

Friday Times

ISSUE NO: 17742

JAMADA ALAWWAL 19, 1440 AH | FRIDAY, JANUARY 25, 2019

7 Central Circle, Dr Ziad Al-Alyan awarded by global financial magazine



10 Venezuela: Tension rises as Maduro rallies military



47 FA Cup heavyweights Arsenal, United kick off fourth round



Flights of fancy: Photographer captures flamingo migration

See Pages 4 & 5



Local

Judicial vs administrative deportation



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Local dailies recently published reports that security authorities in Kuwait deported around 17,000 expats in 2018 compared to 29,000 in 2017, a decline of about 45 percent. They pointed out that the fall is due to the ministry's instructions not to deport any expatriate arbitrarily or illegally.

Legally, deportation is of two types - judicial, by court verdicts in criminal cases; and administrative, by the interior ministry. In 2016, MoI deported 31,000 expats after a series of security campaigns against violators. Unlike in the past, deportation is quick, as anyone sent to the deportation prison does not remain there for more than a week while waiting for an air ticket and finalizing paperwork. The reasons for deportation are violation of the residency laws and involvement in criminal cases, especially violation of traffic rules. Some peo-

ple are stuck for a month or two because of financial issues or waiting for their trial.

Kuwait has been and remains a home for many expatriates, who live here and have contributed to the building of its economy. They are considered an integral part of the state's social fabric. Undoubtedly, deportation causes psychological and social damage to any person, especially with their inability to return to Kuwait and work again. Deportation leaves expatriates feeling insecure and anxious.

Criminals do not abide by the laws of any country where they commit crimes. In Kuwait, expat criminals who are caught are deported after serving their sentences. This is judicial deportation and I think it is fair because it's overseen by the courts

But I think it is necessary to have legislative and humanitarian protection for expatriates who are exposed to administrative deportation because of the possibility of facing problems in their native country.

Kuwaiti embassies abroad should have a memo about the laws of Kuwait which every expat must read and sign before coming to the country.

I think some cases are not worthy of deportation, and appropriate penalties can be imposed for offenses that might be committed. For example, if an expat is a government

employee who has committed a minor offense or has not complied with regulations to dispense his services, the punishment should not reach administrative deportation, especially for those with families. When these people are deported, they lose their jobs, regardless of whether the deportation was due to a crime or a fight they were involved in.

In 2017, the director of the Kuwait Human Rights Society said administrative deportation harms Kuwait's reputation in front of international human rights organizations, calling for urgent legislative amendments. He stressed in a press statement that administrative deportation in its current form represents a danger to the human rights situation and the image of the country, as it is one of the most important issues that is raised at international meetings. Expats should have the right to know the reasons for being deported and should be able to defend themselves.

It is not good to prolong the waiting period of deportation from the country, because this period is bad for all parties. I see that deportation is not a problem, but its reasons can be. The law gives the interior ministry the right to deport an expat if public interest requires it, or if the presence of the person threatens public order. I call on expatriates to maintain legal residence and avoid quarrels, because this could compromise their stay here.

Historian: Old maps document presence of Kuwait since 17th century

By Sheikha Al-Loughani

KUWAIT: The presence of Kuwait as an independent entity was documented by maps drawn by European travel-

ers and geographers as early as the 17th century, said a Kuwaiti researcher and historian yesterday. In his book regarding the role of western travelers in documenting the presence of

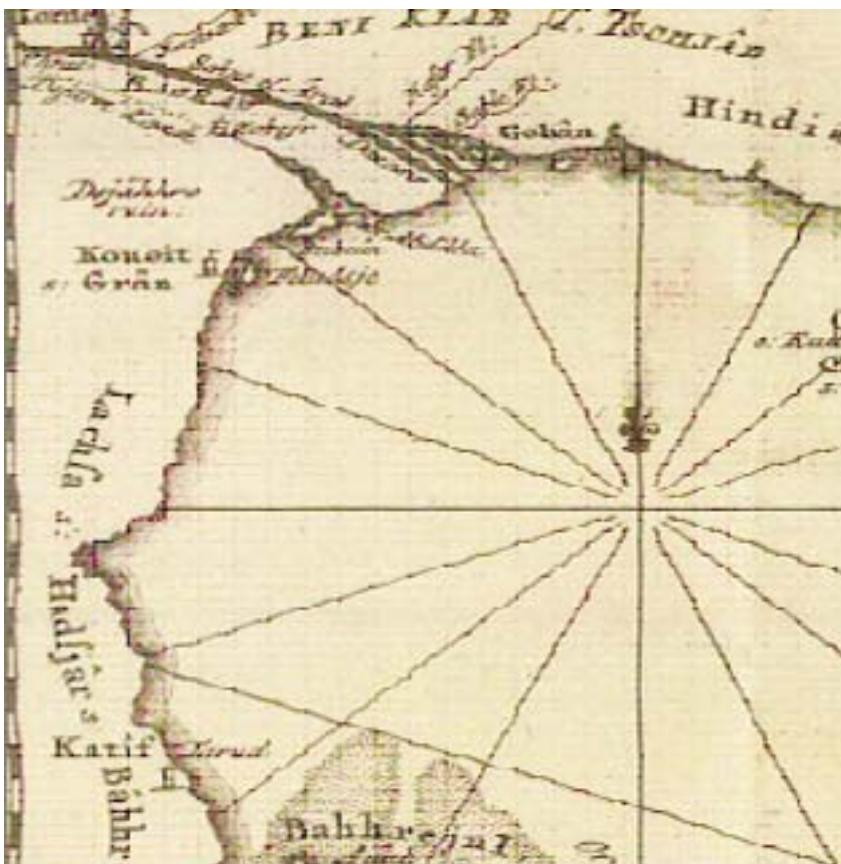
Kuwait through maps, researcher and historian Mohammad Mahmoud Abdulrazzaq said that maps chartered by European travelers and geographers referred to Kuwait by the names of "Khathma" and "Qurain".

Old documents, dating back to 1654, had shown that Kuwait, despite being referred to by different names, existed as an entity of an independent nature, said Abdulrazzaq. The navigational maps of the region were drawn by the Portuguese in around 1563 and also by other Europeans in the 1600s.

The first mention of Kuwait in name came in a map drawn by Carsten Niebuhr, a German mathematician and cartographer, in 1765. The mentioning of Kuwait continued to occur in various maps drawn in throughout the 1700s.

It is important notice that the map drawn by English traveler Gifford Palgrave—born 1826, England, United Kingdom and died in 1888, Montevideo, Uruguay—gave Kuwait a distinctive color as opposed to other regions ruled by the Ottoman Empire then.

A more thorough insight into Kuwait's distinctive nature came from British travelers who visited the region and even stayed in Kuwait in the early 1800s. Some of them stressed that the rulers of Kuwait were not affiliated with any other Empire or entity in the region during that time. — KUNA



Carsten Niebuhr map



Map of the Arabian peninsula drawn by the German geographer Carl Ritter 1818.

Kuwait Times

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Local



Photo Feature

Kuwait's famous flamingoes



Kuwait is famous for the annual migration of flamingoes that flock to its bays and tidal flats. Every year from late fall until early spring, thousands of flamingoes can be seen, especially near the beaches of Kuwait Bay in Sulaibikhat and the Sabah hospital district.

In this series of photographs, taken over several months, award-winning KUNA photographer Ghazy Al-Qaffaf captures these majestic birds in flight and while feeding.

"I might wait sometimes as many as three to four hours for the perfect shot," explains Al-Qaffaf, a Jordanian who has lived and worked in Kuwait as a press photographer for 39 years. From his perch near the water's edge, he uses a Niko D3S or D500 coupled with a telephoto lens to capture moments of individual birds as well as the flamboyance of the flock.



All photos courtesy
Ghazy Al-Qaffaf/Kuna

Local

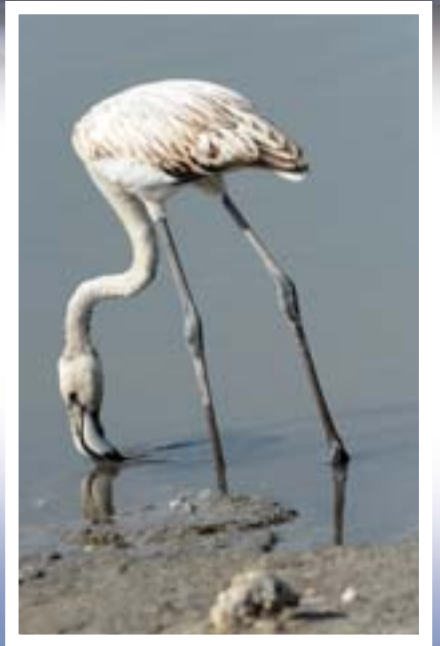
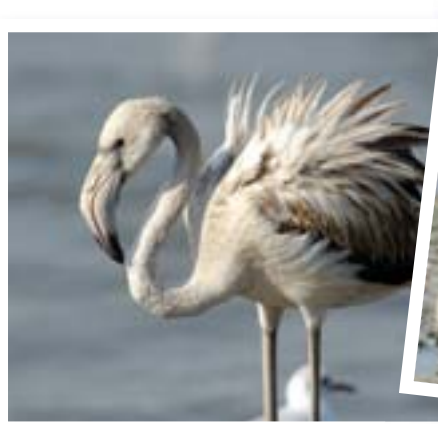


PHOTO OF THE DAY



KUWAIT: Gulf tourists take a look at a panoramic view of Kuwait City from inside the 'viewing sphere' in Kuwait Towers yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait seeks closer cooperation with int'l anti-corruption bodies

Kuwait calls UN to adopt effective anti-graft measures

VIENNA: Director General of Kuwait's Public Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Abdulrahman Al-Nemash stressed yesterday Kuwait's keenness on strengthening cooperation ties with international anti-corruption organizations. Nemash said following the conclusion of the 10th International Anti-Corruption Conference (OECD), that Kuwait, according to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's vision, is looking forward to more joint work with regional and international organizations to reach a world that enjoys safety, security and sustainable development. He added that these conferences are con-

sidered opportunities for countries to showcase their experiences in fighting corruption. The Kuwaiti delegation that participated in the conference comprises several senior officials of Kuwait's Public Anti-Corruption Authority.

Effective measures

Kuwait had urged UN Convention against Corruption member-states to adopt several strategies aimed at raising public awareness on anti-corruption. This can be applied in schools, universities, places of worship, and media outlets, a Nazaha official said Wednesday. It is important to train

national staff on ways to prevent and combat corruption, Assistant Secretary-General Mohammad Buzubar added in his speech at the meeting. Launching anti-corruption initiatives for students and allocating prizes in that regard is also significant to encourage them on searching and innovating, he said. Nazaha has boosted cooperation with various state bodies in Kuwait to increase public awareness on transparency and anti-corruption. Such an action is essential for attaining effective coordination among various government sectors in the country, said the Kuwaiti official. — KUNA



VIENNA: Director General of Kuwait's Public Anti-Corruption Authority Abdulrahman Al-Nemash attends the 10th International Anti-Corruption Conference (OECD). — KUNA

Local

Central Circle and Dr Ziad Al-Alyan bag top awards for ‘Best Healthcare’ 2018 by global financial magazine



Dr Ziad Al-Alyan wins ‘Best CEO in the Healthcare Sector in Kuwait’ 2018 award from International Finance magazine.



DUBAI/KUWAIT: Kuwait-based healthcare solutions provider, Central Circle won two prestigious awards from the International Finance Award 2018 in the categories of “Best healthcare solutions provider” and “Best CEO in the Healthcare Sector” for Dr Ziad Al-Alyan, Central Circle Chief Executive Officer. Dr Al-Alyan received the awards during the ceremony in Dubai in mid-January.

“Central Circle is dedicated to the growth and innovation of Kuwait’s healthcare sector,” explained Dr Al-Alyan. “This award reaffirms

our commitment and drive to effecting real and positive change in collaboration with Kuwait’s Ministry of Health, public and private health care providers and the health care industry as a whole.”

Central Circle is one of Kuwait’s leading healthcare solutions providers. Established in 1979 it has undergone a revitalization following acquisition in 2014. Central Circle health care solutions divisions include medical equipment, cardiology, ophthalmology, pharmaceuticals, 3M medical, consumables and

disposables, Draeger Medical, critical care and emergency, surgical and sterilization, medical imaging and ultrasound, laboratories and blood banking, beauty and aesthetic, dental products and equipment, neuro and respiratory and others.

“Investing in health is an investment like no other. Healthcare has advanced by leaps and bounds today, with new technologies making inroads every other day. USA spent 12.9% of its GDP on healthcare – the highest to date, followed by Switzerland and

Germany. Now, developing economies in Asia as well as Middle East nations are focused on bringing advanced healthcare options for its citizens. International Finance’s healthcare category aims to recognize the most innovative, path breaking and profitable ventures in healthcare insurance, management and technology,” the UK-based finance and business magazine notes.

International Finance Magazine is a premium financial and business analysis magazine with a focus on emerging markets.



(From left) Dr. Bassem Ashoush- Business Development Manager, Eng. Amal Hosny- Customer Relations & Marketing Manager, Dr. Ziad Al-Alyan-CEO and Dr. Mohammad Aljafar- Deputy CEO.

Local

National Assembly Speaker receives ambassadors



KUWAIT: Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Ambassador of Canada to Kuwait Louis Pierre Emond. — KUNA photos



Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Ambassador of Iran to Kuwait Mohammad Irani.



Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Kuwait Samargyul Adamkulova.

KUWAIT: Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem received several ambassadors in his office yesterday. Ghanem met separately with Ambassador of Canada to Kuwait Louis Pierre Emond, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Kuwait Mohammad Irani and Ambassador of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan to Kuwait Samargyul Adamkulova. Meanwhile, Ghanem also received Kuwait's Ambassador to Turkey Ghassan Al-Zawawi and Kuwait's Deputy Consul General in Jeddah Sami Al-Rubaian. — KUNA

Zain participates in opening of Auto Works Show

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, participated in the opening ceremony of Kuwait's Annual International Auto Products and Services Show (Auto Works Show 2019) as part of its platinum sponsorship to the event. The show was held at Kuwait International Fair in Mishref from 17 - 19 January under the patronage of the Amiri Diwan's Administrative and Financial Chief Abdulaziz Saud Ishaq and the attendance of the Assistant Undersecretary at the Amiri Diwan Abdullah Al-Jiri.

Zain's support to the event came in line with its keenness to dedicate more efforts into supporting and empowering Kuwaiti entrepreneurs, as well as taking part in such initiatives that contribute to infusing creativity within the entrepreneurial community through partnering with entities that aim at its development, especially within the automotive sector that witnesses great popularity in Kuwait.

Auto Works Show 2019 is one of Kuwait's first specialized events dedicated to the automotive market. The event aimed at meeting the needs of Kuwaiti consumers by gathering large, medium, and small businesses that specialize in offering automotive products, services, and parts for various ve-



Assistant Undersecretary at the Amiri Diwan Abdullah Al-Jiri with Waleed Al-Khashti and Zain's team at the company's booth.

hicles, including cars and motorcycles. In addition, the event also featured car accessory providers, car care products and services, motorsports companies, and more. The event also had a dedicated section for the authorized governmental entities that facilitate commercial relations with external companies and organizations.

Zain is aware of the important role private sector companies play in encouraging such initiatives that support the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) segment, especially that it is one of the leading na-

tional companies in the private sector. Zain's participation at this event further reflected its keenness in developing the Kuwaiti entrepreneurial community, which bursts with young talents who have vibrant ideas that offer viable solutions for the market needs.

Zain's support to this event came in line with its core objectives that aim at shouldering the advancement of the community as a whole on all levels, where the company reaffirms the principal of partnership through similar efforts with the aim of contributing to the further progress of national economy.

Kuwait, Germany discuss cooperation

BERLIN: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Germany Najib Al-Bader said yesterday that Kuwait and Germany's non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council constitutes a new framework for political cooperation between the two countries and an opportunity for coordination on regional issues. Bader made his remarks to the press after a meeting with Germany's State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office Andreas Michaelis. During the meeting, the two sides discussed a number of issues of mutual interest concerning the two countries' relations, he said, adding that the non-permanent memberships in the Security Council is a good opportunity for the two countries to enhance cooperation and coordination on a number of issues on the UN agenda.

Meanwhile, Michaelis praised the deep-rooted relations between Kuwait and Germany. He stressed the two countries' coordination in the UN Security Council to tackle the challenges related to a number of international disputes and humanitarian and development issues. The German official praised Kuwaiti diplomacy in dealing with international issues. Germany has been a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for two years starting in January 2019, while Kuwait has started its non-permanent membership as of January 2018. — KUNA

Friendship committee lauds Kuwait's activity

PARIS: Members of the French-Kuwaiti Parliamentary Friendship Committee praised the activity of the Kuwaiti National Assembly in international forums. This came during a meeting between Kuwaiti Ambassador to France Sami Al-Sulaiman Wednesday evening, with members of the Parliamentary Friendship Committee of the French National Assembly. Sulaiman said the meeting was to review and evaluate last year's activities, in addition to the activities and events scheduled for this year, which will enhance the excellent relations between the Kuwaiti National Assembly and the French National Assembly. He added that the members of the French parliament who attended the meeting lauded the level of the relations between the two parliaments, expressing aspiration to work further to strengthen the bonds of friendship between the two countries. The French Parliament members praised Kuwait's role in serving global peace and human development, expressing their admiration for Kuwait's pioneering democratic experience. — KUNA



Local

'Fashionista' questioned for uploading video of crying son

Co-op union's representation in Durra 'invalid'

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and A Saleh

KUWAIT: The electronic crimes combating department is preparing to send a 'fashionista' to the prosecution for questioning on child mistreatment charges after she uploaded a video on social media showing her son crying heavily after she informed him of his grandmother's passing. Meanwhile, the child protection office has already referred the case to the Interior Ministry, according to sources familiar with the case. The video which went viral on social media drew a lot of condemnation as many people commented that the mother's actions violated the child's rights and caused him 'major psychological damage'.

Warehouse fire

Firefighters battled a blaze reported in an Industrial Shuwaikh warehouse late Wednesday night. The fire gutted a two-storey, 2,000-square-meter warehouse, while firemen managed to extinguish it before flames could spread to nearby buildings. The warehouse reportedly contained electric supplies and plastics. Meanwhile, no injured were reported in the incident.

Firefighters from Industrial Shuwaikh, Shuhada, Hilali, Mishref, Mubarak Al-Kabeer and back up fire centers joined the operations, which were led by Director of the Capital Fire Department Colonel Mohammad Hayef Al-Rashidi, while Central Operations Supervisor Colonel Saad Al-Ansari and heads of the stations were on hand, the Kuwait Fire Service Directorate's Public Relations Department said in a statement.

Durra company's board

The Fatwa and Legislation Department said a government employee cannot represent any party as a member of a company's board of directors other than the state department he or she works in. This came about after the Ministry of Commerce and Industry asked the department for its legal opinion regarding the situation of three representatives of the Kuwait Union of Consumer Co-operative Societies in Al-Durra Domestic Help Company. The department said that their memberships were invalid after it was discovered that they are government employees. Article 26 of the Civil Service Commission's law 15/1976 bans government employees from becoming members of the

board of a commercial or industrial company. As per the decree to establish Al-Durra company, the co-ops' union owns 60 percent of its shares.

Egypt's debt

The Egyptian Central Bank said Cairo must pay \$14.7 billion during 2019, including \$8.57 as deposits to Arab countries. The central bank said that according to the foreign situation of Egypt's economy, the debts that the country must pay during the current year include \$683.7 million in rescheduled debts, and \$1.76 billion in non-rescheduled debts, \$2.75 million debts for international institutions and \$961 million sovereign and foreign bonds' interests in Euro and US Dollar.

The payment of short-term debts during the first half of the current year includes paying \$6.45 billion of Saudi deposits, as well as \$1.35 billion for Kuwait and \$1.17 billion for UAE. Egypt had paid \$2.05 billion of debts to Kuwait during the second half of 2019, while it is supposed to pay \$1.35 billion during the first half of 2019 and \$667 million in the first half of 2020.

22 Kuwaiti cadets graduate from Qatari military school



DOHA: A group photo of Deputy Chief of General Staff of Kuwait's Army Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah with army cadets and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Qatar Hafeeth Al-Ajmi. — KUNA

DOHA: Deputy Chief of General Staff of Kuwaiti Army Sheikh Abdullah Nawaf Al-Sabah affirmed yesterday the importance of participating in local and international training courses to improve army abilities. On the sidelines of the graduation ceremony of Ahmad bin Mohammad Military School, that included 22 Kuwaiti cadets, Sheikh Abdullah said in a statement that the Ministry of Defense was keen on benefitting from all regional and in-

ternational experiences to improve the Army's abilities in the field. He also affirmed the Ministry's interest in participating in all matters that contribute in reinforcing military abilities by attending classes and practical exercises. Kuwait's Ambassador to Qatar Hafeeth Al-Ajmi, and other army senior officials attended the graduation ceremony which was under the patronage of the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Al-Thani. — KUNA

Contractor sold 'juveniles complex' contract illegally

KUWAIT: A dispute between the winning contractor of a project to build the juveniles care homes complex and the subcontractor revealed that the main contractor had sold the full contract without a written permission or approval of the Ministry of Public Works (MPW). The problem began to sur-

face when the sub-contractor complained to MPW in which he said the main contractor failed to make the payments as agreed, and cancelled the contract unilaterally. The contract was signed in March 2017 at a total cost of KD 16 million.

Informed sources said the ministry formed an investigation committee to find out the truth. They added that the committee found out delays in progress by 15 percent compared to the time schedule. It also discovered that the project was totally sold to another company without a written approval from the ministry, which gives the ministry the right to cancel the contract, especially that the total value of finished work is no more than KD 1.7 million. The main contractor expressed willingness to settle the matter amicably. — Al-Qabas

Deputy FM meets Kenyan, UN officials

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah yesterday met with Director of the Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Middle East Directorate chief Jackline Yonga. They discussed the latest regional and international developments. Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Affairs Ayham Al-Omar and Acting Assistant Foreign Minister for African Affairs Hamad Al-Mashaan also attended the meeting. Jarallah also met with United Nations Secretary-General's Representative to Kuwait Dr Tarek Al-Sheikh, during which they discussed distinguished relations between Kuwait and the UN. Al-Sheikh voiced much appreciation of Kuwait's support for the UN and its mission in the country. Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Affairs Ayham Al-Omar and Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah attended the conference. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Director of the Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Middle East Directorate chief Jackline Yonga. — KUNA photos



Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with United Nations Secretary-General's Representative to Kuwait Dr Tarek Al-Sheikh.



Far out from 2020, progressive Democratic bench takes shape

Trump delays speech until the government shutdown ends



BOGOTA: Venezuelans opposed to President Nicolas Maduro hold a demonstration. — AFP

Tension rises as Maduro rallies military

US and allies back Venezuela challenger, Russia and Turkey take opposite stance

CARACAS: Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro prepared to rally his military supporters yesterday as the US and key allies backed a challenge from his leading rival who declared himself “acting president.” The announcement by Juan Guaido, 35, head of Venezuela’s opposition-led legislature, came amid a fresh wave of deadly street clashes on Wednesday. He declared himself acting leader of the oil-rich nation, which has lurched into economic chaos and violence under Maduro, 56.

The Socialist government responded by warning that the top military leadership would come out “in support of the constitutional president”, Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez said. He added the military would show “backing for the sovereignty” of Venezuela. That was a warning shot to Maduro’s foreign critics as they rallied behind Guaido. US President Donald Trump declared Maduro “illegitimate” and called the National Assembly legislature “the only legitimate branch of government.”

A furious Maduro responded to the US move by breaking off diplomatic ties with the “imperialist” US government, giving its diplo-

mat 72 hours to leave. The US State Department said it did not recognize Maduro as president anymore so his order meant nothing. France added its support for Guaido, also branding Maduro “illegitimate” and calling for “the restoration of democracy” in Venezuela.

Maduro’s key ally Russia meanwhile denounced Guaido’s bid as a “usurpation” of power and condemned what it called foreign “interference” in Venezuela. “This is a direct path to lawlessness and bloodshed,” the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement. Maduro’s key financial backer China also weighed in. Foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said China opposes “interference” in Venezuelan affairs and called for a “political resolution.”

13 killed in clashes

Guaido’s pronouncement capped days of unrest that have seen 13 people killed, the Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict told AFP. They were the first mass street protests in Venezuela since a peak of violence in April and July, 2017, when 125 people died in clashes. Riot

police fired tear gas and rubber bullets at opposition protesters in one Caracas suburb, while television pictures also showed armored vehicles in the capital.

Thousands of Maduro supporters, many wearing red, converged outside the presidential palace, Miraflores, to oppose what they said was a US-backed opposition coup attempt. Elsewhere in Caracas, tens of thousands of opposition supporters rallied, dressed in white and waving Venezuelan flags. “Guaido, friend, the people are with you,” they chanted. Maduro hit back in a speech from a balcony at the presidential palace, lashing out at Trump. He condemned what he called the US leader’s “extremist policy” as “a very serious folly.”

“Trying to impose a government by extra-constitutional means, we cannot accept that.” UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres appealed for dialogue to avoid the political crisis spiraling out of control. “What we hope is that dialogue can be possible, and that we avoid an escalation that would lead to the kind of conflict that would be a disaster for the people of Venezuela and for the region,” he said at the

World Economic Forum in Davos.

Military support key

Maduro was reelected in May in snap elections boycotted by the opposition and denounced around the world as illegitimate. He has held onto power in the face of mass protests, international pressure and opposition efforts to oust him. Analysts at the Eurasia Group consultancy said his opponents could only prevail if the top military command abandon him.

They said Trump might consider further economic sanctions against Venezuela, from which the United States buys more than a million barrels of oil a day. Guaido called on the military to join “the side of the constitution” and offered an amnesty to any Maduro allies who would defect. He was elected president of the National Assembly — the only major state pillar not controlled by the government — in December. Since then, he has managed to rally a divided opposition. “I have faith and hope in Guaido, a young lad who can help us to go forward,” one demonstrator in Caracas, 49-year-old Florangel Rodriguez said. —AFP

Israel charges Jewish teen over Palestinian's killing

JERUSALEM: Israeli prosecutors yesterday charged a Jewish 16-year-old with manslaughter after he allegedly threw a stone at a car in the occupied West Bank and killed a Palestinian woman. Prosecutors announced the indictment for the October incident in a statement, alleging the unnamed suspect threw the stone in an anti-Arab attack "as part of an act of terror".

He was also charged with stone-throwing and intentional sabotage of a vehicle, both "under terrorist circumstances". Aisha Rabi, 48, died after the stone smashed through the windshield of the car she was travelling in with her husband and nine-year-old daughter in the West Bank on October 12. The mother of nine was struck on the head and died later at a hospital in the city of Nablus. The stone weighed about two kilograms according to prosecutors.

Her husband managed to continue driving and make it to a Palestinian clinic, prosecutors said. Israeli authorities arrested the suspect on December 30. Four other suspects arrested as part of the investigation have been released to house arrest. The five were students at the Pri Haaretz religious seminary in the Rechelim settlement in the West Bank. Israeli media have reported that evidence against the teenager includes his DNA found on the stone.

Aisha Rabi's husband Yacoub said he had no faith in Israeli justice and wanted a hearing

in an international court. "The Israeli police and intelligence both know who hit us leading to my wife's death but they charged one person only." "When they hit our car with stones they were more than four people," he told AFP. "I want all those who killed my wife to be tried in an international court."

