franco-Lebanese-Brazilian businessman, who was arrested on November 19, is set to remain behind bars for the foreseeable future after a Tokyo court again denied him bail yesterday.

Prosecutors suspect he under-declared his income in official statements to Nissan shareholders between 2010 and 2015 to the tune of some five billion yen (\$46 million), apparently in an attempt to avoid accusations that he was overpaid. A separate but similar charge is that he continued to do this between 2015 and 2018, under-reporting his income by a further four billion yen.

He also faces a complex charge of seeking to shift personal investment losses onto Nissan's books and transferring company funds to a Saudi contact who allegedly stumped up collateral for him.

Bollere, who has been running



Renault in the wake of Ghosn's stunning arrest, was named deputy CEO a day after he was taken into custody. The 55-year-old has spent his entire career in the car industry, much of it in Asia. This is seen at Renault as valuable experience in terms of smoothing fraught relations

with its Japanese partners and developing business in China.

Senard, 66, has worked at tyre giant Michelin since 2005 and was the first non-family member to head the historic company. He was due to hand over the CEO role to his deputy in May. —AFP

Business

IMF pessimism + trade tensions = sickly stocks

European shares follow Asia lower, UBS results disappoint

LONDON: Pessimism about global growth drove down world shares and commodity markets yesterday and left investors seeking refuge in the dollar, government bonds and gold. The International Monetary Fund's warning of a darkening outlook on Monday after China's confirmation of its slowest growth rate in nearly 30 years and amid more head-scratching over Brexit continued to weigh on the mood. European shares had followed Asia into the red with disappointing earnings from Swiss bank UBS also adding extra gloom after Europe's banking sector saw nearly 30 percent wiped off its value last year.

In its World Economic Outlook report, the IMF predicted the global economy would grow at 3.5 percent in 2019 and 3.6 percent in 2020, down 0.2 and 0.1 percentage point respectively from last October's forecasts. The downgrade mainly reflected signs of weakness in Europe, with Germany hurt by new car emission rules, Italy under market pressure due to Rome's recent budget standoff with the European Union and Brexit hanging over the bloc as well.

"We have seen a little bit of a pull back, but whether it's the IMF growth downgrade or China related is neither here nor there," said CMC Markets' senior analyst Michael Hewson.

He pointed to the strong and sudden rebound that markets like Germany's Dax have seen since the end of December as well as other major global indexes. "We are at the top end of the range for this year and given the global uncertainty, investors are probably taking the view that it is probably wise to take a bit of profit off the table." Futures markets were pointing to a weak start for the United States later with falls of 0.8 percent for the S&P 500 and nearly 1 percent for the Nasdaq seen. Another development nibbling at sentiment was news that the United States plans to proceed with the formal extradition from Canada of Chinese tech giant Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou. Meng, who is also the daughter of Huawei's founder Ren Zhengfei, was

arrested in early December at the request of the United States over alleged violations of sanctions on Iran. She was released on bail and is due in court in Vancouver on Feb. 6.

Asia's overnight losses had been led by Chinese shares, with the blue-chip index off 1.2 percent. Japan's Nikkei skidded 0.5 percent too, while Hong Kong and Sydney closed down 0.8 and 0.5 percent.

In another sign of risk aversion, the Australian dollar, often used as a liquid proxy for China investments, eased 0.4 percent to \$0.7123, putting it on track for a third straight session of losses.

The same worries had also pushed the New Zealand dollar down for a seventh session and copper, which is used in everything from electrical wiring and water pipes to cars, drifting lower in the metals markets.

Brexit plans

The dollar held at a near three-week high as investors sought the relative safety of the U.S. currency. That kept the euro pegged back at 1.1360 and reapplied pressure on the main emerging market currencies following a decent start to the year for most of them.

Sterling was a shade firmer at \$1.2910 after data showed British workers' pay growth hit a new 10-year high and employment had grown by much more than expected in the three months to the end of November. Otherwise traders were still waiting to see whether UK Prime Minister Theresa May can push her Brexit plans through the country's bitterly divided parliament.

May had offered tweaks on Monday by seeking further concessions from the European Union on a backup plan to avoid a hard border between the British-administered province of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. But she had also refused to rule out leaving the EU at the end of March without any deal. "Any upside for sterling in the near term may be limited," said Capital Economics analyst Liam Peach. "Uncertainty would continue during the extended



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) at the closing bell in New York City. —AFP

negotiations and there is no guarantee that it would last for only a short period of time." There was demand too for the safe-haven yen with the Japanese currency last at 109.40 per dollar. Against a basket of currencies, the dollar was barely changed at 96.393.

In commodities, the global growth worries pulled oil prices lower with Brent down 55 cents at \$62.19 and

US crude futures off 39 cents at \$53.41. Eurozone government bond yields also fell, with Germany's 10-year yields down at 0.22 percent from Friday's one-month high of 0.28 percent, and Spain's helped to a near six-month low by record demand at a new bond sale.

The European Central Bank holds its first meeting of the year tomorrow. —Reuters

UBS annual profits jump to \$4.9 billion

ZURICH: Swiss banking giant UBS saw its net profits leap by almost five times last year to \$4.9 billion (4.3 billion euros) despite "challenging conditions," it said yesterday. UBS' 2017 results were hammered by US tax reforms that forced banks that operate in the United States to book substantial one-time losses in the final quarter of that year, but which were expected to be mostly favorable beyond that.

Excluding the impact of changes in US tax laws, UBS net income for 2018 as a whole was still up by 25 percent from the previous year. "I want to thank all UBS employees for a very successful 2018 in overall challenging conditions,"

chief executive Sergio P. Ermotti said in a statement.

He underscored geopolitical tensions, increased protectionism and trade friction, and financial market volatility, all of which weighed on investor sentiment in the second half of the year.

"We've seen some normalization in markets early in 2019, we will stay focused on balancing efficiency and investments for growth, in order to keep delivering on our capital return objectives while creating sustainable long-term value for our shareholders," Ermotti said.

Commenting on the fourth quarter 2018, he added: "The strength of our strategic choices and diversified franchise once again came through... as we delivered a resilient performance despite historically tough market conditions." Net profit in the quarter came to \$696 million, below an average analyst forecast compiled by the Swiss agency AWP, of \$751 million.



Excluding the impact of changes in US tax laws, UBS net income for 2018 as a whole was still up by 25 per cent from the previous year. —Reuters

Transactions by clients in the Americas and Asia Pacific region slumped, with the investment bank unit posting a

plunge of 84 percent in pre-tax operating profit owing to a difficult market environment. —AFP

'Fill or kill': The three weeks that saved Sears

NEW YORK: The future of Sears Holdings Corp and tens of thousands of its employees across the United States hung in the balance in the freezing pre-dawn hours last Wednesday, as Wall Street lawyers and bankers sparred over the fate of the beleaguered retailer in a 50-story Manhattan office tower. Working the phone from Miami, where he has an office and a 17,000-square-foot mansion, was Sears Chairman Eddie Lampert. The investor had to decide between boosting the \$5 billion offer he had made a week earlier for most of the retailer's remaining assets, or letting the 126-year-old company close its doors forever.

A major sticking point: who would cover more than \$200 million in costs that Sears had racked up since filing for bankruptcy in October. The company owed money for taxes and merchandise as well as fees charged by lawyers, bankers and other advisers. The advisers' fees alone had eclipsed \$20 million by the end of the November and were mounting with every billable hour. Sears did not have enough money to pay all of the expenses.

Representatives for both Sears and Lampert occupied the 24th floor offices of Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP, the law firm retained by the company, in the General Motors Building near Central Park. They guzzled coffee like it was water to stay awake, some eating discarded food that was not necessarily theirs. After three days of round-the-clock negotiations, the conference rooms had begun to smell, one adviser said.

Time was running out. The auction Sears was holding as part of its bankruptcy proceedings had already blown past a midnight deadline set by US

Bankruptcy Judge Robert Drain. Besides Lampert, the only other bidders were either looking at small pieces of the company or vying to shut it down altogether and sell off its assets. Finally, at 2:30 a.m., in a conference room that had previously hosted discussions about the bankruptcies of Lehman Brothers and General Motors, a deal was clinched. Lampert would pay more than \$5.2 billion to rescue Sears, acquiring the company's businesses and 425 stores and preserving about 45,000 jobs.

It was the culmination of a battle - with Sears directors and advisers on one side and Lampert and his negotiators on the other - that had begun on the last Friday in December, when the billionaire, through his hedge fund ESL Investments Inc, made an offer to take over the company. This account of those crucial three weeks, based on court documents, securities filings and interviews with nearly a dozen people familiar with the negotiations, shows how close Sears came to liquidation.

A Sears spokesman declined to comment, and a Lampert representative said he was unavailable for an interview.

Plunging revenues

When Lampert combined Sears and rival chain Kmart almost 15 years ago, he heralded the formation of a retailer with more than \$55 billion in annual sales, nearly 3,500 stores and more than 300,000 employees. But within a dozen years, annual revenues had plunged to \$16.7 billion in the face of competition from the likes of Amazon.com Inc and Walmart Inc.

Lampert loaned Sears money over the years to keep it running, becoming the retailer's largest creditor in addition to its biggest shareholder. Under his leadership, Sears also spun off clothing manufacturer Lands' End, parted with 235 of its best stores for \$2.7 billion to a company Lampert created called Seritage Growth Properties and sold its Craftsman tools brand for \$900 million.

None of it worked. Sears has not



turned a profit since 2010.

In September, Lampert proposed a rescue plan, but a special committee of independent Sears directors spurned it. On Oct. 15, the storied retailer, which thrived with famous mail-order catalogs and once owned the tallest building in the world, filed for bankruptcy protection in White Plains, New York, federal court.

Sears listed about \$7 billion in assets, which included just under 700 stores. Liabilities were more than \$11 billion, including \$2.6 billion owed to Lampert. The Hoffman Estates, Illinois-based company by then employed about 68,000 people.

Sears formed a restructuring committee of independent directors and appointed veteran turnaround specialist Mohsin Meghji as chief restructuring officer. They soon faced a difficult choice. On Dec. 28, Lampert came forward with a takeover offer: he would pay \$4.4 billion to acquire various Sears businesses and 425 stores.

The offer would preserve up to

50,000 jobs. The company's creditors, such as mall owners and vendors, pushed for liquidation, which would yield a pile of cash to pay the retailer's bills, not to mention its debts to bankruptcy lenders.

On the brink

The company faced a court-imposed Jan. 4 deadline to determine whether Lampert's bid was good enough to compete in the looming auction. The deadline came and went. Sears directors and Lampert were at loggerheads. The retailer wanted another \$80 million to cover bankruptcy expenses. Lampert refused. On Monday, Jan. 7, the deadlock appeared hopeless, said people involved in the discussions. Drain urged the two sides to keep negotiating, but talks into the night went nowhere. Liquidation announcements were prepared by Sears and Lampert advisers, the people said. Sears tapped New Jersey-based Abacus Advisors Group LLC, whose chairman Alan Cohen was a longtime consultant to the company, to sell the chain's vast inventories of tools, appliances and store fixtures. —Reuters

StanChart CFO proposes second referendum to solve Brexit crisis

DAVOS: The chief financial officer of Asia-focused bank Standard Chartered believes a second referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union could be the only way to end a paralyzing parliamentary deadlock on future ties with the bloc. Speaking to Reuters at the Global Economic Forum in Davos yesterday, Andy Halford said there was a "reasonably compelling argument" for handing back decision-making power to the people, in view of Prime Minister Theresa May's failure to unite warring politicians behind her controversial EU divorce deal.

Senior bank executives have until now avoided comment on the possible merits of a second referendum, after several large institutions drew criticism for their strong financial backing of the failed campaign to stay in the EU in 2016. "The Houses of Parliament are there democratically to represent the people and therefore ostensibly the decision should lie with them," Halford said.

"However, in a situation where there is a gridlock in that body ... going directly to the people and hearing exactly what the people would want to do now that they have had two more years of information being fed to them - that has a strong argument for being a way forward," he added.

StanChart is one of several global lenders grappling with the redistribution of functions and staff to multiple EU outposts in a bid to keep business running smoothly after Britain leaves the EU on March 29. The activities reflect months of planning aimed at protecting clients in the event of a disorderly British exit, which Halford said would "seriously risk momentum in the economy". —Reuters

German investor confidence regains ground in January

FRANKFURT: Confidence among investors in Germany regained ground in January but remained negative overall, a regular survey published yesterday showed as fears grow of a slowdown within the 19-nation eurozone.

Economic expectations for the coming months improved to -15 points, the ZEW institute's monthly poll of 212 investors and analysts found, 2.5 points better than in December.

"It's remarkable that the expectations didn't continue to worsen given the numerous global risks to the economy," ZEW chief Achim Wambach said in a statement. "Financial market experts have already lowered their forecasts for economic growth significantly in recent months... anticipating new, potentially burdensome factors" like the growing risk of a hard Brexit or slower growth in China, he added.

Looking to other elements of the survey, investors' expectations for the coming months across the 19-nation eurozone also improved slightly, while remaining in negative figures. —AFP

Business

First 5G call in the MENA successfully tested between Ooredoo Kuwait and Ooredoo Qatar

Ooredoo announces trial launch of 5G for its customers in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Group yesterday successfully made the first trial International 5G call in the region between Ooredoo Kuwait and Ooredoo Qatar, demonstrating the phenomenal capabilities of its 5G networks in Qatar and Kuwait.

The call took place yesterday between Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani, Chief Executive Officer, Ooredoo Group, and Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulla Al-Thani, Chief Executive Officer, Ooredoo Kuwait. Also present were senior representatives of Ooredoo, respective government officials and invited media.

The call was originated by Sheikh Saud from Ooredoo's headquarters in Doha, and received by Sheikh Mohammed in Ooredoo's Kuwait headquarters. It took place using 5G CPEs connected at 5G speeds of up to 1 Gbps showcasing the incredible potential of 5G.

Ooredoo Qatar became the first operator in the world to launch a live, commercially available 5G network in May 2018 and has since worked tirelessly to ensure it will be ready for use as soon as 5G devices become commercially available. 5G is set to revolutionize mobile and fixed connectivity, with super-fast internet speeds, extreme throughput and low latency.

Ooredoo Kuwait announced the launch of the trial 5G for its customers last June from its key location at its head office in Kuwait City. The trial launch came as the company is preparing to release the biggest network of the revolutionary internet of the future across Kuwait in 2019. This comes in tandem with the international Ooredoo Group's plans to launch this technology across its markets, after it launched the new high capacity 5G in Doha through Ooredoo Qatar.

Detailed 5G testing is now underway in both Qatar and Kuwait, and plenty of the incredible possibilities of 5G have already been showcased by



Group photo during the event.

Ooredoo, including a driverless aerial taxi, 5G broadband in a moving vehicle and never-before-seen gaming quality.

Speaking about the landmark call, Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani, Chief Executive Officer, Ooredoo Group, said: "We were immensely proud to be the first in the world to launch a live, commercially available 5G network in Qatar and today, our pride increased as we conducted the first international trial 5G call in the region. Being at the forefront of technological development, to ensure our customers will be the first to enjoy the incredible capabilities of 5G in the future, is of paramount importance to us and we are delighted to announce the success of this trial call, marking yet another crucial step along the way to widespread, life-changing 5G adoption."

Ooredoo Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulla Al-Thani underscored that the 5G trial call embodies the company's core values of caring, connecting, and challenging, and demonstrates its commitment to enriching people's digital lives and comes in tandem with our strategy of digital transformation and adopting future technologies.

He added, "Over the years, we have worked tirelessly to deliver the best in-class services to our esteemed customers, no matter their needs. Through this, we are exercising our role as a private sector entity in the New Kuwait Vision 2035, and we aspire to deliver comprehensive telecom services with international standards in the Kuwaiti market under one roof, which comes in tandem with our digital transformation strategy."



Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulla Al-Thani

Exceptional rewards await ABK Salary Account customers



KUWAIT: In an effort to further enhance its customers' banking experience, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) yesterday announced the launch of a new salary transfer campaign. Starting from January 1st, the promotion is open to both Kuwaiti and expatriate customers who hold Elite, Prestige or Al Rased Salary Transfer Accounts. In its 2019 edition, the campaign offers ABK salary account customers a number of exceptional rewards when transferring their salaries to the bank in the form of interest-free loans, cash gifts and discounts.

Kuwaiti salary account holders will enjoy cash gifts of up to KD 1,000 provided that they transfer a salary equivalent to or higher than KD 500. Moreover, Kuwaiti customers are eligible for an interest-free loan of up to KD 10,000 and expatriates up to KD 5,000. These loans will be subject to ABK's terms and conditions, as well as the Central Bank of Kuwait's regulations and policies.

In addition, a monthly draw will reward two lucky customers with an equivalent of their monthly salaries. To enter the draw, customers must have their salaries transferred to the bank at least one month prior to the draw date.

Al-Tijari announces winner of Al-Najma prize program

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced the winner of the weekly draw as follows :-

Weekly draw prize KD 5,000- Fahad Abdullah Al-Rasheed The draw was conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Latifa Al-Jean. The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000.

Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

Now CBK existing customers can open Al-Najma Account through Al-Tijari Online and enter all draws without visiting the Bank's branch. However, CBK non-customers can submit an account opening application via the Bank's website where the Bank's Sales Unit will call them to arrange a visit to the customers to complete the account opening formalities.

Turkish Airlines new GM greets Kuwaiti media

KUWAIT: The Kuwait office of Turkish Airlines, Europe's best airline, recently held a media gathering to introduce the New General Manager of Kuwait, Muhammed Baltu, highlighting his new role as the lead for the future of the airline in Kuwait. The special luncheon reinforced the excellent relationship between the two parties and served to reinstate the mutual commitment to further collaboration.

The Turkish Airlines Kuwait General Manager and senior executives expressed their gratitude to the media partners for playing a vital part in making Turkish Airlines a successful brand in Kuwait and the region. They also discussed the upcoming grand announcements ranging from the highly anticipated launch of the new airport to new routes and destinations.

Muhammed Baltu said: "We look forward to celebrating many milestones with you in 2019. New opportunities and challenges lie ahead and I look forward to continue bringing unique offerings, enhanced connectivity, new destinations, in line with traditional values that have shaped Turkish Airlines. As I slowly transition into my new position in Kuwait, I look forward to building mutually beneficial partnerships and stay true to our legacy of 80 years."



