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# Heavy trucks brazenly flout driving ban on main roads

## Court orders MoI to pay compensation over vehicle impoundment

### MP sentenced to 7 years for 'tricking' wife

**KUWAIT:** The appeals court yesterday sentenced opposition MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei to seven years in jail for failing to tell his wife he divorced her and continuing to have sexual relations with her, her lawyer said. Tabtabaei, an Islamist lawmaker who is currently outside Kuwait, already faces a 42-month jail term handed down in July in another case for storming the parliament and assaulting police. The appeals court yesterday upheld a 2018 verdict finding him guilty of adultery, said the lawyer, Nasser Al-Otaibi, adding the ruling was not political.



Waleed Al-Tabtabaei

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By Nawara Fattahova and A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Although the traffic law bans heavy trucks, trailers and other heavy vehicles from driving on main and side roads till the Seventh Ring Road during certain times of the day, motorists have noticed many such trucks on the streets during the ban periods. Their woes have been compounded since Arab schools and Kuwait University colleges reopened on Sunday, leading to heavy gridlock on most roads and highways.

Head of the media security department at the interior ministry Lt Col Nasser Buslaib told Kuwait Times that the hours of the truck ban are still the same and haven't changed. "Truck drivers are obliged to respect the ban, otherwise they will be penalized," he said. "Many police patrols on the main roads are monitoring the situation, especially during the rush hours. The ban timings vary according to the roads," he added.

All heavy trucks, tractor trailers and heavy vehicles are not allowed to drive inside Kuwait City, Hawally and Salmiya from 6:30 am to 3:00 pm and again

from 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm. This means that no heavy trucks should be on the Third and Fourth Ring Roads and other inner ring roads or any other highways, roads or byways during the abovementioned times.

The truck ban is also on these other main highways: From the intersection of Fahaeel Expressway starting from the Sixth Ring Road (Masayel intersection) all the way to Sulaibiya Road and Sabah Al-Nasser Bridge (Kabd Road). Also Sulaibiya Road between the Fifth and Sixth Ring Roads and the Fifth Ring Road till its intersection with Doha Connection and to the north till it meets the main Jahra Road. Heavy trucks cannot drive on these roads from 6:30 am to 9:00 am and again from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm.

Meanwhile, the administrative court yesterday annulled interior ministry decision 1293/2017 and clauses 29 and 27 added to article 207 of the traffic code pertaining impounding vehicles for two months for not wearing seatbelts and using mobile phones while driving. The court also ordered compensating KD 500 to the citizen who had filed the case.



KUWAIT: A truck and cars are seen on a road in this file photo. Image used for illustrative purposes only. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

The citizen's lawyer Khaled Al-Shemmari stressed he was fully confident of winning the case because the resolution was illegal. He also called for more studies of laws before passing them.

Notably, the interior ministry had rescinded the decision to impound vehi-

cles found in violation of traffic regulations pending amendments to traffic laws in Dec 2017, barely a month after enforcing it. The move came after scores of vehicles were impounded, leading to outrage from motorists and lawmakers, lawsuits and even a divorce.

### News in brief

#### 3-day national holidays

**KUWAIT:** The Cabinet announced on its Twitter account yesterday that Sunday (Feb 24) will be an official holiday, and work will resume on Wednesday (Feb 27). The country celebrates its National Day on Feb 25 and Liberation Day on Feb 26. Feb 24 is a day off as it falls between two holidays. — KUNA

#### Saudis hope to attract \$425bn

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia yesterday launched an ambitious program which it hopes will attract \$427 billion in investments in the industry and logistics sectors. To kick-start the 12-year program, the kingdom announced the signing of 37 agreements worth \$55 billion with foreign and local investors. Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said the investments would be made in the fields of industry, mining, energy and logistics. The aim is to create 1.6 million new jobs, boost non-oil exports by \$267 billion a year and add as much as \$320 billion to the gross domestic product, almost 40 percent of last year's GDP, he said. — AFP

#### Dubai airport retains top spot

**DUBAI:** Dubai International Airport said it retained its top global spot in 2018 after serving the largest number of passengers for the fifth year in a row despite falling short of its target. Traffic at the major transit hub rose slightly to 89.15 million passengers, up just over 1.0 percent on the number who used the airport in 2017, it said in a statement. Indians retained the top position with 12.28 million passengers last year and Saudis came in second with 6.47 million travellers, overtaking Britons. — AFP

#### Bahrain upholds life sentences

**DUBAI:** Bahrain's highest court upheld life sentences against three opposition leaders on charges of spying for Qatar, state news agency BNA and a rights group said yesterday. Al-Wafaq secretary-general Sheikh Ali Salman and two senior Wafaq leaders Sheikh Hassan Sultan and Ali Alaswad were sentenced to life imprisonment in November, overturning a previous acquittal. Wafaq said in a statement the ruling was made for "political reasons". — Reuters

#### Egypt pardons jailed Briton

**CAIRO:** A British woman convicted in Egypt of smuggling painkillers has been granted early release after spending more than a year in prison, an Egyptian security source said yesterday. Laura Plummer, 34, was arrested at Hurghada airport and sentenced in Dec 2017 to three years in prison after customs officers found almost 300 Tramadol pills in her luggage. — AFP

## Macron presses Sisi on respect for 'freedoms'

**CAIRO:** French President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday that he told his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi during a trip to Cairo that stability and security could not be separated from human rights. Macron, received with pomp during a three-day state visit, has been under pressure from non-governmental organizations to take a firmer stance after stating in 2017 that he would not lecture Sisi on rights.

"Real stability depends on the vitality of society. Stability and lasting peace go hand in hand with respect for individual freedoms, dignity of everyone and the

rule of law, and the search for stability cannot be dissociated from the question of human rights," he said during a joint news conference with Sisi that was dominated by the subject of rights. "Things haven't gone in the right direction since 2017 - bloggers, journalists are in prison and because of that Egypt's image can find itself suffering," Macron said.

Sisi told reporters that rights should be taken in the context of regional turbulence and the fight against terrorism. "We're not like Europe, nor the United States, we are a country or a region that has its own characteristics," he said. "Egypt does not advance through bloggers. It advances through the work, effort and perseverance of its sons."

Sisi ousted former President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013 and was elected as president a year later, presiding over

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CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (right) shakes hands with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron after their joint press conference yesterday. — AFP



This handout photo taken in 2018 shows Trevor the duck on the Pacific island of Niue. — AFP

## 'Loneliest duck' Trevor dies on tiny Niue island

**SYDNEY:** A lone duck named Trevor that lived on the tiny Pacific island nation of Niue has died, officials say, sparking an outpouring of grief from as far away as New Zealand. The celebrity mallard found fame last year after a visiting journalist from New Zealand discovered that his makeshift home, near a puddle, was used for directions. But his 15 seconds of fame were tragically cut short when he was "seen dead in the bush after being attacked by dogs" this weekend, a Facebook page dedicated to Trevor said.

The chief executive of the Niue

Chamber of Commerce, Rae Findlay, said it was a "sad time for Niue". "He captivated the locals, of which there are only 1,600 in Niue, and the 9,000 visitors to Niue each year," Findlay told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Sunday. "He will definitely be missed, he captured many hearts and even the rooster, the chicken and the weka were looking a little forlorn today wandering around the near-dry puddle."

Niue, a tiny speck of land, lies around 2,400 km northeast of New Zealand. One of the world's biggest coral islands, Niue does not have natural ponds or wetlands, so when Trevor turned up a year ago he was believed to have blown in from New Zealand with a storm. He quickly settled down in a large puddle near a road that the Niue fire service later topped up with water, the ABC reported.

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## Qatar blockade hits Asian Cup

**ABU DHABI:** When the United Arab Emirates take on bitter Gulf rivals Qatar in the Asian Cup semi-finals today, good luck spotting the Qatari fans. Not only are Qataris largely barred from UAE due to the ongoing Gulf blockade, but the hosts have gone to great lengths to make sure no pro-Qatar supporters sneak in. In a telling turn of events, the Abu Dhabi Sports Council has snapped up all remaining tickets to give away to "loyal UAE fans", it said in a tweet.

Long queues formed as supporters waited for their free tickets, but only people holding Emirati identification

were eligible. The move appears aimed at preventing a repeat of Qatar's last-16 game with Saudi Arabia, the UAE's staunch ally, when Omani fans turned up to cheer on the Maroons. It also highlights seething tensions between Qatar and UAE, one of a group of countries enforcing a diplomatic and transport blockade of the 2022 World Cup hosts for allegedly supporting terrorism - a claim Doha denies.

The result is that Abu Dhabi's 42,000-capacity Mohamed Bin Zayed stadium will be not only a sellout, but also nearly unanimously behind Alberto Zaccheroni's white-clad team. Losing to Qatar in a home semifinal would be embarrassing for UAE, and it could've got even worse if Qatari allies Iran, who

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ABU DHABI: Qatar's midfielder Ali Yahya celebrates with the national flag after an Asian Cup quarterfinal match between South Korea and Qatar at Zayed Sports City on Jan 25, 2019. — AFP

# Amir to attend, patronize Kuwaiti flag hoisting ceremony today

Amir receives Ooredoo chief; Crown Prince meets Kuwaiti figures



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ooredoo's CEO and General Manager Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdullah Al-Thani and his accompanying delegation. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Dr Mubarak Al-Ajmi.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Dr Abdulaziz Al-Roumi.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is set to attend and patronize a ceremony to hoist the Kuwaiti flag at Bayan Palace today. The ceremony, which starts at 10:00 am, is expected to see the attendance of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and senior state officials.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir met yesterday with Ooredoo's CEO and General Manager Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdullah Al-Thani and his accompanying delegation. The encounter was attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince met with Kuwaiti Ambassador to the UK Khaled Al-Duwaisan. His Highness the Crown Prince then received Dr Mubarak Al-Ajmi who gave His Highness a copy of his PhD on political philosophy. Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad also received Dr Abdulaziz Al-Roumi who handed him a copy of

his PhD on the role of regulatory transparency in reducing administrative and financial corruption at Kuwaiti cooperative societies. High Highness the Crown Prince received Dr Afrah Ali who gave him a copy of her PhD on the translation of Kuwaiti Constitution into Spanish. His Highness the Crown Prince thanked them and wished more success.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent congratulatory cables to Kuwait's karate team for winning a gold medal in a recent tournament in Paris. In the cables, His Highness the Amir congratulated Karatekas Salman Al-Mousawi, Mohammad Ahmad and Mohammad Al-Mousawi on their achievement in the 1-Premier League tournament, wishing them further development in their sports career. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent similar cables to the winners. —KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Dr Afrah Ali.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Kuwaiti Ambassador to the UK Khaled Al-Duwaisan.



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## Local

# Kuwait celebrates thirteenth anniversary of Amir's reign

## Amir's wisdom stems from a decades-long commitment to serving in various spheres

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait celebrates the 13-year anniversary of the ascendency of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah today as he continues his responsible leadership of this nation and its people. It all started when His Highness Sheikh Sabah stood in parliament to be sworn in as the 15th Amir and ruler of Kuwait amid huge local support from the public and local officials.

The fourth child of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, his wisdom and intelligence stems from a decades-long commitment to serving in the social, political and diplomatic spheres following extensive travel and tutelage at Al-Mubarakiya School; Kuwait's first formal educational establishment named after the late ruler, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Sheikh Sabah's initial foray into public office came in 1954, when he was appointed member in the supreme executive committee tasked with the role of the regulation of government interests and bodies. A year later, he was handed the role of director of the department of social and labor affairs, where he was instrumental in several factors, namely regulating the relationship between employer and employee.

Upon the expansion of his role to include director of the publications department in 1957, Sheikh Sabah demonstrated a commitment to reviving old books and manuscripts and tasked a committee with writing the first book detailing the history of Kuwait. Kuwaiti journalism, regarded one of the most transparent in the Middle East, continues to thrive thanks to His Highness, who was behind the publications' law, which remains in use until this day, albeit some minor amendments.

As Kuwait declared its independence in 1961, he was appointed member of the Kuwaiti constitution's founding council. This was followed by his addition to the first official cabinet, where he assumed the role of minister of guidance in 1962. Only one year later, he began a journey as minister of foreign affairs, where he remained the top man responsible for delivering Kuwait's diplomacy to the world for 40 years.

On May 11, 1963, during the first year of Sheikh Sabah's time in office as minister, Kuwait became a member of the United Nations. Diplomatically, he was involved in Kuwait-hosted talks in 1966 between warring parties in Yemen, Egypt and Saudi Arabia aimed at putting an end to the Yemeni civil war. When the relationship deteriorated between South and North Yemen, with both involved in border clashes, Sheikh Sabah visited the two countries (at the time) helping forge a peace agreement in 1972. He also successfully mediated an agreement of diplomatic principles between Oman and South Yemen, which was followed by a joint announcement of the resumption of diplomatic relations from Kuwait in 1984.

Throughout his tenure, the then minister assumed a balanced foreign policy that enabled Kuwait to overcome some difficult periods such as the Iraq-Iran War of 1980 and its repercussions on the internal and external security and stability of his country. He also forged a strong relationship with countries around the world, particularly the five permanent member nations



**KUWAIT:** In this file photo, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah swears in as the 15th Amir and ruler of Kuwait at the National Assembly. —KUNA

of the United Nations Security Council. These strong ties culminated in the emergence of a 35-nation coalition that helped liberate Kuwait from invasion by Iraq in 1991 as a result of a Security Council resolution that paved the way for a military offensive against the occupying forces.

Alongside his role as foreign minister, Sheikh Sabah was handed numerous roles due to his wise policies and diplomatic proficiency, namely acting information minister (1971-1975), deputy prime minister (1978), acting information minister (1982), deputy prime minister (1985-1992) and first deputy prime minister and foreign minister (1992). In 2001, he was tasked with forming the Kuwaiti cabinet in the place of the then Crown Prince and Prime Minister the late Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah, who was suffering from a medical condition.

Two years later, Sheikh Sabah became prime minister upon Amiri decree. It is during his time as prime minister that his ability to guide domestic policy came to light. The prime minister adopted a comprehensive development-based vision focused particularly on economic growth through support of the private sector and entrepreneurship amongst the youth. On the economic spectrum, a tour in Asia, including China, Japan, South Korea and Singapore, at the head of a business delegation in 2004 resulted in the joint signature of 10 mega deals and projects. He remained premier until 2006 when a cabinet session passed a motion appointing him Amir of Kuwait.

Over the 12 years under his reign, Kuwait has witnessed widespread development concentrated on a number of mega projects like Sabah Al-Ahmad Marine City - the first fully-developed by the private sector. His

Highness the Amir made comments urging nationals to stand together in the face of challenges and threats, namely the June 2015 terrorist attack on Al-Sadeq Mosque, which martyred 26 people and resulted in the injury of 200 more. Shortly after the suicide attack, His Highness took it upon himself to visit the location in person unannounced, where he uttered the renowned paternal words: "Those are my children". While leading thousands of Kuwaitis who came to attend the mass funerals for the victims, His Highness urged "the Kuwaiti family to stand together united through troubles and strife in tackling violence and fundamentalist rhetoric that aims to undermine the other."

On the scale of his foreign policy, Kuwait over recent years had pioneering role in the global humanitarian field thanks to his wise policies. Kuwait hosted three pledging conferences for international governments and organizations, co-chaired a similar event in London and attended another European Union-organized event in Brussels. The Kuwait-hosted donors conferences raised a total of \$7.5 billion from attending nations, while Kuwait handed out a total \$1.6 billion across all five gatherings as support for the victims of the Syrian conflict.

The endeavors overseen by His Highness earned him the unprecedented title of 'Humanitarian Leader' and Kuwait, the title of 'Humanitarian Centre', both granted by the United Nations. In February 2018, Kuwait also hosted a pledging conference dedicated to efforts aimed at rebuilding cities and towns in Iraq reclaimed from the so-called Islamic State group. These efforts have been commended worldwide and have transformed from a unilateral effort to a global initiative, receiving the full backing of the United States and the European Union. —KUNA

Al-Ghanem extended his 'heartiest congratulations' to His Highness the Amir. "Alongside the Kuwaiti people, I sincerely congratulate you on the 13th anniversary of your ascendency," Ghanem wrote in a letter he sent to His Highness the Amir. He said Kuwait's parliamentarians are 'infinitely proud' of His Highness the Amir's astute leadership, which has helped propel the Gulf state to unprecedented levels of development. "I wish you good health, happiness and success as you lead the nation on the path towards prosperity," Kuwait's chief lawmaker wrote. In response to Ghanem's kind words, His Highness the Amir thanked him for the warm sentiments, wishing the country perpetual growth and wellbeing.

Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received a congratulatory message from His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who said that he is proud of His Highness the Amir's blessed career which saw the establishment of development and renaissance characteristics, together with creditable accomplishments both at home and abroad. He attributed all these achievements to the shrewd leadership of His Highness the Amir, which contributed to achieving national development and fulfilling the nation's hopes and ambitions. He also appreciated His Highness the Amir's great efforts in the alleviation of affected people around the globe, which earned His Highness the Amir the Humanitarian Leader title and Kuwait the Humanitarian Center title, as well as his role in the promotion of culture of peace and tolerance. In return, His Highness the Amir sent His Highness the Amir a letter thanking him for his good wishes and sincere sentiments, and appreciating everyone's efforts to serve the country and achieve national development.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir received a letter of congratulations from His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad congratulated His Highness the Amir on the 13th anniversary of his reign, praying to Allah Almighty to bring back such a precious occasion with grace and blessings. Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad wished His Highness the Amir perpetual good health and well-being, as well as further progress, prosperity, and security to Kuwait under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir.

Furthermore, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad expressed his utmost appreciation and pride of His Highness the Amir's 13-year reign, which was devoted entirely to serving Kuwait and the Kuwaiti people. His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad also renewed his pledge of allegiance to His Highness the Amir, reiterating his keenness on serving the nation and contributing to its development and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir.

In return, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of thanks to His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad,

## Officials heap praises on Amir on joyous occasion



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

**KUWAIT:** Some 13 years after the ascendency of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, officials from across Kuwait's political spectrum made statements yesterday marking the joyous occasion. Kuwaitis from all walks of life share a "very special and transparent" relationship with His Highness the Amir, the Gulf state's top lawmaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said in a statement. Celebrating the reign of His Highness the Amir conjures up the fact that his infinite wisdom makes him a strategic leader and a guarantor of security, Ghanem added. "We as Kuwaitis are cognizant of the herculean efforts His Highness the Amir is exerting to protect the country in a region rife with peril," Kuwait's chief lawmaker went on to say.

His Highness the Amir is among "a special breed of leaders" whose accomplishments speak for themselves, the Deputy Chief of Kuwait's National Guard Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said. He spoke of His Highness the Amir's illustrious political career, in which he proudly devoted himself to the well-being of the nation, citing sincerity and altruism as among his innumerable virtues. His shrewd leadership has propelled His Highness the Amir to global prominence, being the first head of state to be honored by the United Nations, the official pointed out, in reference to his UN-bestowed moniker of 'Humanitarian Leader.'

Offering his congratulations as well, Kuwait's Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri said the anniversary of His Highness the Amir's ascendency is tantamount to a national holiday. As the Kuwaiti flag flutters under the sky to mark the occasion today, Jabri, who is also minister of state for youth affairs, said it was a gesture of gratitude for His Highness the Amir's unwavering resolve to lead the country on a path towards prosperity.

Meanwhile, Chairman and Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij Al-Ibrahim Al-Sabah said that His Highness the Amir is the 'safety valve' for the Arab region during crises and unrest. He added in a press release that His Highness the Amir has reinforced peace virtues in Kuwait, sought by international and regional organizations and countries to be enlightened by the wisdom of His Highness to end conflicts and quell wars. He added that His Highness the Amir will be remembered for playing a great role in readjustment of inter-Arab disputes, reconciliation and bolstering unity among Arab countries.

KUNA's chief stressed that His Highness the Amir's diplomatic efforts and humanitarian initiatives contribute to his great goal to elevate Kuwait's standing and credibility in the international arena, adding that His Highness the Amir spared no effort to show the bright and modern face of Kuwait. "No one denies the great influence exerted by the humanitarian diplomacy that was laid down by His Highness the Amir," he said, referring to UN honoring of His Highness as a 'Humanitarian Leader' and Kuwait as a center of humanitarian action. He praised His Highness the Amir's remarkable contributions to the development and progress of Kuwait, adding that His Highness the Amir exerted all possible efforts in serving Kuwait, and worked very hard to turn it into a more advanced country that would meet the aspirations of its people, and offer them a decent life. Moreover, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij hailed the wise leadership of His Highness, and his keenness on transforming Kuwait into an international financial and commercial center through diversifying the sources of income and exploiting Kuwait's resources, noting to Kuwait 2035 vision, which reflects his keenness on the future of the homeland and its generations.

In the meantime, Ambassador of Armenia to Kuwait Sarmen Baghdasarian said he had been personally following up with the development in the state of Kuwait and the substantial shift on diplomatic relations achieved by His Highness the Amir's efforts. Further, Ambassador Baghdasarian extended his heartiest congratulations, expressing deep appreciation for the opportunity to work in Kuwait and benefit from His Highness the Amir's political experience and diplomatic wisdom.

## Amir receives congratulations from Crown Prince, state officials

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday a letter of congratulations from His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince congratulated His Highness the Amir on the 13th anniversary of his reign. His Highness the Crown Prince also hailed His Highness the Amir's great efforts nationwide, which produced major achievements and successes thanks to His Highness the Amir's farsightedness, political and diplomatic wisdom. His Highness the Crown Prince also prayed to Allah Almighty to bring back such a precious occasion with grace and blessings, wishing His Highness the Amir perpetual good health and well-being. His Highness the Crown Prince also wished Kuwait further progress and prosperity, and long-lasting safety and security under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir the 'Humanitarian Leader.'

In return, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of thanks to His Highness the Crown Prince, expressing his utmost appreciation and gratitude to His Highness the Crown Prince's genuine sentiments and good wishes on the 13th anniversary of His Highness the Amir's reign. His Highness the Amir wished His Highness the Crown Prince perpetual good health and well-being. His Highness the Amir also prayed to Allah Almighty to protect Kuwait and perpetuate the grace of security and safety on the nation, wishing everyone best of luck in serving the country and contributing to elevating its status. His Highness the Amir also prayed to Allah Almighty to bless the Kuwaiti people's efforts toward the country's development, and attain their desired and ambitious goals of further progress and prosperity for the nation.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh received a congratulatory letter from His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Kuwait National Guard's Chairman, marking the 13th anniversary of His Highness the Amir's accession to power. In the letter, Sheikh Salem Al-Ali commended His Highness the Amir's great achievements and sincere efforts over the last 13 years, wishing His Highness good health and well-being. His Highness the Amir replied by thanking Sheikh Salem Al-Ali and the National Guard for their good sentiments and sincere congratulations, wishing the dear nation everlasting security and stability as well as more progress and prosperity.

Also yesterday, Kuwait's top lawmaker Marzouq



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

expressing his sincere appreciation and gratitude to his genuine sentiments and good wishes on the 13th anniversary of His Highness the Amir's reign. His Highness the Amir wished His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad everlasting good health and well-being. His Highness the Amir also prayed to Allah Almighty to protect Kuwait and perpetuate the grace of security and safety on the nation, wishing everyone best of luck in serving the country and contributing to elevating its status. His Highness the Amir also prayed to Allah Almighty to bless the Kuwaiti people's efforts toward the country's development, and attain their desired and ambitious goals of further progress and prosperity for the nation.

Moreover, First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated His Highness the Amir on the 13th anniversary of his ascendency. "I extend my heartiest congratulations to you 13 years after your reign began," the Kuwaiti minister wrote in a letter he sent to His Highness the Amir, saying the whole nation is proud of his 'immeasurable achievements.' The Kuwaiti defense minister went on to wish the nation 'success and development' with His Highness the Amir at the helm. In response to the minister's encouraging words, His Highness the Amir thanked him for the warm sentiments, wishing the country perpetual development and wellbeing. —KUNA

## Local

# 11th International Invention Fair in the Middle East opens in Kuwait

Most important in Middle East, one of the world's top five exhibitions

**KUWAIT:** Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the 11th International Invention Fair in the Middle East (IIFME) kicked off in Kuwait late Sunday. Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah represented His Highness the Amir at the annual event.

In a keynote speech, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah said he was proud to represent His Highness the Amir during the opening of the 11th fair, which was organized by the Kuwait Science Club for years. He regarded it as the most important fair in the Middle East and one of the world's top five exhibitions, drawing representatives of 43 countries, along with GCC invention officials. He urged Kuwaiti young people to capitalize on this year's gathering and to carry on excellence and distinction in order to better serve their own nation under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir.

Then, Chairman of the Kuwait Science Club Talal Jassem Al-Kharafi addressed the event by voicing pleasure to welcome 43 countries to the annual fair. He thanked the participating inventors for hailing Kuwait and His Highness the Amir for patronizing the fair. Meanwhile, US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence R. Silverman said: "I am very pleased to be here as the US ambassador. We like to think that the United States is a center for innovation but what's important this evening and in the coming days is that Kuwait is the center for innovation around the Middle East and especially here. So having the invention fair, the 11th one now, is extremely important."

"I was just speaking with the organizers of this conference and I look forward to hearing about the competitors for the Best Invention and seeing them awarded on Wednesday. But it's not just the people that you are seeing here who brought their inventions but particularly the young audience here in Kuwait and throughout the Middle East to encourage people to be interested in the sciences and to want to bring innovation to Kuwait and the Middle East and throughout the world," he added. "So this is really the message going out to every school in Kuwait (I hope from this conference) and I want to congratulate all the organizers and I want to thank the corporate sponsors and others for pushing this. This is the future of any country. I don't care whether you export oil or you export



Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah delivers a speech.

something else. We all have to diversify our economies and I know that Kuwait is trying to do that, wants to do that and this is part of diversifying the economies, so this is critically important to the future economy of Kuwait," the ambassador noted.

He went on saying: "The last thing I want to say is that we, at the US embassy are working directly with the government of Kuwait, with the Ministry of Information and the National Library to revise legislation that protects what we call Intellectual Property so everything that's created in those rooms, all the inventions, if they create it, they own that idea, they can market that idea, they can commercialize it and not fear that it will be stolen by someone else which is what's very important."

"So we are looking forward, hopefully, in the next couple of months to a strengthening of the laws here, which will not only encourage these young people that I was telling you about who want to innovate and who want to be entrepreneurs but also to encourage further foreign investment in Kuwait as well," he concluded. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah (left) Inaugurates the 11th International Invention Fair in the Middle East. — Amiri Diwan photos



Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah in a group photo with participants.