'Our son is innocent'

The suspect's lawyers issued a statement after the indictment was announced saying he was innocent and alleging prosecutors were desperate to charge someone with the crime. "We know that our son is innocent," the statement quoted the suspect's father as saying. Israeli investigations into "Jewish terrorism" — as such cases are often referred to by Israeli media — are highly sensitive.

Israeli authorities have been accused by rights activists of dragging their feet in such cases in comparison to investigations into Palestinian attacks, while far-right Israelis say suspects have undergone coercion and torture. The most high-profile case in recent years was a 2015 firebombing of a home in the Palestinian village of Duma that killed an 18-month-old boy and his parents.

Amiram Ben-Uliel, 21, from the northern West Bank settlement of Shilo, was charged with three counts of murder and one of attempted murder, arson and conspiracy to commit a hate crime in the case. A 17-year-old was charged with being an accessory to



Palestinian protesters run through tear gas fumes during clashes with Israeli forces following a demonstration along the border with Israel east of Gaza City. — AFP

committing a racially motivated murder. However, an Israeli court has since thrown out parts of the confessions of both the minor and Ben-Uliel, ruling they were obtained through

physical coercion, dealing a setback to the case. The minor in the case was given house arrest in July after the ruling on the confessions. — AFP

Yemen govt accuses rebels of violating Hodeida truce

RIYADH: Yemen's embattled government accused rival rebels yesterday of failing to abide by a truce reached between the warring parties at UN-sponsored peace talks in Sweden last month. "The legitimate government remains committed to the Sweden accords," state-run Saba news agency quoted Yemeni President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi as saying.

Hadi accused Yemen's Huthi rebels of failing to respect an agreement on the flashpoint port city of Hodeida, controlled by the insurgents since 2014, Saba said. The news comes as reports surface that the UN is looking to replace the head of a monitoring mission to Hodeida, a lifeline to millions of Yemenis dependent on its imports to survive. The United Nations' Yemen envoy, Martin Griffiths, met with Hadi in Riyadh on Thursday, after holding talks with rebels in the Yemeni capital Sanaa.

Also at the Riyadh meeting was retired Dutch general Patrick Cammaert, who heads a monitoring team tasked with overseeing the Hodeida truce. Diplomatic sources on Wednesday said the UN was looking to replace Cammaert. "In due time, he will leave. He is in this position until a successor is found," one of the sources told AFP. The Houthis, who control Hodeida, have accused Cammaert of not being up to the task and of pursuing "other agendas". Cammaert and members of the UN monitoring team came under fire in Hodeida last week but were unharmed.

The United Nations did not identify who was behind the shooting. Hodeida was for months the main front line in the Yemen war after government forces supported by Saudi Arabia and its allies launched an offensive to capture it in June. But a precarious calm has largely held in the city since the ceasefire

agreement came into force on December 18. The Hodeida agreement stipulates a full ceasefire, followed by the withdrawal and redeployment of rival forces from the city — two clauses that have yet to be fulfilled.

The Yemen conflict has killed some 10,000 people since a Saudi-led military coalition intervened in support of the beleaguered government in March 2015, according to the World Health Organization. Human rights groups say the real death toll could be five times as high. The war has pushed 14 million Yemenis to the brink of famine in what the United Nations describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. — AFP

Indian kills, cuts up and flushes friend down toilet

MUMBAI: A man in India accused of murdering his friend, chopping up his body and flushing the parts down the toilet has been arrested, police said yesterday. The grisly crime was discovered when residents at the Bachraj Paradise Society apartment complex in Mumbai found chunks of flesh blocking their drains. "While sifting through all the flesh we found two fingers which helped us ascertain these were human parts," police official Jayant Bajbale told AFP. After detecting a foul smell, police conducted a search of one of the flats and came across a power tool they believe was used to dismember the corpse. "We identified the tenant and tricked him into coming to his flat and then arrested him," Bajbale said. The 40-year-old accused confessed to killing his friend over a minor altercation. He told the police that he chopped off the body parts of the victim over two or three days and disposed of them in bags dumped in different locations. — AFP

Turkey can form 'security zone' in Syria alone

ISTANBUL: Turkey could establish a "security zone" in neighboring Syria on its own, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said yesterday, as the United States plans to withdraw troops from the war-torn country. "We can establish this security zone on our own and take the necessary measures," Cavusoglu told A-Haber television. Turkey intends to set up a 20-mile zone that will keep the militia of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia away from its border.

The YPG is seen as an effective ground force by the US in the fight against the Islamic State group but Turkey says it is linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which Ankara and Washington list as a terror group. Turkey has been threatening for months to launch an offensive in northern Syria to drive out US-backed Syrian Kurdish fighters. However Ankara has put its plans on hold after US President Donald Trump made a surprise announcement in December to pull out its some 2,000 troops — which was welcomed by the Turkish government.

Washington's request for guarantees for the safety of the YPG militia during the withdrawal remains an issue with Ankara fiercely rejecting any conditions. James Jeffrey, America's Syria pointman, was to hold talks in Ankara on Thursday with Turkish officials, Cavusoglu said. During their telephone call on Sunday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Trump agreed to speed up the discussions under way between generals of both countries to establish the "security zone". — AFP

International

Sudan police fires tear gas as protesters march on palace

Officials say 26 people have died in the violence

KHARTOUM: Sudanese police fired tear gas at hundreds of anti-government protesters trying to march on the presidential palace in Khartoum as demonstrators raised pressure on President Omar Al-Bashir to resign with nationwide rallies yesterday. The east African nation has been rocked by more than a month of deadly protests triggered by the Bashir government's decision to triple the price of bread.

Protesters chanting the movement's catch cry of "Freedom, peace, justice" have been confronted by a crackdown that has drawn international condemnation, including from the United States which has warned Sudan it could damage moves to improve their ties. The mushrooming demonstrations are widely seen as the biggest threat to Bashir's iron-fisted rule since he took power in an Islamist-backed coup in 1989. Officials say 26 people have died in the violence, but human rights groups have put the death toll at 40.

The Sudanese Professionals' Association that is spearheading the protest campaign has upped the ante with a call for nationwide rallies yesterday. "We are calling our people to gather at 17 places in Khartoum and Omdurman and march towards the presidential palace," the association said in a statement. Protesters have staged daily demonstrations in Khartoum and the capital's twin city of Omdurman, on the west bank of the Nile River.

Yesterday, hundreds of protesters began demonstrating in the capital's Burri district but

riot police confronted them with tear gas, witnesses said. "Let's die like martyrs or fight for their rights," shouted men and women as they took to the streets in Khartoum, witnesses said. Riot police also fired tear gas at protesters in Omdurman, and rallies were reported in the state of Jazeera, the Red Sea town of Port Sudan and in a village in North State, witnesses said.

In Port Sudan a security agent from the country's powerful intelligence service — which is leading a crackdown on anti-government protests — was killed late Wednesday in skirmishes with a group of soldiers, police said. The reason for the fighting was not immediately clear but police said Thursday that commanders of both groups later stopped it and the situation was "under control".

Economic crisis

Several previous attempted marches on the presidential palace have been broken up by riot police firing tear gas. Several corporates and business outlets in Khartoum ordered their employees to leave before the protests began, while many schools saw few children attending classes. Protests have also been called on Thursday in other towns and cities, said the SPA, an umbrella group of unions representing doctors, teachers and engineers.

The hike in the price of bread brought demonstrators onto the streets of the eastern farming hub of Atbara and other provincial towns on December 19. The protests then rapidly



OMDURMAN: Sudanese school girls join an anti-government protest in Khartoum's twin city Omdurman on the west bank of the Nile river. —AFP

spread to the capital Khartoum and other big cities as people vented their anger against the government. The demonstrations come with Sudan battling an economic crisis driven by soaring inflation and a shortage of foreign currency.

Bashir, 75, has remained defiant and rejected the calls to step down. He has blamed the violence on "infiltrators" among the protesters. The veteran leader has accused the United States of causing Sudan's economic woes, but his words have fallen on increasingly deaf ears as people have struggled to buy even basic foods and medicines. The United States imposed a trade em-

bargo on Sudan in 1997, and it was lifted only in October 2017.

On Wednesday, Washington called for an investigation into the deaths of protesters, warning Khartoum that excessive force against demonstrators and intimidation of the press and activists would jeopardize relations. "A new, more positive relationship between the United States and Sudan requires meaningful political reform and clear, sustained progress on respect for human rights," US State Department spokesman Robert Palladino said in a statement. — AFP

Nigeria's top female presidential hopeful quits

ABUJA: Nigeria's leading female presidential candidate Oby Ezekwesili yesterday withdrew from the race, pledging to form an opposition coalition to defeat the ruling party. Polls to elect a new president and parliament take place on February 16, while governorship and state assembly elections take place two weeks later.

A total of 73 candidates want the country's top job but it is expected to be a contest between President Muhammadu Buhari, of the All Progressives Congress (APC), and Atiku Abubakar, of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Ezekwesili, from the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria, is a former education minister and ex-World Bank vice-president, who in recent years has campaigned for the release of Boko Haram kidnapping victims, including the

Chibok schoolgirls.

The 55-year-old said she decided to pull out after "extensive consultations with leaders from various walks of life across the country over the past few days". She said she would now "focus on helping to build a veritable coalition to ensure a viable alternative to the #APCPDP in the forthcoming elections". The PDP was in power from the restoration of civilian rule in 1999 to Buhari's victory in 2015. But there are few ideological differences between the main parties, candidates for whom have regularly swapped sides between elections. Both have also faced criticism about their performance in government. Ezekwesili said a "broad coalition for a viable alternative" was now needed "more than ever before".

Minor parties signed an agreement known as PACT (Presidential Aspirants Coming Together) last year to have a unified candidate to challenge the main two parties. Political commentators believe only a strong coalition of minor parties can challenge the dominance of the APC and PDP. In 2015, Buhari's APC was able to defeat then ruling PDP after forming a coalition of fringe parties with the support of some leading PDP defectors. — AFP

Nurse arrested after incapacitated US woman gave birth

LOS ANGELES: A male nurse has been arrested in Arizona on suspicion of assaulting an incapacitated woman who gave birth at a long-term care facility, in a case that has shocked the nation. The 29-year-old victim — who police said "was not in a position to give consent" — gave birth late last month to a baby boy, sparking an investigation.

The suspect — identified as Nathan Sutherland, age 36 — has been charged with one count of sexual assault and one count of vulnerable adult abuse, Phoenix police spokesman Tommy Thompson told a news conference. Sutherland's DNA was matched to that of the baby, leading to his arrest, according to police. Authorities said Sutherland is a licensed practical nurse who was responsible for providing care to the victim at the time the sexual assault took place. He had worked at the privately-owned facility — Hacienda HealthCare in Phoenix — for about seven years.

'Troubled beyond words'

The unidentified victim, a member of the San

Carlos Apache Tribe, has been a patient at the facility for 26 years, local news reports said. Her caregivers have said they were not aware she was pregnant. "This is a facility that you should be safe in and someone wasn't," Mayor Thelda Williams told reporters on Wednesday.

The care center issued a statement saying that Sutherland, who last worked at the facility on Sunday, was fired on news of his arrest. It added that he had undergone an extensive background check when he was hired. "Every member of the Hacienda organization is troubled beyond words to think that a licensed practical nurse could be capable of seriously harming a patient," the statement said. "Once again, we offer an apology and send our deepest sympathies to the client and her family, to the community and to our agency partners at every level."

Phoenix Police Chief Jeri Williams said she had not encountered a similar case during 30 years in law enforcement. In a statement issued on Tuesday through their attorney, the victim's family sought to clarify her condition, saying that she was not in a coma but had "significant intellectual disabilities as a result of seizures very early in her childhood."

"She does not speak but has some ability to move her limbs, head and neck," the statement said. "Their daughter responds to sound and is able to make facial gestures. The important thing is that she is a beloved daughter, albeit with significant intellectual disabilities." The baby, born on December 29, is being cared for by the woman's family and is in good health, Thompson, the police spokesman, said. — AFP

Juan Guaido: The 'kid' assigned to take on Venezuela's Maduro

CARACAS: He will need to be: the bold young politician, head of Venezuela's opposition-controlled legislature, became public enemy number one when he declared himself interim president Wednesday, defying embattled President Nicolas Maduro. Guaido did not set out to supplant Maduro, the socialist president who has presided over a spiraling political and economic crisis in Venezuela.

But the sometimes reserved 35-year-old was thrust to the front of the Venezuelan opposition when more senior leaders were forced from the scene — some detained, some banned from politics and some pushed into exile. Guaido brazenly called out Maduro as he took a revised oath of office before a crowd of thousands in Caracas, saying, "I swear to formally assume the national executive powers as acting president of Venezuela to end the usurpation, (install) a transitional government and hold free elections."

US President Donald Trump immediately recognized him as Venezuela's interim president, followed by a string of countries across the region. Maduro, the hand-picked successor to late leftist firebrand Hugo Chavez, calls Guaido "a kid playing at politics." But the self-declared interim president, an industrial engineer by training, has shown no fear in challenging the socialist leader's election to a second term, in a May vote that was boycotted by the opposition and rejected by the United States, European Union and a dozen Latin American countries.

Guaido, who became the youngest person ever to preside over the legislature on January 5, has never been a great public speaker. But he is known as a talented coalition-builder — something Venezuela's divided and disorganized opposition badly needs. "One of his main virtues is arming teams. He understands the differing positions and does everything in his power to bring them together," 32-year-old lawmaker Juan Andres Mejia told AFP.

'Fresh face'

In his short tenure as legislative leader, Guaido got the opposition

majority to officially declare Maduro a "usurper" and his re-election a fraud, while promising an amnesty for all military and government officials who disavow the president. He has gained confidence along the way, grinning at rallies and speaking with greater ease.

What he hasn't found a solution to, though, is his powerlessness in the face of a government that retains the support of the military high command and the Supreme Court. Guaido has not been shy in reaching out to the armed forces seeking the backing he would need to take power definitively. "I'm a survivor, not a victim," he has said, recalling how he survived one of Venezuela's worst natural disasters as a teenager: the Vargas tragedy of December 1999, when mudslides caused by torrential rain killed thousands of people. Back then, Guaido lived with his mother and five siblings in the coastal state of Vargas. "I know what it means to be hungry," he said.

His introduction to politics came alongside the generation of students that held mass protests against Chavez in 2007. That movement inflicted Chavez's only electoral defeat, in a referendum on reforming the constitution. "Guaido is a fresh face, considered a man of consensus by the moderates and also respected by the radicals for having taken part in those protests," Diego Moya-Ocampos, an analyst at London-based IHS Markit consultants, told AFP. Guaido was a founding member of the Popular Will (VP) party in 2009 and has now become its most recognizable face. Previous leader Leopoldo Lopez is under house arrest for leading anti-Maduro protests in 2014, and his heir apparent, Freddy Guevara, fled to the Chilean embassy after he was accused of inciting violent protests in 2017.

Living dangerously

Guaido, who took part in those protests, was elected deputy for his native Vargas in 2015. He caused ripples by accusing state oil company PDVSA of corruption, but remained a relative unknown until recently. "To be honest, I didn't know who he was. Hopefully



CARACAS: Venezuela's National Assembly head Juan Guaido declares himself the country's "acting president" during a mass opposition rally against leader Nicolas Maduro, on the anniversary of a 1958 uprising that overthrew military dictatorship. — AFP

he won't prove a fraud," said Jose Hernandez, a 24-year-old administrator, at a recent rally in support of Guaido.

Mejia, his legislative colleague, says Guaido is playing "a difficult game": Venezuela is "used to personality cults and authoritarian leadership, and that's placing a big burden on Juan. Change doesn't depend only on him, it's down to everyone." Guaido was briefly detained by intelligence agents on January 13. But he was released after less than an hour. The government later blamed the incident on rogue agents acting unilaterally, arresting 12 people. — AFP

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International

Far out from 2020, progressive Democratic bench takes shape

From high-flying female US senators to charismatic military veterans

WASHINGTON: From a young gay mayor who launched his candidacy Wednesday, to high-flying female US senators and charismatic military veterans, a crowded field of Democrats jockeying to challenge Donald Trump in 2020 has already emerged — and is sure to grow. All told it will likely be the largest and most diverse coterie of candidates ever, with the potential for dozens of current and former lawmakers, governors, mayors, and businessmen to throw their hat in the ultimate political ring. Here are the first politicians to enter the presidential race, 21 months before the election.

Elizabeth Warren

At 69, the US Senate's consumer protection champion from Massachusetts became the most high-profile Democrat to enter the race when she announced a presidential exploratory committee on December 31. Warren is on the party's left flank, and built her reputation by holding Wall Street accountable for its missteps. Trump has already taken aim at Warren, mocking her for her proclamation of Native American heritage.

Kirsten Gillibrand

This senator from New York cut her teeth on the battle to end sexual assault, especially in the military, before the #MeToo movement gained national prominence. The 52-year-old fierce Trump critic is making gender and women's issues a hallmark of her campaign.

Kamala Harris

The barrier-breaking senator from California who aspires to be the nation's first black female and Indian-American president announced her candi-

dacy this week on a day honoring slain civil rights icon Martin Luther King, Jr. The daughter of an Indian immigrant medical researcher mother and Jamaican economist father, Harris, 54, began her career as a district attorney in San Francisco before serving as California's attorney general.

Julian Castro

A cabinet member in the Obama era and grandson of a Mexican immigrant, Castro announced his candidacy in English and Spanish on January 12 in the heat of debate on immigration and border security. At 44, the former mayor of San Antonio, Texas hopes to become the nation's first Hispanic president.

Tulsi Gabbard

At just 37, this congresswoman from Hawaii would be the first Hindu president if elected. A supporter of liberal Bernie Sanders in the 2016 race, military veteran Gabbard was criticized for meeting with Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad during that country's civil war, and for anti-gay positions that she has since retracted and apologized for.

Pete Buttigieg

Nine months younger than Gabbard is the South Bend, Indiana mayor who joined the race Wednesday, unveiling a resolutely future-looking and optimistic message to counter Trump's darker vision. A US Navy veteran who put his mayoral duties on hold to serve in Afghanistan, Buttigieg would become the first openly gay nominee of any major party.



WASHINGTON: US Senator from California, Kamala Harris, addresses the media January 21, 2019 at Howard University in Washington, DC after announcing earlier in the day that she is seeking to become the first African American woman to hold the office of US president, joining an already-crowded field of Democrats lining up to take on Donald Trump. —AFP

Richard Ojeda

This tattooed, blunt-talking retired US Army paratrooper rose to prominence last year during his unsuccessful bid for a US congressional seat deep in Trump country. Ojeda voted for Trump in 2016 but feels the president has failed to meet his economic promises. He seeks to return the Democratic Party to its roots as a champion of working class Americans.

Andrew Yang

This 44-year-old tech entrepreneur launched his

campaign with little fanfare in late 2017, warning against the dangers that automation presents to US workers. He has advocated for a form of universal basic income as a way to reduce inequality.

John Delaney

A wealthy businessman who served three terms in Congress, Delaney was the earliest Democrat to officially launch a bid, back in July 2017. He has crisscrossed the early-voting state of Iowa seeking to boost his name recognition.—AFP

the constitutional limit on his term in office.

Turbulence

A country the size of continental western Europe, DR Congo has lived through two regional wars in 1996-97 and 1998-2003. The last two presidential elections, in 2006 and 2011 — both of which were won by Kabila — were marred by bloody clashes. The ballot, which took place on December 30 after being delayed three times, surprised many by the lack of violence, but a political storm swiftly brewed over the count.

Tshisekedi was declared winner with 38.5 percent of the vote, over his opposition rival Martin Fayulu, who was credited with 34.8 percent. Fayulu branded the result a fix but lost a challenge to the Constitutional Court and foreign support for his position ebbed as countries took comfort in a peaceful transition.

Among foreign nations attending the ceremony, Kenya and Zambia were represented by their presidents and Tanzania by its vice presidents, according to the RTNC state television, while China, France, Japan and the United States sent their ambassadors, AFP journalists saw. "The opposition has run out of recourse to challenge the election results and the threat of widespread post-election violence is gradually subsiding," said Robert Besseling of EXX Africa, a business risk consultancy. —AFP

Angola decriminalizes homosexuality in landmark reform

LUANDA: Angola's parliament has decriminalized homosexuality, removing a notorious "vices against nature" provision in its penal code and banning discrimination against sexual orientation, in a reform hailed by rights watchdogs. On Wednesday, 155 parliamentarians voted for Angola's first overhaul of the criminal statute books since independence, while seven abstained and one voted against.

"Angola has finally shed the divisive 'vices against nature' provision in its law," Human Rights Watch (HRW) said in a statement. "In casting aside this archaic and insidious relic of the colonial past, Angola has eschewed discrimination and embraced equality." While Angola had no known prosecutions under the old law, HRW said the contested provision harmed the rights of gay, bisexual and transgender people and exposed their lives to painful scrutiny.

The new legislation is the first overhaul of

Angola's criminal code since it gained independence from Portugal in 1975. The new law also aims to shore up protection against sexual discrimination. Anyone who refuses to employ individuals or provide services to them on the grounds of sexual orientation will be liable to a jail term of up to two years. "The 69 other countries around the world that still criminalize consensual same-sex conduct should follow its (Angola's) lead," HRW said.

In a historic moment last year, Angola gave legal recognition to a gay rights lobby group called Iris Angola, marking a major breakthrough in a closed and conservative society. Angola has been led since September 2017 by President Joao Lourenco, who succeeded Jose Eduardo dos Santos, the country's ruler for almost four decades. Lourenco has sought in several ways to distance himself from his predecessor. He has launched a campaign against corruption that has netted several top officials from the last government. He has also sought to mend fences with the international community, which has long been critical of Angola's human rights record, and expressed interest in joining the Commonwealth and international francophone community. —AFP

DR Congo set for historic transition

KINSHASA: Felix Tshisekedi was to be sworn in yesterday as president of Democratic Republic of Congo, marking the country's first-ever peaceful handover of power after chaotic and bitterly-disputed elections. At 55, opposition leader Tshisekedi takes over from Joseph Kabila who is stepping aside after 18 years at the helm of sub-Saharan Africa's biggest country.

At least 2,000 Tshisekedi supporters, many of them dressed in white, gathered outside the Palace of the Nation, the seat of the presidency, to celebrate the historic event.

"We hope that this will be a real change, especially as he has taken power without bloodshed," said Saddam Kongolo, a member of Tshisekedi's Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS). One of Tshisekedi's first tasks will be to appoint a prime minister in a move which will see him sharing power with Kabila's supporters, who hold an overwhelming majority in parliament. The ceremony caps more than two years of turmoil sparked by Kabila's refusal to step down when he reached

Trump delays speech until the government shutdown ends

An intensifying war of words between the president and Pelosi

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump backed down late Wednesday in a spat with Democrats over his State of the Union address, agreeing to delay it until a government shutdown ends, although the more than month-long impasse dragged on. The US Senate prepared meanwhile to hold two showdown votes on measures to reopen the shuttered federal agencies, but Trump's toxic sparring with House speaker Nancy Pelosi essentially assured no solution was at hand.

An intensifying war of words between the president and Pelosi came to a head Wednesday with the top Democrat effectively blocking Trump from delivering his annual address in Congress until the partial government shutdown, now in its 34th day, is brought to an end. But in a tweet sent after 11:00 pm, Trump wrote, "As the Shutdown was going on, Nancy Pelosi asked me to give the State of the Union Address. I agreed."

"She then changed her mind because of the Shutdown, suggesting a later date. This is her prerogative - I will do the Address when the Shutdown is over." As acrimony in Washington grew, lawmakers across the political spectrum were left searching in vain for an exit strategy for the longest-ever halt to federal operations, as furloughed government employees and contractors vented their fury on Capitol Hill.

The prospects for Trump getting to deliver his national address in Congress next Tuesday as planned were dim, with the Senate votes — one on Trump's proposal that includes money for his border wall and changes to immigration policy, the other by Democrats seeking to reopen government before negotiating border security — bound to fail.

Traditionally the president's annual speech is delivered before a joint session of Congress in the ornate chamber of the House of Representatives. In an effort to force the hand of Pelosi, who had already urged Trump to reschedule due to shutdown-related security shortcomings, the president wrote to her saying it would be "so very sad for our Country" if his speech could not be delivered on time and in the chamber.

Pelosi, who has become the face of Democratic opposition to Trump in Congress, pushed back, informing the president that the House would only agree to host him for his speech "when government has been opened." Trump now appears to have capitulated. After his tweet late Wednesday agreeing to delay his speech, Pelosi tweeted back saying she hopes he agrees to a deal that opens the government.

'Will work for pay'

The shutdown, which has seen some 800,000 federal employees left without pay for a month, was triggered by Trump's refusal to sign funding bills in December, in retaliation for Democratic opposition to funds for extending walls along the US-Mexico border. With the closure of about one quarter of federal agencies affecting millions of Americans, hundreds of unpaid government workers used the power of protest to publicize their plight, holding a sit-in for hours at a congressional office building.

Some held up paper plates with messages including "Will work for pay." With no solution in sight, many were bracing for Friday, when they expect to miss their second paycheck in a row.



WASHINGTON DC: US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (C) checks her watch while leaving a meeting of the House Democratic caucus at the US Capitol. — AFP

The House, now controlled by Democrats, has passed multiple bills that would open government, but the Republican-run Senate is aligned with Trump's push for border wall funding. The Senate votes have the potential to break the impasse, but since each requires 60 votes to advance in the 100-member chamber, their passage is unlikely. With both sides locked in their posi-

tions, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell told the chamber "it's time to make a deal." Even the Senate's chaplain Barry Black took the rare step of weighing in, somberly intoning in his opening prayer Wednesday that "as some members of our armed forces seek sustenance at charity food pantries, and prepare to miss a second pay day, something has to give." — AFP

Ties between US, Russia and China 'dysfunctional': UN

DAVOS: The world is facing worrying "fragmentation", UN chief Antonio Guterres said yesterday, warning that the relationship between the United States, Russia and China was worryingly out of kilter. "The relationship between the three most important powers, Russia, the United States and China, has never been as dysfunctional as it is today," the UN secretary-general told the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Guterres said the ongoing shift away from a world dominated previously by two Cold War superpowers was creating "a bit of a chaotic situation". "We no longer live in a bipolar or unipolar world, but we are not yet in a multipolar world," he said. "Power relations (are) becoming unclear," he added, urging countries to work together and support multilateralism. The United States has been locked in a trade war with China and others that has rocked the financial markets and sparked fears of a slowdown in the global economy.

And US relations with Moscow have been hit by allegations of Russian meddling in US politics and a stand-off over the fate of a Cold War-era nuclear weapons treaty. The dysfunction is evident "in the economy, but it is also true in the Security Council," Guterres said, lamenting the recurring "paralysis" of the UN's top body. "We are in a world in which global challenges are more and more fragmented, and the responses are more and more fragmented," he said. "If this is not reversed, it is a recipe for disaster."

He acknowledged that many around the world feel disconnected from those in power and from the work of international organizations such as the UN, fuelling nationalism and populism. "We need to demonstrate to all of those who feel that they were left behind that our ideas, our policies, our programs aim at solving their problems or helping them to solve them," he said. — AFP

China says Australian held on national security grounds

BEIJING: China said yesterday that Chinese-Australian author and democracy advocate Yang Hengjun was detained on national security grounds, becoming the latest Western citizen to face such accusations from Beijing. Yang's detention comes at a moment of heightened tension between Western countries and an increasingly muscular Beijing, which recently detained two Canadians amid a diplomatic row with Ottawa.