Muhammed Baltu

Baltu commenced his tenure with Turkish Airlines in 2006 as a station officer in Tbilisi and Moscow, immediately after graduation. He moved onto work for seven

years at the Turkish Airlines Elazig Sales Office, in sales, operations, administrative affairs and accounting units. Followed by his position as a sales traffic manager at Turkish Airlines Sivas sales Office and as a sales manager in Turkish Airlines Nigeria Lagos station for three years after which for the next three years he was assigned as a station manager in Turkish Airlines Netherlands Amsterdam Station. This led to the next big phase of his career wherein he was overseeing local and international operations as GM of Turkish Airlines Italy - Naples from October 2013 to October 2018.

Kuwait's MASBI group exclusive agent for US Chuck E Cheese in Kuwait, Bahrain

KUWAIT: Kuwait's MASBI Group announced signing an exclusive agency agreement with the American family fun and restaurants chain: Chuck E Cheese, by powers of which five branches would be opened in Kuwait and two others in Bahrain by 2030 with total investment value of over KD 1 million.

Notably, this American trademark had entered Middle East markets for the first time in KSA, where it has over 40 branches all over the Saudi Kingdom. As its second region-

al market, Kuwait is so promising thanks to the economic stability, which ensures rewarding investment returns.

In this regard, MASBI executive operations manager, Ahmed Al-Subai'e expressed pleasure for the group's expansion in family amusement fields following its remarkable successes in construction, jewelry and restaurants. "Accordingly, we opted to expand our operations through this agreement with the American international trademark of Chuck E. Cheese by providing recreational centers for all family members over a total area of more than 1000 square meters, over 200 recreational games for competitive prices that suit all family budgets", he explained adding that family recreation markets are witnessing remarkable growth in Kuwait and that the number of families seeking high quality recreational services matching their spending schemes are steadily growing. "The first Chuck E. Cheese branch is expected to be launched by the second quarter of this year". Al-Subai'e concluded adding that MASBI group was currently selecting the suitable location and that further branches would gradually be opened within five years.

Notably, Chuck E Cheese provides all family recre-

ational needs under one roof including various recreational games, cartoon figures and food and beverages through its own restaurant, which makes it a unique one stop for family recreation in Kuwait. The center also provides high quality security to give parents peace of mind and assurance that their kids are totally safe and having fun. This leading recreational center will also provide special programs for birthdays and kids special occasions.

It is also noteworthy to mention that MASBI Group was established in 2008 as an investment umbrella investing in different industries, different partnerships that will serve both the market and stakeholders at the same time.



Ahmed Al-Subai'e

26 new winners in Al-Hassad Islamic account

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank recently conducted its Al-Hassad Islamic account weekly draw, Kuwait's leading sharia-compliant rewards program that offers a broad range of prizes to the largest number of winners, on the 16th of January 2019.

The account provides 26 weekly prizes that are comprised of KD 25,000 as a grand prize and 25 other prizes valued at KD 1,000 each. AUB also offers four quarterly prizes that are valued at KD 250,000 to each winner allowing them to achieve their dreams of travelling, studying abroad, or owning their dream home or car. On this occasion Ahli United Bank announced, "With this draw, we are adding 26 new winners and prizes to the Al-Hassad Islamic account whereby, the total number of winners annually will include more than 1300.

The weekly grand prize winner of KD 25,000 Eman Yaqub Bahzad. 25 other winners won prizes

of KD 1,000 and are as follows: Moudi Hajed AlMutairy , Fouzi Bader Aldabbous, Bahja Sayed Esmail, Eman Jassim Alzelzalah, Laila Sayed Hassan, Abdulredha Jassim Shaaban, Saheb Ahmad AlRasheed, Madihah Alsadoon, TaiBbah Abdulmohsen Almunayes , Fahad Jazaa Al-Qahtany, Fawaz Hazzaa Alenezi, Abdullah M Alqaoud, Dawoud Tawfeeq, Nasser Kareem Obaid , Khatoun Ali Alhaddad, Mohammad Saad AlMutairy , Majeed Ali Mohammed , Sami Ali Mohammed, Anthony Pena Manabat, William Hendricks and Fafia Nabi , Ahmed Jaffar Ghanem, Sayed Ali Hashim, Afaf A.wahab Ahmed, Mohamed Abdulla Mohamed, and Zahra Ahmed Malaki.

Al-Hassad Islamic account's customers in Kuwait and Bahrain are eligible to participate in the draw in line with the program's terms and conditions. Ahli United Bank added, "There are increased opportunities that await our current customers and those who are interested in opening an Al-Hassad Islamic account to benefit from the wide range of prizes and opportunities offered this year." Individual customers can open their accounts with a minimum deposit of KD 100, qualifying them to enter the draw.

WB: South Africa's economy to grow to 1.3% in 2019

JOHANNESBURG: The World bank forecast higher South African economic growth this year compared with the previous year, but warned of risks such as global trade tensions and poor balance sheets of state-owned companies. The World Bank sees South Africa's gross domestic product growing by 1.3 percent this year, an improvement from a forecast of 0.9 percent for 2018. Economic growth would be supported by the implementation of structural reforms under President Cyril Ramaphosa such as relaxed visa regulations, the establishment of an infrastructure fund and progress on the Mining Charter, the bank said.

In its latest economic update report, the bank projected South Africa's economic growth at 1.7 pct in 2020. "We believe the reforms are going into the right direction but first they have to be implemented. Implementation is key," Sebastien Dessus, the World Bank's program leader for South Africa told a news conference in Johannesburg. The Bank, however, said South Africa faced risks such as El Nino weather conditions that could impact crop production, global trade tensions and the impact of cash-strapped state-owned enterprises like power utility Eskom on the national budget. —Reuters

Health & Technology

High-level of pollution lowers people's happiness in China

PARIS: Eye-watering, throat-scratching air pollution is a major driver of big city blues in China, according to a study published yesterday that matched social network chatter with fine-particle pollution levels. "The take-away is simple," lead author Siqi Zheng, an associate professor at MIT and director of the University's China Future City Lab, told AFP. "Higher levels of air pollution lower people's happiness in the world's most populous country."

Dirty air is not the only blight on life in urban China, which is also plagued by soaring housing prices, worries over food safety, and poor public services. But health-wreaking pollution-especially microscopic bits from coal-fired power plants and factories that settle in the lungs-is a long-standing gripe of the country's burgeoning middle class. More than a million premature deaths every year in China can be chalked up to air pollution, the World Health Organization and other research groups have concluded.

A toxic cocktail of small and larger particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and ozone (O₃) is likewise linked to poor cognitive perform-

ance, labour productivity and educational outcomes. On polluted days, people are also more likely to engage in impulsive and risky behaviour they may later regret, observational studies have shown.

Awareness of the problem and its consequences is very high among China's city dwellers, a fact not lost on the government. After an embarrassing episode in 2012 when daily pollution levels published on Twitter by the US embassy in Beijing were consistently higher than official figures for the city, China's leaders declared war on smog-clogged air.

Happiness index

They set up hundreds of monitoring stations throughout the country, and introduced more stringent standards, especially for small particles less than 2.5 microns (PM_{2.5}) in diameter. The average human hair is 60-to-90 microns in width. According to the new rules, the density of these dangerous microscopic particles should not exceed 35 micrograms per cubic meter (35 mcg/m³) for any 24-hour period.

WHO Air Quality Guidelines are even

stricter, setting the limit at 25 mcg/m³. In China's most heavily polluted cities-including Beijing and Tianjin, home to more than 35 million-particulate density is often two, three and even four times higher than either standard. To gauge how urban air pollution affected day-to-day mood, Zheng and colleagues used machine-learning algorithms to comb through more than 200 million messages from 144 cities posted in 2014 on Weibo, China's largest microblogging site.

As of mid-2018, Weibo, similar to Twitter, had 455 million active users. The researchers devised an "expressed happiness index" based on key words and context, and then stacked it up against fluctuating PM_{2.5} pollution levels. "We found a significant negative correlation"-when one went up, the other went down-"between pollution and happiness levels," Zheng said. "Women were more sensitive to higher pollution levels than men." Average daily PM_{2.5} concentration was 55 mcg/m³ across all 144 cities-more than double the WHO limit-and several times higher in many.

More than half of China's population-



Researchers at MIT have discovered that air pollution in China's cities may be associated with low levels of happiness amongst the country's urban population.

nearly 700 million people-now lives in urban areas. Intriguingly, the link was strongest in the cleanest and dirtiest cities examined. People very worried about

health and air quality tend to move to cleaner cities, the study suggested, while those in the dirtiest urban areas were more aware of damage to their health. —AFP

Tokyo airport tests driverless bus to shuttle Olympics visitors

TOKYO: Visitors pouring into Japan's Haneda airport for the Tokyo Olympics next year may find themselves ferried to and from planes on driverless buses, currently being tested at the major hub. Six Japanese firms, including national carrier ANA, jointly started a 10-day experiment with a self-driving prototype minibus last week. On Tuesday, officials allowed a sneak peak at the automated transportation, which is being tested with a safety driver in the front seat.

The "driver" sat with his white-gloved hands hovering above the wheel, ready to take control if need be, but otherwise allowing the bus to wend the route on its own. "Our hope is to be able to offer users autonomous buses by the Tokyo 2020 Olympics," said ANA project



TOKYO: Journalists look at a driverless bus during an open test drive demonstration at Tokyo's Haneda International Airport yesterday. — AFP

chief Tadakatsu Yamaguchi. The vehicle holds a maximum of 10 people and cruises along a route connecting two terminals at a speed of up to 30 kilometers (19 miles) per hour using GPS and magnetic markers on the road.

Project officials did not immediately detail the cost of the system or how many people

they expect to eventually transport with the buses. Japan is hoping the 2020 Games will be a chance to showcase cutting edge tech projects in the country, but autonomous transport is also an important sector for a nation suffering labor shortages and a shrinking, ageing population. —AFP

Scientists make gene-edited chickens in bid to halt pandemic

LONDON: British scientists are developing gene-edited chickens designed to be totally resistant to flu in a new approach to trying to stop the next deadly human pandemic. The first of the transgenic chicks will be hatched later this year at the Roslin Institute at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, said Wendy Barclay, a professor of virology at Imperial College London who is co-leading the project. The birds' DNA has been altered using a new gene editing technology known as CRISPR.

In this case the "edits" are to remove parts of a protein on which the flu virus normally depends, making the chickens totally flu-resistant. The idea is to generate poultry that cannot get flu and would form a "buffer between wild birds

and humans", Barclay said. Global health and infectious disease specialists cite the threat of a human flu pandemic as one of their biggest concerns. The death toll in the last flu pandemic in 2009/10 - caused by the H1N1 strain and considered to be relatively mild - was around half a million people worldwide.

The historic 1918 Spanish flu killed around 50 million people. The greatest fear now is that a deadly strain could jump from wild birds via poultry into humans, and then mutate into a pandemic airborne form that can pass easily between people. "If we could prevent influenza virus crossing from wild birds into chickens, we would stop the next pandemic at source," said Barclay. —AFP

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What's On



Ahmadi governor attends Open Day of 25th Al-Qurain Cultural Festival



Ahmadi governor Sheikh Fawaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah recently attended the Open Day held within the activities of the 25th Al-Qurain Cultural Festival at Ahmadi Park. The festival was also attended by NCCAL secretary general, Ali Al-Youha, his assistant for cultural affairs, Dr. Essa Al-Ansari, dignitaries and diplomats.

Notably, 400 participants from 19 different embassies designated in Kuwait took part in the festival along with 30 voluntary teams from various NGOs in addition to an Expo team.



French Ambassador to Kuwait Marie Masdupuy and German Ambassador to Kuwait Karleried pose for a photograph with officials of both embassies on the eve of the "Treaty of Aachen" for Franco-German cooperation.

LOYAC constitutes board of trustees

LOYAC announced the formation of its board of trustees headed by Mohammed Jassem Al-Sager with Dherar Al-Gahnem, Fadwa Al-Humaidhi, Dr Saad Al-Barrak, Omran Hayat, Fadiya Al-Marzouq and Fare'a Al-Saqqaf as board members.

LOYAC's board chairperson, Fare'a Al-Saqqaf said

after the achievements over the last 16 years, LOYAC is now ready to perform a larger role in serving humanity through various purposeful developmental programs. "That is the reason why LOYAC selected a powerful board of trustees that strongly believes in its values, vision and mission and is capable of discharging its humanitarian role in the Arab region", he added.

"Constitution of a board of trustees had been one of our priorities for years but we were waiting for the right time to restructure LOYAC in a way that allows more expansion", Al-Saqqaf added.



Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa winners at HORECA

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa's has competed and won yet again at HORECA, the biggest hospitality and food industries event in the country, earning the most number of awards in the competition. The competition involved a variety of categories related to cuisine and housekeeping, in order to display the vast variety of talent in Kuwait.

Chefs competed and won in various categories including pasta, mystery box, burger making, sandwiches, cold and hot oriental appetizers. Appetizers included croissants, and eclair, whereas desserts involved a three plated presentation and a themed celebration cake. Furthermore, there was a sushi competition, hot and cold sandwich competition, and jack creek perfect steak challenge. To top it all off, the housekeeping competition involved competing in bed making.

Jumeirah Messilah Beach has won a total of 31 awards at the HORECA Exhibition. One gold award was won at the Hot / Cold mezze live competition, whereas 10 silver awards were won in the fresh pasta, best burger, Asian cuisine, mystery basket, best croissant - zaatar/ thyme, hot/cold sandwiches, and best eclair competitions alongside the Jack creek steak challenge. 16 bronze awards were won in the 3 plated dessert presentation, canape, bread creation, Asian cuisine, Mystery Basket, hot/cold sandwich, best eclair, sushi and themed cake categories. Kuwait's idyllic resort has also won merit in the 3 plated dessert presentation, and best burger competitions, alongside the Jack creek steak challenge, and the 6-course set menu competition. Lastly, 2 hygiene awards were also received.

HORECA is an exhibition in which the hospitality and food service industry displays its talents, and products in competition. "In iconic competitions such as HORECA, we seek to ensure displaying the best form of talent and hard work in what we do. It truly excites us to know that our hard work and talent has paid off in winning at HORECA," expressed Director of Sales & Marketing, Georges Akar.



GUST hosts workshops on translating classics of world literature

Gulf University for Science and Technology's (GUST) Global Studies Center (GSC) announced yesterday that it is set to host a series of workshops and panel discussions, on the 27th and 28th of January on its campus to debate and discuss the challenges involved in defining and translating classic works of literature. The seminars, led by prominent field experts, are part of the GSC's ongoing effort to bring outstanding speakers and stimulating topics to GUST and the wider community.

The main speakers are Dr Bruce Lawrence (Professor Emeritus of Islamic Studies, Duke University), and Dr Miriam Cooke (Professor Emerita of Arab Cultures, Duke University). The first day of the series will include workshops focusing on problems encountered in the translation of the Holy Qur'an - a project currently being undertaken by Professor Lawrence in collaboration with GUST English Professor and poet, Dr Mohammed Habib.

This workshop will be dedicated to an issue that has global significance: how do we define the "classics" of world lit-

erature, how do we translate them across various languages and cultures, and the problems that a translator faces. The second day will feature a series of three interactive sessions where the speakers will discuss the translation of particular passages from various works of literature active participation of the audience.

Director of the Global Studies Center Dr Fahed Al-Sumait said, "The world we live in is dynamic, and so should be the classic works of literature we read over and over again. In conducting these workshops and seminars, we keep those works alive, and ensure that they remain relevant, and have the same impact they had when they were first published."

GUST continues to build on its mission to become a knowledge-hub that benefits and engages students, academics, and the wider community in Kuwait. This particular event follows in the footsteps of other major conferences recently hosted by the university, such as the International Federation for Information Processing Conference, which assembled around 75 scholars from around the globe to present their research findings.



Dr Mohammed Habib



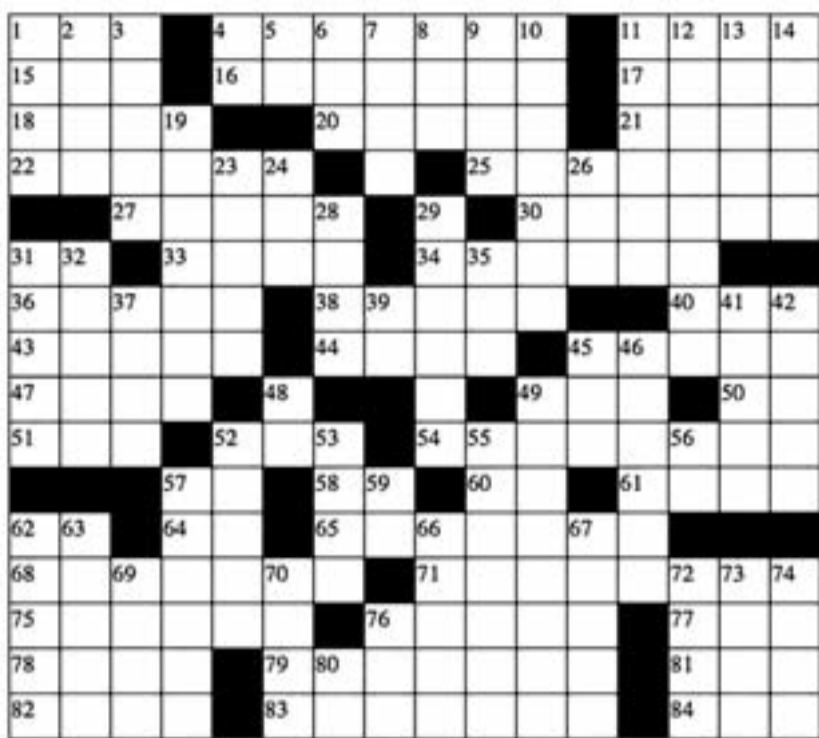
Dr Bruce Lawrence



Dr Miriam Cooke

Stars

CROSSWORD 2117



ACROSS

1. The 19th letter of the Greek alphabet.
4. Cast an actor, singer, or dancer in an unsuitable role.
11. A Loloish language.
15. An edge tool used to cut and shape wood.
16. French mathematician and astronomer who formulated the nebular hypothesis concerning the origins of the solar system and who developed the theory of probability (1749-1827).
17. A public act of violence by an unruly mob.
18. Having nine hinged bands of bony plates.
20. 100 aunar equal 1 krona.
21. (prefix) Outside or outer.
22. A genus of tropical American plants have sword-shaped leaves and a fleshy compound fruits composed of the fruits of several flowers (such as pineapples).
25. Be a signal for or a symptom of.
27. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
30. A breast-shaped mass of padding worn in a brassiere.
31. Date used in reckoning dates before the supposed year Christ was born.
33. Avatar of Vishnu.
34. (Old Testament) The first of the major Hebrew prophets (8th century BC).
36. An ancient city in southeastern Greece.
38. A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
40. A federation of North American labor unions that merged with the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1955.
43. Be in contradiction with.
44. The act of moving along swiftly (as before a gale).
47. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
50. A unit of luminous flux equal to the amount of light given out through a solid angle of 1 steradian by a point source of 1 candela intensity radiating uniformly in all directions.
51. (British) A linear measure of 16.5 feet.
54. (Welsh) The farmer god.
58. Informal terms for a mother.
60. Before noon.
61. A former copper coin of Pakistan.
62. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
64. The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.
65. Of or pertaining to or characteristic of Italy or its people or culture or language.
68. Dried bark of the cascara buckthorn used as a laxative.
71. Backbends combined with handstands.
75. A member of the Wakashan people living on Vancouver Island and in the Cape Flattery region of northwestern Washington.
77. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
78. (prefix) Within.
79. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
81. Being one more than two.
82. Dearly loved.
83. Only extant member of the order Rhychocephala of large spiny lizard-like diapsid reptiles of coastal islands off New Zealand.
84. Inflammation of the urethra of unknown cause.