## Australia, Kuwait keen on bolstering ties: Ambassador

**KUWAIT:** Australia and Kuwait are keen on boosting bilateral relations on all possible domains, said Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Jonathan Gilbert Sunday. During the celebrations of the Australian National Day at the embassy, Ambassador Gilbert said that the two countries have great cooperation within the commercial, educational and food security levels. He added that the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK), which has around 4,000 registered Kuwaiti students, is another indication of the strong relations. On the commercial level, Ambassador Gilbert said that Australia was the suitable partner for Kuwait in the area of food products especially with the increase of agriculture exports. He affirmed that Australia was keen on covering the food security needs of Kuwait for the long term.

Ambassador Gilbert touched on the security and military cooperation between Kuwait and his country, affirming that both countries were keen on peace and security in the region and the world. The diplomat also expressed his pride in Australian troops' participation in



KUWAIT: Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Jonathan Gilbert (left) and Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for the Americas Reem Al-Khaled cut the cake during the celebrations of the Australian National Day at the embassy. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

the 1991 liberation of Kuwait from the Iraq invasion of 1990. Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for the Americas Reem Al-Khaled attended the festivities at the Australian embassy. — KUNA



A general view of the audience.



Ambassador Gilbert and Assistant Foreign Minister Khaled tour an exhibition held on the sidelines of the ceremony.

## Kuwait keen on boosting relations with India: Jarallah

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah lauded strong historic bonds linking Kuwait and India. "The Kuwaiti-Indian relations are deeply-rooted and date back to many decades when Kuwaiti merchants' trips to India to sell their commodities which were a source of income to Kuwaiti people," Jarallah told reporters on the sidelines of his participation in the Indian embassy's celebration of India's National Day on Sunday. This participation shows eagerness on keeping these strong bonds with India, he said. He pointed out that Indians were making up the largest expatriate community in Kuwait.

"They are working with Kuwaitis to develop and upgrade Kuwait," Jarallah said. "We have great relations in all realms." On the political level, he noted that the joint political coordination committee was meeting regularly and the officials of the two countries are paying reciprocal visits to Kuwait and India with an eye to take bilateral relations to new heights. He unveiled that the officials of both countries were working to better regulate contract-



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah (right) and Ambassador of India to Kuwait Jeeva Sagar cut the cake during the Indian embassy's celebration of India's National Day. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

ing with Indian workers and to overcome any impediments in this regard. — KUNA



A general view of people in attendance.



A group photo of guests at the event.

Local

# Minister announces launching online housing application services

## Health ministry recalls Zordyl mouthwash

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Jenan Bushehri announced launching new housing services on the Public Authority for Housing Welfare's website that allows citizens to apply online to obtain housing services. In a press statement, Bushehri said the housing authority had been working on developing e-services and systems to digitalize its services provided to citizens as well as its inter-department transactions. Bushehri added that applicants for housing used to procure

over 13 documents from various government bodies earlier, but interconnection with various government bodies has now made it much easier to get those documents.

### Air quality

Responding to a recent local Arabic daily report bearing the headline "Kuwait's air carcinogenic", which created a state of panic amongst readers, the Environment Public Authority (EPA) strongly denied making any statements including such 'inaccurate' information. EPA stressed that authentic reports about air quality should include accurate

information about the type of pollutants, their concentration and periods of exposure, noting that all such information should be scientifically collected and tested before issuing such reports.

### Mouthwash recalled

The Ministry of Health's assistant under-secretary for medicine and food control Dr Abdullah Al-Bader said a decision was made on suspending and withdrawing all Zordyl mouthwash supplies following a similar decision made in the country of origin, the United Arab Emirates, for not meeting production

specifications. Bader added that the local agent was contacted to withdraw the product from the private sector and prevent its sale pending further instructions. Bader urged consumers to report any complications resulting from the use of this or any other product through: <https://www.moh.gov.kw/Online-services/drug-food-control>.

### Final statements

Rapporteur of the parliamentary budgets and final statement committee Riyadh Al-Adasani said according to audit reports, 24,395 violations had been detected in some

government bodies' final statements for the fiscal year 2017-2018. Adasani added that the 2017-2018 statements showed that there are 13,048 vacant jobs in ministries and other government bodies, in addition to 791 employment violations.

### House deed

The administrative court compelled the Public Authority for Housing Welfare and the real estate registration department at the justice ministry to issue a house deed to a divorced female citizen without consulting her ex-husband.

## Defense Minister arrives in Abu Dhabi

**ABU DHABI:** Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah arrived in Abu Dhabi yesterday with a high ranking delegation for a two-day official visit. Sheikh Nasser was received at the presidential airport in Abu Dhabi by Deputy Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Minister of Presidential Affairs Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Acting Charge d'Affaires at Kuwait Embassy in UAE Abdullah Al-Salem, military attache in the Kuwaiti embassy Brig Gen Yousef Buqambar, and the Kuwaiti diplomatic mission.

The Kuwaiti delegation accompanying Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad included Deputy Chief of General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army Gen Abdullah Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and Assistant of Chief of the General Staff for Information and Plans Authority Major General Mohammad Al-Kandari. It also included Members of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Khalid Al-Mudhaf and Dr Mohammad Al-Abdeljader, Director of the Local Affairs Department in the Office of the Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Lulwa Al-Nemaa, Director of the Office of the Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Hamad Khalid Al-Sabah, and a number of senior ministry officials. — KUNA



ABU DHABI: Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is welcomed upon his arrival to Abu Dhabi yesterday. — KUNA

## Zain platinum sponsor of EG&COMFEST 2019



Hamad Al-Matar and Ahmad Al-Ajeel during the event.



From the event.

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its platinum sponsorship of the Electronic Gaming and Comics Festival 2019 (EG&COMFEST 2019) that was held from 24-26 January at Kuwait International Fair Ground in Mishref. The event, considered the biggest of its kind in Kuwait, witnessed huge crowds of gaming, comics, and pop culture fans.

Zain's sponsorship of the event came in line with its keenness to support and encourage the various efforts and initiatives that offer a unique entertainment and social experience for the youth: society's most vibrant segment. The company is also committed to supporting and empowering young Kuwaiti entrepreneurs who own small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

Zain took part in the event through its own dedicated booth, where it held many exciting competitions for the attending audi-

ences and offered them valuable prizes. Zain also took the opportunity to promote its exclusive Amazon Prime Video offer, through which the company provides its customers with award-winning and popular movies, TV shows, and Prime Originals on its most advanced network.

EG&COMFEST 2019 is considered Kuwait's biggest electronic gaming and comics event, having featured many of the entertainment and gaming industry's biggest brands, including PlayStation Middle East, BANDAI NAMCO Entertainment, FUNKO, ThinkGeek, Entertainment Earth, and many more. The event also hosted many popular international celebrities from the world of gaming and entertainment, where audiences had the chance to meet and greet them. The event witnessed the participation of many Kuwaiti entrepreneurs who own small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) who are

comic and pop culture fans and featured their unique products at the event.

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 national 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: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate officials inspect a building during a recent campaign in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.

## Firemen face many obstacles in Jleeb: KFSD

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Fire Service Directorate's (KFSD) prevention sector carried out a campaign headed by Deputy Director General for Prevention Sector Maj Gen Khalid Abdullah Fahd to inspect buildings and commercial facilities in Farwaniya, in cooperation with Jleeb cleanliness center, carried out several campaigns against encroachments against state property in Jleeb. Director of the department Salem Al-Khraiej said the department extends all support to supervisory departments in the governorate. He said the campaign resulted in removing 10 abandoned cars, in addition to 600 cu m cubic of rubbish.

workshops without licensing, in addition to the lack of firemen's ability to enter such facilities until after obtaining warrants from concerned authorities.

In other news, Kuwait Municipality's public relations department said the department for removing violations in Farwaniya, in cooperation with Jleeb cleanliness center, carried out several campaigns against encroachments against state property in Jleeb. Director of the department Salem Al-Khraiej said the department extends all support to supervisory departments in the governorate. He said the campaign resulted in removing 10 abandoned cars, in addition to 600 cu m cubic of rubbish.

## Development official meets Chinese envoy

**KUWAIT:** The head of the apparatus for developing Silk City and Boubyan Island Faisal Al-Medlej met yesterday with the Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Li Minggang. During the meeting, they discussed the latest developments of the Silk City project and the joint commis-

sion, the apparatus said in a statement. Medlej affirmed Kuwait's interest in promoting cooperative relations between Kuwait and China, while the Chinese ambassador stressed continuing cooperation between both countries, according to the statement. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A sudden dust storm blanketed Kuwait yesterday, accompanied with rains as the country was affected by active southeastern winds with speeds up to 60 kilometers per hour that dropped visibility to less than 1,000 meters in some areas. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## FOR SALE

A plot of land in the Sultanate of Oman in Al-Azaiba, facing Sultan Qaboos Street, near Muscat International Airport.

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**Passed away on 27 January, 2019**

**May his soul Rest in Peace**

# International

TUESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2019



Weeding out jihadists from civilians on Syria front line

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## Evangelicals gain ground in Panama despite pope visit



JOLO: Philippine soldiers walk past the damaged area of a catholic cathedral in Jolo town, sulu province, in southern island of Mindanao yesterday a day after two explosions tore through the cathedral. — AFP

## Islamists suspects in Philippine bombing

### ‘Not all members of Ajang-Ajang group are pro-ISIS’

**MANILA:** Investigators probing the Catholic cathedral bombing that killed 21 people in the Philippines’ restive south said yesterday a group tied to notorious Islamists Abu Sayyaf is the prime suspect. Two explosions tore through the cathedral on the Muslim-majority island of Jolo, killing worshippers at Sunday mass and security forces in an attack claimed by the Islamic State group.

Authorities said the so-called Ajang-Ajang faction is a small band of several dozen that most likely carried out the bombing, the Philippines’ worst in years, in an act of revenge. “Last year their leader was killed. There have been persistent reports that they will retaliate,” regional military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Gerry Besana told AFP. “Yes, we saw them in the CCTV. It was the brother of the leader who was killed,” he said referring to footage from outside the cathedral. “He was seen with two other members of Ajang-Ajang.”

Security forces say the group is composed of relatives of Abu Sayyaf kidnap-for-ransom group members who have been killed in clashes with the government. Abu Sayyaf, which is based on the remote Jolo

island, has been blamed for the Philippines’ deadliest attack, a 2004 ferry bombing in Manila Bay that claimed 116 lives.

#### ‘Revenge group’

“There are high-level law enforcement operations against them (Ajang-Ajang),” said Rommel Banlaoi, chair of the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research. “It evolved into a revenge group.” While Abu Sayyaf have sworn allegiance to Islamic State, that is not necessarily true for the motley members of Ajang-Ajang.

“Not all members of Ajang-Ajang group are pro-ISIS, but all of them are Abu Sayyaf group,” said Banlaoi using another acronym for IS. “It’s not IS-affiliated.” The IS claim, in a formal communique, said two suicide bombers had detonated explosive belts, according to the SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors jihadist activities. But a military report said a second bomb that went off at the cathedral was left in the utility box of a motorcycle in the parking area outside. Police said they believe the explosives were likely

detonated remotely, but did not elaborate. Despite the contradictions, authorities have not ruled out IS involvement. Regardless of who staged the bombing, concern was growing yesterday over the impact it will have on a decades-long push for peace that culminated last week in voters approving expanded Muslim self-rule in the south.

The vote was the result of negotiations started in the 1990s with the nation’s largest rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and will give it considerable power over the so-called Bangsamoro region. “This is a big challenge for the Bangsamoro government,” said Banlaoi. The former rebels need to show they will be able to pull the region toward peace in order to attract much-needed investment to alleviate poverty and counter extremism, he told AFP. “MILF needs to prove it can make a difference... the gravity of the problem faced by MILF is wow, so overwhelming,” he added.

#### ‘Squandered opportunities’

The church attack came despite President Rodrigo

Duterte, who visited the cathedral yesterday, putting the southern Philippines under martial rule after pro-IS militants seized the southern city of Marawi in May 2017. Government officials have argued that martial rule, which gives authorities extra powers, has been effective in taming the perpetually restive region. But families of the dead, who began holding funerals yesterday, have become the latest in the Philippines’ south to mourn loved ones killed in a bomb attack.

“My 81-year-old mother does not deserve this kind of death,” Edward Non told AFP, with a row of victims’ coffins behind him. “This has to stop. It’s the innocent civilians who suffer.” Experts were also worried about how the bombing would impact the hopes for new development in the region, which were spurred by the self-rule vote victory. “It’s a terrible human tragedy, it’s also a development tragedy,” World Bank economist Andrew Mason told broadcaster ABS-CBN. “When we see conflict areas, when we see ups-and-downs and negative impacts due to violence and conflict, what we see is also these are development opportunities that are squandered.” —AFP

## What next for Brexit?

**LONDON:** Despite the humiliating rejection of Prime Minister Theresa May’s Brexit deal, Britain is no closer to knowing the end result of its vote to leave the European Union. A raft of amendments to be voted on by MPs on Tuesday threaten to further muddy the waters as the clock ticks down to Britain’s scheduled departure from the EU on March 29. Three ultimate scenarios remain — leaving without an official deal, leaving with a very similar deal or no Brexit at all. But each path is fraught with uncertainty, political volatility, constitutional logjams and an increasingly embittered electorate. Here are the potential next steps:

#### No deal

Britain is legally on track to leave the EU with or without a deal on March 29, unless it delays or stops the process. A no-deal scenario threatens to trigger a recession in Britain and markedly slow the EU’s economic growth, as well as causing significant legal disruption. The world’s fifth-biggest economy could lose preferential access to its largest export market overnight, affecting every sector, leading to rising costs and disruption at British ports. As D-Day looms, the government has conducted visible displays of its ramped-up no-deal preparations over the past few weeks. But speculation is growing that the

government, under pressure from parliament, could seek to delay the process and take no-deal off the table.

#### Delay

Some amendments introduced in parliament are seeking to delay Britain’s departure date, although all the other 27 EU countries would have to agree. A potential complication is that elections to the European Parliament are due in late May and the new chamber is set to sit on July 2. Some of Britain’s 73 seats have already been reallocated. A delay to give May time to pass legislation enshrining her Brexit deal would likely command widespread support, said leading pollster John Curtice. But Brexit supporters would be deeply opposed to a delay motivated by a desire “to go away and have a referendum or a general election or softer Brexit”, he added. Brussels also may not be so keen if the delay would simply translate into more months of political gridlock.

#### Second referendum

Growing numbers of MPs are seeking a new referendum to reverse the 2016 result, when the Leave campaign won by 52 percent to 48 percent. But supporters admit they do not currently have the numbers in parliament to make it happen. No law prevents Britain from doing it all over again, but many question whether a revote would be democratic — or resolve anything. May has warned that another vote “would do irreparable damage to the integrity of our politics”. It also threatens to be just as divisive as the last one, with opinion polls showing the country is still split over the issue.

#### Try to get another deal

After MPs overwhelmingly rejected the deal agreed between May and Brussels, May held talks with lawmakers across parliament as well as business figures and trade unions to try to find a way through. The key sticking point is the deal’s “backstop” solution to keep the Irish border open, which has the potential to leave Britain indefinitely tied to some form of EU customs union. Influential Brexit supporters say that with changes to the backstop, they could support the agreement. EU leaders have said they are willing to talk further, including on plans for the future trading relationship, but have repeatedly said they do not want to reopen the deal itself.

#### General election

Opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn sought to oust May’s government by calling a confidence vote after her Brexit deal was defeated, but she won. There is a risk that her Conservative party and their Northern Irish allies, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), could turn against her if she pursues either a “softer” or a no-deal Brexit. But if not, the only other way to force an election is for the prime minister herself to gamble and call a snap vote to break the impasse.

#### No Brexit

Some lawmakers favor the nuclear option of cancelling Brexit altogether, despite the threat of widespread public rage. Finance minister Philip Hammond even told business leaders last week that Article 50 could be rescinded. —AFP

## UN judicial expert in Turkey to probe Khashoggi murder

**ANKARA:** Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu yesterday met with a UN judicial expert who is looking into the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi as Ankara calls for an international inquiry. The UN special rapporteur on extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Agnes Callamard, will be in Turkey until Saturday for a series of meetings with authorities including the Istanbul chief prosecutor.

Khashoggi, a Washington Post contributor and Saudi regime critic, was murdered on October 2 in Turkey in what Riyadh called a “rogue” operation, tipping the kingdom into one of its worst diplomatic crises. Turkish authorities have called for an international probe into the killing which took place at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, complaining of Saudi Arabia’s failure to cooperate. “Met with @AgnesCallamard, #UN Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial Executions, who is in #Turkey to investigate the murder of Jamal Khashoggi.” Cavusoglu wrote on Twitter, sharing a picture from his meeting in Ankara.

In an interview with Turkish media last week, Cavusoglu said the Khashoggi case was “not a part of bilateral ties” with Riyadh. “We believe this case should be brought to the international arena,” he said. “It is time for an international probe.” Nearly four months later, the whereabouts of Khashoggi’s body remains unknown and Turkish officials accuse Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of orchestrating the killing — an allegation Saudi authorities categorically refute. Earlier this month a trial of 11 accused in the murder opened in Saudi Arabia with the attorney general seeking the death penalty for five defendants. —AFP

## International

# Afghan president calls for 'serious talks' with Taleban

## 'I call on the Taleban to... show their Afghan will'

**KABUL:** Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said yesterday the Taleban should "enter serious talks" with his government, after the insurgents and Washington both touted progress during unprecedented negotiations in Qatar last week. A months-long diplomatic push by the United States to get the Taleban to talk to Kabul culminated in six days of meetings between the US and the insurgents in Doha, but the Taleban have long refused to negotiate with the Afghan government to end the 17-year conflict, branding them as "puppets".

"I call on the Taleban to... show their Afghan will, and accept Afghans' demand for peace, and enter serious talks with the Afghan government," Ghani said in a nationally televised address from the presidential palace in Kabul. Both the Taleban and the US cited "progress" over the weekend as hopes rise that the length of the negotiations could mean a deal may be in sight which paves the way for Afghan talks.

Sticking points remain, with topics including a ceasefire and a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign troops, as well as a prisoner exchange and a guarantee not to allow militant safe havens in Afghanistan believed to have been on the agenda. US President Donald Trump's clear eagerness to end America's longest war has also weighed heavy on the discussions.

But Afghan authorities have previously complained of being excluded from the talks in Qatar, and warned that any deal between the US and the Taleban would require Kabul's endorsement. "We want peace, we want it fast but we want it with a plan," Ghani said in his address yesterday. "We should not forget that the victims of this war are Afghans and the peace process should also be Afghan-led... No Afghan wants foreign troops to remain in their country indefinitely. No Afghan wants to face suicide attacks in hospitals, schools, the mosques, and parks."

### Talks continue

Ghani spoke hours after his office said it has been reassured by Washington that the talks in Qatar remain geared towards bringing the insurgents to the table with Kabul. US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad — who has been leading the negotiations — arrived in Afghanistan late Sunday to update officials including Ghani on the progress made.

"The US insisted in their talks with the Taleban that the only solution for lasting peace in Afghanistan is intra-Afghan talks," Khalilzad said, according to a statement released by Ghani's office. "My role is to facilitate" such talks between the insurgents and Kabul, Khalilzad said according to Ghani, adding that the discussions are ongoing.

The palace said Khalilzad also confirmed that no agreement had been made on the withdrawal of foreign troops, adding that any such decision would be coordinated and discussed in detail with the Afghan government. The Taleban have insisted foreign troops must pull out. On Saturday Taleban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said that until a withdrawal timetable is decided progress on other issues is "impossible". The palace's statement said Khalilzad denied reports that the issue of an interim government had been raised, saying that was "absolutely wrong" and there had been no discussions with the Taleban about any future government in Kabul.

He also confirmed there had been no progress on the issue of a ceasefire. Afghans have expressed tentative hopes about the talks tempered by fears of an American exit, with Afghan security forces taking staggering losses, the government facing election upheaval, and civilians paying a disproportionate price after nearly two decades of bloodshed. The Taleban and US officials have agreed to continue negotiations, though no date has been publicly announced. — AFP



**KABUL:** In this handout photograph taken and released by the Afghan Presidential Palace on January 27, 2019, Afghan president Ashraf Ghani (C) talks with US special representative for Afghan Peace and reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad (top L) during a cabinet meeting at the presidential palace. — AFP

## Modi putting reforms aside in pre-election budget

**NEW DELHI:** Desperate for five more years in power, India's Hindu nationalist government will woo rural and urban middle-class voters with farm relief measures and tax cuts, said officials privy to plans for the final budget before a general election. Stung by opposition victories in three state polls last month, and needing to call a national election by May, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is facing growing discontent over depressed farm incomes and doubts over whether his policies are creating enough jobs.

The electoral compulsions mean that major economic reforms, such as tax cuts for bigger companies and plans to bring down the budget deficit, could be put on hold at least until after the election, the sources said. Piyush Goyal, India's interim finance minister, will present the budget on Feb. 1, in the absence of Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, who is currently in the United States for medical treatment.

The higher spending, along with a shortfall in tax collections, will push the fiscal deficit up to the equivalent of 3.5 percent of gross domestic product for the year ending in March, overshooting a previous 3.3 percent target, according to one of the sources with direct knowledge of budget discussions. That would fit with the expectations of a Reuters poll of economists. The source said there was a chance that the government could take corrective action in March, hoping that by that time the election schedule will be settled and the public focus will shift towards campaigning. "We may resort to spending cuts in March to contain the fiscal deficit," the source said.

The finance ministry had cut capital and other spending amounting to 750.8 billion rupees (\$10.55 billion) in the last financial year ending in March 2018. But Modi's government has been stepping back from such fiscal rectitude in recent months. In its desperation to find ways to pay for pre-election spending, the government has also pressed the central bank to part with more of its reserves, causing a rift that culminated in the resignation of the bank's governor last month.

"This is an election budget, and most of the economic reforms have been put on hold," said another official, adding the government could defer any decision on business demands for a cut in corporate tax. Business leaders said the government still has to meet its three-year old promise of cutting the corporate tax rate for larger companies to 25 percent from 30 percent. "Although all over the world overall tax has started coming down, India is one of the large economies which has corporate taxes on the higher side," said Rohinton Sidhwa, partner at Deloitte India.

The budget, which is interim and is likely to be followed by a full one in July, is expected to project economic growth of around 7.5 percent for the next financial year, while expanding capital spending on railways, roads, ports by 7-8 percent, and estimating an increase in revenue of about 15 percent, officials said. But the main focus will be on the rural sector and the urban middle-class.

The government is ready with relief measures for farmers, benefits for unemployed youth, higher tax exemptions for the middle class and small businesses, the officials said. — Reuters



**MEDININAGAR:** In this file photo taken on January 05, 2019, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves to the crowd in Medininagar, during a campaign sweep through eastern Jharkhand state to inaugurate development projects. — AFP

## Chinese rights lawyer jailed for 'subversion'

**BEIJING:** Prominent Chinese human rights lawyer Wang Quanzhang was sentenced yesterday to four and a half years in prison for state subversion, sealing the fate of another attorney swept up in a 2015 crackdown. Wang, 42, who defended political activists and victims of land seizures, disappeared in the sweep — known as the "709" clampdown — aimed at courtroom critics of Communist authorities.

Charged in January 2016 with alleged state subversion, Wang had been the last of more than 200 lawyers and activists arrested in the crackdown to be tried or released. The event is dubbed "709" because the arrests started on July 9, 2015. Wang was "found guilty of subverting state power, sentenced to four years and six months in prison, and deprived of political rights for five years," the Tianjin Second Intermediate People's Court said in a statement.

"He has not committed any crimes, so there shouldn't be a sentence," Li Wenzu, Wang's wife, told AFP at her home in Beijing, adding that she found out about his sentence over the internet. "I think the ones who are guilty are the judicial authorities, not him," she said. Wearing a black hoodie with her husband's name and face printed on the front, Li said she was "very worried" about his health. Citing Wang's lawyer, Li said the 10-day period

to submit an appeal starts Tuesday and that they will "of course appeal".

After more than two years of being in legal limbo — detained without a trial date — Wang's court hearing took place behind closed doors in Tianjin on December 26. Li, who has actively protested her husband's detention, was placed under de facto house arrest the day before the trial to prevent her from attending. In December, before Wang's court date was announced, Li and three supporters shaved their heads and tried to submit a petition to a Beijing court protesting his detention. Last April, Li attempted to march 100 kilometers to the detention facility in Tianjin where her husband had been held. She plans to try visiting it again on Chinese New Year's Eve next week, she said. "I still cannot stop — I must continue to defend civil rights."

### 'Gross injustice'

Rights organizations denounced Wang's jail sentence, with Amnesty International calling it "a gross injustice". "His sentence is part of the Chinese government's ongoing crackdown on rights lawyers," said Maya Wang, senior researcher at Human Rights Watch. "In the past three years, the Chinese government has not only detained and imprisoned rights lawyers but also debarred them," she told AFP.

According to Doriane Lau, China researcher at Amnesty International, Wang's four-and-a-half year prison sentence includes the more than three years the rights lawyer spent in detention. "He should be released in a little over a year," she wrote on Twitter. Article 47 of China's criminal law says that prison terms are "to be shortened by one day for each day

spent in custody" for cases where imprisonment is "employed before the judgment".

### 'Disrupting social order'

In addition to Wang, a number of other rights lawyers and activists detained by Chinese authorities in the 709 crackdown have also been charged with state subversion. In December 2017, Chinese dissident Wu Gan was sentenced to eight years in prison, one of the harshest punishments meted out in the sweep. Wang was part of a now defunct law firm called Beijing Fengrui, which specialized in cases involving farmers' land rights, labor camps and criminal rights. The firm had also frequent-

ly defended victims of sexual abuse, dissident scholars, and members of banned religious groups.

Wang, for instance, had worked on several cases defending Falun Gong practitioners. The law firm had been at the centre of the 709 crackdown, with at least five lawyers detained in 2015. At the time, state media called Beijing Fengrui a "major criminal gang", and accused Zhou Shifeng, the firm's founder, and his colleagues of "disrupt(ing) social order". Other attorneys at the firm, such as Liu Xiaoyuan, who told AFP that he believed Wang had been "wrongfully convicted", have been unemployed since the crackdown. — AFP



**BEIJING:** Li Wenzu, the wife of imprisoned lawyer Wang Quanzhang, poses for photo while wearing a shirt with his image calling for his release, at her home. — AFP

## Abe vows Kim meet to 'break shell of mutual distrust'

**TOKYO:** Japan's prime minister vowed yesterday to "break the shell of mutual distrust" with North Korea by meeting leader Kim Jong Un face-to-face and restoring diplomatic relations between the two historic foes. In a major policy speech to mark the opening of parliament, Shinzo Abe also vowed to push Sino-Japan ties "to a new stage" and pledged a record budget to improve crumbling infrastructure in the world's third-biggest economy.