Australia demanded that Yang — a former Chinese diplomat — be treated "fairly and transparently" and complained that Beijing had waited four days, instead of three as required, to notify Canberra about his detention. Yang was detained shortly after he made a rare return to China from the United States last week.

"Beijing state security took compulsory measures against Australian national Yang Jun and are investigating because he is suspected of engaging in

criminal activities that endanger China's national security," said Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying, using Yang's official name. Such accusations in China often imply espionage allegations. Similar allegations were made against the two Canadians who were detained in December.

Australian Defence Minister Christopher Pyne, on an official visit to Beijing, told reporters he would be raising the issue with his Chinese counterpart later yesterday. "As Mr Yang doesn't have a residence in Beijing, I believe he would be held in a... situation which we would describe as home detention," he said. Yang's lawyer Mo Shaoping confirmed to AFP that his client is under residential surveillance, adding that Yang Hengjun is his pen name. But Yang may not have access to his lawyer anytime soon — a visit will require approval from the Beijing State Security Bureau, standard procedure in such cases involving national security.

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne said earlier that diplomats met with Chinese officials in Beijing to discuss the matter and called on China to deal with the matter "transparently and fairly". Once described as China's "most influential political blogger", Yang became an Australian citizen in 2000, but is currently based at New York's Columbia University. His criticism of the Chinese government and support for democracy has in the past made him a target of Beijing's state security apparatus. — AFP

International

Summer blues: S Australia heat smashes record temperatures

‘We expect these emergencies to occur with increasing frequency’

ADELAIDE: Temperatures in southern Australia topped 49 degrees yesterday, shattering previous records as sizzling citizens received free beer and heat-stressed bats fell from trees. The Bureau of Meteorology reported temperatures of 49.5 Celsius (120 Fahrenheit) north of Adelaide, while inside the city temperatures reached 47.7 Celsius, breaking a record that had stood since 1939.

Adelaide residents are used to sweltering days during the southern hemisphere summer, but even they struggled with the oppressive temperatures. More than 13 towns across South Australia have smashed their own heat records. The state's health authorities early yesterday reported that 44 people had received emergency treatment for heat-related illnesses in the past 24 hours. "Remember to check on elderly friends, relatives and neighbors, and those who are unwell," the state emergency services tweeted.

Health authorities were also forced to issue a public warning to avoid contact with hundreds of heat-stressed bats falling from trees in parkland areas. Authorities in central Australia said they had to cull more than 50 feral horses, after they found 90 dead or dying wild brumbies near a dried-up water hole. Shocking images of dozens of dead horses strewn across the dry ground began to circulate on social media this week. "With climate change well and truly upon us, we expect these emergencies to occur with increasing frequency and nobody is truly prepared and resourced to respond to them," David

Ross, director of indigenous representative body the Central Land Council, said in a statement.

Bushfire threat

While thousands of people have flocked to beaches to cool off in the surf, hundreds have taken to shopping centers to stay out of the heat. At the Red Lion Hotel in South Australia, patrons gave a free beer to each of their patrons while the temperature remained above 45 degrees. Around one hundred people lined up for their free drink for over one hour.

At Adelaide Zoo tortoises have been getting cool water wipedowns, rock wallabies have been given ice to lick and hyenas have taken refreshing dips. But the temperatures are also testing municipal services, with SunCity buses forced to cut their services, leaving commuters searching for trams or trains to get home. Emergency services are on the alert as more than 13 districts are under threat of possible bushfires.

Meanwhile, a total fire ban was issued further south in the island state of Tasmania, where authorities continued to battle blazes. Parts of the southeastern state of Victoria were also sweltering through temperatures above 40 degrees. The soaring temperatures follow a heatwave last week that saw Australian towns among the hottest places on Earth.

As many as a million fish were discovered dead last week along the banks of a major river system in drought-battered eastern Australia, with thousands more found killed some 900



ADELAIDE: This recent undated handout photo released to AFP yesterday by the Adelaide Zoo shows Brutus the hippo getting hosed down in the heat at Adelaide Zoo. — AFP

kilometers away in the north of New South Wales on Monday. The government has launched a review into the mass fish kill. National Broadcaster ABC reported that farmers in Western Australia have been forced to cull at least 2,500 feral camels gathering in

"plague proportions" in the past month. Regarded as pests, the ABC said many have wondered onto properties where temperatures had reached 50 Celsius this summer, where they are draining valuable water supply and feed for cattle. — AFP

Hun Sen calls on military to 'destroy' opponents

PHNOM PENH: Cambodia's strongman premier Hun Sen yesterday called on his country's military to "destroy" opponents if the government comes under threat, in a tirade in which he described himself as the "the one who steers the wheel" of the army. The 66-year-old premier has in recent weeks turned up the rhetoric against the now-dissolved opposition party, the European Union and other critics of his government.

Since his ruling party swept a July election widely considered a sham, the EU has warned it may withdraw its Everything But Arms scheme which allows Cambodia's lucrative garment sector duty-free access to its massive market. In the wake of the move, Hun Sen, a five-star general despite his position as the country's civilian leader, has been even more outspoken than usual. "Some people say Hun Sen is consolidating power... that is very correct," he said in a speech to sol-

diers marking the 20th anniversary of the infantry — which is headed by his son Hun Manet.

Hun Sen urged the army to "destroy... revolutions that attempt to topple the legitimate government" adding he is "not afraid to issue an order" if faced with threats. "Better to see the death of four or five people rather than the death of tens of thousands and millions," he said, referring to the lives lost during the ultra-Maoist Khmer Rouge regime which left a quarter of the population dead.

He also called on the lines of soldiers in front of him to purge their ranks of any troops who oppose the government, saying "they must be destroyed." "I am the one who steers the wheel," he added. The wily former Khmer Rouge cadre has stayed in power for more than 30 years through a dense patronage network that analysts say largely benefits his family, the armed forces and the elite.

The speech shows "exactly why under his rule political opponents and human rights defenders have been killed with total impunity," said Andrea Giorgetta from the International Federation for Human Rights. While previously reliant on Western aid, Cambodia is now bankrolled by China. Hun Sen returned from a visit to Beijing this week with a near \$600 million pledge in aid from Chinese President Xi Jinping. — AFP

Taleban says talks with the US enter fourth day in Qatar

KABUL: Negotiations between the Taleban and US officials in Qatar entered a fourth straight day yesterday, according to the insurgents, as the two sides pursue a potential deal to bring an end to Afghanistan's 17-year conflict. Taleban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed to AFP that "discussions are still ongoing". "We will talk in detail later when we reach agreement," the spokesman added.

Washington has been stepping up efforts for a peace deal that could pave the way for the Taleban's participation in the next government. "Both sides are discussing the various aspects of the US troops' withdrawal," a senior Taleban commander based in an unknown location in Pakistan told AFP, adding that a statement could be released later in the day or on Friday. The Pakistan foreign ministry also confirmed that talks were ongoing between the two sides. However, there was no immediate comment from the US embassy or NATO in Kabul.

The US said Tuesday it had resumed talks with the insurgents in Qatar, where special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad was meeting Taleban representatives. Rahimullah Yusufzai, an expert on the Taleban, said the continuation of the talks represented "unprecedented" progress. "I have never seen anything like this before," he said. "This is the first serious effort. And it has continued since July... they have agreed to disagree and continued to meet. That's why it's unprecedented."

Talks have primarily focused on three major points: the withdrawal of US troops, a vow to prevent Afghan soil from being a base for attacks on other countries, and a potential ceasefire, according to Yusufzai. Washington wants the insurgents to enter talks with the Afghan government, but they have long refused, denouncing Kabul as a US puppet. The talks come after Khalilzad spent the weekend in Pakistan where he met with Prime Minister Imran Khan as part of a regional tour that saw the envoy shuttling between India, China and Afghanistan.

The US is not the only country engaged in talks with the militants. Russia and Iran have held meetings with the Taleban in recent months, while China has also made overtures. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan are all participating in the US efforts. "Pakistan has influence with the group, and the Russians also are somewhat supporting the Taleban," said Ateequallah Amarkhail, a Kabul-based military analyst. — AFP

All the President's men: The patrol parade with India's elite bodyguards

The regiment still commands enormous respect, and intrigue

NEW DELHI: They are members of the most elite regiment in the Indian Army, handpicked by height and heritage from a pool of thousands and bedecked in the finest regalia. The President's Bodyguard, a 200-strong cavalry unit, have for centuries been assigned to India's uppermost VIPs, from British viceroys to modern-day heads of state. Today, the mounted regiment flank President Ram Nath Kovind on ceremonial occasions, most notably the Republic Day parade where they march at the very head of India's armed forces.

Every January 26 in New Delhi, the horsemen — draped in fine red coats, golden sashes and resplendent turbans — escort the president to the stage and give the order for the national anthem to begin. "It is the most proud moment for me as the commandant," said Colonel Dhiraj Chengappa, who leads the regiment. Attended by world leaders and beamed across the nation of 1.25 billion, the parade showcases India's military might and is the premier state event of the year. Only the most elite troops — sourced exclusively from India's traditional warrior castes — make the cut.

Despite the title, the bodyguards are not charged with protecting the president. His security detail is provided by Delhi police. But the pride, pomp and prestige of the regiment still commands enormous respect, and intrigue. In December, more than 10,000 people applied for

just nine vacancies in the mounted unit. Successful candidates must be at least six feet tall, boast a pleasing physical appearance and carry an impeccable professional reputation. They were once jokingly referred to as "God's Gift to Beautiful Girls" — a play on the acronym for the Governor General's Body Guards, one of their former titles.

Storied history

The stringent recruitment policy has been challenged by those without the desired attributes or lineage. In December a petitioner went to Delhi's High Court to contest the rule that bodyguards must be Sikh, or a member of two of India's upper castes — Jat or Rajput. The court is waiting for a reply from the army and government in Delhi. Chengappa said the regiment was following "the overall recruitment policy" of the army.

The storied brigade dates back to 1773, when British Governor General Warren Hastings raised a contingent of warriors later dubbed the "Viceroy's Guard". At independence in 1947, the regiment split as the subcontinent was cleaved into India and Pakistan. As they divided their assets, both Indian and Pakistani officers wanted an ornate black and gold-plated carriage, once owned by the Viceroy of India.

The matter was solved by a toss of the coin, and India won. The same horse-drawn buggy



NEW DELHI: Indian Army personnel lower India's national flag during the rehearsal at the Beating Retreat Ceremony at Vijay Chowk. — AFP

now carries the president through the streets of Delhi on Republic Day. The bodyguards ride only the finest horses for the occasion, select beasts pampered and trained in stables at the president's grand residence in Delhi. Like their

riders, protocol dictates their height and dimensions: at least 15 hands tall. Unlike other Indian cavalry units, the horses' manes are allowed to grow and are shampooed and sometimes braided for special occasions. — AFP

Pakistan's top court to decide on Bibi appeal on Jan 29

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Supreme Court will decide on January 29 whether to allow an appeal against its acquittal of a Christian woman at the centre of a blasphemy row, a lawyer involved in the case said yesterday. If the court refuses to allow the appeal, it will remove the last legal hurdle facing Asia Bibi, who is a prime target in conservative Muslim-majority Pakistan and remains in protective custody.

Bibi was on death row for eight years for blasphemy, a hugely sensitive charge. The Supreme Court's decision in October last year to overturn her conviction ignited days of violent demonstrations, with enraged Islamists calling for her beheading, mutiny within the powerful military and the assassination of the country's top judges. The government has since launched a crackdown on the Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) party — the Islamist group driving the violent protests — charging its leaders with sedition and terrorism.

But authorities also struck a deal with the protesters to end the violence, forming an agreement which included allowing a final review of the Supreme Court's judgment. On January 29, "the court will determine if our appeal against her acquittal is admitted", Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry, the lawyer who filed the petition seeking an appeal, told AFP. "Usually the court decides on the same day if the appeal is admit-

ted or not," he added. Under Pakistan's creaky legal system any private citizen can petition the courts on any matter of public interest or human rights, as in the Bibi case.

However legal experts said it would be highly unusual for the Supreme Court to overturn its own decision, especially one that as carefully drafted as the Bibi ruling. "It is very rare," lawyer Saad Rasool told AFP. The three-member bench that will hear the petition will be headed by new Chief Justice Asif Saeed Khosa, considered the country's top expert in criminal law and who helped draft the decision to acquit Bibi.

Blasphemy continues to be a massively inflammatory issue in Pakistan, where even unproven accusations of insulting Islam can spark lynchings. Approximately 40 people are believed to be on death row or serving a life sentence for blasphemy, according to a 2018 report by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. Many cases see Muslims accusing Muslims. But rights activists have warned that minorities — particularly Christians — are often caught in the crossfire, with blasphemy charges used to settle personal scores.

Speculation has been rife since Bibi's acquittal that an asylum deal with a European or North American country may be in the works. The allegations against her date back to 2009, when Muslim women accused her of blasphemy against the Prophet Mohammed, a charge punishable by death under the colonial-era legislation. Her case drew the attention of international rights groups and swiftly became the most high-profile in the country. Pope Benedict XVI called for her release in 2010, while in 2015 her daughter met his successor and the current head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis. — AFP

UN expert visits the Rohingya 'relocation' island

DHAKA: A UN Special Rapporteur on human rights visited yesterday an island off Bangladesh where Dhaka aims to move Rohingya refugees despite worries it will be vulnerable to extreme weather. Some 750,000 Muslim Rohingyas flooded into Bangladesh in late 2017 after an offensive by Myanmar's military that the United Nations has said could have amounted to genocide, joining 250,000 already there.

Bangladesh is spending \$280 million transforming Bhashan Char, a muddy silt islet that only emerged from the sea two decades ago, into a camp for some of the refugees. But the island, in a coastal region where weather has killed hundreds of thousands of people in recent decades, is one hour by boat from the nearest land over a stretch of sea prone to violent storms.

Some of the Rohingya themselves, living in overcrowded and squalid camps in southeastern Bangladesh border district of Cox's Bazar, have expressed unease about moving, while the UN has insisted that any relocation must be voluntary. Yanghee Lee, the UN rapporteur, visited the island by helicopter accompanied by Bangladeshi foreign ministry officials and was due to inspect the shelters and facil-

ities being built there. Lee, on a visit also taking in Myanmar's other neighbor Thailand, issued no statement but she was due to give a news conference in Dhaka on Friday, the UN said. Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen this week said Dhaka was not hiding anything in the island and they would take all interested diplomats once construction work is completed.

"We're very open. We're not in any hide-and-seek. Let's finish the work first," he said. Plans for the island camp were first floated in 2015 and Bangladesh previously wanted to start moving refugees from to the island last June before the monsoon season began. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was then slated to open the new settlement, built to house 100,000 refugees but behind schedule, last October, but the inauguration was postponed. A senior disaster management official told AFP in September that nearly three-quarters of the project was complete, with the navy fast-tracking construction of shelters and evacuation centers. Local authorities have been seeking to reassure refugees that they will be safe on the island, which is off limits to the public and to the media. — AFP

International

Sports-fan sultan picked as Malaysian king weeks after sudden resignation

A keen athlete who holds a string of positions on sporting bodies

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's royal families yesterday picked a sports-loving sultan as the country's new king after the last monarch resigned in a historic first following his reported marriage to a Russian ex-beauty queen. The previous king, Sultan Muhammad V, stepped aside this month following just two years on the throne after reports surfaced he had married the former Miss Moscow while on medical leave.

There was great shock across Malaysia at the first resignation of a monarch in the Muslim-majority country's history. Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, a keen athlete who holds a string of positions on sporting bodies, including at world football governing body FIFA, was elected as the new king during a special meeting of Malaysia's Islamic royalty. Sultan Abdullah "has been chosen as the 16th Yang di-Pertuan Agong (king) for a period of five years starting from January 31, 2019," said a statement from the Keeper of the Rulers' Seal, Syed Danial Syed Ahmad.

Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy, with a unique arrangement where the national throne changes hands every five years between rulers of the country's nine states headed by Islamic royalty. Eight of the state sultans earlier met at the national palace in Kuala Lumpur for the so-called "Conference of Rulers" to select the new king.

The only one absent was Muhammad V, who

remains the sultan of the northeastern state of Kelantan despite having resigned as the national monarch. Abdullah was widely expected to become king as the central state of Pahang was next in line to provide the monarch. The 59-year-old was named Pahang's new ruler — replacing his elderly, ailing father — several days after Muhammad V's resignation, paving the way for him to become the next national monarch. The deputy king was named as Sultan Nazrin Shah of Perak state, according to the statement.

Command great respect

As well as being a member of FIFA's council — which lays out the vision for global football — he is president of the Asian Hockey Association and a former head of the Football Association of Malaysia. After attending school in Malaysia, the keen polo player went on to study in Britain, where he attended the Sandhurst military academy, according to a biography published on Bernama.

After Pahang, the next state due to provide a king is Johor. The sultan of Johor, which borders Singapore, is one of the country's most wealthy and powerful Islamic rulers, and has his own private army. To be elected as the national king, a sultan must be supported by at least five of the state rulers. While their role is ceremo-



KUALA LUMPUR: This handout photo taken and released by Malaysia's Department of Information yesterday shows Sultan Abdullah ibni Sultan Ahmad Shah of Pahang (C) walking after a meeting at Malaysia's National Palace. —AFP

nia, Malaysia's royalty command great respect, especially from the country's Muslim Malay majority, and criticizing them is strictly forbidden.

Portraits of the king and queen adorn government buildings throughout the country. The

king is also the symbolic head of Islam in the nation, as well as the nominal chief of the military. Malaysia's sultans trace a lineage back to the Malay sultanates of the 15th century. The king's official title, Yang di-Pertuan Agong, means "He Who Is Made Lord". —AFP

Taiwan entertainer faces jail for slapping minister

TAIPAI: A retired Taiwanese entertainer could face jail after she slapped a minister to protest government moves to address the controversial legacy of late leader Chiang Kai-shek, officials said yesterday. Cheng Hui-chung, 67, was questioned by prosecutors after she slapped culture minister Cheng Li-chiun in the face during an event on Tuesday.

"Prosecutors questioned Cheng to clarify if she obstructed an official in discharge of public duties which is an indictable offence," Chen Chia-hsiu, a spokeswoman for the Taipei district prosecutor's office, said yesterday. The offence is punishable by a maximum three-years jail. Cheng, a singer in the 1960s and 70s, said she was motivated by the current government's push to confront the controversial legacy of Chiang, seen by many as symbolic of a brutal military regime which purged thousands of opponents until his death in 1975.

As the island grapples with its authoritarian past, calls are growing for his statues and other relics to be removed from public display. His statues across the island have also been repeatedly targeted by protesters. But supporters see him as a national hero who deserved to be revered and remembered. A row is currently raging over the im-

posing Chiang Kai-shek memorial hall in the heart of Taipei. It is one of Taiwan's best-known attractions with visitors flocking to see the daily changing of the guard by soldiers who keep vigil over a giant statue of the Generalissimo.

Opponents of Chiang's legacy, including relatives of his regime's many victims, want the honor guard pulled and the memorial hall either torn down or Chiang's presence removed — and a government commission is examining various options. Cheng the elderly entertainer has apologized for assaulting the minister but insisted she stands firm in opposing moves to erase Chiang's legacy. "My apology doesn't mean the minister is doing the right thing. I urge her not to demolish the Chiang Kai-shek memorial hall," she told reporters.

President Tsai Ing-wen has called for calm over the row while minister Cheng, who was on the receiving end of the slap, said: "Violence is wrong and there is no stance or reason that can be used to justify violence." Chiang and his nationalist Kuomintang troops fled from the mainland to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war to Communist forces. Although Taiwan today is a fully-fledged democracy, it was only in late 2017 that a bill was passed to tackle the legacy of injustices under Chiang. It included a call for streets and schools with names commemorating Chiang to be changed and his statues taken down. The ministry of culture announced in 2017 that the memorial hall would stop selling souvenirs depicting Chiang and cease playing a song dedicated to the former ruler, while references to him would be removed from galleries. —AFP

Jakarta ex-governor freed after sentence

JAKARTA: Jakarta's former governor was released from prison yesterday, nearly two years after his blasphemy conviction fanned fears of religious intolerance in the world's biggest Muslim-majority nation. Basuki Tjahaja Purnama — the Indonesian capital's first non-Muslim governor in half a century and its first ethnic Chinese leader — left a prison outside the capital after dawn.

Supporters of the Christian ex-governor, who is popularly known as Ahok, gathered outside the prison, chanting and cheering his new found freedom. "My dad's a free man! Thank you everyone for the support," Nicholas Sean, one of his three children, said on Twitter. The release ends one of the most tumultuous chapters in Indonesian politics in recent memory. Purnama had been a popular politician who won praise for trying to clean up the traffic-clogged megacity and clamp down on corruption before his imprisonment. But his downfall came quickly after comments he made on the campaign trail during a re-election bid saw him accused of insulting Islam.

The filmed remarks, which went viral online, sparked mass protests in Jakarta, spearheaded by radical groups opposed to a non-Muslim leader and encouraged by his political rivals. Purnama had urged voters to ignore rivals who cited a Koranic verse stating they should reject non-Muslim leaders, with the then governor saying people were being manipulated into voting against him. However, judges ruled the remarks amounted to blasphemy against Islam and he was then sentenced to two years' jail in May 2017, having lost

the election to a Muslim challenger.

It was an unusually harsh sentence — prosecutors had only recommended probation for the now 52-year-old. Purnama has not said publicly whether he would re-enter politics, but some think he should press on with his battle against graft in the corruption-riddled nation. "I hope he becomes chairman of the anti-graft agency and clobbers corrupt people," supporter Supardi Aulele told AFP.

'Unjust conviction'

Purnama's case drew international headlines and a wave of criticism, including from the United Nations, which urged the country of 260 million to revise its decades-old blasphemy law. "Ahok's unjust conviction is a reminder that minorities in Indonesia are at risk so long as the abusive blasphemy law remains in place," said Elaine Pearson of Human Rights Watch. "Islamists will use it to bring wrongful prosecutions and even more discriminatory regulations against religious minorities."

The huge demonstrations calling for Purnama's jailing fuelled concerns about the growing influence of religious hardliners and that the Southeast Asian country's much-vaunted tolerant brand of Islam was under threat. Indonesia's blasphemy law states that anyone found guilty of "expressing feelings of hostility" towards religion can be jailed for up to five years.

It applies to any of the six officially recognized religions, including Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism, but most prosecutions are brought against people accused of blaspheming Islam, which is followed by nearly 90 percent of the population. Among them was an ethnic Chinese Buddhist woman found guilty in August of insulting Islam for asking her neighborhood mosque to lower the volume on its sound system. —AFP

Lifestyle

Friday Times

FRIDAY, JANUARY 25, 2019

www.kuwaittimes.net

A model presents a creation by Elie Saab during the 2019 Spring-Summer Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP

A stitch in time to save Egypt's ancient tent making craft

See Page 20



An Egyptian man looks at wall hangings at his shop in Cairo's Khayamiya Street, or the Street of Tent-makers. — AFP photos



An Egyptian craftsman sits working on a tapestry in his shop in Khayamiya Street.

A stitch in time to save Egypt's ancient tent making craft

Mohsen Al-Khayami has for years watched sadly as his once lucrative craft business dwindled and fellow artisans deserted the ancient art known as Khayamiya, or tent making, for better paying jobs. The 68 year-old, a master of one of Egypt's most traditional crafts, has been hand stitching the decorative appliques that nowadays can range from wall hangings to bed quilts for more than half a century, so long that his customers have named him after his art. "I learned it when I was eight," he told AFP. "It took me years before I could master it and be able to finish a whole tapestry on my own."

In days gone by, his craft was used to make tents and large tapestries but has evolved as demand has changed. These days, Khayamiya refers to the creation of ornamental items mostly in cotton that can also include pillow cases and throws, although the traditional name—tent making when translated into English—endures. Khayami's

and Koranic texts. On other appliques, Khayami has sketched folk tales of Old Juha, a humorous character in Arab culture, always depicted with his faithful donkey. Tales of their exploits often impart valuable lessons.

The centuries-old art of Khayamiya goes back to the time of travelling caravans, when huge tent pavilions were used as shields from the desert's searing sun. It is believed to have emerged during the Fatimid dynasty, which ruled Egypt about 1,000 years ago, but some argue that it even dates back to the Pharaohs. Today, many are still used as backdrops for weddings, funerals and religious celebrations of the Holy month of Ramadan as well as the birthday of Prophet Mohammed known as Mawlid.

Craft at risk

Slowing demand however has stoked fears among artisans that their craft may be dying, especially as younger generations prove reluctant to learn the trade, preferring a more stable source of income. Khayami says it's hard to know the exact number of Khayamiya craftspeople left as many work from their homes or workshops outside the area.

But he said the number on the street has been dropping for years, down to around 20 from 60 in the 1980s. A similar figure was provided by Mamdouh Al-Sheribini, the executive director of the Handicraft Industry Chamber. "The pace of people abandoning the craft has increased since 2011. Young people do not have the patience for learning a craft that takes time to master," Khayami said. "They cannot handle the market's ups and downs, like us."

Abdullah Fathy, a 31-year-old Khayamiya maker, also says many leave to start other businesses or find other jobs. In his shop, Fathy, who learned his craft at 15, usually sits cross-legged on a pillow, bent over a piece of fabric. It can take him a full workday to stitch one small applique. Other pieces, fanning out across meters, can take a month or even more depending on the intricacy of the design. Prices can start from as little as 50 Egyptian pounds (\$2.7) and go up to several thousand pounds. But Fathy refuses to abandon his trade. "If laborers keep leaving one after the other, the craft may soon become extinct," said Fathy.



An Egyptian craftsman showcases a tapestry in his shop in Khayamiya Street.



Customers walk in the shop of an Egyptian craftsman as he weaves a tapestry in his shop in Khayamiya Street.

“
Young people do not have the patience for learning a craft that takes time to master
”

shop is among two dozen others lining the covered Khayamiya Street or the Street of Tentmakers, opposite the towering 11th century Bab Zuweila, one of Old Cairo's main surviving gates.

The street has lured tourists for years and the craftsmen's shops were among the main draws for foreign visitors until the 2011 uprising that toppled longtime ruler Hosni Mubarak. The ensuing turmoil scared away tourists, and since then business has slowed to a trickle. But Khayami still ostentatiously exhibits around his shop his elaborately stitched wall hangings and colorful tapestries replete with pharaonic motifs copied from ancient tombs, Arabesque designs, Kufic calligraphy of Arabic proverbs



Tapestries hanging on the wall of a shop in Khayamiya Street.

Tapestries hanging on the wall of a shop in Khayamiya Street.

Tourism uptick

Though many craftsmen have sought to promote their products among locals, they still long for the days when their shops would teem with tourists. "Tourists used to make up about 98 percent of our clientele. It's usually them who appreciate the effort put into these handicrafts as opposed to Egyptians," said 48-year old Mahmoud Fatouh, whose shop in Khayamiya has belonged to his family since the early 1900s. Signs since late 2017 that tourists may be on their way back to Egypt have brought a small glimmer of hope. "We see tourists more often now," said Khayami. "It's not the same as before (pre-2011), but it's still better than nothing." "There is still hope," he went on.