DOWN

1. Thin fibrous bark of the paper mulberry and Pipturus albidus.
2. Chief port of Yemen.
3. A member of a Turkic people of Uzbekistan and neighboring areas.
4. A metric unit of volume equal to one thousandth of a liter.
5. A state in midwestern United States.
6. A health resort near a spring or at the seaside.
7. A team of professional baseball players who play and travel together.
8. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
9. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
10. (Judaism) Not conforming to dietary laws.
11. Small space in a tissue or part such as the area between veins on a leaf or an insect's wing.
12. Something considered choice to eat.
13. One of the 7 gods of happiness.
14. Make amends for.
19. Containing no liquid or actuated without the use of liquid.
23. Lower in esteem.
24. A guided missile fired from shipboard against an airborne target.
26. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
28. Having or denoting a low vocal or instrumental range.
29. The outer and thinner of the two bones of the human leg between the knee and ankle.
32. Any system of principles or beliefs.
35. Experiencing or showing sorrow or unhappiness.
37. Showing or causing joy and pleasure.
39. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
41. Someone who has committed (or been legally convicted of) a crime.
42. Minute aquatic herbs floating on or below the water surface of still water consisting of a leaflike frond or plant body and single root.
45. The compass point that is one point east (clockwise) of due north.
46. A Spanish male Gypsy.
48. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
49. Well known or easily recognized.
52. Offering little or no hope.
53. Type genus of the Amidae.
55. Stem of the rattan palm used for making canes and umbrella handles.
56. A colorless explosive liquid that is volatile and poisonous and foul-smelling.
57. (Greek mythology) A mythical Trojan who was killed by Achilles during the Trojan War.
59. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
63. A river in eastern France.
66. Look forward to the probably occurrence of.
67. Jordan's port.
69. A sodium salt of carbonic acid.
70. Deeply moved.
72. Characteristic of false pride.
73. Armor plate that protects the chest.
74. Radioactive iodine test that measures the amount of radioactive iodine taken up by the thyroid gland.
76. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
80. A bivalent and trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Your way is the only way today. Others may not show great appreciation for this overly independent side of you. You may be dealing with some personal issues today. This may find you at odds with others. This is a very sensitive matter and others can not understand what you refuse to share. Your independence can be a blessing and a curse. You may feel as if no one is there for you when you need them most. This comes from you always putting on a strong front. Everyone needs a shoulder to cry on once in a while. Let your guard down and let others help you for a change.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may find yourself realizing how special you are today. Appreciating all your gifts and talents and feeling a sense of pride. This is a great time of communication with those around you as you are able to express your emotions clearly to others. Dedication and devotion have gotten you to this point in life and you in a position you can provide much help to others. You are in touch with not only your emotions but also very in touch with the needs and emotions of those close to you. This is a very nice time in your life. You may find someone close shows great support and sympathy to you today when a situation you encounter puts you in need of a listening ear.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This is a time you desire peace and harmony in your world. Make peace with your past. This is a great day to reach out and mend fences with those you have had differences with in the past. This is a great day in the workplace for you. It is your time to shine. Know that all you do will be noticed. You may be asked to represent your company in some way. Your communication skills are on point today and you will be a huge success.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Look for a rainbow today. Something good is happening in your life. It may lead to something important in your career or your personal life. Even if the pleasure you derive from it is not permanent, you can find pleasure in the moment. You're getting a break you deserve. Don't discount it by projecting the future. If you take a "live today" attitude, the future will take care of itself-and you.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

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



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You don't need a shovel for the type of digging you are about to begin. This is an emotional venture. Digging deep into your inner workings. What has happened in your life that has molded you into the person you are today? Remember, stress is brought on not by circumstance, but by our reaction to circumstances. Take a step back, take a deep breath, and remember you are in control of your reaction. You have successfully turned stumbling blocks into stepping stones in the past. This has made you who you are today. You not only have the strength, but also the wisdom to make your world a happy place!



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may look in the mirror and see someone you truly love and respect looking back at you. Today you realize you appreciate who you are and how far you have come in this life. You strive to be a kind person and to help others as much as possible. A giver who attracts takers but doesn't let the users stop you from being you. There is no room for bitterness in your heart. You are determined to leave your mark on this world. What you see today is exactly how those close to you see each day. Know that you are loved and appreciated.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Sit tight. Now is not the time to make any changes concerning your living situation. It is a time to let things remain the same and change shouldn't be an option right now. You may feel alone and disconnected from your friends and crave some time out and about. This is a time you should resist temptation and just keep to yourself to avoid conflict and hard times. Time is best spent at home with your lover, close family, or children right now. Surround yourself with those closest to you who truly understand you best. You may find that the admiration and appreciation you receive from them is just what you need.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 19)

If you find someone challenging your good taste or choices today just brush it off. You may find your mind is a million miles away. Focus may not be a strong point for you today. This probably isn't a great day to make decisions but that is ok. Take a break. Get out and enjoy some of the beauty that surrounds you and enjoy what the world has to offer. Good fortune is soon to come your way. A break from reality may be in order to truly appreciate and recognize the opportunities that are placed in your path.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

All that is dear to your heart takes priority today. You need to love and be loved. Take a chance today. You may receive a great reward. Love is a huge factor in your life today. You are learning to love yourself and pay close attention to the needs and want of those close to you. Getting in touch with your emotions and the emotions of those around you will cause others to be drawn to you. Capricorn, others will value your opinions and sense of independence. You are becoming someone others look up to.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

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



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

If you ask you shall receive. You seem to have a way of getting exactly what you want. You are most persuasive today. Your words are sweet like honey. This is one of those days that seems to fall right into place for you. Enjoy because it just doesn't get much better than this. A great evening to spend time with someone you love. This could be very beneficial to your relationship.

Wordsearch Puzzle

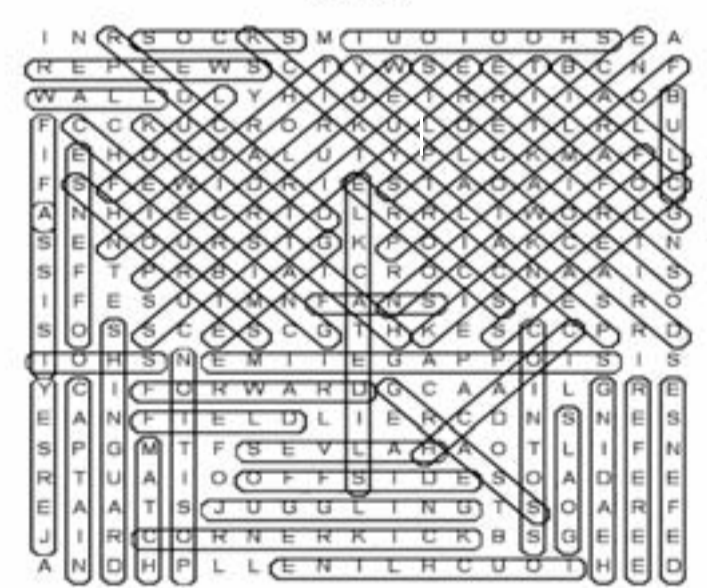
Songs From the Year 2000

Find and circle all of the songs from the year 2000 that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 29 letters spell an additional song title from 2000.



- | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| AMAZED | CALIFORNICATION | INCOMPLETE | PINCH ME |
| AMERICAN PIE | DESERT ROSE | JUMPIN' JUMPIN' | SAY MY NAME |
| BACK AT ONE | FADED | KRYPTONITE | SEPARATED |
| BACK HERE | GIRL ON TV | LUCKY | SHE BANGS |
| BAG LADY | HIGHER | MARIA MARIA | SMOOTH |
| BE WITH YOU | HOT BOYZ | MEET VIRGINIA | STAN |
| BEAUTIFUL DAY | I LIKE IT | MINORITY | STRONGER |
| BENT | I NEED YOU | MOST GIRLS | THERE YOU GO |
| BREATHE | I TRY | MUSIC | TRY AGAIN |
| BROADWAY | I WANNA KNOW | NO MORE | WIFEY |
| BYE BYE BYE | I WISH | OTHERSIDE | WONDERFUL |

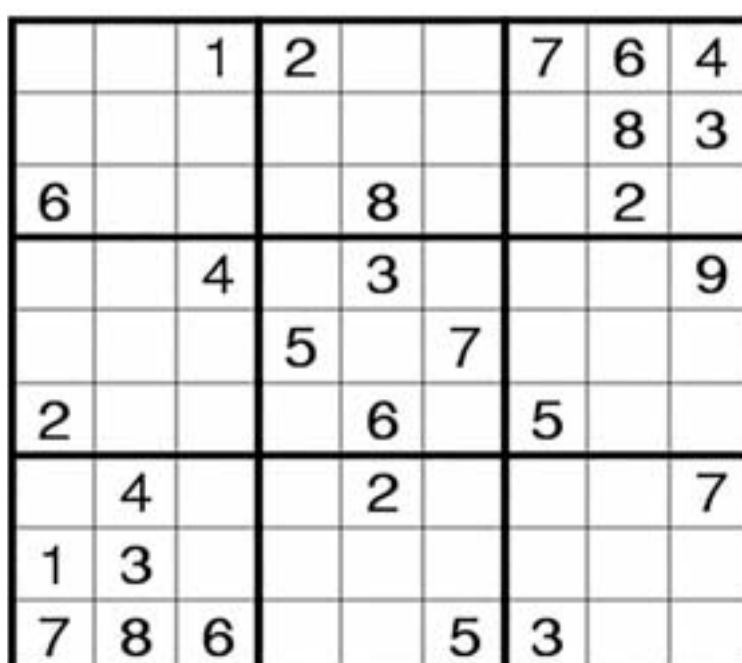
Soccer



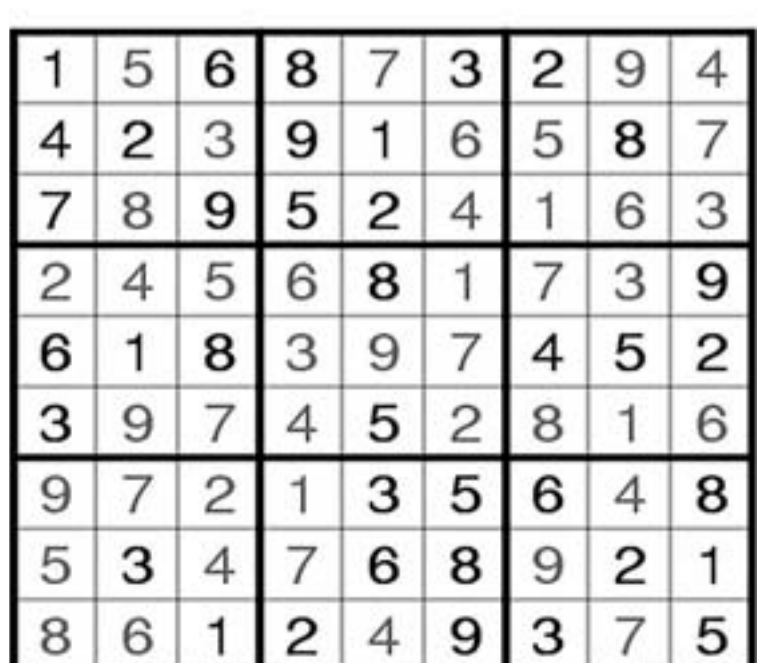
- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|
| ASSIST | FORMATION | MATCH | SLIDE TACKLE |
| BALL | FORWARD | OFFENSE | SOCKS |
| CAPTAIN | FOUL | OFFSIDE | SPORT |
| CHEERING | GAME | PENALTY KICK | STOPPAGE TIME |
| CLEATS | GOALIE | POSITION | STRIKERS |
| CLUB | GOALS | 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 | |

The hidden message is: IN MANY COUNTRIES SOCCER IS CALLED FOOTBALL.

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2019



A picture shows a house covered with ice and snow in Oberwiesenthal. — AFP

‘Roma,’ ‘The Favorite’ lead Oscars nominations with 10 each

Alfonso Cuarón’s “Roma,” an ode to his childhood in 1970s Mexico City, and offbeat royal romp “The Favorite” yesterday topped the Oscar nominations with 10 each. Popular musical romance “A Star Is Born” and Dick Cheney biopic “Vice” finished with eight nominations each, while superhero blockbuster “Black Panther” finished with seven. So far, the awards season has been a bit surprising, with prizes sprayed among a variety of films. So yesterday’s announcement gives the race to the Academy Awards on February 24 a bit more clarity.

The sweeping success of “Roma” is history-making for streaming giant Netflix, marking its first nomination for best picture, and also first in other top categories like best director and best actress. The black and white film snatched up nods for best supporting actress, best foreign film and a swirl of other nominations. But “The Favorite” scored a bit of a surprise with its stellar haul. While nominations for its trio of stars—Olivia Colman, Emma Stone and Rachel Weisz—were a near-lock, its flight to the top of the list was not.

Director Yorgos Lanthimos took a nod—instead of Cooper. “A Star Is Born,” the latest iteration of the classic musical romance, scored in most big categories, with nominations for three of the four acting prizes—Bradley Cooper, Lady Gaga and their co-star Sam Elliott. Surprisingly, Cooper was denied a nod for his directing debut, despite earning nominations at the Golden Globes and from the Directors Guild.

In all, there are eight films vying for best picture: “Roma,” “The Favorite,” “A Star Is Born,” Spike Lee’s “BlacKkKlansman,” Queen biopic “Bohemian Rhapsody,” satirical Dick Cheney biopic “Vice,” civil rights dramedy “Green Book” and “Black Panther.” “Panther” also made a bit of history, as the first superhero flick ever nominated in the category. “Green Book” earned five Oscar nominations and moved up in the Academy Award conversation at

the weekend when it won best film at the Producers Guild of America awards. Twenty times out of 29, the PGA award winner has gone on to take the best picture Oscar, including “The Shape of Water” last year.

Controversy

Last year, the awards season was marked by the Harvey Weinstein scandal, and the birth of the #MeToo and Time’s Up movements against sexual misconduct and harassment in the workplace. This year, multiple controversies are plaguing the Oscars—none of them related to last year’s bombshell. In August, the Academy—under fire for being too elitist—announced it would add a “best popular film” award. But many saw the new category as a booby prize for blockbusters like “Black Panther” that would keep them out of contention for top honors.

The plan was scrapped a month later. Then actor-comedian Kevin Hart had perhaps the briefest tenure ever as Oscars host—a few days. He withdrew after homophobic tweets he had written years ago sparked a crippling backlash on social media. By all accounts, with many stars reportedly unwilling to grasp the poisoned chalice, the Academy has opted to go forward without a host.

Of course, on Oscars night, the focus will revert to the nominees, and the red carpet glamour. In the best actor category, Christian Bale looks to be the frontrunner for his uncanny portrayal of Cheney in “Vice.” But Rami Malek’s Golden Globe win for his work as Freddie Mercury in Queen biopic “Bohemian Rhapsody” put him into the conversation. Viggo Mortensen (“Green Book”) and Cooper (“Star”) are also contenders, with Willem Dafoe (“At Eternity’s Gate”) rounding out the field as a dark horse. For best actress, Glenn Close’s momentum is soaring after her twin Globe and Critics’ Choice wins for “The Wife,” in which she plays a woman author whose marriage boils over when her writer husband wins the Nobel Prize.



In this file photo US singer/actress Lady Gaga (left) and US actor/director Bradley Cooper pose on the red carpet upon arrival for the UK premiere of the film “A Star Is Born” in central London.



In this file photo Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón arrives for the Los Angeles premiere of “Roma” at the Egyptian theatre in Hollywood. — AFP photos



In this file photo US actress Emma Stone (left) and British actress Olivia Colman arrive for the BAFTA Tea at the Four Seasons Hotel in Beverly Hills, California Party.

But Gaga and Olivia Colman, who plays Queen Anne in “The Favourite,” are expected to give her a fight, along with breakout “Roma” star Yalitza Aparicio and dark house Melissa McCarthy (“Can You Ever Forgive Me?”). In the supporting actor category, Elliott will go head-to-head with “Green Book” star Mahershala Ali, who took home a Golden Globe. For best supporting actress, Regina King (“If Beale Street Could Talk”) will battle with Stone and Weisz.