"I will act resolutely, never failing to seize every opportunity to break the shell of mutual distrust, and I myself will directly face Chairman Kim Jong Un... to resolve North Korea's nuclear and missile issues, as well as the abductions issue," Abe said. Abe gave no timeframe for a potential meeting with the North Korean leader but the comments came as Kim has ordered preparation for a second summit with US President Donald Trump, likely towards the end of next month.

"I will aim at diplomatic normalization by setting the unfortunate past," Abe said, using a Japanese diplomatic euphemism referring to harm caused by Japan during its brutal colonization of the Korean peninsula before and during World War II. The conciliatory message contrasted sharply from a year ago, when Abe used the same parliamentary address to set out a hardline approach, pledging to "compel North Korea to change its policies" and describing Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programs as an "unprecedentedly grave and urgent threat".

Abe has long sought to resolve an emotional row related to North Korean agents' abduction of Japanese nationals during the Cold War era to

train Pyongyang's spies. Pyongyang released what it said were the five survivors in 2002, and said eight others it admitted kidnapping had all died. North Korean authorities have given no public indication of any willingness to meet Abe, while Pyongyang's state media regularly excoriate Japan over its past history and Abe for ramping up defense spending. A commentary by the official KCNA news agency earlier this month called Japan a "heinous criminal state against humanity" and an "immoral and impudent country".

### 'Peace and prosperity'

On China, Abe said ties had "completely returned to a normal path" after he visited President Xi Jinping in Beijing last year. Xi is expected to make his first official visit to Japan in 2019. "I will strongly pursue diplomacy with neighbors for a new era... in order to make northeast Asia truly a land of stable peace and prosperity," he said.

Bilateral ties were harmed in 2012 when Tokyo "nationalized" disputed islands in the East China Sea also claimed by Beijing. Until recently, neither nation had made much effort to repair relations. But Japan's business community has long urged Abe to improve ties with China, Tokyo's largest trade partner as well as the biggest source of foreign tourists, who are collectively becoming a key driver of the country's chronically fragile economy.

Tokyo believes a successful Xi visit is key to a productive G20, which Japan hosts this year, and hopes the Chinese leader will attend the 2020 Olympic Games. Abe was cautious about Russia, amid a territorial row over tiny islands to Japan's north that has proved difficult to resolve despite frequent meetings with President Vladimir Putin. Domestically, Abe vowed to press ahead with an upcoming consumption tax hike from the current eight percent to 10 percent from October. He also pledged a whopping seven trillion yen (\$64 billion) on infrastructure spending, as the nation's many roads and bridges become dilapidated and Japan routinely faces serious natural disasters such as flooding and earthquakes. — AFP

## 10,000 'red scarf' protesters march against 'yellow vest'

**PARIS:** More than 10,000 people wearing red scarves marched through Paris on Sunday in protest at "yellow vest" violence during the anti-government demos that have drawn tens of thousands of people to the streets over the past 11 weeks. Since mid-November President Emmanuel Macron has offered concessions and debates seeking to quell the weekly rallies that often end in violent clashes with police in the most serious challenge yet to his government.

In Sunday's rival protest, the crowds marched in rain from the Place de la Nation square to the Bastille monument, some chanting "Yes to democracy, no to revolution" as they waved French and European Union flags. Dubbed the "red scarf" movement, the centrist initiative is the brainchild of an engineer from Toulouse who was horrified by the violence seen among more extremist "yellow vest" demonstrators.

Many protesters joining the rally said they were not against "yellow vest" demands for greater help for France's poor, but were sick of the clashes and destruction that have marked protests for 11 consecutive Saturdays since mid-November. Laurent Soulie, an organizer of the march, said the protesters responded to a call to the "silent majority who have remained holed up at home for 10 weeks."

A nursing manager who gave her name as Marie-Line said she believed the yellow vests had just cause to "grumble", but came "to say that this verbal and physical violence must stop". "It's not a protest against the yellow vests — it's a protest to say, you've made your demands, we are listening to them," Francois Patriat, a senator from Macron's centrist party, told AFP at the demonstration. "There are other places to discuss this than the street. You cannot block the country and economy because you consider the president to be illegitimate."

Sunday's protest was almost double the size of the "yellow vest" demonstration in Paris a day earlier, when some 4,000 people came out to rail against Macron. The protesters are named after the luminous road safety vests that they wear.

Originally sparked by rises in fuel taxes, the movement quickly snowballed into a widespread revolt over accusations the president, an ex-banker, is out of touch with rural and small-town France. But their numbers have ebbed in recent weeks after Macron announced a series of policy climbdowns and launched a two-month consultation to allow people to vent their anger. — AFP

## International

## Weeding out jihadists from civilians on Syria front line

## 'They told us the Kurds will slaughter you'

**BAGHOUZ:** A hesitation on a simple question or a callus on a trigger finger — it doesn't always take much for US-backed forces to spot potential jihadists hiding among fleeing civilians. At a desert outpost held by the Syrian Democratic Forces near the Iraqi border, trucks stream in carrying men, women and children from the ever-shrinking last bastion of the Islamic State group. "Men over here, women on the other side," one SDF member calls out, ushering those who have fled into orderly lines near the frontline village of Baghouz.

Men queue up in front of an SDF official, who registers each new arrival. He records each man's fingerprints with a small digital reader, takes their photo, and jots down their name and nationality. Opposite him, a man with a thick beard stutters when he is asked his country of origin. He fumbles for words, then answers: "Iraq". He is passed on to a colleague from the SDF Special Forces, who then ferries him on to a third investigator for even more questions.

After they are interrogated, the men are then led to the side, where they sit on the ground in crowded, neat lines, an identical distance between them. "Sometimes you feel you have an IS fighter in front of you from the way he speaks or when he hesitates to reply," an interrogator tells AFP. "Or if you find traces on his hands that show extensive use of a trigger, or on his shoulders from carrying a cartridge pouch," he says, asking to remain anonymous for his security.

## 'Scared'

Members of the US-led international coalition backing the SDF stroll around the area, but it is not immediately clear what their role is in the screening process. Backed by coalition air strikes, the SDF have since September pressed a battle to expel IS from the last shred of the "caliphate" they proclaimed in 2014. The Kurdish-led alliance has whittled down that pocket to just a few hamlets in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor,

sending thousands of people fleeing. Some 32,000 people have escaped into SDF-held territory since early December, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. They included more than 2,700 IS jihadists, the Britain-based war monitor says. Among the new arrivals in the desert, another bearded man stands in line waiting to be assessed. He says he stayed behind when his family fled a week earlier: "I was scared I'd be detained." But his family encouraged him to leave after they reached a Kurdish-held camp for IS relatives in Syria's northeast. "They told me, 'Come. Nothing will happen to you,'" he says.

In their own section, women too are searched and screened. Female SDF fighters lift up the black face veil of each new arrival to see their face and inspect their scant belongings. When they encounter a woman who is neither Syrian nor Iraqi — an "immigrant", they say — they also record her fingerprints and take her photo.

## 'Slaughter you'

After being vetted, women, children, and men not suspected of belonging to the extremist group are transported north to the Kurdish-run camp of Al-Hol. "The aim of this security operation is to know who the displaced are," says Mohammed Suleiman Othman, an official in charge of their transfer. "Are they civilians, or fighters hiding" among them?

Among the women waiting, several said a baby died during the night from the cold and had to be buried. Two women, they say, gave birth in the open. A truck draws up and they all rush towards it. SDF fighters have arrived to distribute bread. Sitting on the ground, Amina Hajj Hassan, 28, says she fled Baghouz with her five-year-old-son after most of the village came under SDF control. Her husband — a "modest employee" of the jihadist group — fled five months ago, says the young Syrian woman from the northern province of Aleppo. He made it to Turkey where he now works, she



**BAGHOUZ:** People who fled battles between Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and fighters from the Islamic State (IS) group in the Syrian village of Baghouz, arrive after crossing a desert in the back of a truck to a region controlled by the SDF in the countryside of the Deir Ezzor province on January 26, 2019. — AFP

says. "I wanted to leave when the bombardment... started months ago, but they told us: 'The Kurds will slaughter you'."

Next to her, Noura al-Ali says she is wracked with worry after her husband was detained, though "not one

day" did he join IS. "He worked at a restaurant," says the 18-year-old, also from Aleppo province. "I used to listen to music in secret," she adds, whereas IS forbade it. Her only wish is "to go with my husband to join our family in Turkey". — AFP

## Nigeria: Top judge's suspension not linked to election

**ABUJA:** Nigeria's government has denied suggestions that the suspension of the country's top judge on corruption charges was linked to next month's election. President Muhammadu Buhari replaced Chief Justice Walter Onnoghen on Friday, sparking claims he had breached the constitution and was trying to manipulate the judiciary. The European Union, Britain and the United States each issued statements at the weekend expressing concern at the development, as elections are due on February 16. But Buhari's spokesman said Sunday that there was no connection.

"In Nigerian law there is no such linkage," Garba Shehu said in a statement. "The CJN (Chief Justice of Nigeria) does not run the election. Nor is he the first arbiter of any electoral complaints. He and the Supreme Court will only get involved as the final arbiter at the end of the appellate process... To link the CJN to the elections in this way is illogical unless they assume that election complaints will be filed and go all the way to the Supreme Court." Shehu's statement was his second against the EU, Britain and the United States, which are all scheduled to have election monitors on the ground. His later comments were more conciliatory in tone than the first, in which the government rejected outside "interference" and said the issue was an internal matter. Onnoghen is accused of failing to declare foreign currency bank accounts, in breach of rules governing the declaration of assets by public officials.

## 'Brazen act of dictatorship'

Shehu maintained that Onnoghen's position was "untenable" given the case against him and the president was forced to act because the judge had not stepped down voluntarily. The suspension was temporary until the conclusion of the case, he added. Buhari's opponents have questioned the timing of the charges against Onnoghen so close to elections at which the president is seeking a second term of office. The 76-year-old head of state, of the All Progressives Congress, came to power in 2015 on a pledge to tackle corruption.

International and domestic observers have already warned that the two main parties may attempt to rig the vote, in what is expected to be a close race. The main opposition candidate Atiku Abubakar said Buhari's suspension of Onnoghen was "a brazen act of dictatorship" in a clear reference to his army past. Buhari headed a military government in the 1980s.

## Executive overreach

Members of the Nigerian Bar Association were meeting on Monday to discuss the suspension, amid mounting protests that could lead to a court shutdown. The NBA has called Onnoghen's removal "an attempted coup against the judiciary". In another potential clash between the arms of government, parliament has been recalled today for an emergency session.

Buhari's critics, including the Senate leader Bukola Saraki, have previously alleged he has used state security agencies to target perceived political opponents. The president has been accused of conducting a political witch-hunt, as most of facing corruption charges are opposition lawmakers. Onnoghen is facing trial at the Code of Conduct Tribunal, where Saraki was also brought on charges of failing to disclose his assets. He was cleared by the Supreme Court.

Under Nigeria's constitution, the Senate has to approve a motion to remove the chief justice by a two-thirds majority. Analyst group SBM Intelligence said the only previous case of a chief justice being removed was in 1975, after general Murtala Muhammad ousted Yakubu Gowon in a coup. It said only the National Judicial Council, the advisory and regulatory body for judges, had the power to suspend a judicial officer. — AFP

## Yemen truce, prisoner swap timelines delayed

**SANAA:** The UN envoy for Yemen said yesterday the expected timeline for a truce in the flashpoint city of Hodeida and a prisoner swap between warring parties had been pushed back. Envoy Martin Griffiths hosted hard-won peace talks between the Saudi-backed Yemeni government and rival Iran-aligned Houthi rebels in Sweden last month.

The two parties, who have been at war for four years, agreed at the talks to a mass prisoner swap and an ambitious ceasefire pact in Hodeida, the Red Sea city home to the impoverished country's most valuable port. Griffiths, who arrived Monday in Sanaa on his third trip to Yemen this month, said there had been "changes in timelines" for both deals.

"That momentum is still there, even if we have seen the timelines for implementation extended, both in Hodeida and with regard to the prisoner exchange agreement," he told Saudi-owned newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat. "Yet such changes in

timelines are expected, in light of the facts that the timelines were rather ambitious and we are dealing with a complex situation on the ground."

Griffiths also confirmed reports of plans to replace retired Dutch general Patrick Cammaert, who heads the monitoring team tasked with overseeing the Hodeida truce. "General Cammaert's plan was to stay in Yemen for a rather short period of time to... lay the ground for establishing the Hodeida mission," he said. "All the speculations about other reasons for General Patrick's departure are not accurate." Cammaert arrived Saturday in Yemen.

The Houthis, who control Hodeida, have accused Cammaert of not being up to the task and of pursuing "other agendas". 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. Griffiths said yesterday another round of consultations was temporarily on hold pending progress on the current agreements. Earlier this month he had said that planned talks had been postponed until



**HODEIDA:** Soldiers with a military coalition in Yemen backed by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates stand guard at a facility of Yemen's Red sea mills company in the port city of Hodeida. — AFP

February. "We are all on the same page that we need to see progress in implementing what was agreed in Sweden before convening the next round of consultations," Griffiths said.

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

## Armed gang snatches jailed criminal outside French courthouse

**TARASCON:** Three heavily armed men attacked a van carrying a jailed criminal on his way to court yesterday, firing shots outside the courthouse and striking a guard before making their getaway in the southern French town of Tarascon, officials said. The spectacular escape took place at around 8:30 am as the prisoner was being transferred from a prison to be presented before a judge. The guards "had left the van to ring the doorbell to the courthouse when the armed men fell upon them," said Nicolas Burtz, a local prison guard union representative.

The gang shot out the van's tyres and knocked to the ground a female guard who had refused to let the prisoner go, according to the justice ministry and the local prosecutor. The guards, who had escorted the prisoner from a jail in Beziers, 150 kilometers away, did not fire their

weapons. "It was very violent. It's been a long time since we've seen a van attacked with automatic weapons. It was really shocking for the guards, who reacted well," an official in France's prison administration agency said.

The 27-year-old prisoner, who was not immediately identified, had been jailed since September 2017 awaiting trial for armed robbery and criminal gang activity, prison officials said. "The prisoner had already attempted to escape while previously in jail," according to Karim Terki, another prison guard union representative. Authorities "are really naive: he played nice for several months in order to try to escape again," Terki added.

The last spectacular jailbreak in France took place in late December when a prisoner at the Fresnes prison south of Paris managed to escape from an exercise yard by climbing over a wall with a rope made of bedsheets. Guards in the watchtowers fired three shots but the prisoner got away. In July 2018 the notorious gangster Redoine Faïd made a Hollywood-style prison break when two heavily armed accomplices hijacked a helicopter and used smoke bombs and angle grinders to whisk him away from the prison in Reau, 50 kilometers southeast of Paris. Faïd, a career criminal with multiple convictions for armed robbery, was caught after three months on the run. — AFP



**TARASCON:** A forensic police officer searches for evidences yesterday outside the Courthouse of Tarascon. — AFP

## Bashir vows to bring peace as demos called in war zones

**KHARTOUM:** President Omar Al-Bashir vowed yesterday to bring peace in the state of South Kordofan where Sudanese forces are fighting rebels, as protesters planned to hold anti-government rallies in the country's conflict zones. Deadly protests triggered by a government decision to raise the price of bread have rocked the east African country for weeks.

The demonstrations have spiraled into nationwide rallies against the government of Bashir, who swept to power in an Islamist-backed coup in 1989. Officials say 30 people have died in the violence since the protests first erupted on December 19 in the farming town of Atbara, before spreading to Khartoum and other regions. Rights groups say more than 40 people have been killed.

Yesterday, Bashir vowed to work to bring peace in South Kordofan, a region ravaged by a deadly conflict between government forces and rebels since 2011. "Our top priority is to bring peace to this area," Bashir, dressed in military uniform, told a crowd of cheering supporters at a televised rally in Kadguli, the capital of South Kordofan. "We are ready to go to any length to bring peace to this area. We will undertake all efforts that will bring peace to this area."

In 2011, fighting erupted in the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, both bordering South Sudan, eight years after a brutal conflict broke out in the country's western region of Darfur. Tens of thousands of people have been killed in the three conflicts and millions displaced over the years after ethnic minority rebels took up arms against Khartoum, accusing it of economic and political marginalization.

Bashir is wanted by the Hague-based International Criminal Court on charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide related to the war in Darfur. He denies the charges.



International

# Venezuela's Guaido calls for new anti-Maduro protests

## Guaido on a mission to weaken military's support of Maduro

CARACAS: Venezuela's self-proclaimed president Juan Guaido called Sunday for two new protests, in an effort to push the military to turn against leader Nicolas Maduro and back a European ultimatum demanding free elections within the week. In a video posted on Twitter, the head of the opposition-controlled National Assembly said the first of the nationwide strikes, on Wednesday from noon to 2:00 pm (1600-1800 GMT), would be one "to demand that the armed forces side with the people."

The second, on Saturday, will be a "big national and international rally to back the support of the European Union and the ultimatum" from Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain and the Netherlands that they would recognize Guaido as interim president unless Maduro calls elections by February 3. The EU was vaguer, saying it would take "further actions" if elections were not called in the coming days, including the issue of recognition of the country's "leadership." Australia, meanwhile, said it "recognizes and supports" Guaido as interim president pending elections. And Italy has called for "a rapid return to democratic legitimacy." The United States separately warned there would be a "significant response" if US diplomats, Guaido or the opposition-controlled National Assembly were targeted with violence and intimidation. Maduro so far has not budged from his position, telling CNN Turk: "No one can give us an ultimatum." Nearly 30 people have been killed and more than 350 arrested in clashes with security forces over the past week.

### Appeals to the military

Encouraged by the international support for his cause, Guaido is on a mission to weaken the military's support of Maduro, which has been essential to keeping him in power since 2013. His appeals have included promises of amnesty, and mass protests to dramatize the depth of popular opposition to Maduro, who has presided over a virtual collapse of the economy and a severe humanitarian crisis, with shortages of food and medicines. Supporters circulated copies of amnesty measures approved by the National

Assembly to friends and relatives in the military, but some soldiers burned or ripped up the document.

Venezuela's military attache in Washington, Army Colonel Jose Luis Silva, switched his support to Guaido in a video that called on his brothers in arms to follow his lead. Maduro appeared at a military exercise in the state of Carabobo where he called for "union, discipline and cohesion" to defeat what he called an "attempted coup d'etat." "Traitors never, loyal always," he exhorted the military audience. Televised images showed tanks lined up in a row and soldiers firing their weapons. "Are you coup-backers or are you constitutionalists? Are you pro-imperialist or anti-imperialists?" Maduro asked. Thus far, the military has backed the leftist regime, which was ushered into power more than 20 years ago by the late Hugo Chavez, but there have been some signs of unrest.

### Playing down military intervention

Guaido, 35, heads the opposition-controlled National Assembly and declared himself acting president in Caracas on Wednesday during an anti-government rally by tens of thousands of people. He contends that Maduro's reelection to a second six-year term was fraudulent. His bid was swiftly endorsed by Canada, the United States and many Latin American countries.

"Any violence and intimidation against US diplomatic personnel, Venezuela's democratic leader, Juan Guaido, or the National Assembly itself would represent a grave assault on the rule of law and will be met with a significant response," US National Security Advisor John Bolton tweeted, without specifying what kind of response he meant.

The warning didn't address specific groups or individuals, but Bolton noted in a linked tweet that Cuba's "support and control over Maduro's security and paramilitary forces" was well known. Washington also accepted exiled opposition leader Carlos Vecchio as Venezuela's new charge d'affaires to the United States after he was tapped by Guaido. Pope Francis, winding up a trip to Panama, said he was praying that "a just and peaceful solution is



NAGUANAGUA: Handout picture released by the Venezuelan presidency showing a Russian-made T72 tank taking part in military exercises at Fort Paramacay in Naganagua, Carabobo State, Venezuela, on January 27, 2019. — AFP

reached to overcome the crisis, respecting human rights."

Maduro has received backing from China, Russia, Syria and Turkey, as well as longtime allies Cuba and Bolivia. In Washington, Republican Senator Marco Rubio, considered a key architect of the US policy on Venezuela, played down the possibility of a military intervention despite his and Trump's warnings earlier in the week that "all options

are on the table." The Venezuelan leader earlier had given US diplomats until late Saturday to leave the country. But as the deadline expired, Maduro said he had begun negotiations to set up within 30 days an Interests Section in Caracas to maintain a minimum level of diplomatic contact, similar to the arrangement the US had with Cuba until their 2015 rapprochement. — AFP

## Evangelicals gain ground in Panama despite pope visit

PANAMA CITY: Panama rolled out the red carpet for Pope Francis for World Youth Day celebrations, but here and across Latin America the Catholic Church is losing ground to a growing evangelical movement. In the gritty barrio of El Chorrillo, a kilometer (half-mile) of dense streets from where Francis celebrated mass at the city's 400-year old Cathedral on Saturday, evangelical churches are holding sway in a pitched battle for the souls of Panamanians, particularly the poor.

"Without wanting to criticize the Catholics, the Evangelical Church is more united with the people, with the young who are here in the neighborhood," said evangelical preacher Juan Manuel. "Because we deal with them, we walk with them, we live in the same buildings with them," he said. Roberto Rodriguez was a practicing Catholic up to a couple of years ago, but says he only really felt connected when he joined the local evangelical church. "I was lost," said Rodriguez, 20. "Now that I am in the evangelical church I feel the glory of God. I feel the options that God has given me, really the grace of God."

### Filling the void

Apart from occasional police patrols, there are few signs of government presence in El Chorrillo. Locals say churches fill the void in a barrio of broken families, school dropouts and gang violence. The vast majority of Evangelicals in Panama and across Latin America are Pentecostals, a charismatic branch of Protestantism born in the United States at the beginning of the 20th Century. In a rubbish-strewn alley, Yamilka Carrion runs the Valle de Beraca church on the ground floor of a run-down building.

It is one of six Pentecostal prayer rooms or soup kitchens located within 200 meters of El Chorrillo's Our Lady of Fatima Catholic church. "It's pure misery, a lot of young people are in danger," said Carrion, a 39-year-old preacher and business graduate. "But we are here." More than half of the 440 murders committed last year were of people under the age of 30, statistics show. The small evangelical communities have based their success on a simple but effective tactic: preachers go door to door, rather than passively waiting for people to come to church. "You have to go through the alleys, the stairs of buildings, knock on the doors of houses," said pastor Dalia Viveros. "The young person needs to feel you are interested in him."

### Growing influence

Neighbors say evangelicals have been growing in number here over the last 15 years. Official figures show they now account for 19 percent of Panama's four million population. "It's real competition for the Catholic Church," said Claire Nevache in a report for Panama's Center for Democratic Initiatives CIDEM, which promotes democracy and respect for human rights.

Local Catholic priest Jonathan Vasquez however said that Pope Francis' five-day visit to Panama "has given an impulse" to the Catholic Church. "We are renewing ourselves, we are becoming more and more faithful to the message of Jesus Christ," said Vasquez. Pentecostals differ from Catholics because they don't pray to saints, recognize the pope, or acknowledge the pre-eminent role of the Virgin Mary. The Holy Spirit is the focal point of their spiritual life.

Pentecostal services are so animated by comparison to Catholic mass — sometimes even including exorcisms — that Pope Francis once likened them to "glorified Samba schools." Later, with a few neighbors, Rodriguez joined a prayer service led by three local preachers in a modest apartment. "Give me an Amen!" said the preacher Juan Manuel, a tall and thin man who said he had been "reformed" after spending 28 of his 50 years in prison. Rodriguez belted out an "Amen!" with a shudder. — AFP

## Kamala Harris launches White House bid in America 'under attack'

OAKLAND: Lamenting that the American Dream and its democracy are under attack in Donald Trump's United States, California Senator Kamala Harris formally declared Sunday her candidacy to become the country's first black female president in 2020. Harris, who was California's attorney general from 2011 to 2017, made her announcement to supporters outside city hall in Oakland, San Francisco's grittier neighbor where she was born.

Barack Obama introduced himself to Californian voters in 2007 in the same location before he was elected the first African American president of the United States a year later. Harris already announced in a January 21 video that she would run for president. She joins a Democratic field with several other candidates seeking to keep Trump out of the White House for a second term. "We are here because the American dream and our American democracy are under attack and on the line like never before," she said. "When democratic values are under attack

around the globe, when authoritarianism is on the march, when nuclear proliferation is on the rise, when we have foreign powers infecting the White House like malware, let's speak the truth," she added to raucous applause.

### 'Not our America'

Without naming the president, Harris directly targeted the divisive policies of his unconventional administration. Harris, whose father is from Jamaica and whose mother is a Tamil Indian, said that "in the face of powerful forces trying to sow hate and division among us, the truth is that as Americans, we have so much more in common than what separates us."

Trump regularly tries to equate illegal immigrants with crime and gangs, and his standoff with Democrats in Congress over funding for a wall on the Mexican border led to a record nearly five-week shutdown of parts of the government. "The president's medieval vanity project is not going to stop them," Harris said of transnational gangs. She also attacked Trump's failed policy that put migrant children "in cages" after separating them from their parents. "Don't you dare call that border security. That's a human rights abuse!" she said.

Referring to racist-inspired deadly violence in the country, Harris said "that's not our America," and neither is it when "we have leaders who bully and attack a free press and undermine our democratic institutions." Trump regularly dismisses as "fake news" reports that cast him in a critical light, and has called some journalists the "enemy of the people." — AFP

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## Misinformation woes could multiply with 'deepfake' videos

If you see a video of a politician speaking words he never would utter, or a Hollywood star improbably appearing in a cheap adult movie, don't adjust your television set - you may just be witnessing the future of "fake news". "Deepfake" videos that manipulate reality are becoming more sophisticated due to advances in artificial intelligence, creating the potential for new kinds of misinformation with devastating consequences. As the technology advances, worries are growing about how deepfakes can be used for nefarious purposes by hackers or state actors.

"We're not quite to the stage where we are seeing deepfakes weaponized, but that moment is coming," Robert Chesney, a University of Texas law professor who has researched the topic, told AFP. Chesney argues that deepfakes could add to the current turmoil over disinformation and influence operations. "A well-timed and thoughtfully scripted deepfake or series of deepfakes could tip an election, spark violence in a city primed for civil unrest, bolster insurgent narratives about an enemy's supposed atrocities, or exacerbate political divisions in a society," Chesney and University of Maryland professor Danielle Citron said in a blog post for the Council on Foreign Relations.

Paul Scharre, a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, a think tank specializing in AI and security issues, said it was almost inevitable that deepfakes would be used in upcoming elections. A fake video could be deployed to smear a candidate, Scharre said, or to enable people to deny actual events captured on authentic video. With believable fake videos in circulation, he added, "people can choose to believe whatever version or narrative that they want, and that's a real concern."