"So long as the country is stable, tourists will keep coming back," Khayami added. Official figures on tourism in 2018 have yet to be announced. But last month, the Egyptian travel agents' association chairman, Hossam El-Shaer, said tourists arriving in Egypt increased by 40 percent in 2018 compared to the year before, when the number of tourists reached 8.3 million, according to the CAPMAS official statistics agency.

But that 2018 figure was announced before a roadside bomb hit a tourist bus in late December, killing three Vietnamese holidaymakers near the famed pyramids in Giza. Shaer maintains that the target for this year is an additional 30-40 percent increase. For the few tourists visiting the street daily, Khayamiya art remains a draw. "It is one thing I would be interested in, this textile, especially one of these appliques," said David Pullins, an American tourist, who visited the ancient street in December. "It's very beautiful." — AFP



A view of shops along the roofed Khayamiya Street, or the Street of Tent-makers.

Travel ban for 'fragile' Van Gogh's 'Sunflowers'

The Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam said yesterday its version of "Sunflowers" will no longer be allowed to travel after restoration work showed it was in a "fragile" condition. The museum in the Dutch capital is one of only five in the world with a copy of Vincent van Gogh's masterpiece, and it rarely goes abroad, with the last time being in 2014. But international experts involved in the restoration said that even that was too much for the 130-year-old painting, meaning that it will now "stay at home in Amsterdam". "An important conclusion of the research is that the soil and paint layers are stable, but very sensitive to vibrations and changes in air humidity and temperature," Van Gogh Museum director Axel Rueger said. "It is therefore important that the painting is



Van Gogh Museum's director Axel Rueger explains the restoration process of De Zonnebloemen (The Sunflowers) by Vincent van Gogh. — AFP photos

moved as little as possible and in a stable climate. To avoid taking any risks, the museum has decided that it will no longer be possible to let Sunflowers travel." The restoration found that the painting was "stable but fragile", the museum said in a statement. It will go back on display in February. "Sunflowers" has been lent out only six times since the museum opened in 1973 with the last time to the National Gallery in

London in 2014, so it could hang next to that museum's own version.

The other versions are in the Neue Pinakothek in Munich, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Seiji Togo Memorial Sampo Japan Nipponkoa Museum of Art in Tokyo. The Tokyo version briefly set the record for the world's most expensive artwork when it was sold to a Japanese firm in 1987 for 40 million dollars, be-



Van Gogh Museum's senior paintings conservator Rene Boitelle explains the restoration process of De Zonnebloemen (The Sunflowers) by Vincent van Gogh.

fore losing the crown a few months later to Van Gogh's "Irises". The Dutch master painted a series of Sunflowers paintings, which rank among his most famous works, while he lived in Arles in the south of France between 1888-89. Sunflowers had a special significance for Van Gogh, who once wrote in a letter to a friend that they conveyed "gratitude". Van Gogh committed suicide at the age of 37 in 1890. — AFP



In this file photo US rapper Meek Mill attends the 2018 NBA Awards at Barker Hangar in Santa Monica, California.—AFP

Rappers Meek Mill and Jay-Z

launch criminal justice group

Rappers Jay-Z and Meek Mill announced Wednesday they are launching a new criminal justice reform organization aimed at “dramatically” reducing the number of people in the US prison system. The group’s creation comes less than a year after Mill, 31, was released from jail after his harsh sentence for a parole violation sparked protests against racial biases in US probation laws. REFORM Alliance is putting an initial \$50 million toward “disabling the revolving door of probation and parole,” by “changing the laws, policies, and practices that perpetuate injustice,” according to its mission statement.

Along with Mill and Jay-Z, founding partners of the group include CNN commentator and justice advocate Van Jones, who will serve as the organization’s CEO. The owner of the National Football League’s New England Patriots, Robert Kraft, along with National Basketball Association team co-owners Clara Wu Tsai (Brooklyn Nets) and Michael Rubin (Philadelphia 76ers) have also put their weight behind the cause. “I’m here to speak for all the people who don’t have a voice,” said Mill, who was born Robert Rihmeek Williams and raised in North Philadelphia, an area notorious for drug violence, by a single mother after his father was killed.

Well before he ascended to rap stardom Mill was jailed on drug and possession charges in 2008 — and re-imprisoned in 2017 after a Philadelphia judge handed down a term of two to four years for a parole violation. His incarceration triggered a public outcry, and Mill’s case became a flashpoint in the national conversation over the US criminal justice system’s treatment of black people. His celebrity backers included activist and football player Colin Kaepernick and Jay-Z, who penned an op-ed in The New York Times on his fellow rapper’s behalf.

“Being from the environment I’m from, I don’t even think it’s possible for you to be an angel,” Mill said at the unveiling of REFORM. “You grow up around murder on a daily basis, you grow up in drug-infested neighborhoods on a daily basis.” “I got caught up in the system, and every time I started to further my life with the music industry,” he said, “every year or two there was always something that brought me back to ground zero.”

REFORM’s current goal is to free one million people from the system in the next five years, with an initial focus on parole and probation. —AFP

Woman maintains Paris rape claim against **Chris Brown**

A 25-year-old woman who accused US singer Chris Brown of rape is standing by her accusations despite Brown’s denials and release from custody, her lawyer told AFP yesterday. “She maintains her accusations. We have taken note of his release from questioning, and will leave it in the hands of investigators as the inquiry continues,” lawyer Jean-Marc Descoubes said. The woman, identified as “Karima” in media reports, says Brown along with his bodyguard and a friend assaulted her in the luxury Mandarin Oriental hotel on the night of January 15.

Brown and his associates were released without charge on Tuesday after being held overnight for questioning on charges of aggravated rape and a drug offence. The woman

told police she met Brown in a nightclub near the Champs-Élysées avenue with a group of other party-goers. She then agreed to go back to the hotel, which is on the glitzy Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honore. A lawyer for the Grammy Award-winning singer said his client was innocent and was considering a defamation lawsuit. The singer posted a picture on his Instagram account Tuesday night that read “This Bxxxx Lyin”.

The singer, who according to Billboard has sold more than 100 million records, has been in the news more for his legal troubles than hit releases in recent years. In 2009 he was convicted of beating fellow singer Rihanna, his girlfriend at the time, who missed the Grammy Awards because of her injuries.—AFP



In this file photo US singer Chris Brown preforms during the World Music Festival “Mawazine” in Rabat. —AFP



A mannequin sits on a couch inside the Theatre du Chatelet, where “Dau”—one of the strangest and most mind-boggling artistic projects ever undertaken.—AFP photos

Zimbabwean Afro-jazz legend ‘Tuku’ dies

Zimbabwean musician Oliver “Tuku” Mtukudzi, a star of Afro-jazz who won a following across the continent and beyond, died on Wednesday at the age of 66, his agent told AFP. He passed away in hospital in Harare, succumbing to diabetes complications, according to various local media. The lanky self-taught guitarist was a legend in the vibrant cross-genre music of Afro-jazz, with 66 albums under his belt in a career that spanned 45 years. “Today we said goodbye to a true patriot. Oliver Mtukudzi, your voice has given us comfort during difficult times, and will remain with us for posterity,” said President Emmerson Mnangagwa on Twitter.

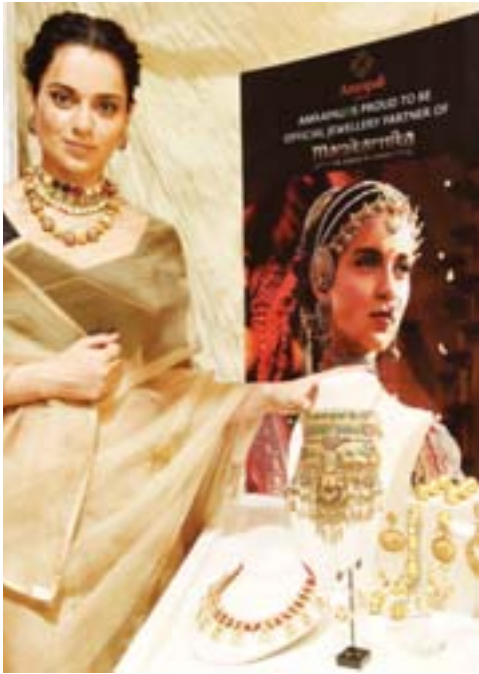
“We’ve lost an icon,” Zimbabwean lawmaker Temba Mliswa added, also on Twitter, leading the call for him to be declared “a national hero for his national contribution to the music, arts and culture industry”. Mtukudzi’s work—dubbed “Tuku music”—was a mixture of ethnic styles, including the Zulu-rooted mbaqanga from South Africa, and drew on diverse instruments, including Zimbabwe’s mbira, a metal-tined, hand-held instrument. His lyrics, delivered through rasping vo-

cals, often carried social messages about HIV/AIDS and alcohol abuse and encouraging self-respect, sometimes invoking proverbs and wisdom from his mother tongue, Shona.

He was rated by Forbes magazine one of Africa’s 10 most bankable artists and some experts ranked him alongside Senegal’s Salif Keita and Youssou N’Dour for his innovation and influence. He was also famed for his philanthropy and commitment to human rights, and served as a goodwill ambassador for the UN’s children’s agency Unicef. In an interview with AFP last March, Mtukudzi played down the acclaim, saying “I don’t even understand the word celebrity”. Instead, he said, he set great store by the words of his mother, who declared he would never sing a note better than his first scream after his birth.

“It means when I was born I had already started singing. This is who I am.” Opposition Movement for Democratic Change lawmaker and former education minister David Coltart also paid tribute. “If anyone ever made me proud to be #Zimbabwean, it was you. —AFP

Bollywood epic lauds India's Brit-bashing 'Joan of Arc'



Bollywood's newest swashbuckling, Brit-bashing offering hits cinemas today, a patriotic epic heavy on martial arts which tells the story of a warrior queen dubbed India's Joan of Arc. Released just in time for Republic Day, the Hindi-language "Manikarnika: The Queen Of Jhansi" is not without controversy, with its star Kangana Ranaut threatening to "destroy" protesters who say the film alludes to an affair with a British officer. Rani Laxmibai was a leading figure in the failed 1857 uprising against Britain's East India Company, which led London to impose direct control, and is also revered for defying gender stereotypes.

Killed in the Battle of Gwalior in June 1858 that ended the rebellion, she has lived on as an independence icon and is usually depicted brandishing a sword while leading her troops to war on a horse. "Her story is one that all Indians have grown up listening to, whether it's at school or from our mothers and grandmothers," trade ana-

lyst Akshaye Rathi told AFP. The film, which sees its blood-spattered star deftly despatch red-coated British soldiers with her sword, hits screens on India's Republic Day weekend, one of two annual holidays that celebrate independence. Industry watchers expect audiences to flock to a flick that will be full of nationalistic fervor, featuring elaborate costumes and grandiose battle scenes.

"People are in the mood for a certain occasion and playing into their mind at that point of time is fine," said Rathi. "We express our patriotism the most on Independence Day and Republic Day so why not talk about the people who have contributed to our struggle for freedom, which of course includes the Queen of Jhansi," he added. The filmmakers will be hoping "Manikarnika" does better than Bollywood's last anti-colonial epic—the "Pirates of the Caribbean" style "Thugs of Hindostan" which bombed at the box office in November despite a star-studded

cast. Indian media reports say fanatical groups belonging to India's Rajput caste have held protests against what they believe will be a scene alluding to a relationship between Laxmibai and a British officer. They also say that images of her dancing go against the community's tradition. Ranaut, the award-winning star of hits such as "Queen" (2014) and "Tanu Weds Manu Returns" (2015), said in a statement last week that she had received threats from the fringe group Rajput Karni Sena. The organization famously tried to disrupt the release of "Padmaavat" last year over its portrayal of a legendary Hindu queen.

"Four historians have certified 'Manikarnika', we have got censor certificates as well. Karni Sena have been conveyed this but they are continuing to harass me," Ranaut, 31, said Friday. "If they don't stop then they should know I am also a Rajput and I will destroy each one of them," the actress added. —AFP

Netflix finally accepted in Hollywood club - but not fully

By earning its first-ever Oscar nomination for best picture with "Roma," Netflix has propelled itself into Hollywood's club of elite filmmakers, but the streaming giant's hybrid business model still hasn't won over its sharpest critics. Netflix on Tuesday earned a whopping 10 nominations for Alfonso Cuarón's cinematic love letter to his childhood in Mexico City, three more for "The Ballad of Buster Scruggs" and two for documentary shorts. Also on Tuesday, it joined the Motion Picture Association of America, the powerful lobbying group—until now the stomping ground of traditional film studios Disney, Fox, Warner Bros., Universal, Sony and Paramount.

"Joining the Motion Picture Association further exemplifies our commitment to ensuring the vibrancy of these creative industries," Netflix chief content officer Ted Sarandos said in an MPAA statement. While it has progressively been welcomed at most major film festivals, Netflix still finds that Tinseltown's red carpet is not fully rolled out—with theaters up in arms about its unique position as a distribution king and A-list content provider. After the Oscar nominations came out, mega-theater chains AMC and Regal—by far the top two in the business in America—announced that "Roma" would not be screened in their annual best picture showcases. AMC said that as the film was never licensed to the chain for screening upon its release, it would not show it now.

In all, "Roma" was shown in roughly 900 theaters around the world—more than any other Netflix film, but far short of the norm for a usual wide release. Netflix never released any box office data. "We are beginning to have our original movie offering mirror the success of our series offering for consumer enjoyment," it said in a letter to shareholders last week. "People love films... at home and in theaters." The streaming pioneer mounted an aggressive—and expensive—awards season marketing campaign, hosting events, renting billboards in Los Angeles and even sending swag to journalists, according to reports. Of course, Netflix—home to hit series like "Orange Is the New Black" and "House of Cards"—has been in the film business for several years, but mainly producing documentaries. But top directors like Cuarón, Martin Scorsese and the Coen brothers ("Buster Scruggs") have been turning to it more and more, finding that the company is amenable to their exacting standards. Top acting talent has been on board for the shift as well—Oscar winner Sandra Bullock starred in last year's cult phenomenon "Bird Box." —AFP

This illustration picture shows the logo of the Netflix entertainment company, displayed on a tablet screen with a remote control in front of it.—AFP



Mekas, godfather of American experimental film, dies at 96



In this file photo writer/film subject Jonas Mekas takes part in a Q&A following the "I Had Nowhere To Go" screening.—AFP

Lithuanian-born American director Jonas Mekas, one of the leading figures of avant-garde cinema in the United States, died Wednesday. He was 96. "Jonas passed away quietly and peacefully early this morning," the New York-based Anthology Film Archives, which Mekas co-founded, posted on Instagram, saying he died at home with his family at his bedside. "He will be greatly missed but his light shines on."

Born in 1922 in a northeastern Lithuanian village, Mekas was imprisoned in a labor camp in Germany during World War II. He settled in New York in 1949, where he went on to become a pillar of independent film. Mekas approached cinema from multiple angles—as a filmmaker, but also as a journalist, curator, historian and spokesman for alternative and experimental movie-making. He directed more than 70 films, mainly documentaries, aiming to capture moments of life which he often filtered through jerky, radical montage. "I did not follow scripts," he said in a video shot by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and released in 2012. "I was just filming," he said. "And the same, I'm doing now. I don't work with preconceived ideas. I film what happens and I never know what will happen." "I don't live according to plans." His 1964 film "The Brig"—in which he films a play that takes place in a military prison—remains his most famous. Highly active in the film community, he was a critic for The Village Voice, once a top cultural paper of reference. Mekas went on to co-found New York's Anthology Film Archives—a renowned center dedicated to film and video with a focus on the avant garde. Located in Manhattan's East Village, the center houses thousands of films, videotapes and documents. At the time of his death Mekas remained the anthology's artistic director.—AFP



In this file photo (From left) Robert Iler, Michael Gandolfini and Jamie-Lynn Sigler attend the 'The Sopranos' 20th Anniversary Panel Discussion at SVA Theater in New York City.—AFP

James Gandolfini's son cast in 'Sopranos' prequel

The 19-year-old son of the late James Gandolfini has been cast to play a young Tony Soprano in the planned prequel to the hit television show "The Sopranos." Michael Gandolfini was chosen to take on his father's most famous role in the upcoming movie "The Many Saints of Newark," which will delve into the life of the young mobster in the 1960s. "It's a profound honor to continue my dad's legacy while stepping into the shoes of a young Tony Soprano," the actor said in a statement.

James Gandolfini died of a heart attack in 2013 at age 51. He played mob boss Tony in the series which ran between 1999 and 2007 and earned 21 Emmy Awards and five Golden Globes. Michael Gandolfini is best known for his breakout role in the HBO drama series "The Deuce." He was reportedly picked to play a young Tony after an extensive audition. "Insiders said that his screen presence, mastery of Tony's mannerisms, coupled with his resemblance to the elder Gandolfini made him the standout choice for the role because no one there understood the character better," Deadline Hollywood said.

Also starring in the movie, set during the 1960s Newark riots, will be Alessandro Nivola, Vera Farmiga, Billy Magnussen and Corey Stoll. "Sopranos" creator David Chase will co-write and co-produce the film. "The Sopranos" cast recently celebrated the 20th anniversary of the iconic show's debut. News of Michael Gandolfini stepping into his father's shoes was greeted favorably by fans on social media. "James Gandolfini's son, Michael, is set to play young Tony Soprano in The Many Saints of Newark. I am so excited for this movie! No one could replace Jimmy Gandolfini, but who better to step into his iconic shoes than his son?" one twitter user said.—AFP



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

ELIE SAAB INSPIRED BY CARIBBEAN ISLAND AND UNDERWATER FLORA

Valentino took drama to its height at its Wednesday spring couture collection in Paris, where Celine Dion wept theatrically as a solemn Naomi Campbell swept past to close the house's show in a see-through black organza gown. The VIP crowd that was surrounded by multicolored perfumed flowers whooped during a standing ovation as snow fell outside. Here are some highlights of Wednesday's spring-summer 2019 couture collections:

ELIE SAAB SWIMS

Elie Saab swam to the depths of the sea for inspiration and came back up with a sparkling bounty of summer couture. A Caribbean Island and underwater flora was the theme of the show inside Paris' Palais de Chaillot that was put on to the sound of an enchanting James Bond-style soundtrack.

Oversized shades resembling a sort of underwater-mask set the chic but playful tone. Saab's loose, full silk gowns gleamed with embroidered sequins and beading that referenced the sparkle of tropical fish, sea mollusks and mother-of-pearl. Coral was the idea behind asymmetrical architectural gowns in vivid red that captured the randomly forming three-dimensional curves of the beautiful sea organisms. Couture swimwear added a fun touch amid the aquatic musing alongside some figure-hugging mermaid cuts.





GAULTIER'S ASIAN WATERS

It was a typically tongue-in-cheek affair for Gaultier. This season, a particularly theatrical vision of Asia was served up in combination with a water theme. Gaultier's signature maritime stripe opened the show on an Asian model with a cinched oriental waist. The Asian theme became more obvious as the collection progressed beginning with a look from Gaultier muse, model Anna Cleveland. She rocked a diaphanous pleated organza gown with voluminous sleeves and a black crisscross "martial arts" lapel. It was topped with a huge, piled-up Oriental wig, an accessory featured throughout the show.

The program notes then listed a series of looks inspired by the sea such as "New Wave," featuring an undulating black-and-white striped organza front piece. Then, a dark wool pant suit with jagged "fin" shoulders called "Stop Being a Shark" filed by, prompting chuckles from some seated guests.



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



Lifestyle | Fashion

Models present creations by Jean-Paul Gaultier during the 2019 Spring-Summer Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris.



GAULTIER'S DIVERSITY

Sports Illustrated cover model Irina Shayk heaped praise on Gaultier for championing diversity and creating collections that could speak to all kinds of men and women of different ages and style. "That's what makes him so special in the fashion industry. He broke all the barriers," said Shayk, ahead of the summer show that featured Asian and black models and played on Asia-inspired styles. "He doesn't have a standard beauty."

You can see models of different shapes and personalities on the runway. It's not a typical fashion show," she added. Since an early age, Gaultier, 66, has been inspired by models from different backgrounds. In 1979, he launched the career of one of his earliest muses, supermodel Farida Khelfa, who is of Algerian descent.



Lifestyle | Fashion



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



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



An architectural tour of Liverpool's fascinating history

The buildings known as the Three Graces are among Liverpool's world class architecture



Best known as the home town of the Beatles, the English city of Liverpool has another appealing claim to fame - the architecturally striking buildings which tell the stories of the city's past. From Queen Anne style to Brutalism via Neoclassical and industrial Victorian, Liverpool's bricks-and-mortar record of local history earned it UNESCO World Heritage status in 2004 and fascinates hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. The city is second only to London for having the most listed (nationally protected) buildings in the UK and to get a taste of its architectural wonders, here's our guide to some of the best-preserved pieces from the past.

Bluecoat Chambers

Believed to be the oldest building in the city centre (built 1716), The Bluecoat is a former school turned arts centre - the UK's oldest, in fact. It is a striking H-shaped building, constructed in a variation of Queen Anne style, with double-pile rooms, a pediment at the front, grand columns, quoins at the corners of the brown brickwork and round-arched windows instead of traditional sash. A modern extension and interior renovations

have made room for the performances and exhibitions that take place here.

Liverpool Town Hall

The Grade I listed Liverpool Town Hall is a spectacular example of Georgian architecture. First opened in 1754, it still stands as a showcase of Georgian decorative style (despite various subsequent additions and alterations) and as a symbol of Liverpool's booming mid-18th century economy, a boom partly made possible by the slave trade in which the city would become the dominant player. Key features to look out for include the incorporation of Classical design principles (pillars, columns, domed roofing and arches), the embellished stone frontage, the building's symmetry, the sash windows (the Georgian equivalent of air-conditioning) and epic chandeliers. It is still used by the council, but also holds events and offers public tours at least once a month.

St George's Hall

Offering an impressive welcome for those arriving at Lime Street train station opposite, St George's Hall is another Neo-

classical Grade I listed building of imposing proportions. Opened in 1854 on the site of the former Liverpool Infirmary, the hall was purpose-built to serve a variety of purposes (concerts, law courts, grand dinners), which explains why the rooms and the flight of stairs at the entrance are so wide. Its legal uses meant that it needed to have a certain formality to it, so nods to Greek and Roman architecture were used to add grandeur - Corinthian columns, statues of ancient gods, sweeping archways and lavish interior decorations to name but a few. While the law courts now operate elsewhere, the building is still a major focal point for the city, with cultural events and community gatherings happening here all year round (plus the occasional wedding).

Albert Dock

Opened in 1846, the Albert Dock was once at the centre of world trade. Five-storey fireproof warehouses built from cast iron, brick and stone made it possible for traders to safely store their goods, while the open loading bays halved the time it took to unload each arriving ship's cargo - innovations that helped propel Liverpool to the top tier of global ports for the rest of the



From its innovative design to its innovative contemporary uses, the Albert Dock has played an important part in Liverpool life.

19th century. During early World War II, it was a docking station for small warships, but in 1941 it took a beating in the Blitz and lay empty and in a state of disrepair until a major renovation project in the 1980s. Current inhabitants include Tate Liverpool, The Beatles Story, historical museums (such as the Merseyside Maritime Museum and the International Slavery Museum), and dockside streets lined with swanky bars, restaurants and music venues.

The Three Graces

Three landmarks on Liverpool's waterfront Pier Head are collectively known as the Three Graces and act as emblems of the city as a whole: the Royal Liver Building, the Cunard Building and the Port of Liverpool Building. The Royal Liver Building, constructed out of reinforced concrete in 1911, was built for the Royal Liver Assurance group, a company founded to support families who had lost a wage-earner. On top of each of its two clock towers is a mythical Liver Bird, one gazing over the River Mersey River, the other facing the city. The Cunard Building next door, built in 1917 in an Italian palazzo style with some Greek flourishes, was the headquarters of Cunard Cruise Line, a major employer back in the days when Liverpool was a hub for trans-Atlantic sailings. The final member of the trio, the Port of Liverpool Building, is in Edwardian Baroque-style, with an impressive dome (first conceived for the Anglican Cathedral) and ornate decorative elements. For a great view of all three, wander along the Albert Dock or climb to the top floor of the Museum of Liverpool.

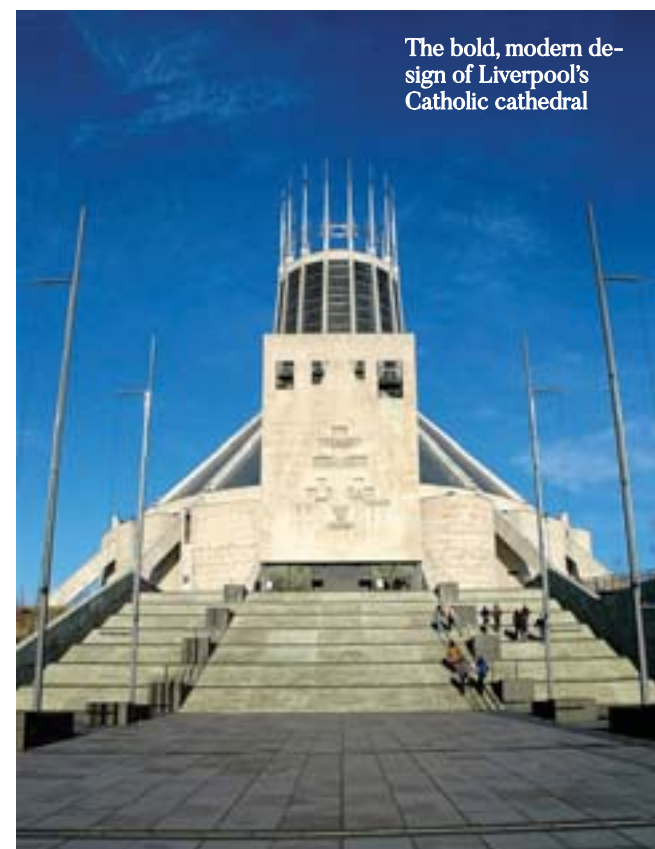
Liverpool Anglican Cathedral

Also known as the Cathedral Church of Christ, Liverpool Anglican Cathedral looms large over the Georgian Quarter on Hope

Street. A relatively modern building, this masterpiece of Gothic Revival took almost as long to erect as many of its medieval counterparts: construction took place between 1904 and 1978, beginning when Liverpool was at its peak and being completed during its post-war economic low point. At 189m, it is the longest cathedral in the world, and can also claim the highest and widest Gothic arches and the largest belltower. Despite its traditional design, the cathedral is keen to keep up with the times, something best shown by the Tracey Emin sculpture that runs below three grand stained-glass windows. Once you've had your fill of the vast, soaring interior, head up to the roof for views of Liverpool, the Irish Sea and even the mountains of Snowdonia in Wales.