“Roma” is the pre-emptive favorite for best foreign language film. It will compete with “Capernaum” (Lebanon), “Cold War” (Poland), “Never Look Away” (Germany) and “Shoplifters” (Japan). The nominations were announced on Tuesday in the pre-dawn hours in Hollywood by actors Tracee Ellis Ross and Kumail Nanjani. — AFP

Oscar nominees in main categories

Best picture:
“Black Panther”
“BlacKkKlansman”
“Bohemian Rhapsody”
“The Favorite”
“Green Book”
“Roma”
“A Star Is Born”
“Vice”

Best director:
Spike Lee, “BlacKkKlansman”
Pawel Pawlikowski, “Cold War”
Yorgos Lanthimos, “The Favorite”
Alfonso Cuarón, “Roma”
Adam McKay, “Vice”

Best actor:
Christian Bale, “Vice”
Bradley Cooper, “A Star Is Born”
Willem Dafoe, “At Eternity’s Gate”
Rami Malek, “Bohemian Rhapsody”
Viggo Mortensen, “Green Book”

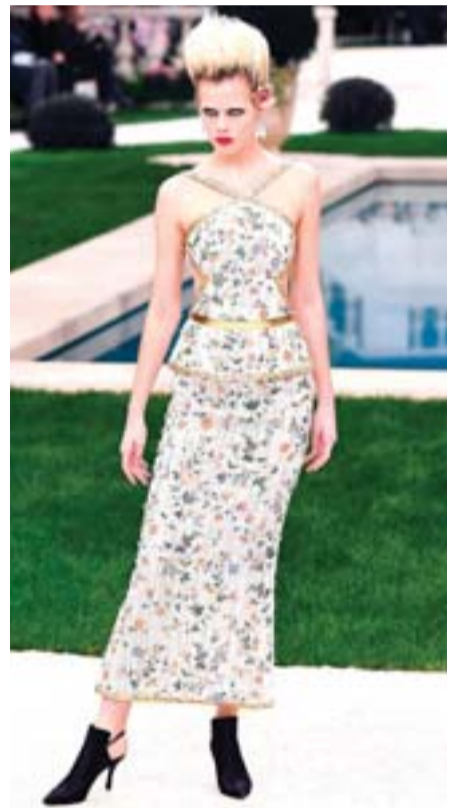
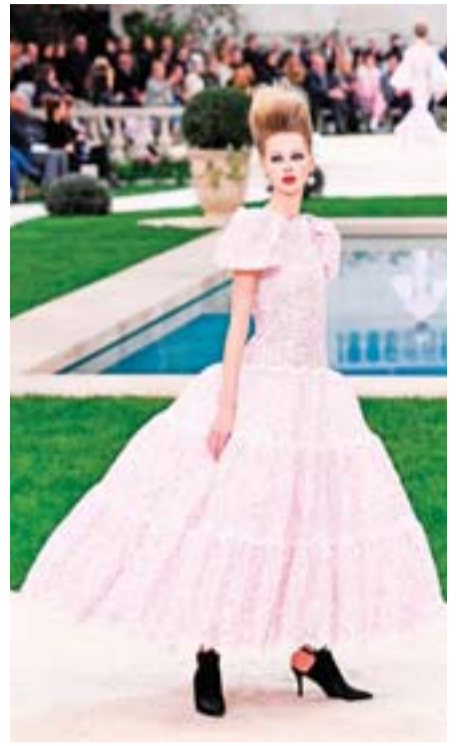
Best actress:
Yalitza Aparicio, “Roma”
Glenn Close, “The Wife”
Olivia Colman, “The Favorite”
Lady Gaga, “A Star Is Born”
Melissa McCarthy, “Can You Ever Forgive Me?”

Best supporting actor:
Mahershala Ali, “Green Book”
Adam Driver, “BlacKkKlansman”
Sam Elliott, “A Star Is Born”
Richard E. Grant, “Can You Ever Forgive Me?”
Sam Rockwell, “Vice”

Best supporting actress:
Amy Adams, “Vice”
Marina de Távora, “Roma”
Regina King, “If Beale Street Could Talk”
Emma Stone, “The Favorite”
Rachel Weisz, “The Favorite”

Best foreign language film:
“Capernaum” (Lebanon)
“Cold War” (Poland)
“Never Look Away” (Germany)
“Roma” (Mexico)
“Shoplifters” (Japan)

Best animated feature:
“Incredibles 2”
“Isle of Dogs”
“Mirai”
“Ralph Breaks the Internet”
“Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse” — AFP



'TIRED' LAGERFELD MISSES CHANEL PARIS COUTURE SHOW



Karl Lagerfeld missed the first of his Paris haute couture fashion Chanel shows yesterday, with the label later saying that the veteran designer "was tired this morning". With the French capital hit by a snowstorm, the 85-year-old creator left his studio head Virginie Viard to take the bow for him at the end of his spring summer collection set in the gardens of an Italian villa. With fashionistas expecting the traditional theatrical reveal at the end of the show where Lagerfeld would appear somewhere on the extravagant set, a Chanel executive emerged instead to announce his absence.

He said the designer would be at the second show for his super-rich clientele. The bizarre twist set off speculation that the designer, known as the 'Kaiser', who has ruled over fashion for a large part of the past half century, may be about to step back. Lagerfeld went out of his way to acknowledge Viard, one of the behind-the-scenes heroines at the luxury label, for her years of support at his last Paris show in October. Asked by AFP, executives initially refused to give a reason for the designer's absence. But later a spokeswoman told Women's Wear Daily that "he was tired this morning".

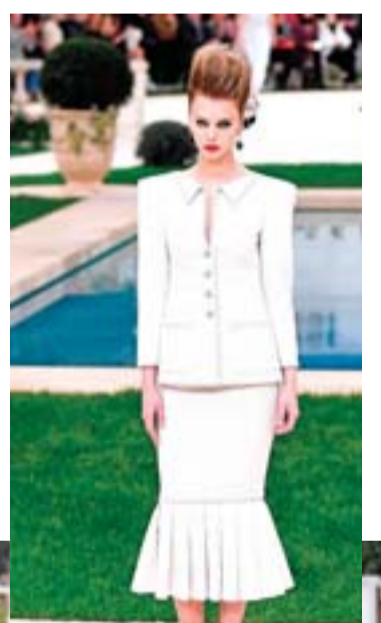
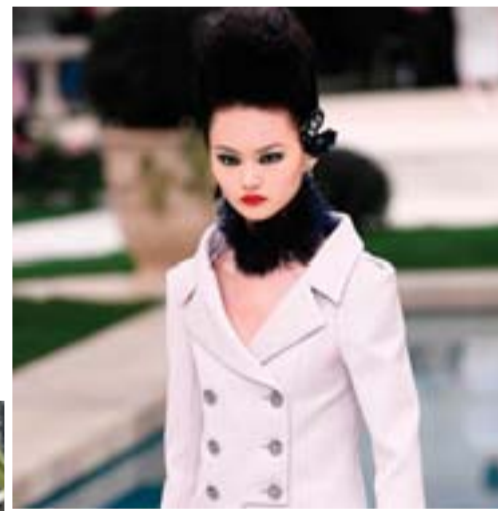
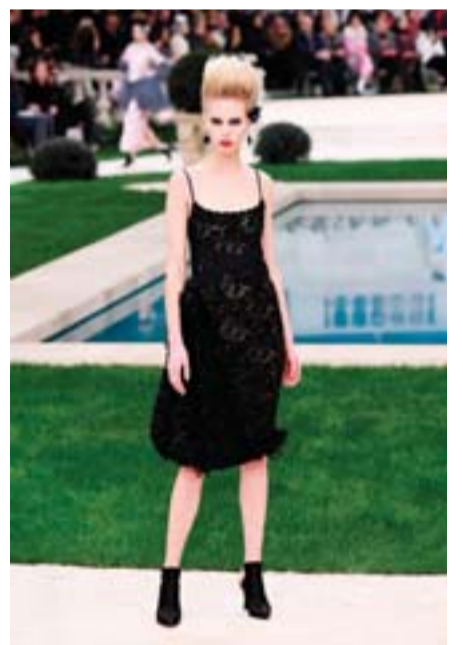
One veteran critic told AFP that she could not remember Lagerfeld ever missing a Chanel Paris show in his four decades of the couture house. The prolific German has left many younger creators in the dust, turning out collections season after season for Fendi and his own label as well as Chanel.

Fashion rolls up for Dior's chic strongwoman circus

Italian designer Maria Grazia Chiuri took Christian Dior to the circus Monday with arguably her most sublimely balanced collection for the Paris haute couture label. A troupe of all-female acrobats of all body shapes led out the

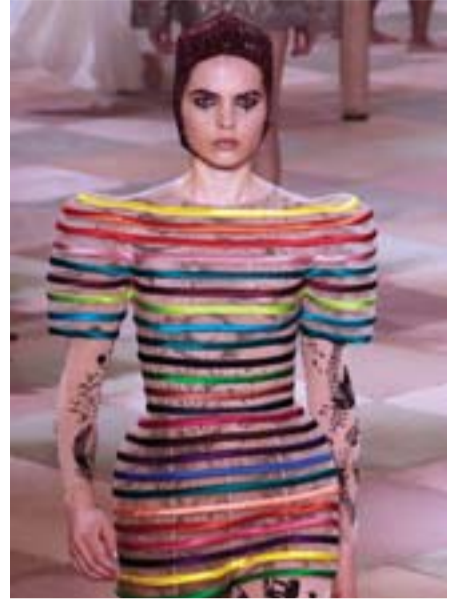
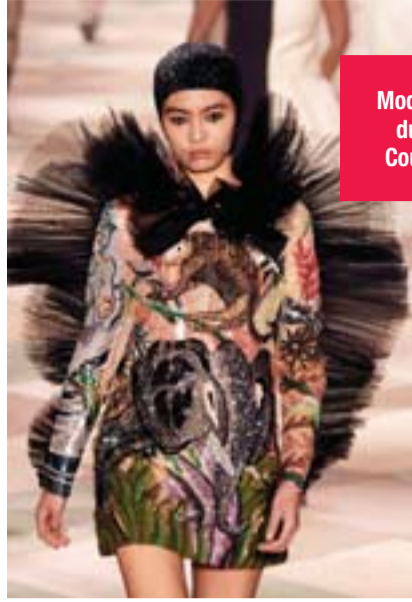
show inside a retro big top-complete with harlequin-pattern floor-built in the gardens of the Rodin Museum in the center of the French capital. Chiuri is the first woman ever to lead the mythic French label, and her feminism is never far away. All her nearly 70 models wore glittery skullcaps fastened under their chins-think aviation pioneer Amelia Earhart meets commedia dell'arte character Pierrot.

But there was nothing remotely clownish about the muted elegance of the clothes, featuring lashings of embroidery and beadwork, to summon up the spirit of the circus-set 1917 ballet "Parade". That legendary show pooled the talents of Pablo Picasso-who did the sets and costumes-the composer Erik Satie, writer Jean Cocteau and Sergei Diaghilev and his Ballets Russes. Chiuri's designs mixed the romantic and the muscular, cutting her dreamy organza and tulle dresses with whip smart ringmaster and lion-tamer jackets, leather corsets and high-wire jumpsuits. "Every look has its own personality, just like circus characters," she told AFP, "brave, funny, happy and sad." "The circus is a world of its own, which passes from town to town, changing each one a little as it goes-a bit like fashion week," the creator added.



Models present creations by Chanel during the 2019 Spring-Summer Haute Couture collection fashion show at the Grand Palais in Paris, yesterday. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Fashion



Models present creations by Christian Dior during the 2019 Spring-Summer Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris.

Iris Van Herpen takes flight

Dutch wunderkind Iris Van Herpen's couture took flight in the Palais de Beaux Arts in Paris' chic Left Bank. The show evoked winged forms and organic life, and was inspired by visual artist Kim Keever, who drops paint pigment into water. The arty setting was an appropriate backdrop for the sculptural creations that seemed to borrow from works housed at the Louvre, located hundreds of meters (yards) away.

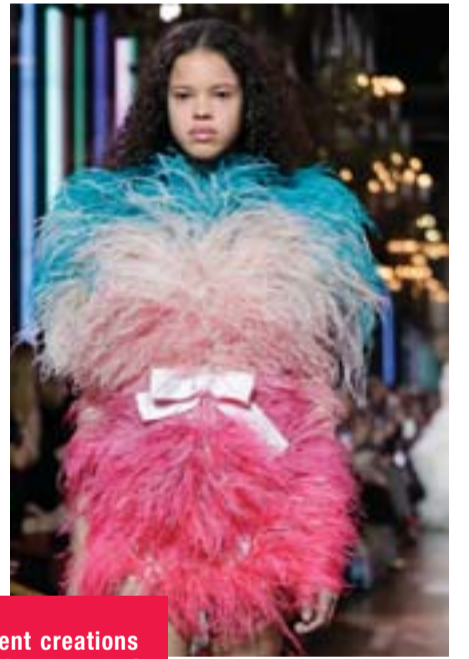
An organic cobalt blue gown featured bare shoulders and a pair of pleated wings that created a highly dramatic dynamic, similar to the Louvre's famed Hellenistic sculpture, The Winged Victory of Samothrace.

Elsewhere, the marbled form of insects - or perhaps the intricate molecular structures of stones and crystals? - were reflected in a beautiful series of draped and loosely fitted silk gowns. Long Asian sleeves on vivid red and pearly white dresses added elegance and an opportunity to create an interesting trapeze silhouette. Van Herpen is a couture poet.

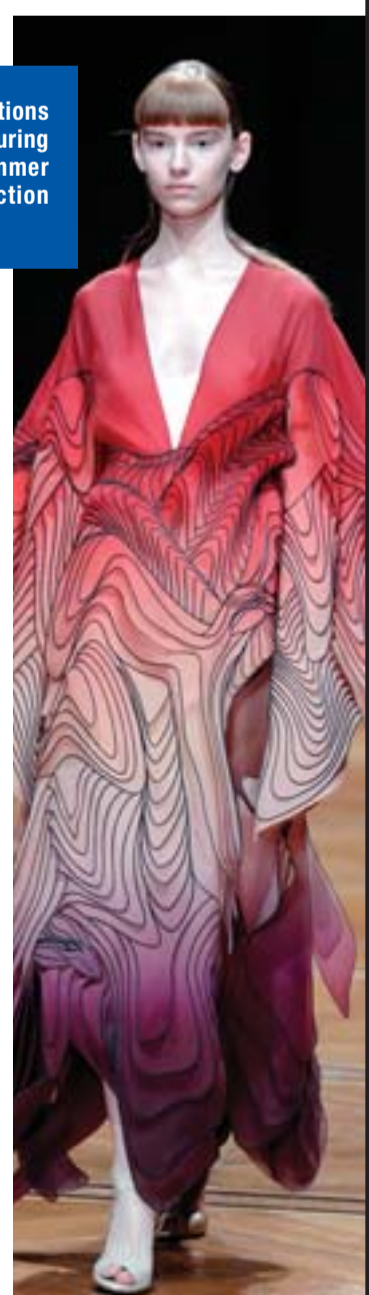
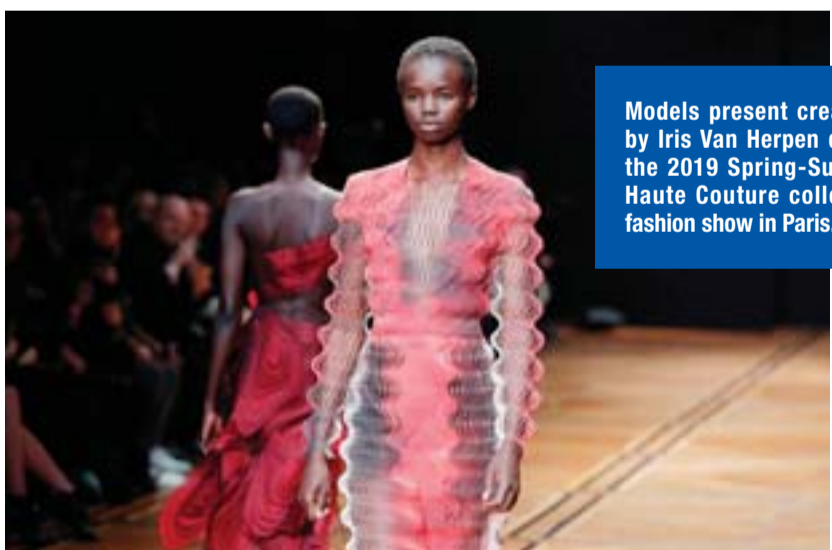
Schiaparelli is whimsical

Whimsical would be the word to best describe Schiaparelli's spring-summer couture. Designer Bertrand Guyon presented a fantastical universe of sheeny silks, softly architectural silhouettes and beautiful colors. The embellishments and shimmering embroideries on diverse designs were more than a match for the gilded gold of the show venue, Paris' ornate Garnier Opera House. Anachronism and contrast ruled.

Cowboy boots cut a dramatic style below a medieval mini dress with speckled and billowing Juliette sleeves. A 1950s bar jacket and peplum ensemble and contemporary pants sported floral scenes that made it appear the pieces were used as a painter's canvas. And colored feathers that embellished several dresses gave the collection a dreamy quality as they slowly floated by, with the occasional plume falling gently to the ground. — AP/AFP



Models present creations by Iris Van Herpen during the 2019 Spring-Summer Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris.



Models present creations by Schiaparelli at the end of the 2019 Spring-Summer Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris.



Virsky group presents Ukrainian folk dance in Kuwait



Photos show the Virsky Ukrainian national folk-dance group perform on stage. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

A visiting Ukrainian national folk dance ensemble enthralled the audience in the packed hall of Abdulhussein Abduldredha Theatre with its extraordinary skills during an almost hour-long performance. Diplomats, Kuwaitis and expatriates enjoyed the evening with continuous thunderous applause during the show.

The Virsky Ukrainian national folk dance ensemble is well known for its innovative approach to the art form. The ensemble was founded in 1937 by Paulo Virsky and Mykolo Bolotiv and was guided by Palo until his death in 1975. During World War II, Virsky performed for the soldiers on the frontlines. Virsky aims to create dances and embrace historical Ukrainian dance traditions as well as dances that are innovative and forward-moving.

Chris Brown detained in Paris over rape claim

American R&B star Chris Brown is being questioned by police in Paris after being accused of raping a woman in a luxury hotel suite in the French capital, sources close to the inquiry told AFP yesterday. A 25-year-old woman has accused Brown, along with his bodyguard and a friend, of assaulting her in the high-end Mandarin Oriental last Tuesday night, a source close to the case said on condition of anonymity. She has told police she met him in a nightclub near the Champs-Elysees avenue before agreeing to join other women who went back to his hotel, which is on the glitzy boutique-lined Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honore.

The Grammy Award-winning singer, 29, is also being questioned over a suspected drugs offence following his arrest on Monday, the sources said. Brown, who was pictured in Paris last week attending haute-couture fashion shows, is yet to comment. Brown was convicted in 2009 of beating fellow singer Rihanna, who was then his girlfriend and forced to miss the Grammy Awards because of her injuries. In 2016, he was arrested and charged with assault with a deadly weapon following a standoff with Los Angeles police, after a woman said he threatened her at his home. He also pleaded guilty to assaulting a fan in Washington in 2014 and was accused of violence by a woman in Las Vegas. In May last year, a woman filed a lawsuit against Brown over claims that one of his friends repeatedly raped her at a drunken and drug-fueled party at the singer's Los Angeles home in 2017. —AFP



This picture taken on May 8, 1969 shows French accordionist Marcel Azzola (left) during the inauguration of his wax statue at the Musee Grevin in Paris. — AFP

Marcel Azzola, accordionist who played with Brel, dies at 91

French accordionist Marcel Azzola, who played with greats including Jacques Brel and Edith Piaf, has died at the age of 91, his partner said. Azzola, who was born to Italian immigrants in Paris and displayed his musical ability at a young age, was credited with using his rare technical mastery of one of France's most emblematic instruments to adapt it to the world of jazz.