### Chaplin's return?

Video manipulation has been around for decades and can be innocuous or even entertaining - as in the digitally-aided appearance of Peter Cushing in 2016's "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story," 22 years after his death. Carnegie Mellon University researchers last year revealed techniques that make it easier to produce deepfakes via machine learning to infer missing data. In the movie industry, "the hope is we can have old movie stars like Charlie Chaplin come back," said Aayush Bansal.

The popularization of apps which make realistic fake videos threatens to undermine the notion of truth in news media, criminal trials and many other areas, researchers point out. "If we can put any words in anyone's mouth, that is quite scary," says Siwei Lyu, a professor of computer science at the State University of New York at Albany, who is researching deepfake detection. "It blurs the line between what is true and what is false. If we cannot really trust information to be authentic it's no better than to have no information at all."

Representative Adam Schiff and two other lawmakers recently sent a letter to National Intelligence Director Dan Coats asking for information about what the government is doing to combat deepfakes. "Forged videos, images or audio could be used to target individuals for blackmail or for other nefarious purposes," the lawmakers wrote. "Of greater concern for national security, they could also be used by foreign or domestic actors to spread misinformation."

### Separating fake from real

Researchers have been working on better detection methods for some time, with support from private firms such as Google and government entities like the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), which began a media forensics initiative in 2015. Lyu's research has focused on detecting fakes, in part by analyzing the rate of blinking of an individual's eyes. But he acknowledges that even detecting fakes may not be enough, if a video goes viral and leads to chaos. "It's more important to disrupt the process than to analyze the videos," Lyu said.

While deepfakes have been evolving for several years, the topic came into focus with the creation last April of video appearing to show former president Barack Obama using a curse word to describe his successor Donald Trump - a coordinated stunt from filmmaker Jordan Peele and BuzzFeed. Also in 2018, a proliferation of "face swap" porn videos that used images of Emma Watson, Scarlett Johansson and other celebrities prompted bans on deepfakes by Reddit, Twitter and Pornhub, though it remained unclear if they could enforce the policies. — AFP



An AFP journalist views a video on Jan 25, 2019, manipulated with artificial intelligence to potentially deceive viewers at his newsdesk in Washington, DC. — AFP



Soldiers with a military coalition in Yemen backed by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates stand guard at a facility of Yemen's Red Sea Mills company in the port city of Hodeida on Jan 22, 2019. — AFP

## Fight over Yemen granary tests truce

Gunshots reverberate through a battle-scarred granary in the port city of Hodeida, where a mountain of grain meant for starving Yemenis remains inaccessible as a hard-won ceasefire comes under strain. The Red Sea Mills, one of the last positions seized by Saudi and Emirati-backed forces before last month's UN-brokered truce, holds wheat that could feed nearly four million people for a month in a country on the brink of famine.

But the facility, a shrapnel-pocked symbol of how controlling food is a weapon in Yemen's war, has remained off-limits to aid organizations since September as skirmishes shake the fragile ceasefire agreed with Houthi rebels during talks in Sweden. The site, on Hodeida's eastern edges, was rigged heavily with mines when it slipped from Houthi control in November.

Last week, during a military embed organized by the Saudi-led coalition, AFP saw government loyalists including Sudanese soldiers scouring the vast complex with metal detectors amid fears rebels were sneaking in to plant new booby traps. Sudan is a member of the Saudi-led coalition. A column of smoke snaked into the sky from Houthi positions less than a mile away, with loyalists saying the rebels were burning tyres in a provocative move.

Then, a volley of close-range gunshots crackled through the complex. It was not possible to tell who was firing. "We are committed to the truce... but the enemy has not committed to anything as you can see and hear," said Yemeni commander Mohammed Salman. Just after the tour, the UN on Friday reported apparent mortar shelling at the mill had started a fire that left two food silos damaged. "The loss of this wheat comes at a terrible time,"

said the UN's humanitarian coordinator Lise Grande. "More than 20 million Yemenis, nearly 70 percent of the entire population, are hungry."

In Hodeida, the entry point for more than two-thirds of Yemen's food imports and international aid, the choices are stark - either an imperfect truce with violations on both sides or all-out fighting that could unleash famine. The ceasefire came after Western nations pressed Riyadh to end its four-year military campaign in Yemen following the murder of Saudi critic and journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

But with recurring breaches, observers warn its collapse could be just a matter of time. "If it is allowed to break down, there will be no opportunity for a similar deal for a long time," the International Crisis Group said. Inside Hodeida, a city rippling with tension as the war-wounded continue to trickle into hospitals, a common refrain among civilians and military officials is "mafi hudna" - Arabic for "no truce".

Colonel Saeed Salmeen, an Emirati commander on Yemen's west coast, told AFP his men were committed to the ceasefire but were "always ready" for battle. He warned Yemen's west coast road - a key supply route linking the south to Hodeida - was a "red line". UN chief Antonio Guterres said on January 7 that neither side had tried to gain new territory since the ceasefire. But an agreed redeployment of rival forces from the city, a key confidence-building measure, has not happened.

UN envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths said Monday the expected timeline for a truce in Hodeida and a prisoner swap between the warring parties had been pushed back. "We are dealing with a complex situation

on the ground," he told Saudi-owned newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat.

### 'Food is a weapon'

"How long can the international community accept this Houthi game - ceasefire, regroup, ceasefire, regroup?" a member of the coalition told AFP, requesting anonymity. "Only when you catch them by the neck will they come to the negotiating table." The sentiment was echoed by other pro-government troops who insisted to AFP that military action was the only solution. The truce has given the World Food Program "some breathing room" to reach districts in southern Hodeida previously inaccessible due to fighting, its country director Stephen Anderson told AFP. However, 51,000 metric tonnes of wheat - one quarter of WFP's flour-milling capacity in Yemen - remains locked away in the Red Sea Mills. The WFP has been trying to get access "to see for ourselves the scale of the damage" after the fire, a spokesman said, adding one of the damaged silos held about 4,500 tonnes of WFP wheat.

For starving Yemenis on both sides of the conflict the lack of access is collective punishment. Salman, the Yemeni commander, alleged the Houthis hoarded grain, creating artificial shortages and exacerbating famine-like conditions. When the Houthis controlled the mill, they accused the coalition of destroying food with indiscriminate air strikes. The mills are "being used in the most Machiavellian ways by all warring parties to achieve political goals," said Wesam Qaid, executive director of Yemeni development organization SMEPS. "Whoever controls such facilities will have greater say on who gets fed. Food is a weapon." — AFP

## Man vs condor: King of the Andes under threat

By all accounts, Dasan and Illika should have died of poisoning. But they are back on their feet, poking their beaks through the bars of their cages, impatient to return to the skies over Colombia, which have been transformed into hostile territory for the so-called king of the Andes - the condor. Dasan, a five-year-old male, fell victim first. Locals found him in November - weak and strangely docile - in Cerrito, located about 400 km west of the capital Bogota.

Then Illika, an older female, was found just 200 m from that spot, showing the same symptoms of poisoning - which may have been intentional. According to the Neotropical Foundation, the incident marks at least the fifth time that ranchers have used poisoned carrion to eliminate the birds of prey, which they see as dangerous to their herds of cattle, sheep and goats.

In the Andes, the paramo ecosystem - at an altitude of about 4,000 m - is a tropical mountainous area with hardy vegetation, prone to retaining moisture and resisting temperature changes. It is not conducive to serving as a grazing pasture for livestock. But with development and the gradual disappearance of native wildlife, the Andean condor's habitat has been forever changed.

### The paramos: Andean reservoirs

"In Andean nations, the paramos serve as our reservoirs. Without this tropical heathland, we would literally be parched and dead," Sebastian Kohn, director of the Andean Condor Foundation in Ecuador, told AFP. "The livestock is having a negative impact, but if we pull them all out in one fell swoop, the condor will have nothing to feed itself," he added, highlighting the complexity of the problem.

The Andean condor, one of the biggest birds in the world with a wingspan of up to 3.2 m and a weight of 9-15 kg, is considered to be in critical danger of extinction in Colombia, a nation that has adopted the predator as its national symbol. But the bird is not at risk on a global scale, even if its numbers are dwindling, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Experts say there are only about 150 Andean condors left in all of Colombia, where there is no official count of the birds. Condors typically only feed on dead animals, but it appears that some have taken to attacking live prey, according to residents of Cerrito. "If the condors see an animal move, they hit it with their wings, two or three times. When they see it's no longer moving, they start eating it," explained Eduin Conde, a 38-year-old sheep farmer. In all, 80 percent of Cerrito's total surface area is made up of wet heathland. Many rivers begin there,



Peasant and keeper of condors Gilberto Conde looks through his binoculars in a mountainous area in the municipality of Cerrito in Colombia on Jan 16, 2019. — AFP

including the Arauca, which provides part of Venezuela with its water.

### Poisoning suspected

At least 30 condors soar over the Cerrito area, according to Fausto Saenz, scientific director for the Neotropical Foundation. The foundation worked with the Andean Condor Foundation in Ecuador, the US non-governmental organization The Peregrine Fund and the Jaime Duque zoo outside Bogota to rehabilitate and release Dasan and Illika back into the wild. Researchers, firefighters and police officers took care of the birds at first. Then a helicopter airlifted them to the veterinary clinic at the Jaime Duque zoo. "They were not reacting to any stimuli," recalls Saenz. The two birds also had the exact same symptoms - an indication that "they had both eaten from the same poisoned source."

Cerrito's mayor, Carlos Romero, told AFP that an investigation was ongoing to determine whether the birds were intentionally poisoned. Dasan and Illika remained in isolation for two months, with only minimal human contact and regular tests to monitor the toxicity in their systems. Slowly, they regained their strength.

During their convalescence, a contest was launched on social media to choose their names. "Dasan means 'head of the birds', while Illika means 'lucky one' in the Uwa dialect," Saenz said, referring to an indigenous group native to northeastern Colombia. Poisoning is the top threat to condors in Colombia. The species is present throughout the Andes, from Venezuela to Argentina and Chile. Experts say there are about 6,700 left in the wild. But the bird, which only lays an egg every two years, also faces risks from hunting and electrocution on power cables. Andean bears and jaguars, whose natural habitats have been encroached upon by the expansion of farming and ranching, encounter the same risks. About 100 people showed up at the spot where Dasan and Illika were found ill to watch the two majestic birds return to the wild. They took flight before their admirers - with newly fitted tags so they can be tracked and monitored for research purposes. — AFP

## Voulez-vous take it outside? Italy-France row gets personal

Baguette in hand, beret tilted jauntily, the Parisian looks down at the rowdy, pasta-scoffing Roman: they may be stereotypes, but perceived French smugness is again being blamed for a falling out with Italy. "French arrogance has lost its charm," Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini said shortly after Italy's populist government took power last year. While ordinary citizens still hop back and forth on holidays, official relations across the Alps are icy.

Tension has been building for weeks, with small jibes leading to boorish accusations and finally to blunt insults, effectively killing off political and diplomatic dialogue, according to Nathalie Loiseau, France's European Affairs Minister. The neighbors have often had turbulent relations, but the climate has seriously deteriorated since Western Europe's first populist government came to power in June in Italy, a founding member of the European Union.

### Migration a hot topic

"It's the French who started to dislike Italians," insists Milan newspaper vendor Maria Rosaria Varella, 54. "For Europeans, we are pizza, mandolins and mafia, and that's it. They think we are superficial," she complained. A member of Salvini's far-right League party, she admitted: "We think the French are a bit arrogant. You can see it in football."

At the World Cup final last summer, Italians overwhelmingly backed Croatia. The joke doing the rounds on social media in Italy was that the only country supporting France was France. And while retired France midfielder Emmanuel Petit called his own people "arrogant, smug, lying and hypocritical," Italy's populist leaders appear to wholeheartedly agree.

Twice the French ambassador to Rome, Christian Masset, has been summoned - and both times it was to be given an earful over the hottest issue in Italy today: Migration. Of all the European countries accused of turning a blind eye to a migration crisis - which saw tens of thousands of people land in Italy - Paris' perceived betrayal has hit the hardest.

France's signing of a new friendship treaty with Germany this month to strengthen their alliance in the face of growing populism in the EU rubbed salt in the wound. — AFP

## Business

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**12** MENA could issue over \$80bn of debt in 2019, inflows to pick up**13** Nissan says it's target of SEC inquiry after report of probe on exec pay**14** T14H enters Switzerland with new IntercityHotel Zurich Airport

BEIJING: People leave a shopping mall in Beijing. Earnings at China's industrial firms shrank for a second straight month in December, putting pressure on policymakers to support industries hurt by slowing prices and weak factory activity amid a protracted Sino-US trade war. —AFP

# China's industrial profits shrink again in Dec

## Slowing prices, weak factory activity hurt industries

BEIJING: Earnings at China's industrial firms shrank for a second straight month in December, putting pressure on policymakers to support industries hurt by slowing prices and weak factory activity amid a protracted Sino-US trade war.

The downturn data points to more troubles ahead for the country's vast manufacturing sector already struggling with a decline in orders, job layoffs and factory closures as China's economic growth slows to its weakest in nearly three decades. China's economy expanded 6.6 percent in 2018 and growth is set to slow further this year as Beijing's efforts to reduce debt risks depress the property market and curb credit flows to the private sector, while a crackdown on pollution dents industrial activity.

Industrial profits in December fell 1.9 percent from a year earlier to 680.8 billion yuan (\$100.9 billion), weighed down by weak factory-gate prices and soft demand, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said yesterday. This is on top of a decline of 1.8 percent in November - the first contraction in profits in nearly three years.

"As far as the future trend is concerned, it is quite obvious that it will continue to decline because the (producer price index) has apparently turned negative last month, and when PPI has turned negative, the profits of industrial enterprises will go down," said Tang Jianwei, senior economist at Bank of Communications in Shanghai, adding that the structure of corporate profitability will also start to change.

"Profits at mid- and downstream sectors may stabilise while the upstream sector will face immense pressure." Profits at chemical, coal mining and non-ferrous metal sectors all slowed significantly in December, the data showed.

For the full year, profits rose 10.3 percent to 6.64 trillion yuan in 2018, easing from 2017's robust pace of 21 percent.

Upstream sectors such as oil extraction, coal and metal mining still commanded the lion's share of profit gains last year, but analysts say that as industrial prices slow further or even shrink, profitability will come under pressure. Tang said that if large-scale tax

cuts promised by the government could be rolled out in time, however, it would help put a floor on declining industrial profits in the second half.

A survey from the state planner this month showed activity at 2,500 Chinese small- and mid-sized enterprises continued to contract in the fourth quarter last year despite a flurry of supportive government policies.

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Index stood at 93 last quarter, below the 100-mark that separates growth from contraction, according to the National Development and Reform Commission. Moody's said in a recent report the Chinese government's latest measures to support funding for private firms would be limited in effect, as credit would mostly flow to the fewer stronger privately-owned enterprises.

### Demand remains soft

Yesterday's data showed industrial firms' liabilities rose 5.2 percent from a year earlier to 64.1 trillion yuan by end-2018, compared with a 5.8 percent rise as of end-November.

Though traders are replenishing inventory ahead of the Lunar New Year holiday in early February, demand remains weak. Aggravating the slowdown, the government has also vowed it will not relent on enforcing anti-pollution controls, refusing to accept mounting economic pressure as excuses.

That raises uncertainty on the overall boost to the industrial sector from support measures policymakers have pledged so far. Beijing has promised to increase spending on infrastructure projects this year and boost consumption in areas such as automobile and home appliances.

The state-run enterprise China Railway is planning a record-high rail investment worth about 850 billion yuan in 2019, according to a Nikkei report.

China's producer prices rose at their slowest pace in more than two years in December. New orders - an indicator of future activity - contracted for the first time in at least a year in December. Profits at China's state-owned industrial firms rose 12.6 percent in 2018 from a year earlier, slowing from a 16.1 percent increase in the January-November period. —Reuters

## 'Get a grip on Brexit', businesses tell UK's feuding politicians

LONDON: British businesses implored politicians yesterday to stop quarrelling over Brexit and agree an orderly exit from the European Union, as some big firms set up emergency situations rooms to cope with the possible tumult of a no-deal divorce. With less than nine weeks until the United Kingdom is due by law to leave the European Union on March 29, there is no agreement yet in London on how and even whether to leave the world's biggest trading bloc.

Parliament rejected Prime Minister Theresa May's Withdrawal Agreement, which includes a nearly two-year transition period to help minimize economic disruption, earlier this month. That has left the UK on course to leave without a deal, a step that could snarl up ports, fracture supply chains and send shockwaves through financial markets.

On the eve of today's votes in the British parliament on a way forward, the United Kingdom's shipping industry called for lawmakers to stop arguing and agree a deal that Prime Minister Theresa May could seal with the EU. "We need put aside party politics and in the moment of need that we find ourselves in, we need to look at the bigger picture and look at what is best for the country," Bob Sanguinetti, chief executive of the UK Chamber of Shipping, told Reuters.

The chamber, which represents 200 companies including Maersk and P&O that facilitate 95 percent of the country's trade in goods, said May should either ditch the Irish backstop-the most contentious part of the deal she agreed in November-or put a time limit on it. "In the absence of a viable alternative to the Withdrawal Agreement, we continue to be heading for a no-deal scenario which is damaging, disruptive and chaotic to business, to manufacturers and consumers," Sanguinetti said. The comments from Sanguinetti, a former commodore in the British navy, indicate just how worried British business is about the possibility that the world's fifth-largest economy could drop out of the EU without a deal.

### 'Situations rooms'

May is trying to use a series of votes in parliament today to find a consensus that lawmakers in her own party could support, just two weeks since her deal suffered the biggest parliamentary defeat in modern British history. But as the politicians battle over Brexit, some of the world's biggest companies are having to guess what lies in store for the UK, one of the biggest destinations for foreign investment over the past two decades.

As the crisis over EU membership approaches its finale, the possible outcomes include a no-deal Brexit, a last-minute deal, a delay, a snap election, or even a referendum that could undo the 2016 Brexit vote. "Many of the businesses we're speaking to are praying for an extension to Article 50," said James Stewart, head of Brexit at KPMG, referring to the two-year negotiation period with the EU.

"Nearly all larger firms are now preparing for Brexit, after some came late to the party-however the timing of no-deal



LONDON: Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond (center) arrives at the rear of Downing Street in central London yesterday. —AFP

implementation planning remains highly variable."

"Even our most informed clients feel as if anything could happen," said Stewart. "They're thinking about getting products from A to B, market access, and staffing up situation rooms for April. Forecasting the outcome of Brexit is a bit like trying to predict a greyhound race, there are no safe bets." The Brexit challenges for business cut across sectors and are both bewildering and costly.

AstraZeneca has said it will increase stockpiles of medicines, BMW is looking for lorry parking areas and warehousing on both sides of the channel while P&O said it would shift the registration of its British ships to Cyprus to keep its tax arrangements in the bloc. —Reuters

## S&P Global enters China's credit rating market amid trade war

BEIJING: Chinese bank regulators approved the registration of S&P Global's Chinese entity yesterday, giving the US tech firm access to the country's credit rating market, as the China-US trade war grinds on. The People's Bank of China-China's central bank-said S&P Global's Beijing-based subsidiary has successfully registered and has received the green light to conduct bond rating in China's interbank bond market.

"As a next step, the People's Bank of China will... support even more foreign credit rating organizations that conform to regulations and have international influence to enter the Chinese market," the bank said in a statement. Opening up China's credit rating industry is "an important part" of steadily growing China's financial market, it said.

S&P Global's entry into China comes as Beijing and Washington are locked in a bruising trade war that has spooked markets worldwide. —AFP



## Business

# Nissan says it's target of SEC inquiry after report of probe on exec pay

## Japan prosecutors have charged Nissan along with Ghosn

TOKYO: Nissan Motor Co Ltd said yesterday it was the target of a US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) inquiry, widening a scandal involving the Japanese firm and its ousted Chairman Carlos Ghosn over his alleged financial misconduct.

Ghosn, first arrested on Nov 19 in Japan, has been charged with failing to disclose more than \$80 million in additional Nissan compensation for 2010-2018 that he had arranged to be paid later. Ghosn, swiftly dismissed as Nissan chairman after the arrest, has denied wrongdoing. Nissan was also charged by Japanese prosecutors for under-reporting his pay, and has since pledged to overhaul its governance. Bloomberg earlier reported that the US regulator was investigating the company's disclosures on executive pay. The report, citing sources, said the SEC is examining whether the company maintained adequate controls to prevent improper payments and whether lapses by Nissan violated US securities law.

Separately, the Wall Street Journal reported that the

SEC also sent a request for information to Ghosn. A representative for Ghosn could not immediately be reached for comment. A Nissan spokesman confirmed the automaker received an inquiry from the US regulator, without giving further details. The SEC was not immediately available to comment on the matter.

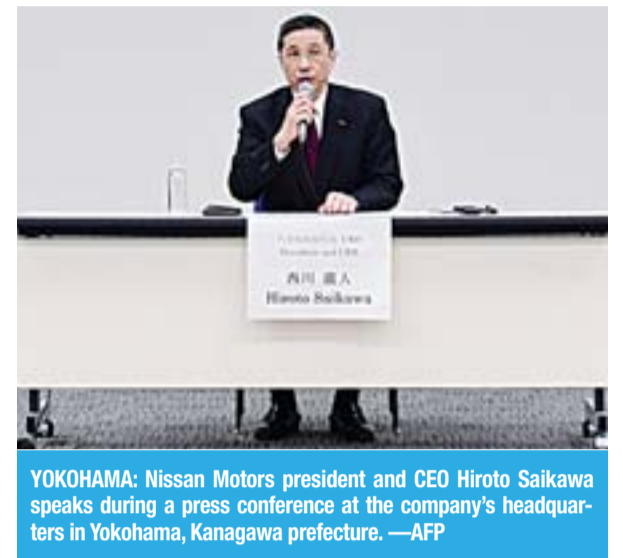
Such an SEC inquiry does not mean that regulators have found any wrongdoing, but can lead to civil cases against companies and their employees, or they can end with no charges, sometimes months or years later. A three-year SEC investigation last year found that Dow Chemical failed to properly disclose around \$3 million in perks for former CEO Andrew Liveries and the firm agreed to pay \$1.75 million in settlement.

In 2004, industrial giant General Electric settled with the regulator over its failure to disclose former CEO Jack Welch's lavish retirement package. Tyson Foods Inc also agreed that year to pay a civil penalty of \$1.5 million after it failed to properly disclose payments to its former senior chairman.

Nissan has American Depository Receipts traded on the US over-the-counter market, giving the United States authority to investigate it for potential wrongdoing. Other Japanese companies have been the target of SEC inquiries before, including Toyota Motor Corp over its handling of safety problems.

The financial scandal involving Ghosn, one of the auto industry's most feted executives, has rocked the industry, clouded the future of Nissan and its alliance with French partner Renault and raised questions about governance at Japan's second-largest automaker. Nissan set up a committee to examine the root cause of Ghosn's alleged financial misconduct and propose corporate governance reforms.

The committee plans to make recommendations to Nissan's board in March on how to tighten lax governance and approval processes for matters including director compensation and chairman selection. Nissan shares slipped 0.8 percent yesterday in Tokyo, versus a 0.6 percent decline in the Nikkei average. —Reuters



YOKOHAMA: Nissan Motors president and CEO Hiroto Saikawa speaks during a press conference at the company's headquarters in Yokohama, Kanagawa prefecture. —AFP

## Greece to raise minimum wage by 11%, says PM

ATHENS: Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras announced yesterday plans to increase the standard minimum monthly wage by about 11 percent, the first such hike since the country's debt crisis erupted almost a decade ago. Greece emerged in August from its third international bailout since 2010 and the government, which faces a national election this year, has promised to reverse some of the unpopular reforms it implemented under bailout supervision.

"I'm calling on you, after a decade of wage cuts, to make another historic step," Tsipras said, calling on his cabinet to approve the labor ministry's proposal for an increase to 650 euros from 586 euros currently. Tsipras, who signed up to Greece's third bailout in 2015, also proposed the abolition of the youth minimum wage, which is for those below 25.

Ministers applauded and a smiling Tsipras respond-

ed: "From your reaction I reckon that my proposal is ... approved". The plan must be approved by parliament in the coming days to take effect next month, as the government hopes.

Athens had told its European lenders that it would reinstate the process of increasing the minimum wage periodically after the end of the bailout.

The suggested increase was agreed following consultations among the government, employers and labor unions. Greece slashed the standard minimum monthly wage by 22 percent to 586 euros in 2012, when it was mired in recession.

Workers below 25 years suffered deeper wage cut as part of measures prescribed by international lenders to make the labor market more flexible and the economy more competitive.

Greece expects 2.5 percent economic growth this year. It also sees unemployment falling to 18.2 percent in 2019 from 19.6 percent last year. The Tsipras government's current term ends in October and his Syriza party is trailing the conservative New Democracy party by up to 12 points in opinion polls. The International Monetary Fund urged Athens last week to introduce greater flexibility into the labor market to mitigate any negative impact from its new policies. —Reuters

## In the new lithium 'Great Game,' Germany edges out China in Bolivia

UYUNI, Bolivia: When Germany signed a deal last month to help Bolivia exploit its huge lithium reserves, it hailed the venture as a deepening of economic ties with the South American country. But it also gives Germany entry into the new "Great Game", in which big powers like China are jostling across the globe for access to the prized electric battery metal.

The signing of the deal in Berlin on Dec 12 capped two years of intense lobbying by Germany as it sought to persuade President Evo Morales' government that a small German family-run company was a better bet than its Chinese rivals, according to Reuters interviews with

German and Bolivian officials.

While the substance of the deal has been reported, how China, Bolivia's biggest non-institutional lender and close ideological ally, lost out to Germany has not. China has been quietly cornering the global lithium market, making deals in Asia, Chile, and Argentina as it seeks to lock in access to a strategic resource that could power the next energy revolution. China has invested \$4.2 billion in South America in the past two years, surpassing the value of similar deals by Japanese and South Korean companies in the same period. Chinese entities now control nearly half of global lithium production and 60 percent of electric battery production capacity.

