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Lawmaker calls for halt on employing unskilled expats

Panel rules premier grilling unconstitutional

Amir hoists flag at Bayan Palace



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah kisses the Kuwaiti flag before raising it during a flag hoisting ceremony at Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA (See Page 3)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Head of a National Assembly committee entrusted with urging government agencies to employ more Kuwaitis by replacing expatriates yesterday called on the government to immediately stop employing unskilled expatriates and implement a real replacement policy. MP Khalil Al-Saleh, head of the human resources development committee, complained that government agencies and ministries do not provide accurate and updated statistics about replacement of expatriates by Kuwaitis and the unemployment crisis among nationals.

The lawmaker demanded that the government should provide the committee with regular statistics about the number of expatriates who have been dismissed and the number of Kuwaitis who were appointed in their place. Saleh said he plans to submit a detailed report to Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem about how government departments fail to provide the required replacement timelines to enable the committee to devise a strategy based on solid and real figures.

The lawmaker called on the government to "immediately halt the appointment of unskilled expatriates and implement a real and effective replacement policy" and stop appointing expatriates under other categories to avoid including them in statistics. Saleh said the committee's patience is about to run out because government authorities responsible for replacement are clearly in favor of expatriates despite the fact that their technical standards are poor, excluding

skilled manpower.

Meanwhile, the Assembly's legal and legislative committee has decided that the grilling filed against the prime minister by MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri in November is unconstitutional, rapporteur of the panel said. MP Khalil Abul said the committee received the final report from constitutional experts and yesterday met and decided unanimously that the grilling violates the constitution. But the lawmaker said he is not sure if the committee report on the issue will be ready in time to be debated in today's regular Assembly session, adding that he doubts it will be ready.

The grilling was submitted by the opposition lawmaker in November, holding the premier of being responsible for the failure of government agencies in dealing effectively with torrential rain that lashed the country, causing heavy damage. The Assembly will debate and vote on whether to accept or reject the report. Muwaizri did not comment on the outcome of the decision of the committee and had declined to attend its meetings to explain his viewpoint.

Muwaizri however warned Housing Minister Jenan Bushehri about providing what he claims "false information" about him in response to a parliamentary question. He said the minister has to be ready and has to prepare the documents necessary to prove her claims against him. The Assembly is expected to debate today another controversial issue about the amended version of the early retirement law over which there are several conflicting views by lawmakers.

Bibi expected to leave Pak after acquittal upheld

ISLAMABAD: Asia Bibi, the Christian woman at the center of a blasphemy row which has ignited violent protests, been linked to two assassinations and spotlighted religious

extremism in Pakistan, is expected to leave the country after its top court yesterday upheld her acquittal. When she will leave and where she will go remain to be seen, however, with rampant unconfirmed speculation she will seek asylum in a North American or European country.

Bibi, a laborer from Pakistan's central Punjab province, spent eight years awaiting execution before the Supreme Court overturned her death sentence for blasphemy in October last year - prompting days of violent Islamist demonstrations. As part of a deal with protesters to end the violence, the government allowed a petition demand-

ing an appeal against the court's acquittal. Bibi has been held in protective custody since, with authorities refusing to reveal her whereabouts for fear she will be targeted by vigilantes.

But Chief Justice Asif Saeed Khosa - considered Pakistan's top expert in criminal law - threw the petition out "on merit" yesterday, lifting the last legal hurdle in the case and paving the way for her to leave the country. Moments after the ruling was announced, Bibi's lawyer Saif-ul-Mulook hinted that his client's move could be imminent.

Continued on Page 24

Kuwait improves seven ranks in corruption index

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait improved seven ranks in the latest Corruption Perception Index released by Transparency International yesterday, marking a notable recovery after it recorded its lowest mark in six years last year. The Corruption Perception Index 2018 ranks Kuwait 78th out of 180 countries, with a score of 41 points out of a possible 100. Kuwait had ranked 85th out of 161 countries in the 2017 index, in which it scored 39 points.

Kuwait was tied in 78th place in this year's index with six other countries - Burkina Faso, Ghana, India, Lesotho, Trinidad and Tobago and Turkey, all of whom finished with 41 points as well. Kuwait maintained its eighth rank among Arab countries, trailing the United Arab Emirates (23rd worldwide), Qatar (33), Oman (53), Jordan (58), Saudi Arabia (58), Morocco (73) and Tunisia (73).

Public Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) chief Abdul Rahman Al-Namash pointed out that the relative progress made by Kuwait is a good thing and represents a push forward towards boosting efforts to enhance integrity and fight corruption. He also expressed hope that the government's and Nazaha's efforts in this regard will help achieve more positive results and move Kuwait to a more deserved rank on the index.

Continued on Page 24

Kuwait Times lensman scoops top prize



(Left) Kuwait Times photographer Yasser Al-Zayyat (right) receives the first-place award in the photography category of the Sheikh Mubarak Al-Hamad Journalism Excellence Award from Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah during a grand ceremony to honor prizewinners at JW Marriott Hotel yesterday. (Right) The winning image, which shows people having fun with a boat on a flooded road in Daiya on Nov 14, 2018 following heavy rain that lashed the country.



Local

Amir meets Jordan Senate Chairman, receives letter from Jordanian King

Amir meets FIFA President, Arab-International Relations Council members



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of Jordan's Senate Faisal Al-Fayez. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with members of the Arab-International Relations Council.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with FIFA President Gianni Infantino.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the visiting Chairman of Jordan's Senate Faisal Al-Fayez and his accompanying delegation.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah hosted at Bayan Palace yesterday National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and the visiting Chairman of Jordan's Senate Faisal Al-Fayez, who handed His Highness a written message from Jordanian King Abdullah II, dealing with the deeply rooted brotherly and historic relations between the two countries and brotherly peoples. The Jordanian Monarch, in the letter, expressed appreciation of His Highness the Amir's brotherly and noble stances in support of the Kingdom, affirming desire to broaden mutual cooperation between the two countries. Moreover, King Abdullah affirmed keenness to discuss with the Kuwaiti leadership all issues that could help in reactivating joint Arab cooperation to face various challenges, concluding his message with an invitation to His Highness to visit the Kingdom.

Among yesterday's activities was His Highness the Amir hosting of His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Earlier yesterday, he received the visiting FIFA President Gianni Infantino and Chairman of the Kuwaiti Football Association Sheikh Ahmad Yousef Al-Saud Al-Sabah. Among His Highness' guests were



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

Chairman of the Arab-International Relations Council Mohammad Al-Sagr and members of the council whose board of trustees had held their eighth session.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met with the visiting Chairman of Jordan's Senate Faisal Al-Fayez and his accompanying delegation. The meeting was attended by Director of Protocols and

Ceremonials at His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. Also yesterday, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

In the meantime, His Highness the Prime



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the Chairman of Jordan's Senate Faisal Al-Fayez.

Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received Chairman of Jordan's Senate Faisal Al-Fayez and the delegation accompanying him. Undersecretary at His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Etimad Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the head of the accompanying mission of honor MP Dr Ouda Al-Ruwaiee attended the reception.

Also yesterday, His Highness the Prime

Minister received the visiting former Qatari Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and member of the Arab and International Relations Council Sheikh Hamad bin Jasssem Al Thani on the occasion of the council's 8th meeting. Furthermore, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak received Lieutenant General Dr Ahmad Al-Meshaal, who presented His Highness with a copy of his book on penal procedures and trials' law. — KUNA

FM receives new envoys' credentials

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday received credentials of the newly-appointed UAE Ambassador to Kuwait Saqer Nasser Al-Raesi. During a meeting in his office, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled expressed his best wishes to the newly appointed Ambassador and hoped that the diplomat will continue to bolster bilateral relations between the two nations.

Later yesterday, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received credentials of the newly-appointed Ambassador of Somalia to Kuwait Mohammad Abdullah Adwa. During a meeting in his office, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled expressed his best wishes to the newly appointed Ambassador and hoped that the diplomat will continue to bolster bilateral relations between the two nations.

The meetings were attended by Deputy Foreign



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives the newly-appointed UAE Ambassador to Kuwait Saqer Nasser Al-Raesi. — KUNA photos

Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocols Ambassador Dhari Al-Ajran, Acting Assistant Foreign Minister for the Office of Deputy



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives the newly-appointed Ambassador of Somalia to Kuwait Mohammad Abdullah Adwa.

Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ambassador Saleh Al-Loughani and a number of officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. —KUNA

UAE, Kuwait eye closer military cooperation

ABU DHABI: UAE Minister of State for Defense Affairs Mohammad Al-Bowardi met yesterday with the visiting Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. They discussed ways of promoting and developing bilateral cooperation in various domains, mainly the defensive one, the UAE's state-owned news agency (WAM) reported. During the encounter, the UAE minister hailed the depth of brotherly distinguished relations between the UAE and Kuwait, pointing to people-to-people historical bonds, it added. Both ministers also exchanged views on a host of regional and international issues that concern the two Gulf countries, it noted. — KUNA



ABU DHABI: UAE Minister of State for Defense Affairs Mohammad Al-Bowardi meets with the visiting Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Former Qatari FM frowns upon Trump's 'deal of the century'

KUWAIT: A US-proposed Middle East peace plan billed as the "deal of the century" is a no-win situation for Arabs, a former Qatari foreign minister said yesterday, suggesting a more feasible Arab initiative to end the decades-long conflict. The Arab peace initiative ensures that Palestinians are not deprived of their inalienable rights, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al-Thani



bin Jassim Al-Thani said on the sidelines of the International Conference of the Council for Arab and International Relations. He questioned the general motive behind the US plan, saying he does not "oppose" relations with Israel so long as it leads to peace in the Middle East. He backed a two-state solution to the Middle East conflict, which envisages an "independent state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel." On the Council for Arab and International Relations, which kicked off its meeting earlier yesterday with prominent Arab political figures attending, he said it delves into issues concerning the wider Arab region, chief among them the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. US President Donald Trump has pledged to pursue a "deal of the century" between Israel and the Palestinians. — KUNA

Local



KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti flag is raised during a ceremony held at Bayan Palace yesterday. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah greets servicemen during the ceremony.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attend the flag hoisting ceremony.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is handed the Kuwaiti flag.



Servicemen carry Kuwait's flag.

Amir hoists Kuwait's flag at Bayan Palace

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday attended and patronized the ceremony of hoisting the Kuwaiti flag at Bayan Palace, where the national event was capped with His Highness personally raising the flag. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and other senior state officials attended the event. His Highness the Amir, whose motorcade had

arrived at the venue to a 21-gun salute, amid an impassioned welcome by police officers and National Guards, personally hoisted the state's flag. Then, a brass band played the National Anthem. Adding to the air of patriotic fervor prevailing at the venue, Major Fahad Humoud Al-Shemmari recited a patriotic poem, hailing His Highness the Amir's traits, pledging long-life allegiance and vowing to give all possible sacrifices to safeguard the homeland. The ceremony proceeded with the Armed Forces presenting a memorial present to His Highness the Amir. — KUNA



Senior officials attend the ceremony.



Officials in attendance.



The marching band parades during the ceremony.

Kuwaiti flag flutters aloft to kick off national celebrations



KUWAIT: Hawally Governor Lieutenant General Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah raises Kuwait's flag during a ceremony yesterday. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh, Joseph Shagra and KUNA



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Sabah kisses the flag during a ceremony yesterday.



Capital Governor Lieutenant General Thabet Al-Muhana delivers a speech during a flag hoisting ceremony yesterday.



Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Hamad Al-Sabah raises Kuwait's flag during a ceremony yesterday.

KUWAIT: A festive atmosphere pervaded Kuwait's six governorates yesterday as a nationwide flag-hoisting ceremony was held to usher in national celebrations and mark the 13th anniversary of the ascendency of His Highness the Amir. Leading the festivities in their respective administrative divisions as Kuwait celebrates its 58th Independence Day and 28th Liberation Day, the country's six governors conveyed their heartiest congratulations to the Kuwaiti leadership and people over the joyous occasion. The occasion is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the Kuwaiti people, all of which epitomize the patriotic zeal they exude, said Hawally Governor Lieutenant General Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah.

Kuwaitis are also rejoicing over the 13th anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's rise to power, making this year's celebrations all the more special.

Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Sabah pointed out. Weighing in on the festivities, Capital Governor Lieutenant General Thabet Al-Muhana said the celebrations are a chance to reflect on the Gulf state's illustrious past and look forward to a prosperous future.

Jahra Governor Lieutenant General Fahad Al-Amir said the celebrations are also a reminder of the need to preserve national unity, which is crucial to keep the country on a path towards prosperity. Extending his congratulation to His Highness the Amir, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Lieutenant General Ahmad Al-Rujaib wished him good health, happiness and success as he continues to lead the nation to glory. Similarly, Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Hamad Al-Sabah wished the Kuwaiti leadership and people well, saying the entire nation is proud of the unprecedented levels of development the country has seen. — KUNA



Jahra Governor Lieutenant General Fahad Al-Amir raises Kuwait's flag during a ceremony yesterday.

Local

Confronting old, emerging problems top Arab duty: Siniora

Arabs need to invest in health, education, basic services: Former Lebanese PM

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Arab Planning Institute of Kuwait (API) organized a talk presented by former Lebanese prime minister Fuad Siniora, under the title "Issues of the Present" on Monday at its headquarters. Siniora affirmed that the top duty of Arab countries is to confront old and emerging problems in the region, especially the repercussions of the so-called Arab Spring. He explained that the problems of the Arab world are the result of three main things - the breakdown of the state system in many parts of the Arab world, failure of addressing internal problems and reducing the effectiveness of Arab institutions, as well as regional and international interventions.

As for the strategic vacuum, Siniora said that the first person to speak about it was the former Saudi foreign minister, the late Prince Saud Al-Faisal, who realized the extent of the danger posed by regional and international interference in Arab security. He stressed the need to emphasize the concept of Arabization set by the Arab League at the summit level in 2007. He said this is not an ethnic concept, but a united cultural identity and common cultural framework

based on spiritual, moral and human values.

Strategic group
Siniora called for the creation of a "strategic group" of Arab states that would push for the implementation of international resolutions with regards to the so-called



Talk hosted at Arab Planning Institute

Arab Spring to be ready to participate closely with the aim of achieving national and Arab progress. He spoke of three tasks for the proposed Arab strategic group: to work with the administrations of fractured countries to restore stability, immunity and urban, economic, political and social rehabilitation; the continuation of communications with major powers to urge the

enforcement of international resolutions on these countries; and to launch one or more initiatives on promoting common interests on the basis of serious and consistent mutual respect as well as adherence to the rule of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states.

Siniora said that there are seven important factors for the Arab world to enter the modern era and achieve sustained stability. "These are: Invest in education, where statistics indicate that a quarter of the children of the Arab world are of basic education age, investing in the health sector, investing in basic services such as the urgent need to strengthen and raise the levels of infrastructure of electricity, communications, roads, transportation, sewage and solid waste."

He pointed out that the fourth factor is the need to make policy allocations and take the necessary initiatives to promote economic growth and business, reducing deficits, reforming public finances and diversifying economies in various Arab countries.

"The fifth factor is the strengthening of efforts towards responsible governance and the adoption of competency standards to give responsibilities based on performance.



KUWAIT: Former Prime Minister of Lebanon Fuad Siniora speaks during a talk hosted at the Arab Planning Institute of Kuwait. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

The sixth factor is the problems of reconstruction and the displaced, while the seventh factor emphasizes the availability of basic freedoms such as freedom of expression and the ability to participate in national and local decisions," Siniora added.

Gulf Bank sponsors 6th season of Qout Market

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has become a title sponsor of Qout Market, Kuwait's largest artisanal farmers gathering, for the first time. Now in its sixth season, Qout Market, will be held on the 2nd February 2019, at Safat Square in Kuwait City, from 9am to 5pm.

Speaking about the sponsorship, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communications, Gulf Bank, said: "Gulf Bank's participation and support for the community-based farmers' market aligns with the organization's value proposition and corporate social responsibility initiatives. The bank is dedicated to empowering young Kuwaiti entrepreneurs and engaging the community, and we look forward to this year's season of what is sure to be a successful Qout Market."

Noaf Hussein, Co-Founder, Qout Market, added: "We are delighted to be partnering with Gulf Bank for this season of Qout Market. The Bank's support and empowerment of young Kuwaiti entrepreneurs is demonstrated by their commitment to the market, and we would like to



KUWAIT: Qout Market Co-Founders with Ahmad Al-Amir.

express our thanks for their support." Founded in 2013, Qout Market has become a national fixture on the social calendar attracting over 18,000 regional and local

visitors in previous seasons. The market is designed to attract, incubate, and highlight the incredible spectrum of Kuwait's local artisan community.

Kuwait keen on boosting economic ties with Iraq: KCCI

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Ali Al-Ghanem stressed keenness to strengthen joint economic ties with Iraq for the benefit of the two countries. Trade relations between Kuwait and the city of Basra have a social and cultural history, Ghanem said in a statement yesterday following his meeting with the Head of Iraqi Businessmen Association in Basra Sabih Al-Hashemi and his accompanying delegation.

The official and commercial visits have contributed to promoting bilateral trade and investment cooperation, he said, as he stressed KCCI's readiness to provide services available to Iraqi business owners, facilitate their business in the country and establish trade and investment partnerships with their Kuwaiti counterparts to enhance trade exchange between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Hashemi said in a similar statement that the economic relations between the two countries are progressing, as he called on



KUWAIT: Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Ali Al-Ghanem meets with the Head of Iraqi Businessmen Association in Basra Sabih Al-Hashemi. — KUNA

the Kuwaiti business sector to take advantage of available investment opportunities in Basra which enjoys political and security stability. Iraq put new mechanisms to attract foreign invest-

ment in addition to the presence of Kuwaiti consulate in Basra, which facilitates the work of Kuwaiti investors, mainly including entry visas, he added. — KUNA

Zain participates in opening ceremony of Int'l Invention Fair

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, participated in the opening ceremony of the 11th International Invention Fair Middle East as part of its strategic partnership. The event is held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and runs from 27-30 January 2019 in Arraya Ballroom at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel.

His Highness the Amir's representative, the Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Chairman of Kuwait Science Club Talal Al-Kharafi, Director of Scientific Culture at the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS) Dr Salam Al-Abdani, as well as Zain's officials and a number of ambassadors from the participating countries.

Zain is keen on encouraging Kuwaiti and Arab talents in the fields of science and innovation, and the company supports such events as it believes they offer a valuable opportunity for young inventors to benefit from the expertise and knowledge of international inventors, especially that the 11th edition of the fair will feature over 150 inventions from 41 different countries. The company will continue to foster young talents, believing that the current generation of youngsters holds the keys to the future development of Kuwait.

Zain's continuous support to this unique event since its inception comes in

line with its Corporate Sustainability and social Responsibility strategy, which aims at supporting the scientific arena and contributing to the further development of the scientific field in Kuwait and the Arab region. The fair's success in recent years greatly contributed to highlighting Kuwait's rich cultural involvement in the inventions and scientific areas.

Zain values the distinguished role played by the Kuwait Science Club in offering Arab and Kuwaiti youth, especially Kuwaiti inventors, with the proper environment to highlight their scientific talents and skills side by side along with the international inventors who visit Kuwait from all around the world to showcase their inventions, innovations, and bright ideas for a better future. Zain will spare no efforts in offering its support and encouragement to any entity that adopts creativity and innovation within the community and contribute to the further progress of national economy.

The International Invention Fair in the Middle East, organized in collaboration with the International Exhibition of Inventions - Geneva, is one of the most significant and major specialized exhibitions of inventions in the Middle East region, and is considered the second largest exhibition of its kind in the world after the Exhibition of Geneva. The event offers an opportunity for inventions from different cultures to be exhibited and for inventors to build connections with investors.



KUWAIT: Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah and Talal Al-Kharafi in Zain's Booth.

Jordan to host Arab meeting on region tomorrow

AMMAN: Jordan is set to host a meeting of six Arab foreign ministers tomorrow, mainly to reflect on how to address the current regional developments. The foreign ministers of Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE and Bahrain will come together here for consultations and talks to discuss the crises the region is facing and to ponder over ways of serving Arab interests, Jordanian Foreign Minister's Spokesman Sufian Qudah said in a press statement. The ministers are expected to arrive in the Jordanian capital today for talks at King Hussein Bin Talal Convention Centre on the eastern shores of the Dead Sea, he added. — KUNA

Campaign in Kuwait aims at aiding injured athletes

KUWAIT: Kuwait is witnessing a campaign aimed at aiding athletes whose injuries prevent them from resuming exercise. Abdulaziz Al-Rashed, head of the campaign organizing committee, said at a news conference yesterday that the campaign, launched every two months, involves a marathon grouping the impaired and others with no injuries. The activity is held in coordination with the National Assembly Speaker's Commission for Special Needs. Speaking at the same news conference, Asrar Al-Ansari, in charge of strategic marketing at the State Ministry for Youth Affairs, has spoken of the ministry's approach to involve the disabled with non-impaired citizens in sport competitions.

Meanwhile, Faisal Al-Duwaihees, official spokesman of the Public Authority for Youth (PAY), says the authority is covering the event via its news network 'Akhbar Al-Shabab'. At a related level, he has declared that membership registration in the Kuwait Youth Council begins in middle of March. Sharifa Al-Ghanem, the chairperson of the speaker commission, has affirmed that the committee is seeking to help the youth with such difficulty to be engaged in all aspects of the life and promote their gifts. — KUNA

ABK offers 40% discount on cancer screening

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) yesterday announced its latest campaign in support of this year's World Cancer Day titled 'I am and I will', in partnership with Global Med Group. The bank will present ABK cardholders with special cancer screening offers to raise awareness of the illness and encourage its prevention. In addition, informative brochures will be available at all branches and at the Head Office. Valid throughout the month of February, all ABK customers and staff can get their 40 percent discount on tumor marker screening with two separate male and female packages available at Global Med Clinic in Jabriya (Mazaya Tower), Global Medical Center in Bneid Al-Gar and Al-Ahli-Medical Laboratory in Hawally. The screening will include checking for tumors existing in several organs including lungs, colon, rectum, ovary, stomach, breast, thyroid, liver, pancreas and prostate.

Red Crescent and Red Cross grouped in common network

ISTANBUL: Red Crescent and Red Cross organizations have joined hands in a new common entity within framework of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Head of the Turkish Red Crescent Kerem Kinik, speaking at a news conference, proclaimed "the red network" with aim of boosting cooperation among the Red Crescent and Red Cross in more than 50 countries. The new entity is meant to facilitate information swap and resolve issues in the relief sector jointly. The founding convention for the "red network" kicked off on Monday, with participation of representatives from the Red Crescent and Red Cross, including Kuwait Red Crescent Society. The Kuwaiti delegation was headed by the KRCS Secretary General, Maha Al-Barjas. In her keynote statement at the conference, Barjas said establishing the network was the first such comprehensive regional initiative to comprise these societies under the OIC umbrella. — KUNA

Local

Plan to privatize power plant as part of ministry's role in restructuring process

Minister to receive final investigation report on heavy rain damage tomorrow

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) plans to privatize Shuaiba northern power plant as part of its annual development plan for 2018-2019, said informed sources. The sources added that the privatization plan aims at improving infrastructure and quality, in addition to being in step with the state's plans to restructure the role played by MEW in economic activities by turning it from a producer and operator to a regulator and supervisor with the ultimate goal of achieving sustainable non-oil economic growth.