Besides playing with Brel, he was known for his contribution to the soundtracks of dozens of films, including Jacques Tati's "Mon Oncle". His partner, Lina Bossati, who also accompanied him on piano, said Azzola had died on Monday morning at his home west of Paris. "His heart gave out," she told AFP. "He was a great musician and no less great a man." I am devastated," jazz guitarist Christian Escoudie, who often played with Azzola, wrote on Facebook. — AFP

Michelin boosts female chefs in 2019 guide

An unprecedented number of restaurants run by female chefs won plaudits in the new French edition of the Michelin food guide released Monday, as the guardians of haute cuisine sought to address a glaring gender imbalance. Eleven female-led restaurants have been added to the 2019 guide to the best food in France, out of a record 75 new additions bestowed with one, two or three Michelin stars. Among them was 24-year-old wunderkind Julia Sedefdjian, who won a star for her new restaurant Baieta, while Stephanie Le Quellec claimed her second for Parisian restaurant La Scene.

The 2018 French guide had been marked by a near absence of women: only two female chefs featured, both in partnership with male colleagues. A year earlier, only one woman was among the 70 new additions to the "starred" list. The guide's new international director Gwendal Poullennec had promised to breathe new life into its pages this year, celebrating young talent as well as female chefs. "It's a reflection of the great dynamism of French gastronomy, in all regions, with establishments set up by talented young people who are often entrepreneurs who have taken risks," Poullennec said.

Poullennec stressed in an interview with AFP last week that the Michelin reviewers were not working under any "quotas" or "lowering of the criteria", but had simply sought to select a more diverse range of restaurants this year, both in terms of the profile of the chefs and the style of the cooking. A large number of international chefs are also honored—many of them Japanese—while Argentine Mauro Colagreco became the only foreigner to currently hold three stars in France. "So many emotions. Thank you! I'm so honored," said the 42-year-old, whose Mirazur restaurant on the glitzy French Riviera ranked fourth last year on the World's 50 Best Restaurants list.

Chef Laurent Petit meanwhile praised the feared Michelin reviewers for having "the sense" to award him a third star for Le Clos des Sens restaurant in Annecy. "I'm delighted to have won a third star with endive roots and a cabbage tart. Simple, simple, simple," he said. In one of the biggest shocks, renowned Alpine chef Marc Veyrat lost his third star, along with the Auberge de l'III, a restaurant in Alsace that had held three stars for 51 years. "It's hard for the team, it's hard

for everyone—the customers, the family," its chef Marc Haerberlin told France 3 Alsace television. "I don't know how to explain this loss," said Haerberlin, whose family has run an inn in Alsace for 150 years.

Veyrat, known as much for his trademark wide-brimmed black hat as his love of mountain herbs, said he was "terribly disappointed" that his restaurant the Maison des Bois had been downgraded. "I can't understand it at all," said Veyrat, blasting the decision as "unfair".

Unwanted stars

A chef who shocked the culinary world in 2017 by renouncing his Michelin stars was meanwhile stunned to find himself back in the prestigious guide for 2019. Sebastien Bras had cited the "huge pressure" that came with Michelin recognition when he asked in September 2017 for his three-star restaurant Le Suquet to be left out of the 2018 guide. Michelin agreed, with the company's then brand manager Claire Dorland Clauzel telling AFP: "It is difficult for us to have a restaurant in the guide which does not wish to be in it."

Bras spent the following year rustling up inventive French cuisine at his restaurant in the town of Laguiole, in the rural Aveyron region, without worrying whether it was meeting Michelin's exacting standards. But on Monday the 47-year-old said he was "surprised" to see the restaurant back in the guide, with two stars. "This contradictory decision has left us with doubts, even if in any case we no longer worry about either the stars or the strategies of the guide," he said in a statement sent to AFP.

Bras took over the kitchen at Le Suquet from his father Michel a decade ago. The elder Bras had held three Michelin stars since 1999, and his son said that knowing a single below-par dish could cost him his reputation had created unbearable pressure as a chef. "You're inspected two or three times a year, you never know when," he told AFP in 2017. "That means that every day one of the 500 meals that leaves the kitchen could be judged." "Maybe I will be less famous, but I accept that," he said of dropping out of the Michelin guide. — AFP



Italian-Argentinian chef Mauro Colagreco (center left) and French chef Laurent Petit (Center right) react on stage with French chef Alain Ducasse (center) after they were awarded three Michelin stars during the Michelin guide award ceremony in Paris on January 21, 2019. — AFP

Classifieds

Wednesday, January 23, 2019

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Cool with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Cold with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 06 - 24 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 22/01/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	17 °C	11 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	17 °C	08 °C			
ABDALY	19 °C	04 °C			
BUBYAN	--- °C	--- °C			
JAHIRA	17 °C	08 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	16 °C	09 °C			
SALMIYAH	15 °C	11 °C			
AHMADI	15 °C	12 °C			
NUWASIB	17 °C	09 °C			
WAFRA	17 °C	05 °C			
SALMY	15 °C	06 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	01/23	Cool	19 °C	09 °C	NE-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Thursday	01/24	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear with a chance for fog forming at night	21 °C	10 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 26 km/h
Friday	01/25	Warm with a chance for fog forming at night	25 °C	14 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Saturday	01/26	Warm and Visibility will improve gradually and some high clouds will appear	23 °C	11 °C	VRB-SE	10 - 35 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:19
Sunrise	06:42
Zuhr	12:00
Asr	14:57
Sunset	17:17
Isha	18:38

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	15 °C
MIN. Temp.	04 °C
MAX. RH	88 %
MIN. RH	33 %
MAX. Wind	N 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP0 2019/01/22 07:32 UTC V1.00 T2.4 2-1 ع/ع

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

Airlines

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



Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 23/1/2019				Departure Flights on Wednesday 23/1/2019							
FEG 341	Sohag	00:05	FDB 059	Dubai	14:20	AZQ 566	Baku	00:05	KIS 6033	Mashhad	14:00
JAI 572	Mumbai	00:15	MSR 575	Sharm el-Sheikh	14:20	AIC 988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05	MSR 611	Cairo	14:10
KAC 102	London	00:50	KAC 672	Dubai	14:25	JZR 407	Ahmedabad	00:05	UAE 872	Dubai	14:15
JZR 734	Cairo	00:50	KAC 286	Dhaka	14:30	MSC 406	Sohag	00:30	RBG 218	Asyut	14:25
THY 772	Istanbul	00:50	KAC 364	Colombo	14:30	FDB 072	Dubai	00:40	IRC 527	Mashhad	14:30
PGT 858	Istanbul	01:00	KAC 512	Mashhad	14:40	BBC 044	Bahrain	00:45	RBG 554	Alexandria	14:45
DLH 625	Dammam	01:25	GFA 221	Doha	14:40	JZR 409	Delhi	00:50	QTR 1079	Doha	15:00
MSR 618	Alexandria	01:40	KAC 618	Doha	14:40	FEG 242	Alexandria	01:05	KNE 382	Taif	15:00
UAE 853	Dubai	01:45	KAC 412	Bangkok	15:00	JAI 571	Mumbai	01:15	MSR 576	Sharm el-Sheikh	15:05
THY 764	Istanbul	01:50	KNE 529	Jeddah	15:05	JZR 111	Doha	01:45	FDB 8066	Dubai	15:05
IGO 1757	Kochi	01:55	KAC 788	Jeddah	15:10	KAC 677	Dubai	01:50	FDB 060	Dubai	15:10
JZR 722	Alexandria	02:15	ETD 303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	KAC 363	Colombo	01:50	GFA 222	Bahrain	15:25
GFA 211	Bahrain	02:30	JZR 222	Riyadh	15:30	KAC 285	Dhaka	01:55	CLX 792	Hanoi	15:40
KLM 446	Bahrain	02:30	KAC 562	Amman	15:35	KAC 417	Manila	02:00	KAC 673	Dubai	15:40
QTR 1086	Doha	02:40	OMA 645	Muscat	15:35	DLH 625	Frankfurt	02:25	SVA 501	Jeddah	15:45
OMA 643	Muscat	02:55	JZR 142	Al Najaf	15:40	THY 773	Istanbul	02:30	KAC 775	Riyadh	15:50
JZR 1736	Cairo	03:00	KAC 304	Mumbai	15:40	MSR 619	Alexandria	02:40	KAC 743	Dammam	15:55
ETD 305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	UAE 857	Dubai	15:45	PGT 859	Istanbul	02:55	KNE 530	Jeddah	16:00
MSR 612	Cairo	03:15	JZR 732	Cairo	15:50	IGO 1758	Kochi	02:55	KAC 619	Doha	16:10
JZR 502	Lahore	03:35	SVA 504	Madinah	16:00	UAE 854	Dubai	03:40	ETD 304	Amman	16:10
QTR 1076	Doha	04:00	SAW 705	Damascus	16:00	KLM 446	Amsterdam	03:55	KAC 563	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KAC 796	Madinah	04:10	JZR 152	Mashhad	16:00	OMA 644	Muscat	03:55	KAC 283	Dhaka	16:30
IGO 1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC 118	New York	16:05	THY 765	Istanbul	04:00	OMA 646	Muscat	16:35
KAC 418	Manila	04:25	ABY 127	Sharjah	16:05	QTR 1087	Doha	04:00	KAC 785	Jeddah	16:40
KAC 784	Jeddah	04:30	JZR 212	Jeddah	16:25	ETD 306	Abu Dhabi	04:05	ABY 128	Sharjah	16:45
FDB 069	Dubai	05:00	KAC 502	Beirut	16:30	MSR 613	Cairo	04:15	JZR 105	Bahrain	16:55
KAC 382	Delhi	05:05	KAC 542	Cairo	16:30	JZR 701	Asyut	04:30	SAW 706	Damascus	17:00
JZR 404	Hyderabad	05:10	QTR 1072	Doha	16:35	IGO 1752	Chennai	04:30	SVA 505	Madinah	17:00
THY 770	Istanbul	05:10	FDB 051	Dubai	16:40	KAC 103	London	05:10	KAC 503	Beirut	17:15
KAC 1544	Cairo	05:10	KAC 522	Dubai	16:40	QTR 1077	Doha	05:10	KAC 361	Colombo	17:35
KAC 284	Dhaka	05:15	JZR 114	Al Najaf	17:00	FDB 070	Dubai	05:30	FDB 052	Dubai	17:40
JZR 112	Doha	05:25	SVA 510	Riyadh	17:10	KAC 303	Mumbai	05:50	UAE 858	Dubai	17:45
KAC 332	Trivandrum	05:40	JZR 215	Doha	17:10	JZR 713	Sohag	06:10	JZR 405	Kochi	17:45
KAC 344	Chennai	05:50	GFA 214	Riyadh	17:15	KAC 701	Asyut	06:15	QTR 1073	Doha	17:50
JZR 402	Mumbai	06:05	JZR 214	Bahrain	17:30	JZR 1153	Mashhad	06:25	KAC 615	Bahrain	18:00
KAC 302	Mumbai	06:25	UAE 875	Dubai	17:45	JZR 121	Dubai	06:35	KAC 331	Trivandrum	18:00
KAC 678	Dubai	06:55	FDB 063	Dubai	18:15	THY 771	Istanbul	06:40	KAC 343	Chennai	18:00
BAW 157	London	07:05	JZR 302	Istanbul	18:15	KAC 167	Paris	07:10	JZR 733	Cairo	18:10
KAC 206	Islamabad	07:35	JZR 124	Dubai	18:20	GFA 212	Bahrain	07:15	SVA 511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC 354	Bengaluru	07:35	QTR 1080	Doha	18:20	KAC 171	Frankfurt	07:15	GFA 212	Bahrain	18:20
FDB 053	Dubai	07:50	MSR 620	Cairo	18:30	KAC 165	Rome	08:20	JZR 127	Dubai	18:35
KAC 384	Delhi	08:00	RJA 640	Amman	19:00	KAC 511	Mashhad	08:25	JZR 253	Amman	18:40
KAC 358	Kochi	08:05	KAC 744	Dammam	19:00	FDB 054	Dubai	08:50	JZR 403	Hyderabad	18:40
UAE 855	Dubai	08:35	KAC 123	Sharjah	19:25	KAC 501	Beirut	09:00	KAC 381	Delhi	18:55
JZR 408	Ahmedabad	08:45	ABY 123	Sharjah	19:25	KAC 613	Bahrain	09:05	JZR 721	Alexandria	19:20
ETD 301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	GFA 217	Bahrain	19:30	KAC 787	Jeddah	09:05	FDB 064	Dubai	19:20
ABY 125	Sharjah	09:05	KAC 156	Istanbul	19:30	BAW 156	London	09:10	UAE 876	Dubai	19:30
QTR 1070	Doha	09:30	FDB 057	Dubai	19:50	JZR 731	Cairo	09:10	MSR 621	Cairo	19:30
FDB 055	Dubai	09:40	KAC 776	Riyadh	19:50	KAC 541	Cairo	09:30	QTR 1081	Doha	19:55
IRC 6511	Lamerd	09:50	KAC 104	London	19:55	KAC 561	Amman	09:40	RJA 641	Amman	20:00
JZR 410	Delhi	10:00	JZR 106	Bahrain	20:00	ABY 126	Sharjah	09:45	ABY 124	Sharjah	20:05
IRA 665	Shiraz	10:10	KNE 381	Taif	20:00	KAC 101	London	09:45	GFA 218	Bahrain	20:15
GFA 213	Bahrain	10:40	JZR 166	Rome	20:10	KAC 671	Dubai	09:45	FDB 058	Dubai	20:35
SYR 341	Latakia	11:00	KAC 620	Doha	20:15	JZR 151	Mashhad	09:50	KNE 232	Riyadh	20:50
JZR 702	Asyut	11:05	OMA 647	Muscat	20:20	UAE 856	Dubai	10:00	KAC 353	Bengaluru	20:55
AXB 889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	KAC 674	Doha	20:35	JZR 301	Istanbul	10:05	KAC 301	Mumbai	20:55
JZR 122	Dubai	11:20	QTR 1088	Doha	20:35	KAC 773	Riyadh	10:10	JZR 401	Mumbai	20:55
QTR 1074	Doha	11:35	KAC 674	Dubai	20:35	ETD 302	Abu Dhabi	10:10	KAC 357	Kochi	21:00
IAW 157A	Al Najaf	11:55	DLH 624	Frankfurt	20:45	KAC 617	Doha	10:35	JZR 723	Alexandria	21:05
MEA 404	Beirut	11:55	RBG 217	Asyut	20:50	FDB 056	Dubai	10:35	OMA 648	Muscat	21:20
AHY 119	Baku	12:05	JAV 621	Amman	21:15	KAC 617	Doha	10:35	DLH 624	Dammam	21:30
MSC 415	Sohag	12:10	KAC 172	Frankfurt	21:15	IRC 6512	Lamerd	10:40	RBG 214	Sohag	21:30

In Iraq, political wrangling spawns debate on US troops

BAGHDAD: From the halls of parliament to the lightning-fast rumor mills of social media, pro-Iran factions are demanding US troops withdraw from Iraq in a challenge to the country's fragile government. The political wrangling is another indication of Iraq's precarious position as it tries to balance ties between two key allies - the United States and the Islamic republic of Iran. Calls for a US pullout have intensified since President Donald Trump's shock decision last month to pull troops from neighboring Syria, while keeping American forces in Iraq. In recent weeks, pro-Iran parties have organized protests to demand an accelerated US troop withdrawal while affiliated media outlets published footage of alleged US reinforcements in Iraq's restive west and north. The debate is heating up in parliament as well. Last week a lawmaker demanded Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi provide a written explanation for the ongoing US military presence in Iraq and a timeframe for their stay.

MPs are also drafting a law that would set a deadline for a US withdrawal, according to Mahmud Al-Rubaie of the Sadiqun bloc, one of the political groups working on the text. "We categorically reject the presence of foreign troops in Iraq," Rubaie told AFP. But rather than a genuine, popularly-driven desire for a US withdrawal, the draft is part of the wider race for influence between Washington and Tehran, analysts said. "This talk is part of the power struggle between the US and Iran," said Iraqi security expert Hashem Al-Hashemi. Tensions between the two countries have intensified since the US pulled out of the landmark 2015 nuclear accord negotiated with Iran in May last year, and observers fear they could destabilize Iraq.

Between Iraq and a hard place

American troop numbers in Iraq peaked at some 170,000 during the battle against Al-Qaeda and other insurgents that followed the US-led invasion of 2003. Trump's predecessor Barack Obama ordered a withdrawal that was completed in 2011, but troops were

redeployed in 2014 under a US-led coalition battling the Islamic State group. In Dec 2017, Iraq announced it had defeated IS. Since then the number of foreign coalition troops has dropped from nearly 11,000 in January 2018 to 8,000 by December last year, according to the prime minister.

Coalition spokesman Sean Ryan says there are 5,200 US soldiers now stationed alongside Iraqi forces in various bases across the country. Their presence angers the Hashed Al-Shaabi, a paramilitary force that is dominated by pro-Iran factions which played a key role alongside government forces in the fight against IS. "The US has banned the Hashed from coming near the military bases where its troops are stationed," said Hashemi. "So the Hashed is now adopting a reciprocal policy," he said, by pushing for a US withdrawal.

Weakening Iraq's PM

Trump's surprise Christmas visit to troops stationed in western Iraq has added fuel to the fire. Pro-Iran parties seized on the fact that he did not meet with Iraqi officials to slam the visit as insulting and a violation of Iraq's sovereignty. Renad Mansour, a researcher at the London-based Chatham House, told AFP the revived debate over US troops was likely a swipe at Abdel Mahdi by hardline pro-Iran factions. "If Adel Abdel Mahdi fails in removing the US troops, his opponents will of course use it to make him seem weak, just as they used the fact that Trump didn't meet with him when he came," he said.

Iraqis, meanwhile, are more concerned with staggering unemployment, power cuts, and a political crisis that has left key ministries unmanned for months. Very few showed up Friday at protests in Baghdad demanding an American pullout, while hundreds turned out for demonstrations in the south of the country to protest a lack of public services. "If Abdel Mahdi is unable to deliver services or jobs or water, or pick a defense or interior minister, then he has way bigger problems," said Mansour. "If he succeeds in delivering in services, no one will care about US forces." — AFP

continue to pray for positive news," Cardiff called off a training session planned for yesterday morning, while Nantes have had their French Cup tie against third-tier side Entente Sannois Saint-Gratien postponed from today until Sunday.