German officials told Reuters they championed the bid by ACI Systems GmbH because they saw an opportunity to lower Germany's reliance on Asian battery makers and help its carmakers catch up with Chinese and U.S. rivals in the race to make electric cars. The German push included a series of visits by German government officials who talked up the benefits of picking a German company. Bolivian officials also toured German battery factories. Bolivia's deputy minister of High Energy Technologies, Luis Alberto Echazu, told Reuters. —Reuters



بيت التمويل الكويتي  
Kuwait Finance House



Kuwait Finance House Group

sends its sincere regards and salutations to

His Highness The Emir of Kuwait

**Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah**

On the anniversary of His Highness accession to the reign of power

and to the people of The State of Kuwait

on the occasion of His Highness

directives to commence celebrations

for the National and Liberation Days

## Business

# Twenty14 Holdings enters Switzerland with new IntercityHotel Zurich Airport

## T14H joins a portfolio of \$750m worth of luxury properties across the UK, ME, India

**KUWAIT:** Twenty14 Holdings (T14H), the hospitality investment arm of Abu Dhabi-based LuLu Group International, has entered into a forward purchase contract with Swiss real-estate developer Necron AG for the upcoming IntercityHotel Zurich Airport in Rmang, Switzerland.

The addition of the IntercityHotel marks Twenty14 Holdings entry into mainland Europe and joins a portfolio of \$750 million worth of luxury properties across the UK, the Middle East, and India.

The purpose-built, 260-room, 4-star hotel will be located close to the Rmang station, A1 motorway and offers fantastic transport links, including access to Zurich International Airport in ten minutes, while the city center is just 15 minutes away. The property will include meeting and event spaces, a restaurant, an indoor fitness center, and spa area as well as underground and outdoor parking facilities. The property is scheduled to open in 2020.

The hotel will be operated by Deutsche Hospitality (Steigenberger Hotels AG) under a 20-year lease contract. The design of the property will be based on the new Intercity Hotels Matteo Thun design standards, and keeping in mind business travellers and tourists, the property

will feature modern guestrooms and public spaces. Commenting on the acquisition, Adeen Ahamed, Managing Director, T14H said, "We are excited to mark our entry into mainland Europe with our first property in Zurich. It is an important milestone in our group's portfolio as we work towards becoming a billion-dollar investment firm by 2020."

"This is an exciting hotel development and we are delighted to be working in partnership with both Twenty14 Holdings and Deutsche Hospitality. We very much hope this is the start of a successful long-term partnership with both," said Gerard van Liempt, CEO, Necron AG. "The IntercityHotel Zurich Airport launches our brand in Switzerland and adds a highly attractive location to the portfolio," said Thomas Wilms, CEO, Deutsche Hospitality. "This hotel is symbolic of our growing international presence at strategically important locations and we are delighted to have such a reliable partner as the Twenty14 Holdings on our side."

This is Twenty14 Holdings' second property to be operated by Deutsche Hospitality. The German hospitality firm currently operates T14H's Steigenberger Hotel Business Bay in Dubai, UAE.



## Al-Tijari announces winner of weekly Al-Najma prize program

**KUWAIT:** Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced the winner of the weekly draw as follows :- weekly draw prize KD 5,000 - Abdul Qayum Mohammad Ali

The draw was conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Latifa Al-Jean. The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000. Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

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

## Infiniti Al-Babtain unveils Infiniti QX Inspiration



**KUWAIT:** INFINITI unveiled its new QX Inspiration concept at the 2019 North American International Auto Show that concluded on 27th of this month. The new concept represents INFINITI's plans for high-performance electrified vehicles, offering complete range confidence while signaling a new era for INFINITI design enabled by new technology. Infused with Japanese DNA, a refreshed form language hints at the potency and character of the brand's future electrified powertrains.

The development of new electric vehicle platforms enables the formation of spacious, lounge-like interiors. In the case of the QX Inspiration concept, the cabin has been hand-crafted using traditional techniques and a choice of materials inspired by a subtle Japanese sensuality. New interior technology follows the Japanese hospitality principle of omotenashi, creating a welcoming environment while assisting drivers and connecting occupants to the world around them.

The new QX Inspiration is the beginning of a new era for INFINITI and an illustration of where the brand is headed. New technology has given the automotive brand an opportunity to evolve its design philosophy.

## Renault Al-Babtain offers best value for its most stylish Renault Megane 2019

**KUWAIT:** Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co, the authorized agent of Renault in the State of Kuwait urges its customers to experience the best of European performance in the 2019 model of Renault Megane. The offer includes a ten-year comprehensive warranty attached with a special starting price of only KD 3,799.

The Renault Megane 2019 is equipped with generous space for its occupants i.e. dimensions of 4.63m long and 1.81m wide, and a record wheelbase in its class of 2.71m. Owing to its dynamic styling and advanced features, the new Megane represents the next level in the compact saloon category. It comes with a 1.6-litre engine, 115hp designed to enhance driving enjoyment and reduce fuel consumption.

Externally, its muscular bonnet, broad shoulders, tight curves and sculpted slides emphasize its modern, sophisticated character. At the rear, the new lighting signature traces an intense, dark-red horizontal line. Proudly supporting its chrome diamond, MEGANE



affirms its ambition and dominates the road.

With comfort at its core, its sculpted, wraparound seats, worthy of the finest design workshops, the Renault MEGANE welcomes you in the greatest of style. It comes in 3 immaculately finished upholstery, including one in perforated leather. From the speedometer and its center console to the vents, it is jam-packed with real satin-finish chrome details.

Enriched with driving technologies, the R-LINK 2 system and its large touchscreen makes total control of the vehicle only a touch away. Passengers can choose the MULTI-SENSE driving mode according to the mood while staying connected with R-LINK 2 for

more comfort: with Android Auto™ and Apple CarPlay™ and get easy access to the smartphone's driving-compatible apps using the large onboard R-LINK 2 screen. Backed by a digital speedometer, Bluetooth radio with voice recognition, USB & Jack sockets, 4.2" display, 4 speakers, ergonomic center console, large 8.7-inch, intuitive, vertical touchscreen, etc. on board All-New Renault MEGANE, one is at the heart of the action.

Renault Al-Babtain encourages its customers to visit its showroom located in Al-Rai and avail of the benefits that accompany the new model during the limited time offer.

## Flydubai goes to Tashkent

**KUWAIT:** Dubai-based flydubai yesterday has announced the start of flights to Tashkent (TAS) the capital of Uzbekistan. The five times weekly service between Dubai and Tashkent will start from 11 March 2019 and will become a daily operation from 31 May 2019.

Flydubai has been flying to Central Asia since November 2010 with the launch of operations to Ashgabat in Turkmenistan, followed by the launch of flights to Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan in February 2012, Dushanbe in Tajikistan in April 2013, flights to Almaty in September 2014, Astana in October 2015 and Shymkent in Kazakhstan in 2018. With the launch of the new direct flights to Tashkent, flydubai will offer 33 weekly flights to seven points in Central Asia.

Commenting on the launch of flights to Tashkent, Ghaith Al-Ghaith, Chief Executive Officer of flydubai, said: "we are pleased to become the first UAE national carrier to offer direct flights to Tashkent, strengthening ties between the UAE and Uzbekistan via these new direct air links. This creates opportunities for further development of tourism and trade flows and is in line with our commitment to opening up previously underserved markets and offering more travel options to fly to Dubai and beyond." The carrier will operate the new route with one of its brand-new Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft from Terminal 3 at Dubai International (DXB) offering passengers comfort and an enhanced travel experience. The new cabin features a flat-bed in Business Class and in addition to the extra space and privacy, passengers can sleep comfortably during their flight. Economy Class offers new RECARO seats, which are designed to optimize space and comfort so passengers can sit back, relax and enjoy their flight.

Jeyhun Efendi, Senior Vice President, Commercial

## Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on Sunday and announced the names of its winners for the week from the 20th January till the 24th January 2019, in which five winners will receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners this week are:

- \* Soheil Parviz Haji Aghajanian
- \* Mohammed Mahmoud Mohammed Ashkanani
- \* Mohammed Sultan Alfadly
- \* Rajaa Sulaiman Dawoud Mohammad
- \* Meshaal Khashan Rakan Alkferi

The first of Al-Danah's coveted quarterly draws will be held on 27 March 2019, and for a chance to win the exciting prize of KD 150,000, customers are encouraged to open an Al-Danah account before 31 January 2019.



Operations and E-commerce for flydubai, said: "we are looking forward to offering passengers the convenience of direct flights between Dubai and Tashkent. We hope the new route will be a popular choice for passengers traveling from Dubai and the GCC looking for new hidden gems within a short flying distance from our hub in Dubai."

Uzbekistan is known for its mosques, mausoleums and other sites linked to the Silk Road, the ancient trade route between China and the Mediterranean. Tashkent is one of the largest cities in Central Asia, popular for its rich history, architecture and delicious local food. Samarkand, a major city on the Silk route which is

known for its landmark Islamic architecture, is only a few hours from the capital.

Flydubai's growing network covers more than 90 destinations in 47 countries. Emirates will codeshare on this route as part of the Emirates flydubai partnership announced in July 2017. For bookings under the codeshare, Emirates passengers will receive complimentary meals and the Emirates checked baggage allowance on flights operated by flydubai in Business and Economy classes. With the partnership, passengers from Uzbekistan will have an opportunity to travel via Dubai to the hundreds of destinations all over the world.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah second quarterly draw 2019 will be held on 26 June 2019, for the prize of KD 250,000, and the third quarterly draw for the prize of KD 500,000 on 25 September 2019. The final Al-Danah draw for KD 1,000,000, will be held on 16 January 2020, where the Al-Danah millionaire will be announced at a live event.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services. Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's



account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. To take part in the Al-Danah 2019 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw.

Technology

# 'Radical rethink' needed to tackle obesity, hunger, climate: Report

## Govt asked to curb political influence of major corporations

PARIS: To defeat the intertwined pandemics of obesity, hunger and climate change, governments must curb the political influence of major corporations, said a major report yesterday calling for a 'global treaty' similar to one for tobacco control. But this will not happen unless ordinary citizens demand a "radical rethink" of the relationship between policymakers and business, nearly four dozen experts from The Lancet Commission on Obesity concluded.

"Powerful opposition from vested interests, lack of political leadership, and insufficient societal demand for change are preventing action," they said in a statement.

Nearly a billion people are hungry and another two billion are eating too much of the wrong foods, causing epidemics of obesity, heart disease and diabetes. Unhealthy diets account for up to 11 million premature deaths every year, according to the most recent Global Burden of Disease report.

"Malnutrition in all its forms-including undernutrition and obesity-is by far the biggest cause of ill-health and premature death globally," said Commission co-chair Boyd Swinburn, a professor at the University of Auckland. "Both undernutrition and obesity are expected to be made significantly worse by climate change."

The way in which food is currently produced, distributed and consumed not only fuels the hunger and obesity pandemics, it also generates 25 to 30 percent of planet-warming greenhouse gas emis-

sions. Cattle production alone accounts for more than half of those gases, in the form of methane-laden flatulence and CO2 when forests-especially in Brazil-are cleared to make room for livestock. A transport system dominated by cars contributes another 15 to 25 percent of emissions, and supports a sedentary lifestyle.

### Triple pandemic

"Underpinning all of these are weak political governance, the unchallenging economic pursuit of GDP growth, and the powerful commercial engineering of overconsumption," the report said. "Undernutrition is declining too slowly to meet global targets, no country has reversed its obesity epidemic, and comprehensive policy responses to the threat of climate change have barely begun."

Despite 30 years of warnings from science about the dire impacts of global warming, CO2 emissions hit record levels in 2017 and again last year. Because all these problems are interwoven, the answers must be too, the researchers emphasized. "Joining three pandemics-hunger, obesity, climate-together as 'The Global Syndemic' allows us to consider common drivers and shared solutions."

Another Lancet Commission report published last week calling for a dramatic shift in global diet to improve health and avoid "catastrophic" damage to the planet.

"Until now, undernutrition and obesity have been seen as polar opposites of either

too few or too many calories," said Swinburn. "In reality, they are both driven by the same unhealthy, inequitable food systems, underpinned by the same political economy."

The report calls for a Framework Convention on Food Systems-similar to global conventions for tobacco control and climate change-to restrict the influence of the food industry.

### How we eat, live, move

The experts argue that economic incentives must be overhauled. Some five trillion dollars (4.4 trillion euros) in government subsidies for fossil fuels and large-scale agribusiness should be rechanneled toward "sustainable, healthy and environmentally friendly activities," they said.

To sharply reduce red meat consumption, for example, the report favors high taxes, abolishing subsidies, along with transparent health and environment labelling. In addition, they favor the creation of a one billion dollar philanthropic fund to support grassroots action. "Support from civil society is crucial to break the policy deadlock," said co-author William Dietz, a professor at George Washington University.

"As with other social movements-such as campaigns to introduce sugary drink taxes-efforts ... are more likely to begin at the community, city or state level." Nearly all facets of daily life are at play. "Tackling 'The Global Syndemic' requires an urgent rethink of how



we eat, live, consume and move," said Richard Horton, editor-in-chief of The Lancet.

The two Lancet reports are not the only urgent appeal from science in recent months. In October, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change likewise called for an economic and social "paradigm shift" to avoid global chaos.

Health advocates and climate experts hailed The Lancet commission's sweeping call for deep change. "For too long we have been day-dreaming our way to a diseased future," said Katie Dain, CEO of the

Noncommunicable Disease Alliance. "A food system that secures a better diet for this and the immediate next generations will save millions of lives and, at the same time, help save the planet." Industry representatives and libertarians slammed the findings as overwrought and an assault on free choice. "Nanny-state zealots are no longer hiding their intention to use the anti-tobacco blueprint to control other areas of our lives," said Christopher Snowden, head of lifestyle economics at the London-based Institute of Economic Affairs. — AFP

## Electricity-hungry Cameroon boosts solar energy

MFOU, Cameroon: Adrienne Ngonou's 25-seat restaurant used to open from 8 am to 5 pm, shutting its doors as the sun began to go down. But these days it's open until 11 pm - and her profits have tripled.

"We now sell both during the day and late in the night because of the constant electricity supply," she said. "Two years ago, this was not possible." Ngonou's new power source is a government-provided solar array that supplies power to about 300 homes, businesses and other institutions in Mfou, a town of about 10,000 people east of Yaounde, Cameroon's capital. Earlier the area relied in part on grid power, which has been unreliable as

more erratic rainfall and droughts linked to climate change hit the county's hydropower dams, which supply the majority of its energy.

But the \$13,000 battery-backed solar grid, installed in 2017, has given the area it serves 24-hour reliable power - and is now being replicated in other power-hungry parts of Cameroon, as the government tries to plug a stubborn energy gap and shore up its energy system against climate change, officials say. Mfou's solar system was part of a deal between Cameroon's government and China's Huawei telecommunications company, which also installs solar installations, to supply solar energy to more than 160 villages, largely in rural areas, they say.

### Solar's small share

So far solar power - much of it small-scale and often installed by non-governmental organizations - provides only about 1 percent of Cameroon's energy needs, according to 2017 government figures.

Energy expansion plans for Cameroon have focused

largely on fossil fuel plants and hydropower expansion, mostly funded by China. But now Cameroon's President Paul Biya "has thrown his hefty political weight in support of renewable energy and this has brought a new stimulating perspective," Martine Akame Mesumbe, director of gas exploitation at the Ministry of Water and Energy, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The government hopes to boost Cameroon's electricity access in rural areas as part of its "Vision 2035" development plan, aimed at expanding the economy and slashing poverty to 10 percent. So far that expansion has been hampered by a lack of power, experts say. According to a 2018 World Bank report, just half of Cameroon's people have access to electricity, with 80 percent of the supply concentrated in urban areas.

Rural electrification is just 17 percent, it said. As part of its push to change that, the government now aims to reach 1,000 communities - about 250,000 people in total - with solar power by the end of 2020, according to Mesumbe. Altogether it hopes to get electricity, from a

variety of sources, to 40 percent of rural Cameroonians by 2020. "This could drive significant economic change in rural Cameroon," Mesumbe said. More than \$120 million in funding for the push is coming from a Bank of China loan for renewable energy projects, he said.

Communities now hooked up to solar panels - like those in Mfou - say they are happy to have a cleaner and less costly source of energy. "It is a cheaper alternative to diesel generators and wood energy ... used in the past to power small businesses," said Roger Belinga, the mayor of Mfou. Jarome Angwi, a beer vendor in the town, said solar energy to power his refrigerator and premises costs just a fifth of what he used to pay for diesel.

Local officials say they hope access to electricity will help keep young people from deserting rural areas for jobs in Cameroon's cities. In Mfou, "even some of those who left are already coming back" since the solar panels were installed, Belinga said. Whether the new solar systems will be maintained, however, remains a question. — Reuters

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What's On



# Anjeri thanks minister Aqeel and Horeca 2019 sponsors

Manager of Leaders Group and head of Horeca Kuwait's organizing committee Nabila Al-Anjeri thanked to all participants who contributed to achieving the success of Horeca Kuwait 2019. She also expressed special gratitude to the manager of Hospitality Services, Joumana Dammous.

In a statement she made after concluding the exhibition, Anjeri thanked minister of state for economic

affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel for patronizing and inaugurating the exhibition, touring its sections along with heads of participating and sponsoring companies and discussing hospitality issues. This reflects increasing governmental care in lines of business that can help turn Kuwait into a regional financial and commercial hub, she noted.

Furthermore, Anjeri indicated that more than 10

ambassadors visited the exhibition, while the ambassadors of France and Australia in Kuwait held special receptions in honors of participants. "Many foreign delegations also visited the exhibition and negotiated with a number of exhibitors concerning possible joint projects," she added.

Further, Anjeri noted that participants and competitors in the cooking competitions belonged to over 20

nationalities, adding that next year's cycle would be held in the period of January 22-24, 2020. Finally, Anjeri stressed that Horeca Kuwait was annually gaining more interest and exhibitors' satisfaction, noting that the total number of participating companies had increased by 10 percent compared to the previous cycle, while visitors' numbers jumped from 6,000 last year to around 7,000 this year.



## BAS, BAIA open registration for Term 2

The British Academy of Sport (BAS) and the British Academy of International Arts (BAIA) are well-known in Kuwait. With over 1000 registered students, we are pleased to announce the start of Term 2 activities which will run for 10 weeks until late March. BAIA and BAS activities are available for children from all private and public schools in Kuwait from 3 to 16 years of age, with courses that have classes once or twice per week.

At BAS there is something for everyone, being the only Academy in Kuwait which offers courses in 10 sports including Swimming, Basketball, Roller Skating, Tennis, Football, Kick Boxing, Gymnastics, Karate, Zumba and Volleyball. New for Term 2 is yoga for ladies. Apart from the courses, in February and March BAS will host the traditional Men's and Ladies' International Volleyball Tournament between the various Embassies, and in April BAS will have the second International Sports Trip to Carlingford in Ireland.

BAIA will be offering all the usual classes in Dance-Ballet, Contemporary, Modern and jazz, as well as Theatre, Music and Arts and Crafts. Following the very successful Theatre Showcase in January the students will be working hard in preparation for examinations with bbodance, the NATD, LAMDA and the ABRSM that take place from April through to June 2019. Join us in May for the BAIA Dance extravaganza and the Theatre showcase - 'An Enchanted Tale.'



## ICSK celebrates anniversary with Super Mega Carnival

Amidst celebrations of its 60th anniversary, The Indian Community School, Kuwait (ICSK) heralded the New Year with the extravagant 16th Super Mega Carnival 2019, on Friday, January 25, 2019. This much anticipated event among the Indian community in Kuwait, witnessed throngs of people from all over Kuwait assembled at the ICSK Senior campus to celebrate the fun and frolic of the lively event.

The 16th Super Mega carnival kicked off to a

colorful start with a grand inauguration ceremony which showcased the success of ICSK for the past 60 years, highlighting its exemplary contributions in scholastic and artistic fields. The carnival was more decadent due to the incorporation of the ICSK family's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. The magnificent event was inaugurated by the Chief Guest Dr Manaf Behbehani - Retired Professor, Ecology and Marine Zoology, Kuwait University. In his address, the Chief Guest commended the noble cause carried by the Carnival to provide free education to underprivileged children through the proceeds collected. The Guest of Honor, K.G. Abraham - Chairman and Managing Director, K.G.A Group, Kuwait lauded the school for its altruistic efforts, offered his best wishes for the program and also released this year's carnival souvenir.

Dr V Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator welcomed the august gathering. Shaikh Abdul Rahman, Honorary Chairman,

Board of Trustees ICSK honoured the guests. The other members of the ICSK Board of Trustees: Vinukumar Nair Honorary Vice Chairman, Amer Mohammed Honorary Secretary, Agnello Antonio Sebastio Fernandes Honorary Jt. Secretary and Raju, Honorary Treasurer also graced the occasion. The Principals and Vice-Principals of all the branches of ICSK were present for the ceremony. Gangadhar Shirsath, Principal ICSK Khaitan rendered the vote of thanks and in his address, entreated the parents and students to extend their wholehearted cooperation to make the school achieve greater success in academics and other school related programs.

The 25th of January at ICSK Senior turned in to a day of extravagant fiesta, where throngs of thousands gathered to ring in the New Year. There were stalls of scrumptious food and a variety of merchandise to fulfill both the crowd's appetite for food and shopping. The gaming stalls enchanted the youngsters, who also went absolutely bonkers dancing at the Disco. The day further witnessed extravagant events such as a Magic Show by the Emperor of Magic - Ugesh Sarcar, Instrumental Fusion by the Junior Sivamani - Gino and a Live Musical Band Performance by Kuwait's renowned singer - Mubarak. The atmosphere was lit up with the theatrical displays of various cultural events such as Taal Dance, Fusion Show, Egyptian Dance, Dandiya Dance, Punjabi Dance, Filipino Dance and so much more which delighted the audience and enthralled their senses. The fashion show and dance performances by the ICSK's very own talented youth added to the charm of the event.



## Future Eye Theatre organizes workshop

The Future Eye Theater Kuwait is organizing a professional drama workshop titled 'Professional Acting Training Program' at the Symphony Hall in Riga on February 15 and 16. This program is conducted under direct supervision of Prof Sreejith Ramanan, the prominent director, actor, and the faculty of Trissur School of Drama. Sreejith Ramanan, who won the Best Actor Award for 2003, is the director of the notable dramas Ekantham and Misty Mountain Of Mahabharata. A day-long workshop covers various aspects of drama, such as physical exercises, slow motion exercises, directional movements, organic performance, etc. This event is organized for adults on February 15th and for children above 10 years on 16th. As the numbers of seats are limited, admissions are allotted on first in first out basis. Interested candidates are required to contact e-mail before February 5th. E-mail ID: fel.kuwait@gmail.com



## GUST's Fatma Al-Bader 7th to attain full Graduate Scholarship

Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) has awarded Fatma Al Bader GUST's Graduate Scholarship to enable her to complete her higher studies. Ms Al Bader has officially been accepted at the University of Manchester to pursue her Masters in Accounting. She is the 7th GUST alumni to

receive this scholarship. Four GUST alumni are currently on this prestigious scholarship, and pursuing their PhD degrees in esteemed universities like Pennsylvania State University and Arizona State University. Upon the completion of their degrees they will return to GUST as faculty members. This effort comes as part of GUST's faculty hiring strategy to integrate its graduates as future faculty members. GUST offers this scholarship to a selective number of alumni each year to encourage them to pursue their graduate degrees, in one of the QS top 100 ranked universities worldwide. GUST has already funded six of its students to pursue their graduate studies. The eligibility requirements are:

- Kuwaiti citizen
  - GUST undergraduate degree
  - Achieved high distinction (B+) or a 3.30 GPA
  - Strong command of the English language to be able to meet all academic, entry, and other requirements of the concerned universities.
  - Applicants must not be above the age of 28 (as of October 1st following the scholarship nomination).
- International study has proven its benefits to the growth and development of individuals. GUST prides itself in its growing portfolio of international courses and programs, and strives to connect with renowned universities worldwide to deliver a well-rounded experience to its students and faculty.



Stars

CROSSWORD 2122



ACROSS

1. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
5. Relating to or characteristic of the Celts.
11. In addition.
15. Chief port of Yemen.
16. Untie the lashing of.
17. Located in or toward the back or rear.
18. Offering goods or services at less than standard price or rate.
20. A literary language of Chinese Turkistan (named for one of the sons of Genghis Khan).
22. Declare or acknowledge to be true.
23. An associate degree in nursing.
25. (music) A tremulous effect produced by rapid repetition of a single tone or rapid alternation of two tones.
26. A colorless odorless gaseous element that give a red glow in a vacuum tube.
27. Baked dish of layers of lasagna pasta with sauce and cheese and meat or vegetables.
29. Half the width of an em.
30. A large body of water constituting a principal part of the hydrosphere.
33. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
34. A human limb.
35. A doctor's degree in optometry.
36. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
37. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
40. Foul with waste matter.
43. The cry made by sheep.
47. A ship with a reinforced bow to break up ice and keep channels open for navigation.
49. A compound of arsenic with a more positive element.
52. Lac purified by heating and filtering.
53. An Australian state on the island of Tasmania.
54. A very light colorless element that is one of the six inert gasses.
55. The 17th letter of the Greek alphabet.
57. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
58. An antiviral drug used in the treatment of AIDS.
60. Before noon.
62. A master's degree in library science.
64. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
69. Worn or shabby from overuse or (of pages) from having corners turned down.
73. A room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter.
74. A city in north central Venezuela.
77. An informal term for a father.
78. An inflated feeling of pride in your superiority to others.
79. Medieval artillery used during sieges.
80. Slightly open.
81. A local computer network for communication between computers.
82. A large group of islands in the south Pacific including Melanesia and Micronesia and Polynesia (and sometimes Australasia and the Malay Archipelago).
83. Flat and uninspiring.