Meanwhile, MEW undersecretary Mohammed Bushehri said power plants had consumed fuel worth KD 1.3 billion in 2017, including 55.9 million barrels of liquid fuel and 374.9 billion cubic meters of natural gas. Speaking during a ceremony held to launch the second conservation forum organized by the ministry, Bushehri stressed MEW is keen on taking serious measures to execute the state's long-term plan to meet its developing and growing needs of electricity and water.

Rain damage

Well-informed sources said that the committee

formed to investigate damages resulting from the recent heavy rain will hand over its final report to Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Jenan Bushehri tomorrow pending referral to the Cabinet. The sources added that the report includes all malfunctions and suggests solutions to prevent repeating the same problems. It also determines the reasons of loose gravel on various roads and sets remedies. The sources said the committee also discussed the problems at Sabah Al-Ahmad City, adding that the committee had questioned over 100 senior officials, technicians, employees and company officials during the investigation.

Increase rejected

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) rejected a request by the Ministry of Education to increase allowances given to Kuwaiti teachers of subjects in which they are considered rare to over 30 percent. The CSC explained that it had previously agreed to consider Kuwaiti teachers, as well as those from the GCC, forming 30 percent or less in any given subject as "rare". Notably, rare Kuwaiti teachers are those teaching English, French, Maths, Science, Biology, Physics and Chemistry.



KUWAIT: Ministry of Electricity and Water's undersecretary Mohammed Bushehri (second from right) honors Kuwait National Guard in the ministry's second conservation forum. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

Military Information Systems conference underway

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Experts on military communications from various countries have gathered to participate in the Kuwait Military Communications and Information Systems conference and exhibition being held at the Radisson Blu Hotel on Jan 29 and 30. Ameena Al-Kandari, Director of Information Technology at the Ministry of Defense, said information and communication technology has led to great change in various fields including the military.

"Due to modern technology, the electronic change in warfare became a priority for military leaders and planners. The results of this change have become visible, with unmanned aircraft, cyber-attacks and electronic armies," she said during the opening ceremony. The classic tactics of war are not very popular today. "Countries are spending millions of dollars on electronic warfare. This gives them the tools of future power," added Kandari.

"The development of communications and information technology has increased the responsibility of every country to preserve its security and the security of its people. It also needs to protect its vital facilities and the digital infrastructure from cyber-attacks from enemy countries or terrorist organizations that aim to



KUWAIT: Officials attend the inauguration of the Kuwait Military Communications and Information Systems conference and exhibition. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

destroy security and stability," she explained.

Electronic warfare and cyber defense are being systematically developed and present a basic part of all armed forces in the world. "Electronic weapons have become an essential part of military work today. In Kuwait, we have advanced technologies and scientific experience to protect vital facilities and systems to deal with any attack. We aim to develop our digital defense further to stay updated," Kandari added.

This conference is a great opportunity to build relationships, develop new ideas and exchange experiences between experts in information and communications security. "This conference also encourages scientific research and spreading awareness on the importance of protecting communication networks and information systems of armed forces and governmental institutions that are in charge of protecting the basic digital infrastructure," concluded Kandari.

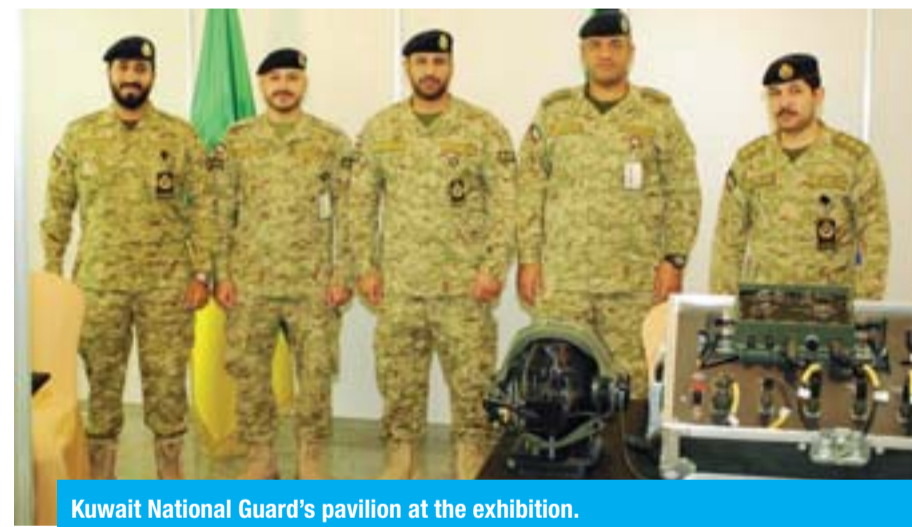
Egg imports mull to address shortage

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Social Affairs' official spokesperson and assistant undersecretary for cooperation affairs Abdul Aziz Shuaib said both the ministry and the co-ops union are considering importing eggs to make up for a shortage in the local market. Shuaib added that the ministry recently inspected over 60 co-ops and found a severe shortage in strategic egg reserves, adding that in addition to the commerce ministry's decision to ban egg exports for a month, the social affairs ministry and the co-ops union are currently studying the possibility of importing eggs.

Private sector

Director of the Public Authority for Manpower Ahmad Al-Moussa said resolution number 1868/2018 on amending Cabinet resolution number 904/2002 pertaining the percentages of Kuwaiti workers in non-governmental bodies had set the percentages in various economic activities to attract more citizens to join the private sector. Moussa added that the resolution will take effect in June 2019 after collecting extra annual fees of KD 300 per work permit for non-Kuwaitis more than the allowed ratio.



Kuwait National Guard's pavilion at the exhibition.



The Central Agency for Information Technology's pavilion.

Wife questioned over posting 'intimate moments' online

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: Police arrested an Asian woman who was accused by her husband of posting their videos of their intimate moments on lewd websites. She was found with a compatriot who helped her in posting the videos online. A Kuwaiti man had accused his wife of uploading private video clips online with the help of Asians running pornographic websites. When he confronted her with the matter, she had a fight with him and escaped to her embassy, claiming he beat her, according to the husband's statements. Both the woman and her companion were sent to concerned authorities.

Missing citizen found

Police were able to find a Kuwaiti man who went missing in the Salmi desert during a dust storm and was returned to his family, Al-Rai reported. The citizen got lost and his phone was out of the coverage area. This frightened his family, because they knew he had left for a camp with his friends, so they went to the police and asked for help.

Wife freed

Police received a call from a woman asking for help after her husband locked her in the house to prevent her from attending a reception of a friend, reported Al-Rai. The woman attempted to convince her husband to open the door, but he refused, telling her he will do so only after the reception is over, adding if he opens the door, he will beat her. The wife, who had spent a fortune getting ready for the function, called police and asked for help. Police freed the woman and the two were taken to the police station, where the woman insisted on lodging a complaint.



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti vintage car owners made it their mission to display historical vehicles to the public, keeping alive the memory of such awesome machines. During festivities such as 'Hala February', vintage car enthusiast painstakingly restore and maintain their automobiles for the public to admire and stand in awe. — KUNA

PUBLIC NOTICE

As per the orders of the Hon'ble Adl. Senior Civil Judge, Tenali, in H.MOP 18/2018 Dt. 22-01-2019, by issue the following public notice by way of paper publication on behalf of our client Bussa Pradeep.

Our client Bussa Pradeep filed H.MOP 18/2018 for dissolution of the marriage which was solemnized on 11-02-2015 with Wini Priyadarshini Sarella @ Bussa Wini Priyadarshini the respondent in the OP. The petitioner Bussa Pradeep filed Batta from time to time effect the service of summons to the respondent. But the respondent successfully avoided to receive the summons. Under these circumstances, the petitioner was constrained, as per the orders of the Hon'ble court, get published the date of next adjournment which was posted to 08-03-2019 for the appearance of the respondent Wini Priyadarshini Sarella. This notice is issued as per the orders of the Hon'ble Adl. Senior Civil Judge, Tenali (Andhra Pradesh, India). Sd/ Place : Tenali, Ch. Radhakrishana Murthy Advocate for the petitioner Date : 30-01-2019

International

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2019



Suicide bomber among
Philippines cathedral blast
suspects: Duterte

Refugees in W Bengal get land titles amid citizenship row

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NEWTON: Evonne Beltran creates a poster board during the Massachusetts 4 Trump Christmas Party and Trump 2020 Kick-Off event at the American Legion. — AFP

2020: Rumbblings of a GOP challenge

It is rare for an incumbent president to be challenged — but not unprecedented

WASHINGTON: Democrats are already furiously jockeying for position to take on President Donald Trump in 2020. But will Trump actually be on the ballot two years from now? With approval ratings hovering around 40 percent — even lower, according to some polls — speculation is mounting that Trump could face a primary challenge for the Republican presidential nomination.

Trump has shouldered much of the blame for a crippling government shutdown that failed to achieve his signature campaign promise — building a border wall with Mexico. And Special Counsel Robert Mueller has not yet delivered the final report from his investigation into whether members of Trump's 2016 campaign colluded with Russia to get him elected. It is rare for an incumbent president seeking reelection to be challenged for the nomination by a member of his own party — but not unprecedented.

In 1976, Ronald Reagan, a former California governor, sought to wrest the Republican nomination from president Gerald Ford. Four years later, president

Jimmy Carter faced a tough but ultimately unsuccessful primary challenge from Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy. And in 1992, then president George H.W. Bush fended off an insurgent bid for the Republican nod by right-wing commentator Pat Buchanan. All three incumbent presidents who faced a primary challenge — Ford, Carter and Bush — went on to lose the general election.

Kasich, Hogan among names floated

You have to go all the way back to 1884 to find the last incumbent who failed to win his party's approval — an ailing Chester Alan Arthur, who lost the Republican nomination to James Blaine. Although no Republican has come out so far and said that he — or she — would mount a challenge to Trump, several names have been floated. Former Ohio governor John Kasich — who sought the Republican nomination in 2016, only to lose to Trump — is seen as one potential candidate.

The 66-year-old Kasich, a moderate Republican, has

not ruled out a White House bid, telling students at the University of Florida last week that "all options are on the table." "I'm only interested in running if I can win," The Gainesville Sun quoted Kasich as saying. "I'm not interested in running to damage someone else." Another politician being talked about is Maryland Governor Larry Hogan, who easily won re-election in November as a centrist Republican in a heavily Democratic state. The Washington Post reported on Monday that Hogan, 62, is "consulting with aides and national GOP critics of Trump about whether to pursue a White House bid."

The newspaper said that Hogan, who has been an outspoken critic of the president, could appeal to "Republican dissenters who are seeking a less-polarizing alternative to President Trump." Hogan has apparently not made his mind up yet and the Post quoted people close to him as saying he is unlikely to run "unless Trump is severely weakened or decides not to seek a second term."

Other Republicans who have been mentioned as potential primary challengers to Trump include retired Arizona senator Jeff Flake, 56, a vocal opponent of the president, and Utah Senator Mitt Romney, 71, who lost the 2012 presidential election to Barack Obama. For the moment, Trump's approval ratings among Republicans remain relatively high — around 80 percent.

Political analysts said those numbers will probably have to decline for any challenger to have a realistic chance of booting Trump from the 2020 ballot. "At that point even a loyal Republican — candidate or voter — might come to believe that the only thing that would save the party is to have someone else lead the ticket," wrote Paul Waldman of the Washington Post.

Amid the growing speculation, Mercedes Schlapp, the White House Director of Strategic Communications, was asked on Monday about the possibility of Trump facing a primary challenge. "The president is ready for any candidate," Schlapp said. "We have a great record to run on. We have a great story to tell." — AFP

Fear of Boko Haram attack sees 30,000 flee Nigerian town

KANO: More than 30,000 people have fled the northeast Nigerian town of Rann and across the border to Cameroon in recent days because of fears of renewed Boko Haram attacks, the UN, civilian militia and residents said yesterday. The latest mass movement comes as the world body voiced renewed concern about the effect of the bloody conflict on civilians and launched a longer-term plan to help those made homeless by the fighting.

Rann, in northern Borno state, near the border with Cameroon, has been repeatedly attacked by Boko Haram, most recently on January 14, when the jihadists targeted a military base. UN refugee agency spokesman Babar Baloch told reporters in Geneva that recent fighting in Borno had forced more than 80,000 people to flee their homes. "Nigerian refugees continue to arrive in very remote and impoverished communities in neighboring countries," he added. "All the population seems to be panicking and they are on the run as a preemptive meas-

ure to save their lives."

Humanitarian organizations working in Rann said the attack earlier this month forced some 9,000 people to flee into Cameroon. But they were sent back, as Cameroon deployed troops to reinforce the town as part of the regional military response against the Islamist militants. "It was a bit peaceful but as far as we understand now, that multinational taskforce has left," said Baloch, adding that refugees had told aid workers Boko Haram "promised to return".

Walid Abdallahi, who was among those who fled, said there was now "not a single resident in Rann" and that Boko Haram had been "in control" of the town since Monday. "We all left the town as soon as the Cameroonian soldiers withdrew because we knew we were vulnerable to Boko Haram who would no doubt launch an attack," he said. Abdallahi said the remaining Nigerian soldiers also withdrew "because their number was too small to face Boko Haram when they attacked".

His account was supported by an aid worker who left Rann after the January 14 attack but remains in contact with those in the area, and a civilian militia source. "There were over 35,000 IDPs (internally displaced people) in Rann and all of them have fled to Cameroon," the aid worker added. The civilian militia source said Cameroonian soldiers withdrew on Sunday and Nigerian troops were now based in Ngala, nearly 40 kilometers away. "The terrorists set fire to most houses in the town and have taken strate-

gic positions in anticipation of military operations to push them out," he added.

Funding appeal

News from Rann came as the UN in Abuja launched an appeal for \$848 million to fund projects in Borno and two other northeast states over the next three years. An additional \$135 million was required to help the 228,500 Nigerian refugees who have fled to neighboring Cameroon, Chad and Niger, it said. Nigeria's government has said Boko Haram has been virtually defeated, despite persistent attacks against the military and civilians.

The UN said aid agencies' access to people in hard-to-reach areas was largely unchanged in the last year, indicating security conditions had not improved. Some 260 aid workers have been forced to pull out of three local government areas in Borno in recent months because of fighting. Many IDPs have had to move several times as a result of attacks and are unable to return home. An average of 4,500 people were displaced every week in 2018, it added.

"Civilians still bear the brunt of a conflict that has led to widespread forced displacement and violations of international humanitarian and human rights law," said the UN humanitarian coordinator in Nigeria, Edward Kallon. "New and protracted displacement, triggered by the conflict, continues to affect access to basic services and disrupts the livelihoods of millions of people." — AFP

Govt submits resignation to Abbas

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian government submitted its resignation yesterday, a statement said, a move seen as a bid by president Mahmud Abbas to strengthen his position as a decade-old political split deepens. Analysts view replacing prime minister Rami Hamdallah after five years as part of Abbas's efforts to further isolate his political rivals Hamas, who run the Gaza Strip. Hamdallah's government will remain in place while a new administration is formed.

"The government of Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah submitted on Tuesday its resignation to President Mahmud Abbas," official news agency Wafa said in English following a cabinet meeting. The government "will continue to serve our people wherever they are and shoulder all its responsibilities until a new government is formed," it added. It was unclear how the change of government could impact on policy. Secularist Abbas remains the primary decision maker and interlocutor with the international community.

Palestinian politics has essentially been paralyzed since 2007, when Islamist group Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip from Abbas's forces in a near civil war, a year after winning parliamentary elections. Since

then Abbas's governments have maintained limited self-rule in the occupied West Bank, while Hamas has led a rival government in the strip. Israel and Hamas, which is considered a terrorist organization by the United States, the European Union and others, have since fought three wars in Gaza. The division between the Palestinian parties is seen as a key issue preventing progress in solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and improving the situation in the impoverished enclave.

Reconciliation blow

Multiple attempts to reach a reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas have failed. It was during one such attempt in 2014 that Hamdallah formed what was labeled a national unity government, with both Fatah and Hamas backing a government made up nominally of technocrats. Since then relations have again worsened and Hamdallah survived an assassination attempt in 2018 when an explosion hit his convoy during a rare visit to Hamas-controlled Gaza.

Palestinian government officials accused Hamas of responsibility, claims the Islamist group denied. The new government is expected to be made up of parties that are members of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which does not include Hamas or its allies Islamic Jihad. Hamas condemned the government's resignation, saying Abbas was seeking to establish a "separatist government" to serve his interests. "Our people need a national unity government," spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said in a statement. — AFP

International

Main Netanyahu challenger to launch Israel election bid

The long-serving premier faces potential corruption charges

JERUSALEM: A former Israeli military chief regarded as the only serious challenger to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was set to formally unveil his election campaign yesterday, breaking his silence on his party's platform. Benny Gantz was to deliver a speech in Tel Aviv to "discuss all the issues at hand" and respond to claims made against him by political opponents, a source close to the retired general told AFP.

His new party, Israel Resilience, could emerge as the second largest in parliament in the April 9 general election, according to polls carried out since its launch in December. Generals are revered in Israel, though many who cross into political life after their military service discover that their army experience does not always prepare them for the challenges of civilian decision-making.

The widely respected former military chief of staff has kept his cards close to his chest and made few public comments since December. But the tall, square-jawed 59-year-old was expected to clear up question marks surrounding his political ambitions in the Tuesday speech. Opinion polls show Netanyahu winning the April election, however the long-serving premier faces potential corruption charges that may shake up the campaign.

Considered a political centrist, in the event of a Netanyahu victory commentators see Gantz as likely to join a coalition led by the man who has been premier since 2009 — including from 2011-2015, when Gantz was the chief of military staff. A poll last week said Gantz's Israel Resilience could win 15 seats out of the Knesset's 120, with Netanyahu's Likud remaining the largest faction with 31 lawmakers voted in on April.

One issue Gantz could address in his Tuesday speech would be whether he would serve in a coalition led by

Netanyahu, if the premier was formally charged with corruption. Using vague terms about hope and unity, Gantz has so far avoided directly attacking Netanyahu, who could be the one to appoint him as a senior minister in a future government. He could even perhaps be rewarded with the defence portfolio, which Netanyahu currently holds himself.

'No more right or left'

In a rare remark however, Gantz has committed to amending a contentious law defining Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people in order to accommodate its Druze minority, leading to Netanyahu calling him a "leftist". Gantz has meanwhile become the target of a campaign from the harder right wing of the Israeli political spectrum.

Naftali Bennett of the newly founded Hayamin Hehadash used a recording from 2015 in which Gantz said he "risked Israeli soldiers to ensure" the safety of Palestinian civilians in a bid to dub the general as part of the "weak left". Apart from some messages on social media promising "something different" for Israel and a song pledging "no more right or left", Gantz has so far just played up his military credentials.

He has boasted in videos of the number of Palestinian militants killed and targets destroyed under his command in the 2014 war with Gaza's Islamist Hamas rulers. And in another video, Gantz stresses the need to strive to make Arab-Israeli peace. Some political commentators have suggested he could join another former armed forces chief, Moshe Yaalon, in a centre-right alliance. Yaalon served as Netanyahu's defence minister from 2013 to 2016, but has since become a critic of the premier. He unveiled his own party, Telem, in December. — AFP



JERUSALEM: A man rides a bicycle past a political campaign poster of former Israeli chief of staff Benny Gantz. — AFP

Corruption seen rising in Trump's US: Watchdog

FRANKFURT: The United States last year slid down the rankings of a global corruption index as America's system of checks and balances faced growing threats on Donald Trump's watch, Transparency International said yesterday. The US lost four points to score 71 out of 100 on the watchdog's 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index, sending the country tumbling out of the top 20 for the first time since 2011.

"The low score comes at a time when the US is experiencing threats to its system of checks and balances as well as an erosion of ethical norms at the highest levels of power," TI said in its annual report. The second year of Trump's presidency was a turbulent one, ranging from damaging revelations in an investigation probing links between Trump's 2016 campaign team and Russia, to his controversial backing for a Supreme Court nominee accused of sexual assault. The US leader, who frequently rails against the media for writing "fake news", was also dogged by accusations of nepotism and conflicts of interest.

Last month, Trump agreed to close his personal charity after the New York attorney general said it had acted "as little more than a checkbook to serve Mr. Trump's business and political interests". Transparency International's closely-watched index ranks 180 nations according to their perceived level of public sector corruption, where a score of zero means very corrupt and 100 signifies very clean.

"The Trump presidency has illuminated the cracks in the US system for ensuring a government that is accountable to the public interest," TI's Zoe Reiter, acting representative to the US, told AFP. "But President Trump is a symptom rather than a cause; the issues were there before he took office. — AFP

Mueller's probe close to completion

WASHINGTON: Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into possible collusion between Donald Trump's campaign and Russia in the 2016 presidential election is close to being wrapped up, Acting Attorney General Matthew Whitaker said Monday. Mueller's office has been notoriously tight-lipped about the progress of the high-profile investigation, and Whitaker's remarks were the first official indication that the probe may be coming to a close.

"The Mueller investigation is close to being completed," Whitaker told journalists. "I've been fully briefed on the investigation and I look forward to Director Mueller delivering the final report," he said. "I hope we can get the report from Director Mueller as soon as possible." Mueller will submit his report to Whitaker unless he has been replaced as attorney general by then by Bill Barr, who has been nominated to the post by Trump but not yet confirmed by the Senate.

Without elaborating, Whitaker said: "I am comfortable that the decisions that were made (in the Mueller report) are going to be reviewed, you know, through the various means that we have." Mueller, a

former FBI director, was named by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein in May 2017 to look into Russian meddling in the 2016 election. Mueller was appointed special counsel after Trump abruptly fired FBI director James Comey that same month. Mueller's team has indicted a total of 34 people — but so far, no charges of outright collusion between the Trump campaign and Moscow have been filed.

'Political witch hunt'

Trump has repeatedly denounced the investigation as a "political witch hunt" and fervently denied there was any collusion between his campaign and Moscow. He has frequently taken to Twitter to condemn members of the Mueller team as a bunch of "angry Democrats." Trump has also dangled the possibility of pardons for some of those indicted. On Friday, Roger Stone, 66, a veteran Republican operative and long-time Trump advisor, was arrested at his Florida home by FBI agents on charges of making false statements to Congress and witness tampering.

Stone has proclaimed his innocence and said he would fight the charges, but several other Trump associates indicted by Mueller have pleaded guilty to various charges. Paul Manafort, 69, who served as Trump's campaign chairman for several months in 2016, is awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to tax and bank fraud connected to his work for pro-Russian politicians in Ukraine.

Michael Flynn, 60, a retired US Army



FORT LAUDERDALE: A person holds a sign while waiting for Roger Stone, a former advisor to President Donald Trump, to leave the Federal Courthouse. — AFP

general who stepped down after three weeks as Trump's national security advisor, is awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to lying to the FBI about his contacts with the Russian ambassador in Washington. Trump's longtime personal attorney and fixer Michael Cohen, 52, was sentenced to three years in prison in December after pleading guilty to tax evasion, violating campaign finance laws, making false statements to Congress and other crimes. He is to report to prison on March 6.