Meanwhile, Nantes fan group 'A La Nantaise' released a statement calling for supporters of Sala's former club to gather in the center of the city for a vigil yesterday evening. "I still have hope, he is a fighter," said Nantes president Waldemar Kita in a tweet published by the Ligue 1 club. When he put pen to paper at relegation-threatened Cardiff on Saturday, Sala, who also has Italian nationality, said in a statement: "I'm very happy to be here. It gives me great pleasure and I can't wait to start training, meet my new team-mates and get down to work. For me it feels special (to be the club's record signing). I have come here wanting to work and to help my team-mates and the club."

Sala's last post on Instagram showed him surrounded by players from Nantes. "La ultima ciao (the last goodbye)," he wrote. The accident, if confirmed, comes only three months after the Thai billionaire owner of Leicester City football club died in a helicopter crash that shocked the club and supporters around the world. Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha and four others died on Oct 27 shortly after taking off from the pitch of the club's stadium in central England.

Sala began his footballing career at French club Bordeaux, who he joined in 2010, and had loan spells at other French clubs including Orleans, Niort and Caen. He joined Nantes in 2015 for one million euros and scored 42 Ligue 1 goals in three and a half seasons at the Stade de la Beaujoire. "He's a very likeable lad, very hard working," his coach at Nantes, Vahid Halilhodzic, said of Sala recently. — AFP

because few had applied for such permission. "I assure you we have no problem receiving any Qatari who will go through the proper channel," said the former Abu Dhabi police chief. The Qatar FA could not immediately be reached for comment.

Under AFC rules, candidates for the presidency are not allowed to campaign for the April 6 election during the Asian Cup but Romaiti made it clear what his main platform would be. "One short statement: Improving the level of football in Asia," he said. "That has to have a lot of tools but I know where I'd start. I can't say (exactly) because I don't want to violate the rules but any president needs to improve the level of football in Asia, not just in the rich countries but all over the region."

A pacy winger in his youth, the 54-year-old said he wanted to see more of the sort of sponsorship money that has been flooding into FIFA's coffers from Asian companies remain in the continent. "We want to bring some of this money to Asia - China, Japan, South Korea, UAE and Saudi Arabia have giant companies that can go into the AFC and sponsor," he said. "I was always good with money, even when I worked here, I got a lot of money for our FA. Money is important." — Reuters

National Assembly before it becomes effective.

Meanwhile, former MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji is due to appear before the public prosecution today to testify in the Dow Chemical case in which Kuwait paid over \$2 billion in fines for unilaterally revoking a multibillion-dollar joint venture with the giant US firm. Turaiji is testifying because he was the head of the National Assembly's public funds protection committee which investigated the Dow Chemical saga. The case was first shelved by the public prosecution but the criminal court a few weeks ago ordered it to reopen investigations into the controversial case.

MP Thamer Al-Suwait yesterday submitted a draft law calling to raise child allowance for Kuwaitis from KD 50 to KD 75 monthly. The lawmaker said the proposed hike comes to meet the rising cost of living and high inflation, adding that the last raise was made in 1992.



BAGHDAD: A double-decker bus passes through Al-Rassafi Square in central Baghdad on Monday. — AFP

Palestinians to refuse US aid over terror lawsuit fears

BETHLEHEM: The Palestinian Authority will refuse all US government aid for fear of lawsuits over alleged support for terrorism, officials said yesterday, throwing into doubt the future of security coordination and projects already under way. Senior official Saeb Erekat said the Palestinians had demanded all funding stop at the end of January for fear they would expose themselves to costly lawsuits under the US Anti-Terrorism Clarification Act (ATCA) which is about to come into force.

"The government sent an official letter to the US administration requesting it stop all aid to the Palestinian Authority, including assistance to the Palestinian security services," Erekat told AFP. He said the main reason for the move was the ATCA legislation. The legislation passed by the US Congress last year stipulates that foreign organizations that receive certain types of US funding be subject to American counterterrorism laws.

Families of American victims of past Palestinian attacks have pledged to sue the Palestinian Authority over their alleged support for violence. Israeli and US officials regularly accuse the PA of encouraging violence by providing funds to the families of prisoners or those killed while carrying out attacks against Israelis. The PA says the payments

are a form of welfare to the families who have lost their main breadwinner and denies it is seeking to encourage violence. Many Palestinians also view prisoners and those killed while carrying out attacks as heroes in their conflict with Israel. Palestinian leaders often venerate them as martyrs.

US President Donald Trump had already pledged to cut almost all humanitarian aid to the Palestinians, who froze contact with the White House after its declaration of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in Dec 2017. Palestinian leaders accuse Trump of seeking to blackmail them into accepting the terms of a peace plan his administration has been working on that they believe will be blatantly biased in favor of Israel.

Due to the Palestinians' decision to refuse remaining aid, the planned expansion of a school near Bethlehem will now not be completed, while infrastructure projects in Jericho and other towns will also stop. The US also is scheduled to provide \$35 million in annual support for the Palestinian security services in the coming years, including to help security coordination with Israel that Israeli officials say is crucial for maintaining calm in the occupied West Bank. This funding had not been cut off by the US government but will now cease.

A US official confirmed yesterday the United States was "working through" the potential impact of ATCA and had "taken steps to wind down certain projects and programs in the West Bank and Gaza". Erekat played down the ending of US funding, saying it would "not impact on the role of the security services". However, a senior Palestinian security official told AFP the impact could be significant. They were searching for new sources of funding in Europe and elsewhere, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. A handful of US contractors working to support the security services have already left the Palestinian territories, he added. — AFP

Pompeo hails 'disruption' as...

Continued from Page 1

Brazil's far-right president, Jair Bolsonaro, who addressed Davos earlier yesterday.

More surprisingly, Pompeo pointed to the 2017 election in France of President Emmanuel Macron - a political centrist who broke out of the party system but who recently has been beleaguered by protests from the Yellow Vest movement which says he is out of touch with ordinary people's economic anxieties. Pompeo also listed as an example of the world's new directions last year's electoral comeback of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad after corruption allegations against his predecessor.

Pompeo, responding to a question in Davos, acknowledged that Trump's criticism of international institutions has ruffled feathers, although he denied that the United States has become more isolated. "It is the case that sometimes leadership and asking hard questions drives others to be a little concerned. Perhaps they're not quite ready to stare these problems in the face," Pompeo said. "But we are - President Trump is. We know that these challenges must be confronted," he said.

Earlier, Bolsonaro touted a "new Brazil" in a speech, vowing an investment-friendly agenda and attacking leftwing politics in Latin America. The new leader of the region's biggest economy gave the keynote address at this year's WEF, where warnings are mounting of the dangers of a growth slowdown, yawning inequality and disastrous climate change. Trump along with the leaders of France, Britain and Zimbabwe have stayed away from the Swiss ski resort as they fight political fires back home.

Like Trump, Bolsonaro surfed a populist wave to ride to power, vowing an end to rampant corruption and a restoration of law and order in Brazil. But staging his first foreign trip as president, Bolsonaro has left behind a scandal amid suspicious payments involving his politician son Flavio Bolsonaro, who denies any wrongdoing. Focusing instead on a pro-business message at the WEF, Bolsonaro told his well-heeled audience that he was determined to open up Brazil's economy, slash red tape and lower taxes. "I want to introduce to all of you the new Brazil we are building," he said. "We are

committed to changing our history."

Addressing civil society's deep concerns over his authoritarian leanings, Bolsonaro said "true human rights" were safe under his government as it would protect the right to life and safety of property. In a nod to Venezuela and other regional hotbeds of socialism, he also said the left wing would "not prevail" in Latin America. And he insisted the natural environment was also safe, despite fears that the new government will open up the Amazon rainforest further to agribusiness and loggers.

The reaction to the speech was muted, with Davos-goers saying there was little to go by in the leader's short and sometimes stilted address. "He's obviously very green from a policy point of view but maybe he won't be corrupt which would be such an improvement," Harvard professor Kenneth Rogoff, a former IMF chief economist, told AFP after the speech. While Bolsonaro's promises on investment and deregulation have wowed the Brazilian stock market, he has also taken a page from the Trump playbook in bashing China.

Greenpeace executive director Jennifer Morgan said Bolsonaro should not have been afforded the "prestigious platform" of the WEF in Davos, "because I think it just buttresses the type of approach that he is taking". It was up to the company bosses present in Davos to push back and "actually prioritize the Amazon and reducing deforestation over their short-term business interest", she told AFP, "because the Amazon is a fundamental part of how the whole planet works".

However, a new analysis by the World Resources Institute said the world is on course to miss its "best chance" of preventing runaway climate change, by ensuring global greenhouse gas emissions peak in 2020. The WEF week features an eclectic lineup of discussions devoted to issues such as mindful parenting in the digital age, chronic loneliness and harnessing artificial intelligence without destroying jobs. It is drawing some 3,000 political and business figures, including 65 government leaders from Germany, Israel and elsewhere.

Trump pulled out of Davos because of the partial US government shutdown and then yanked his entire delegation, removing any prospect of trade peacemaking in the Alps with Chinese Vice President Wang Qishan. While economic growth is slowing, aid charity Oxfam warned the Davos elite that inequality around the world most certainly is not. The wealth of the world's 26 richest people is now equivalent to that of the poorest half of humanity, Oxfam said, warning that such an imbalance was stoking popular anger and undermining democracies around the world. — Agencies

Cardiff striker Sala feared...

Continued from Page 1

Police later yesterday suspended the search, warning that survival chances were "slim" if the aircraft landed on water. Meanwhile, one of the rescuers searching for the missing plane admitted they were "fearing the worst". "Sadly we are fearing the worst...the sea temperature is so cold at the moment," John Fitzgerald, Chief Officer of Channel Islands Air Search, told AFP. "If it came down as an uncontrolled landing, the plane would've broken up, in which case there is no hope," said Fitzgerald, whose volunteer-staffed company assists British and French coastguards.

Sala's father, Horacio, earlier told Argentine television station C5N he was "distracted" at the news, which he discovered from press reports. "I don't know anything, I haven't had any information. I can't believe it, it's incredible," he said. "I'm distraught. Hopefully everything will be OK." Sala, who had been at Nantes since 2015 and had scored 13 goals in all competitions this season, had signed a three-and-a-half-year contract with relegation-threatened Cardiff subject to receiving international clearance.

"We were very shocked upon hearing the news that the plane had gone missing. We expected Emiliano to arrive last night into Cardiff and today was due to be his first day with the team," the Premier League club's executive director Ken Choo said in a statement. "We

UAE open to co-hosting...

Continued from Page 1

"If the relationship comes back to normal and all problems are resolved, we would be more than happy to help the Qataris." Romaiti is challenging Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al-Khalifa, a member of Bahrain's ruling family, for the presidency of the Asian Football Confederation and said that if he won he would back Qatar's hosting of the 2022 World Cup.

The boycott has had an impact on the UAE's ongoing hosting of the AFC's showcase tournament, the Asian Cup, with only small numbers of Qatari journalists and almost no fans supporting the national team. Qataris, who previously travelled freely between the countries, have been banned from the UAE unless they receive a special permit. Romaiti said the almost complete absence of Qataris from the tournament was

MP threatens to grill Hajraf...

Continued from Page 1

Adasani said he was following some financial intelligence about a former lawmaker who had reportedly accepted bribes from the government, adding that he should be referred to the public prosecution and that his case should not be shelved. In the budget announcement on Monday, Hajraf projected revenues of KD 16.4 billion, including KD 14.5 billion in oil income, and expenditure of KD 22.5 billion. The new budget starts on April 1 and must be approved by the

Sports

Nadal relentlessly marches on as emotional Kvitova makes Open semis

Greek sensation Tsitsipas powers into last four with win over Spain's Agut

MELBOURNE: Rafael Nadal continued his relentless march towards an 18th major title yesterday as an emotional Petra Kvitova swept into her first Grand Slam semi-final since a terrifying knife attack almost ended her career.

On day nine of the Australian Open, the fairytale runs of Stefanos Tsitsipas and Danielle Collins were also extended as they too swept into the last four. Second seed Nadal inched closer to winning an event he has only claimed once before when he trounced unseeded American Frances Tiafoe 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 in another ruthless display from a man who has not dropped a set so far.

Tiafoe had announced himself by beating fifth seed Kevin Anderson, but was no match for a player at the peak of his powers as he attempts to become only the third man to win all four Slams and the first to do so in the Open era. "I had some trouble at this event all my career, so I'm very happy with the way I played tonight," said the Spaniard, who faces another young gun Tsitsipas in the semi-finals.

"I feel lucky to be where I am." Greek sensation Tsitsipas powered into the last four with a measured 7-5, 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/2) win over Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut. The 20-year-old, who ended Swiss great Roger Federer's tournament, became the youngest man to reach the semis at Melbourne Park since Andy Roddick in 2003 and the first player from Greece—man or woman—to get so far at Grand Slam.

"I'm just living the dream, living what I've been working hard for," said the 14th seed, who lives in

Cyprus but trains at the academy of Serena Williams' coach Patrick Mouratoglou in France. "I feel a bit emotional but not too much—I know I really worked hard to get here, playing in semis of a Grand Slam."

Czech Kvitova had not gone past the last eight at a major since a burglar slashed her left hand in December 2016, forcing her out of the game for six months and leaving her with lasting nerve damage in the fingers of her racquet hand.

But the eighth seed has bounced back and is on a sensational 10-match unbeaten streak after claiming the Sydney International warm-up title.

She proved too much for Ashleigh Barty, crushing the local hope 6-1, 6-4, and was in tears afterwards as she reflected on her long journey back to the top.

"Really, I didn't imagine to be back on this great stadium and play with the best," the two-time Wimbledon champion said. "I'm calling it as my second career. So it's the first semi-final of the second career. I'm really enjoying it."

Kvitova will face unseeded American Collins in the semi-final tomorrow and she desperately wants to reach Saturday's decider. "I want it bad, that's right," she said. Collins, the world number 35, had never won a Grand Slam match before entering this year's tournament but she stunned three-time major champion and second seed Angelique Kerber in round four.

And the 25-year-old from Florida continued her Cinderella run by bouncing back spectacularly to down Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 2-6, 7-5, 6-1 in the quarter-finals. Collins, who has spent long stretches of



MELBOURNE: Czech Republic's Petra Kvitova plays a forehand return to Australia's Ashleigh Barty during their women's singles quarter-final match on day nine of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

her career playing small tournaments to build up her ranking points, was in big trouble after losing the first set to the world number 44.

But she fearlessly battled back into the match to again stamp her mark on the tournament. "This has all

been a really incredible experience," she said. "This time last year I was playing a challenger (tournament) in Newport Beach. But, yeah, I think I'm really embracing it. It makes it a lot easier when you play in front of great fans and really good energy." — AFP

Hewitt overlooks Kyrgios for Davis Cup tie with Bosnia

MELBOURNE: Skipper Lleyton Hewitt yesterday overlooked Nick Kyrgios for next month's Davis Cup qualifier against Bosnia and Herzegovina and instead opted for Australia's in-form stars.

Alex de Minaur, John Millman, Jordan Thompson, Alexei Popyrin and doubles specialist John Peers were

named for the February 1-2 tie at Adelaide's Memorial Drive. But Hewitt, who engaged in a bitter war of words with Bernard Tomic over his Davis Cup exclusion last week, opted not to go with the talented but temperamental Kyrgios, who has been sliding down the rankings. De Minaur's inclusion caps a huge 12 months for the youngster, who has risen up the rankings from 208 to 29 while winning his first ATP title in Sydney this month. Nineteen-year-old Popyrin was also named after delivering a career best showing at the Australian Open last week.

"De Minaur has had an incredible start to the year winning his maiden ATP title in Sydney and making the third round of the Aussie Open," Hewitt said. "Popyrin showed us he can match it with the top players and it

was pleasing to see him do so well in only his second appearance at a Grand Slam.

"John Millman and Jordan Thompson will bring experience to the team as will John Peers," he added. Under a new format controversially adopted by the International Tennis Federation, the Davis Cup will now be decided at a week-long season-ending 18-team event. It will be held in Madrid in November.

Six teams are already guaranteed a spot with Australia—the second most successful Davis Cup nation behind the United States—needing to qualify. A new format will see them play the Bosnians in best of three-set matches—as opposed to the previous five-set matches. The two singles are played on the first day and a doubles and the reverse singles on the second. —AFP

Predators dispatch struggling Avalanche

DENVER: Nick Bonino had a goal and an assist, Viktor Arvidsson, Roman Josi and Ryan Ellis also scored, and the Nashville Predators beat the Colorado Avalanche 4-1 on Monday in Denver. Pekka Rinne stopped 35 shots for the Predators, who ended a two-game losing streak and gave coach Peter Laviolette his 600th career victory. Alexander Kerfoot scored a goal, and Semyon Varlamov made 23 saves for the Avalanche. Colorado, which is 3-9-2 in its past 14 games, played without Erik Johnson. The Avalanche's top defenseman went into the concussion protocol after being hit in the jaw with the puck in the first period of a Saturday win against the Los Angeles Kings.

WILD 4, GOLDEN KNIGHTS 2

Charlie Coyle scored the winning goal with 5:31 remaining, and Devan Dubnyk made 30 saves to help Minnesota hand Vegas a rare defeat in Las Vegas. Mikko Koivu scored his 200th career goal, and Eric Staal and Marcus Foligno also scored for the Wild, who leapfrogged Dallas and Colorado into third place in the Central Division with their third win in four games. Minnesota also improved to 4-0-1 in five all-time games against the Golden Knights. Max Pacioretty and Alex Tuch scored goals for Vegas, which lost for just the second time in regulation in its past 15 home games (11-2-2). Colin Miller added two assists, and Marc-Andre Fleury, making his NHL-leading 44th start, stopped 18 shots.

PANTHERS 6, SHARKS 2

Frank Vatrano recorded his first four-point game, and Florida broke a third-period tie with three quick goals in a victory over San Jose at Sunrise, Fla. Vatrano had a goal and a career-high three assists, and Aaron Ekblad, Mike Matheson, Keith Yandle, Vincent Trocheck and Nick Bjugstad also scored for Florida. Aleksander Barkov had three assists, and Evgenii Dadonov added two. Roberto Luongo stopped 27 shots for the Panthers, who enter the All-Star break on a three-game winning streak. Timo Meier had a goal and an assist, and Logan Couture also scored for the Sharks, who lost their third straight. San Jose plays the Capitals in Washington on Tuesday before entering the All-Star break.