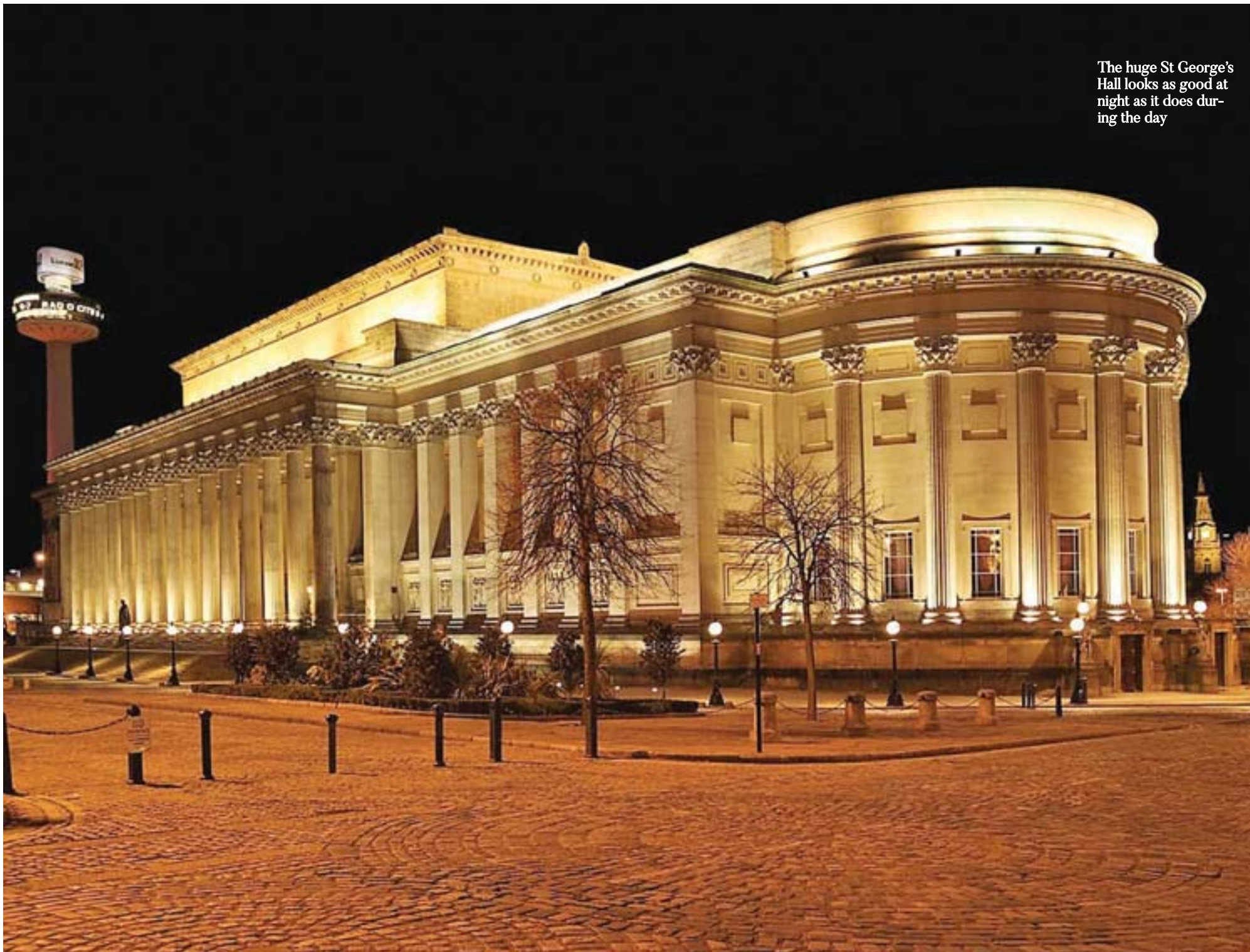
The Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King

Facing the Anglican Cathedral at the northern end of Hope Street, the city's main Catholic place of worship has a very different look to it. The Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King is a building of its time, the 1960s. A conical concrete structure, surrounded by a truncated cone, it's supported by undisguised trusses and has a roof that is clad in aluminium and crowned with a ring of pinnacles. The cathedral as it stands today went up between 1962 and 1967 and was designed by Sir Frederick Gibberd, although two earlier architects, Edward Welby Pugin (son of the elder Pugin of Houses of Parliament fame) and Sir Edwin Lutyens (of New Delhi fame) had both come up with earlier designs for a church to meet the needs of Liverpool's growing Catholic population. Lutyens' Crypt, accessed down a spiral staircase, hides underneath the main cathedral and is all that was ever built from his plans. Finished in 1933, money constraints after World War II caused the rest of the work to stop after this bottom floor was completed. When Gibberd took over, he designed a circular



The bold, modern design of Liverpool's Catholic cathedral

Lifestyle | Travel



The huge St George's Hall looks as good at night as it does during the day

ground floor with concentric pews facing towards a central 10ft marble altar, with access to the crypt below. It is a treat to explore, with fusions of traditional and modern stylings. There's also, somewhat surprisingly, an annual beer festival down there.

Liverpool ONE

In the 1990s and 2000s, the heart of the city was stalling following the decline in manufacturing, dock work and investment in the 1970s and 80s. To revitalize it, developers came up with Liverpool ONE - a huge complex connecting various parts of the city centre. The open-air construction has a style that's sympathetic to both the city's historic architecture and its cultural vibrancy. Walking around, you see brickwork inspired by 1700s dockland Liverpool, curves inspired by the rounded lines of nearby Georgian windows, bright splashes of color calling to mind Liverpool's artistic vitality and the occasional borderline-Brutalist wall. Having revitalized the centre of Liverpool by bringing the cultural quarters, shopping areas, leisure outlets and residential spaces together for locals and tourists to enjoy, it makes a fitting end to your historical, architectural journey of this fascinating city. (www.lonelyplanet.com)



These days Bluecoat Chambers is an arts centre but three centuries ago when it was built it was a school.



The lavish interior of Liverpool Town Hall

Comic

Word Search

Songs From the Year 2002

Find and circle all of the songs from 2002 that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 21 letters spell an additional song title from 2002.

NEVAEHGIRLFRIENDCE
 EMTUOHTIWAHSILOOFL
 ANDHZYDETACILPMOCD
 TLBIPYSELGNEHUAFAFAD
 TOLPLCAFCAATLUOEUDI
 YOAMAECEDEIOYHYRLDM
 HHXPYRMLYSFOHRILIE
 BEEIALCMENYIUOAMCH
 YULZCSYIAOIBRFLOTT
 TAYLDIOFGISAOCISOIS
 HODNAUTIETTMRGANVI
 ENAYRGRYIAIYUTSSEL
 WHISRLOKOVLEBABYYY
 ASEHTEROHILHEREIAM
 YLPATOVEDTFBLURRYD
 FFLIWOREMOLDISEASE
 YKHENONINMYPLACEAD

- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|------------|
| ADDICTIVE | ESCAPE | HEAVEN | NOTHIN' |
| AERIALS | EVERYDAY | HELLA GOOD | OH BOY |
| ALL MY LIFE | FOOLISH | HERE I AM | RAINY DAYZ |
| BABY | FOR YOU | HERO | SPIN |
| BLURRY | FULL MOON | HEY MA | STILL FLY |
| BY THE WAY | GIRL TALK | IN MY PLACE | THE MIDDLE |
| COMPLICATED | GIRLFRIEND | LOSE YOURSELF | TOXICITY |
| DAYS GO BY | HALFCRAZY | MOTIVATION | UH HUH |
| DILEMMA | HANDS CLEAN | MY LIST | WITHOUT ME |
| DISEASE | HAPPY | MY SACRIFICE | WORK IT |

Yesterday's Solution

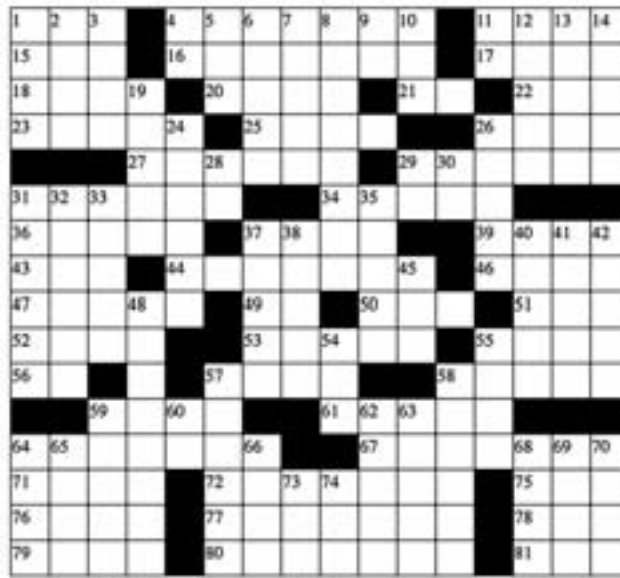
Songs From the Year 2001

NUOYRUFLLANOKLAWNEV
 IMUSIGIRLSEEMOTIONR
 TPINIGIDBEAUTIFULDAY
 SRLIHADYLLAWETHCOOA
 UOYFAIDOUYKNARILMIR
 AMTAEGRMISSTINGYDUWB
 EIIMLMARACESECEVSIIE
 RSMIEPHIELOMTOUREISL
 OEEELADSTISINAUAACH
 VYRYUELSITILLTINEZOK
 ILEATRISMAWASPATINT
 VFHFREUESHMEFTIGESPT
 RRWFUMUMRTECNIMITR
 UEYAMIWABIRUONOBLOMA
 STRIKAMOENTORALLLYOT
 OTERNYINLPOESMOBEMMS
 RUVVUCOYLLOMEJADEUO
 EBEAMEERHACTEBEVEVIRU
 HLLTSRKUJWNYVVIDEOE

- | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| AGAIN | DRIVE | KRYPTONITE | PLAY |
| ALL FOR YOU | EMOTION | LADY MARMALADE | PROMISE |
| ANGEL | EVERYWHERE | LOVE | RIDE WIT ME |
| AUSTIN | FAMILY AFFAIR | MISSING YOU | SOUTH SIDE |
| BE LIKE THAT | FESTA | MOST GIRLS | STUTTER |
| BEAUTIFUL DAY | FILL ME IN | MUSIC | SURVIVOR |
| BUTTERFLY | FOLLOW ME | MY BABY | THANK YOU |
| CONTAGIOUS | HERO | ONE MORE DAY | U REMIND ME |
| CRAZY | I WISH | ONLY TIME | VIDEO |
| DANCE WITH ME | IRRESISTIBLE | OOOHE WALLY | WALK ON |
| DIFFERENCES | JADED | OUTSIDE | WHO I AM |
| DOG IN | | | |

The hidden song title is: NEVER HAD A DREAM COME TRUE

Crossword 2119



ACROSS

- A spacecraft that carries astronauts from the command module to the surface of the moon and back.
- (Arthurian legend) The most virtuous knight of the Round Table.
- A book of the New Testament.
- Late time of life.
- An inferior imitator of some distinguished writer or artist of musician.
- 100 toea equal 1 kina.
- Voluntary contributions to aid the poor.
- Group of people related by blood or marriage.
- Date used in reckoning dates before the supposed year Christ was born.
- (British) Your grandmother.
- Deciduous South African tree having large odd-pinnate leaves and profuse fragrant orange-yellow flowers.
- In a murderous frenzy as if possessed by a demon.
- Of or relating to or toward the cheek.
- Humorously vulgar.
- The act of using.
- A genus of Indriidae.
- A Loloish language.
- Of a light yellowish-brown color n l.
- Disturb in mind or make uneasy or cause to be worried or alarmed.
- Made of fir or pine.
- (in writing) See below.
- 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.

- Light informal conversation for social occasions.
- An authoritative direction or instruction to do something.
- Cheeselike food made of curdled soy-bean milk.
- American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
- A unit of energy equal to the work done by an electron accelerated through a potential difference of 1 volt.
- A landlocked desert republic in north-central Africa.
- A large mass of ice floating at sea.
- Of or relating to or supporting Islamism.
- Large genus of African trees bearing kola nuts.
- Large genus of Australian evergreen shrubs or small trees with large daisy-like flowers.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- (informal) Exceptionally good.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- A republic in central Europe.
- A member of an American Indian people of Yucatan and Belize and Guatemala who once had a culture characterized by outstanding architecture and pottery and astronomy.
- A bee that is a member of the genus Andrena.
- A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.

DOWN

- An accidental hole that allows something (fluid or light etc.) to enter or escape.
- (Norse mythology) Goddess of old age who defeated Thor in a wrestling match.
- Designer drug designed to have the effects of amphetamines (it floods the brain with serotonin) but to avoid the drug laws.
- A brittle gray crystalline element that is a semiconducting metalloid (resembling silicon) used in transistors.
- A drug combination found in some over-the-counter headache remedies (Aspirin and Phenacetin and Caffeine).
- Of a pale purple color.
- Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
- The capital and largest city of Hawaii.
- An associate degree in nursing.
- A young woman making her debut into society.
- A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
- Music composed for dancing the conga.
- The process of shedding tears (usually accompanied by sobs or other inarticulate sounds).
- The capital and largest city of Yemen.
- A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
- Eurasian perennial bulbous herbs.
- Having the leading position or higher score in a contest.
- Being one hundred more than three hundred.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
- Russian choreographer (1834-1905).
- A popular vacation spot in the Canadian Rockies.
- Any of several sorghums cultivated as a source of syrup.
- (Greek mythology) One of the mountain nymphs.
- The function or position properly or customarily occupied or served by another.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- A member of a seafaring group of North American Indians who lived on the Pacific coast of British Columbia and southwestern Alaska.
- An oily colorless liquid obtained by the condensation of two molecules of acetaldehyde.
- A decree that prohibits something.
- The large yellow root of a rutabaga plant used as food.
- Any of various long-tailed rodents similar to but larger than a mouse.
- An informal term for a father.
- The 4th largest of Jupiter's satellites.
- West Indian tree having racemes of fragrant white flowers and yielding a durable timber and resinous juice.
- Something to which a mountain climber's rope can be secured v l.
- A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
- (Greek mythology) A sorceress who detained Odysseus on her island and turned his men into swine.
- A city of central China.
- (Greek mythology) Daughter of Zeus and Demeter.
- (Scottish) A narrow secluded valley (in the mountains).
- A Chad language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- A United Nations agency created to assist developing nations by loans guaranteed by member governments.
- An enclosure made of wire or metal bars in which birds or animals are kept.
- A doctor's degree in education.
- Relating to or characteristic of or occurring in the air.

Yesterday's Solution

OBOE DANCING STM
 SIAN HANDCAR CIA
 HARDCORE BECALM
 ASSERT DS ARDEA
 MAOI SHAKTI
 CHARM MARI BASS
 HENL GULAG DAK
 OBREJIG BADA VY
 MEDOC MG ALBINAL
 PINWHEEL NIAGARA
 AI PLEAD BR AB
 ACN ELD BAA S
 COWGIRL PBPPTS D
 KWAAGONAL THECA
 EEC MNTACEAE LAB
 EDO BENDABLE ABA

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings



01:45 Battleship
04:05 Nerve
05:55 Star Wars: Episode II - Attack Of The Clones
08:25 Against The Ropes
10:20 Taken Heart
11:55 Battleship
14:10 Rogue One: A Star Wars Story
16:30 Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge Of The Sith
18:55 Boyka: Undisputed
20:30 Jack Reacher: Never Go Back
22:30 Renegades

08:45 Police Patrol
09:05 Crimes That Shook Britain
09:50 Homicide Hunter
10:35 Homicide: Hours To Kill
11:30 Homicide: Hours To Kill
12:25 Police Patrol
12:55 Police Patrol
13:20 Crimes That Shook Britain
14:16 Babies Behind Bars
15:10 Babies Behind Bars
16:05 Homicide Hunter
17:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
18:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
19:00 The First 48
20:00 The First 48
21:00 Homicide Hunter
22:00 Police Patrol
22:30 Police Patrol
23:00 It Takes A Killer
23:30 It Takes A Killer

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



00:50 Scene Of The Crime With Tony Harris
01:45 Blood Runs Cold
02:40 American Monster
03:35 Murder By Numbers
04:30 Reasonable Doubt
05:25 Pandora's Box: Unleashing Evil
06:20 Grave Secrets
07:10 I Almost Got Away With It
08:00 I Was Murdered
08:25 Evil Online
09:15 Nightmare Next Door
10:10 Evil Lives Here
11:05 Murder Calls
12:00 Who Killed Jane Doe?
12:55 Evil Online
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:45 Pandora's Box: Unleashing Evil
15:40 Grave Secrets
16:35 Reasonable Doubt
17:30 Evil Online
18:25 Nightmare Next Door
19:20 I Almost Got Away With It
20:15 Pandora's Box: Unleashing Evil
21:10 Grave Secrets
22:05 Swamp Murders
23:00 Murder By Numbers
23:55 American Monster



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

17:25 That's So Raven
17:50 Raven's Home
18:15 Raven's Home
18:40 Bunk'd
19:05 K.C. Undercover
19:30 Bizaardvark
19:55 Descendants Wicked World
20:00 Raven's Home
20:25 Liv And Maddie
20:50 K.C. Undercover
21:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:20 A.N.T. Farm
21:45 Bizaardvark
22:10 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
22:35 Stuck In The Middle
23:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
23:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
23:50 Lolirock



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



00:15 Ultimate Survival
01:05 Impossible Engineering
01:50 How Do They Do It?
02:15 How Do They Do It?
02:35 What On Earth?
03:20 Fast N' Loud
04:05 Fast N' Loud
04:50 How Do They Do It?
05:15 How Do They Do It?
05:35 Property Wars
06:00 Storage Hunters UK
06:20 Property Wars
06:45 Ultimate Survival

07:35 Deadliest Catch
08:20 Gold Rush
09:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier
09:55 Alaskan Bush People
10:45 How Do They Do It?
11:10 How Do They Do It?
11:30 Fast N' Loud
12:20 Fast N' Loud
13:05 Storage Hunters UK
13:30 Property Wars
13:55 Alaskan Bush People
14:40 Alaska: The Last Frontier
15:30 Master Of Arms
16:15 Wheeler Dealers
17:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier
17:50 Gold Rush
18:40 How Do They Do It?
19:05 How Do They Do It?
19:25 Fast N' Loud
20:15 Fast N' Loud
21:00 Sticker Shock
21:50 Wheeler Dealers
22:40 Twin Turbos
23:30 Deadliest Catch



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



00:00 Botched
01:00 Botched
02:00 E! News
03:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
04:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
08:00 E! News: Daily Pop
08:55 Botched
12:35 Model Squad
15:20 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Botched
19:00 E! News
20:00 Botched

21:00 Botched
22:00 Ashlee+evan
22:30 Ashlee+evan
23:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry



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



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



00:20 Alone
01:05 Dark Files
02:35 Hunting Hitler
03:25 The Warfighters
04:15 Forged In Fire
05:05 Forged In Fire
06:00 The Warfighters
06:45 The Warfighters
07:30 The Warfighters
08:15 The Warfighters
09:00 The Warfighters
09:45 Forged In Fire
10:30 Forged In Fire
11:15 Alone: Lost And Found
12:00 Alone: Lost And Found
12:45 Alone: Lost And Found
13:30 Alone
14:15 Alone
15:00 Forged In Fire
15:45 Hunting Hitler
16:30 Hunting Hitler
18:00 Hunting Hitler
18:45 Forged In Fire
19:30 Forged In Fire
20:15 Fifth Gear
21:00 Ice Road Truckers
21:50 The Warfighters
22:40 The Warfighters
23:30 The Warfighters



00:50 Wolves And Warriors
01:45 North Woods Law
02:40 I'm Alive
03:35 The Beauty Of Snakes
04:25 Wolves And Warriors
05:15 North Woods Law
06:02 Untamed China With Nigel Marven
06:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
07:36 Meet The Orangutans
08:00 Meet The Orangutans
08:25 Keeping Up With The Kruger
09:15 Animal Cops Houston
10:10 Wolves And Warriors
11:05 North Woods Law
12:00 Untamed China With Nigel Marven
12:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
13:50 The Beauty Of Snakes
14:45 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
15:40 Scaled
16:35 I'm Alive
17:30 Keeping Up With The Kruger
18:25 Animal Cops Houston
19:20 Growing Up... Wolves
20:15 The Vet Life
21:10 Amanda To The Rescue
22:05 Untamed China With Nigel Marven
23:00 I'm Alive
23:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees



00:05 Russell Simmons Presents: The Ruckus
00:30 South Park (Digital)
00:55 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
01:25 Impractical Jokers
01:45 Russell Simmons Presents: The Ruckus
02:10 Another Period
02:35 South Park (Digital)
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:30 South Park (Digital)
03:55 South Park (Digital)
04:20 Lip Sync Battle
04:45 Lip Sync Battle
05:10 Catch A Contractor
06:00 Friendszone
06:25 Friendszone
06:50 Snack Off
07:15 Snack Off
07:40 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team
08:30 Lip Sync Battle
08:55 Lip Sync Battle
09:20 I Used To Be Fat
10:10 Kroll Show
10:35 Kroll Show
11:00 Kroll Show
11:25 Key And Peele
13:30 Friends
20:10 Friends
20:35 Barely Famous
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 Norm Macdonald: Me Doing Stand-Up
22:20 Roast Battle UK
22:45 Tosh.0
23:10 Tosh.0
23:35 Chris Hardwick: Funcomfortable



00:30 Xploration Outer Space
01:20 Beverly Hills Groomer
02:10 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
03:00 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
03:50 How It's Made
04:15 How It's Made
04:40 Weather Gone Viral
05:30 Xploration Outer Space
05:55 Xploration Outer Space
06:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things
06:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
07:00 Mysteries At The Museum
07:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
08:40 How It's Made
09:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
10:20 Beverly Hills Groomer
11:10 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
12:00 Mysteries At The Museum
12:50 Weather Gone Viral
13:40 Xploration Outer Space
14:30 How It's Made
15:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things
16:10 Xtreme Waterparks
17:00 Beverly Hills Groomer
17:50 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
18:40 Breaking Magic
19:30 The Next Great Magician
20:20 The Carbonaro Effect
21:10 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
22:00 How It's Made
22:25 How It's Made



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

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

If you take care of your body, your body will take care of you. This applies to your mental well-being also. Once your mind is set to becoming a better you, things will seem to fall into place in your world. You will have a greater appreciation for life and a renewed love of self. Happiness begins at home and your health is the root of this happiness. If you will stick to a new lifestyle you will find great reward will come to you from choices you make today. Today is the first day of the rest of your life. You will be a new confident you and find that you can truly love who you are. Take the leap.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may have heard, "You can't have it all." This is not true for you, Taurus. You can "bring home the bacon and cook it up in the pan" and still feel like enjoying a night on the town. Keep your work day stress-free by handling crises with humor. Be sure to take a break today and step out for a breath of fresh air. Save your energy to enjoy time with your friends and family this evening.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Get out and be heard. This is a wonderful time in your life and what you have to say will be heard. This is a great day for public speaking. You seem to have a knack for knowing what people want and being able to provide it. It seems your popularity may be at an all time high now. You are charming and pay close attention to the needs of others. Who could ask for a better friend? You may find a profitable deal come your way concerning real estate. Playing the middle man may be the way to go.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may make mistakes today. Fortunately, you learn from your mistakes. A small setback will not diminish what you accomplish. You will dwell on the slip-ups just long enough to make sure they don't happen again. Then you will focus on the good you have done. You will be applauded for your work. Others will notice and appreciate your efforts.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Close relationships are where your focus is placed now. As independent as you seem to appear, you need to feel the love and support of those closest to you. This alone makes your life feel complete. You are beginning to truly feel needed and cared for. You may feel as if a fresh start is what you need. You are beginning to develop new habit patterns. Out with the old and in with the new. Make sure new habits are good ones. These will set the tone for years to come. The new you is the best you.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

There is a problem out there that can be solved with a simple new product. And you are capable of creating that product. Put your inventive mind to work. Look around and see what is needed. Then set about to provide it. The solution will bring you more than financial success. It will provide the satisfaction of knowing you made someone's life easier. You are a kind friend and a good person.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Deep thought and meditation may be in order. The easy way is not always the best way. You may have learned the biggest rewards come with the biggest challenges. All work and no play also can cause your sensitivity to be stifled. Work on finding a balance between your personal life and career. We all need to step back and take a deep breath sometime. This is your time to breathe. Personal growth is a priority. Do not let pursuit of wealth and your career stand in the way of this.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You have learned to appreciate and love yourself and all you stand for. It is rare that you are not your own worst critic but today, through clear eyes, you are able to appreciate who you are and what you have accomplished. You exude self-respect and self-confidence. Those around you sense this and are drawn to you today. You are able to truly identify all in your life that is important and of lasting value. You feel driven and motivated and can offer much assistance to friends and family today. You feel deep connections with your family today and place much value on these relationships. You may find that today is a great day to reach out to someone close to you that you have lost touch with. Reconnect with this someone special. Today is a great day to work towards accomplishing this goal.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You have begun to search for beauty in all that surrounds you. Life takes on a different meaning to you. You seem to see a new depth to the meaning of life. Your ability to analyze your situation and the situations of others are at high point. You are able to really get to the root of all problems that present themselves and provide those around you with solutions. You are able to express yourself and communicate with ease. A long deep conversation with someone may be just what you need to stay grounded and focused. This may be a great time to refrain from spending and beginning focusing your goals on a budget and organizing your finances.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Reach for the stars. You feel as though you are invincible. Today that may be true. If it can go your way, it does. What a wonderful feeling! You are full of optimism and faith. Your self-confidence is at an all-time high. You may desire to make a change in your living situation. Leave this decision for a later date when your head comes down from the clouds.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

You may be faced with a difficult decision this week. You may feel led to pass up a very profitable career opportunity because it truly conflicts with your morals and values. This is a road to success you may choose to take a detour around. The easy way is not always the right way. You may find in the long run you will reap great reward from doing the right thing.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Expect to feel much admiration and recognition from those close to you today. You may feel support and able to relate to anyone and any situation. You may find yourself to be the center of attention in a social setting today. It seems everyone is able to relate to you and you may find that someone turns to you for help today. Feel flattered that you are trusted with such a delicate situation that your peer is experiencing. Through sharing life experiences of your own you may be able to assist this person and appreciated your own hardships as lessons learned. This is a great time of reflection in your life. Pisces, live, learn, and love.

Country Codes

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

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY
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A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases

- ◆ Diagnosis/ Treatment of General Ears, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatrics
- ◆ Minimally invasive Endoscopic sinus surgery including Balloon sinuplasty
- ◆ Minimally invasive Microscopic & Endoscopic Ear surgery
- ◆ Diagnosis & treatment of Otolaryngology and Audiology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
- ◆ Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
- ◆ Diagnosis & treatment of snoring & obstructive sleep apnea in clinic without surgery
- ◆ Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders.
- ◆ Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

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ACADEMIC CERTIFICATES:

- ◆ Dermatology board certified.
- ◆ Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- ◆ Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- ◆ Referee reviewer of International Journal of Dermatology.

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Health

Coffee clash brewing in China: Startup Luckin takes on Starbucks

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

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

latte costs 31 yuan (around \$5) at Starbucks, but only 24 yuan at Luckin.

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

Luckin's aggressive strategy mirrors tactics used by other Chinese startups that have dislodged Western brands from one of the world's top consumer markets. "The big advantage for us of having pickup stores versus the big stores is that in terms of rental costs, we pay significantly less than our competitors," Luckin's chief strategy officer, Reinout Schakel, told AFP. After only a year in business, the

company announced plans earlier this month to open 2,500 outlets by the end of the year, which would push its total store strength to 4,500. By comparison, Starbucks has some 3,600 stores across the country.