Rick Gates, 46, Trump's deputy cam-

paign manager and Manafort's business partner, pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI and financial fraud. George Papadopoulos, 31, an oil industry analyst who served on Trump's foreign policy advisory team, was sentenced to two weeks in prison after admitting he lied to the FBI. Others indicted by Mueller include Alex Van Der Zwaan, a London lawyer who got 30 days in prison for lying about his work with Manafort, and Richard Pinedo, a California man who admitted to selling stolen bank and credit card numbers to the Russians. — AFP

40 years ago, Iran's exiled Khomeini returns a hero

TEHRAN: Forty years ago Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Shiite spiritual cleric who led Iran's unfolding Islamic revolution, was welcomed back to Tehran by a jubilant throng after more than 14 years in exile. This story by AFP journalist Patrick Meney, originally in French, captures the mood of that remarkable day in February 1979 when the opposition leader returned to replace the monarchy with an Islamic republic.

A triumphant return

TEHRAN, February 1, 1979: Millions of Iranians with beaming faces massed along a 32-kilometre (20-mile) route Thursday to give a triumphant welcome to the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini, whose car was engulfed for hours by an ecstatic human tide. As soon as he left the Tehran airport (...), a visibly moved but calm Khomeini was swept up by millions of his supporters.

In black robes and a turban, the religious leader travelled in an American station wagon that was followed by a fleet of minibuses packed with journalists from around the world. About 50,000 volunteers were on hand to control the crowd. Wearing green armbands, they were called the "Islamic police". The government had given them full responsibility for the ayatollah's security.

But this religious security service was quickly overwhelmed. In a matter of seconds, Khomeini's car disappeared in the crowd, which blocked the way for dozens of ambulances filled with unconscious demonstrators who fainted in the swell of the black mass that stretched as far as the eye could see down Tehran's long, straight avenues.

How many people were out on the street on this Thursday? Five million, perhaps... or six, it was impossible to say. In any case, it was unprecedented. At the gateway to the capital the imposing memorial to the shah, the symbol of modern Iran, had been renamed Khomeini Square. Where is the ayatollah's car now? We don't know. It has disappeared somewhere in the noisy tide of people, a swarming wave, from which emerge hundreds of thousands of portraits of the leader of the "Islamic revolution".

Veils and carnations

The women have all turned out in chadors — black veils — with a red carnation in their hands. Since sunrise they have been singing "Khomeini is our leader". Banners



TEHRAN: in this file photo taken on February 01, 1979 at Tehran airport shows revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (C) leaving the Air France Boeing 747 jumbo that flew him back from exile in France to Tehran. — AFP

read: "Khomeini, welcome to your country." The men chant: "Allah is great."

Clerics spray rose water on the demonstrators, who hold up their faces to the holy scent. In the sunny capital, overlooked by the nearby snow-covered mountains, a single roar resounds: "Khomeini, Khomeini." The military has totally deserted the capital. At some points along the route, followers — finally getting back their venerated "leader" after more than 14 years in exile — pick up the ayatollah's car and carry it for several meters.

Islamic republic

"Your return signifies the proclamation of the Islamic republic," the most enthusiastic among them shout. One mullah, or Shiite cleric, sporting a white turban, exclaims: "Who would have thought just six months ago that Khomeini would return to Iran, he the pariah, today cheered by millions of Muslims?" Everyone is aware of the significance of this return from exile, while the recent departure of the shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, also looks

like someone who has gone into exile. When the ayatollah's Boeing 747 touched down in Tehran, there was silence. It was also in silence that he descended the steps of the plane, rediscovering his country but not recognizing the capital, now bristling with modern towers. Several minutes later the ayatollah made an appeal for unity, saying, "The fight is not over, the shah's departure is only the first part of the road to be travelled."

Then he vehemently lashed out at his adversary. "The shah has destroyed everything, our culture, our university, the economy, agriculture. We will destroy the system he put in place." On Thursday all of Iran seemed to have turned out for Ayatollah Khomeini. From the airport to the Tehran cemetery, the centre of religious protest where a massive crowd awaited him, the Shiite leader could see that he was followed by a whole people to whom he intends to "show the way". With the monarchy still in place and the shoots emerging of civil — or would it be holy — war, everyone is wondering, what concretely will this Islamic way be? — AFP

UN envoy on first Yemen port city visit after truce

DUBAI: The UN envoy for Yemen briefly visited the flashpoint city of Hodeida yesterday, an official said, the diplomat's first trip there since warring parties agreed to a ceasefire last month. Martin Griffiths was in the Red Sea port city "for a few hours" to oversee the truce deal's implementation and "follow up on preparations" for a new monitoring mission, the UN official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Yemen's government and Houthi rebels reached a deal over Hodeida at peace talks brokered by Griffiths in Sweden last month. The agreement stipulates a full ceasefire, followed by the withdrawal of rival forces from the city — two clauses that have yet to be fulfilled. The United Nations Security Council this month unanimously adopted Resolution 2452, which calls for the deployment of up to 75 monitors to oversee the fragile ceasefire and pullback of forces from Hodeida.

Held by Iran-backed Houthi rebels since 2014, the Red Sea city is home to the impoverished Yemen's most valuable port, a vital conduit for life-saving aid to a country on the brink of famine. Hodeida was for months the main front line in the Yemen war after pro-government forces, backed by a Saudi-led military coalition, launched an offensive to capture it in June. But since the ceasefire agreement came into force on December 18, a precarious calm has returned to the city, despite each side accusing the other of violations.

Griffiths said Monday that the deal's timeline had also been extended. "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 Arabic newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat. — AFP

International

Suicide bomber among Philippines cathedral blast suspects: Duterte

President's account differed from earlier statements by security officials

MANILA: A male suicide bomber and his wife carried out a Catholic cathedral attack that killed 21 people in the country's restive south, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte said yesterday. Duterte told reporters a woman who remains at large left a device that exploded during mass at the cathedral in the remote Muslim-majority island of Jolo on Sunday, and her husband later blew himself up outside. The president's account differed from earlier statements by security officials.

He said military intelligence told him yesterday the second bomb was strapped on to the body of the male suspect who detonated it as survivors of the first explosion ran for their lives. "They (investigators) could not find any part of the body because it exploded, because that was terrorism and that was a suicide," the president said. If Duterte's account is confirmed it would be among the few suspected cases of suicide bombings in the Philippines.

Kidnap-for-ransom group

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for the cathedral blast, saying two suicide bombers detonated explosive belts, according to the SITE Intelligence Group which monitors jihadist activities. Duterte said the Jolo attack was carried out by the Abu Sayyaf, a kidnap-for-ransom group that has also been blamed for the

Philippines' deadliest attacks and some of whose factions have declared support for the Islamic State. "We are sure of that," he said.

Security officials said earlier yesterday that a group affiliated with the Abu Sayyaf carried out the cathedral attack with two explosive devices, one left behind by a woman inside the church and the other hidden on a motorcycle outside. Duterte said the woman wore a necklace "with a large cross" pendant, like a Catholic worshipper, which he suggested was the likely reason she was not intercepted. "It's not the norm in this country to frisk a woman inside the church," the president said, adding he has ordered the military to "go into a punitive action" against the Abu Sayyaf.

The Jolo attack was carried out days after voters overwhelmingly approved expanding Muslim self-rule in the south aimed at ending a decades-old rebellion for independence or autonomy for the sizeable Islamic minority of the mainly Catholic nation. The church attack came despite Duterte putting the southern Philippines under martial rule after pro-IS militants seized the southern city of Marawi in May 2017. Abu Sayyaf, which is based on Jolo island, has been blamed for the Philippines' deadliest attack, a 2004 ferry bombing in Manila Bay that claimed 116 lives. — AFP



JOLO: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte (C) and Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana (2nd L, with spectacles) listen to national police chief Director General Oscar Albayalde (L, in camouflage) as they inspect the damage area of a catholic cathedral. — AFP

N Korea says it wants peace, relations with US

GENEVA: North Korea said yesterday that relations with the United States will develop "wonderfully at a fast pace" if Washington responds to its efforts on denuclearization with trustworthy measures and practical actions. North Korea's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Han Tae Song, told the UN-sponsored Conference on Disarmament that Pyongyang would continue working to establish a "permanent and durable peace mechanism on the Korean peninsula".

The landmark summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump last June produced a promise to work towards the complete denuclearization of the divided peninsula. Progress since then has been patchy, Washington is demanding concrete action, such as a full disclosure of North Korea's nuclear and missile facilities, before agreeing to key goals of Pyongyang - easing international sanctions and declaring an official end to the 1950-53 Korean War that ended with an armistice.

The summit had brought about a dramatic turn in relations that had been "the most hostile on earth" and contributed to ensuring peace and security on the peninsula, Han said. He referred to the two leaders' joint statement issued after their meeting in Singapore and Kim's New Year's Address, adding: "Accordingly we declared that we would neither make and test nuclear weapons any longer nor use and proliferate them and we have taken various practical measures. "If the US responds to our efforts with trustworthy measures and corresponding practical actions, bilateral relations will develop wonderfully at a fast pace through the process of taking more definite and epoch-making steps," he said. — Reuters

Refugees in W Bengal get land titles amid citizenship row

BANGKOK: Authorities in India's West Bengal state have given land titles to about 30,000 refugees who have lived in settlement colonies for years, and promised that thousands more will also get property rights, as a row over their citizenship intensifies. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee handed the title deeds on Monday, and said those living in more than 200 settlements will also get land rights, even though their settlements are on private or federal government land.

"We will try to buy the land from the owners, and we will ask the central government to regularize the colonies on plots owned by central agencies," Banerjee said at a public meeting late on Monday. There are an estimated 150,000 families in the eastern state's refugee colonies. Most are from Bangladesh, according to officials. Banerjee's move is part of a wider push to give more rights to certain refugee groups in the country.

India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which spells out refugee rights and state responsibilities to protect them. Nor does it have a domestic law to protect the more than 200,000 refugees it currently hosts, including Tibetans, Sri Lankans, Afghans, Bangladeshis and Rohingyas from Myanmar. But in recent years, the government has been granting limited rights to some refugee groups. Last year, the western state of Maharashtra granted land ownership rights to refugees who had fled what is now Pakistan some 70 years ago, when the countries were partitioned at independence.

Indigenous Chakma and Hajong refugees who left Bangladesh more than five decades ago have limited citizenship in India, but not land rights, while Tibetan refugees get welfare benefits, but no property rights. Refugee rights are in focus with the Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019, which proposes to give citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Christians and Parsis



GUWAHATI: Activists of Students' Federation of India (SFI) burn the effigies of India's Prime Minister and Chief Minister of Assam in Guwahati on January 8, 2019 after India's lower house passed today legislation that will grant citizenship to members of certain religious minorities but not Muslims. — AFP

from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, who came to India before Dec. 31, 2014.

"Land ownership is an issue for refugees, so having a title will make them feel more secure," said Achin Chakraborty, director of the Institute of Development Studies in the West Bengal capital Kolkata. "But the issue over the cut-off date still remains, and it is not clear if having a land title is enough," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation yesterday. Chakraborty is one of more than 100 academics and activists who have

appealed to President Ram Nath Kovind to reject the Citizenship Bill as it discriminates on the grounds of religion and "violates the constitutional principle of equality".

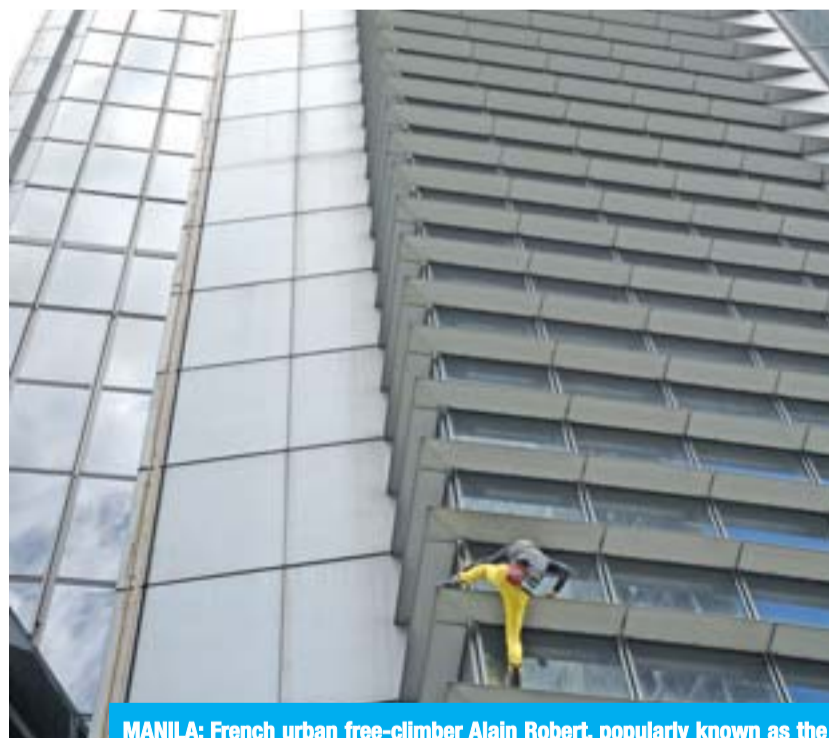
There have also been protests in the northeastern state of Assam, where residents complain that immigrants from Bangladesh have encroached their land and strained resources. The bill, which was passed in the lower house of parliament earlier this month, is expected to face resistance from the opposition Congress party in the upper house. — Reuters

'French Spiderman' arrested after scaling Manila skyscraper

MANILA: French urban freeclimber Alain Robert was arrested yesterday, police said, after he scaled one of Manila's tallest towers in his latest high-risk ascent. The 56-year old adventurer dubbed the "French spiderman" climbed the 47-storey GT Tower without safety equipment, leaving watchers on the ground staring in amazement. "This is my path, this is my way of living. It is as important to me as eating, sleeping. I need that. It keeps me alive," he told reporters after completing the climb.

Police were less enthusiastic about the stunt and took him into custody as soon as he reached the ground after the roughly two-hour climb up and down the building. He was being held on a charge of public disturbance and was awaiting a decision from prosecutors on bail. Robert has scaled more than 100 structures without ropes or other safety equipment, setting a record for "most buildings climbed unassisted" according to Guinness World Records.

His successes include many of the world's tallest skyscrapers and iconic buildings, such as the Eiffel Tower, the Sydney Opera House, the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur and the Burj Khalifa in Dubai — where he used suction devices and a safety rope as it has no hand or footholds. However in June he was foiled when he attempted to ascend a Seoul skyscraper, getting more than half way up the 123-storey Lotte World Tower before security forced him to abort. Robert has suffered several severe falls while climbing and estimates his accidents have left him 66 per cent disabled. He has been arrested numerous times for his exploits. — AFP



MANILA: French urban free-climber Alain Robert, popularly known as the "French Spiderman", is pictured on the side of the 47-storey GT Tower in Manila's financial district of Makati. — AFP

Indonesia flood, landslide death toll now hits 70

JAKARTA: Floods and landslides that battered Indonesia's Sulawesi island have killed at least 70 people, authorities said yesterday, as aerial footage underscored the scale of the disaster with whole villages wiped off the map. Lashed by heavy rain, rivers swelled and burst their banks, inundating dozens of communities across 12 districts as well as parts of the provincial capital Makassar. The bodies of 70 victims have been found, while six are still missing, Syamsibar, head of South Sulawesi's disaster

mitigation agency, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, told AFP.

Drone footage showed landslides had buried Pattalikang village in hard-hit Gowa district, with only a few buildings — including a mosque — visible after an avalanche of mud and rock cascaded down a nearby hillside. Nearly 9,500 people have been displaced by the extreme weather, and hundreds of houses, government buildings, schools and bridges have been damaged, the disaster mitigation agency said Monday. Authorities say floodwaters are receding but a state of emergency will remain in place until February 6, while rescuers look for those still missing and help repair damaged infrastructure. Landslides and floods are common in Indonesia, especially during the monsoon season between October and April, when rains lash the vast Southeast Asian archipelago. — AFP



This picture taken on January 27, 2019 shows an Indonesian rescuer using a sniffer dog to search for survivors after a landslide in Gowa in South Sulawesi. — AFP

LGBT people in Singapore 'fearful' after HIV data leak

KUALA LUMPUR: A major leak of the confidential data of 14,200 people with HIV in Singapore could hamper a fight against new infections among LGBT+ people in the city-state, campaigners said yesterday. The health ministry said on Monday that an American, who lived in the country previously, disclosed online the details of 5,400 Singaporeans and 8,800 foreigners who were diagnosed with HIV in Singapore.

About half of the 434 new HIV cases reported in 2017 were transmitted through same-sex intercourse, official data shows. Gay sex remains a crime in Singapore under a British colonial-era law. LGBT+ groups have set up support services following the breach, but campaigners said it would discourage LGBT+ people living with HIV from seeking help, fearing that their details will be compromised. "The first hurdle for them to get tested or to approach social services is the issue of coming out. A lot of them are extremely afraid to be outed," said Jean Chong, founder of Singapore-based LGBT+ rights group Sayoni.

"A lot of LGBT people will be even more fearful to get tested and to believe in Singapore's healthcare system ... it might drive more people underground," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone. Chong said her organization had received about a dozen calls from people whose details had been leaked and who faced "huge" risks if they lost their jobs or were ostracized.

Singapore's health ministry has apologized over the leak, saying it became aware in 2016 that US citizen Mikhy Farrera Brochez was in possession of confidential information that appeared to be from the country's HIV registry. Brochez was convicted in Singapore in 2017 on numerous drug-related and fraud offences, including lying to the authorities about his HIV-positive status. He was deported after serving a jail term. His boyfriend, a Singaporean doctor, had access to the country's HIV registry for his work at a government unit. LGBT+ campaign group Oogachaga, which has set up an online and phone counseling service, said LGBT+ people who have yet to come out publicly were most vulnerable from the leak.

"It can only be expected that they are all under some distress," Leow Yangfa, its executive director said in emailed comments. Leow warned against a rise in "hateful comments" and that it would further stigmatize LGBT+ and people living with HIV. The leak comes months after Singapore revealed the worst cyber attack in its history after hackers infiltrated the government health database. The HIV data leak was unrelated. — Reuters

International

In Venezuela, Russia risks losing an ally and billions

Russia has stood firm behind its man in Caracas

MOSCOW: As President Nicolas Maduro's rule balance in hangs in the Venezuela, Russia risks losing its long-cultivated main ally in Latin America and billions invested in oil and arms contracts. Russian President Vladimir Putin spent years building up an alliance with Venezuela's late populist leader Hugo Chavez and his successor Maduro, often playing host to the two in Moscow.

As pressure has built on Maduro from self-proclaimed acting president Juan Guaido and his Western allies, Russia has stood firm behind its man in Caracas. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov yesterday vowed Moscow would "do everything" to protect its ally. Behind this support, analysts say, is an understanding that if it loses Venezuela, Moscow will have few allies to speak of in Latin America. "Venezuela is practically the last thing that Vladimir Putin has left in Latin America," said Vladimir Rouvinski, a Russian international relations specialist at Colombia's Icesi University.

Moscow likes to present itself as an "alternative" superpower in Washington's backyard. But while it has close ties with Venezuela and traditional ally Communist Cuba, Moscow's relations with Brazil, Ecuador and Argentina have been hit by recent changes of leadership there, Rouvinski said. Russia shored up its alliance with Venezuela as the second largest lender to Caracas after China, supplying it with tanks and Kalashnikovs and investing in the country's main asset, its oil resources.

As recently as last month Maduro announced during a visit to Moscow that Russia would invest \$6 billion in Venezuela's oil and mining sectors. Now Russia "runs the risk that all these long-matured relationships... will turn out to be devalued," said Nikolai Petrov, a professor at Moscow's Higher School of Economics.

worth \$11 billion between 2005 and 2017. Moscow, along with China and Turkey, has maintained that support since Maduro's disputed re-election in May last year and opposition leader Guaido's naming of himself as interim president.

With the United States and a dozen Latin American countries recognizing Guaido — and Europe demanding new elections — Putin called Maduro last week to endorse the "lawful authorities". Reports have even surfaced of hundreds of mercenaries from the secretive Russian private military contractor Wagner deploying to Venezuela. Moscow has denied the reports but Rouvinski said they were likely to be true.

"Everything suggests that Russian mercenaries have been present in Venezuela for a while, although most likely, far fewer than reported by media," he said. Russian television has given wide coverage to protests in Caracas, likening the events to Ukraine's 2014 popular uprising that toppled a pro-Kremlin president and led to Moscow's seizure of Crimea and a long-running separatist conflict. Given Russia's vehement opposition to such popular uprisings, "a limited Russian military operation cannot be ruled out" but only as the "very last option" for Moscow, Rouvinski said. "Such a scenario would set the whole of the rest of Latin America against Russia... for many years."

Beyond its long-term strategic goals, Russia has billions in investments and loans at stake. State oil corporation Rosneft, led by Putin's ally Igor Sechin, has loaned around \$6 billion to Venezuela's state oil company PDVSA, investing in exploration and production. Cash-strapped Caracas has struggled to pay back loans in the form of oil due to the poor state of its production facilities.

'Pragmatic approach'

Russia made such investments on the understanding that they were high-risk but could ultimately pay off, analysts said. "Rosneft stayed because it was ready to work for the long-term," said Daniel Rozenal, an expert on Venezuela at Moscow's Institute of Latin America. If Maduro's government does fall, Russia will "undoubtedly fight for contracts



CARACAS: Handout picture released by the Venezuelan Presidency showing President Nicolas Maduro talking during a meeting with Venezuelan diplomats returning from the US, at the Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas on January 28, 2019. — AFP

and debts," said Rouvinski, predicting that Russian non-oil-related investments "will most likely be lost".

Forging political ties with a new regime will depend on how Moscow behaves now at the "critical moment" for Maduro, he said. Ordinary Venezuelans largely see Russia as propping up Maduro's government even if China is a larger investor, he said. Yet "today's opposition forces are prag-

matic," he said, and the Kremlin for its part has hinted it could back a "legitimate" handover of power. In Russia, "the pragmatic approach prevails," said Rozenal, and "working relations can remain" even if the opposition takes over. "The Russian leadership supports the government of Venezuela, in this case the legally elected president. This doesn't mean we won't support contacts with the opposition." — AFP

4 dead, 195 injured in Havana tornado

HAVANA: A rare and powerful tornado has devastated sections of Havana, killing four people and injuring 195, as it overturned cars, uprooted trees and destroyed dozens of homes. A shaken resident, recalling a night of terror, said she clutched her daughter and crouched down in her kitchen as the tornado came roaring in Sunday night. "It was as if rocks were falling — it was hail — and I felt things beginning to fall. It lifted my entire roof and took everything away," said a sobbing Canaima Hernandez, 36.

Hernandez's Havana neighborhood, Regla, was one of the hardest hit by the tornado, which state media said was comparable in strength to the most powerful hurricanes. Residents picked their way through overturned vehicles, collapsed walls, overturned lampposts and uprooted trees. Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel, who confirmed the latest toll on Monday, toured the city's darkened streets visiting emergency crews, wrote on Twitter that damage was "severe."

Night of terror

In the city's Luyano neighborhood, storm debris — including parts of a balcony ripped off an old building — blocked the streets. As emergency sirens blared across the city, firefighters and ambulances rushed about on rescue missions, their



HAVANA: A resident of tornado-hit Regla neighborhood looks at destroyed buildings. — AFP

flashing lights illuminating blacked out areas. Diaz-Canel said that several emergency teams were working hard to restore power to those areas.

At the Hijas de Galicia maternity hospital, staff were forced to evacuate the building due to storm damage. The tornado, spawned by a powerful storm that originated in the Gulf of Mexico, hit western Cuba with winds of up to 100 kilometers per hour. "Islanders are used to these warnings, but they did not suspect the magnitude of what was approaching," said Gramma, the Communist Party daily. People described the tornado as having "the sound of a jet engine," and reported feeling changes in the environmental pressure when it arrived, Armando Caymares

with the Institute of Meteorology said. The tornado "caught me in the street, in the car with my wife and children," actor Luis "Panfilo" Silva wrote on his social media account.