DOWN

1. A small cake leavened with yeast.
2. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
3. A word or expression used for some particular thing.
4. Any disease of the throat or fauces marked by spasmodic attacks of intense suffocative pain.
5. A user interface based on graphics (icons and pictures and menus) instead of text.
6. Reports of the work of a society or learned body etc.
7. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
8. Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
9. (Babylonian and Assyrian) Goddess of love and fertility and war.
10. (criminal law) A pleading describing some wrong or offense.
11. Of or relating to the ancient Aramaic languages.
12. Wife or mistress of Zeus and mother of Apollo and Artemis in ancient mythology.
13. A river that rises in central Germany and flows north to join the Elbe River.
14. (Greek mythology) A giant Boeotian hunter who pursued the Pleiades and was eventually slain by Artemis.
19. An oral beta blocker (trade name Tenormin) used in treating hypertension and angina.
21. A kind of literary or artistic work.
24. Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
28. A midnight meeting of witches to practice witchcraft and sorcery.
31. A hospital where foundlings (infant children of unknown parents) are taken in and cared for.
32. A person who acts as host at formal occasions (makes an introductory speech and introduces other speakers).
38. An ancient port city in southwestern Spain.
39. Something considered choice to eat.
41. Discrimination in favor of the able-bodied.
42. Make an etching of.
44. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
45. State in northeastern India.
46. Tropical Asian starlings.
48. An association of people to promote the welfare of senior citizens.
50. The boy whose upbringing was described by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
51. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
56. A city of southeastern Mexico.
59. American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
61. A city in central Georgia southeast of Atlanta.
63. Egyptian statesman who (as President of Egypt) negotiated a peace treaty with Menachem Begin of Israel (1918-1981).
65. Mentally or physically infirm with age.
66. A platform raised above the surrounding level to give prominence to the person on it.
67. A member of an Iroquoian people formerly living on the south shore of Lake Erie in northern Ohio and northwest Pennsylvania and western New York.
68. A landlocked republic in northwestern Africa.
70. A Hindu prince or king in India.
71. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
72. A challenge to do something dangerous or foolhardy.
75. Electrical conduction through a gas in

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

The easy way is not always the right way. Today your morals may be tested. Doing the right thing could bring great reward into your world. Even with no reward in sight, the right way is the only way. You always want to be able to look back and be proud of the decisions you make. You are strong and determined and you will succeed. Problems and decisions, you face today could leave you feeling tense and uptight. Spend some time this evening relaxing with a good book or funny movie. We all need to escape our realities now and then.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

If you make a mistake today, you will learn from it and be a better person as a result. You take your work seriously. It's a trait that will help you advance in your career but may be a stumbling block in personal relationships. People are not as disciplined may be envious. Be patient with them. Your good manners and self-control will overcome.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may experience a tense beginning to this day. Your thoughts are deep but scattered. Leave the big decisions for later unless you are in the mood to do things twice. You may have your eye on a prize and seem to be focused on the material things this world has to offer. Today could be a very rewarding day for you in this area. Your focus is far from the workplace today and you may find yourself going through the motions. A special task assigned to you may be just what you need to regain focus and bring you back down to Earth.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You tell on yourself by the friends you keep Who are your friends? Ideally they are a mixture of all ages. They may come from different cultures and different religions. Their opinions may be different from yours. You have a wide range of talents, and different friends can help you cultivate them. They can also provide a network for business purposes as well as emotional support.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

It doesn't seem things can get much better in the workplace. Your superiors seem to be really taking notice of who you are and what you bring to the table. You may find new responsibility is being placed on you. You eagerly take on whatever is assigned to you. You find a sense of pride in knowing you are trusted and admired. You are in the limelight today. You will find this day to be very productive. A great day to share your happiness and high energy with others. Enjoy an evening with friends.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

What do you want from a significant person in your life? Is the person aware that you want this? Don't try to communicate by osmosis. Express your needs clearly. You don't have to be aggressive. Just be assertive. You may find the person more than willing to meet you half way if they have the right information. Virgo. Open your heart and you may find just what you have been seeking.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Make a plan and put it in action. The ins and outs of your daily life have become mundane. You need excitement and change. Even though plans for a getaway may not go smoothly, the actual trip is just what you need to refresh and rejuvenate. Your focus tends to be centered on the wants and needs of those around you. This is a time in your life it will be best to put yourself first. Remember you must first take care of yourself to be able to help others.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Things may seem too good to be true. In an almost magical sense it seems that all of your dreams are coming true. Goals seem attainable now. Everything seems to be falling in your lap. You are being smiled upon and you have a new love for life. This is the result of your hard work and dedication. You may find that karma has a way of repaying your good deeds and there seems to be no other explanation for this vast array of good fortune. This is a great time to get all of your affairs in order and continue to dream big.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Today is a day that things would be much easier if you could just see the future. You yearn to know what tomorrow will bring and the uncertainty has you on edge. You may feel you are facing opposition from one of your elders. It may be time to regroup and reorganize not only your emotions but also your surroundings. The answers you seek may be found from merely taking a step back and taking a different approach. Surround yourself with friends and let your hair down. This may be just the distraction you need to wake up to a new day and see things in a much clearer light. Sagittarius, take some time for yourself and go have some fun!



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You have the ability to get outside yourself and see what is going on with others. This may mean you see things others don't see. It's a gift that could serve you well in journalism or in crime detection. Or, you may just find it useful in personal relationships. You can see beyond the "what" and identify the "why" of behavior. It helps. You may be able to lose yourself in your imaginings today. You make take an idea and totally run with it.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You have a natural sense of communicating with others. You know what others want and you able to quickly read others emotions. You may find that your sexual needs or one of the issues emphasized in your life now. You want power and control. It is if you wish to be the puppet master of all around you. You may wish to help others and think that taking control of them is the way to accomplish this. Just as you have lived and learned, you may need to take a step back. Others need to learn from their own mistakes and you need to step back and let them.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your mood is one of sensuality and pleasure. Be careful as you may come across as being overbearing or controlling; this doesn't work with someone you're beginning to care for. The outdoors is where you spend time recharging and letting your mind wander. You understand that life can be everything you want but you may have to do things differently. A new project looks like it can provide some income. Shopping for someone else is a priority right now, and you rise to the occasion: the items you seek seem to simply manifest! An assertive energy is strongly felt, almost as though you're flying! Dinner and dancing - even if you don't, you'll be around it - brings fun times you'll remember. You could more emotionally involved.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Spiders 2

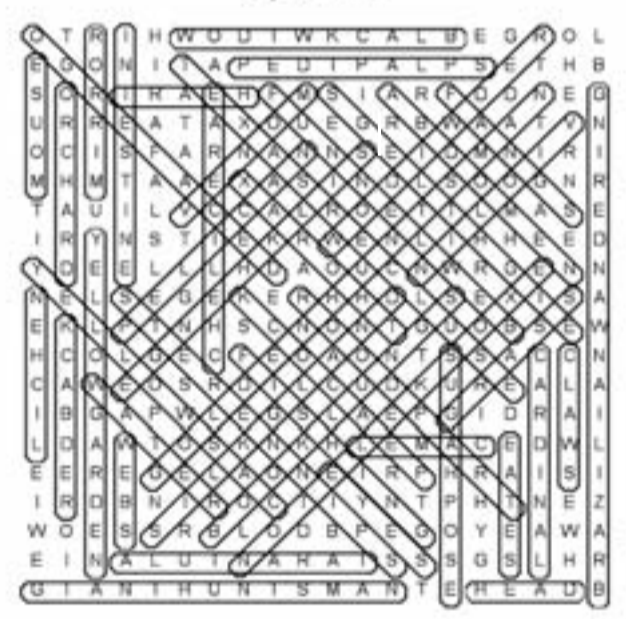
Find and circle all of the spider species that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.



- |               |                 |                |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| ANT HEMIC     | FILMY DOME      | JOHNSON JUMPER | STEALTHY GROUND |
| ARROWHEAD     | FLOWER          | JUMPING        | STRIPED LYNX    |
| BANDED GARDEN | GHOST           | LADYBIRD MIMIC | TENT WEB        |
| BIRD DROPPING | GIANT HOUSE     | NURSERY WEB    | TURRET          |
| BOLAS         | GOLDENROD CRAB  | ORBWEAVER      | TWIG            |
| BOLD JUMPER   | GRAY CROSS      | PARSON         | WESTERN LYNX    |
| BROWN RECLUSE | GREEN LYNX      | PIRATE         | WHIP            |
| BROWN WIDOW   | HAMMOCK         | REDBACK        | WOODLOUSE       |
| BUTTON        | HERCULES BABOON | RUNNING        | ZEBRA           |
| CELLAR        | HOBBO           | SOWBUG KILLER  |                 |
| ENAMEL        | JEWEL           | SPITTING       |                 |

Yesterday's Solution

Spiders 1



- |                     |                 |            |               |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| ABDOMEN             | FANGS           | HOUSE      | SPINNERETS    |
| BLACK WIDOW         | FISHING         | OGRE FACED | TARANTULA     |
| BOOK LUNGS          | FUNNEL WEB      | ORCHARD    | TEXAS RECLUSE |
| BRAZILIAN WANDERING | GIANT HUNTSMAN  | PEACOCK    | THORAX        |
| CAMEL               | GOLDEN HUNTSMAN | PRODIGALPS | TRAPDOOR      |
| CARDINAL            | GRASS           | PILICAN    | VENOM         |
| CHLICERAE           | HEAD            | REDBACK    | VIOLIN        |
| CLAWS               | HEART           | RED WIDOW  | WATER         |
| EIGHT LEGS          | HEART           | SETAE      | WEBS          |
| ESOPHAGUS           | INTESTINE       | SILK GLAND | YELLOW GARDEN |
| EXOSKELETON         | LICHEN          | SILKHENGE  | YELLOW SAC    |
| EYES                | HIRGOR          |            |               |

THE GOLIATH BIRDEATER TARANTULA IS THE LARGEST SPIDER IN THE WORLD BY WEIGHT

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



# Lifestyle

TUESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2019



(From left) Sterling K Brown, winner of Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture for "Black Panther" and Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series for "This Is Us;" Angela Bassett, Lupita Nyong'o, Chadwick Boseman, Danai Gurira, Michael B. Jordan, and Andy Serkis, winners of Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture for "Black Panther," pose in the press room at the 25th annual Screen Actors Guild Awards at The Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

## LGBT teen shines as France's Eurovision pick

At the tender age of 19, Bilal Hassani is already being held up as an inspiration to LGBT teenagers—and now he's got his sights on winning the Eurovision Song Contest. An internet sensation, Hassani beat better known singers to clinch Saturday night's public vote to represent France in the glitter-soaked competition in Israel in May. "I am very proud to represent in being 100 percent myself, despite people who might say on the internet that I don't represent France," he said Sunday evening on French television. Born to a Moroccan family, the Beyonce fan has delighted in proving wrong critics who laughed at the singer they dismissed as an "Arab in a wig".

"I've been a Eurovision addict since I was nine, as much for the artistry as for what it symbolizes—all the cultures and differences that are brought together by music," he said on Instagram. With a penchant for wigs—each of which has a pet name, including a blonde called "Paris" and a brunette called "Gila"—Hassani is unapologetic about what he stands for. "I am me, and I know I will always be. I am free," he sings in "Roi" ("King"), the song he is hoping will become France's first victorious Eurovision entry since 1977. Hassani is vocal about his sexuality and rejection of old ideas about masculinity, delighting in a gender-bending wardrobe.

Heavily made up a la Kim Kardashian—albeit far less curvy—his success owes much to his big personality, flaunting what he calls his "fabulousness". Encouraging messages flooded in on Hassani's YouTube channel after he was picked for Eurovision on Saturday. "I wanted to thank you — even if you don't read this comment, it's thanks to you that I've managed to have confidence in myself," wrote one fan.



This handout shows French singer Bilal Hassani (center) performing on stage in Paris during Destination Eurovision France television's broadcast.

### 1,500 hateful tweets

But beyond the tide of support, Hassani has also had to grapple with a violent online hate campaign from homophobes and racists. Campaign group Urgence Homophobie said it had already identified "more than 1,500 insulting, discriminatory or threatening tweets linked to his sexual orientation and/or appearance". The NGO has joined forces with another group, Stop Homophobie, to take to court "every person who has insulted, threatened, or discriminated against" Hassani.

The young singer has tried to take it in his stride, telling

reporters that winning "the votes of so many French people" on Saturday was "the best response to the haters". Hassani has taken singing and dance classes since his early years, appearing on children's talent show "The Voice Kids" at the age of 15. For his audition, he opted to perform a song by one of his idols—Conchita Wurst, the Austrian bearded diva who won Eurovision in 2014.

He became a YouTuber shortly after and has since won nearly 800,000 subscribers, with videos—often humorous—that start with him belting out a tuneful "Bonsoir, Paris!" With titles like "The time I fell in love with a straight guy!",

some videos are confessional, while others feature make-up tutorials or covers of songs by stars such as Ed Sheeran and Ariana Grande. His Eurovision entry, co-written with last year's French contenders Madame Monsieur, has already racked up nearly six million views online. In any case, Hassani is already looking beyond the competition in Tel Aviv: his debut album is due out this spring, under the French label Low Wood. — AFP



This handout picture released by France television shows French singer Bilal Hassani waving a French flag next to Canadian singer Garou (left) in Paris during Destination Eurovision France television's broadcast.

## US writer Ferris triumphs over illness to win top comics prize

American artist Emil Ferris has overcome life-threatening illness to become the first woman in more than a decade to win the Golden Wildcat prize at France's top graphic novel festival. The Chicagoan—who wrote "My Favorite Thing is Monsters" after being paralyzed from the waist down after getting West Nile fever



from a mosquito bite—is the first female since "Persepolis" author Marjane Satrapi to take the honor. Satrapi won in 2005 for her novel "Chicken with Plums".

Ferris, 55, picked up the award in the western French city of Angoulême Saturday still walking with the aid of a cane, 15 years after being struck down by the illness. She said she was touched by how her coming-of-age tale of a girl obsessed with monster mags investigating the murder of a Holocaust survivor had found such a global audience. "I live like a monster and I wrote a book about monsters. When I wrote the book I wondered if I would offend people," she said as she received the prize at the Angoulême Comics Festival, one of the biggest in Europe.

"It is marvelous that all these monsters have come out into the light to reclaim their due," Ferris, a single parent, took six years to draw the 700-page story as she recovered from the virus, having also lost at one point the power in her right arm. Art Spiegelman, author of the now classic graphic novel "Maus" about the Nazi death camps, said he "started crying like a big dumb baby" while reading the book, Ferris' first published work.

To make ends meet while she wrote the book, Ferris worked as an illustrator and toy designer, making the "Mulan" line of Happy Meal figurines for the fast food chain McDonald's. On Thursday, the Japanese manga queen Rumiko Takahashi won the festival's top prize for her life's work, only the second woman to have ever done so. The hugely prolific Takahashi, 61, is one of the most read authors in the world, with her "Urusei Yatsura", "Maison Ikkoku" and "Rin-ne" series selling more than 200 million copies. — AFP

In this file photo American writer, cartoonist, and designer author of the graphic novel "My Favorite Thing Is Monsters", Emil Ferris poses during a photo session in Paris. — AFP

## Suspect nabbed in brazen art theft from Moscow museum

A man who snatched a 19th-century painting off the wall in a busy Moscow museum and calmly walked out has been arrested, authorities said yesterday. The suspect took a Crimean landscape by Russian artist Arkhip Kuindzhi and carried it through a room filled with visitors on Sunday, footage aired on state television showed. It is the second security incident to hit the capital's Tretyakov gallery in a year, after a visitor in May seriously damaged a painting of Ivan the Terrible. The Russian interior ministry said a 31-year-old man was detained yesterday in a village outside Moscow.

He admitted hiding it on a construction site from where it was recovered, a ministry statement said. The painting, depicting the Ai-Petri mountain in Crimea, was completed

between 1898 and 1908. The ministry published a video of his arrest that showed armed police holding the man to the floor and recovering the painting, that appeared not to be damaged. Authorities said the man had previously been charged with drug possession and was currently not allowed to leave Russia. Police are working to establish if he had accomplices.

"At the time of the theft, the museum's security-carried out by forces of the National Guard and the museum's security service—was working normally," the gallery said. "Security measures at the Arkhip Kuindzhi exhibition and all sites of the Tretyakov Gallery have been strengthened," it added. The Kremlin yesterday said the gallery is "protected at a proper level" but added that "conclusions must be drawn". It also praised authorities for recovering the painting. "Thank God, thanks to the energetic efforts of our law enforcement officers, the painting was found quickly and efficiently," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

The theft comes after a man slashed a painting by celebrated Russian artist Ilya Repin, depicting 16th-century Tsar Ivan the Terrible after he killed his son. Police arrested a 37-year-old who used a metal pole to break the glass covering the picture, damaging the work in three places. The gallery is currently hosting an exhibition with more than 120 Kuindzhi paintings that will run until February 17. On its website, the gallery calls Arkhip Kuindzhi, who died in 1910, "one of the most memorable figures in Russian painting of the second half of the 19th century." — AFP



An image shows a man, stealing a famous painting by Arkhip Kuindzhi during an exhibition at the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. — AFP photos



Chadwick Boseman and the cast of "Black Panther" accept the award for best Cast In A Motion Picture during the 25th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards show at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. — AFP photos



(From left) Angela Bassett, Lupita Nyong'o and Danai Gurira winners of Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture for "Black Panther" pose in the press room.



Chadwick Boseman (center), Michael B. Jordan (left), Danai Gurira (second left), Lupita Nyong'o (second right), Angela Bassett (right) and the cast of "Black Panther" accept the award for best Cast In A Motion.

## 'BLACK PANTHER' SCORES BIG WIN AT SCREEN ACTORS GUILD AWARDS



Rami Malek accepts the award for Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Leading Role in "Bohemian Rhapsody".



Actress Glenn Close accepts the award for Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Leading Role for "The Wife".



Jason Bateman, winner of Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Drama Series for "Ozark".



Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Supporting Role for "Green Book" winner Mahershala Ali.



Tony Shalhoub accepts the award for outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Comedy Series for "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel".

Groundbreaking superhero blockbuster "Black Panther" on Sunday won the top prize at the Screen Actors Guild Awards—a major boost to its campaign for Oscars glory next month. The film won for best ensemble cast, besting musical romance "A Star Is Born," Spike Lee's "BlacKkKlansman," Queen biopic "Bohemian Rhapsody" and rom-com "Crazy Rich Asians." Chadwick Boseman, who plays the title role in what was the top-grossing film in North America in 2018, explained the film's significance alongside his co-stars, nearly all of them black. "We all know what it's like to be told that there is not a place for you to be featured, yet you are young, gifted and black," Boseman told the audience at the Shrine Auditorium.

"We knew that we had something special that we wanted to give the world—that we could be full human beings in the roles that we were playing, that we could create a world that exemplified a world we wanted to see." "Black Panther" also won for best stunt ensemble. This year, the SAG Awards come at a key point in the race to next month's Academy Awards—just after the Oscars nominations, and well before voting for the winners begins. The Screen Actors Guild accounts for a major percentage of the 8,000-odd Oscar voters, so the SAG winners will earn a lot of awards season momentum. Despite four nominations, "A Star Is Born"—the latest iteration of the classic Tinseltown story of an aging star and the ingénue he discovers—went home empty-handed. One major absentee at the 25th edition of the SAG Awards was Alfonso Cuarón's "Roma"—the top Oscar nomination getter was left out of SAG contention.

### Sure bets and surprises

While SAG-winning casts have only gone on to win a best picture Oscar about half the time, the awards are better at predicting best actor winners (79 percent) and best actress (75 percent). Glenn Close solidified her frontrunner status in the race for the best actress Oscar with a win for her searing work in "The Wife." So far this awards season, she has also won a Golden Globe and a Critics' Choice

Award. For best actor, Rami Malek's star-making turn as Queen frontman Freddie Mercury in "Bohemian Rhapsody" was rewarded—over Christian Bale's work in another biopic, as former US vice president Dick Cheney in "Vice."

"I just never in my wildest dreams thought I could be in a category with these men," said Malek, who also won a Golden Globe for the role and is nominated for an Oscar. Mahershala Ali ("Green Book") continued his march to the Oscars by taking the best sup-

porting actor trophy for his work in civil rights dramedy "Green Book." Ali—already a Golden Globe and Critics' Choice Award winner—stars as Don Shirley, a black pianist who hires a white Italian-American driver (Viggo Mortensen) to help him on a tour of the segregated American South in the 1960s. "I am just really grateful to be amongst this fraternity of people, amongst this fraternity of artists who have the good fortune of getting to deal and wrestle with the human condition and trying to do that responsibly," he said.

Emily Blunt meanwhile pulled off a major upset, winning the statuette for best supporting actress for "A Quiet Place," an innovative horror film directed by her husband and co-star, John Krasinski. "Thank you for giving me the part—you would have been in major trouble if you hadn't," she quipped at Krasinski. "You are a stunning filmmaker." On the television side, NBC's popular "This Is Us" won top honors for best drama ensemble cast for the second year in a row, while popular Amazon series "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" swept the three prizes in the comedy categories.

Jason Bateman won best actor honors for dark Netflix drama "Ozark," while Sandra Oh triumphed for her work on BBC America drama "Killing Eve." And Tom Hanks presented a lifetime achievement award to veteran actor Alan Alda, the star of the long-running TV comedy "M\*A\*S\*H" who revealed last year that he is battling Parkinson's disease. "It may never have been more urgent to see the world through another person's eyes than when a culture is divided so sharply," Alda said to a rapt audience. "Actors can help, at least a little, just by doing what we do. (...) It can't solve everything, but it wouldn't hurt." — AFP



Emily Blunt, winner of Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role for 'A Quiet Place,' poses in the press room.



'This Is Us,' winners of Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series.

Lifestyle | Awards



Rachel Brosnahan accepts the award for outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Comedy Series for "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel".



Patricia Arquette accepts the award for Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Television Movie or Miniseries for "Escape at Dannemora".



The cast of "This Is Us" accepts the award for Ensemble in a Drama Series onstage.



(From right) Actresses Kimmy Gatewood, Rachel Bloom and Rebekka Johnson.

Screen Actor Guild Awards winners:

MOTION PICTURE AWARDS

- Best ensemble cast: "Black Panther"
- Best actor: Rami Malek, "Bohemian Rhapsody"
- Best actress: Glenn Close, "The Wife"
- Best supporting actor: Mahershala Ali, "Green Book"
- Best supporting actress: Emily Blunt, "A Quiet Place"
- Best stunt ensemble: "Black Panther"

TELEVISION AWARDS

- Best ensemble, drama: "This Is Us"
- Best ensemble, comedy: "The Marvelous Mrs Maisel"
- Best actor, drama: Jason Bateman, "Ozark"
- Best actress, drama: Sandra Oh, "Killing Eve"
- Best actor, comedy: Tony Shalhoub, "The Marvelous Mrs Maisel"
- Best actress, comedy: Rachel Brosnahan, "The Marvelous Mrs Maisel"
- Best actor, TV movie or limited series: Darren Criss, "The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story"
- Best actress, TV movie or limited series: Patricia Arquette, "Escape at Dannemora" — AFP



Sandra Oh, winner of Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Drama Series for 'Killing Eve.'



SAG Life Achievement Award for career achievement and humanitarian accomplishment recipient actor Alan Alda speaks onstage during the 25th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards.



Ensemble in a Comedy Series winners the cast of "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel".



Darren Criss, winner of Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Miniseries or Television Movie for 'The Assassination of Gianni Versace'.



Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Leading Role for "A Star is Born" nominee Lady Gaga arrives.



Actress Margo Martindale



Actress Patricia Clarkson



Actress Aja Naomi King



Actor Andy Serkis and his wife Lorraine Ashbourne.



Actresses Tan Kheng Hua (left) and Fiona Xie.



Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role for "The Favourite" and Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Television Movie or Miniseries for "Maniac" nominee Emma Stone.



Amy Adams walks the red carpet.



Actress Rumer Willis



Actor Jodie Foster speaks on stage.



Actor Hugh Grant speaks onstage.



Actress Robin Wright speaks on stage.



Photo shows jeepneys during rush hour in Manila. — AFP photos



Custom artwork on the side of a jeepney as a driver's assistant (right) calls for passengers during rush hour in Manila.



Vic Capuno, 52-year-old jeepney artist, working a stencil sketch over a jeepney body panel.



Vic Capuno, 52-year-old jeepney artist, painting in the side of one of the vehicles at a workshop in San Pablo.

## Philippine 'jeepney' artists stalked by extinction

Bernardo de la Cruz casts his eyes around the nearly silent workshop where he used to toil overtime hand-painting custom decor on jeepneys, the singularly Philippine minibuses facing the scrapheap. These rolling art galleries adorned with images of everything from Batman to babies, as well as disco lights and chrome wheels, have for decades provided cheap transport for millions. But pollution and safety concerns have led to a modernization program, with jeepneys 15 years or older to be taken off the streets by 2020. "This is an act of treachery against fellow Filipinos," said de la Cruz. "This is a uniquely Filipino product. We were born with it."

When he began 45 years ago, there were hundreds of artists giving the vehicles their famously boisterous paint jobs. Now there are estimated to be fewer than a dozen left. He has seen orders decline from a high of up to 80 a month in the 1980s to just one or two now.

His canvas is being replaced by eco-jeepneys, powered by electricity or lower-polluting diesel motors. Riders of old jeepneys currently have to climb in through a hatch in the rear, cramming into the benches inside with no respite from the heat and roadside pollution.

### On borrowed time

The jeepney's successor is being billed as a big improvement. It has doors, individual seats, air-conditioning, and enough height to stand up. But it will be mass-produced and look just like a public bus. Skipping over



This picture shows jeepneys during rush hour in Manila.

the jeepney's bespoke production process in small workshops means a loss of the individual style and flair that made them global symbols of the Philippines. "It's one of the most genuine forms of modern folk art that we have," Bernie Sim, a Manila-based graphic designer and co-author of a 2014 book on jeepney art, told AFP.

French fashion designer Christian Louboutin launched a jeepney-themed handbag collection last year, while Swedish furniture giant Ikea painted a jeepney in its signature blue and yellow to announce plans to open a Philippine store. But the vehicles, which were first made from leftover US jeeps after World War II, have been on



Custom artwork on the side of a jeepney as a driver's assistant waits for passengers during rush hour in Manila.

borrowed time for years. Jeepneys are highly polluting, and the Philippines is desperate to improve air quality in its traffic-clogged cities.

Their drivers are also notorious for ignoring traffic rules, and the vehicles have few safety features. On top of that, Manila ushered in internet-based ride-sharing services in 2014, and three years later President Rodrigo Duterte said the jeepney must evolve or disappear.

### 'I cry quietly'

"They have all but stopped making jeepneys," said 52-year-old jeepney artist Vic Capuno, based in San Pablo

### 'Fitness is key to a healthy life'

"There's a local gym but there's no equipment," said Emmanuel Sibanda, 25, a keen bodybuilder. "We come here because it is a way to lose weight and look good. People want to be healthy." The fitness "club" has no name, members or structure, and each group does its own routines, with some bringing along music on mobile phones or small hand-held stereos. They use the road curbs for step exercises and drainage holes for their feet when doing sit-ups, or they sprint up and down the steep embankment from the bridge down to the railway tracks.

Some also jog along the railway, from one concrete sleeper to the next. "That's not the best exercise-it could lead to injury," warned amateur football coach Julius Ndlovu, who brought two young players from a local side for pre-season training before matches start in March. "Many kids take drugs but if they come here in the morning they avoid that," he said. "Fitness is the key to a healthy life-you have to fight against high blood pressure and diabetes."

As the morning progresses, traffic picks up and the small crowd clears off the road to allow cars, trucks and buses to hurtle past on their way to and from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second city. The session ends with a coordinated exercise when about eight pairs run towards each other from either side of the road. They jump in the air 10 times, clapping their partner's hand each time in a final burst of energy. — AFP



People go through their morning exercise routine.



Youths go through their morning exercise routine near the township of Emakhandeni, outside the Zimbabwean city of Bulawayo.