The US behemoth has an 80 percent stake in China's \$3.4 billion coffee shop market, according to research group Euromonitor. But Schakel sees room for growth. Chinese consumers currently drink just four to five cups of coffee per year, compared to about 300 cups in neighbouring Japan or South Korea, which were also traditionally tea drinking markets, he said. China is Starbucks' fastest-growing and second biggest market after the United States.

Its Reserve Roastery in Shanghai, which opened in late 2017, is the company's biggest store in the world. But it was a latecomer to China's huge food delivery industry. The Seattle-based company partnered with Chinese e-commerce firm Alibaba's delivery

service ele.me only after Luckin started eating into its market share in July.

"Our delivery service today covers more than 2,000 stores across 30 cities, within three months of its launch," Derek Ng, communications director for Starbucks China, told AFP. Competition has also prompted Starbucks to focus on its more upmarket Reserve brand of rarer coffees from around the world, said Hu Yuwan, an analyst at Daxue Consulting in Shanghai.

But the US chain has recently started doing discounts, Hu said, adding the coffee rivalry reminded her of the discount wars between Uber and its local rival Didi Chuxing, which later dislodged the American ride-hailing giant from the Chinese market. Schakel-who is also Luckin's chief financial officer-says the startup can afford to burn money to grab market share over the next few years. "Are we competing with Starbucks? Probably to some extent. — AFP

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 20 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

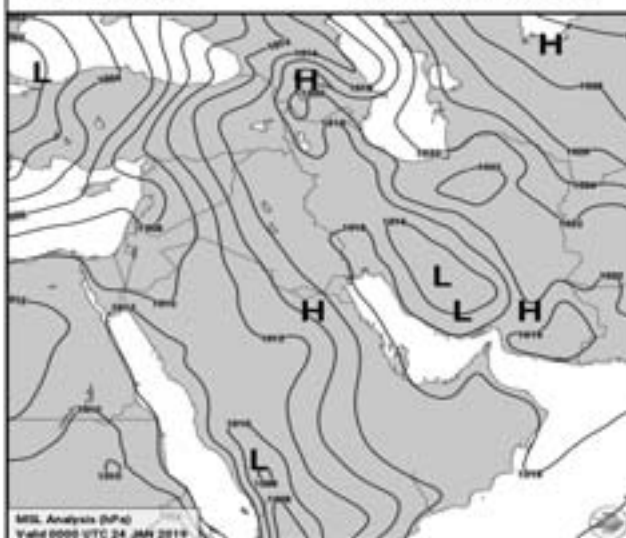
BY NIGHT: Cool and Partly cloudy with light to moderate variable wind to south easterly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a chance for fog forming over some areas.

WEATHER WARNING

No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	19 °C	13 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	09 °C
ABDALY	22 °C	07 °C
BUBYAN	--- °C	--- °C
JAHRA	21 °C	10 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	18 °C	11 °C
SALMIYAH	17 °C	13 °C
AHMADI	18 °C	14 °C
NUWAISIB	19 °C	13 °C
WAFRA	20 °C	10 °C
SALMY	20 °C	07 °C

SFC. CHART 24/01/2019 0000 UTC



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	01/25	Warm and Partly cloudy+Fog at night	25 °C	11 °C	SE-VRB	08 - 32 km/h
Saturday	01/26	Warm and partly cloudy+ Fog at night	25 °C	12 °C	SE	08 - 28 km/h
Sunday	01/27	Warm and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain	26 °C	15 °C	SE	15 - 40 km/h
Monday	01/28	Warm and Cloudy with a chance for rising dust and a chance for scattered light rain later on	27 °C	18 °C	SE-S	25 - 60 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	05:19
Sunrise	06:41
Zuhr	12:00
Asr	14:59
Sunset	17:19
Isha	18:39

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	19 °C
MIN. Temp.	06 °C
MAX. RH	93 %
MIN. RH	15 %
MAX. Wind	NE 21 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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Adaliya	22517144
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Dasmah	22532265
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Business

FRIDAY, JANUARY 25, 2019

38 'The new oil': Dublin strikes it rich as Europe's key data hub



39 P&G confident of payoff from Gillette's 'toxic masculinity' ad



41 Nigeria: Africa's top oil producer, world's extreme poverty capital



BOULOGNE-BILLANCOURT: French carmaker Renault's newly appointed board chairman Jean-Dominique Senard (L) and new chief executive Thierry Bolloré attend a press conference at the headquarters of the French car manufacturer Renault. —AFP

Ghosn resigns as Renault boss

Signaling the start of new era for the French manufacturer

PARIS: Arrested car boss Carlos Ghosn has resigned as chief executive and chairman of Renault, ending his leadership roles in the auto industry and signaling the start of new era for the French manufacturer. Ghosn, the most powerful man in car-making until his sensational arrest last November in Japan on financial misconduct charges, had already been sacked as chairman of Japanese auto groups Nissan and Mitsubishi. But the 64-year-old had held on to the top job at Renault, which has been run on an interim basis by one of his deputies while he languishes in a Japanese jail. French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire confirmed to AFP that Ghosn tendered his resignation late Wednesday — ahead of a Renault board meeting in Paris that would have seen him replaced. A senior director from the firm “received last night the letter of resignation from Carlos Ghosn,” Le Maire said at the Davos gathering in Switzerland.

As head of Renault since 2005, Ghosn was the keystone of its alliance with Nissan and Mitsubishi, forging an industry powerhouse which together sold more cars than any of its rivals last year. But his career came screeching to a halt when Tokyo police arrested him on

suspicion of under-reporting millions of dollars in income over eight years. Ghosn has denied the charges, but with his release from jail unlikely anytime soon, Renault's board prepared to name new directors.

The board is widely expected to name interim chief executive Thierry Bolloré as permanent CEO, and Michelin head Jean-Dominique Senard as its chairman — both roles were previously held by Ghosn. A meeting was scheduled for 10:00 am (0900 GMT) at the company's headquarters outside Paris. “The chairman's role will be to ensure, alongside the French state, the reinforcement of the Nissan and Renault alliance, which is a strategic priority,” Le Maire told media at the World Economic Forum in Davos where for years Ghosn had enjoyed VIP status. “The chief executive, for his part, is responsible for overseeing good operations on a day-to-day basis,” Le Maire noted.

Uncertain future

The future of the Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi alliance has been thrown into doubt with the arrest of Ghosn, who is widely credited with reviving Nissan and fusing

together two vastly different corporate cultures. Although Renault posted record sales of nearly 3.9 million vehicles last year and is in rude financial health, it is grappling with the industry's shift to electric cars as governments worldwide impose stricter emission cuts.

E-vehicles require far fewer workers to build, and Renault has targeted four billion euros (\$4.5 billion) in cost cuts by 2022, even as it aims to lift revenue to 70 billion euros from 59 billion euros in 2017. Bolloré, a 55-year-old at Renault since 2012, has held various positions in the car industry in Asia, including Japan, giving him valuable experience that will be helpful in maintaining the alliance as it enters a new era, analysts say.

Renault owns 43 percent of Nissan, which in turn has just a 15 percent stake in its French partner — and no voting rights. But Nissan's market value is nearly double that of Renault's, prompting some to expect the Japanese side will seek to rebalance the terms of their relationship. It remains unclear who will replace Ghosn as head of the alliance, a role traditionally reserved for Renault's CEO, while Nissan chooses its vice president.

Nissan said separately that it would hold an extraor-

dinary shareholders' meeting by mid-April to remove Ghosn from its board, having already stripped the Franco-Lebanese-Brazilian executive of the chairmanship. Le Maire called Nissan's move a “positive signal” for the alliance. “The shareholder meeting on one hand, the Renault board meeting on the other: it's a new start for Renault and a new start for the alliance,” he said.

Alliance 'not in danger'

Ghosn is expected to stay behind bars for several months after seeing a second bail request denied on Tuesday. He faces three separate charges: two of under-declaring his income by tens of millions of dollars over eight years and another of seeking to shift personal investment losses onto Nissan. The 64-year-old executive has been seen in public only once since his arrest on November 19 stunned the business world — in a dramatic courtroom appearance where he passionately denied the charges and declared his “genuine love” for Nissan. Current Nissan CEO Hiroto Saikawa, who oversaw his former mentor's downfall, has stressed that the alliance is “absolutely not in danger”. —AFP

Business

‘The new oil’: Dublin strikes it rich as Europe’s key data hub

24/7 access to massive data, processing power and storage that digital services require

DUBLIN: A new industrial revolution is under way on the outskirts of Dublin. Fortunes are being made in clusters of anonymous warehouses housing vast data centers. “Data is the new oil, definitely,” said Brian Roe, commercial director of Servecentric, a data centre company. Roe is a new breed of prospector, presiding over one node in a network of 48 data centers in Ireland. Put simply, these powerhouse developments provide 24/7/365 access to the massive data, processing power and storage that digital services around Europe require. “People are saying, ‘Well everything is going to come from the cloud,’” Roe said. “Well where’s the cloud? The cloud is data centers.”

A fortune in the making

According to industry lobby group Host in Ireland, the country has become the unlikely engine room for everything from video streaming to phone apps and social media. Government incentives, a skilled workforce and high connectivity to Europe and America are helping attract data centre construction investment which is expected to reach nine billion euros (\$10 billion) by 2021.

The sector employs 5,700 people in full-time equivalent roles including 1,800 as data centre operators, according to a report produced for Ireland’s investment agency. Nestled in an industrial estate next to a motorway, Servecentric is a “co-location” site shared by multiple businesses, dwarfed by the exclusive “hyperscale” establishments of Google, Amazon and Facebook.

In the lobby, visitors are asked to present ID to a

security guard. Fingerprint scanners abound and 160 CCTV cameras record footage stored for three months. One client requires six levels of security, including airport-style checks and private guards in their portion of the centre. Roe, touring the facility in a crisp suit, declines to say who, but says they are a “household name”. The secrecy is in service of the library-like rows of cabinets decked with blinking servers plugged with neatly bundled wires. All are locked away like safe deposit boxes.

The space whirrs with the constant air conditioning required to prevent overheating — evidence of voracious power consumption which, for some, is causing concern. State-owned power provider Eirgrid says data centers “can require the same amount of energy as a large town” and could account for 31 percent of Ireland’s total energy demand by 2027.

In May, Apple pulled out of a 875 million euro (\$1 billion) data centre development on Ireland’s west coast after objectors claimed it could eventually increase the demand on the grid by up to eight percent. With Ireland set to miss its 2020 and 2030 climate change targets, according to the country’s environmental watchdog, industry is keen to play down energy concerns. Facebook has made a PR push at its new 200 million euro (\$230 million) centre in Clonee near Dublin, assuring locals it is 100 percent powered by renewables.

Secrecy and security

There are also concerns that the opacity and transnational nature of the data business could end up with Ireland harboring or supporting unethical or



DUBLIN: Commercial Director, Brian Roe poses for a photograph beside the cabinets inside Servecentric Data Centre on the outskirts of Dublin. —AFP

illegal practices of the type seen in last year’s Cambridge Analytica scandal. Amazon Web Services (AWS) — which provides cloud services for hire — is a particular concern for Paul O’Neill, a researcher at Dublin City University.

“The ethical implications of hosting AWS data centers in Ireland are potentially vast,” he said. AWS, which plans to expand its Dublin operations, sells controversial facial recognition technology to US police. “These corporations are or have been involved in many of the dominant controversies and debates

of our contemporary networked era including privacy, data breaches and surveillance,” O’Neill said. Data centers do have at least some local support.

When Apple pulled out of plans for the west coast Athenry development — predicted to bring 150 jobs to the remote area — campaign group “Athenry for Apple” mourned it as “an absolute hammer blow to the locality”. But plans for a million square foot data centre, currently at the early stages in the nearby west coast town of Ennis, have sparked local concerns. —AFP

Iraq parliament approves budget, one of largest ever

BAGHDAD: Iraqi lawmakers yesterday approved the government’s 2019 budget, which at \$111.8 billion is one of the oil-rich country’s largest ever spending bills. It represents a nearly 45 percent increase from last year and awards even more money for public salaries, including those of the northern Kurdish region. Nearly 90 percent of the budget comes from oil revenues.

Iraq expects to export 3.9 million barrels per day in 2019, including 250,000 bpd from the Kurdish region, at an average of \$56 per barrel. The current price of crude sits at \$63 per barrel. The deficit is expected to more than double to \$23.1 billion, while investments increase to \$27.8 billion. The draft bill was originally submitted to parliament in October but has been fiercely debated since then. MPs from provinces ravaged by the fight against the Islamic State group criticized it for not allocating enough reconstruction funds to their regions.

Another debate raged over the share that would be allotted to the administratively autonomous

Kurdish region. MPs had originally scheduled a session for 1:00 pm on Wednesday but delayed it to 7:00 pm and voted article by article, finishing just after midnight. The government proposed \$52 billion in salaries, pensions, and social security for state workers — a 15-percent jump from 2018 and more than half the total budget.

Notably, parliament passed a budget measure to fund salaries for the Kurdistan region’s state workers and armed forces, the peshmerga. The budget also stipulates the Kurdish Regional Government must export 250,000 bpd of crude through state-owned companies and deposit the revenues in federal coffers. If it didn’t, MP Sarkawt Shamsaddin told AFP, Baghdad would continue to pay salaries but would not disburse other funds to the Kurdish region.

“The good thing is public servants’ salaries and peshmerga are not subject to political disputes,” said Shamsaddin, representing the northeastern Kurdish city of Sulaymaniyah. Relations between Baghdad and Arbil, the capital of the Kurdish region, soured in 2017 after Kurdish authorities held an independence referendum. Last year’s budget was approved by parliament in March. Parliament had also scheduled a vote on two of the five remaining empty cabinet posts in Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi’s government but adjourned without holding it. —AFP

Eurozone business growth lowest since 2013: Survey

BRUSSELS: Eurozone business growth is at its lowest level in five-and-a-half years, according to the initial reading of a survey by data firm IHS Markit. The group’s composite eurozone PMI fell to 50.7 points in January — a 54-month low — from 51.1 points in December, according to figures published Thursday. A reading above 50 points indicates an expansion, and the trend appears to be heading towards stagnation.

“The disappointing survey data indicate that GDP (gross domestic product) is rising at a quarterly rate of just 0.1 percent,” said Chris Williamson, an IHS Markit economist. “The eurozone economy slipped closer to stall speed in January, with companies reporting the first drop in demand for over four years,” he added. Williamson cited “yellow vest” protests in France as a drag on the euro area, but noted: “German businesses are also reporting their toughest spell for four years.”

The composite reading for France slumped to a four-year low in January, falling to 47.9 points from 48.7 the previous month, an IHS

statement said. The contraction was particularly severe in the service sector amid recurrent protests by the “yellow vest” or “gilets jaunes” movement against government reforms and the globalised French economy. The protests saw dozens of stores looted in Paris and other cities during holiday shopping weekends, while cargo transportation was hampered by roadblocks.

But “despite the continuation of ‘gilets jaunes’ protests, it is unclear whether the latest weak performance was caused by the resulting disruption, or whether the anticipated global economic slowdown for 2019 is already beginning to take hold,” said IHS Markit economist Eliot Kerr.

Economic clouds over France

The survey was the latest sign that economic clouds have gathered over France, where growth has slowed markedly in recent months and is expected to reach just 1.5 percent for 2018 according to the central bank, after 2.2 percent in 2017. In Germany, the IHS composite index rose by half a point to 52.1, which was still one of the weakest readings in four years.

While the services component ticked higher, manufacturing edged into contraction territory with a reading of 49.9. Two forward-looking components, new orders and job creation, both worsened as well, IHS said. Inflows of new business declined for the first time in more than four years and employment growth eased to its slowest pace since December 2016. —AFP

Business

P&G confident of payoff from Gillette's 'toxic masculinity' ad

'We've received unprecedented levels of both media coverage'

NEW YORK: Procter & Gamble said Wednesday its controversial Gillette ad targeting "toxic masculinity" was resonating with younger consumers and producing solid sales despite criticism from some conservatives and calls for a boycott. Chief Financial Officer Jon Moeller said the company was pleased at the attention surrounding the spot for the struggling shaving brand, which features images of men carousing and cat-calling at women, as well as examples of men reining in bullies and coaching children.

"We've received unprecedented levels of both media coverage and consumer engagement in that campaign," Moeller, said, adding that retail sales of Gillette had been stable since the ad was released January 14, while online sales had continued to grow. "It's a part of our effort to connect more meaningfully with younger consumer groups. Early results when you look at the age group specifics both externally and internally reflect that we're accomplishing that objective."

The nearly two-minute ad, the latest by a big brand on a hot-button social issue, comes as the more than 100-year-old product continues to struggle amid meager demand for shaving gear as more men grow beards and online competitors like Harry's contend for market share. P&G's second-quarter earnings released Tuesday underscored these challenges, with grooming the weak link in otherwise good results that boosted shares.

Sales in P&G's grooming business fell nine percent compared with the year-ago period, by far the worst performance of the company's five divi-

sions. P&G — whose brands include Crest toothpaste, Tide detergent and Bounty paper towels — reported second-quarter profits of \$3.2 billion, up 28 percent due to a one-time hit in the year-ago period from US tax reform. Revenues were flat at \$17.4 billion as the company boosted its full-year sales targets. Shares finished up 4.9 percent at \$94.84.

Going viral

Moeller defended the company's actions to try to boost Gillette, which enacted price cuts in 2017 and new products prior to launching its "Me Too" ad, which went viral and did not require extra spending to be seen. "As the CFO, I'm very interested in the financial effectiveness of the campaign," Moeller said. "That campaign was aired once and has generated significant conversation and has generated a huge number of impressions."

The spot, "We Believe: The Best Men Can Be," has been viewed more than 25.2 million times on YouTube, with 693,000 giving it a thumbs-up and 1.2 million giving it a thumbs-down. The campaign was mocked by Rush Limbaugh and other conservative commentators, with some consumers posting #BoycottGillette hashtag on Twitter and complaining they felt "too masculine" for Gillette and characterizing the spot as "anti-male."

The ad follows an attention-grabbing Nike spot last September featuring the American football player Colin Kaepernick, who has not been able to secure a contract to play on a team following his civil rights activism. Other big brands

to block a URL and that may be what happened," said independent US tech analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group. "China has been aggressive in terms of controlling the media, 'censorship' is kind of their middle name. If there were searches going on providing results the Chinese government didn't like, it wouldn't surprise me if they blocked the site," Enderle said. But the analyst said it could also be a "hack gone wrong". China's cyberspace administration did not immediately return a request for comment.

Walled off

China's Great Firewall can be circumvented by using a virtual private network (VPN), which can hide a user's IP address. While its rival Google shut down its search engine in China in 2010 after rows over censorship and hacking, Bing has continued to operate in the country along with Microsoft-owned Skype.

On Weibo, China's Twitter-like social media site, people complained about the lack of access, with some speculating that Bing too had been "walled off". Others aired their dissatisfaction about having to use Baidu, China's largest domestic search service. "Even Bing requires a VPN now, how exhausting," wrote one user. "Our country is amazing, even the obedient Bing has been walled off, while Baidu flourishes," said another. "Thank you wise party leaders!" —AFP



DUBAI: In this file photo taken on February 4, 2007, (from L to R) Swiss tennis player Roger Federer, French football player Thierry Henry and US golfer Tiger Woods take part in promotion for US razor giant Gillette. —AFP

have taken stances on gun control and immigration. The Nike spot also generated plenty of criticism, but was generally seen as a winner by marketing experts because it strengthened the brand's connection to millennials, who prefer brands that are committed to social issues.

Kelly O'Keefe, a professor of brand strategy at Virginia Commonwealth University, praised the intent of the ad but said Gillette could have executed it more effectively. For example, he said an image of a row of men next to barbecue grills

doing nothing in response to bullying by kids, reinforced stereotypes and fed the impression that it was "an indictment of men in general" rather than of bullying. But O'Keefe predicted the spot would overall be a winner for Gillette. "This puts them back into a conversation with younger consumers who had started to tune them out or just not take notice of them," O'Keefe said. "What we are seeing is if you are trying to become a better company, you will become a better brand." —AFP

Microsoft's Bing inaccessible in China

BEIJING: Microsoft's Bing search engine was inaccessible in China yesterday, with social media users fearing it could be the latest foreign website to be blocked by censors. Attempts to open cn.bing.com has resulted in an error message for users since Wednesday, taking away the most prominent foreign search engine available in China.

"We've confirmed that Bing is currently inaccessible in China and are engaged to determine next steps," a Microsoft spokesperson said in a brief statement, hours after saying the company was investigating the matter. China's Communist authorities operate an on-line censorship apparatus known as the "Great Firewall", which blocks a slew of websites including Facebook, Twitter and several foreign media outlets. But it was not clear whether or not Bing had joined the list of prohibited websites, or if its China service was experiencing technical difficulties. The search engine had been censoring searches in China.

The wording of the US company's statement "means Microsoft received no government order, but clearly China has the power

Hitachi wants nationalization of UK nuclear project: Report

LONDON: Hitachi's frozen nuclear power project in Britain can only be revived if it is nationalized, Nikkei news agency reported the company's chairman as saying on Wednesday. "Nationalization is the only path," Hiroaki Nakanishi was quoted as saying at the World Economic Forum in Davos. But he added that legal changes would be required for the British government to take a majority stake in the business to fill a funding gap left by the private sector.

The chairman said private investors had little appetite to support the power plant after seeing similar projects

around the world stall, Nikkei reported. Hitachi last week froze construction of the Wylfa Newydd plant in Wales owing to financing difficulties. It had launched the project after acquiring British-based Horizon Nuclear Power in 2012. The UK government had agreed to take a one-third equity stake in the project, alongside investment from Hitachi, Japanese government agencies and other strategic partners.

Fund-raising efforts subsequently fell short, however. Britain has put nuclear power at the heart of its low-carbon energy policy, in stark contrast to Europe's biggest economy Germany, which is phasing it out in the wake of Japan's 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. Last year, Hitachi's Japanese rival Toshiba also pulled the plug on a nuclear power plant project in northwest England. The Franco-Chinese project Hinkley Point C — Britain's first new nuclear power station in a generation — is still under construction meanwhile. —AFP

Business

Airbus warns no-deal Brexit may spark 'very harmful decisions'

'Whole aerospace sector now stands at the precipice'

LONDON: Airbus chief Tom Enders yesterday warned the European aerospace giant could make "very harmful decisions" for Britain if it leaves the European Union without a deal, the latest multinational to issue a stark alert. Enders branded the government's handling of Brexit a "disgrace" and suggested 14,000 jobs at its sites designing and manufacturing wings at Filton in southwest England and Broughton in north Wales were under threat. "If there is a no-deal Brexit, we at Airbus will have to make potentially very harmful decisions for the UK," Enders warned in a video published on the group's website. The German CEO said that up to 110,000 jobs in Britain relied on its British plants, which generate around £6 billion (\$7.8 billion) of turnover every year. The country's whole aerospace sector "now stands at the precipice," he added.

'It is a disgrace'

The Franco-German firm, which has repeatedly stated that Brexit could mean pulling investment out of Britain, also expressed deep frustration over Prime Minister Theresa May's faltering Brexit strategy. "It is a disgrace that more than two years after the result of the 2016 referendum, businesses are still unable to plan properly for the future," Enders said.

"We, along with many of our peers, have repeatedly called for clarity. "But we still have no idea what is really going on here." The aviation giant's relationship with the EU has itself been under scrutiny recently, with the World Trade Organization last year ruling the firm received improper subsidies from the bloc after the US argued it had given \$22 billion in

state aid to help launch the A380 and A350 jets.

British lawmakers last week roundly rejected the divorce terms May agreed with Brussels, raising fresh fears that Britain could crash out with no deal on March 29. The nation's powerful CBI business lobby group has also expressed dismay that May had not offered a clearer way forward. "The global market for aviation is growing at five percent each year. But we are not dependent on the UK for our future," Enders said. "Airbus will survive and thrive whatever the outcome. "The question is: does the UK wish to be part of that future success?"

May has promised a debate and votes on the way forward on January 29, with MPs mulling a long list of options including a second referendum or delaying the March 29 divorce date. But EU negotiator Michel Barnier warned on Wednesday that a parliamentary move to block a no-deal Brexit would fail unless a MPs could swing behind an alternative agreement.

'Brexiters' madness'

"There appears to be a majority in the Commons to oppose a no-deal but opposing a no-deal will not stop a no-deal from happening" on the official March 29 departure date, he said. "To stop 'no deal', a positive majority for another solution will need to emerge." Enders meanwhile urged Britons not to listen to "Brexiters' madness" that multinationals would always stay in Britain.

"Please don't listen to the Brexiters' madness which asserts that, because we have huge plants



BROUGHTON: In this file photo taken on December 01, 2016 a general view of the wing production plant for the Airbus A350 aircraft at Airbus' site. —AFP

here, we will not move and we will always be here." They are wrong. Of course it is not possible to pick up and move our large UK factories to other parts of the world immediately. However, aerospace is a long-term business and we could be forced to re-direct future investments in the event of a no-deal Brexit. Make no mistake, there are plenty of countries out there who would love to build the wings for Airbus aircraft."

The Airbus warning caps a torrid week for corporate Britain after Japanese electronics titan

Sony decided to switch its European headquarters to the Netherlands, while UK appliance maker Dyson revealed it would move its base to Singapore in 2019. The Dutch government revealed Wednesday that officials are in contact with more than 250 companies about a possible post-Brexit move. International Trade Secretary Liam Fox, speaking to AFP at Davos on Wednesday, nonetheless insisted that Britain remains "open for business" and is still an "attractive destination" for foreign direct investment. —AFP

France to propose world business tax at G7: Minister

DAVOS: French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said yesterday that France would plead for global minimum corporate tax as a priority of its presidency of the G7 nations group this year. "We need an effective minimum corporate tax in all developed countries," the minister said at a press conference on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos where he defended the idea of a "fairer" capitalism and globalization.

The ambitious proposal has long been a desire of activists, but could raise eyebrows among the Davos elite with many countries seeking to drive down tax rates to attract big business. "We know that some of the biggest companies are escaping taxes and corporate taxes through many possibilities," he said, targeting in particular countries that do not tax multi-

nationals at all. According to a recent OECD report, average corporate tax rates around the world fell further last year to 21.7 percent. But countries with rates of less than 10 percent were 13 in 2018 compared to 10 in 2000, the OECD said.

The OECD pointed out that twelve jurisdictions with zero rates, including the British territories of Guernsey, Jersey, as well as the Isle of Man and the British Virgin Islands. "Some tax competition is not bad and forces countries to be more competitive, but zero tax jurisdictions are not acceptable," Le Maire said. "That's why the first priority for the finance part of the G7 will be the introduction of an effective minimum corporate tax to fight against tax avoidance from the biggest companies of the world."

Le Maire said the problem was urgent, with France currently in "an important social and economic crisis", referring to the yellow vests protests that have rocked the country since November. "We have to understand that this is not a French crisis. This is a crisis of the capitalism that no longer meets the requirements of the people," he said. —AFP

US industries plead for end to US metals tariffs

WASHINGTON: Dozens of US industry groups sent a letter to the Trump administration on Wednesday pleading for an end to the economic pain caused by steep US tariffs on steel and aluminum. In addition to increased costs for any company importing metal products or components, many other industries are suffering from the retaliation imposed by countries like China and Mexico.

"The continued application of metal tariffs means ongoing economic hardship for US companies that depend on imported steel and aluminum," said the letter, signed by four dozen industry groups. And while they applauded the newly-agreed US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, they warned that for "many farmers, ranchers and manufacturers, the damage from the reciprocal trade actions in the steel dispute far outweighs any benefit that may accrue to them from the USMCA."