"I had to dodge fallen trees, flooded areas and strong winds until I managed to get home. We experienced great fear," he wrote. Francisco Sotolongo said it was a good thing the tornado's impact only lasted seconds, "because if it lasted a minute there would be nothing left here." High winds sent seawater surging over the city's famed Malecon esplanade and several meters into the city. The western provinces of Pinar del Rio, Artemisa and Mayabeque also were affected by the storm. — AFP

German NGO sues Italy over stranded migrants

BERLIN: German aid group Sea Watch said yesterday it has filed a case at the European Human Rights Court against Italy for refusing to allow its ship carrying 47 rescued migrants to dock. The German NGO's spokesman Ruben Neugebauer said the group had taken the drastic step on Friday because of Rome's hardline attitude against the mainly sub-Saharan migrants that its ship Sea Watch 3 pulled out of the Mediterranean on January 19.

Italy's Interior Minister Matteo Salvini is "taking the people on board as political hostages", said Neugebauer. "They are trying to push it to the Netherlands," he added, referring to Salvini's insistence that the Netherlands or Germany take responsibility for the migrants. Sea Watch 3 is sailing under the Dutch flag and currently sheltering from bad weather off Sicily. Neugebauer stressed that laws governing international waters are clear that ships in distress "must be brought to the nearest safe harbor". Migrants rescued by ships

have frequently been left in limbo since Italy's anti-immigration government began turning them away last summer. In a similar case earlier this month, the EU struck a deal to share out between eight European countries nearly 50 migrants stranded aboard two ships, one of which was Sea Watch 3. Salvini, who has warned that he was considering legal action against Sea Watch's crew, said yesterday that the 47 migrants can disembark if they agree to leave for Germany or the Netherlands.

"Disembarking of migrants? Only if they head for the Netherlands, whose flag the Sea Watch boat is flying, or to Germany, the country of the NGO," he said on Twitter. "In Italy we have already received, and spent, too much." The Netherlands on Monday rebuffed Italy's call to take in the 47 migrants, arguing that Dutch-flagged ship had acted "on its own initiative". "It was up to the captain of Sea Watch 3 to find a nearby port to disembark the 47 migrants he had on board," said the Dutch government. Some 113,482 migrants crossed the Mediterranean to reach Europe last year, according to the UN refugee agency, which said 2,262 people lost their lives or went missing making the perilous journey. Europe has been wrestling with the problem since the migration crisis of 2015 when more than one million people arrived on its shores, many of them fleeing conflict in the Middle East. — AFP

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Repair, refurbish, reuse: Call to arms for electronics giants

Armed with screwdrivers and a zeal for change, a growing global movement is urging electronics giants to make devices that last longer and are easier to fix to cut the environmental fallout of the tech boom. From repair cafes to e-waste recyclers, social enterprises are leading a 'right to repair' campaign, exploring commercial models to reduce the human and environmental impact of the electronics supply chain and its ever-growing waste. The consumer electronics industry is growing at a rapid pace, as technology advances and costs drops.

According to a forecast from Gartner, 2.3 billion PCs, tablets and smartphones will be shipped in 2019. People not only buy more devices, they abandon them quicker, increasing the mining of raw materials and landfill waste. "It is a huge issue, considering how many resources go into the manufacturing of these machines. Every smartphone, every TV monitor, comes with an enormous ecological footprint," Ruediger Kuehr, director of the e-waste program at the United Nations University (UNU) told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The UNU estimates 50 million tonnes of e-waste is produced annually. It expects this to hit 120 million tonnes by 2050. "There needs to be substantially more done to tackle the e-waste issue. We have to seriously consider pushing repair, refurbishment and reuse, but this is so far unfortunately not on the political agenda," said Kuehr.

Glued to a screen

Devices are also becoming more complicated to repair. Spare parts are hard to source, repair instructions scant, and components are often glued together. So it is often cheaper to buy anew, which boosts sales for a host of big manufacturers, be it Microsoft or Amazon. "Once you buy a product or device, then you are the owner of it and that also should mean you decide when and where and how to repair it," Eva Gouwens, chief executive of Fairphone, which bills itself as an ethical manufacturer, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The Amsterdam-based social enterprise designed a smartphone that is easier to open, repair and upgrade without expert help. "Currently the average lifetime of a mobile phone is 20 months, so if you can extend that to three years, imagine the impact on e-waste and CO2 emissions," said Gouwens. Eighteen US states have proposed a 'right to repair' act, forcing manufacturers to make information and spare parts freely available to device owners and third-party repair shops. The EU will introduce similar legislation in 2020. Its proposals, however, only apply to lighting, white goods and televisions. They also only let accredited repairers, rather than independent repairers and individuals, fix such devices.

David and Goliath

Social enterprises active in the sector face a David and Goliath-style battle given the heft of giants such as Apple and Samsung, which market their devices as a high-tech dream. In 2018, Apple sold about 218 million iPhones, according to statistics site, Statista. By contrast, Fairphone has sold 160,000 devices since 2013 and has not yet turned a profit. Having just raised £7 million (\$7.9 million) in investment, Fairphone plans to scale up the business this year. "Some people will always go for the latest and greatest," said Gouwens. "But we think we can convince people that a good quality, functioning phone, with the aim to change industry into a more sustainable industry, is a good deal for them."

Airedale Computers - a social enterprise based in Yorkshire, in the north of England - refurbishes used computers. Its chief executive, Neil Kennedy, is not convinced people will have the knowhow or desire to repair their own devices. "The technology is beyond many people's grasp to repair. People don't have the interest. They want to open a box, press a button and make it work," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Across Europe and beyond, social enterprises and charities have set up repair cafes, where locals bring in broken devices for free or affordable fixing to cut waste and boost recycling.

E-waste entrepreneurs

While wealthy Europe and the United States are mulling laws that would push consumers to repair their electronics, 'make do and mend' is the norm in many poorer parts of the world. Nairobi-based social enterprise AB3D makes 3D printers from broken electronic equipment. Its chief executive and founder, Roy Mwangi Ombatti, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that in Kenya, and other parts of Africa, there is a growing market for repair and resale. "Those of us who are confident enough to take the machines apart and reuse are seeing opportunities and trying to capitalize and make money from them," he said. "It has stemmed out of a culture we have of repurposing and reusing waste."

According to the UNU, only 20 percent of e-waste is recycled properly. The remaining 80 percent ends up in homes, landfill or is shipped, often illegally, overseas and informally recycled. E-waste contaminates the soil and groundwater supply and exposes people to hazardous chemicals. — Reuters



A member of Syria's Arab Shaytat tribe, who has joined a Kurdish-led alliance fighting the Islamic State group in northern Syria, walks past the debris of a bombed vehicle on Jan 27, 2019 in the Syrian village of Baghouz. — AFP

Syrian Arab fighters battle IS for revenge

Near the frontline in eastern Syria, Amer Khalifa plays with a sword he found. To "avenge" his family, he has joined a Kurdish-led alliance fighting the Islamic State group. The 22-year-old is one of numerous members of the Shaytat tribe who have joined the fight to flush out the militants from a shrinking enclave near the Iraqi border. Backed by US-led coalition air strikes, they have confined the extremists to a final pocket spanning just four square kilometres on the Euphrates River in Deir Ezzor province. "I want to avenge my brother and my relatives," Khalifa says. "I will fight to the bitter end of the battle, and then I'll hunt down their sleeper cells," says the Deir Ezzor native.

IS swept across large swathes of Syria and neighboring Iraq in 2014 and proclaimed an "caliphate" that at its peak reached the size of Britain. As they rampaged across Deir Ezzor, IS fighters massacred more than 900 members of the Arab Shaytat tribe. That summer, Khalifa's 26-year-old brother, his maternal uncle, and a cousin on his father's side all went missing. The young fighter believes IS killed them. He joined the Kurdish-led SDF in the neighbouring northeastern province of Hasakeh in late 2016, after escaping his IS-controlled home village of Abu Hamam.

Afghanistan post 9/11 generation wary of any future with the Taliban

Afghanistan's Generation Z has grown up in a 17-year window shadowed by warfare and a heavy international presence, but now faces an uncertain future and the possibility of stark change. Peace talks between the United States and Taliban are ramping up, which could see the hardline group take on a formal role in government, while US President Donald Trump is reported to be mulling cutting the number of US troops, which peaked at 100,000 in the early 2010s and is now at about 14,000.

No one knows what form a new government may take or how much control the Taliban might have under any deal, but for young people who were babies when the Taliban were driven from power by a US-led campaign in 2001, the prospect of peace with the hardline Islamists brings a daunting mix of hope and fear. For villagers in rural Afghanistan, where traditional ways have always counted for more than central government law, life may not change much.

But for the young of Kabul and other cities, there is much to lose, in particular the freedoms restored after the Taliban were ousted - from playing music, to modelling and adopting trendy haircuts - which they've grown up with. "The thing I'm most worried about is that if they return, I'll not be able to continue playing music," said Maram Atayee, a 16-year-old pianist who attends music school in Kabul. "It will be great if the government and the Taliban reach a peace deal. At that time there should be access to music for everyone and women's rights must be protected."

When the Taliban were last in power, they gained global notoriety for a harsh regime that forced women and girls to stay at home, restricted music and sports and imposed brutal punishment on infractions of a hardline version of Islamic law. More recently, they have adopted a more moderate tone, including pledges on rights for women and girls' education, appeals for support from foreign aid groups and promises to maintain good international relations.

While huge doubts remain, the peace talks have given young people a sense of hope. "I am optimistic about the Taliban joining the peace process," said Hussain, 19, who like many young Afghans grew up in neighboring Iran where millions have taken refuge from war. He now works as a hairdresser in Kabul. "It will be an end to the war and conflicts in our country. I want the Taliban to change their policy and not behave like before."

'Watch out'

But still he has heard nothing of his relatives, nor found their remains in any of the mass graves the IS group left in its wake. In Dec 2014, one such death pit was discovered, its belly containing the bodies of 230 Shaytat tribe members - but not Khalifa's brother or relatives. IS has been ousted from nearly all of its once sprawling proto-state in multiple offensives by various state and non-state parties, including the SDF, formed with US-led support in 2015.

Of the SDF's around 30,000 fighters, some 5,000 are from local Sunni Arab tribes. The force also includes Christians and ethnic Turkmen as well as its core Kurdish fighters. On the east bank of the Euphrates River, in the village of Baghouz near the front line, Arab fighters have set up posts inside modest one-storey homes. Among them, Abu Zeid, a fighter in his late thirties, scrutinizes the distance to the nearest possible militant.

He has a glass eye in his right socket but his left eye is sharp. "Watch out, between the trees," he warns journalists. "They're on the white dirt road... Look, they're behind the pillars," says the fighter in uniform, an olive-colored scarf tied around his head. He speaks excitedly about the latest developments in battle, and the nearing end of IS territorial control.

'We need help'

Afghanistan has a strikingly young population, with more than 60 percent of its 35 million people under the age of 25, and half under the age of 15, according to the UN population agency. Like young people everywhere, Afghanistan's urban youth rely on technology for their window on global trends and culture, and face huge problems finding permanent, stable work. They have also had to deal with near-daily violence and a broken economy that cannot provide jobs for the 400,000 or so new entrants to the workforce every year.

Hundreds of thousands have migrated in the years since 2014, when most foreign forces left. Many have risked dangerous journeys in search of new homes in countries like Turkey, or in Europe or further afield. For some of those who have remained, there is now hope that peace will bring opportunities. Nineteen-year-old Omar, who works at a shop in Kabul that sells clothes imported from Turkey, has been learning English since he was six with the hope of travelling. He keeps a book filled with photos of places he wants to visit - the Taj Mahal, the Eiffel Tower, New York City.

Still, he says, he wants to live in Afghanistan and longs for an end to the violence. "If there's peace it would be easier, there's lots of rich guys and they're not investing because they're scared for their lives, that there will be a bomb that will destroy what they've done." He admires the progress made by China, whose presence in Afghanistan pales in comparison with that of other powers, but whose investment is increasing. "They have peace, they are hard workers." But he feels apprehensive about the prospect of the US military leaving. "What President Trump said about Afghanistan was totally wrong, we need help," he said.

Generation of change

Sultan Qasim Sayeedi, an 18-year-old model sports a hairstyle with shaven sides and a slicked back front called a "sinpogh", which he says turns heads on Kabul's streets. He scours Facebook, YouTube and Instagram to learn about fashion and modelling and draws inspiration from his favorite models, including Saudi Arabia's Omar Borkan, and Canadian pop star Justin Bieber. "We're afraid that if the Taliban come then we will not be able to hold our shows," he said. Despite that wariness, Sultan says it's time the fighting ended. "If American troops will go peace will come, we want peace," he said.

Maryam Ghulami, a 20-year-old living in the western province of Herat, says her generation will bring change that her parents never could. She is learning graphic design and computer coding at an online academy and likes to hone her skills with YouTube tutorials. While she believes Afghanistan faces many problems - a slow and unreliable Internet connection, for a start - she has faith that her generation can bring change. "The new generation can change Afghanistan with knowledge, with technology," she said. — Reuters

'Grief has become normal'

But when he is asked about what brought him to the front, he becomes silent. He too lost relatives from the Shaytat tribe after IS overran his hometown but refuses to recount what happened. After a pause, he says: "Whatever, it's all so normal. Even my grief has become normal." As soon as they hear gun or artillery fire against the jihadists on the edges of Baghouz, the US-backed fighters scuttle from one terrace to the next to get a better view.

The SDF have whittled away at the last IS territory east of the Euphrates in a major offensive launched in September. The alliance's commander in chief last week said he expected to announced the demise of their "caliphate" within a month, before pursuing remaining sleeper cells. IS has retained a presence in the vast virtually unpopulated desert to the west, and has claimed several deadly attacks in SDF-held territory in recent weeks.

In a building under construction in Baghouz, Khalifa sits with fellow Shaytat tribesmen around a small fire, heating a blackened kettle to make tea. Asked about why he is fighting the militants, he echoes the answer of his fellow Arab combatants. "We want revenge," he says. — AFP

Foreign reporters say China work conditions worsen

Detentions, visa delays, and suspected phone bugging are among the challenges faced by foreign journalists in China, who say working conditions are getting worse with many reporting being watched and harassed. A survey of 109 journalists published yesterday "painted the darkest picture of reporting conditions inside China in recent memory", the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China said in a statement. Surveillance was a key concern with close to half of respondents saying they had been followed in 2018, while 91 percent were concerned about the security of their phones, the FCCC's report said.

Fourteen people said they were physically blocked from accessing public areas in the far western region of Xinjiang. Up to a million Uighurs and members of other mostly Muslim minority groups are held in extrajudicial detention in camps in the region, according to a group of experts cited by the United Nations. China has accused foreign media of sensationalizing the issue but 23 respondents who visited Xinjiang in 2018 said they were subject to some sort of interference - including being forced to delete pictures or data, having their interviews disrupted or even being detained.

"I was followed and tracked for nearly 1,600 kilometers, by at least nine cars and 20 people... had armed police approach my vehicle with shields raised and tell me to put my hands outside the car," said Nathan VanderKlippe of the Globe and Mail in the report, adding that he was detained multiple times in Xinjiang. Chinese authorities say the country has a basic policy of "opening up to the outside world" including protecting the rights of foreign journalists, who may interview anyone who gives prior consent. But correspondents report increasing pressure from Chinese officials.

Visa delays

Many have been threatened with visa delays, according to the FCCC, which noted that BuzzFeed News bureau chief Megha Rajagopalan was effectively expelled after her visa was not renewed. Six correspondents said they felt their visa renewal difficulties were related to their news coverage, with at least four journalists issued short three-month or six-month visas, including Sankei Shimbun bureau chief Kinya Fujimoto, instead of the standard one-year stay.

Local staff and sources have also been harassed and intimidated, with this at times extending to their family and friends. "There is a risk that even foreign media will shy away from stories that are perceived as too troublesome, or costly, to tell in China," said FCCC president Hanna Sahlberg. "These trends run contrary to the FCCC's hopes for real openness for foreign media to be able to cover China."

The space in China for foreign journalists is quickly diminishing, said Patrick Poon, China researcher at Amnesty International. "Unless they don't report anything on human rights, they all face the increasing risk of losing their visas," he told AFP. China's foreign ministry dismissed the report as "repetitive" from past years and not representative of the views of all foreign correspondents in the country. "It is also basically not worth refuting," foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a regular press briefing. "We are willing to do our best to help solve problems, but I am not sure whether publishing such reports is constructive or will help to solve the problem." — AFP

Business

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BEIJING: Huawei employees work at their store's showroom in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

China slams US 'smear' in Huawei case

Tensions boil as US slaps 13 charges against Chinese telecom giant

BEIJING: China yesterday accused the United States of "political motivations" behind sweeping charges against Chinese telecom giant Huawei in a case that has ratcheted up tensions between the two superpowers. The Justice Department Monday unveiled 13 charges against Huawei Technologies, its chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou—the daughter of the company's founder—and two affiliates related to violating US sanctions on Iran.

The firm was also accused of technology theft on the same day China's top trade negotiator arrived in Washington for high-stakes talks with US officials, possibly complicating the discussions ahead of a March deadline to avert a deepening of their trade war. Canada has been dragged into the dispute since it arrested Meng at the behest of the United States last month, sparking a diplomatic crisis between Ottawa and Beijing, which renewed calls for her release and for the US to drop its warrant against her. China's foreign ministry said there were "strong political motivations and political manipulations" behind the charges.

"For some time, the US has used state power to smear and suppress specific Chinese companies in an attempt to stifle their legitimate business activities," ministry

spokesman Geng Shaung said at a regular briefing. "We strongly urge the US to stop the unreasonable suppression of Chinese companies including Huawei and to treat them fairly and objectively. China will also resolutely defend the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese enterprises." The twin indictments are the latest setback for the company, with its equipment having been barred from domestic networks in the United States, Australia and New Zealand amid security fears.

In addition to fraud charges linked to Iran sanctions violations against Meng and the company, two Huawei affiliates were charged with stealing robot technology from T-Mobile. "Both sets of charges expose Huawei's brazen and persistent actions to exploit American companies and financial institutions, and to threaten the free and fair global marketplace," said FBI Director Christopher Wray.

Acting US Attorney General Matthew Whitaker said there was nothing in the indictment that alleged Chinese government involvement in either case.

However, he added, "As I told Chinese officials in August, China must hold its citizens and Chinese companies accountable for complying with the law."

In a statement sent to AFP, Huawei said it was "disappointed" and denied that it committed any of the allegations. It added that it was "not aware of any wrongdoing by Ms Meng (Wanzhou), and believes the US courts will ultimately reach the same conclusion."

Extradition request

The United States have filed a formal extradition request for Meng, according to Canadian broadcaster CBC, and she faces a court hearing on February 6. Nine days after her arrest in Vancouver on December 1, Chinese authorities detained two Canadians in what is seen as an act of retaliation to pressure Ottawa.

The charges against Meng, filed in federal court in New York, allege that between 2007 and 2017 she, Huawei and the subsidiaries sought to mask their business with Iran in violation of US and UN sanctions on the country. Meng in particular "repeatedly lied" to bankers about the relationships between the companies, especially with Skycom, a Huawei affiliate in Iran, according to the charges.

That violated US laws, the Justice Department said, because the Iran business involved US-dollar transac-

tions processed by banks through the United States. Huawei and the affiliates also lied to US authorities, obstructing the investigation, they said. The indictment also mentions that Huawei's founder—Ren Zhengfei, a former People's Liberation Army engineer identified only as "Individual-1" in the court documents—had "falsely stated" that the company had "not dealt directly with any Iranian company" in an interview with FBI in July 2007. Ren, however, has not been charged.

'Stealing' tech secrets

The second case charged that Huawei made a concerted effort to steal technology related to a phone-testing robot dubbed Tappy from a T-Mobile USA lab in Washington state. Engineers of Huawei—which was supplying T-Mobile with phones—took pictures and made measurements of parts of the robot, "even stealing a piece of it," said Whitaker. The Justice Department charged that the Chinese company had, in July 2013, offered bonuses to employees "based on the value of information they stole from other companies around the world, and provided to Huawei via an encrypted email address." —AFP

Three banks merge to form third largest UAE lender

ABUD DHABI: Three banks based in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi yesterday announced they have agreed to merge to form the Emirates' third largest lender. The boards of Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank (ADCB) and Union National Bank have unanimously agreed to merge and then acquire the third lender, Al-Hilal Bank which will continue to operate as an Islamic bank under the new group, a statement said.

The merger is still subject to regulatory and shareholder approvals in the coming weeks, said the statement by the three banks. The new lender will operate under the ADCB name and will have assets of \$114 billion, making it the third largest in UAE after the First Abu Dhabi Bank and Emirates National Bank of Dubai, both of which were the result of mergers. The oil-rich government of Abu Dhabi through the Abu Dhabi Investment Council will own a 60.2 percent stake in the new bank, the statement said. —AFP

Mnuchin says Huawei case 'separate' from US-China trade talks

WASHINGTON: US Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin said yesterday he expected to see significant progress in trade talks with Chinese officials this week and that US charges against telecommunications giant Huawei Technologies Co Ltd were a separate issue.

"Those are separate issues, and that's a separate dialogue," Mnuchin said in an interview with Fox Business Network. "So those are not part of trade discussions. Forced technology issues are part of trade discussions, but any issues as it relates to violations of US law or US sanctions are going through a separate track." China's Vice Premier Liu He is leading a delegation for high-level trade and economic talks in Washington this week, including a meeting with US President Donald Trump.

On Monday, the United States announced criminal charges against Huawei's Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou and the Chinese technology firm. But Mnuchin said he did not expect the issue to be part of the economic talks.

Meng, who is the daughter of Huawei's founder, was arrested in Canada in December and is fighting extradition to the United States.

Mnuchin said the US security concerns raised by the Huawei case were separate from the conversation on trade and forced technology. "There are two different issues. One is an issue of state subsidies" regarding Beijing's subsidies, he said. The other, he added, was a national security issue focused on US infrastructure and cybersecurity.

"These are separate issues and shouldn't be confused," Mnuchin said.

The talks, scheduled for today and tomorrow in Washington, will include a meeting between Liu and US President Donald Trump and take place amid worsening tensions between the world's two largest economies.

The US Justice Department on Monday unsealed indictments against China's top telecommunications equipment maker, Huawei Technologies Co, accusing it of bank and wire fraud to



WASHINGTON, DC: National Security Advisor John Bolton looks on as US Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin takes a question during a briefing in the Brady Briefing Room of the White House in Washington, DC on Monday. —AFP

evade Iran sanctions and conspiring to steal trade secrets from T-Mobile US Inc.

China, meanwhile, formally challenged US tariffs on Chinese goods in the World Trade Organization's dispute settlement system, calling the duties a "blatant breach" of Washington's WTO obligations. US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross insisted at a news conference

that the Huawei indictments are "law enforcement actions and are wholly separate from our trade negotiations with China." The Huawei indictment came as a Chinese delegation including Liu and Vice Commerce Minister Wang Shouwen was already in Washington preparing for the talks, a person familiar with the discussions said. —Reuters

Business

German giant SAP to slash 4,400 jobs in billion-euro restructuring

Turnaround plan to impact Germany and the US the most

BERLIN: German software giant SAP said yesterday it would slash 4,400 jobs in a billion-euro restructuring plan after profits stagnated in 2018, while insisting it was on track to grow revenues and earnings this year.