People work out on a bridge near the township of Emakhandeni, outside the Zimbabwean city of Bulawayo.



A man shadow boxes during a morning workout session.



Emmanuel Sibanda, a 25-year-old mechanical engineer, does pushups early in the morning.



People go through their morning exercise routine along a railway track. — AFP photos

## At dawn, a township road in Zimbabwe turns into a fitness club

On a road over a railway track outside the Zimbabwean city of Bulawayo, about 30 people from surrounding townships go through their morning exercise routines. The wide stretch of road is a well-known gathering spot each morning from 5 to 7 am for fitness enthusiasts who stretch, jog, shadow-box, plank and do squats, push-ups, sit-ups and jumps. The nearby townships of Emakhandeni and Cowdray Park have scant health facilities, and the bridge is a safe, social spot for anyone looking to burn some calories at the start of the day.

On Sunday, two young footballers did warm-up drills under the eye of their coach, groups of men worked out together and a couple shared a laugh as they exercised while small children joined in. "I come with my sisters as early as we can, like at 5 am, and we come every day," said Sidumsile Mthethwa, a 20-year-old arts student. "On Sundays we come before church. "It keeps kids busy, and it allows us to spend time together-others come from different places around so we meet here. "We connect as young people and we get to know each other better."



# Race for 'hypersonic' weapons heats up as France joins fray

PARIS: World powers are vying to develop so-called "hypersonic" weapons that travel several times the speed of sound, with France the latest to join a field led so far by Russia and China. Hypersonics are like missiles that travel at over five times the speed of sound (Mach 5) but are able to maneuver in mid-flight, making them much harder to track and intercept than traditional projectiles. France is the fourth of the five permanent UN Security Council members to join the so-called "stealth by speed" contest, after China, Russia and the United States.

"We have decided to issue a contract for a hypersonic glider" that can travel at over 6,000 km/hour, Defence Minister Florence Parly said last week, promising a test flight by the end of 2021. "Many countries are acquiring them (hypersonic weapons) and we have the know-how to develop them. We could no longer afford to wait," Parly said, unveiling project V-MaX (Experimental Manoeuvring Vehicle).

In March last year, Russian President Vladimir Putin stunned Western military analysts - and many in Russia - by unveiling plans for a new arsenal of

hypersonic weapons which he said would render missile defense systems obsolete. Putin insisted the weapons would only ever be used in self-defense, but his presentation featured video montages of missiles crossing the Atlantic, sparking jitters among NATO members. A few months later US President Donald Trump threatened to walk away from a key arms control treaty with Moscow.

## 'Avanguard'

France has already carried out studies on propulsion systems for hypersonic flights as part of a €37 billion (\$42 billion) revamp of its nuclear arsenal. Under the V-MaX project, being led by ArianeGroup - a joint venture between Airbus and France's Safran - the air-to-surface ASN4G missile, which will replace the medium-range ASMP, could possibly be configured to travel at hypersonic speeds.

"These (hypersonic) weapons could constitute an instantaneous threat of a conventional or even nuclear strike," France's inter-ministerial Secretariat for National Defense and Security (SGDSN) wrote in a

2017 report on next-generation technologies. Hypersonic gliders would be carried to the end of the earth's atmosphere by a launch vehicle and would then "glide" back to a target on the ground.

"The goal is high-speed manoeuvrability. That's how it differs from a ballistic trajectory," the French government's defence procurement and technology agency (DGA) said. "Once the initial speed is reached, we can play with speed and altitude to move up and down, to the left and to the right, creating a trajectory that is more difficult to intercept. And, the agency added: "If we are targeted by a defense system, we can operate evasive maneuvers."

In December, the Kremlin touted the capabilities of its new hypersonic glider, aptly named "Avanguard". The Kremlin said that in tests the intercontinental projectile reached 27 times the speed of sound - 33,000 km per hour or Mach 27. "At this speed not a single interceptor missile can shoot it down," Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov boasted. China has also reportedly carried out several successful tests since 2014 of a glider that can reach

speeds of between Mach 5 and Mach 10.

## Falling behind

Harry Harris, former US military commander for the Pacific region, admitted last year: "China's hypersonic weapons development outpaces ours... we're falling behind". The United States, which is developing several hypersonic programs, is also studying the feasibility of creating a space-based interceptor system, in which an orbiting craft of some sort would be equipped with missiles that could destroy an incoming warhead while it is in space. "The US will now adjust its posture to defend against any missile strikes including cruise and hypersonic missiles," President Donald Trump said in January, releasing a review of the US missile defense network.

For France, developing and deploying a device that can withstand hypersonic speeds poses an enormous challenge. The DGA, the French defense agency, admitted that it had "relatively little experience" in the area. "The first use will probably not be for several years, and will be limited in terms of payload, flight time and precision," the SGDSN cautioned. — AFP

## India politician jailed over Modi Facebook post

NEW DELHI: An Indian politician who posted a picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with a begging bowl on Facebook has been arrested, police said yesterday, in the latest example of what critics say is a clampdown on free speech. It follows more than a dozen similar arrests last year in a clampdown on those attacking the Hindu nationalist premier's policies or ideology. Sathiyaraj Balu, a member of a local pro-Tamil party, was arrested on Saturday after he posted a morphed picture of Modi with a begging bowl a day ahead of the PM's visit to the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

He has been charged with intent to disrupt the peace and to create ill-will between classes, after an official complaint was made by local members of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "We received a complaint against him (Balu) and took action as per the law," a senior police officer in the district told

AFP on condition of anonymity. Balu is being remanded in custody pending a police investigation.

A television reporter is in jail in the northeastern state of Manipur for alleged posts that also criticized Modi and the state's chief minister Biren Singh. Kishorechandra Wangkhem was arrested in December under a Draconian law that allows authorities to detain anyone for up to a year without trial. He had accused Singh of promoting right-wing Hindu ideology in the region and called him a "puppet" of Modi and of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a hardline Hindu group.

Police in September charged the main opposition Congress party's social media chief Divya Spandana with sedition, after she tweeted a meme that showed an altered image of Modi's statue with a placard emblazoned with "thief". Critics say such arrests are alarming in the world's largest democracy. "There has been a worrying crackdown on free speech and dissent in India, whether slogans, social media commentary against ruling leaders, or arrests of journalists and activists who criticise the government," Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia director at Human Rights Watch, told AFP. "People are being accused under range of laws including sedition and threats to national security." — AFP

## Amid cool response, US says conference not aimed at Iran

WASHINGTON: A US-Polish conference next month on the Middle East is not aimed at Iran, a US official said yesterday, after key players balked at attending. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo plans to head to Warsaw for the Feb 13-14 "Ministerial to Promote a Future of Peace and Security in the Middle East," which he earlier said would look at "making sure Iran is not a destabilizing influence". But the conference has drawn few concrete RSVPs amid unease over the hard US line on Iran, with EU diplomatic chief Federica Mogherini saying she had previous commitments even though the event is taking place in the European Union.

A senior US official, previewing the conference to reporters, said that Iran would not be a specific agenda item. "It's important to underscore that this is not an anti-Iran meeting or coalition-building exercise," the

official said on condition of anonymity. "From the start, this ministerial has been focused on exploring a range of issues important to the region's security and prosperity," he said. He said Pompeo "will certainly discuss concerns regarding Iran's destructive policies in the region," but said this was because "it's difficult to talk about the region's challenges without referencing Iran."

The official said that the conference would discuss the crises in Syria and Yemen as well as missile proliferation, cyber issues, human rights and refugees, with working groups then tasked with following up. The conference, which Pompeo said will draw ministers from around the world, comes almost exactly as Iran marks 40 years since its Islamic revolution and after the United States re-imposed sweeping sanctions on the country.

Iran summoned a Polish diplomat to protest the conference, which it called a hostile act. A Polish official said that, despite serving as co-host, that Poland still supports an international agreement on Iran's nuclear program from which President Donald Trump withdrew. Russia has also said it will not attend the conference because of its "one-country" focus and failure to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. — AFP

## US citizen leaks data on HIV positive people in Singapore

SINGAPORE: An HIV-positive American has leaked online the names of 14,200 Singaporeans and foreigners also diagnosed in the city-state with the human immunodeficiency virus, the health ministry said yesterday. US citizen Mikhy Farrera Brochez lived in Singapore from 2008 and was convicted in 2017 on numerous drug-related and fraud offences, including lying to the ministry of manpower about his own HIV status, the Health Ministry said. He was deported after serving his jail term and was now overseas, according to the statement, which did not say where.

Brochez was HIV-positive and used his Singaporean doctor partner's blood sample to pass blood tests so he could work in Singapore, the ministry said. His partner, Ler Teck Siang, previously had access to the HIV reg-

istry for his work, the ministry said. He was convicted in September of abetting Brochez in criminal activity, and sentenced to 24 months' imprisonment. He is appealing. Brochez was in possession of information that appeared to be from the HIV registry, the ministry said. The statement did not say how Brochez obtained the data or suggest a motive for leaking it online but only that the partner was believed to have "mishandled" the information.

The leaked records relate to 5,400 Singaporeans diagnosed with HIV up to Jan 2013, and 8,800 foreigners diagnosed up to Dec 2011. Brochez is currently under police investigation, and the authorities are seeking assistance from their foreign counterparts, according to the ministry statement, which did not specify any country. Reuters could not immediately reach Brochez for comment.

The ministry said it had worked with the "relevant parties" to disable access to the information. It did not say where it was leaked online. The leak comes just months after Singapore revealed the worst cyber attack in its history after hackers infiltrated the government health database. The HIV information leak was not related to the cyber breach. — Agencies

## Macron presses Sisi on respect...

Continued from Page 1

a crackdown on opposition that has extended from Islamists to liberal activists. Sisi and his supporters say the measures are needed to stabilize Egypt after the turmoil that followed the country's 2011 uprising. In an interview this month Sisi denied Egypt was holding political prisoners, though one rights group estimates the number at 60,000.

French officials say Egypt is a key strategic partner for promoting stability and security in the region, including in Libya, which Macron has put at the top of his foreign policy agenda. Eight human rights groups had urged Macron to deliver a strong message on rights during his trip, free "unjustly detained" prisoners

and suspend arms sales that could be used in rights violations.

The France director for Human Rights Watch, one of the groups, cautiously welcomed Macron's comments yesterday. "It's an important recognition by Macron of the centrality of human rights in the struggle against terrorism," said Benedicte Jeannerod. "The question now is to know if these words will translate into concrete changes to France's unconditional support for Sisi's abusive anti-terrorism policy."

Macron dismissed suggestions that French weapons in Egypt were being used against civilians, saying they had only been used for military purposes. He also said no potential new military contracts were talked about during the meeting with Sisi beyond a possible deal for 12 fighter jets. During Macron's trip officials signed 40 trade deals and development agreements worth an estimated total of 1.6 billion euros, covering sectors including transport, energy, health and telecoms, Egypt's investment ministry said in a statement. — Agencies

## 'Loneliest duck' Trevor dies on...

Continued from Page 1

He became so famous locally that when the New Zealand Herald's deputy political editor Claire Trevett visited the island nation, she found he had been incor-

porated into street directions. "Someone said, 'Turn right past the duck' and then the whole story came out, the only duck on Niue," she told the ABC. He was later dubbed the "world's loneliest duck" for his solitary existence. Trevor Mallard, the speaker of New Zealand's House of Representatives after whom the late duck was named, offered his condolences. "Deepest sympathy to the people of Niue from the Parliament of New Zealand," Mallard wrote on the duck's Facebook death notice. — AFP

also need to travel via another country, complicating the journey.

"It's not only me who wants to travel to the match, thousands of Qatari people want to watch the team," Qatar fan Abdulrahman, a 25-year-old IT engineer, told AFP in Doha. "Of course, I won't go. If I go I will have too many problems, it's far too much trouble for us." He added: "If we win we are going to cry. We want to show the UAE that you blockaded us, you gave us too many problems, but you will never stop us."

It's not all enmity, however. On social media, many fans from both sides were sharing clips and interviews from before the crisis blew up in mid-2017, when people spoke of a united Gulf. "If Qatar wins we will be happy, and if the UAE wins we will also be happy," wrote Ahmed, who had a Saudi flag next to his Twitter handle. "The most important thing is that the cup will be won by a team from the Gulf. We are one Gulf, one nation." — AFP

nalizes her under sharia (Islamic) law," he told AFP. The lawyer said his client had found out her husband divorced her in 2017 - a year later - after she sued him for failing to provide for her and their child. "Evidence was brought forward that they continued a marital relationship during the time they were divorced, including an exchange of intimate pictures via WhatsApp," he said. Tabtabaei is currently outside of Kuwait amid government discussions on whether or not to unseat him from parliament. — AFP

## Qatar blockade hits Asian Cup...

Continued from Page 1

lost to Japan yesterday, had also reached the final. Seeing Iran or Qatar celebrating under their national flag in Abu Dhabi would be hard to stomach for the hosts, and would raise the thorny question of whether to let senior officials from the two countries attend.

The regional rivalry has permeated the tournament, which is only available to watch in UAE via Qatar's subscription-only beIN Sports, which isn't available even in official, tournament-approved hotels. Qatari fans will, of course, be watching from afar. Qataris need prior permission to visit UAE, and with transport links cut they

## MP sentenced to 7 years for...

Continued from Page 1

"My client received justice after she was taken advantage of and tricked into something that crimi-



Orcas chase herrings on Jan 17, 2019 in the Reisafjorden fjord region near the Norwegian northern city of Tromsø on the Arctic Circle. — AFP



Sports

# George's season high 3-pointer and 36 points lead Thunder past Bucks

## Seven Spurs score in double figures to beat Wizards

**OKLAHOMA:** Paul George hit a season-high eight 3-pointers and scored 36 points to lead the Oklahoma City Thunder to a 118-112 home win over the visiting Milwaukee Bucks on Sunday. The Thunder have won five consecutive games, sweeping their three-game homestand that also included wins over New Orleans and Portland. The loss snapped a six-game winning streak for Milwaukee, which was playing the first of five consecutive games away from home. Russell Westbrook had a triple-double in all three games of the homestand, finishing with 13 points, 13 rebounds and 11 assists. Six Thunder players scored in double figures. The Thunder made life miserable for Giannis Antetokounmpo early, as the All-Star missed all six of his first-half field goals, scoring just three points before intermission. But Antetokounmpo scored 24 second-half points to lead Milwaukee with 27. Khris Middleton added 22. Antetokounmpo also had 18 rebounds.

### RAPTORS 123, MAVERICKS 120

Toronto drained 17 3-pointers and Kawhi Leonard scored 33 points, offsetting a triple-double by rookie sensation Luka Doncic in defeating host Dallas. The Raptors salvaged the final game of their three-game road trip, while Dallas couldn't cap its three-game home stand with a third consecutive win. Doncic, finished with a career-best 35 points, 12 rebounds and 10 assists for his second triple-double of the season. At 19, Doncic became the first teenager in NBA history with a 30-point triple-double. LeBron James had been the youngest at age 20 years, 100 days, in 2005.

### ROCKETS 103, MAGIC 93

James Harden sank his first 3-pointer of the second half with 75 seconds left and host Houston finished off a comeback win against Orlando. Harden finished with 40 points, 11 rebounds, six assists and three blocks. It was his 23rd consecutive game with 30-plus points. Houston's Chris Paul had 12 points and six assists in his return from a 17-game absence with a hamstring injury. Aaron Gordon (23 points, 10 rebounds) and Nikola Vucevic (19 points, 17 rebounds) posted double-doubles for Orlando, which also got 18 points from Evan Fournier and 15 off the bench from Terrence Ross.

### CLIPPERS 122, KINGS 108

Montrezl Harrell scored 25 points on 11-of-13 shooting off the bench and Tobias Harris added 18 points as Los Angeles returned home and trounced visiting Sacramento. Rookie Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 17 points and Patrick Beverley added 16 as the Clippers got off to a hot start by making six of their first seven 3-point attempts, while ending a four-game losing streak. Los Angeles was 3-1 on a just-completed cross-country road swing. De'Aaron Fox scored 21 points for the Kings, who displayed their typical pattern of starting slow before rallying late, but could not overcome a deficit that was as large as 25 points in the first half. The Kings ended a six-game road trip with a 2-4 record.

### JAZZ 125, TIMBERWOLVES 111

Donovan Mitchell scored 29 points and dished out five assists to lead Utah past host Minnesota. Ricky Rubio added 18 points and eight assists and Rudy Gobert chipped in 17 points and three blocks. Seven players scored in double figures for Utah, which beat the Timberwolves for the second time in three days. The Jazz shot 46 of 86 (53.5 percent) from the field. Andrew Wiggins scored 35 points to lead Minnesota. Karl-Anthony Towns added 22 points and Jerryd Bayless chipped in 19 for the Timberwolves.

### SPURS 132, WIZARDS 119

LaMarcus Aldridge scored 30 points to lead seven San Antonio players in double figures in defeating visiting Washington. Davis Bertans hit 5 of 8 3-pointers and added 21 points for the Spurs. Derrick White and Bryn Forbes hit for 16 points apiece, Patty Mills scored 15, and Marco Belinelli and Rudy Gay added 13 and 11 points, respectively. Bradley Beal and Tomas Satoransky led the Wizards with 21 points each, while Trevor Ariza scored 20, Jeff Green and Thomas Bryant hit for 15 each, Otto Porter Jr. added 13 points and Chasson Randle chipped in 11 points.

### LAKERS 116, SUNS 102

Ivica Zubac had 24 points and a career-high 16 rebounds and host Los Angeles avoided a season-long



OKLAHOMA CITY: Brook Lopez #11 of the Milwaukee Bucks shoots the ball against the Oklahoma City Thunder on Sunday at Chesapeake Energy Arena in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. — AFP

four-game losing streak by sending Phoenix to its eighth straight loss. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope also scored 24 points. Brandon Ingram finished with 22 points, and Lance Stephenson scored 10 of his 17 points during a key fourth-quarter stretch for the Lakers. Devin Booker scored 21 points to lead the Suns. Kelly Oubre Jr. scored 17 off the bench and Mikal Bridges had 16 points.

### CAVALIERS 104, BULLS 101

Alec Burks scored 18 points, including a putback jumper with 17 seconds left, to lift Cleveland to a road win over Chicago. The victory snapped the Cavaliers' six-game losing streak and was just their second win in 20 games. The Bulls have now dropped three straight and 13 of their last 14 games. The game stayed tight throughout, with 23 lead changes and 14 ties. Jordan Clarkson also

had 18 points for Cleveland, making 8 of 11 shots from the field, while Cedi Osman scored 17. Ante Zizic had a career-high 14 rebounds. Chicago was led by Lauri Markkanen's 21 points and 15 rebounds. Zach LaVine added 17 points and 12 boards.

### HEAT 106, KNICKS 97

Wayne Ellington scored 10 of his team-high 19 points in the final 2:16 as Miami held off host New York, which has lost nine straight and 17 of 18. Hassan Whiteside had 13 points and 16 rebounds. Dwyane Wade added 15 points and 10 assists for Miami. Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 22 points for the Knicks and was the only starter with more than six points. Trey Burke (16 points), Damyean Dotson (14), Mario Hezonja (12) and Allonzo Trier (11) all reached double figures off the bench. — Reuters



## Who will be crowned 2019 Kuwait King of Drift?

**KUWAIT:** With just a few days remaining until the Red Bull Car Park Drift Qualifier, Kuwait is gearing up to find out who will be crowned the 2019 National King of Drift. Only a couple months since Lebanon welcomed elite drifters competing for the 2018 King of Drift

thrown at the Red Bull Car Park Drift Series Final, Kuwait is ready to rev-up its engines for the local qualifier of the 2019 series on February 1 at Sirbb Circuit.

Last year's final in Lebanon witnessed an exciting turnout, with Lebanese drifter, Oliver El Kik, securing the King of Drift crown after a stellar performance.

Twenty drifters will go head to head to impress the reputable judges and clinch the crown of the Kuwait 2019 King of Drift. Having had hosted a successful adrenaline-filled Series Final in 2017, Kuwait is, no doubt, in the position to impress thousands of drifting and motorsport fans alike.

Red Bull Car Park Drift is organized by Basel Salem AlSabah Motor Racing Club and is sponsored by Falken Tyres, Platinum Gym and Acqua Eva.

In order to be crowned the 2019 King of Drift, the drifters will have to score the highest on a variety of

criteria. This year their performance will be determined based on Car Look & Design (10%), Tire Smoke (10%), Car Sound (7%), Section 1 Drifting (15%), Section 2 Drifting (15%), Boxes (15%), Gates (15%), and Pendulum (13%).

This challenging competition leaves no room for error, as participants will lose points if they hit obstacles, drift the wrong way, or spin their car. In case of three penalties, the drifter will be disqualified.

The 2019 series will kick off in Kuwait on February 1 and the competition will continue with qualifiers in Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Algeria, Mauritius, Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, Georgia, and Jordan. With only one drifter from each participating country, Turkey will welcome the 2019 Kuwait King of Drift at the Series Final where he will compete to claim the Series Final thrown.

## NBK sponsors Flare sports festival for 3rd consecutive year

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) sponsored the Flare sports festival for the third consecutive year. The festival was organized by Flare Fitness at Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) and was attended by a large number of young participants.

The sponsorship comes in line with NBK's commitment to support youths' health. This sponsorship aims to spread physical awareness and attract youth to participate in sporting events.

NBK Public Relations Executive Manager, Abdul Mohsen Al Rushaid, said: "The competition participants were for public and University students. NBK's booth witnessed various sports challenges and distributed rewards to the winners and participants. The purpose of this event was to increase fitness awareness for all Kuwait citizens. It shed light on the potential of youth in regards to fitness and sport awareness".

Al Rushaid added: "NBK's sponsorship to this sports event comes in line with the bank's customary and ongoing spirit of corporate citizenship as well as the vital role it plays in supporting youth and their health. NBK always strives to empower youth to realize their potentials, providing different supportive opportunities".



Minister of Industry and Commerce Khaled Al-Roudhan who attended the awarding ceremony awarded NBK along with Yousef Al-Shaya, Managing Partner at Flare Fitness for its support towards this social oriented event. The Flare sports festival included sports challenges that attracted more than 900 participants from professional sports players and more than 4000 attendees.

The competitions in this festival comprised a range of physical challenges that depend on the strength, flexibility and endurance. All of which contribute to raise the spirit of

positive competition among student circles. NBK has always considered supporting youth an essential part of its social and philanthropic outreach which comes in line with the bank's commitment to encourage a merit-based system in health, education and environment that promotes the best and the brightest the country has to offer.

It's worth mentioning that this is the fifth year Flare Fitness is running the Festival. The Festival is a fitness challenge and a health weekend for sports enthusiasts. This event aims at increasing fitness awareness and elevates Kuwait's Fitness.

## Djokovic, Osaka tighten grip on top of rankings

**PARIS:** Novak Djokovic strengthened his grip at the top of the men's ATP tennis ranking yesterday following his destruction of Rafael Nadal in the Australian Open final.

An outclassed Nadal, beaten in straight sets in just over two hours, held on to second spot in the rankings while Roger Federer slipped from third to six place.

Federer, the defending champion, was eliminated in the round of 16 by Greek giant-killer Stefanos Tsitsipas. Alexander Zverev replaces Federer in third position ahead of Juan Martin Del Potro, fourth, who missed the Australian Open.

Despite his early elimination in Melbourne, South African Kevin Anderson, a Wimbledon finalist last year, moved up a spot into fifth.

Japan's Kei Nishikori, meanwhile, rises two places to seventh after reaching the quarter-finals in Melbourne.

Tsitsipas, eliminated by Nadal in the semi-finals, jumped three places and is knocking on the door of the top 10 in 12th place.

- Latest ATP ranking:
1. Novak Djokovic (SRB) 10,955 pts
  2. Rafael Nadal (ESP) 8,320
  3. Alexander Zverev (GER) 6,475 (+1)
  4. Juan Martin Del Potro (ARG) 5,060 (+1)
  5. Kevin Anderson (RSA) 4,845 (+1)
  6. Roger Federer (SUI) 4,600 (-3)
  7. Kei Nishikori (JPN) 4,110 (+2)
  8. Dominic Thiem (AUT) 3,960
  9. John Isner (USA) 3,155 (+1)

Meanwhile, Naomi Osaka, winner of the Australian Open, has jumped to the top of women's tennis with her beaten opponent Petra Kvitova rising to second in yesterday's WTA rankings. Osaka climbed three places after beating the Czech in Melbourne on Saturday. Kvitova moved up four places.

The 21-year-old Japanese player has only won three career titles, but those include the last two majors, after she won the US Open in September. Romanian former number one Simona Halep, knocked out by Serena Williams in the round of 16 in Melbourne, fell two spots to third. Dane Caroline Wozniacki, whose defence of her Australian Open title ended in the third round, fell six places to ninth.

The biggest rise of the week was by the 25-year-old American Danielle Collins who leaped 12 places to 23rd after her run to the semi-finals. The other semi-finalist, Czech Karolina Pliskova, who saved four match points against Williams in their quarterfinal, also advanced, gaining three places to fifth in the world.

Williams, who fell to 491 after her maternity break last year, continued her rise, gaining five places to 11th.

- WTA rankings:
1. Naomi Osaka (JPN) 7,030 pts (+3)
  2. Petra Kvitova (CZE) 6,290 (+4)
  3. Simona Halep (ROM) 5,582 (-2)
  4. Sloane Stephens (USA) 5,307 (+1)
  5. Karolina Pliskova (CZE) 5,100 (+3)
  6. Angelique Kerber (GER) 4,965 (-4)
  7. Elina Svitolina (UKR) 4,940
  8. Kiki Bertens (NED) 4,430 (+1)
  9. Caroline Wozniacki (DEN) 3,566 (-6)
  10. Aryna Sabalenka (BLR) 3,485 (+1)

## Sports

# King Kohli bows out with India undefeated in New Zealand

## Rayudu suspended from bowling for suspect action

### SCOREBOARD

Completed scoreboard in the third one-day international between New Zealand and India at Mount Maunganui yesterday.

New Zealand	
M. Guptill c Karthik b Kumar	13
C. Munro c Sharma b Shami	7
K. Williamson c Pandya b Chahal	28
R. Taylor c Karthik b Shami	93
T. Latham c Rayudu b Chahal	51
H. Nicholls c Karthik b Pandya	6
M. Santner c Karthik b Pandya	3
D. Bracewell run out (Kohli)	15
I. Sodhi c Kohli b Shami	12
T. Boult c Shami b Kumar	2
L. Ferguson not out	2
Extras: (lb 4, wd 7)	11
Total: (all out: 49 overs)	243
Fall of wickets: 1-10 (Munro), 2-26 (Guptill), 3-59 (Williamson), 4-178 (Latham), 5-191 (Nicholls), 6-198 (Santner), 7-222 (Taylor), 8-239 (Sodhi), 9-239 (Bracewell), 10-243 (Boult)	
Bowling: Kumar 10-1-46-2 (1w), Shami 9-0-41-3 (1w), Chahal 9-0-51-2, Pandya 10-0-45-2 (4w), Yadav 8-0-39-0, Jadhav 3-0-17-0 (1w).	