China fired back at the United States with tariffs on key US exports after President Donald Trump imposed the 25 percent tariffs on steel and 10 percent on aluminum on March 2018. Mexico and Canada retaliated after

their initial exemption expired and the metals tariffs began to bite in June of last year. Despite the agreement on a new free trade deal, Trump has not made clear whether the steel and aluminum duties would be removed as part of the USMCA.

"We urge you to take all necessary steps to resolve this matter so that zero-tariff North American trade can resume, and we can turn our attention to working with you to gain prompt Congressional approval of the USMCA," the letter stated. The letter was signed by groups representing a large swath of the economy, including the Motor & Equipment Manufacturers Association, the National Association of Egg Farmers and the National Restaurant Association.

Rufus Yerxa, head of the 300-company National Foreign Trade Council, told AFP the letter was the first step in a campaign to push for an end to the tariffs as Congress considers approval of the USMCA which is "going to need vigorous support." He said Trump was "picking winners and losers to only favor one industry," while the damage done far outweighed the benefits to the steel industry. And he warned that for smaller companies or those reliant on exports "this might be a matter of life or death." Jim Monroe at the National Pork Producers Council cited a study showing Mexican retaliation was costing US pork producers \$1.5 billion annually, while the impact of China's actions is \$1 billion. —AFP

Business

Nigeria: Africa's top oil producer, world's extreme poverty capital

'We live like doves in a cage'

LAGOS: In the Ago Egun Bariga area of Nigeria's commercial capital, Lagos, there is no road, no electricity, no running water and no rubbish collection. Now that high grass has blocked access to the water, there is no work either. The people of Ago Egun Bariga have made a living from fishing ever since their families first settled on the edge of the lagoon more than 50 years ago.

At the time, local chief Agemo Akapo's grandfather lived comfortably surrounded by the tropical vegetation. But as urbanization gathered pace at breakneck speed, Lagos' population mushroomed from 300,000 people in 1950 to some 20 million today — and the trees disappeared. In their place are makeshift shanties as far as the eye can see. "We would like to have electricity, schools, hospitals, running water," said Agemo Akapo. "But this is not our number one priority. They need to open access to the sea again, so that we can go to work, buy food and feed our children." He added: "We live like doves in a cage."

The Lagos state government has filled in vast stretches of the water with sand to build much-needed homes, contributing to major changes to the local ecosystem. As a result, the fishing boats of Ago Egun have lain idle in the mud for the last two years among the detritus of daily life. The fishermen can no longer put to sea. Their wives can no longer sell the catch at market. There is no money to send children to school. "If my children can eat once a day, we can thank our god," said Abiodun Kakini, who used to earn about 3,000 naira (about \$8, 7 euros) a day selling fish her husband caught. She now earns a little money smoking and selling large tilapia imported from the Netherlands. "I have to buy a carton of imported fish on credit. So, I

have almost nothing left at the end of the day. I need to pay back my debts," she told AFP. In just a few years, the people of Ago Egun Bariga have gone from poverty to extreme poverty.

World record

Oxfam this week published a sobering report that suggested the world's 26 richest billionaires owned more wealth than the poorest half of the planet combined. Overall, the World Bank has said the number of people living on the less than \$1.9 a day — the benchmark of extreme poverty — has fallen overall. But rates were rising in sub-Saharan Africa.

Nigeria overtook India as the country with the most number of people living in extreme poverty last year, with 87 million people in dire financial hardship — or nearly half the country's population. The World Poverty Clock estimated that six Nigerians slip into extreme poverty every minute. Between now and 2030, it said 45.5 percent of the population or 120 million people will be living in extreme poverty. In Ago Egun Bariga, the statistics have faces.

Five-year-old children carry heavy jerrycans of water on their heads, scale tilapia in brackish water or sell dried fish even before they have learned to read. Nigerians vote for a new president and parliament on February 16. Two weeks later, there are elections for new state governors and state assemblies. Places like Ago Egun Bariga give an indication of the task facing the country's new political leaders. Local chief Akapo said he had attended a political meeting the day before. "They told us to stick these posters on our walls. But once we vote for them, they disappear," he said, ges-

cropped up again in a diplomatic spat between France and Italy, with Paris summoning the Italian ambassador over incendiary remarks by deputy premier Luigi di Maio.

He accused France of continuing to "colonise" African countries, charging that it "hampers development and contributes to the departure of refugees" through the CFA franc. But what exactly do anti-establishment politicians like Di Maio and some French "yellow vests" have against a currency used by some 155 million people in Central and West Africa?

Stability vs sovereignty

The CFA franc is technically two different currencies. One version is used in West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo) and the other in central Africa (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon). It was introduced in 1945, 15 years before these former colonies declared independence from France. All but two of the countries using it are former French territories. Arguments both for and against the franc hinge on whether the currency, which has a fixed exchange rate with the euro, is healthy for African economies.

Some economists argue this "peg" overvalues the franc, making African exports more expensive than they should be. This would hurt local companies and hamper growth. More broadly, critics say the peg forces African cen-



LAGOS: A girl walks on a dump in Bariga shanty fishing community which shows the extreme poverty and inequality between the rich and the poor in Lagos Nigeria's commercial capital. —AFP

turing to adverts for the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

Theft and corruption

For Emmanuel Onwubiko, the head of a local human rights association, both leading candidates for the upcoming polls have largely ignored the needs of those being economically left behind. "In Nigeria, politicians are busy playing politics and patronage strategies instead of implementing programs to take people out of poverty," he said. President Muham-

adu Buhari is proposing social assistance and micro-finance for the poorest.

His main challenger Atiku Abubakar, a wealthy businessman and former vice-president from the Peoples Democratic Party, is more market-driven. Onwubiko complained there was no formal means of ensuring that politicians followed through on their promises once they get into power. "The military government looted public funds for decades but the politicians who have been elected since 1999 have also failed to solve this issue," he added. —AFP

African franc faces unlikely foes on Europe's fringes

PARIS: It has featured among complaints by French "yellow vest" protesters and in populist Italian rhetoric: Africa's CFA franc currency has become an unexpected hot topic on Europe's political fringes. When a list of unofficial "yellow vest" demands went viral in December, some observers were surprised to see scrapping the CFA franc included alongside domestic requests such as a minimum wage hike. If most "yellow vests" are chiefly concerned by the rich-poor divide at home, among their ranks is a hard-left minority which sees the CFA franc as a tool of French neo-colonialism.

It's a charge that has simmered for years among anti-imperialist intellectuals who argue that francophone Africa could have developed faster if it wasn't for the shackles of the franc. The issue continues to generate strong opinions on the streets of cities like Abidjan and Bangui, and in 2017 protesters staged anti-franc demonstrations in Benin, Gabon, Ivory Coast and Mali. And this week the CFA franc

tral banks to coordinate their monetary policies with Europe's, which is not necessarily in their interests.

The European Central Bank's historic priority has been controlling inflation, while many poor African countries prioritize economic growth. Senegalese economist Demba Moussa Dembele, a staunch opponent of the currency, told AFP the franc was "a brake on development" for this reason. What's more, France guarantees the franc's convertibility into euros — meaning governments or businesses don't have to worry they'll be stuck with a currency no one wants. But in return, the African countries are obliged to keep half their reserves in the French treasury, which critics see as a form of control.

A French central bank source stressed that Paris pays the governments above market rates for the deposits — currently 0.7 percent. "It's very favorable," the source said, noting that market rates are currently negative and confirming that the reserves are not, as Di Maio claimed, used to finance French debt. Supporters also say that using a currency pegged to the euro reassures investors by preventing damaging fluctuations in the franc's value and enabling predictable long-term trade. Challenged on the issue by a student in Ouagadougou on his first trip to Africa in 2017, Macron issued a staunch defense of the franc. "It's a good thing," Macron said. "For one thing, it gives stability to those who have it." —AFP

Barcelona taxi drivers end strike

BARCELONA: Barcelona taxi drivers called off a six-day strike yesterday after the regional government unveiled regulations to restrict ride-hailing services like Uber. The strike was called off following a tight vote by members of the Elite taxi union, it said on Twitter. In the vote carried out late Wednesday in Barcelona's Catalunya square, 2,508 taxi drivers voted in favor of ending the strike and 2,177 were opposed.

Spanish taxi drivers complain that rivals from ride-hailing apps work like taxis despite not being classed as such in law, competing unfairly since they do not face the same regulations and costs. The new Catalan government regulations will oblige customers of Uber or its main Spanish rival, Cabify, to book services 15 minutes in advance. That means customers will have to wait at least that long before they can get a ride rather than having a vehicle arrive almost immediately. —AFP

Sports

Kadri's hat trick lifts Maple Leafs over defending champion Capitals

TORONTO: Nazem Kadri posted a hat trick plus an assist as the host Toronto Maple Leafs defeated Washington 6-3 on Wednesday night, handing the defending Stanley Cup champion Capitals a seventh consecutive loss. Kadri scored once in the first period and added two more in the third as Toronto broke open a close game. He also had an assist on Nikita Zaitsev's first goal of the season as the Maple Leafs broke a two-game losing streak. Washington continues to struggle on defense, falling to 0-5-2 in its past seven and 3-7-3 in its past 13. The Capitals have allowed an opponent to get a hat trick in four of the last five games. On the positive side for the Capitals, Alex Ovechkin scored a second-period goal to tie him with Sergei Fedorov as the leader in NHL points amongst Russian players with 1,179.

PREDATORS 2, GOLDEN KNIGHTS 1

Juuse Saros had a career-high 47 saves as Nashville moved into a tie for first place in the Central Division with a win in Las Vegas. Nick Bonino and Ryan Johansen scored goals for Nashville, which picked up its 30th win victory the season. The Predators go into the All-Star break tied with Winnipeg at 64 points, though the Jets have four games in hand. Max Pacioretty scored the lone goal for the Golden Knights, who lost back-to-back regulation home games for the first time this season and limp into All-Star break having lost four of their last six games.

HURRICANES 5, CANUCKS 2

Nino Niederreiter scored twice and Teuvo Teravainen tallied three points to help goaltender Alex Nedeljkovic win his first NHL start as visiting Carolina used a five-goal second pe-

riod to win in Vancouver. Nedeljkovic, Carolina's 2014 second-round draft choice, stopped 24 shots for the victory. The Hurricanes, who last won in Vancouver on Oct. 15, 1999, and had lost their last 10 visits, finished 2-0-1 on a road trip through Western Canada. Goalie Jacob Markstrom made 29 saves for the Canucks, who went into the game on a 3-0-2 run.

WILD 5, AVALANCHE 2

Eric Staal had two goals and an assist, Charlie Coyle and Ryan Suter had a goal and an assist each, and Minnesota knocked off Colorado in Denver. Jared Spurgeon also scored, and Devan Dubnyk made 20 saves for the Wild. Minnesota, which has won four of its past five games, sits in third place in the Central Division heading into the All-Star break. Carl Soderberg and Tyson Barrie scored, and Philipp Grubauer stopped 23 shots for the struggling Avalanche. Colorado has gone 5-13-3 since Dec. 8.

BLUES 5, DUCKS 1

Zach Sanford and Tyler Bozak scored goals in their return from injured reserve, and visiting St. Louis went on to an easy win over Anaheim in the final game for each team before the All-Star break. Vladimir Tarasenko, Oskar Sundqvist and Sammy Blais also scored goals as the Blues overcame an early deficit to clinch their first winning month of the season (7-4-1). Jordan Binnington made 12 saves for St. Louis, which ended a three-game road losing streak. Daniel Sprong scored for the Ducks, who have put up two goals or fewer in 11 of their past 16 games. Anaheim took just two shots in the first period, with Sprong delivering his eighth goal on the



TORONTO: Evgeny Kuznetsov #92 of the Washington Capitals passes the puck in front of Travis Dermott #23 of the Toronto Maple Leafs during an NHL game at Scotiabank Arena on Wednesday in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. — AFP

Ducks' first shot 6:44 into the contest.

CANADIENS 2, COYOTES 1

Carey Price continued his mastery of Arizona, stopping 30 shots to lead host Montreal to a narrow win. Price improved to 11-1-0 with a 1.91 goals-against average in 12 career starts against the Coyotes. He got a little help when a late Arizona goal was nullified on a video re-

view because the Coyotes were offside when they entered the offensive zone. Mike Reilly and Jonathan Drouin scored for the Canadiens, who have won five of their past six games. Montreal moved past idle Boston and into third place in the Atlantic Division heading into the All-Star break. Conor Garland scored for the Coyotes, who were 6-1-1 in their previous eight games. — Reuters

AIBA says progress made in fight to avoid Tokyo KO

LAUSANNE: Amateur boxing's governing body was upbeat yesterday over the steps it has taken to avoid being potentially kicked out of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The AIBA is being investigated by the International Olympic Committee which in November froze preparations for boxing at next year's Games, warning it could be stripped of the right to run the competition.

Since the IOC launched their investigation the two sides have yet to meet face to face. "There is no meeting planned with the IOC up to now," AIBA executive director Tom Virgets told AFP. "AIBA is preparing documents to present that will address the additional advances that we have made on every question and area that the IOC has asked us to report on."

He called for hearings conducted by the IOC's probe to be held in public. "AIBA is transparent, and wants to be an open book. We have

nothing to hide!" assured Virgets. An IOC spokesman said they would sit down with the AIBA "once all the documents and responses we have from AIBA have been studied".

The inquiry led by IOC executive member Nenad Lalovic, who is president of wrestling's ruling body, met last week, with the AIBA absent. The IOC's probe is focusing on "governance, ethics and financial management" of the AIBA, which in November elected as president a controversial Uzbek businessman the US Treasury Department claims is linked to organized crime.

Gafur Rakhimov strenuously rejects the charges. "We anticipate that the IOC's concerns will centre on how AIBA is progressing in all of the areas they focused upon in the past, and I am confident that we will be able to show continued improvements in all areas," Virgets said.

Relations between the IOC and AIBA were hit hard at the 2016 Rio Olympics when 36 officials and referees were suspended amid allegations of bout fixing. Back in November the IOC made it clear it still wanted boxing to go ahead at Tokyo but warned its inquiry into the International Boxing Association (AIBA) "can lead to the withdrawal of (its) recognition".

But the IOC said it would make "all efforts to protect the athletes and ensure that a boxing tournament can take place at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 regardless of these measures". —AFP

Svindal a doubt for Kitz downhill, Hirscher goes for slalom hat-trick

KITZBUHEL: Norwegian veteran Aksel Lund Svindal will be hoping to target a fourth Kitzbuehel victory, and a first in the famed downhill, at this weekend's Hahnenkamm races, while home favourite Marcel Hirscher is eyeing up a slalom hat-trick.

Svindal has claimed three wins in the super-G on the Streif course, widely regarded as the most testing on the World Cup circuit. But the 36-year-old Norwegian, Olympic gold medalist in the super-G (2010) and downhill (2018), has never won the downhill in the Tyrolean resort, the blue riband event of the season.

And in potential bad news, Svindal will skip the second training run in order to undergo medical tests on his right knee before deciding whether he takes to the piste. The nail-biting 3.3km-long descent, featuring a vertical drop

of 860m and, at times, an 85-percent gradient, sees racers reaching 100km/h (60mph) within eight seconds of leaving the startgate and then touching motorway-coasting speeds of 140km/h.

There have been crashes aplenty, not least for Svindal, whose 2016 season was ended here. The drama lends an unashamedly voyeuristic edge to the spectacle which attracts some 50,000 baying fans. "Maybe it's no coincidence that I have never won, it's possible that I cannot push fast enough on some passages," Svindal told ServusTV.

"To say that it's my bad luck that I've never won, I do not believe in that, there are other downhills where I'm faster." Svindal spearheads Norway's self-proclaimed team of "Attacking Vikings", but that tight group has already suffered a blow with news that Kjetil Jansrud, the 2014 Olympic super-G gold medalist, who also claimed downhill silver in Pyeongchang last year, broke two fingers in Tuesday's first training run.

"#DieStreif 1 - 0 Jansrud," said the Norwegian, winner in Kitzbuehel on a shortened, fog-hit race in 2015 and an ardent Liverpool fan. The 33-year-old, who has 22 World Cup wins and 50 podiums to his name, now faces a battle to be fit for next month's World Ski Championships in Are, Sweden. —AFP

Sports

Dominant Australia in charge of day-night Test against Sri Lanka

BRISBANE: Some fine pace bowling from Jhye Richardson and Pat Cummins put a dominant Australia firmly in charge after the first day of the day-night Test against Sri Lanka in Brisbane yesterday. Newcomer Richardson took three wickets and

Cummins four as the home side dismissed Sri Lanka for just 144.

Australian opener Marcus Harris then batted assuredly to finish on 40 not out at the close of play as the home side finished the day 72 for two. Australia lost opener Joe Burns on 15 during the difficult night session to a fine outswinger from Suranga Lakmal, while Usman Khawaja (11) chopped on a ball from off-spinner Dilruwan Perera 10 minutes before the close.

Sri Lankan captain Dinesh Chandimal earlier won the toss and elected to bat first on a hot and humid Brisbane afternoon but the visitors were forced to battle hard against the Australian attack. The 22-year-old Richardson bowled with real pace and found just enough movement to trouble the Sri Lankans, who struggled to come to terms with the bouncy Gabba wicket.

Richardson, who only came into the side after Josh Hazlewood was ruled out with injury, had figures of 3-26 to lead an impressive Australian display with the ball. Pat Cummins chimed in to clean up the tail, finishing with 4-39.

The only Sri Lankan batsman to show any resistance was wicketkeeper Niroshan Dickwella, who combined resolute defence with some audacious attacking shots.

The Sri Lankans began cautiously and moved the score to 26 before Lahiru Thirimanne on 12 tried to drive Cummins, only to edge a comfortable catch to Marnus Labuschagne at third slip.

Richardson was impressive in his first spell in Test cricket, hitting the pads of the Sri Lankan openers numerous times. He was finally rewarded with the big wicket of Chandimal, well caught by a diving Burns at second slip to leave the visitors at 31 for two.

"If the ball's swinging then I'm instantly more confident in what I'm doing," Richardson said. "To get that first wicket, it releases a lot of emotion and built up tension you might have." Kusal Mendis replaced Chandimal at the crease and he and Dimuth Karunaratne fought hard to try and rebuild the visitors' innings.

But with the score on 54, Lyon drew an edge from Karunaratne, on 24, and wicketkeeper Tim



BRISBANE: Sri Lanka's Niroshan Dickwella plays a shot during the first day of the day-night Test cricket match between Australia and Sri Lanka at the Gabba in Brisbane yesterday. —AFP

Paine took a sharp catch, high and to his left to put the home side in charge at the tea break. Mendis had looked good before the break but he was undone by a superb Richardson delivery three balls after the resumption, which squared him up and crashed into the stumps.

Dhananjaya de Silva and Roshan Silva came and went quickly and the Sri Lankans were in further disarray when a Cummins short ball crashed into Perera's thumb, forcing the off-spinning all-rounder to retire hurt.

Mitchell Starc took his 200th Test wicket when Labuschagne held a sharp catch at third slip to dis-

miss Lakmal for seven, then had his 201st soon after when Perera, who had returned to the crease, got a thick edge to give Labuschagne his third catch. But a fine swashbuckling 64 from 78 balls by Dickwella rescued Sri Lanka and gave the score some semblance of respectability. Karunaratne said he was confident Sri Lanka could salvage something from the game.

"We need to dry up the runs because otherwise because if they score freely it will be really tough for us," he said. "If we get some early wickets tomorrow then we are in the game." The Brisbane Test is the first of a two-match series against Sri Lanka. —AFP

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the first day of the opening Test between Australia and Sri Lanka in Brisbane yesterday:

Sri Lanka	
D. Karunaratne c Paine b Lyon	24
L. Thirimanne c Labuschagne b Cummins	12
D. Chandimal c Burns b Richardson	5
K. Mendis b Richardson	14
R. Silva c Paine b Cummins	9
D. de Silva c Paine b Richardson	5
N. Dickwella c Patterson b Cummins	64
D. Perera c Labuschagne b Starc	1
S. Lakmal c Labuschagne b Starc	7
D. Chameera c Patterson b Cummins	0
L. Kumara not out	0
Extras (nb2, w1)	3
Total	144
Fall of wickets: 1-26 (Thirimanne), 2-31 (Chandimal), 3-54 (Karunaratne), 4-58 (Mendis), 5-66 (de Silva), 6-91 (Silva), 7-102 (Lakmal), 8-106 (Perera), 9-144 (Dickwella), 10-144 (Chameera)	
Bowling: Starc 12-2-41-2 (2nb), Richardson 14-5-26-3 (1w), Cummins 14.4-3-39-4, Lyon 16-3-38-1	

Australia	
M. Harris not out	40
J. Burns c Mendis b Lakmal	15
U. Khawaja b Perera	11
N. Lyon not out	0
Extras (3lb, 1w, 2nb)	6
Total (for two wickets)	72
Fall of wickets: 1-37 (Burns), 2-72 (Khawaja)	
To bat: M. Labuschagne, T. Head, K. Patterson, T. Paine, P. Cummins, M. Starc, J. Richardson	
Bowling: Lakmal 9-3-27-1 (1nb), Kumara 6-0-24-0 (1w), Chameera 7-1-14-0 (1nb), Perera 3-2-4-1	

India, N Zealand players told to 'toughen up' over sun glare

WELLINGTON: The New Zealand and India cricketers were told to toughen up yesterday and not walk off the field even if they are blinded by the sun and can't see the ball.

The first one-day international between the two sides was halted for 37 minutes in Napier on Wednesday when the umpires deemed the setting sun made it too dangerous for the players. The problem lay with the McLean Park wicket running east to west rather than in the traditional north-south orientation.

The low-lying sun was in the eyes of Indian batsmen Virat Kohli and Shikhar Dhawan who were facing deliveries of up to 150 kilometres per hour (94 mph) fired at them from less than 20 metres away.

But an unsympathetic Bill Dalton, the mayor of Napier City that bills McLean Park as the "jewel in the crown" of its sports-

grounds, did not see that as reason enough for the players to leave the field.

"To be absolutely honest with you, my view is that these guys are sportsmen who play outside. If they get a bit of sun in their eyes that's part of the game," Dalton told local media. "It's an outdoor sport and they've got to toughen up... It's all a bit weird to me."

The break in play had little impact on the outcome of the game, which India comfortably won by eight wickets. It is believed to be the first time a cricket international has been interrupted because of too much sun. Umpire Shaun George said he had no choice but to take the players from the field under the cricket rule stating "conditions shall be regarded as dangerous if there is actual and foreseeable risk" to player safety.

"We have a setting sun which is directly in the eyes of the batsmen. We have to take into consideration the safety of players, not only the batsmen but the umpires, and the players fielding behind the stumps as well," he said.

The rival captains agreed with New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson saying nothing else could be done. "It's hard to move the sun and hard to move the grandstand, we didn't have either of those options so we had to sit down for a bit," Williamson joked.

India captain Virat Kohli was glad for the break, recalling he had been dismissed in a game four years ago because the sun was in his eyes. —AFP

Pandya, Rahul suspension lifted

NEW DELHI: India's cricket board lifted yesterday suspensions on Hardik Pandya and Lokesh Rahul, imposed after comments about women during a talk show saw the players ordered home from a tour of Australia. Pandya boasted on the TV celebrity show earlier this month about his success with multiple women as Rahul sat next to him, prompting uproar on social media. "You are just watching and observing how they move as I said I am a little from the black side (influenced by West Indies culture) so I have to see how they (women) move first," Pandya had said.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) subsequently suspended the all-rounder and batsman and ordered them to return home from the team's tour of Australia. Yesterday the board said that its committee of administrators "is of the view that the interim suspension orders... should be presently lifted with immediate effect". The players apologised for their conduct following the uproar, with Pandya tweeting: "Honestly, I got a bit carried away with the nature of the show. In no way did I mean to disrespect or hurt anyone's sentiments. Respect." —AFP

Harden scores franchise-record 61 as Rockets nip New York Knicks

NEW YORK: Houston superstar James Harden continued his historic streak Wednesday night by scoring a career-high and franchise-record 61 points, but it was Eric Gordon who drained the biggest shot, a 3-pointer with nine seconds left that gave the Rockets the lead for good in a wild 114-110 win over the host New York Knicks. Harden has scored at least 30 points in 21 consecutive games, the fourth-longest such streak in NBA history (behind only three authored by Wilt Chamberlain). "Wilt the Stilt" scored 30 points in 25 straight games during the 1960-61 season, in 31 straight games spanning the 1961-62 and 1962-63 seasons and in 65 straight games during the 1961-62 season. The 61 points are the most by a player in an NBA game this season—Kemba Walker scored 60 points for the Charlotte Hornets on Nov. 17 — and tied for the most scored by a Knicks opponent at Madison Square Garden. Kobe Bryant scored 61 points for the Los Angeles Lakers on Feb. 2, 2009. There was little suspense regarding Harden's streak Wednesday as he scored 19 points in the first quarter, finished the first half with 36 points and ended the third quarter with 49 points. He missed six consecutive shots before reaching 50 points with a jumper with 4:22 left.

PACERS 110, RAPTORS 106

Thaddeus Young scored 12 of his 23 points in the fourth quarter and finished with 15 rebounds as Indiana held off a late rally to defeat visiting Toronto in a game that may prove very costly in the long run. The Pacers lost guard Victor Oladipo with 4:05 left in the first half. He left on a stretcher with what the team termed a serious right knee injury, and he is headed for an MRI exam Thursday. Oladipo, Indiana's leading scorer on the season, had four points, three rebounds and one assist. Darren Collison added 17 points, and Bojan Bogdanovic had 16 points for the Pacers, who won their third game in a row. Serge Ibaka had 23 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Raptors, and Kyle Lowry added 20 points and seven assists.

76ERS 122, SPURS 120

Joel Embiid scored 33 points and grabbed 19 rebounds to lift host Philadelphia past San Antonio. Ben Simmons secured his eighth triple-double of the season with 21 points, 15 assists and 10 rebounds as the Sixers won their second in a row. DeMar DeRozan led the Spurs with 26 points while Patty Mills and Rudy Gay added 17 apiece. Marco Belinelli had 16.

CELTICS 123, CAVALIERS 103

Terry Rozier, starting in place of the injured Kyrie Irving, scored 22 of his 26 points in the first half to spark Boston to an easy win over visiting Cleveland. Irving sat out with flu-like symptoms but was hardly missed. Rozier, who played high school basketball in Cleveland, was perfect in the first two periods, going 8-for-8, including connecting on a buzzer-beater from 31 feet to give Boston a 65-50 lead at halftime. Boston has won 10 straight at home and five straight overall while Cleveland, the NBA's worst team with just nine wins in 49 games, lost its fifth straight despite 19 points from former Celtic Ante Zizic.

HORNETS 118, GRIZZLIES 107

Kemba Walker scored 22 points, including 12 in the fourth quarter, and visiting Charlotte added to Memphis' misery. Earlier Wednesday, Memphis ownership confirmed that veteran stars Mike Conley and Marc Gasol were on the trading block. Then came an afternoon fire in the Grizzlies' locker room that forced everyone to evacuate the FedEx Forum and eventually caused the Grizzlies to change locker rooms. Nonetheless, Conley finished with 31 points on 10-of-17 shooting while Gasol had a triple-double with 22 points, 17 rebounds and 10 assists.