"We are talking about a completely voluntary program," chief financial officer Luka Mucic said. The number of job cuts would be "slightly higher" than during a previous overhaul in 2015, he added, when the group shifted focus to "cloud" computing from traditional software. "We are expecting 4,400 job cuts, more than the 3,000 in 2015 and we think that Germany and the US will be the most impacted," spokesman Benjamin Nickel said. Under the new turnaround plan, executives plan to spend between 800 million and 950 million euros (\$915-\$1.1 billion) on restructuring in 2019 "to further simplify company structures and processes".

They aim to realize "a minor cost benefit" this year, before slashing annual outgoings by up to 850 million euros from 2020. Chief executive Bill McDermott said the departures were necessary to clear the way for SAP to make new bets on growth areas in the software industry.

"We are going to move our people and our focus to the areas SAP needs the most, AI (artificial intelligence), blockchain, internet of things, quantum computing," he said. "We currently have 95,000 people in the company, if we talk in a few years it will be more," McDermott added.

Sluggish profits

SAP's restructuring announcement came as it reported net profit added just one percent last year to reach 4.1 billion euros. The group preferred to play up operating, or underlying profit that surged 17 percent, to 5.7 billion euros, on revenues up 5.0 percent at 24.7 billion euros.

The result "sets us up perfectly for continued strong profitable growth in 2019 and beyond," Mucic said. One area the group hopes will stoke the bottom line is so-called "experience management" after it recently snapped up Californian firm Qualtrics for \$8 billion.

Invented in the 1990s, the technique calls for collecting data on customers, employees, brands and products, aiming to sharpen firms' understanding of how they are perceived.

In 2018, SAP continued its transformation away from traditional one-off sales of business software licenses to cloud computing, under which it charges customers a subscription fee to process data on the firm's computers. Revenue from cloud subscriptions and support grew 32 percent over the year, to almost 3.8 billion euros. Meanwhile software licenses and support revenue shrank one percent, although it remains a far bigger source of income for now at almost 15.8 billion euros.

Across the whole group, SAP aims to increase revenue from its cloud and software activities to between 22.4 and 22.7 billion euros in 2019 — up from 20.66 billion booked last year under non-IFRS accounting standards, which exclude some costs.



Still in non-IFRS terms, the group aims for operating profit of 7.7 to 8.0 billion euros this year, up from 7.16 billion euros in 2018. SAP stock rebounded were trading down 2.4 percent at 90.15 euros around 12:40 pm in Frankfurt (1140 GMT) — while remaining the worst performer on the DAX index of blue-chip shares. — AFP

AUB announces winners of 'shop and win up to 100% cash back' campaign

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank announced the names of the winners of the first draw of "Shop and Win Up to 100 percent Cash Back" of the Value of your Purchases' campaign, which took place on 21 January 2019 at the bank's main branch in the presence of the Ministry of Trade and Industry's representative, The lucky winners: Amani Youssef Almeshari, Dana Abdelaziz Gholoum, Qasem Ali Al-Hasawi, Abdullah Saleh Alazmi and Abdulwahab Nabil Al-Awadi. All winners redeemed up to 100 percent cash-back of the value of their purchases using their AUB Credit Cards with a maximum cash-back of KD1,000.

The campaign was designed to reward the bank's customers with up to 100 percent cash-back on their purchases made using their AUB Credit Cards, with a maximum cash-back of KD 1,000 for each winner. To be eligible, the AUB Credit Cardholder had to spend KD 100 or above during the three months campaign period which ran from the current January until the end of March 2019. The campaign offered 15 prizes throughout three draws, each with five prizes.

Entry into the draw was calculated based on the total value of purchases made during the period of the campaign. Customers received one chance in the draw for every KD 10 they spent locally in Kuwait, and received three chances in the draw for every KD 10 they spent abroad.

In addition to the exciting cash-back campaign benefits, customers who spent using AUB credit cards automatically benefited from the Pearls reward program as well as AUB's instant discount program. These offers provided customers a real added value that rewards the AUB Credit Card and ATM card holders through unique discounts at major well-known companies and retail outlets in Kuwait.

In a press statement, the Bank said "We are very pleased with the success of this campaign which reflects our success in introducing innovative offers that add to our customers' banking experience. This campaign reflects AUB's ongoing commitment towards our customers, and our underlying efforts to reward them."

Infiniti VC-Turbo recognized by ALG with 'powertrain innovation award'

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait, announces that INFINITI's variable compression ratio engine (VC-Turbo engine), the world's first production variable compression ratio engine, was recognized by ALG with the Powertrain Innovation Award.

The Powertrain Innovation Award from ALG recognizes powertrains that embody the driving experience, taking into account the elements of power, efficiency and handling dynamics.

A breakthrough in combustion engine design, the 2.0-liter VC-Turbo engine adjusts its compression ratio to optimize power and efficiency. The VC-Turbo engine changes its compression ratio seamlessly with an advanced multi-link system, continuously raising or lowering the pistons' reach, which provides the power and strength of a sprinter with the efficiency and endurance of a marathon runner.

In operation, the QX50's VC-Turbo engine offers any compression ratio between 8:1 (for high performance) and 14:1 (for high efficiency). The engine delivers



268 hp at 5,600 rpm and 280 lb ft at 1,600 - 4,800 rpm. The VC-Turbo's specific power output is higher than many competing turbocharged gasoline engines, and it comes close to the performance of some V6 gasoline engines. The unit's single-scroll turbo ensures immediate accelerator responses on demand.

The VC-Turbo's powerful-yet-compact footprint allows the entire cabin to move forward, revealing more interior space and making the 2019 QX50 one of few vehicles in its segment to offer sliding and reclining rear seating. The QX50 also boasts rear legroom of up to

38.7 inches and a trunk that can accommodate a stroller situated length-wise without letting down the back seats, with space for additional cargo.

Available in the INFINITI showroom in Al-Rai, the 2019 QX50 is the brand's most advanced vehicle to date and embodies everything INFINITI stands for: Beautiful design, advanced technology and empowering performance features. Additionally, INFINITI's available ProPILOT Assist technologies can offer support when needed and add to the enjoyment and confidence of the driver.

Philips shifting production from US to China due to trade war

AMSTERDAM: The trade war between Washington and Beijing is forcing Dutch health technology company Philips to move "hundreds of millions" of euros worth of production from the United States to China, and vice versa, to avoid punitive tariffs.

"This is not peanuts", Chief Executive Frans van Houten told reporters yesterday. "These are serious changes to our supply chains," he said, adding the switches would take place in the first half of 2019.

Philips, whose healthcare products range from high-

tech toothbrushes to medical imaging systems, stuck to an earlier prediction that increased trade tariffs would cut around 60 million euros (\$69 million) from core profits this year.

But the effects of the trade war go beyond tariffs, the CEO said, as it is hitting consumer confidence in China, slowing demand for consumer healthcare products in the world's second-largest economy.

Philips' sales in China will continue to grow in 2019, however, Van Houten said, as strong demand for hospital equipment will outweigh the weakness of the consumer market. Overall, Philips held on to its target for total comparable sales growth of 4 to 6 percent per year until 2020.

Higher shareholder returns

Strong demand for hospital equipment in China, Latin America and Europe helped Philips beat analysts' forecasts in the last quarter of 2018, as comparable sales rose 5 percent and core profit (adjusted earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation)

increased 10 percent to 971 million euros.

Together with a 6 percent dividend hike and a new 1.5 billion euros share buyback plan, this lifted Philips shares 1.8 percent to 32.89 euros at 0930 GMT. "On headline numbers, Philips reported a decent update", ING analyst Marc Hesselink wrote in a note. "Underlying, the quality of the beat was lower (as) Connected Care & Healthcare Informatics was, like previous quarters, well below expectations."

Rival Siemens Healthineers said yesterday it would take steps to raise profitability at its diagnostics unit after lengthy installation times for its new Atellica blood and urine testing machines hit profit at the division. Philips reported comparable sales growth of 3 to 5 percent for its two largest businesses, which make hospital equipment and personal healthcare products. Sales of its connected care division, which specializes in remote patient monitoring, were flat. Philips expects rising life expectancy and associated chronic diseases to lead to growing demand for devices that allow patients to stay at home, while their data is monitored. — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	303.900
Euro	349.790
Sterling Pound	404.340
Canadian dollar	231.980
Turkish lira	59.010
Swiss Franc	309.130
US Dollar Buying	304.300

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.774
Indian Rupees	4.277
Pakistani Rupees	2.210
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.669
Nepali Rupees	2.666
Singapore Dollar	226.030
Hongkong Dollar	38.736
Bangladesh Taka	3.551
Philippine Peso	5.787
Thai Baht	9.627
Malaysian ringgit	77.724

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.094
Qatari Riyal	83.523
UAE Dirham	82.795

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.850
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	16.941

Yemen Riyal/for 1000

1.221	
Tunisian Dinar	103.720
Jordanian Dinar	428.480
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.026
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.295

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer

US Dollar	303.540
Canadian Dollar	230.395
Sterling Pound	401.730
Euro	349.550
Swiss Franc	303.670
Bahrain Dinar	807.225
UAE Dirhams	83.045
Qatari Riyals	84.280
Saudi Riyals	81.840
Jordanian Dinar	429.410
Egyptian Pound	17.186
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.669
Indian Rupees	4.268
Pakistani Rupees	2.187
Bangladesh Taka	3.620
Philippines Peso	5.785
Cyprus pound	18.060
Japanese Yen	3.775
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.673
Malaysian Ringgit	74.760
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.410
Thai Bhat	10.605

Turkish Lira

57.375	
Singapore dollars	224.548

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY BUY SELL

Europe		
British Pound	0.392269	0.406169
Czech Korune	0.005454	0.014754
Danish Krone	0.042428	0.047428
Euro	0.339618	0.353318
Georgian Lari	0.113857	0.113857
Hungarian 0.001002	0.001192	
Norwegian Krone	0.031627	0.036827
Romanian Leu	0.055778	0.072628
Russian ruble	0.004580	0.004580
Slovakia	0.009076	0.019076
Swedish Krona	0.029477	0.034477
Swiss Franc	0.299630	0.0310630

Australasia

Australian Dollar	0.209212	0.221212
New Zealand Dollar	0.201525	0.211025
Canada Dollar	0.223804	0.232804
US Dollars	0.299800	0.305100
US Dollars Mint	0.300300	0.305100

Asia

Bangladesh Taka	0.003010	0.003811
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Chinese Yuan

0.043552	0.047052	
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036642	0.039392
Indian Rupee	0.003713	0.004485
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002695	0.002875
Korean Won	0.000262	0.000277
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070314	0.076314
Nepalese Rupee	0.002605	0.002945
Pakistan Rupee	0.001564	0.002334
Philippine Peso	0.005788	0.006088
Singapore Dollar	0.219070	0.229070
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001327	0.001907
Taiwan	0.009736	0.009916
Thai Baht	0.009257	0.009807
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.791531	0.808031
Egyptian Pound	0.017087	0.019687
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000208	0.000268
Jordanian Dinar	0.424331	0.433331
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000151	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021689	0.045689
Omani Riyal	0.783032	0.788712
Qatar Riyal	0.079184	0.084124
audi Riyal	0.079953	0.081253
Syrian Pound	0.001288	0.001508
Tunisian Dinar	0.095899	0.103899
Turkish Lira	0.050643	0.062143
UAE Dirhams	0.081316	0.083016
Yemeni Riyal	0.000988	0.001068

Business

KES forum discusses challenges, opportunities of tech projects

Kuwait's \$200m tech fund a step towards embracing digital technology: Expert

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Kuwait Economic Society (KES) hosted a forum titled 'Tech Projects in Kuwait: Challenges and Opportunities', geared towards startups. The speakers included CEO of Faith Capital Holding Mohamad Jaafar, Founder and Managing Director of Boutiqaat Abdelwahad Al-Essa, Co-Founder and CEO of Carriage Abdullah Al-Mutawa and Executive Vice President of Research Department at Kuwait Financial Center (Al-Markaz) Mandagolator Raghu.

In his presentation 'The Future of Startups in Kuwait', Raghu elaborated on the rapid acceleration of startups in the GCC and Kuwait. Raghu said the best thing for many companies nowadays is that they no longer have to count years to soar high, as many of them are born propped up by the new era of technology, like the sudden acceleration of Apple, Google, Microsoft, Amazon and Facebook to name a few.

He said around 10 years ago, the ecosystem was far different from what it is now, as ExxonMobil was on top of the ladder, followed by companies like GE and Microsoft. He said several companies had to strive hard to reach the 50 million users threshold. "For example, aviation companies took 68 years to reach 50 million users, along with cars (62 years), tele-

phones (50 years) and television (22 years), while Facebook and Twitter took only two to three years to achieve 50 million users. In fact, Pokemon Go reached 50 million users in just 19 days," he said. "You cannot remove technology from anything we do nowadays," he said.

Raghu mentioned several companies that are considered movers and accelerated despite being listed as startups. In Kuwait, according to Raghu, there are several companies that accelerated quickly from multiple sectors, like entertainment (Eventat), food delivery services (Talabat, Carriage, Makan, Zitaat, Jeebly), online retailers (Boutiqaat, Chip Store, Kharda) and logistics (Shipa and Armada).

"When we talk about startups, the word disruption is very important. What is disruption and what is not disruption? Disruptors like Netflix, King Price Insurance, LEDs and Skype provide services similar to existing ones, but they destroyed the old and set up new ones. Sometimes they just create and don't destroy - they just build on top of existing ones. Companies not being considered disruptors are Uber, Google and Tesla," Raghu said.

In the GCC and MENA region, he said Talabat dominates 95 percent of the market share of food delivery in Kuwait. Careem's ride-hailing network



KUWAIT: M Raghu speaks during the Kuwait Economic Society forum on 'Tech Projects in Kuwait: Challenges and Opportunities.' — Photo by Joseph Shagra

services has now present in 20 countries in the Middle East, servicing 700 million people and heading a 10-12 billion taxi market. According to Raghu, there is high-level indication that the government of Kuwait will continue to support SMEs with seed capital and

can stress test the service or product ideas from its \$6.5 billion national SME fund. He also mentioned the recent announcement (January 2019) of an initiative to form a \$200 million fund for investments in technology as a step towards embracing digital technology.

Japan's ANA to order 30 Boeing, 18 Airbus planes

TOKYO: The operator of Japan's All Nippon Airways said yesterday it has decided to order a total of 48 aircraft from Boeing and Airbus for deliveries from 2021 through 2025.

ANA Holdings said it would buy 30 Boeing 737 MAX 8 planes and 18 Airbus A320neo units, citing growing demand in the region and increased inbound tourism to Japan. The company said the 30 Boeing jets would have a catalogue price of 383 billion yen (\$3.5 billion), adding that the firm has so far confirmed orders for 20 units, with an option to buy 10 more.

The 18 Airbus orders are all confirmed, but the engines manufacturer is yet to be decided, the company said. For now, the Airbus deal has a catalogue price of 166 billion yen, ANA Holdings said.

The deal makes ANA the first Japanese buyer of the Boeing model, while the Airbus A320neo already serves ANA's international routes. The company praised the fuel efficiency of the two models.

Separately, the Japanese firm also said it will spend \$95 million to buy 9.5 percent of PAL Holdings, which operates flag carrier Philippine Airlines. "Asia is a key growth market and we believe Philippine Airlines is in an excellent operational position to capitalize on both the strong uptick in air traffic growth as



(FILES) In this file photo, various All Nippon Airways (ANA) passenger aircraft manufactured by Boeing and Airbus (top R) are seen on the tarmac at Haneda international airport in Tokyo. — AFP

well as the vibrant, expanding Philippine economy," ANA Holdings President Shinya Katanozaka said in a statement.

For nine months to December, ANA Holdings said its net profit dropped 30.2 percent to 106.8 billion yen. The fall was due partly to comparison effects as the previous year saw special income related to making low-cost carrier Peach Aviation its subsidiary.

The company also paid \$58 million to settle a class action lawsuit in the US related to an anti-trust allegation. The firm's nine-month

operating profit dropped 5.6 percent to 156.6 billion yen, while overall sales rose 5.2 percent to 1,568 billion yen.

Severe natural disasters in Japan as well as rising fuel prices also weighed on the firm's bottom line. But generally strong demand for both domestic and international air travel was supporting the firm's financial performance, the company said. The firm kept its annual forecasts for a net profit of 102 billion yen and an operating profit of 165 billion yen on sales of 2.04 trillion yen. — AFP

More Chinese provinces cut growth targets

BEIJING: More Chinese provinces have cut their annual growth targets in 2019 than the year before, a sign of deepening pessimism among local governments amid weakening domestic demand and an prolonged trade dispute with the United States. The lower regional targets reinforce expectations of a further slowdown in the world's second-biggest economy this year, after 2018 gross domestic product expanded at its slowest pace in nearly three decades.

Of China's 31 provinces, regions and municipalities, at least 23 cut their economic growth targets for this year, according to provincial announcements this month. In 2018, 17 provinces set lower targets. Shandong, China's third-richest province, has yet to announce its 2019 target. Five provinces - Sichuan, Hebei, Guizhou, Gansu and Hainan - kept their targets unchanged from last year.

That compares with 12 provinces that maintained their targets in 2018. Only one province - Hubei - raised its target, encouraged by an emerging high-tech manufacturing sector. "The new provincial targets reflect the challenges faced by China. Export-driven coastal areas are facing the risk of lower growth amid uncertainty from the US-China trade war," said Tommy Xie, China economist at OCBC Bank in Singapore.

"Western China will remain the key source of growth due to the rise of consumption and services," Xie said. The downward revisions also imply China will set a lower national growth target this year, probably in the 6-6.5 percent range, he added. Growth cooled to 6.6 percent last year, the slowest pace since 1990, as a multi-year campaign to curb risky



SHANGHAI: In this file photo, a woman walks on a pedestrian bridge in Shanghai's Lujiazui financial district. —AFP

lending practices squeezed access to corporate financing, particularly for private firms. A longer-term effort to rein in polluting and low-value industries also hurt factory output.

Moreover, China's vast services sector has lost steam, while an increasingly cautious consumer outlook dulled retail sales. The trade dispute with the United States also hampered Chinese exporters. Export-oriented provinces such as Guangdong, Jiangsu and Fujian all missed their 2018 economic growth targets. A recent Reuters visit to three once-thriving towns in Dongguan in Guangdong province showed clear signs of a slowdown. Scores of shops and restaurants were shuttered, some factories idled and many up for rent. "Some provinces in southern China exposed to exports could feel a bigger impact from the trade war this year," said Yu Pingkang, chief economist at Changjiang Pension Insurance Co in Shanghai. "I personally believe the trade ten-

sions could ease temporarily in March, but they won't be resolved once and for all.

The US won't easily give it up, and the pressure could come back in the (US) election year of 2020." Chinese and US officials are meeting in Washington this week seeking to end their bruising trade dispute, though sources say they are still far apart on some issues. US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Monday the United States expects significant progress in the talks, but the two sides will be tackling "complicated issues", including how to enforce any deal. Beijing may unveil more fiscal stimulus during the annual parliamentary meeting in March, including bigger tax cuts and more infrastructure spending, after a raft of growth boosting measures last year. At the meeting, the government is expected to unveil a lower annual GDP growth target of 6-6.5 percent, policy sources previously told Reuters. — Reuters

EU investment bank cut lending by 20%, gears for Brexit

BRUSSELS: The European Investment Bank, the EU's lending institution, cut lending by nearly 20 percent last year and plans to keep financing at a similar level in 2019 at around 60 billion euros (\$69 billion), the EIB president said yesterday.

The bank is also preparing for all Brexit outcomes, including Britain's departure without a deal in March. Plans are in place for the other 27 EU states to plug the capital gap caused by Britain's departure, even in the event of a no-deal Brexit that would create a sudden shortfall without any transition period, Werner Hoyer told a news conference.

Hoyer said 2018's decrease in lending was due to improved economic conditions in the EU which allowed the bank to invest less and concentrate on riskier and more profitable projects.

Despite signals of a slowdown in several EU economies, the bank would keep a similar level of funding this year. Britain's departure from the bloc will deprive the bank of one of its largest

shareholders and of 3.5 billion euros of British paid-in capital and 35 billion euros of UK callable capital which are key for the bank to maintain its triple-A rating and low funding costs.

The gap in the paid-in capital will be covered with the bank's reserves, Hoyer said, while the hole in the callable capital would be filled proportionally by the 27 remaining governments of the EU.

A deal on filling the gap has been reached at technical level to address the shortfall but it needs to be formalized by EU finance ministers. Hoyer said the formal deal would be sealed once there is clarity on the Brexit process. Agreement among EU states has been hampered by divisions about the future composition of the shareholding, with Poland pushing for a bigger share - which would come with more powers. The provisional compromise reached envisages a modest increase for Poland and smaller capital rises for Romania, and perhaps for Luxembourg. — Reuters

Huawei: How the telecoms giant is seen around the world

PARIS: US charges against Chinese telecoms giant Huawei have cranked up tensions between the world's two biggest economies, but the company is already facing obstructions around the world over alleged cyber-security risks. Huawei's status as a leading supplier of the backbone equipment for telecoms systems - mostly in developing markets - has given China an inside track for spearheading fifth-generation (5G) mobile technology.

5G communications are the next milestone in the digital revolution, bringing near-instantaneous connectivity, vast data capacity and futuristic technologies. However, fears that Chinese telecoms companies like Huawei could be proxies for Beijing's intrusive security apparatus, using the sophisticated infrastructure for espionage, a growing number of Western states turn their backs on the giant.

China has strongly defended its flagship tech group, with Foreign Minister Wang Yi denouncing on Friday an "unfair and immoral" campaign against Huawei.

Here is an overview of how Huawei is seen around the world:

The United States

Washington has slapped the strictest restrictions against Huawei, and according to American media, is strongly encouraging its allies to follow suit. A report in October 2012 by the House Intelligence Committee found Huawei and China-based ZTE could be used to undermine the security of the US, and demanded they be excluded from public contracts.

The committee's report noted that Huawei, whose founder is a former

Chinese army engineer, "did not fully cooperate with its investigation and was reluctant to explain its relations with the Chinese government". Despite steering clear of infrastructure projects, a congressional letter issued in December 2017 said Huawei's equipment remained a "security threat" to the US.

Telecoms groups AT&T and Verizon have stopped offering Huawei smartphones in the US and in August 2018 President Donald Trump signed the military budget for 2019 which prohibited government and military officials from using devices built by Huawei and ZTE.

Australia, New Zealand, Japan

Australian authorities banned Huawei from submitting offers for the national broadband internet program in 2012, fearing cyber-attacks.

In the summer of 2018, Australia excluded Huawei from rolling out 5G, saying "the involvement of suppliers likely to be subject to extrajudicial decisions by a foreign government" constituted a security risk. New Zealand followed suit in November, officially citing technological incompatibility, and Japan came next in December with a ruling aimed at avoiding "information leaks", according to the Nikkei newspaper.

Czech Republic

In mid-December, the Czech cyber-security agency warned against the use of Huawei and ZTE's software and equipment, claiming it posed a threat to national security. "Chinese laws require private companies headquartered in China to cooperate with intelligence services," it argued.