KINGS 4, BLUES 3

Anze Kopitar and Tyler Toffoli each had a goal and an assist for Los Angeles in a win over visiting St. Louis. Brendan Leipsic had two assists, Drew Doughty and Paul LaDue also scored and Jonathan Quick made 33 saves on his 33rd birthday, helping send his team into a 12-day break on a positive note. Mackenzie MacEachern scored his first NHL goal for the Blues. Oskar Sundqvist and Ryan O'Reilly also scored, Ivan Barbashev had two assists, and Jordan Binnington made 25 saves for St. Louis. — Reuters



LAS VEGAS: Zach Parise #11 of the Minnesota Wild dives to pass the puck for an assist on an empty-net goal by teammate Mikko Koivu (not pictured) #9 in front of Alex Tuch #89 and Max Pacioretty #67 of the Vegas Golden Knights in the third period of their game at T-Mobile Arena on Monday in Las Vegas. — AFP

Pacquiao on the mend after scratched cornea

LOS ANGELES: The eye injury Manny Pacquiao suffered in a unanimous-decision win over Adrian Broner is a scratched cornea, and the Filipino ring icon is already on the mend, a spokesman for Pacquiao's camp said Monday.

The New York Daily News had reported that some in Pacquiao's camp feared he had suffered a potentially career-threatening detached retina in beating Broner to retain the World Boxing Association "regular" welterweight world title—the lesser of two WBA welterweight belts to that of unbeaten US "super champion" Keith Thurman.

In fact, the 40-year-old fighter had already shed his eye patch and was feeling fit enough to attend Monday night's NBA game between the reigning champion Golden State Warriors and the Los Angeles Lakers at Staples Center.

But the eye injury—possibly caused by loose tape on Broner's gloves—wasn't the only bad news for Pacquiao in an otherwise productive weekend. A Los Angeles home owned by Pacquiao was burgled while he was in Las Vegas, sources said, but it wasn't immediately clear what was taken.

It's not the first time a prominent sportsman has had a home burglarized in Los Angeles. Former Los Angeles Dodgers star Yasiel Puig was the victim of at least four burglaries in an 18-month period while he was playing in Major League Baseball games or otherwise fulfilling team duties. Thieves have also targeted the home of Los Angeles Rams receiver Robert Woods.

Pacquiao, who improved to 61-7 with two drawn and 39 knockouts after his win over Broner, has indicated that he will continue to fight even though he has obligations as a Philippines senator.

"I will ask my promoters who's next and we will announce that in proper time," promised Pacquiao, who said he would be more than willing to climb into the ring again with Floyd Mayweather in a bid to avenge his 2015 loss to the undefeated American which became the richest one-day sporting event in history. "Tell him to come back to the ring and we will fight," Pacquiao said. — AFP

Russia waits on WADA missed doping deadline verdict

PARIS: Russia will discover yesterday whether they are to face fresh sanctions over December's missed deadline to allow WADA investigators access to the Moscow laboratory at the epicentre of the state-sponsored doping scandal.

The World Anti-Doping Agency meets via conference call at 1300 GMT to discuss recommendations on the compliance of the Russian anti-doping agency (RUSADA). This is the latest chapter in an affair that surfaced with Richard McLaren's July 2016 report detailing doping in Russia from 2011 to 2015 involving more than 1,000 athletes across more than 30 sports. The Canadian lawyer's damning revelations led to Russia's athletics team being barred from the 2016 Rio Olympics and Russian competitors exiled from the 2018 Winter Olympics. WADA had conditionally lifted a ban on RUSADA in September, with one of the conditions being the granting of access to thousands of samples at the tainted Moscow lab by the end of 2018.

But when a WADA team arrived last month, Russian authorities raised issues with the certification of their equipment under Russian law. WADA officials finally gained access two weeks later and last week confirmed they had "successfully retrieved" all the data, leading the body's president Craig Reedie to declare "a major breakthrough for clean sport".

For some like former WADA chief Dick Pound the fact that a deadline was missed was "not the end of the world" as "the real objective in all of this was to get access to the lab and the data".

But WADA's critics, like US anti-doping boss Travis Tygart, have slammed the agency's handling of the process as "a total joke" and an "embarrassment". "No one is surprised this deadline was ignored and it's time for WADA to stop being played by the Russians and immediately declare them non-compliant for failing yet again to meet the deadline," he said.

The head of RUSADA has written to WADA pleading its case ahead of yesterday's verdict. In a letter dated January 18 RUSADA director Yury Ganas said it was not his agency's fault that the deadline was missed.

Ganas listed the various strides RUSADA had made to be fully reinstated following its suspension in 2016 over McLaren's findings. RUSADA had undergone "a profound transformation" and the new body "shares the values of clean sport," he said.

Even if they escape a new ban, Russia are still not off the doping hook. McLaren estimated up to "600" new doping cases could be unearthed in the Moscow lab's samples. He suggested the reason for the missed deadline was nothing to do with WADA "but a power struggle within Russia".

WADA can expect further criticism from the likes of Travis should it decide to stop short of inflicting further sanctions on RUSADA, but not from International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach.

In his New Year message, Bach insisted Russia had been sufficiently punished. "With its suspension from the Olympic Winter Games Pyeongchang 2018, the Russian Olympic Committee has served its sanction," he wrote. — AFP

Sports

Kohli sweeps top ICC awards, selectors get cash bonus for historic Australia tour

Kohli, first-ever player to clinch all three top honours

NEW DELHI: India captain Virat Kohli said yesterday he was "very very happy" after becoming the first-ever player to clinch all three top honours, including cricketer of the year, in the International Cricket Council awards.

Kohli, who recently led India to their maiden Test and one-day series triumph in Australia, was also voted the Test and ODI men's player of the year as the cricket's world governing body announced its annual honours, chosen by former players and veteran journalists.

"It feels amazing. It's a reward for all the hard work that you do throughout the calendar year. I feel really grateful and very, very happy with the team doing well at the same time myself performing," Kohli said in a statement.

"Having recognition at the global level from the ICC is something you feel proud of as a cricketer because you understand that there are many players playing the game." The 30-year-old Kohli, who is married to Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma, has reached superstar status in cricket-mad India, after first coming into the limelight when he led the South Asian nation to victory in the 2008 Under-19 World Cup. He was the top Test and ODI batsman in 2018, scoring 1,322 Test runs at an average of 55.08 — including five centuries—and 1,202 runs at 133.55 in ODIs, with six centuries.

He also scored 211 runs in 10 Twenty20 matches. Kohli was picked to skipper the ICC Test and ODI teams of the year for the second year running. Kohli became only the second player after Australian great Ricky Ponting to retain the prestigious Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy—given to the cricketer of the year.

He was the unanimous choice for the award, with South African fast bowler Kagiso Rabada coming sec-

ond in both the cricketer of the year category and the Test player of the year. "This is well deserved recognition for an extraordinary talent," ICC chief executive David Richardson said of Kohli.

"His regard for the game and particularly for Test cricket is also recognised and appreciated. He is passionate in his support of the longest form of the game and its continued importance." Australia opener Aaron Finch won the T20 performance of the year award for the second time for his 172 — the highest-ever individual T20 score—against Zimbabwe in Harare last July.

India's Rishabh Pant was named emerging player of the year, while Scotland batsman Callum MacLeod took home the associate cricketer of the year trophy. The 21-year-old Pant became the first Indian wicket-keeper to score a Test century in England, and equalled the record for the most catches taken in a Test, with 11 in Adelaide in December.

Meanwhile, the selectors who chose the Indian cricketers to tour Australia recently have been awarded almost \$30,000 each as a bonus for picking the history-making squad. India clinched their first Test series in Australia in 71 years before claiming another historic first with a 2-1 win in the one-day internationals. The Twenty20 series ended in a draw.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India awarded the players and coaches cash bonuses after the historic win, but followed up with a two million rupee (\$28,000) reward for each selector.

"The five men have played a crucial role in picking a balanced Indian squad and offering the team management enough options to work around different combinations," Indian cricket administrator Vinod Rai said in a statement.

"The boys chosen to represent the Indian team went about their task in a fearless manner and stood



MELBOURNE: In this file photo taken on January 18, 2019 India's captain Virat Kohli holds up the team's one-day international series trophy after defeating Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in Melbourne. India captain Virat Kohli yesterday became the first ever player to clinch all three top honours including cricketer of the year in the International Cricket Council awards. —AFP

up in challenging situations." Former women's captain, and Indian cricket administrator Diana Edulji, also praised the selectors.

"Each member who has played a role in India's recent triumphs in Australia needs to be appreciated,"

said Edulji. The cricket board was criticised in 2017 for giving away cash prizes to selectors. Former India all-rounder Madan Lal had expressed "surprise" at the time to reward the selectors for a job they are employed to do. —AFP

Warriors' Thompson ties 3-point record

LOS ANGELES: Klay Thompson scored 23 of his 44 points in the third quarter Monday, tying an NBA record by connecting on his first 10 3-point attempts of the game, and the visiting Golden State Warriors extended their winning streak to eight games with a 130-111 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers. Thompson went 3-for-3 from 3-point range in the first half before hitting his first seven attempts from behind the arc in the third quarter. He matched the game-opening mark set by Ty Lawson of the Denver Nuggets on April 9, 2011, and Thompson wound up 10 of 11 from long distance on the night. The four-time All-Star finished with his 13th career game of at least 40 points and made 10 or more 3-pointers for the fifth time in his career. The Warriors have won seven straight on the road. Ivica Zubac scored 18 points, Brandon Ingram had 17 and Kyle Kuzma added 16 as the Lakers lost for the fourth time in their past six games. They fell to 5-9 without LeBron James, who has been out since coming away with a groin injury on Christmas Day against the Warriors in Oakland, Calif.

76ers 121, Rockets 93

Joel Embiid scored 32 points and grabbed 14 rebounds to carry host Philadelphia to an easy victory over Houston. It was the 39th double-double this season for Embiid, who had been listed as questionable for the game due to a sore lower back. Embiid and Utah Jazz center Rudy Gobert, who also registered a double-double on Monday, are tied for the league lead in double-doubles. James Harden paced the Rockets with 37 points, his 20th consecutive game with at least 30.

Celtics 107, Heat 99

Kyrie Irving posted his 11th double-double of the season with 26 points and 10 assists-to go with a career-high eight steals-as host Boston defeated Miami. Irving is averaging 29.6 points in his past five games. The Celtics improved to 18-5 at home this season, including nine straight wins. Boston hasn't lost a home game since Dec. 21 against the Milwaukee Bucks. Jayson Tatum added 19 points for the Celtics. Heat reserves Derrick Jones Jr. and Dion Waiters each scored 18 points.

Thunder 127, Knicks 109

Paul George scored a game-high 31 points despite sitting out the fourth quarter for Oklahoma City, which never trailed in the victory at New York. The Thunder have won two straight following a stretch where they lost five of six. The Knicks have lost six straight, 14 of 15, and 19 of 21. Russell Westbrook narrowly missed a triple-double with 17 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists for the Thunder. Dennis Schroder also scored 17 points while Jerami Grant and Abdel Nader each scored 16 points. Tim Hardaway Jr. paced the Knicks with 23 points.

Trail Blazers 109, Jazz 104

Damian Lillard scored 26 points and Jusuf Nurkic added 22 before fouling out in the final minute to lead Portland past Utah in Salt Lake City. Lillard also tallied eight rebounds and eight assists while Nurkic added eight boards, seven assists and six blocked shots. CJ McCollum chipped in 14 points, and Jake Layman and Evan Turner added 12 and 10 off the bench, respectively, to help Portland win its third game in a row. Donovan Mitchell scored 36 points to lead Utah. Jae Crowder added 15 and Rudy Gobert chipped in 10 points, 13 rebounds and four blocks. It wasn't enough to extend a six-game winning streak for the Jazz, however.

Pelicans 105, Grizzlies 85

No Anthony Davis, no problem for New Orleans, which routed host Memphis in the Pelicans' first game without their injured All-Star. Davis sprained his left index finger in a loss at Portland on Friday night and is expected to miss a week or two. Jahliel Okafor earned the start in place of Davis and made the most of it, scoring 20 points on 9-of-11 shooting and pulling down 10 rebounds. Jrue Holiday and Nikola Mirotic each scored 21 for New Orleans, and Holiday added 11 rebounds. New Orleans' Julius Randle also scored 20 and had a team-high 12 rebounds. Marc Gasol scored 22 points



LOS ANGELES: Moritz Wagner #15 of the Los Angeles Lakers scores on a layup past Jonas Jerabko #21 and Jordan Bell #2 of the Golden State Warriors during a 130-111 loss to the Golden State Warriors at Staples Center on Monday in Los Angeles. —AFP

and Mike Conley added 20 for the Grizzlies.

Nets 123, Kings 94

D'Angelo Russell scored 31 points, and Brooklyn extended its home winning streak to six games with an easy victory over Sacramento. Russell shot 12 of 25 and made 7 of 14 3-pointers. He became the first Net ever to hit at least seven 3-pointers in consecutive games—which he has done in three of four games—and also recorded his eighth game of at least 30 points this season. Russell added eight assists. Bogdan Bogdanovic led the Kings with 22 points and 11 rebounds.

Wizards 101, Pistons 87

Trevor Ariza finished with 20 points and 12 rebounds, and Otto Porter Jr. contributed 19 points off the bench as Washington took charge early and defeated visiting Detroit. Ariza has given Washington help in different ways since the team acquired him in a trade on Dec. 15. This time, he went 7-for-13 from the field and was a force on the boards. He also handed out four assists. Thomas Bryant added 11 points and 12 rebounds as Washington finished with seven players scoring in double figures. Blake Griffin topped the Pistons with 29 points and nine rebounds.

Bulls 104, Cavaliers 88

Zach LaVine led five Chicago players in double figures with 25 points, and the Bulls led wire to wire for the first time this season in a win at Cleveland. Bobby Portis added 15 points off the Bulls' bench. Lauri Markkanen had 13 points and eight rebounds. Kris Dunn added 13 points and

nine assists and Jabari Parker scored 10 points for Chicago, which snapped a 10-game losing streak. Cleveland got a team-high 18 points from Collin Sexton.

Bucks 116, Mavericks 106

Giannis Antetokounmpo poured in a game-high 31 points, and all five Milwaukee starters scored in double figures as the Bucks topped visiting Dallas. Antetokounmpo, 10 of 20 from the floor and 10 of 12 from the free-throw line, recorded his 32nd double-double of the season with a team-high 15 rebounds to go with five assists. The Bucks won for the fifth consecutive time and handed Dallas a fourth straight loss. Mavericks Rookie of the Year front-runner Luka Doncic recorded his first career triple-double with 18 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists, joining Philadelphia's Markelle Fultz as the only teenagers in NBA history to post a triple-double. Doncic, at 19 years and 327 days old, is 10 days older than was Fultz when the latter accomplished the feat last April.

Magic 122, Hawks 103

Evan Fournier and Nikola Vucevic scored 29 points apiece and combined for 20 in the decisive third quarter as Orlando pulled away for a win at Atlanta. Playing for a second consecutive game without Aaron Gordon, out with a sore back, the Magic fell behind by as many as nine points in the first quarter before dominating the final three periods en route to snapping a three-game losing streak. Dewayne Dedmon matched his career highs of 24 points and five 3-pointers for Atlanta. Trae Young added 21 for the Hawks, who were playing without Kevin Huerter, a late scratch due to a sore neck. —Reuters

In-form Wade blasts CA over Test snub

SYDNEY: In-form wicketkeeper Matthew Wade has blasted Cricket Australia after he was overlooked for a recall to the Test side to face Sri Lanka, saying he and other players were unclear about the criteria for national selection.

Wade, who whacked an unbeaten 84 from 49 balls for the Twenty20 Big Bash League's Hobart Hurricanes on Monday night, has scored over 1,000 runs across all formats this summer. The 31-year-old has also been the leading run scorer in the domestic Sheffield Shield with Tasmania.

Despite his performances, selectors opted to add Kurtis Patterson to the squad for the first Test starting Thursday, with national selector Trevor Hohns hailing

his back-to-back centuries for a Cricket Australia XI in Hobart last week.

"I get told one thing, then I see the comments in the paper the next day about Kurtis piling runs on and getting picked," Wade said after the BBL game, cricket.com.au reported. "I'm not sure what's going on. It's just a little bit frustrating that on one hand you can say one thing about one player and on the other hand (say) it's why someone's getting picked."

"I don't think I'm just talking for myself. I think all players around the country... if the criteria is hundreds and scoring runs, then pick the guys that are doing it. If that's not the criteria, then let us know."

Wade said he was previously told by Hohns he wasn't gaining selection because he batted too low in Tasmania's order. Wade has played 22 Tests and 94 one-day internationals for Australia, but only averaged in the twenties with the bat in both formats has not appeared for a national team since October 2017.

Australia's batting line-up has come in for criticism after their poor form during the home Tests against India, with question marks over selectors' picks such as Aaron Finch, who has a poor record in the longer forms of the game. —AFP

England begin crucial year with tour to unfancied Windies

BRIDGETOWN: England are solid favourites although history is on the side of the underdog West Indies ahead of the first Test of the three-match series starting today at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown.

Riding a wave of five consecutive victories - eight in nine matches going back to the last English summer - which includes series wins over top-ranked India and an historic sweep in Sri Lanka, the tourists appear supremely confident of overturning the disappointments of their last two Caribbean campaigns.

England have only won one Test series in the West Indies in the past 50 years, a 3-0 triumph in 2004, and failed to live up to expectations in 2009, when they lost 1-0, and again in 2015 when a five-wicket triumph inside three days by the unfancied hosts at the same Kensington Oval venue resulted in a shared series.

While the weight of expectation will be on the visitors' shoulders, West Indies face a daunting task to halt a run of four consecutive defeats, all within three days, on a disastrous Asian tour late last year which saw them being brushed aside by both India and Bangladesh in two-Test series.

England have a settled look to their team and took the weekend off training following two satisfactory two-day matches against a Cricket West Indies XI at the 3Ws Oval just outside Bridgetown. By contrast the West Indies squad reflects both a lack of continuity in selection and the parlous state of the domestic game. John Campbell looks certain to make his Test debut opening the batting alongside the established Kraigg Brathwaite. However the 25-year-old's first-class average of 30 suggests he will face a stern challenge from England senior pace spearheads Jimmy Anderson and Stuart Broad, who need just two more wickets to lift their combined tally of Test victims to 1,000.