PISTONS 98, PELICANS 94

Blake Griffin scored 37 points and visiting Detroit held off a rally by short-handed New Orleans. Jrue Holiday led the Pelicans with 29 points, Jahlil Okafor had 17 points and 10 rebounds, Julius Randle had 13 points and 13 rebounds, and Nikola Mirotic added 11 points before a strained right calf sidelined him in the fourth quarter. The Pelicans played their second consecutive game without All-Star forward Anthony Davis, who sprained his left index finger in a 128-112 loss at Portland last Friday. Coach Alvin Gentry estimated that Davis would miss one or two weeks, though he said before Wednesday's game that it could be "as much as four weeks."

CLIPPERS 111, HEAT 99

Tobias Harris continued his breakout season with a game-high 31 points to lead Los Angeles past host Miami. It was Harris' fifth 30-point outing this season, continuing an exceptionally consistent first season with the Clippers. He has averaged more than 20 points every month this season and also against the Eastern Conference and the Western Conference. Counting Wednesday's game, Harris is averaging 21.0 points this season, and he has 31 games with at least 20 points. Miami was led by Hassan Whiteside's double-double (22 points and 16 rebounds). Josh Richardson added 17 points, Tyler Johnson had 15 points and Dwyane Wade had 13 points for the Heat. Wade, though, was scoreless in the second half.

HAWKS 121, BULLS 101

John Collins scored a career-high 35 points to pace visiting Atlanta to an easy win in Chicago, ending the Hawks' two-game losing streak. The second-year power forward was 14-for-16 from the floor and 4-for-4 on 3-point attempts. Collins added eight rebounds and two assists to help Atlanta end a five-game losing streak against Chicago. The Bulls got 23 points from Zach LaVine, the 31st time he's scored 20-plus points this season. Lauri Markkanen scored 22, the third time in four games he's scored at least 20, and added six rebounds. Kris Dunn had 16 points.

NETS 114, MAGIC 110

D'Angelo Russell broke a late tie with a 15-footer and DeMarre Carroll added two key hoops down the stretch to lift host Brooklyn past Orlando. The fourth period featured four



BROOKLYN: Allonzo Trier #14 of the New York Knicks shoots the ball against the Houston Rockets on Wednesday at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York. — AFP

lead changes and six ties, the last of which occurred when Jarrett Allen converted a layup with 4:02 to go, creating a 104-all deadlock. Russell gave the Nets a lead they never relinquished with his jumper with 3:37 to go. Nikola Vucevic had a 21-point, game-high 14-rebound double-double for the Magic, who lost for the fourth time in five games.

JAZZ 114, NUGGETS 108

Donovan Mitchell matched his season high of six 3-pointers while scoring 35 points to lead host Utah to a win over Denver. Ricky Rubio recorded 17 points for the Jazz, who

won for the seventh time in their past eight games. Rudy Gobert had 15 points, 10 rebounds and three blocked shots, Jae Crowder also scored 15 points, and Joe Ingles had 14 points and eight assists for Utah. Nikola Jokic registered 28 points and matched his career high of 21 rebounds, and Will Barton contributed 22 points and nine rebounds off the bench for the Nuggets, who lost for just the fourth time in their past 14 games. Gary Harris tallied 16 points, Trey Lyles added 12 and Monte Morris scored 10 for Denver, which dropped its eighth straight game in Salt Lake City. — Reuters

W I captain skips Pakistan tour over security concerns

ST JOHN'S: West Indies women's captain Stafanie Taylor will miss her team's three-match T20 international series in Pakistan which starts later this month over security concerns, Cricket West Indies (CWI) announced yesterday. The 2016 World Twenty20 champions are set to play games in Karachi on January 31, February 1 and February 3.

But all-rounder Taylor, one of the biggest stars in the women's game, will only join the squad for the following one-day international series in the United Arab Emirates. "Following the detailed security plan from the PCB and the

independent security assessment...Stafanie Taylor has opted out of touring Pakistan," the CWI confirmed.

Only a handful of international cricket matches have been played in Pakistan since an attack on the Sri Lankan men's team bus in Lahore in 2009 which killed six police officers and two civilians and injured six members of the team.

Zimbabwe played five games at Lahore in 2015, while Sri Lanka returned to the country for the first time since the attack in 2017 as efforts have increased to return regular internationals to Pakistan. "This tour is a further major step for our friends at the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to bring their cricket back home, and we are pleased that our players and support staff have recognised this and agreed to play the T20Is in Pakistan," CWI chief executive Johnny Grave said.

Merissa Aguilera will take over as skipper from Taylor for the T20s as the West Indies look to bounce back from their semi-final loss on home soil to Australia in the World Twenty20 last November. — AFP

Timeless Nadal crushes another youth rebellion

MELBOURNE: No tennis for four months, no problem for Rafa Nadal. Only weeks after worrying that his Australian Open might be in jeopardy, the Spaniard charged into his fifth Melbourne final with a 6-2 6-4 6-0 demolition of 20-year-old Stefanos Tsitsipas yesterday.

Nadal has waged near-constant war with his body over the course of his career, winning and losing his share of battles with an injury count that nearly dwarfs his 17 Grand Slam trophies. He played no matches after retiring from last year's US Open semi-finals with a knee problem but the hurt continued with an abdominal strain and surgery on his ankle surgery which soured the end of his 2018 season.

A thigh issue then forced him to pull out of the Brisbane International earlier this month, leaving him doubtful and bereft of match fitness when he arrived at the first major of 2019.

However, after six matches in Melbourne, Nadal has not dropped a set, and is back to his free-wheeling, forehand-whipping best, as Tsitsipas found in a harrowing one hour and 46 minutes.

"I was a little bit worried, of course, because there has been issue after issue," 2009 champion Nadal told reporters of his nervous tournament lead-up. "I was worried about having another issue. But in terms of tennis, I know I was playing well.

"Then, of course, you have to compete. After four, five months without action at all, then of

course you know that you can come here and anything can happen, no? "It's not easy to be back after four months, five months, and play the way I am playing.

"Of course, I didn't expect that at all." Tsitsipas, Greece's first Grand Slam semi-finalist and the man who toppled double defending champion Roger Federer, was also surprised by the Spaniard, who will play either top seed Novak Djokovic or Frenchman Lucas Pouille for the title.

The Greek was broken in the third game and another five times for the match as a marauding Nadal bounded around the court like a hyperactive teenager, instead of a banged-up 32-year-old with a history of health insurance claims.

Eighteen years after turning professional, Nadal continues to add new tricks and he credited his remodelled serve for allowing him to be more aggressive against Tsitsipas and the other young pretenders he smashed in straight sets.

"I can't play like Roger (Federer) when I don't have the serve of Roger," said Nadal, who crushed American 21-year-old Frances Tiafoe in the previous round. "But today I'm serving better. That's why I'm able to create more winners on the first ball."

With a second Melbourne title on Sunday, Nadal can become just the third man to win all the Grand Slams twice after Australians Rod Laver and Roy Emerson. It would re-open the

past he went on to win the title. But first he needs to get past Pouille. "I'm looking forward for a battle. Obviously it's his first semi-finals at a slam, but he has won against Nadal in New York some years ago, and he's made a couple advances at the big tournaments," said Djokovic of the 24-year-old Frenchman.

"He's not afraid to play his best at the biggest stage in sports. So I expect him to come out, you know, be very confident as he always is." Djokovic had an early night in his quarter-final when eighth seed Kei Nishikori quit with a thigh injury after 51 minutes on Wednesday.

Pouille, who had never won a match at Melbourne Park before this year in five previous appearances, spent over three hours in beating 16th seed Milos Raonic in four sets. He credited coach Amelie Mauresmo for his new-found confidence after a torrid start to the year when he lost four singles matches in a row at the Hopman Cup and in Sydney.

"I think she's bringing a lot of confidence to my game, to my personality, to my state of mind," he said of the Frenchwoman, who won the Australian Open in 2006. Pouille recruited double Grand Slam title winner Mauresmo to his team in the off-season after a splitting with long-time coach Emmanuel Planque.

"As I said at the beginning, the goal is not to reach the final, the semi-final, the goal is to improve my tennis, to put into a match what I work on during practice," he said. "That gives me less pressure. I'm just trying to focus on my game, not on the consequences and the results." — AFP

Djokovic faces practice pal Pouille for place in final

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic says it will be odd to face practice partner Lucas Pouille in the Australian Open semi-final today, as the world number one continues his quest for a record seventh title.

Top seed Djokovic will be stepping out on Rod Laver Arena in his 34th Grand Slam semi-final, while 28th seed Pouille has never experienced one before. The Serbian world number one said they know each other well but have never played a competitive match.

"It's funny that we're going to play first time against each other," the 14-times Grand Slam winner told reporters. "We've practised many times. We've known each other obviously for a long time. Here we go. We'll see. It's the semi-finals."

Djokovic, 31, can claim the outright record for Australian Open wins ahead of six-time title holders Roger Federer and Roy Emerson if he lifts the Norman Brookes trophy on Sunday against either Rafael Nadal or Stefanos Tsitsipas.

He has history on his side—every time he has reached the Melbourne semi-finals in the



MELBOURNE: Spain's Rafael Nadal hits a return against Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas during their men's singles semi-final match on day 11 of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

debate about the greatest men's player of all-time, even with Federer on 20 Grand Slam titles.

"The results say during my career I did a lot of things very well," said Nadal. "Today I have

to adapt my game to the new time and to my age, that's all. "That's the only reason why at this moment I am still here competing at a high level." — Reuters

Osaka to battle Kvitova for Open title, top ranking

MELBOURNE: Japanese star Naomi Osaka stormed into the Australian Open final yesterday to set up a battle with Czech comeback queen Petra Kvitova for the Melbourne Park crown and world number one ranking.

The 21-year-old outgunned seventh seed Karolina Pliskova 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 to reach her second successive Grand Slam decider after a breakthrough triumph over Serena Williams at last year's US Open.

Osaka took the first set then held off a barnstorming comeback by Pliskova, who survived four set points to eliminate Williams on Wednesday but could not manage another miracle turnaround less than 24 hours later.

"I expected it, I expected a really hard battle," Osaka said of Pliskova's attempted return from a set and a break down to extend a 10-match winning streak. Fourth seed Osaka admitted the never-say-die Czech rattled her but she drew on her experience winning a major at Flushing Meadows to settle her nerves.

"Somehow I made it. I just told myself to regroup in the third set and try as hard as I could no matter what, and I managed to win." Osaka is seen as the leader of a new generation of stars but victory in her maiden Slam was overshadowed by Williams' raging rows with the umpire in the final at Flushing Meadows.

Victory on Saturday would make her the first woman since Williams in 2015 to win the US and Australian Opens back to back, burnishing her Grand Slam credentials and confirming her superstar status.

The roof of Rod Laver Arena was closed amid sweltering temperatures approaching 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) and Pliskova believed it gave Osaka an edge. "The conditions with the roof closed were perfect for her," she said. "It wasn't bad for me but maybe she just loved it a little bit more. "It was tough. Maybe a couple of points there would have been different."

Standing between Osaka and the Australian title is another Czech opponent Kvitova who is on an even better winning run than Pliskova, with 11 straight matches. The winner of the final will become the new world number one, replacing Romania's Simona Halep.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Kvitova, 28, also has a wealth of experience to draw on and it proved telling as she raced past unheralded American Danielle Collins in the other semi-final. Seeded eight, Kvitova defeated Collins, who had a dream tournament debut to reach the final four, 7-6 (7/2), 6-0 after the closure of the centre court roof gave her a boost.

Collins was matching Kvitova until play was interrupted late in the first set to shut the roof and the Czech said she was struggling until then to find her best form. Reaching the final is the highlight of what Kvitova calls her "second career", after she returned following a terrifying attack in her home in the Czech Republic in late 2016. A burglar slashed her racquet hand, sidelining her for almost six months and causing permanent nerve damage. —AFP

Sports

Barcelona left with mountain to climb after cup defeat by Sevilla

SEVILLE: Barcelona's hopes of winning a fifth consecutive Copa del Rey were dented on Wednesday as they were beaten 2-0 by Sevilla in the first leg of the quarter-finals. Lionel Messi was rested and Luis Suarez left on the bench as Kevin-Prince Boateng made his debut for Barca in a match that Sevilla might even have been disappointed not to win by more.

Even so, Pablo Sarabia and Wissam Ben Yedder each scored in the second half at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan to leave their opponents facing an uphill task if they are to rescue next week's second leg.

"We played a great game, it's a shame it doesn't settle the tie," said Sevilla coach Pablo Machin. "In Barcelona, anything can happen. They have turned around bigger defeats than this." Ben Yedder celebrated his goal by unveiling a t-shirt in support of Argentine striker Emiliano Sala, the player who is feared to have died in a plane crash on his way to join new club Cardiff City in Wales.

"Para mi hermano fuerza E. Sala", the message read, meaning, "For my brother, be strong". Barcelona had thrashed Sevilla 5-0 in last year's final, when Andres Iniesta delivered a masterclass in what was one of his final appearances for the club.

Winning a domestic double, however, did little to ease the disappointment of crashing out of the Champions League and Ernesto Valverde is clearly keener to rotate in the Copa del Rey this season. Messi and Sergio Busquets were left out

completely while Luis Suarez, Philippe Coutinho and Jordi Alba all started on the bench, only to come on as substitutes in the second half. "I thought it was for the best," Valverde said. "But when you make changes you take risks."

Boateng, who has joined on a six-month loan deal from Sassuolo, was signed to spare Suarez nights like these and he did little particularly wrong, or spectacular, before being replaced after 63 minutes.

Barca's biggest signing of the transfer window was announced three and a half hours before kick-off, a 75-million euro deal for Frenkie de Jong to join from Ajax in the summer. "He is an exciting signing for the club," Valverde said. "He is for both the future and the present."

They could have done with some of the 21-year-old's craft in the first half, which was high on intensity but low on precision as both sides traded blows but failed to create much of note.

A quick free-kick sent Ben Yedder free and he fooled the sliding Gerard Pique with a dummy only to shoot wide, off-balance. Barca's best early chance fell to the out-of-sorts Malcom but he took the ball too far left after nipping round Juan Soriano and hit the side-netting.

Sevilla had been the better team and their dominance continued after half-time. Just before the hour-mark, they scored, as the lively Quincy Promes did brilliantly down the left and his cross fell to Sarabia at the back post.

Sarabia's drilled the bouncing ball into the far corner, with the offside Ibrahim Amadou darting



SEVILLE: Sevilla's Spanish midfielder Jesus Navas (bottom) fights for the ball with Barcelona's Portuguese defender Nelson Semedo (2R) during the Spanish Copa del Rey (King's Cup) quarter-final first leg football match between Sevilla FC and FC Barcelona at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium in Seville. — AFP

across Jasper Cillessen's line of sight. Barca brought on Suarez and Coutinho, who almost made an instant impact. Suarez's first contribution was to lose the ball and his second was to win it back. Coutinho was given a free shot at goal but fired over.

Sevilla could have made it two but Ever Banega headed over and then they did, as his cross grazed Sergi Roberto on its way to the back post, where Ben Yedder had timed his run perfectly. He slid in to bolster his team's advantage. — AFP

Neymar suffers fresh metatarsal injury in PSG win

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain talisman Neymar has suffered a fresh injury to his right metatarsal, the club said yesterday, marring the holders' advance to the last 16 of the French Cup with a 2-0 win over Strasbourg.

A fractured metatarsal curtailed the Brazilian's last season, and the recurrence comes just three weeks ahead of the first leg of PSG's crunch Champions League clash against Manchester United. The severity of the new injury is not yet known, although Neymar was able to walk off the field unsupported.

"Initial tests carried out revealed a painful re-activation of the injury to the fifth metatarsal," a club statement said yesterday. "The treatment will depend on progress over the coming days," it said, adding all medical options would be considered. Neymar initially tried to continue playing. But he covered his eyes-in tears, according to witnesses-as he was forced off to be replaced by Moussa Diaby just after the hour mark. His early departure was a worrying moment for PSG, with the world's most expensive player having missed the final three months of last season after breaking the same bone.

Each season PSG, which dominates France's domestic league, is judged according to its Champions League results. PSG coach Thomas

Tuchel after the game said: "The doctor is worried. 'Ney' is worried, because it is the same foot, the same place."

"It was a situation where he was fouled three times, one after the other. The referee didn't give anything. He twisted his foot." The PSG coach was also unhappy with suggestions from the Strasbourg players and coach that Neymar had provoked the injury by winding up his opponents. "It's Neymar's style, but don't come and complain when you get kicked," Strasbourg's Anthony Goncalves told broadcaster Eurosport. "He is a great player. I respect him. He can enjoy himself but don't come blubbing afterwards."

Neymar's compatriot and PSG teammate Dani Alves claimed that the referee was too passive, urging officials to "protect these kinds of players, because they're the ones who make people pay to come to the stadium".

Edinson Cavani and Angel di Maria got the goals on a bitterly cold night at the Parc des Princes. Tuchel had left out the ill Kylian Mbappe for this game, with Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting handed a rare start in place of the superstar France forward.

The Cameroon international set up Cavani for the fourth-minute opener, before Di Maria—who had earlier hit the post—finished into the roof of the net 10 minutes from time as PSG stay on track to win the French Cup for the fifth season running.

Before kick-off, fans applauded and chanted the name of Emiliano Sala, the former Nantes striker who is feared dead after the plane he was travelling in disappeared over the Channel Islands on Monday as he was on his way to join his new club Cardiff City. — AFP

'Emi is out there', family and friends hope for Sala miracle

PROGRESO: The returned from Europe on holiday to Progreso, the small town in Argentina where he lived until the age of 16, Emiliano Sala became "Emi" once more, just like in his childhood.

"He wasn't Sala the player, he was Emi. He was one more, he was riding a bike, like when he was a boy," Diego Solis, a former coach to Sala at San Martin in his teenage years, tells AFP. Sala, missing since Monday after boarding a plane in France to head to Wales to link up with his new club Cardiff City in the Premier League, "went with his teammates to the pitch, with a ball, to run, to the bowling alley," Solis recalls with a certain sadness.

In Progreso, a town of 3,000 residents in the province of Santa Fe, in northern Argentina, where Sala was known by everyone, family and friends are not yet ready to accept the worst. "We still cannot take in the facts of what happened to him, I still have hope on my part," Solis bravely maintains, daring to imagine a happy outcome to a seemingly tragic ordeal. "For me, 'Emi' is out there, he will appear

soon and come out on a pitch in the Premier League," Solis hopes. After excelling in French football with Nantes, the 28-year-old forward signed a contract on Saturday with Cardiff in a club record deal worth a reported 17 million euros (\$19.3 million).

Sala, who came up against the likes of Neymar and Kylian Mbappe in Ligue 1, had been a selfless striker since his youth, fully committed to the team cause and not purely on the hunt for goals. "He was caring, he wasn't stubborn, he played for the team, he wasn't bothered if he had to give it to a teammate," recounts Solis, who coached him until Sala moved to Proyecto Crecer, an academy in the town of San Francisco, four hours north of the capital Buenos Aires.

At the academy, which has a partnership with Bordeaux, Sala stood out and a few years later, in 2011, he made the switch to Europe with the six-time French champions. "Many who don't know him are getting to know him now, unfortunately," Solis says regretfully.

Yet none of that appears to matter much in Progreso, where residents are crossing their fingers in the belief that Sala could yet appear alive and well. Sheltered by neighbours and friends, the striker's family is holding out for good news, a wait that is largely consigned to inside the family home. "I would have liked the press not to be here because of what happened, but instead for a call-up to the Argentina national team," says Martin Molteri, a friend of Sala's dating back to when they played together as kids. — AFP

Japan's historic VAR penalty sinks Vietnam at Asian Cup

DUBAI: Ritsu Doan scored the Asian Cup's first penalty awarded through the video assistant referee (VAR) as Japan beat Vietnam 1-0 to reach the Asian Cup semi-finals yesterday. As VAR made an eventful Asian Cup debut, Maya Yoshida had a headed goal ruled out on review before Doan was adjudged to have been fouled in the box by B.T. Dung.

The Dutch-based midfielder rolled in the penalty on 57 minutes for a deserved win for the four-time champions, who were repeatedly denied by inspired goalkeeper Dang Van Lam.

Hajime Moriyasu's Blue Samurai will now play either China or Iran in the semis as they bid for a record-extending fifth title, and their first since 2011. Lam saved brilliantly from Takehiro Tomiyasu's header and tipped Takumi Minamino's point-blank shot over the bar in an engrossing first half where VAR intervened after 24 minutes.

UAE referee Mohammed Abdulla Hassan blew for Yoshida's goal from a corner before replays showed that the ball came off the Southampton defender's arm. Lam denied Wataru Endo early in the second half before VAR had another say, this time in Japan's favour when Doan went down under Dung's challenge and replays showed contact.

As Vietnam strived to hit back, Phong Hong Duy went close with a shot from distance and Lam kept them in it with another miraculous stop, this time from Minamino. But there was no coming back for the Southeast Asian champions, whose only other foray to the quarter-finals was in 2007 when they lost to eventual winners Iraq.

VAR is being used for the first time at the Asian Cup from the quarter-finals onwards. China are playing Iran later before South Korea face Qatar and UAE play holders Australia today. — AFP



DUBAI: Japan's defender Wataru Endo (R) dribbles past Vietnam's defender Duy Manh Do (C) during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup quarter-final football match between Vietnam and Japan at the Al-Maktoum Stadium in Dubai yesterday. — AFP

Refugee footballer held in Thailand 'losing hope'

LONDON: A footballer with refugee status who has been detained in Thailand for nearly two months over his alleged role in Bahrain's Arab Spring protests is "losing hope", according to a global players' union.

Hakeem Alaraibi, 25, who played for the gulf state's national youth team, fled his homeland and was granted asylum in Australia where he plays semi-professionally for the second-tier team Pascoe Vale FC in Melbourne.

He was detained entering Thailand for a vacation and held "with a substantial number of other detainees... in very trying conditions", Brendan Schwab, executive director of the World Players' Association (WPA), told AFP in London.

"Hakeem is now at a stage where he's losing hope," said Schwab, whose Swiss-based union represents 85,000 players across professional sport through more than 100 associations in over 60 countries. Schwab also urged FIFA's Bahraini senior vice-president Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa to "use the power of his office" to win Alaraibi's release, warning that failure to do so would be "a fundamental breach of his duties".

Bahraini authorities sentenced Alaraibi to 10 years in prison for allegedly helping protesters burn down a police station during demonstrations that swept the Gulf state in 2012.

The footballer, who played for the country's youth team in qualifying games for the Olympics, denied the charges, noting he was playing in a match at the time. Alaraibi managed to flee Bahrain in 2013 while he was out on bail. He was detained on arrival in Bangkok on November 27 for a holiday with his wife. The Australian govern-

ment, human rights groups and FIFA have all called for Alaraibi's release, while Interpol has faced criticism for initially issuing the warrant for his arrest, which it later withdrew.

The WPA believes Shaikh Salman—who is head of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and facing a re-election contest for that post in April—must do more to secure his freedom.

Alaraibi had spoken out against the FIFA number two in 2016 when Sheikh Salman ran unsuccessfully to be its president.

"Being a member of the Bahraini ruling family he's uniquely positioned to demonstrate that he is someone who deserves to hold high office in the game," Schwab said. "It's been nearly two months—the (AFC) has not even issued a statement as to what it thinks should occur. "Inactivity in the next week or two unequivocally in our view makes his position untenable."

Schwab noted the case is nearing a pivotal point with Thai law requiring Bahrain to submit a formal extradition request by February 8.

Alaraibi's plight has attracted global coverage—with the hashtag #SaveHakeem gaining traction—and high-profile supporters, including Australian Hollywood actor Anthony LaPaglia.

Former Australia football captain Craig Foster visited Alaraibi in prison on Tuesday.

Australia's Foreign Minister Marise Payne has also raised the case with Thai authorities, including during a visit to the country earlier this month.

FIFA repeated an appeal to Thai authorities earlier this month for the player's release.

But the WPA, which pressured FIFA to draw up a formal human rights policy in 2017, wants the world footballing body to now uphold its vow to "strive to protect" all such rights globally.

Schwab said the union will file a formal complaint with FIFA's ethics committee if it fails to act more forcefully. "What we need to occur is for people who hold positions of power within the sports movement to carry out their responsibilities," he added. — AFP

FA Cup heavyweights Arsenal, United kick off fourth round

LONDON: As FA Cup ties go they do not come any bigger than Arsenal against Manchester United and the two most successful clubs in the competition's history kick off a weekend of fourth-round action at The Emirates today.

The record books are littered with epic clashes between the clubs with Ryan Giggs's bare-chested celebration of a magnificent solo winner in the 1999 semi-final replay one of the abiding FA Cup memories. That clash came at a time when United and Arsenal were the dominant forces in English football as rival managers Alex Ferguson and Arsene Wenger battled for supremacy.

Twenty years later the landscape has changed with both clubs having fallen down the Premier League pecking order and the FA Cup struggling to retain its magic.

The spiteful edge that often accompanied their duels has also disappeared but Friday's meeting in north London will need no hyping as 12-times winners United, rejuvenated under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, seek an eighth successive victory since their former striker was put in temporary charge last month.

United's burst of form under the Norwegian has pushed them back into contention for a top-four finish and they are in sixth place level on points with Arsenal and just three points behind fourth-placed Chelsea, the Cup holders.

Arsenal top the list of FA Cup wins with 13 and, after some stumbles under new manager Unai Emery in the past month, returned to form with a convincing league win over visiting Chelsea last weekend. Their most recent triumph, in 2017, saw Alexis Sanchez score in the Wembley final against Chelsea, but the Chilean could well line up against the

Gunners on Friday having swapped London for Manchester last January—a deal which saw Henrikh Mkhitaryan move in the opposite direction.

Mkhitaryan will not be involved as he recovers from an injury while Arsenal are also without full back Hector Bellerin who ruptured cruciate knee ligaments in Saturday's win over Chelsea and is sidelined for the season. United will likely adopt the same attacking approach that has been a feature of Solskjaer's unbeaten time in charge—so a dour stalemate is unlikely. Holders Chelsea host Sheffield Wednesday on Sunday, while Manchester City face Burnley in one of three all-Premier League clashes—the others being Newcastle United at home to Watford and injury-hit Tottenham Hotspur at Crystal Palace. While the outstanding tie of the round at The Emirates is first on the schedule, the weekend offers plenty of scope for the sort of shocks that were served up in the third round.

Third-tier AFC Wimbledon host Premier League West Ham United in a London derby, second-tier Millwall welcome Everton and third-tier Shrewsbury Town are at home to top flight Wolverhampton Wanderers. Accrington Stanley's home tie against Frank Lampard's Derby County also looks enticing. The draw was not especially kind to the sides that injected some old-fashioned Cup romance into the previous round. Barnet, the sole survivors from outside the top four divisions after their win over Sheffield United, have a home tie against second-tier Brentford. Newport County, who knocked out Leicester City, visit Championship outfit Middlesbrough, while fellow fourth-tier side Oldham Athletic travel to Doncaster Rovers of the third-tier. — Reuters

MELBOURNE: Japan's Naomi Osaka celebrates her victory against Czech Republic's Karolina Pliskova during their women's singles semi-final match on day 11 of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP



Osaka to battle Kvitova for Open title, top ranking

See Page 45