Poland

One of Huawei's officials in Poland was arrested in mid-January by the internal security service ABW on charges of spying for Beijing. A senior government official then said that the country had begun investigating equipment provided by Huawei to assess the risks. —AFP

Business



KUWAIT: Talal Anwar Al Mulla, Chief Executive Officer of Al Mulla Group, Kazuo Kobayashi, Managing Director of Konica Minolta (KMBS) Middle-East, and Takashi Ashiki, Ambassador of Japan to Kuwait, during the inauguration.



Al Mulla Group opens new Konica Minolta showroom in Kuwait City

Event witnesses launch of the cutting-edge Konica Minolta production printing machines

KUWAIT: Al Mulla Office Automation Solutions, a division of Al Mulla Group, inaugurated yesterday the newly-designed showroom for Konica Minolta Business Solutions, a leader in office products, digital workflow solutions, as well as industrial and commercial printing and packaging, in Sharq, Kuwait City.

The inauguration was hosted by Talal Anwar Al Mulla, Chief Executive Officer of Al Mulla Group, Kazuo Kobayashi, Managing Director of Konica Minolta (KMBS) Middle-East, and Takashi Ashiki, Ambassador of Japan to Kuwait.

The opening ceremony of the newly renovated showroom also witnessed the launch of a range of cutting-edge Konica Minolta production printing machines, as well as an array of high-tech systems that offer office solutions to businesses of different sizes and domains. The visitors to the event were taken on a guided tour around the showroom, where product specialists demonstrated the enhanced capabilities of the multi-functional machines.

During the event, Kazuo Kobayashi, Managing Director of Konica Minolta Business Solutions presented "Best Distributor Middle-East Award" to Talal Anwar Al Mulla, Chief Executive Officer of Al Mulla Group, in recognition of Al Mulla Office Automation Solutions' outstanding performance and contribution as the exclusive distributor in Kuwait.

The new line of Accurio digital printing presses is the first of its kind in Kuwait and it will be exclusively



available at Al Mulla Office Automation Solutions, as the exclusive distributor of Konica Minolta products and services in Kuwait.

"We are pleased to be here today to witness the opening of a dedicated showroom for such a global brand as Konica Minolta," said Hormuzda Davar, Managing Director of Trading, Manufacturing & Financial Services at Al Mulla Group. "Our long-standing partnership with some of the most trusted names in business solutions allows us to bring the most

advanced equipment to our customers in Kuwait, and we will continue to offer products and services that meet the growing market needs," Davar added.

Kazuo Kobayashi, Konica Minolta Business Solutions said, "We firmly believe that the investment Al Mulla has made in their new showroom will bring significant value to all parties concerned. It is increasingly important when customers are purchasing the latest digital technology and workflow solutions, that they are able to see how the products and solutions integrate



into a complete workflow. By Al Mulla investing in the new state-of-the-art showroom, it will enable

them to demonstrate and even replicate a customer's environment, offering a first-hand experience to the customer." Al Mulla Office Automation Solutions is a division of Al Mulla Group, a leading privately-held diversified business group based in Kuwait. Its portfolio includes companies in the automotive, engineering, manufacturing, financial services, real estate, health, and education sectors.

Al-Raya promotes Adnan Al-Salem as its new CEO

KUWAIT: Al-Raya United Company (Raya) recently announced the appointment of its deputy CEO Adnan Salman Al-Salem as CEO. The announcement was made during the Raya board meeting held in Kuwait in the presence of board chairman, Jassem Mohammed Humoud Al-Fajji and board members.



In this regard, Al-Fajji said that the new announcement matches Raya policy of promoting its performance through attracting more qualified and skilled citizens capable of continuing the company's growth and achievements made over two decades since its establishment. "I am fully confident that the new CEO and the administrative team will execute the task perfectly through translating the board vision and aspirations built on seizing investment opportunities in various economic fields as well as enhancing benefits for shareholders and partners in both the public and private sectors", Al-Fajji said.

The newly-appointed CEO, Adnan Al-Salem expressed his pleasure for the honor of leading the company's team, which includes a group of fully qualified professionals capable of overcoming all difficulties through focusing on the policy of diversified economy and finding new sources of income.

Notably, Al-Salem has over 23 years long career and had his significant expertise in developing management and operations in previous establishments such as Warba Bank where he founded and headed the bank's banking group.

Al-Salem holds a degree from Harvard in strategic management, Masters degree in business administration, finance and banking from Dubai University, a degree in business administration from Kuwait University and has undergone several training courses in strategies, investment, human resources, risk management and strategic administration.

Renault Al-Babtain brings its fans closer to owning Renault Koleos in 2019

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co, the authorized agent of Renault in the State of Kuwait is delighted to announce that customers can avail of the exciting offer that comes with the Renault Koleos 2019. With an exceptional starting price of only KD 6,499, the outstanding model includes a ten year warranty and 50,000 KM free maintenance.

The Renault Koleos exterior holds a taste for adventure all that is expected of a D-segment SUV. Its robust and muscular features amplifies the athletic exterior design with door protective moldings, large diameter two-tone alloy wheels, alloy roof rails, shark antenna, fender chrome lines and silver front skid. The four wheel drive technology, all-terrain ability, engine and transmission line-up has been tailored to meet the needs and expectations of the Kuwaiti market. The 2.5-litre petrol engine is also an atmospheric, four-cylinder, power is 170hp (126kW) at 6,000rpm, with peak torque of 233Nm at 4,000rpm.

Kaspersky Lab identifies an overlap in cyberattacks

KUWAIT: Kaspersky Lab experts have identified an overlap in cyberattacks between two infamous threat actors, GreyEnergy - which is believed to be a successor of BlackEnergy - and the Sofacy cyberespionage group. Both actors used the same servers at the same time, with, however, a different purpose.

BlackEnergy and Sofacy hacking groups are considered to be two of the major actors in the modern cyberthreat landscape. In the past, their activities often led to devastating national level consequences. BlackEnergy inflicted one of the most notorious cyberattacks in history with their actions against Ukrainian energy facilities in 2015, which led to power outages. Meanwhile, Sofacy group caused havoc with multiple attacks against US and European governmental organizations, along with national security and intelligence agencies. It had previously been suspected that there was a connection between the two groups, but has not



The Renault Koleos captures everyone's attention with an athletic profile, robust front end, roomy seats, taut lines underscored with chrome, and C-Shape LED Daytime Running Lights.

Ensuring unique driving experiences, it comes with ambient lighting, panoramic sunroof, 8.7" touchscreen tablet with R-Link 2 multimedia and navigation system,

and Bose Sound System. Further backed by a wide interior with premium looking, refined materials and details, high tech digital cluster, ventilated power seats, wide door opening, cooled cup holders, generous storage space and sliding armrest. Renault Al-Babtain invites its Renault fans to avail of the exclusive offer by visiting its showroom in Al-Rai.

been proven until now, after GreyEnergy - BlackEnergy's successor - was found to be using malware to attack industrial and critical infrastructure targets mainly in Ukraine, and demonstrated some strong architectural similarities with BlackEnergy.

Kaspersky Lab's ICS CERT department, responsible for industrial systems threats research and elimination, found two servers hosted in Ukraine and Sweden, which were used by both threat actors at the same time in June 2018. GreyEnergy group used servers in their phishing campaign to store a malicious file. This file was downloaded by users as they opened a text document attached to a phishing e-mail. At the same time, Sofacy used the server as a command and control centre for their own malware. As both groups used the servers for a relatively short time, such a coincidence suggests a shared infrastructure. This was confirmed by the fact that both threat actors were observed to target one company a week after each other with spear phishing emails. What's more, both groups used similar phishing documents under the guise of e-mails from the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

"The compromised infrastructure found to be shared by these two threat actors potentially points to the fact that the pair not only have the Russian language in common, but that they also cooperate with each other. It also provides an idea of their joint capabilities and creates better picture of their plausible goals and potential targets. These findings add

another important piece into public knowledge about GreyEnergy and Sofacy. The more the industry knows about their tactics, techniques and procedures, the better security experts can do their job in protecting customers from sophisticated attacks," said Maria Garnaeva, security researcher at Kaspersky Lab ICS CERT.

To protect businesses from attacks from such groups, Kaspersky Lab suggests customers to:

- Provide dedicated cybersecurity training for employees, educate them to always check the link address and the sender's email before clicking anything.

- Introduce security awareness initiatives, including gamified training with skills assessments and reinforcement through the repetition of simulated phishing attacks.

- Automate operating systems, application software and security solutions updates on systems that are part of the IT, as well as enterprise's industrial, network.
- Deploy a dedicated protection solution, empowered with behavioural-based anti-phishing technologies, as well as anti-targeted attack technologies and threat intelligence, such as the Kaspersky Threat Management and Defense solution. These are capable of spotting and catching advanced targeted attacks by analyzing network anomalies and giving cybersecurity teams full visibility over the network and response automation.

Technology

Tipplles and trash: A Japan waste plant opens its doors

TOKYO: A group of young Japanese snap selfies as they knock back a few drinks on a Friday night. But the backdrop to their photos is a mechanical claw stuffed with trash. They have chosen one of the more unusual spots in Tokyo for an after-work tipples: a local waste facility and incinerator. The pop-up bar-called Gomi (trash) Pit-is the initiative of local officials who are trying to promote their state-of-the-art facility and prod local residents to think about the waste they produce.

It makes for a striking juxtaposition: on the upper floor of the facility in Musashino in western Tokyo, several dozen people sit at tables eating nibbles and sipping cocktails. The glass windows in front of them look directly onto a deep pit where tons of garbage is piled for incineration. Every few minutes, an enormous crane descends to the bottom of the pit, then raises up gripping the detritus of daily life: half an Ikea bag, a tie, pieces of cushion foam, torn paper, and plastic bags of every description.

The claw opens to release and mix the trash-key to ensure the various components burn evenly in the incinerator-and the pieces dance down through the air, like the most unpleasant snow imaginable.

"It's kind of surprising," said Isao Tomioka, 49, looking at the swirling waste falling behind the glass.

His two daughters, aged six and four, were pressed up against one window watching. A local resident, Tomioka said he had come to see the facility with his children because he worries about the impact of waste on their generation. "There is some garbage which cannot be burned at all, that garbage must be piled up somewhere, which means that for them it's a kind of negative legacy from our generation," he said.

Musashino already requires residents to sort their waste into several categories-a common practice in Japan-and also charges for the garbage bags that local authorities will collect.

It's a way to encourage people to minimize waste, but

local officials hope exposing people to the sight of the accumulated trash will have an even bigger effect.

"Many visitors have expressed surprise. They say they had no idea how the waste they produce is being processed," said Ayana Seki, an official with the local environmental department.

"Many people also say that they were shocked to see so much waste being piled up although each household puts out only a bag or two of trash."

'Doesn't smell at all'

Tomioka said he already carefully adheres to local rules about separating his waste, but seeing the facility made him feel he could do more. "I would like to streamline my consumption," he said, balancing his younger daughter on his hip. "I love cooking, for me it's one of my favorite hobbies... from now on I'm going to try to minimize food waste. That's my decision after seeing this."

Gomi Pit is only temporary, but the Musashino Clean Centre facility is open to visitors year-round, and was designed to encourage people to come in and look around. Seki said. When they began planning the center, which opened in 2017, they wanted to overcome potential local opposition by creating a place that would be seen as positive. The facility is designed to be attractive, with wooden slats along the facade to mask the concrete shell, and windows at eye level to invite curiosity.

Each area is labelled in Japanese and English, and the control room has floor-to-ceiling windows on one side so visitors can watch technicians remotely handle trash and monitor the facility.

One of the windows even doubles as a touch screen: pressing different icons brings up information including the incinerator's temperature and the amount of trash burned that day. The facility didn't come cheap: 10 billion yen (\$91 million) to build and another 10 billion to operate over the next 20 years. But local resident Yukiko Ota, sip-



TOKYO: This file photo shows customers drinking at the "Gomi Pit" bar in Tokyo. The pop-up bar — called Gomi (trash) Pit — is the initiative of local officials who are trying to promote their state-of-the-art facility and prod local residents to think about the waste they produce. — AFP

ping a lurid blue concoction from a miniature glass, said the visit had made her think.

"This place is really neat and doesn't smell at all!" the 49-year-old housewife said. She said she had been sur-

prised to learn that items that can't be burned are land-filled elsewhere in the country. "We are imposing the burden on some other town," she said. "We should try to reduce the amount of waste we produce." — AFP

EU urges internet firms to intensify fake news fight

BRUSSELS: The EU yesterday urged advertising trade associations and US internet giants to intensify the fight against disinformation campaigns from suspects such as Russia, ahead of European elections in May. The European Commission said Google, Facebook, Twitter, Mozilla and trade groups have made "some progress" toward meeting their pledges to fight fake news by removing fake accounts and checking suspect sites.

"But we need to go further and faster before May," when a new European Parliament is elected, the EU's security commissioner Julian King said. "We don't want to wake up the day after the elections and realize we

should have done more." His remarks came as the Commission, the 28-nation European Union's executive arm, issued its first report on how well internet actors were doing in meeting pledges made late last year in a code of practice to fight disinformation. The Commission said "additional action is needed to ensure full transparency of political ads" by the start of the campaign in EU member countries for the elections.

It also urged platforms to provide access to their data for research purposes, and to ensure cooperation between the platforms and member countries through the Rapid Alert System.

Planned for March, the system will allow members to share data and analysis on propaganda campaigns and promote what the bloc says will be objective communications about its values and policies.

Andrus Ansip, the EU's vice president for the digital single market, said: "Signatories (to the code of practice) have taken action, for example giving people new ways to get more details about the source of a story or ad. — AFP

Germany to soften ban on 'advertising' abortions

BERLIN: Germany's coalition government agreed in principle yesterday to soften a controversial law that bars medical doctors from advertising abortion services.

Gynaecologists and hospitals will now be allowed to share essential information about where and how women can terminate unwanted pregnancies.

German law allows abortions but has long effectively discouraged them through various hurdles such as the advertising ban. Last year gynaecologist Kristina Haenel was fined 6,000 euros (\$6,800) for breaking the law by publishing information on abortion services on her website. The case revived debate in the coalition government led by Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative Christian Democrats (CDU). Junior partners the Social Democrats (SPD) wanted the paragraph scrapped, a demand backed by left-ist opposition parties the Greens and Die Linke.

In the end the ruling parties reached a compromise that many



Kristina Haenel

read as a defeat for the SPD. Andrea Nahles, the SPD leader, nonetheless welcomed the agreement, tweeting that "women are finally getting the information they need". Health Minister Jens Spahn of the CDU said women needed access to crucial information but added that abortions should not be advertised because they are "not a medical procedure like any other". The draft bill seen by AFP would allow federal health authorities and the German Medical Association to publish nationwide lists of doctors who perform abortions.

In other changes, the age limit for women entitled to free contraceptives will be raised from 20 to 22 years, and training on performing abortions will be expanded for medical students. The bill is expected to be approved by the Merkel cabinet on February 6 and then pass both houses of parliament. — AFP

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

Scope of clinical Practice.

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

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

What's On

Ooredoo sponsors 'Reset' trip to Koh Samui Island



Mijbil Alayoub, Senior Director of Corporate Communications

Ooredoo Kuwait sponsored "Reset" Fitness Program's trip to Koh Samui Island in Thailand which is an intense and exciting fitness program on an international level that focuses on combining travel and wellness. The program consisted of nutrition sessions, fitness classes, sports, mental coaching as well as leisure activities. The program is designed to build strength and fitness through an array of intense group training intervals in order to sustain motivation and achieve the ultimate levels of both health and fitness.

Ooredoo's sponsorship of "Reset" Fitness Program comes in tandem with its strategy of enabling youth and supporting them in reaching their potential through taking part in various initiatives related to youth which revolve around sports, fitness, health, and cultural activities. The sponsorship portrays Ooredoo's commitment to raising awareness about health programs and initiatives

among youth with benefits to one's mind, body, and soul and stems from the company's core values of caring, connecting, and challenging. Ooredoo also strongly supports Reset Fitness' notion of how social aspects of travelling combined with physical exercise can enhance one's sense of self and its emphasis in enabling youth as they are an integral part in building the future of the country.

Commenting on this, Mijbil Alayoub, Senior Director of Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait emphasized that Ooredoo and "Reset" Fitness Program both believe in enabling youth and supporting them in reaching their potential, which is one of the biggest pillars of the company's Corporate Social Responsibility strategy. He added: "This sponsorship comes in tandem with our belief in supporting youth initiatives in Kuwait. We are proud to be sponsors of the "Reset" Fitness Program, and we are committed to supporting youth".



ICSK Junior celebrates Republic Day of India

Republic Day honors the date on which the constitution of India came into being and its people became a part of a republic. This year ICSK Junior celebrated the 70th Republic Day with a special assembly. The assembly began with the beautiful quote which was followed by the hoisting of our National Flag which is a symbol of pride and identity for all Indians alike. To express these immeasurable sentiments a speech, song and a dance were presented.

To express our sense of loyalty towards our country, a mime was presented by the students. A tribute was paid to the founders of our Constitution: Dr BR Ambedkar, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Dr Rajendra Prasad and Jawaharlal Nehru who worked tirelessly to give India its sovereign democratic status as a republic. Since India is a vast country with a diverse collection of cultural identities, students dressed as professionals and various traditional costumes depicted our country's unity in its diversity.

Mrs Sheeja, Vice Principal ICSK Junior, in her address expressed her views on patriotism. She talked about respecting and standing up for the honor of our national flag. She also reminded us to keep the sacrifices made by our freedom fighters that could make us realize the dream of an independent and unified India, in our minds and hearts.

ASSP Kuwait Chapter launches GCC HSE Excellence award

American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP) - Kuwait Chapter is pleased to launch of ASSP GCC HSE Excellence Award 2019. Fadhel Ali, Chairman of ASSP Kuwait chapter, Fares Al-Mansouri, Director of ASSP GCC HSE Excellence Award 2019 along with Advisory committee & Core Committee of ASSP Kuwait Chapter released the brochure for the award program on 8th January 2019 at KOC Unity Center, Ahmadi Township, State of Kuwait. More than 100 HSE leaders representing different Private Sector Companies of Kuwait and Other parts of GCC, participated in this launch program.

American Society of Safety Professionals-Gulf Cooperation Council HSE Excellence Award introduced to recognize leadership, excellence and encourage exceptional performance in the field of Health, Safety and Environment in private sector companies in the Gulf Region. The American Society of Safety Professionals-Kuwait chapter instituted the award, since 2007. The award scheme is devised to recognize and reward those GCC private sector organizations who have been successful over the course of the years in managing the Occupational Health, Safety and Environment risks of workplace, development and performance of its HSE Management System.

The award is patronized by Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and endorsed by the international organizations like International Association of Drilling Contractors (IADC), Supported by Board of Certified



Professional (BCSP), International Powered Access Federation (IPAF) and supported by Institution of Occupational Safety and Health UK (IOSH). The awards will be presented to the private sector organizations under five categories such as ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION, MANUFACTURING, OIL & GAS, FACILITY & MAINTENANCE and SECTOR (Specific Contract / Project Site). Based on the award criteria, Gold, Silver, Bronze and Merit awards are presented under each Category.

In addition to this, special awards are also being presented under Management of Driving Safety Award, Best HSE Initiative award, Best Environmental Excellence Award, Best Corporate Social Responsibility award and Best Risk Management Award. This year award pattern is modified, so that any company can participate in any of the award whether it is a service sector or industrial depending upon on their functions related to the award title.

During the brochure release event Chairman ASSP,

Kuwait chapter, Fadhel Al Ali conveyed best wishes to the Chapter Executive Committee members and Award organizing committee members for the success of the program. Fares Al-Mansouri stated that ASSP GCC HSE excellence award promotes HSE culture among the companies and commended the efforts of the ASSP Kuwait chapter for introducing such awards. He also emphasized the contractors to participate in the event.

During the Launch program, Adnan Yousuf, Deputy Director of ASSP GCC HSE Excellence, Welcomed the VIPs and the gathering. Aamir Rasheed, President of ASSP Kuwait Chapter in his opening address stated that it will be a good opportunity for the private sector companies to show case their HSE performance and benchmark their position. During the program, the website for the GCC HSE excellence award 2019 was launched by Fares Al-Mansouri in the presence of invited guests from the contracting companies, ASSP Executive Committee, ASSP Advisory members and the ASSP members.

TIES class announcement

You are cordially invited to another session of our series about some prophets and messengers of Allah (SWT) this Thursday, January 31st, at 7:00 pm, in which we will learn more about Prophet Moses (AS). In this class, we will discover how the two sisters whom Moses (AS) helped surprised their father, why he sent one of them to fetch Moses, and what happened next. We will examine some signs of Moses' modesty and why he asked the woman to lead him from behind to her father's house. We will also discuss why Islam discourages gazing at women outside of one's family. Finally, we will learn the importance of showing gratitude to Allah (SWT) and to humans who do us favors, and the various ways of showing it, deducing many practical lessons from episodes of Moses' life.

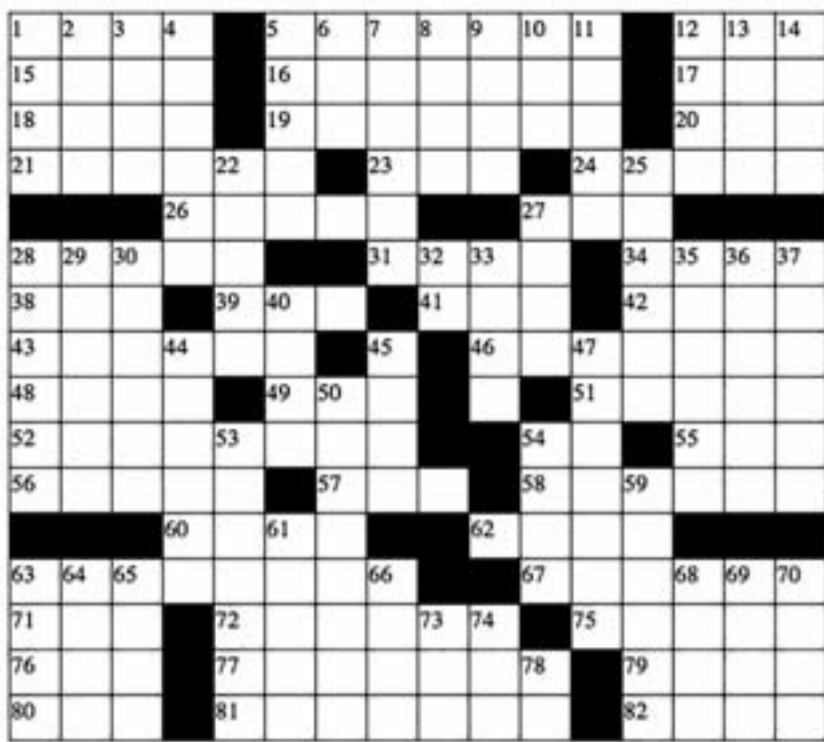
Voter registration for South African citizens abroad

Voter registration for South African citizens is continuous, including for those based abroad. Registration abroad takes place at South Africa's 120 foreign missions, including the Embassy in Kuwait City, during office hours. However, a special two-day voter registration event for South African citizens in Kuwait City will take place at the South African Embassy, State of Kuwait: Villa No. 3, House No 91, Street 1, Block 1, Block 10, SALWA. Will take place on the 1st and the 2nd February 2019. All South Africa citizens aged 16 and older and in possession of an official South African identity document (either a green barcoded ID book, a smartcard ID or a temporary ID certificate) as well as a valid South African passport are eligible to register as voters.