Another newcomer in the West Indies squad of 13, 30-year-old middle-order batsman Shamarh Brooks who averages 33 but has endured a poor season so far in the inter-territorial first-class competition, is unlikely to make the final 11 especially given the return to Test duty of Darren Bravo after more than two years out of the team.

Bravo's Test average of 40 and elegant left-handed style would normally make him an automatic selection except that a Twitter tirade against CWI president Dave Cameron in November of 2016 led to his alienation from the team until now.

A polarising figure in West Indies cricket at the best of times, Cameron has also become the centre of an internal squabble in the regional cricket administration with representatives of the Leeward Islands making public their dissatisfaction with the process of the appointment of Richard Pybus as interim head coach for the period covering the England visit, the 2019 World Cup and the India tour to the Caribbean in July and August.

Pybus is viewed as a controversial figure in Caribbean cricket circles notwithstanding the historic treble of successes in 2016 - men's and women's World T20 and Under-19 World Cup - when he was Director of Cricket. He returned to West Indies administration in the post of High Performance Director a year ago and the Englishman's appointment as coach to replace Australian Stuart Law has prompted criticism from notable personalities in the region, including two-time World T20-winning captain Darren Sammy. —AFP

Sports

Ronaldo misses penalty but Juventus ease past Chievo

AC Milan bounce back from Super Cup defeat to reclaim fourth spot

MILAN: Cristiano Ronaldo missed a penalty but Italian league leaders Juventus eased past bottom club Chievo 3-0 to pull nine points clear on top of Serie A on Monday as AC Milan returned to the Champions League berths with a 2-0 win in Genoa.

Portuguese superstar Ronaldo had sealed Juventus's first title of the season—a record eighth Italian Super Cup trophy against AC Milan last Wednesday in Saudi Arabia.

But the 33-year-old was off-form in the first league game after a three-week winter break and on the eve of his return to Madrid where he will appear in court for tax fraud charges dating back to his time with Real Madrid.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner missed numerous chances with Chievo goalkeeper Stefano Sorrentino denying Ronaldo, who has scored 14 times in the league, a first goal from the spot this season.

But Juventus were never worried by Chievo with Douglas Costa and Emre Can scoring in the first half and Daniele Rugani heading in a third six minutes from time.

"I don't think it's the first time it has happened in his career," said coach Massimiliano Allegri of Ronaldo's miss, "the important thing is that the team won. He was looking for a goal, but in the first half he tried too hard, he did better in the second half."

"It was a pleasant game," continued Allegri. "The team had a good match, another fundamental success in the run-up to the Scudetto."

Chievo started their season with a 3-2 defeat to Juventus in Verona during which Sorrentino was knocked unconscious after colliding with Ronaldo. But 'The Flying Donkeys'—who had been deducted three points for false accounting—ended 2018 with their first win and had lost just one of the previous eight games holding Napoli, Lazio and Inter Milan.

Brazilian winger Costa got Juventus off the mark with a stunning solo run from midfield after 13 minutes. Paulo

Dybala set up Can for the German international's first goal since moving from Liverpool last summer just before the break.

Juventus were awarded a penalty for a Mattia Bani handball with 39-year-old Sorrentino clearing having also earlier denied Alex Sandro's close-range header.

Ronaldo missed two more chances before Rugani headed in a Federico Bernardeschi free kick to keep unbeaten Juventus, with 56 points from 20 games, on track for an eighth consecutive Scudetto.

Second-placed Napoli beat Lazio 2-1 on Sunday, with the Roman club now two games without a win before hosting Juventus next weekend.

AC MILAN BACK FOURTH

Earlier Fabio Borini and Suso scored late as AC Milan bounced back from their Super Cup defeat to reclaim fourth spot. Gennaro Gattuso's side occupy the final Champions League berth, overtaking Roma who are one point behind in fifth and Lazio, who are a further point behind in sixth.

Just four points separate Milan and eighth-placed Sampdoria in a tight race to qualify for Europe's premier club competition. Gattuso's side unsettled by their defeat in Saudi Arabia and mounting speculation surrounding Argentine striker Gonzalo Higuain's loan move to Chelsea—struggled early against Genoa, who are in 14th position following their 10th defeat of the season.

Gattuso left Higuain out of his squad after saying he was not "mentally ready" while Genoa's Krzysztof Piatek, who has scored 13 goals this season and is set to replace Higuain at Milan, was suspended.

Milan goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma pulled off key saves and new Brazilian signing Lucas Paqueta also impressing as his long range volley rattled the post just before the break.

However Milan got into their stride as the game



TURIN: Juventus' Argentine forward Paulo Dybala (R) outruns Chievo's Italian midfielder Emanuele Giaccherini during the Italian Serie A football match Juventus vs Chievo Verona on Monday at the Juventus stadium in Turin. — AFP

ended into its final period, with Andrea Conti setting up Borini to tap in his first league goal this season with 18 minutes left.

Donnarumma then got his hand to a powerful Veloso

strike before Patrick Cutrone sent Suso free on the counter attack, the Spaniard shaking off Genoa's defenders to shoot home the decisive goal from an angle 10 minutes later. — AFP

Mendy return boosts City's quadruple quest

MANCHESTER: Pep Guardiola believes the fit-again Benjamin Mendy can make a telling contribution to Manchester City's push for four trophies in the second half of the season.

Mendy is set to make his first appearance in two months in City's League Cup semi-final, second leg against Burton Albion today. The English champions hold an unprecedented 9-0 lead from the first leg over the team from League One — English football's third tier — so the tie is over as a contest.

Therefore, Guardiola wants to use the match to blood youngsters and give more game time to players in need of minutes. Mendy falls into that latter category, having suffered a knee injury following a 3-1 derby victory over Manchester United on November 11.

It required treatment in Barcelona for the French World Cup winner and comes after he missed eight months of football last season with an anterior cruciate ligament injury. Mendy's injury absences have caused Guardiola a headache with no other natural left-back in City's expensively assembled squad.

Fabian Delph, Oleksandr Zinchenko and Aymeric Laporte have all deputised in that role, but the return of the attacking thrust offered by Mendy will be a huge boost to City's challenge on four fronts in the second half of the season.

"I miss him a lot," said Guardiola. "I have a feeling he can give us something extra and hopefully in the last part of the season, we can use him. "When he pushes from the outside, he is unstoppable and especially in the last third. He is so clever. "It's not simply cross to cross, it's clever when he does these kinds of actions."

While Mendy is only likely to be a substitute as he begins his comeback, Kevin De Bruyne will start at the 6,000-capacity Pirelli Stadium. The Belgian played his first full 90 minutes of the season in Sunday's 3-0 win at Huddersfield and City's star midfielder has only started twice in the Premier League so far.

Having suffered two separate knee injuries this campaign, De Bruyne is short of games and Guardiola wants him up to speed with tougher tests to come in the Premier League, Champions League, FA Cup and the League Cup final next month.

Phil Foden and goalkeeper Arijanet Muric will also start while five teenagers—Felix Nmecha, Luke Bolton, Iker Pozo, Ian Carlo Poveda and Taylor Richards—are in the first-team squad for the first time.

"Some players need rhythm and are going to play," said Guardiola. "The guys who've had a lot of games will rest. They will do what they need to be fit, but the ones who've not played too much or are back from long-term injuries are going to play."

"We are going to play some youngsters and some will be on the bench. Two or three will play and two, three or four will be on the bench, but Kevin is going to play. "We start the game with 9-0, which is unusual for a semi-final, but the approach is to improve every single game. It can help us to improve what we want to do." —AFP

Pochettino stays positive despite injuries to Kane and Dele Alli

LONDON: Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino is "optimistic" his team can beat Chelsea to reach the League Cup final despite injuries to Harry Kane and Dele Alli. The 46-year-old Argentine remains focused and upbeat even though Kane likely to be missing until March while Alli is being assessed after going off late in the 2-1 win over Fulham on Sunday with a hamstring problem.

Pochettino is also without South Korean forward Son Heung-min, who is away on Asian Cup duty. Pressure is growing on the manager and his talented young Spurs side to translate attractive football into silverware—a loss in the 2015 League Cup final and two FA Cup semi-final defeats have led to questions over their mental strength.

Spurs take a 1-0 lead into Thursday's second leg at Stamford Bridge against Chelsea, who beat them in the League Cup final and the 2017 FA Cup semi-final. "I am so optimistic," Pochettino was quoted as saying in the Daily Mirror. "We are going to prepare for Chelsea, try to find solutions. Try to be solid, aggressive, offensive and keep our identity."

"Of course it's going to be tough. I don't say we're

Rashford comes in from the cold at Man United

LONDON: Marcus Rashford was in danger of seeing his dream of becoming Manchester United's star striker turn to dust but the England forward is flourishing again after escaping Jose Mourinho's shackles.

Three years after exploding onto the Premier League scene, Rashford marked his 150th United appearance on Saturday with a memorable goal that underlined his vast potential. Smoothly turning away from Brighton's Pascal Gross, Rashford curled a fine shot into the top corner as United sealed a seventh successive win since Ole Gunnar Solskjaer took over as interim manager.

Solskjaer's arrival in December to replace the sacked Mourinho has proved a catalyst for United's surge, and Rashford has been at the heart of their success. Rashford has scored five times in six league matches following the Norwegian's appointment, earning comparisons from his manager with former United stars Cristiano Ronaldo and Wayne Rooney.

"Definitely he can be absolutely top-class. He is only 21 but the maturity he is showing at times is more than 21," Solskjaer said when asked if Rashford was capable of emulating Ronaldo and Rooney. Born in the south Manchester suburb of Wythenshawe, Rashford has long appeared destined to join the lengthy list of homegrown United legends.

He joined the club as a seven-year-old and was so highly regarded that the notoriously demanding Louis van Gaal handed him his debut in a Europa League tie against Midtjylland in February 2016. The coltish Rashford netted twice that night, before scoring another brace against Arsenal in his first Premier League game three days later.

He also scored in his first Manchester derby match and his first Champions League match, earn-



Mauricio Pochettino (right).

going to win easily on Thursday. But we are going to try. "That is the most important thing and I know that afterwards I will be happy because the squad we have is going to give their best to be in the final."

Pochettino, who is one of the frontrunners for the permanent job at Manchester United and has also been linked with Real Madrid, believes his players have

learned to shake off adversity better. "More problems, more positives, more optimism," he said. "In football, you cannot be affected by the things that happen."

"When the game finishes you can be disappointed and all the emotion arrives, but during the game the most important thing is that the team isn't affected by that situation." — AFP

FIFA, UEFA blast piracy network

GENEVA: FIFA, UEFA and several of the world's top football leagues yesterday condemned alleged piracy of television rights by the "beoutQ" network, which Qatar claims is backed by Saudi Arabia.

Qatar, host of the 2022 World Cup, and the Doha-based beIN Media Group have described beoutQ as a vast and sophisticated Saudi bootlegging network that has been transmitting stolen programmes via Riyadh-based satellite provider Arabsat. FIFA, UEFA, the English Premier League, La Liga, the German Bundesliga and the Asian Football Confederation weighed in yesterday by blasting beoutQ's actions as "a clear and flagrant breach of our intellectual property rights".

"Collectively, we, as rights-holders in various football competitions, condemn the pirate entity beoutQ, which continues to abuse the operations of rights holders and legitimate broadcasters through its persistent and illegal screening of events for which it has made no effort to secure the rights," the powerful football bodies said in a joint statement. FIFA and the Premier League have previously said they were preparing to take legal action in Saudi Arabia against the pirates, but yesterday's statement makes no mention of the kingdom.

In October, beIN launched a compensation claim worth \$1 billion (880 million euros) against the Saudi piracy channel while Qatar filed an action at the World Trade Organization. Saudi Arabia has denied the claims and even said the piracy was operating out of Cuba.

The spat over beoutQ's actions comes amid a 19-month economic and diplomatic boycott of Qatar by Saudi Arabia and its allies, who accuse Doha of backing terrorism and seeking closer ties with rival Iran. Qatar has refuted the claims. — AFP

25 Nadal relentlessly marches on as emotional Kvitova makes Open semis



26 Kohli sweeps top ICC awards, selectors get cash bonus for historic Australia tour



27 Ronaldo misses penalty but Juventus ease past Chievo



ABU DHABI: Iraq's forward Mohanad Ali Kadhimi Alshammari (R) collides with Qatar's goalkeeper Saad Al Sheeb (L) during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup Round of 16 football match between Qatar and Iraq at the Al Nahyan Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday. — AFP

Stunning goal sends Qatar into quarters

Extra-time winner takes Koreans past Bahrain

ABU DHABI: Qatar wrestled their way past Iraq into the quarter-finals of the Asian Cup yesterday when a stunning free kick from the son of a former Iraqi international gave them a 1-0 victory at Al Nahyan Stadium.

Defender Bassam Al-Rawi, whose father Hisham played for Iraq in the 1990s, found the net in the 62nd minute to decide a scrappy contest in favour of the 2022 World Cup hosts and set up a date with South Korea across town at Zayed Sports City on Friday.

Iraq, the 2007 champions, gave their all but paid the price for failing to take their chances and departed the continental tournament before the quarter-final stage for the first time since 1972.

Because of the current political and economic rift between the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, Iraq were cheered on by a noisy majority of the 14,000 crowd in the boutique ground, with barely a handful supporting the Maroons. Qatar, who scored 10 goals and conceded none in the group stage, made the brighter start and left back Abdelkarim Hassan hit the bar in the fourth minute.

That was pretty much the extent of their threat on goal until he had a shot deflected onto the post just before the break, though, as the Qataris were muscled

out of the game in midfield.

Iraq fared little better at the other end with Mohanad Ali having their best chance of breaking the deadlock in the 23rd minute as the 2007 champions started to make some progress with the ball over the top of the Qatari defence.

The young striker raced through on goal but Saad Al Sheeb bravely dived at his feet, with the goalkeeper getting a boot to the face for his efforts. A defensive error put Qatar winger Akram Afif through early in the second half but his touch woefully betrayed him, and the ball trickled harmlessly to Iraq keeper Jalal Hassan.

It was a foul on the dangerous Afif on the left-hand corner of the box that led to the breakthrough just after the hour mark, Bassam stepping up and curling the ball over the wall and into the bottom left-hand corner of the net.

The Qataris were charged with confidence by the goal and poured forward to pepper Hassan's goal with shots in the next 10 minutes before Iraq regained their grip on the midfield.

Iraq defender Ali Adnan went close to matching Bassam's effort from a free kick slightly further out in the 78th minute and twice Iraqi forwards flashed head-

ers wide as they lay siege to the Qatar goal in the last few minutes.

But the Qataris held them out to register a fourth clean sheet in four matches at the tournament, almost outnumbering their small band of fans when they celebrated with them at the end.

Meanwhile, Kim Jin-su's extra-time header took South Korea past a stubborn Bahrain and into the quarter-finals of the Asian Cup yesterday as Paulo Bento's side sealed a 2-1 win at Dubai's Rashid Stadium.

The goal, scored in stoppage time of the first period of extra time, earned Korea a barely deserved win after Bahrain's Mohamed Al Romaihi had earlier cancelled out Hwang Hee-chan's opener to take the game beyond 90 minutes.

Bento's side will now face either Qatar or Iraq in the last eight as the Koreans seek to win the title for the first time since 1960. Victory came despite Korea making a slow start and Miroslav Soukup's Bahrain looked the more likely to break the deadlock.

Mohamed Marhoon's strike from distance flashed just wide of Kim Seung-gyu's goal with only four minutes on the clock and, midway through the half, the Al Riffa midfielder skied his free kick from a similar dis-

stance over the bar. Korea grew more assertive and delivered the opening goal two minutes before halftime, with Tottenham Hotspur forward Son Heung-min heavily involved. The 27-year-old's incisive ball out right found Lee Yong and, while his low cross was parried by Sayed Shubbar, the rebound fell to Hwang Hee-chan who made no mistake from eight yards out.

The Koreans continued to press in the opening exchanges of the second half, with Hwang Ui-jo's attempt blocked by Shubbar and Hwang In-beom shooting over from outside the area. Jung Woo-young then had his free kick deflected wide.

Soukup's team were never overawed and, with 20 minutes remaining, Jamal Rashed's curling effort looked destined for the back of the net, only for goalkeeper Kim Seung-gyu to steer the ball wide for a corner.

However, Bahrain were level seven minutes later with Al Romaihi scoring from close range after Hong Chul had slid in to keep out Mahdi Al Humaidan's initial goal-bound effort. Hwang Ui-jo should have won it for Korea three minutes into stoppage time when Waleed Al Hayam's poor back pass was intercepted by the Gamba Osaka striker, but he slid his shot wide of Shubbar's goal. — Reuters

Ronaldo avoids jail but hit by hefty fine for tax fraud in Spain

MADRID: Cristiano Ronaldo avoided jail yesterday but was ordered by a Spanish court to pay 3.57 million euros (\$4.1 million) for committing tax fraud when he was at Real Madrid. The court sentenced him to a two-year jail sentence that it immediately reduced to a fine of 365,000 euros, which adds on to another penalty of 3.2 million euros, the sentence read.

A court spokesman said he did not know whether this would be added on to the 18.8 million euros that Ronaldo had agreed to pay Spain's taxman under a deal reached in June with the player's lawyers. Ronaldo, who last year joined Italian champions Juventus, returned to Madrid for a brief court appearance which lasted around 40 minutes as the deal was officially presented to the judge.

"I am very well," the five-time Ballon d'Or winner told the crowd of reporters gathered outside of the court in northeastern Madrid as he left the hearing. He signed a few autographs before leaving in a black van.

The presiding judge refused the player's request to appear by video or to enter the building by car to avoid the spotlight. Ronaldo, 33, smiled broadly as he arrived at

the court dressed in black trousers, a black turtleneck and dark sunglasses, holding hands with his girlfriend Georgina Rodriguez.

He had played for Juventus on Monday night, missing a penalty as the Italian league leaders eased past bottom club Chievo 3-0. Madrid prosecutors opened a probe into Ronaldo in June 2017 and he was questioned in July that same year.

"I have never hidden anything, nor have I had the intention of evading taxes," he told the court then, according to a statement from the sports agency which represents him, Gestifute. Prosecutors accuse him of having used companies in low-tax foreign jurisdictions—notably the British Virgin Islands and Ireland—to avoid paying the tax due in Spain on payments for his image rights between 2011 and 2014. — AFP



MADRID: Juventus' forward and former Real Madrid player Cristiano Ronaldo arrives with his Spanish girlfriend Georgina Rodriguez to attend a court hearing for tax evasion in Madrid yesterday. — AFP