India	
R. Sharma std Latham b Santner	62
S. Dhawan c Taylor b Boult	28
V. Kohli c Nicholls b Boult	60
A. Rayudu not out	40
D. Karthik not out	38
Extras: (b 1, wd 16)	17
Total: (for 3 wickets: 43 overs)	245
Fall of wickets: 1-39 (Dhawan), 2-152 (Sharma), 3-168 (Kohli)	
Bowling: Boult 10-1-40-2, Bracewell 6-0-49-0 (2w), Ferguson 10-1-57-0 (4w), Santner 10-0-45-1, Sodhi 7-0-53-0 (1w)	
Results: India won by 7 wickets	
Series: India lead 3-0	

WELLINGTON: Virat Kohli bowled out of the New Zealand tour with India in an unbeatable position after a dominant seven-wicket win in the third one-day international in Mount Maunganui yesterday.

It put India 3-0 up and world player of the year Kohli said with the series wrapped up early it was time for him to step aside for the remaining two matches and the following Twenty20 series. "I couldn't have asked for a better performance after the first two clinical performances and just the relentlessness of the side is something that really pleases me," he said after India easily chased down New Zealand's 243 with seven overs to spare.

"I haven't had a break for a long time. It's been a very hectic Australian tour and now I go on a break very happy, 3-0 up, sealing the series and I can relax and enjoy my break." Kohli's 60 off 74 deliveries and a 113-run partnership with Rohit Sharma formed the backbone of India's run chase. It gave the tourists back-to-back series wins against Australia and New Zealand and ensured they will be a force to be reckoned with in the World Cup later this year. Sharma top-scored with 62 while Ambati Rayudu was unbeaten on 40 and Dinesh Karthik on 38.

### 'TEACHING US A LESSON'

While Rayudu was steering India home, the International Cricket Council announced he had been suspended from international bowling. The part-time spinner was cited for a suspect action after the first ODI against Australia two weeks ago.

He has not bowled since on tour as India's recognised bowlers proved too much for Australia and New Zealand. "They are teaching us a lesson and we're required to rise to the challenge," New Zealand captain Kane Williamson said. "The quality they brought with the ball, in particular their consistency in what they've tried to do, they haven't given you much and they've forced some mistakes."

New Zealand, batting first, posted their highest score and longest innings in the three matches so far but they still fell short of 50 overs, their last wicket falling with six balls remaining.

Ross Taylor (93) and Tom Latham (51) gave the innings credibility but proved no challenge for the visitors. Sharma's first wicket partnership of 39 ended when Shikhar Dhawan edged Trent Boult to the lone slip Taylor



MOUNT MAUNGANUI: India's Ambati Rayudu bats during the third one-day international cricket match between New Zealand and India at Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui yesterday. — AFP

to be gone for 28.

Kohli then joined Sharma and the pair swatted the attack around the ground in their century stand for the second wicket. New Zealand, taking a leaf from the India playbook, brought two spinners into the match after the tourists' spin twins Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal took the bulk of the wickets in the first two matches.

Ish Sodhi proved expensive but Mitchell Santner was tight and finished with one for 45 after he cleverly deceived Sharma in the air and the India opener was stumped. Kohli, who averages a century every 5.6 innings, was due a big knock in New Zealand after posting 45 and 43 earlier in the series, but his attempt to drive Boult to the cover boundary was well caught by a leaping Henry Nicholls.

Boult proved the most economical of the New Zealand bowlers with two for 40.

### DISASTROUS START

Mohammed Shami had earlier taken three for 41 while Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Hardik Pandya and Yuzvendra Chahal took two wickets apiece as India shared around the bowling honours in the New Zealand innings.

Only Taylor, and for a time Latham, offered any real resistance after another disastrous start by the top order. Both openers were gone and New Zealand were two for 26 when Taylor went to the middle and Latham arrived at three for 59 with the dismissal of Kane Williamson (28). King

Taylor and Latham mounted a rescue mission with a 119-run stand for the fourth wicket. But after Latham was dismissed for 51 it ignited a collapse in which the last six wickets fell for only 52 runs.

Hamilton hosts the fourth game in the series on Thursday. — AFP

## Sun innocent of blood sample tampering: CSA

BERLIN: China's world and Olympic swimming champion Sun Yang has not broken anti-doping rules, the Chinese swimming association said yesterday, rejecting allegations in a British newspaper that he tampered with a blood sample.

The Sunday Times reported an alleged dispute between doping testers and the swimmer last year which, according to the newspaper, had resulted in damage to a sample.

China's association (CSA) said an investigation by world swimming body FINA had found the swimmer committed no anti-doping rule violation.

The CSA said Sun had rejected an out-of-competition doping test at his home in China on Sept. 4 last year over what the ath-

lete said was a lack of proof of identification by the testers.

"After FINA called up an investigation of the issue, CSA ordered Sun Yang to fully cooperate with FINA and truly report every detail of the affair," the CSA said in a statement to state-run news agency Xinhua.

"According to the final decision of the FINA Doping Panel, FINA confirms the athlete did not commit an anti-doping rule violation."

FINA could not be immediately reached for comment. Sun, a triple Olympic gold medallist and world record holder, was banned in 2014 for three months after testing positive for the banned stimulant trimetazidine during the Chinese national championships.

His lawyer Zhang Qihui has threatened legal action, saying the newspaper reported with "a malign intention" which "severely damaged Sun Yang's reputation and violated his privacy." "We reserve the right to file a lawsuit against the relevant international media which reported the incident," Zhang said in a statement to Xinhua. — Reuters



Sun Yang

## N Zealand recall Neesham, Astle to face India

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: New Zealand have brought in all-rounder Jimmy Neesham and leg-spinner Todd Astle for the remaining two one-day internationals against India, after losing a third successive game in Mount Maunganui yesterday.

However, they have decided to persevere with openers Martin Guptill and Colin Munro, who have both struggled for runs. India took an unbeatable 3-0 lead in the series when they beat New Zealand by seven wickets with seven overs to spare in the third match. Guptill and Munro put on 10 for the first wicket following partnerships of 23 and five in the two matches before that. Neesham returns to the side to replace all-rounder Doug Bracewell, while Astle comes in for Ish Sodhi as the leg-spinner.

Astle, who has recovered from a knee injury which forced him out of New Zealand's series against Pakistan in November, is also a capable lower order batsman in a side struggling for runs. Neesham starred with bat and ball against Sri Lanka earlier this month but was sidelined from the start of the India series by a hamstring strain. "It's great to welcome back the all-round skills of Jimmy and Todd and we're looking forward to seeing what they can bring to the series," selector Gavin Larsen said, as New Zealand works towards finalising its World Cup squad.

"We're still looking to keep our options open with selections at this stage and ensure we continue to learn as much as we can about our players." New Zealand squad: Kane Williamson (capt), Todd Astle, Trent Boult, Colin De Grandhomme, Lockie Ferguson, Martin Guptill, Matt Henry, Tom Latham, Colin Munro, Jimmy Neesham, Henry Nicholls, Mitchell Santner, Tim Southee, Ross Taylor. — AFP



Wu Lei

## 'China's Maradona' signs for Espanyol

SHANGHAI: Prolific forward Wu Lei, dubbed "the Chinese Maradona", has signed for struggling Espanyol in La Liga, the Spanish club and Shanghai SIPG said yesterday. The 27-year-old was top scorer in the Chinese Super League (CSL) last season, hitting 27 goals to play a major part in SIPG's maiden title success.

"The new blue and white player will wear the number 24 on his shirt," Chinese-owned Espanyol, who are in the bottom third of La Liga, said in a statement. There was no immediate word on the size of the transfer fee.

"SIPG still follows one basic principle: as long as it (the transfer) is beneficial to the player's career and the development of Chinese football, the club will fully support it," SIPG said in a statement. The move for the international Wu, China's best player, has been mooted for

several days.

Wu, who can play centrally or out wide, was previously linked with Chinese-owned Wolverhampton Wanderers in the Premier League. But it is Barcelona-based Espanyol who have taken the chance on a player who has spent his entire career in China at SIPG.

He outshone the likes of SIPG teammate Hulk and the Nigerian striker Odion Ighalo in the CSL last season to finish top scorer and was also named player of the year.

However, the comparisons to Argentine legend Diego Maradona—originally made by the coach who unearthed Wu—are way wide of the mark. And it remains to be seen if he can make the considerable step up to Spanish football, particularly at a team who are struggling.

Espanyol lost 4-2 at home on the weekend to Real Madrid to leave them languishing in 15th place. Wu exited with China from the Asian Cup quarter-finals last week following a 3-0 defeat to Iran. He suffered a shoulder injury during the campaign in the United Arab Emirates, though it is not expected to keep him out of action long term. — AFP

## FA Cup success for Nigerian Isaac

PARIS: Nigerian Isaac Success was the happiest African footballer in England at the weekend as he scored the goal that ensured Watford a place in the FA Cup last 16.

The 23-year-old, who has been capped by his country at age-limit and senior levels, netted in the 90th minute to seal a 2-0 win at fellow Premier League outfit Newcastle United. On the continent, there were braces for Moroccan Youssef en-Nesyri in La Liga and France-born Ivorian international Nicolas Pepe in Ligue 1.

### England

#### ISAAC SUCCESS (Watford)

The Nigerian forward lived up to his name in appropriate fashion when he sealed the Hornets' 2-0 victory away to Newcastle with a close-range finish at St James' Park.

#### PIERRE-EMERICK AUBAMEYANG (Arsenal)

He gave the Gunners hope of a comeback when, with his side 2-0 down against Manchester United just after the half-hour mark, he turned in an Aaron Ramsey cross after Alexandre Lacazette and Lucas Torreira failed to apply a finishing touch. Unfortunately for the Gabon star, Anthony Martial's late goal saw United to a 3-1 win.

### Spain

#### YOUSSEF EN-NESYRI (Leganes)

En-Nesyri led a Leganes comeback as he scored twice in a 2-2 draw at home to Eibar. Leganes trailed 2-0 but the Moroccan weaved in from the right and drilled into the bottom corner before rising to head in a second and salvage a valuable point in his team's struggle against relegation.

### Italy

#### KHOUMA BABACAR/ALFRED DUNCAN (Sassuolo)

Senegalese forward Babacar converted a penalty for Sassuolo's second goal in a 3-0 win over Cagliari days after Ghanaian forward Kevin-Prince Boateng left for Barcelona. Ghanaian midfielder Duncan set up Alessandro Matri to tap in the third three minutes from time as 11th-place Sassuolo earned their first home win in four months.

#### KALIDOU KOULIBALY (Napoli)

Napoli defender Koulibaly returned from the two-match ban he received a month ago after being targeted by racist chanting by Inter Milan fans at the same San Siro stadium. But Carlo Ancelotti's side had to settle for a point in a goalless draw against AC Milan to fall 11 points behind leaders Juventus.

### Germany

#### ACHRAF HAKIMI (Borussia Dortmund)

The Morocco international was outstanding at left-back in a 5-1 mauling of strugglers Hanover with a goal and assist for league leaders Borussia Dortmund. The 20-year-old, who is on loan from Real Madrid, curled in Dortmund's opening goal midway through the first half, then robbed Hanover defender Miiko Albornoz in the Hanover area and squared for captain Marco Reus to score the second, which opened the floodgates as the hosts hit three goals in seven minutes. — AFP

Sports

# Ronaldo late winner pulls Juventus 11 points clear

## Roma throw away three-goal lead as Zapata rescues Atalanta

**MILAN:** Cristiano Ronaldo converted a penalty to seal a hard-fought 2-1 win for Juventus against Lazio in Rome on Sunday to pull 11 points clear in Serie A. Juventus had trailed after an Emre Can own-goal after an hour before substitute Joao Cancelo pulled the champions level and then earned the penalty which Ronaldo slotted in with two minutes to go.

An eighth straight Serie A title beckons for Massimiliano Allegri's side who soar clear of second-placed Napoli who were held to a goalless draw at AC Milan on Saturday. Inter Milan are 19 points behind the leaders after losing 1-0 at Torino earlier on Sunday.

Lazio drop to eighth place-three points off the Champions League spots-after their second defeat in a row after losing to Napoli by the same score last weekend. "It must have been the kitman's fault, giving us ten shirts of different colours because we couldn't pass the ball to each other," said Allegri.

"For sixty minutes it was the worst Juventus of the year," continued captain Giorgio Chiellini. "Paradoxically after the goal disadvantage we found the motivation to win it. 'We've got players who make the difference. (Goalkeeper Wojciech) Szczesny kept us on our feet, we were lethal in the end.'"

The champions had struggled for the first hour in the Stadio Olimpico as Lazio piled on the pressure. Daniele Rugani pulled off a goal-line clearance, after Joaquin Correa dribbled past Can and Leonardo Bonucci, with Szczesny denying Luis Alberto and Marco Parolo.

German midfielder Can's woes were compounded just before the hour mark when he ducked down and instead deflected the ball into his own net off a corner. But Allegri's side could count on the depth of their bench with second half substitutes Cancelo and Federico Bernardeschi proving pivotal.

A solo run by Bernardeschi down the left set up the equaliser which Cancelo fired in off a rebound after

Lazio goalkeeper Thomas Strakosha had initially cleared a Paulo Dybala shot. Ronaldo-whose penalty was saved last week against Chievo-finished off to score in his eighth consecutive away match to bring his league tally to 15 goals.

### ROMA WASTEFUL

Inter Milan fell at Torino with defender Armando Izzo scoring the only goal, as Roma threw away a three-goal lead to draw 3-3 against Atalanta. Roma could have overtaken AC Milan in fourth but Colombian forward Duvan Zapata continued his goal-scoring streak to snatch a point.

Roma had been three goals up following an Edin Dzeko brace, with Stephan El Shaarawy adding a third five minutes prior to the break, before the Romans faded under the driving rain in northern Italy. Roma coach Eusebio Di Francesco lamented: "What drives me crazy is the lack of consistency from this team, even during the same match. 'It's absurd to see a team with the same players put in such a different performance from one half to the next. 'We were fortunate to get a draw.' Dzeko broke through after just three minutes for his first goal in Serie A since October, adding a second half an hour later, with teenage compatriot Nicolo Zaniolo providing two assists.

Atalanta fought back with Zapata heading just wide before Roma doubled their lead against the run of play with Steven Nzonzi finding a way through for Dzeko to finish off. Zaniolo set up El Shaarawy to make it 3-0 five minutes before the break but Timothy Castagne headed Atalanta back into the game before the interval.

Di Francesco's men struggled after the break with former Roma defender Rafael Toloio nodding in Atalanta's second just before the hour off a Papu Gomez cross. Zapata missed a chance for a third ten minutes later sending a penalty kick over the bar.



**ROME:** Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo shoots to score a penalty during the Italian Serie A football match Lazio Roma vs Juventus on Sunday at the Olympic stadium in Rome. — AFP

But a minute later he fired in his 14th goal in the last eight league games, for a total of 15 this season. Both sides also drew 3-3 when they met in Rome last August,

a game in which the Romans had come from 3-1 down. Atalanta are now seventh, three points off the elite European places. — AFP

## Madrid get third win in a row with victory at Espanyol

**BARCELONA:** Gareth Bale marked his return from injury with a goal as Real Madrid continued their impressive turnaround in results by thrashing Espanyol 4-2 away on Sunday, racking up a third consecutive win in La Liga.

Third-placed Real usually fare well on trips to Espanyol and they got off to a flying start on this visit when Karim Benzema scored in the fourth minute on the rebound, beating former Real goalkeeper Diego Lopez who had parried a shot from Luka Modric.

Captain Sergio Ramos headed home a cross from Modric in the 15th minute to score his fourth goal in January and put Madrid further at ease, although Espanyol pulled themselves back into contention with a strike from Leo Baptistao 10 minutes later.

Santiago Solari's side restored their two-goal advantage when Benzema struck again just before halftime, playing a one-two with Vinicius Jr and curling the ball into the bottom corner after a delightful backheel from the Brazilian teenager.

Madrid had a setback at the end of the half as Ramos was forced off with an injury and was unable to continue, although Solari said the defender only had a knock and would not be sidelined for long.

Bale came off the bench midway through the second half after more than three weeks out injured and the Wales forward scored within three minutes of his return, collecting a pass and escaping from two defenders with a drag of the heel before smashing into the net.

Madrid were reduced to 10 men later in the game when Raphael Varane was given a straight red card for



**CORNELLA DE LLOBREGAT:** Real Madrid's Welsh forward Gareth Bale (R) kicks the ball past Espanyol's Spanish defender Lluís Lopez to score a goal during the Spanish league football match between RCD Espanyol and Real Madrid CF at the RCDE Stadium in Cornellà de Llobregat on Sunday. — AFP

blocking a goalscoring chance with a foul, and Espanyol pulled back another goal with a wonderful strike from Venezuelan Roberto Rosales. "We played with great intensity and pace and we were always looking to score, and we had the game under control until the sending-off," Solari told reporters after a fifth win from six games in all competitions. Madrid are third on 39 points, 10

behind leaders Barcelona who beat Girona 2-0 earlier on Sunday, while Espanyol dropped to 15th.

"We've scored four goals but the most important thing is how we played. Our hard work is coming off," added Madrid winger Lucas Vazquez. "The key thing for us has been our intensity. When we play with this much intensity, we are an entirely different team." — Reuters

## Zaccheroni wary of 'outstanding' Qatar in Asian Cup semi

**ABU DHABI:** United Arab Emirates coach Alberto Zaccheroni indulged in some mind games yesterday before the Asian Cup semi-finals, suggesting opponents Qatar were favourites to win.

The Italian, who steered Japan to a record fourth title in 2011, sought to take the pressure off his players before Tuesday's politically charged clash in Abu Dhabi by highlighting the strengths of 2022 World Cup hosts Qatar.

"They are an outstanding side who haven't conceded a goal yet in this tournament," said Zaccheroni, whose team stunned holders Australia 1-0 in the quarter-finals. "Their results even before the Asian Cup were excellent. They are solid in all departments but they have some dangerous individuals too.

"They've been together for many years," noted the former AC Milan and Lazio boss before a game that will be bristling with regional tensions over the long-running Gulf blockade of Qatar. "That stability is a source of great strength for them." The winners of semi-final between Iran and Japan await in the final on February 1.

The Emiratis reached the final the last time they hosted the Asian Cup in 1996 and reached the last four in Australia four years ago. Zaccheroni promised his side had extra incentive to go one better than in 2015 with key players Khalifa Mubarak and Mohamed Ahmed ruled out of the semi-final through injury and set to undergo surgery. "The players who are fit are highly motivated and all aware of the importance of this game," he said. "We have faced our difficulties in this tournament in the group stage and in the last 16," admitted Zaccheroni, whose side benefitted from con-



**ABU DHABI:** File photo shows Qatar's players celebrate their victory during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup quarter-final football match between South Korea and Qatar at Zayed Sports City in Abu Dhabi on January 25, 2019. —AFP

troverial late penalties against Bahrain in their opening game and Kyrgyzstan in the knockout phase.

"But we are growing into the tournament and our performance against Australia has boosted our confidence." However, UAE have failed to set the world on fire and fans have hardly been flocking to see them, with swathes of empty seats visible at their matches.

Zaccheroni, though, brushed off criticism of his team's somewhat laboured style in the absence through injury of mop-top playmaker Omar Abdulrahman.

"I don't speak Arabic so I don't read the newspapers

to read what critics say," sniffed the Italian. "My focus is on getting my team to the final and we are confident we can do that." Qatar's run to their first Asian Cup semi-final is all the more remarkable given the animosity shown towards them from local crowds. But Portugal-born defender Pedro Miguel welcomed the pressure of being favourites after Qatar shocked co-favourites South Korea 1-0 in the quarter-finals. "We want to be the favourites," he told AFP. "All the players have the confidence to win this games. It's important for the players, the staff and all of Qatar." — AFP

## Juventus maintain unbeaten run

**MILAN:** Even playing badly seven-time reigning Italian champions Juventus maintained their unbeaten run in Serie A with a 2-1 win over Lazio in the Stadio Olimpico to pull 11 points clear in Serie A.

Second-placed Napoli were held to a goalless draw by AC Milan while Inter Milan lost 1-0 at Torino to slip a distant third 19 points behind the leaders. Cristiano Ronaldo once again shrugged off his personal problems to seal Juventus's victory from the penalty spot with two minutes to go in Rome for his 15th goal this season.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner was fined millions and handed a two-year jail sentence which was also reduced to a fine by a Spanish court during the week for committing tax fraud while at Real Madrid. "When you play like this and win it's a good signal on a mental level," said Allegri of his side's battle with Lazio. "It's an important step for the Scudetto."

Sampdoria forward Fabio Quagliarella has moved back into the Italy frame eight years after last playing for the national side after his brace against Udinese equalled Gabriel Batistuta's record of scoring in 11 consecutive Serie A games.

Quagliarella, who turns 36 this week, is the in-form striker in Italy with 16 goals, five more than Lazio's Ciro Immobile. Italy boss Roberto Mancini watched in the stands in Genoa and former Napoli and Torino coach Walter Novellino says it would be impossible to overlook a player who has scored more goals than Ronaldo.

"Mancini's project is important but we have to look at reality and today Fabio is the in-form striker," Novellino told Gazzetta dello Sport. "Age doesn't count for anything, he's a leader."

Inter Milan captain Mauro Icardi drew another blank as he went a fifth consecutive game without scoring. The Argentine, the joint top scorer last season is currently in contract negotiations with Inter and reports have linked him to Real Madrid and Chelsea.—AFP

Live		Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
<b>ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE</b>			
Arsenal FC v Cardiff City	beIN SPORTS HD 3	22:45	
Fulham FC v Brighton & Hove Albion	beIN SPORTS HD 4	22:45	
Wolverhampton Wanderers FC v West Ham	beIN SPORTS HD 8	22:45	
Huddersfield Town v Everton FC	beIN SPORTS HD 6	22:45	
Manchester United v Burnley FC	beIN SPORTS HD 5	23:00	
Newcastle United FC v Manchester City	beIN SPORTS HD 2	23:00	
<b>SPAIN COPA DEL REY</b>			
Valencia C.F. v Getafe CF	beIN SPORTS HD	23:30	
<b>ITALIAN CUP</b>			
AC Milan v SSC Napoli	beIN SPORTS	22:45	
<b>ASIAN NATIONS CUP 2019</b>			
Qatar v United Arab Emirates	beIN SPORTS	17:00	

**25** George's season high 3-pointer and 36 points lead Thunder past Bucks

**26** King Kohli bows out with India undefeated in New Zealand

**27** Ronaldo late winner pulls Juventus 11 points clear



## Japan stun Iran to reach Asian Cup final

Queiroz stands down as Iran coach after semi-final defeat



ABU DHABI: Japan's goalkeeper Shuichi Gonda (2nd-R) catches the ball during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup semi-final football match between Iran and Japan at the Hazza Bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday. — AFP

**AL AIN:** Werder Bremen striker Yuya Osako scored twice in 11 second-half minutes to help four-times champions Japan into the final of the Asian Cup with a 3-0 victory over tournament favourites Iran yesterday.

Osako headed the first home in the 56th minute and added his second from the penalty spot to help set up a date with either hosts the United Arab Emirates or Qatar in Friday's final in Abu Dhabi.

Genki Haraguchi put a gloss to the scoreline with a powerful run and shot in stoppage time at the end of the match but the contest was already long decided. Iran had been the form team of the tournament but their dreams of a ending a 43-year wait for a fourth continental title were left in tatters by the clinical Samurai Blue.

Carlos Queiroz announced in the post-match news conference that his nearly eight-year run as Iran coach, which took in two World Cups, was over. "I think the simplest thing to do is to copy the old song: 'and now, the end is here'," the Portuguese said, misquoting the song Frank Sinatra made famous.

"I'm happy and proud to say I did it my way." Roared on by a noisy majority of the crowd, the Iranians had enjoyed the better of a competitive, if goalless, first half but were completely deflated by Osako's twin strikes and never looked like fighting their way back into the match.

"We knew it was going to be tough but the players showed great fighting spirit," said Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu. "I'm happy the players showed that fighting spirit and really went for the win." While Iran

might have had a case that Morteza Pournazeri's arm blocked Takumi Minamino's cross accidentally for the penalty, the opening goal was down to the sort of lapse of concentration that Queiroz has warned his team against.

Minamino had made a break down the left and crumpled to the floor on the edge of the area looking for a free kick or penalty. None was forthcoming but while defender Ehsan Hajsafi was asking the referee to book the striker for a dive, Minamino raced to retrieve the ball and crossed it from the corner flag for Osako to head home unchallenged.

"It was very competitive, quite balanced game, until one error by my team, a naive error. We were all expecting action from the referee over the simulation," said Queiroz. "It was an emotional breakdown from my players and after that there was only one team on the pitch."

It was the first goal Iran had conceded in six games at the tournament but winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh came close to equalising five minutes later with a free kick that forced a good save out of Shuichi Gonda.

The second blow landed soon afterwards when the referee pointed to the spot after the ball had struck Pournazeri on the arm, confirming his decision following a look at the TV pictures on the sideline.

Osako sent goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand the wrong way from the spot and a fifth final in the last eight versions of the continental championship look assured, Haraguchi helping to wrap up their first win by a margin of more than one goal at the tournament. —Reuters

## Kuwait SC wins HH Crown Prince Football Cup



KUWAIT: Kuwait SC players celebrate their victory after winning His Highness the Crown Prince Football Cup in Kuwait yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al Zayyat

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait SC won His Highness the Crown Prince Football Cup after beating rival Qadsia SC 1-0 yesterday. Faisal Zayed scored Kuwait's sole goal to give the club's seventh Crown Prince Football Cup title. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attended the final match. The first half witnessed moder-

ate performance by both teams but Zayed's goal broke the silence of the fans. The first half ended with Kuwait leading by one goal. Qadsia put on a better show in the second half but was unable to level the score sheet. The final match was attended by FIFA President Gianni Infantino and top official. Qadsia reached the finals after beating Al-

Arabi SC 2-1, while Kuwait's difficult 2-1 win over Al-Nasr took the team to yesterday's clash. His Highness the Crown Prince Football Cup was first held in season 1993-94. Qadsia SC has nine titles under its belt, followed by Al-Arabi and Kuwait with seven each. Salmiya SC won the Cup twice and Kazma once. — KUNA