Stars

CROSSWORD 2123



ACROSS

1. Interface consisting of a standard port between a computer and its peripherals that is used in some computers.
5. Small bitter fruit of the marasca cherry tree from whose juice maraschino liqueur is made.
12. The seventh and last day of the week.
15. A young male horse under the age of four.
16. The craniometric point on the sagittal suture near the lambda suture.
17. Electronic equipment that provides visual images of varying electrical quantities.
18. A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.
19. A streamlined enclosure for an aircraft engine.
20. The month following July and preceding September.
21. A member of an Athapaskan people that migrated to Arizona and New Mexico and Utah.
23. The fatty flesh of eel.
24. (folklore) A corpse that rises at night to drink the blood of the living.
26. An expression of approval and commendation.
28. Full of flavor.
31. An island in the Netherlands Antilles that is the top of an extinct volcano.
34. (Greek mythology) Goddess of discord.
38. The address of a web page on the world wide web.
39. The residue that remains when something is burned.
41. Having undesirable or negative qualities.
42. Lacking in strength or firmness or resilience.
43. Emitting or reflecting light readily or in large amounts.
46. Bottom-dwelling tropical rays.
48. (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
49. Either extremity of something that has length.
51. A high wave (often dangerous) caused by tidal flow (as by colliding tidal currents or in a narrow estuary).
52. Still full.
55. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
56. The principles of right and wrong that are accepted by an individual or a social group.
57. (British) A waterproof raincoat made of rubberized fabric.
58. A healthy state of wellbeing free from disease.
60. Type genus of the family Arcidae.
62. An island in Indonesia south of Borneo.
63. Cover with ice or snow or a glacier.
67. French novelist.
71. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
72. According to schedule or without delay.
75. The mother-in-law of Ruth whose story is told in the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament.
76. A benevolent aspect of Devi.
77. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
79. A person regarded as arrogant and annoying.
80. A light touch or stroke.
81. Genus of herbs of mountains of North America and Eurasia and Africa.
82. The quality of a person's voice.

DOWN

1. The act of scanning.
2. A state of deep and often prolonged unconsciousness.
3. Speaking a Slavic language.
4. A Greek island west of Greece.
5. French biochemist who (with Francois Jacob) explained how genes are activated and suggested the existence of messenger RNA (1910-1976).
6. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
7. A state of abeyance or suspended business.
8. On or toward the lee.
9. Structural member consisting of a continuous horizontal timber forming the lowest member of a framework or supporting structure.
10. A pass between mountain peaks.
11. Administer an oil or ointment to.
12. A fraudulent business scheme.
13. Wild sheep of northern Africa.
14. A one-piece cloak worn by men in ancient Rome.
22. (Old Testament) The fourth son of Jacob who was forebear of one of the tribes of Israel.
25. Any of various deciduous or evergreen ornamental shrubs of the genus Abelia having opposite simple leaves and cymes of small white or pink or purple flowers.
27. An informal term for a father.
29. Without qualification.
30. An architectural support or base (as for a column or statue).
32. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
33. An aggressive remark directed at a person like a missile and intended to have a telling effect.
35. A colt with undescended testicles.
36. A hostel for pilgrims in Turkey.
37. A formal spoken communication delivered to an audience.
44. Hard greenish-brown wood of the lignum vitae tree and other trees of the genus Guaiacum.
45. Tropical starchy tuberous root.
47. Capital of Armenia.
50. Unsegmented worms with elongated rounded body pointed at both ends.
53. United States newspaper publisher who founded an important press association.
54. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
59. A town in central Belgium.
61. English Cavalier poet whose lyric poetry was favored by Charles I (1595-1639).
64. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
65. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
66. An independent ruler or chieftain (especially in Africa or Arabia).
68. Ancient Greek philosopher who formulated paradoxes that defended the belief that motion and change are illusory (circa 495-430 BC).
69. A primeval personification of air and breath.
70. Make reference to.
73. A proportion multiplied by 100.
74. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
78. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Just because something seems easy doesn't mean it is right. Taking the easy way out can lead to trouble. Not feeling right about the path before you, you may choose the long way around to accomplish your goals. This is a great time in your life to work with others. You may find you are chosen as just the right person to lead a new project at work. Not only are you highly organized, your directional abilities are great. You may be offered a new position or asked to lead a project. Your confidence levels are high now and for good reason.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

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



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

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



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

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



Leo (July 23-August 22)

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



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Make plans for a quiet evening for those you hold near and dear to your heart. You may find this to be a great time of peace and understanding in your world. An evening spent visiting and sharing future plans could be very beneficial. You will experience much support today and a general feeling of peace and harmony will be present. The more you open up to others and truly let them in you may find they are more willing to open up to you. Drop your walls and enjoy feeling the love.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You always tend to place great importance on the needs of those close to you. You are entering a cycle where relationships seem to mean even more to you than usual. Your focus is not only on your family but also on your social relationships. Friendships become priority now. You seem to be taking a more open-minded approach to life. Focusing on seeing situations and solving problems from the perspective of others will help you grow as a person. You may find yourself focusing on listening to understand rather than listening to respond. This is a very healthy change you are making in your life. Relationships on all levels will strengthen as you become more open-minded.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This day may find you longing for change. A new style, new friends, new experiences may be calling out to you. You want to break out and break away from the mundane life you have been leading. A major change is on the horizon. You may be led to really change things up in your life. Don't run out and get a tattoo or make any changes that can be reversed because this phase could fade as fast as it appeared. This change in attitude is very evident to those around you and you may find you are being met with much opposition. The new you is not the highly respected hard-working role model that so many close to you have grown to admire.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

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



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

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



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

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



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

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

Wordsearch Puzzle

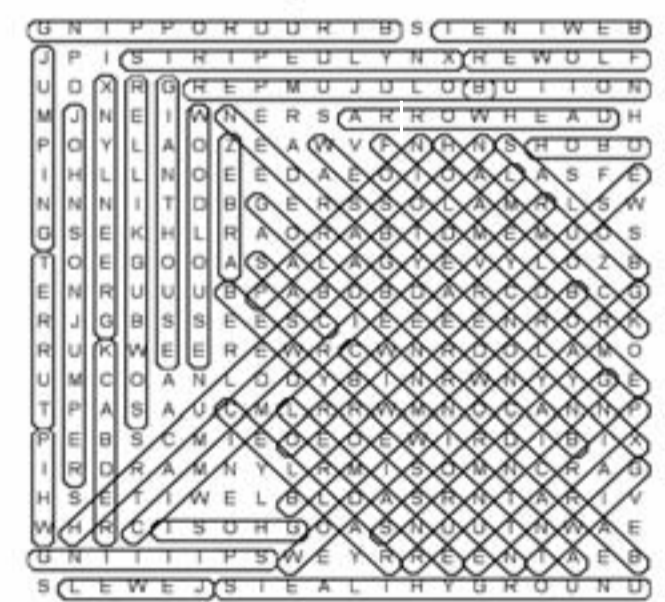
Sports

Find and circle all of the Sports that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a Vince Lombardi quotation.

L W S E S S O R C A L O I F N N E
F L R U I L U S L L L L O N B E V
L E A N R L L R L B O W L I N G
O B N B N F A A A A T P Q H L S N
G E A I T B I B B B U Y I S L K I
T T N D D F Y N A T R B T A I A H
L G E N M E O L G E E G E U A T S
L T A K L I L S H K C U U Q R I I
A H A L C G N C N S C R Q S D N F
B D O Q N I R T U A O I O C S G C
E V T I D A R T O B B E R R A S Y
S N X A F E N C I N G E C V E R C
A O R G N I D R A O B E T A K S L
B T W R E S T L I N G N I I K S I
S R W I A L A J R E C C O S N
H O C K E Y S W I M M I N G I N G

- | | | | |
|------------|----------|---------------|------------|
| ARCHERY | CROQUET | JAI ALAI | SOCCER |
| BADMINTON | CYCLING | LACROSSE | SOFTBALL |
| BASEBALL | DARTS | POLO | SQUASH |
| BASKETBALL | FENCING | RACQUETBALL | SWIMMING |
| BILLIARDS | FISHING | RUGBY | SWIMMING |
| BOCCIE | FOOTBALL | RUNNING | TENNIS |
| BOWLING | GOLF | SKATEBOARDING | VOLLEYBALL |
| BOXING | HANDBALL | SKATING | WRESTLING |
| CRICKET | HOCKEY | SKIING | |

Spiders 2



- | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| ANT MISC | FILMY DOME | JOHNSON JUMPER | STEALTHY GROUND |
| ARROWHEAD | FLOWER | LADYBIRD MISC | STRIPED LYNX |
| BANDED GARDEN | GHOST | NURSERY WEB | TENT WEB |
| BIRD DROPPING | GIANT HOUSE | ORBWEAVER | TURTLE |
| BOLAS | GOLDENROD CRAB | PARSON | TWIG |
| BOLD JUMPER | GRAY CRISPS | PIRATE | WESTERN LYNX |
| BROWN RECLUSE | GREEN LYNX | REDBACK | WHIP |
| BROWN WIDOW | HAMMOCK | RUNNING | WOOLLOUSE |
| CELLAR | HERCULES BABOON | SOWBUG KILLER | ZEBRA |
| ENAMEL | HOBO | SPITTING | |
| | JEWEL | | |

The hidden message is: SPIDERS HAVE AS FEW AS ZERO AND AS MANY AS EIGHT EYES

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2019



Vietnamese shopkeepers wait for customers to sell decorations at a market in the old quarters of Hanoi ahead of the Lunar New Year or Tet celebrations. — AFP

In Egypt, stray dogs pose growing urban challenge

Alaa Hilal was out shopping in Cairo when she was attacked by a stray dog in broad daylight—an increasing problem of daily life in Egypt which is stirring debate. “I got out of my car and saw an exceptionally large street dog,” the 38-year-old housewife told AFP at her home, northeast of Cairo. “He approached me and bit me without barking or doing anything else,” said Hilal, adding that she had been injured in the thigh. An overpopulated mega-city of more than 20 million people, Cairo is already plagued by monster traffic jams, widespread waste problems and rampant pollution. Packs of stray dogs are only adding to the city’s challenges. Complaints about dog attacks, exposure to rabies and in some cases even deaths over the years have triggered calls for the animals to be brought under control.

fatal within 24 hours as it damages the human’s nervous system, said Shehab Abdel-Hamid, the head of Egypt’s society for the prevention of cruelty to animals (SPCA).

Hilal, who had never feared dogs having had several pets when growing up, was rushed to a nearby hospital only to discover that she was the ninth person to be bitten by the same dog.

“Due to the trauma caused by this incident, I became worried and I no longer want to be in the same place with them,” she said. There are no official data on the numbers of stray dogs, but activists say they are running loose in their millions. A survey by the SPCA showed that the number of stray dogs “may reach up to more than 15 million”, Abdel-Hamid said.

And though street dogs appear to fear the most crowded areas, they can be loud and aggressive in poorly lit and rubbish-strewn suburbs. In November, a video widely circulated on social media showed a car hitting a teenager who was being chased by two stray dogs. “Garbage is the main reason behind the stray dogs’ crisis in Egypt,” said Abdel-Hamid, highlighting how the problem was exacerbated when the rubbish men stopped working during the 2011 uprising.

Government mauled

The SPCA, however, lacks resources. Its headquarters in downtown Cairo was looted during the uprising and has not been renovated since, Abdel-Hamid added. And Egyptian authorities say they can only intervene on a case by case basis. “We do not go around the streets looking for dogs to kill them,” said the agriculture ministry spokesman Hamed Abdel-Dayem. “We only take measures following complaints.”

He didn’t specify what measures are taken to bring the stray dog population under control. But animal rights advocates often lambast the government, accusing it of mass culls. In 2017, authorities killed more than 17,000 stray dogs following multiple complaints of dog “disturbances” and “biting” in Beni Suef, south of Cairo, according to an August report by the governorate’s veterinary directorate. The Red Sea governor even offered a 100 Egyptian pounds (\$5.58) award to those who capture and hand over at least five strays.

Animal rights defenders also accuse the government of killing dogs using a drug, known as “strychnine”, a chemical substance listed as “unacceptable on animal welfare grounds” for euthanasia by the World Organization for



Rescued dogs run at the HOPE shelter for stray dogs in the village of Abusir, about 20 kilometers southwest of the Egyptian capital Cairo. — AFP photos

Animal Health. But Abdel-Dayem denied that the government imported banned substances. “Is it logical that we (the ministry) allow internationally prohibited substances to enter the country?” he told AFP when asked about the strychnine claim.

‘Shelter of Hope’

Animal rights advocates have sought to offer solutions, actively removing dogs from the streets and giving them homes. Ahmed Al-Shorbagi, 35, opened two dog shelters in a desert area west of Cairo, near the famed Giza pyramids. The buildings with sheer concrete walls have kept more than 250 dogs safe for the past three years. Shorbagi contributes 40 percent to the funding of the shelters while the rest comes from donations. “At first I followed the animal rescue pages on Facebook,” Shorbagi told AFP, rubbing one

dog’s belly as she wagged her tail in joy.

“I saved a dog that I called ‘Hope’ and when I opened the shelter, I named it after her,” Shorbagi believes the solution lies in dog sterilization programs, providing rabies vaccinations and removing the garbage. “Instead of the government paying millions of dollars to import poison, it should consider sterilization,” he said. “We, as associations, proposed to the ministry of agriculture to solve the problem but it refused.” The ministry’s spokesman denied however refusing to cooperate with private entities and hailed their work to help resolve the crisis. — AFP



Ahmed El-Shorbagi feeds dogs in the shelter’s courtyard, in the village of Abusir.

Hounds unleashed

Commonly referred to as “baladi dogs”, strays are widely viewed as unsanitary and dirty. They are typically seen running around the streets and scavenging garbage for food. According to the agriculture ministry, there were around 400,000 cases of dog bites in 2017, up from 300,000 in 2014. And 231 people died over the past four years from the wounds they received, mainly as a result of rabies. A bite from a dog carrying the rabies virus can be



Rescued dogs roam in a courtyard at the HOPE shelter for stray dogs.



A veterinarian treats a stray dog at the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), in the Egyptian capital Cairo.



Ahmed El-Shorbagi, owner of the HOPE shelter for stray dogs, pets a dog in the shelter’s courtyard.

Lifestyle | Gossip



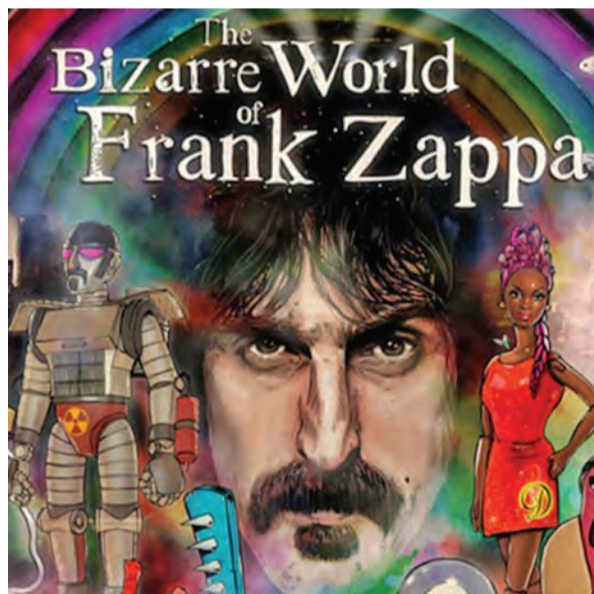
Emily Eavis addresses Glastonbury's future

Emily Eavis "doesn't know" how much longer Glastonbury Festival will be around for. The world renowned music extravaganza's organizer - who curates the line-up with her father, Michael Eavis - has opened up about the challenges the Worthy Farm event in Somerset, South West England - which launched in 1970 - is faced with each year, including extreme weather and their relationships with the owners of the farmland the site is situated on. The festival already has a "fallow year" every few years to allow the muddy fields to recover. Appearing on George Ezra's 'George Ezra & Friends' podcast, Emily admitted: "I don't know if it will be going that long. "There are so many factors its dependent on. "We're reliant on good feeling and where people help us out. "The location of it means we are using 20 different farms' land so we have to maintain relationships with people and we have to take over their land. "The fact that it's a farm, the fact that there is extreme weather. There are so many things." Emily says that it's vital that the festival, which is spread out over around 900 acres of land, and will this year see 135,000 festival-goers party on the sprawling farmlands, maintains its size and doesn't get any bigger. She explained to the 'Shotgun' hitmaker: "We have a license which is in perpetuity, which means we don't have to apply for it

every year. "But now our council can see that it brings in so much to the local economy and there are so many benefits. "So fingers crossed, we'll keep it going." So far, Stormzy has been confirmed for the Pyramid Stage, Kylie Minogue is set to make her debut performing the Sunday afternoon Legend's slot and Janelle Monae was recently announced for the West Holts Stage. Emily has fuelled rumors that The Cure could be set to play this June. Speaking about how Robert Smith's band's headlining set in 1995 was a turning point in the festival's history, she said: "I was born in '79 right, so the festival in the '80s it was quite - the music we had on, certainly in the early 80s was much more of a kind of certain genre. "There was only really one stage and it was more like Elvis Costello and Van Morrison and great artists like that, but in the early '80s it didn't really cross over to the pop culture in the kind of popular way that it does now. "And then I suddenly probably in the early-late '80s when I was probably nine or 10 that I started getting really excited by my own kind of music. Do you know what I mean? "Like I got really into The Cure for example and then they ended up playing and I was like: 'This is amazing ... this festival is quite cool.'"

Frank Zappa hologram tour headed to the UK

The Bizarre World Of Frank Zappa' hologram tour is set to make its debut in the UK. The Zappa Family Trust, which was setup after the death of the 'Cheap Thrills' singer - who died from prostate cancer at the age of 52 in 1993 - and his son Ahmet Zappa, 44, first announced that they were working on putting together a series of shows featuring the American composer and filmmaker two years ago. The estate has teamed up with the hologram production company Eyellusion to create a virtual likeness of the star, who was renowned for his free-form improvisation, sound experiments and political satire, to tour, wit shows in Edinburgh, Gateshead, Manchester, Birmingham and London between May 9 and May 14. The performance will feature "hours of never-before-seen Zappa performance footage from the early 70s", and will see a touring line-up comprised of Zappa's long-term bandmates: Ray White, Mike Keneally, Scott Thunes, Robert Martin, Ed Mann and Joe 'Vaultmeister' Travers. Ahmet said: "As a futurist and hologram enthusiast, Frank fearlessly broke through boundary after boundary as an artist and in honoring his indomitable spirit, we're about to do it again, 25 years after his passing. "This mind-melting show we're putting together celebrates the music, often surreal imagery and humour synonymous with Frank. "We will be pushing the limits of what anyone has seen holographically on stage before in a live venue. "This is a love letter and a journey celebrating the genius artistry of Frank Zappa. He also teased that: "Circumstances, objects, places and subject matter from Frank's songs and imagination will be brought to life for the first time on stage." The show will feature many of the creative's hand drawn art and the characters from his songs. He continued: "We are anthropomorphising Frank's music, so his own hand drawn illustrations, classic imagery from his album artwork and characters from his songs can all interact and perform on stage." Many late music stars have been immortalised with their own hologram tours over the years, including Tupac



Shakur, Roy Orbison, Michael Jackson and most recently an Amy Winehouse show was announced for 2019. Not everyone is a fan of the concept, but Ahmet has stated that his father "actively discussed" the art of holography with him, and he even wrote about it in his tome 'The Real Frank Zappa Book', so it's something he would more than approve of. He explained: "My father and I actively discussed 3D and 'holography' and it was a concept he actively engaged in. He actually devoted half a chapter of his 'The Real Frank Zappa Book' to this subject. "This is a love letter and a journey celebrating the genius artistry of Frank Zappa." He added: "On a personal note, I feel like I am finishing something my father started years ago - and let's not forget, Frank himself will be rocking his fans, alongside his bandmates like nobody's business."

Angelina Jolie joins thriller Those Who Wish Me Dead

Angelina Jolie is set to star in original thriller 'Those Who Wish Me Dead'. The 43-year-old actor has been cast by Oscar nominee Taylor Sheridan - who is best known for his work on 'Hell or High Water' - in his big screen adaptation of Michael Koryta's 2014 tome about fourteen-year-old Jace Wilson, who witnesses a brutal murder and is given a false identity and sent on a program for troubled teens. According to The Hollywood Reporter, the movie will move away from some of the main parts of the suspense story. The studios behind 'A Simple Favour', Bron Studios, are producing the flick, along with Steven Zaillian ('The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo') and Garrett Basch via Film Rites. It's also reported that the script is female-driven. Angelina hasn't been on the big screen since 2015's 'By the Sea' - which saw her star alongside her ex-husband Brad Pitt as troubled couple Vanessa and Roland - however she voiced Tigress in 'Kung Fu Panda 3' in 2016. The 'Girl Interrupted' star's next big gig is currently 'Maleficent 2', which sees the Hollywood star reprise the titular role in Disney's dark fantasy film, which is currently in post-production and set to hit screens in 2020. It's not currently known when 'Those Who Wish Me Dead' is being slated to hit cinemas. — BangShowbiz



AJ Tracey among 100 artists added to The Great Escape 2019

AJ Tracey is among 100 more artists who have been confirmed for The Great Escape Festival 2019. The 24-year-old grime star - who was crowned the winner of MTV's Brand New 2017 - will head up the grime/rap/hip-hop side of things, along with rising rapper Mykki Blanco, at the music event that celebrates up-and-coming artists with a series of concerts across Brighton, England, between May 8 and May 11. AJ is set to release his self-titled debut studio album on February 8, which features the Not3s collaboration 'Butterflies' and Giggs-featuring 'Nothing But Net', which means he's likely to debut some new tracks during his set. Elsewhere, Lewis Capaldi's support acts for his Spotlight Show at the seaside city's Brighton Dome venue, on May 9, have been confirmed. The 'Grace' hitmaker will be joined by indie rock group Easy Life and R&B soul singer Kara Marni. Other acts performing include Greentea Peng, Priests, Sports Team, Yves Tumor and Pagan. They joined previously confirmed acts Connie Constance, Indoor Pets, Pip Blom, Skynd, Self Esteem, Jockstrap, The Howl and The Hum, Crack Cloud and Kawala. 300 more acts are still to be confirmed for the epic four-day event. 2018's Great Escape saw the likes of Pale Waves, Tom Walker and Alma perform. Tickets are priced from £60 and are on sale now.



Courtney Act hopes Eurovision will launch pop career

Courtney Act hopes 'Eurovision - Australia Decides' will help launch her pop career. The 36-year-old drag star will give a live performance of her brand new single 'Fight For Love' on the SBS reality contest in a bid to become Australia's entry at the 'Eurovision Song Contest' this year. Although she may not be after a "traditional straight pop career", Courtney hopes winning a place on the show will give her another chance to prove herself in music, after she first came to prominence, as Courtney, competing on the first season of 'Australian Idol' in 2003. In an exclusive interview with BANG Showbiz, she said: "It's not my first attempt [at a pop career], eventually you're bound to get lucky if you keep trying hard enough. "I think 'Eurovision' is such a fun playground and I just hope that my song and my performance are good enough on the night to get me selected. "I would certainly love it to launch, maybe not your traditional straight pop career, but singing and performance is definitely a big part of what I do." The 'Bi-Life' host went on to explain that despite already performing covers of songs during her drag act, she wants to add some "original content" to her shows. The television personality said: "So, it's gonna be cool to have a few songs, an album of music that people can come and see me perform at my live shows. "Because I do some of my own stuff but mainly only covers, so it would be cool to add some original content to my own shows." Courtney's new single 'Fight For Love' is available to purchase now on iTunes and stream on Spotify, and the accompanying music video is live here: youtu.be/ay47x3EaoWA Courtney will compete with 'Fight For Love' on SBS' 'Eurovision - Australia Decides' on Saturday, February 9, 2019.



Kyrie Irving set to star in untitled haunted hotel flick

Kyrrie Irving is set to star in a horror flick inspired by an infamous haunted hotel. According to Variety, the 26-year-old NBA player - who recently appeared in the 2018 sports comedy 'Uncle Drew' - will star and be an executive producer in the untitled film, and the Boston Celtics star has revealed that he "connected" with the plot of the movie "immediately". Imagine Entertainment is basing the plot of the highly-anticipated flick on the Skirvin Hotel in Oklahoma City, which is notorious with travelling NBA teams and even had an article in the Players' Tribune, and some basketball stars even refuse to stay there because of its haunted atmosphere. Irving said: "Having had my own interesting experiences at the Skirvin Hotel, I connected with this idea immediately. To work with Brian Grazer is a dream come true, and I'm excited to bring this project to life with the Imagine Entertainment team." The Skirvin hotel was famously built in 1911 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The film is set to be produced by Imagine Entertainment Chairman Brian Grazer and 'Now You See Me's' Bobby Cohen who confessed that he knew the film would work because it is "fascinatingly relevant". Cohen added: "I'd heard rumors about the Skirvin before, but once we realized that by coupling the deliciously eerie with the fascinatingly relevant, we were on to something big with this one. Kyrie is an ideal collaborator and this is a great movie to make with Imagine." The upcoming project will be developed as a satirical horror and will tap in to the Skirvin Hotel's spooky folklore.

Dion's 'a little bit nervous' about BST Hyde Park gig

Celine Dion is "a little bit nervous" about headlining British Summer Time Hyde Park. The 'My Heart Will Go On' hitmaker will perform for the first time at the London landmark for the annual Barclaycard-sponsored summer concert series on July 5, joined by a host of special guests, for what will be her only European show of the year. Celine has confessed that despite performing at stadiums around the world, she still gets pre-gig nerves. Speaking about the forthcoming show in an interview with The Sun newspaper, the 50-year-old music legend spilled: "It's going to be quite special, extraordinary. I'm kind of nervous a little bit and excited." The 'Because You Loved Me' hitmaker revealed in her video announcement for the concert that she can't wait to have sausage and mashed potatoes when she's in the British capital as she has a "big craving" for the traditional dish, which usually comes served with lashings of gravy. She said in the Twitter clip: "Hello everyone this is Celine Dion and I've got a big craving for some bangers and mash and sticky toffee pudding, definitely. So I am heading over to London this summer, and while I am there I am going to headline Barclaycard presents BST Hyde Park on July 5th. London, here we come, ciao, be there." Celine has revealed that her late husband René Angélil -

who died in 2016, at the age of 73 - was a bangers and mash-eating champion in their household. The 'I'm Alive' singer - who has 18-year-old son René-Charles and eight-year-old Nelson with her late spouse, who was also her manager - explained: "My husband won the gold medal in our family of eating this dish." Celine also admitted that she feels like she has lived "four lives" - but that she is having the "best time" now. She explained: "I started so long ago, so far back, but I feel like I've been here for four lives. They say when you live your life to the fullest, one should be enough. "I'm not sure I agree with that, because I think I'm having the best time of my life now."



Lifestyle Awards

Michael Jackson family slams documentary renewing sex abuse claims

Michael Jackson's family on Monday lashed out against a new documentary renewing focus on allegations the singer sexually abused young boys, calling the subsequent social media outrage a "public lynching." Dubbing the late King of Pop an "easy target," the Jackson family said they were "furious" over the bombshell "Leaving Neverland" expose that premiered Friday at the Sundance Film Festival. The family noted that prior to his 2009 death Jackson had faced a

lengthy investigation, including a raid on his Neverland Ranch in California and a criminal trial concerning another teenager, in which he was acquitted.

"Michael always turned the other cheek, and we have always turned the other cheek when people have gone after members of our family—that is the Jackson way," the statement said. "But we can't just stand by while this public lynching goes on, and the vulture tweeters and others who never met Michael go after him." "Michael is not here to defend himself, otherwise these allegations would not have been made." The new four-hour documentary—which is set to air on HBO later this year—reportedly included graphic testimony from accusers Wade Robson and James Safechuck, leaving Sundance viewers shellshocked.

The two men who are now in their 30s allege Jackson sexually abused them when they were seven and 10. Robson testified during the 2005 trial of Jackson, and both men have filed lawsuits against Jackson's estate as adults in recent years, though both cases were dismissed for technical reasons. Prior to its premiere the Jackson family had slammed the documentary earlier this month as a "pathetic attempt to exploit and cash in on Michael Jackson."

Director Dan Reed, who is behind a documentary on the 2015 terror attack against the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, at the time defended his lengthy two-part documentary, named for Jackson's famed California ranch. "If there's anything we've learned during this time



In this file photo taken on November 15, 2006 US singer Michael Jackson (center) performs at the World Music Awards in Earls Court, London. — AFP photos

in our history, it's that sexual abuse is complicated, and survivors' voices need to be listened to," he said in a statement. The documentary's release comes on the heels of another explosive docu-series "Surviving R. Kelly," in which accusers of the R&B superstar detail disturbing allegations against him including sexual battery, false imprisonment and having sex with minors.

Jackson, who died on June 25, 2009 after being given

an overdose of the anesthetic propofol, faced multiple allegations of child sex abuse during his lifetime.

In addition to his 2005 acquittal the performer paid a \$15 million court settlement in 1994 over allegations involving another child. — AFP



In this file photo taken on September 1, 1993 in Singapore shows US pop megastar Michael Jackson performing during his "Dangerous" tour.

Berlin filmfest unveils starry lineup

New movies starring Diane Kruger, Martin Freeman and Catherine Deneuve and features directed by Hollywood actors Jonah Hill and Casey Affleck will take the spotlight at next month's Berlin film festival. The 11-day Berlinale, now in its 69th year, figures along with Cannes and Venice among Europe's A-list festivals. It will present some 400 movies from around the world before wrapping up on February 17. This year's edition will be the last led by Dieter Kosslick, who is handing over the reins after 18 years. "The audio-visual world is in major, major turmoil and we'll have to see where the journey takes us," Kosslick, 70, told reporters, referring to competition from streaming giants such as Netflix.

"But I think in future, film festivals will be more important than ever because you will see movies that you can't see anywhere else (on a big screen). I think they (streaming and festivals) will co-exist." Seventeen films will vie for the Berlinale's Golden and Silver Bear prizes, including a record seven by female directors such as Polish veteran Agnieszka Holland and Denmark's Lone Scherfig ("An Education").

Scherfig will open the festival on February 7 with the bittersweet drama "The Kindness of Strangers" set in New York and starring Zoe Kazan, Andreas Riseborough and Bill Nighy. French star Juliette Binoche will lead a jury including fellow Oscar winner Sebastian Lelio of Chile ("A Fantastic Woman"), British actress/director/producer Trudie Styler, Museum of Modern Art curator Rajendra Roy, German actress Sandra Hüller ("Toni Erdmann") and

US critic Justin Chang. Kruger and Freeman are expected on Berlin's red carpet for the premiere of Israeli spy thriller "The Operative" by Yuval Adler.

Society without women

Outside the main showcase, Affleck will premiere "Light of My Life", a dystopian drama starring Elisabeth Moss ("The Handmaid's Tale") and set in a society without women. Hill's directorial debut "Mid90s" will also screen in the Panorama sidebar section alongside "Skin", starring Jamie Bell, about the US neo-Nazi scene and "The Souvenir" featuring Tilda Swinton and her real-life daughter Honor Swinton Byrne. Deneuve leads the cast of "Farewell to the Night" directed by Andre Techine and screening out of competition.

Turkish-German director Fatih Akin, who won a Golden Globe last year for his terrorism drama "In the Fade" starring Kruger, will premiere "The Golden Glove" about a killer in his hometown Hamburg. China will be represented in competition with two features, "One Second" by Zhang Yimou and "So Long, My Son" by festival favourite Wang Xiaoshuai. After winning the Golden Lion top prize at the Venice film festival in September with "Roma", Netflix will enter the fray in Berlin for the first time with "Elisa and Marcela" by Spain's Isabel Coixet. Last year's Golden Bear winner was the sex docudrama "Touch Me Not" by Romania's Adina Pintilie. — AFP



People take the programs of the Berlinale after a press conference given by the outgoing Berlinale director. — AFP photos



Outgoing Berlinale director Dieter Kosslick waves as he leaves after addressing a press conference yesterday in Berlin.



Chris Brown's accuser files complaint after police photo leaked

A woman who accused US singer Chris Brown of rape has filed a new complaint in France after her police photo was leaked on the internet, a judicial source said Monday. The 25-year-old woman, identified in media reports as "Karima", alleges that the image, taken by police as she filed the complaint, was posted on social media.

An investigation for violation of judicial secrets, violation of a professional secret and distribution of images or information on the identity of a victim of sexual aggression, has been launched by the Paris prosecutor's office, the source said. The woman's lawyer, Jean-Marc Descoubes, said the photograph in question was taken by police to be used only in connection with the investigation.

"We have reasons to believe that someone took a photo of the photo of my client during a detention or a hearing and it is circulating on social media," Descoubes told AFP. The woman claimed that Brown, 29, along with his bodyguard and a friend assaulted her in the luxury Mandarin Oriental hotel in Paris on the night of January 15. Brown and his associates were released without charge last week after being held overnight for questioning on charges of aggravated rape and a drug offence. According to Brown's lawyer, the singer had no sexual relations with the woman and has filed a complaint for defamation. Descoubes told AFP he has asked for a face to face confrontation between his client and those she has accused. — AFP

'Glass' tops N America box office for second week

M. Night Shyamalan's latest thriller "Glass" bested the competition at the North American box office for a second straight weekend, taking in \$18.9 million, industry figures showed Monday. The film unites the narratives of the director's "Unbreakable" (2000) and "Split" (2016), and stars Bruce Willis, Samuel L Jackson and James McAvoy. The second and third spots at the box office remained unchanged from last weekend. Buddy drama "The Upside" starring Bryan Cranston as a wealthy quadriplegic who hires ex-convict Kevin Hart as his caretaker-earned \$11.9 million.

Superhero flick "Aquaman," starring Jason Momoa as the underwater king, hauled in another \$7.3 million. It has now generated \$1.09 billion in global box office revenues, making it the largest DC Comics adaptation of all time, according to industry tracker Exhibitor Relations. A new release from Fox, "The Kid Who Would Be King," placed fourth with \$7.2 million for the three-day weekend. That would be a "potentially disastrous result for a film that cost over \$60 million" to make, according to Variety.

The movie stars Louis Ashbourne Serkis (son of Andy Serkis, Gollum in the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy) as a boy living in modern times who stumbles upon King Arthur's legendary sword Excalibur. It has drawn largely positive reviews. In fifth spot-and hanging strong in its seventh week out-was Sony's "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse," with takings of \$6.1 million. The film is the favorite to win an Oscar for best animated feature next month.

- Rounding out the weekend's top 10 were:
- "Green Book" (\$5.5 million)
 - "A Dog's Way Home" (\$5.1 million)
 - "Serenity" (\$4.4 million)
 - "Escape Room" (\$4.1 million)
 - "Mary Poppins Returns" (\$3.3 million)—AFP

First Indian film museum opens in home of Bollywood

From silent black-and-white films to colorful blockbusters bursting with song and dance, the evolution of Indian cinema is traced by a new museum in the home of Bollywood. Costing 1.4 billion rupees (\$19.6 million), India's first national film museum is spread across a stylish 19th-century bungalow and a modern five-storey glass structure in south Mumbai. "It showcases to the world outside what Indian cinema has achieved in its entirety over more than 100 years," Amrit Gangar, a consulting curator on the project, told AFP. Movie-mad India today produces around 1,500 films a year, dwarfing even Hollywood's output.

The government-funded National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC) boasts stacks of memorabilia, recordings and film-making tools as well as interactive touch screens where visitors can watch clips from memorable movies. Movie buffs can learn about India's first full-length feature film, the 1913 Dadasaheb Phalke-directed "Raja Harishchandra", and listen to recordings of K. L. Saigal, considered the first superstar of Hindi-language cinema. They are also able to view hand-painted movie posters, including for internationally acclaimed director Satyajit Ray's 1955 hit "Pathar Panchali", and click selfies beside a statue of Bollywood icon Raj Kapoor.

The museum takes visitors through "the journey of Indian cinema, from silent films to 'talkies' to the studio era to the new wave," Prashant Pathrabe, director general of the Indian government's film department, told AFP. Bollywood is a nickname for the Hindi-language film industry that is based in Mumbai, formerly known as Bombay. The museum celebrates not just Bollywood but also the movies made in the various regions and languages across India. "Films are made in about 25 different regional languages in India and all are included here so that the entire country, irrespective of which part you come from, can enjoy this museum," said Pathrabe.

Gandhi and Chaplin

The museum also hosts replicas of the Mutoscope, the camera used by the Lumiere Brothers, and the Praxinoscope—a spinning cylindrical animation device invented in France in the 1870s. The idea for the museum was first mooted in 2006 and it was due to open in 2014 when the exhibition rooms housed in the 6,000 square foot heritage building were declared ready. However the opening was delayed after the government decided to build the new wing, which includes a section exploring the impact independence hero Mahatma Gandhi had on cinema around the world, including on Charlie Chaplin.

"This is the first time I have seen such a huge museum about cinema," said Maria Jones, who had travelled from her home in the southern India state of Kerala, to visit the museum. "I'm really happy and excited to see the history of Indian cinema until now. The different cameras have been fascinating for me. The first cameras were really huge," she told AFP. The museum does contain some gaps though as many of India's early films were never preserved while other artefacts have been damaged over the years. For example, the last remaining print of India's first "talkie", the 1931 "Alam Ara" (The Light of the World), was destroyed in a fire in 2003. Still, officials expect the museum to be a hit with fans. "It's an education in cinema," said Pathrabe. — AFP



This picture shows a general view of the National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC), the country's first museum showcasing the history of its film industry, in Mumbai. — AFP photos



Visitors browse through exhibits at the National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC).



An Indian student (left) visits the National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC).



An old Arricord motion picture camera is displayed at the National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC).



An Iraqi man on a wheelchair looks on yesterday at paintings displayed at a contemporary art exhibition hall in the museum of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. — AFP photos



Iraqis stand in front of a "Welcome to Mosul" road sign displayed at an art hall in the museum of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul.



An Iraqi man looks at paintings at a contemporary art exhibition at one of the halls of the national museum.



A contemporary art exhibition at one of the halls of the national museum.



A displayed sculpture at a contemporary art exhibition hall in the museum of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul.



An Iraqi man plays the oud, an oriental string instrument, during the opening of an art exhibition at the national museum of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul.

Its treasures ruined by IS, Mosul museum hosts modern art

Mosul's celebrated museum has not recovered since Islamic State group jihadists ravaged its ancient treasures several years ago, but part of the complex reopened yesterday to showcase more contemporary art. For the first time since IS overran the Iraqi city in 2014, visitors yesterday could wander the grandiose royal reception hall, which forms part of the museum. The building is considered the oldest government complex in Mosul and was recently renovated to host the 29-artist exhibit, titled "Return to Mosul," a member of the organizing Al-Ghad Radio station told AFP.

The northern Iraqi city served as IS's brutal seat of power for three years, before Iraqi troops recaptured it in 2017. Much of Mosul's east has made a modest recovery, but the west-home to the Old City

and the museum-remains in ruins. The exhibit was "proof that war didn't kill Mosul and that, on the contrary, it's living a full-on renaissance," said Huda Hani, a 25-year-old visitor yesterday.

Buttoned up in warm jackets, families walked through the hall to look at the paintings and sculptures, many of which feature themes of home, return, or conflict. The rest of the museum, however, remains closed for security reasons, said its director Zeid Saadallah. "You have to protect what is left," he told AFP.

During its bloody reign over Mosul, IS released a video of its jihadists attacking the museum with sledgehammers and pneumatic drills, destroying priceless pre-Islamic artefacts that it considered insulting to religion. The damaged pieces including

two imposing "lamassu" statues, Assyrian winged bulls with human faces. IS also blew up the Assyrian city of Nimrud, the ancient city of Hatra, and the centuries-old desert city of Palmyra in neighboring Syria.

But in addition to destroying artefacts, the jihadist group trafficked valuable pieces to finance its activities. In partnership with Google, 3-D printer BQ, and other organizations, Mosul's artists and technicians are looking to print three-dimensional versions of the smashed pieces. And ALIPH, a heritage-focused project led by France and the UAE, has dedicated \$480,000 to help in the first phase of the museum's reconstruction. — AFP



A general view of the exterior of the damaged museum of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul.



Ashanti Syed, who lost her uncle to a shooting on Valentine's Day 2018, takes to the runway in an African inspired gown designed by Akwasi Oduro Boakye Yiadom. — AFP photos



A model walks the runway in a Blancomaj outfit during the Battle of the Brands fashion show in Boston.

A Boston fashion show takes on gun violence

Dozens of models took to the runway in Boston over the weekend, and all of them shared a common thread: all had lost relatives to gun violence. Several local designers showed their work at the Sunday event aimed at maintaining awareness of rampant mass shootings in the United States. Some 48 people were shot dead in Boston in 2018, according to city police figures, slightly more than the previous year's 45 and significantly more than the past five year's average, 37. The bulk of these homicides occurred in neighborhoods with heavy black populations.

Activist Asia Jackson spearheaded the event with the organization "We are Better 2gether," with the proceeds going to groups supporting relatives of the victims. "They loved the idea," Jackson said of these relatives. "Nobody has done it." "We wanted them to represent their lost loved ones, come to the fashion show, be in the fashion show." The festive event saw the models-for-a-day of all ages and sizes parade down the catwalk before a packed room in downtown Boston.

"I think it raised some awareness about finding another way to battle instead of with violence," said Ebony LePenn, whose husband Anthony Clay was shot dead in 2016. The event offered another outlet to "express your emotions," she said, adding that it shows "we're not forgotten." "We can turn the pain into purpose." — AFP



Family members who have lost loved ones or friends to homicide come together backstage during the Battle of the Brands fashion show in Boston, Massachusetts.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds unveils 'Heart to Heart' jewelry collection to celebrate the season of love

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the largest jewelry retailers globally with a strong retail network of 250 outlets spread across 10 countries launched a special collection of diamond and 18K gold jewelry named 'Heart to Heart' to celebrate the season of love. 'Heart to Heart' jewelry collection showcases exclusive jewelry to symbolize the best way to express your love. As the demand for heart shaped jewelry increases during this season of love, the jewelry retailer launched the exclusive collection to cater to the customer demand. This unique jewelry collection is a perfect gift to express true emotions to your loved ones. With prices starting from as low as KWD 55, there is something to fit everyone's budget.

Apart from the pendants in diamonds and 18k, customers can also choose the heart shaped beautifully crafted bangles, bracelets, rings and anklets to gift your loved ones. The company has also launched a special 2 in 1 locket which can be worn in 2 different ways. To add more delight to this occasion, the customers can also avail a branded Kenneth Cole watch or Giordano watch absolutely free with this limited edition diamond jewelry. These promotional sets will be available at their outlets in Kuwait until 16th February 2019.

Apart from these, Malabar Gold & Diamonds also showcase an incredible collection of unique designs in gold and diamond jewelry from Italy, Singapore, Turkey, Bahrain, India, etc to suit the tastes and budget of its dif-

ferent customers. Customers can also choose gifts for their loved ones from their branded jewelry segment that includes Era - Uncut Diamond Jewelry, Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewelry, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Precia- Gem Jewelry and Divine - Indian Heritage Jewelry.

Free Branded watch with every 'Heart to Heart' Diamond jewelry collection



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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Cool with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 35 km/h.

BY NIGHT: Cold with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 28/01/2019 1200 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	19 °C	15 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	19 °C	14 °C		
ABDALY	17 °C	12 °C		
BUBYAN	--- °C	--- °C		
JAHRA	20 °C	13 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	18 °C	15 °C		
SALMIYAH	18 °C	15 °C		
AHMADI	18 °C	16 °C		
NUWASIB	21 °C	16 °C		
WAFRA	21 °C	14 °C		
SALMY	17 °C	10 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	01/30	Cool and Clouds will increase gradually	18 °C	09 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Thursday	01/31	Fair and some high clouds will appear	21 °C	09 °C	SE	10 - 32 km/h
Friday	02/01	Fair and Partly cloudy with a slight chance for scattered light rain	22 °C	11 °C	SE-NE	06 - 28 km/h
Saturday	02/02	Fair	21 °C	12 °C	NW	10 - 30 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:17
Sunrise	06:39
Zuhr	12:01
Asr	15:02
Sunset	17:23
Isha	18:43

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	26 °C
MIN. Temp.	18 °C
MAX. RH	94 %
MIN. RH	34 %
MAX Wind	S 57 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	1.52mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

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

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

FLIGHT SCHEDULE

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 30/1/2019				Departure Flights on Wednesday 30/1/2019							
FEG 341	Sohag	00:05	FDB 059	Dubai	14:20	AZQ 566	Baku	00:05	KIS 6033	Mashhad	14:00
JAI 572	Mumbai	00:15	MSR 575	Sharm el-Sheikh	14:20	AIC 988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05	MSR 611	Cairo	14:10
KAC 102	London	00:50	KAC 672	Dubai	14:25	JZR 407	Ahmedabad	00:05	UAE 872	Dubai	14:15
JZR 734	Cairo	00:50	KAC 286	Dhaka	14:30	MSC 406	Sohag	00:30	RBG 218	Asyut	14:25
THY 772	Istanbul	00:50	KAC 364	Colombo	14:30	FDB 072	Dubai	00:40	IRC 527	Mashhad	14:30
PGT 858	Istanbul	01:00	KAC 512	Mashhad	14:40	BBC 044	Bahrain	00:45	RBG 554	Alexandria	14:45
DLH 625	Dammam	01:25	GFA 221	Doha	14:40	JZR 409	Delhi	00:50	QTR 1079	Doha	15:00
MSR 618	Alexandria	01:40	KAC 618	Doha	14:40	FEG 242	Alexandria	01:05	KNE 382	Taif	15:00
UAE 853	Dubai	01:45	KAC 412	Bangkok	15:00	JAI 571	Mumbai	01:15	MSR 576	Sharm el-Sheikh	15:05
THY 764	Istanbul	01:50	KNE 529	Jeddah	15:05	JZR 111	Doha	01:45	FDB 8066	Dubai	15:05
IGO 1757	Kochi	01:55	KAC 788	Jeddah	15:10	KAC 677	Dubai	01:50	FDB 060	Dubai	15:10
JZR 722	Alexandria	02:15	ETD 303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	KAC 363	Colombo	01:50	GFA 222	Bahrain	15:25
GFA 211	Bahrain	02:30	JZR 222	Riyadh	15:30	KAC 285	Dhaka	01:55	CLX 792	Hanoi	15:40
KLM 446	Bahrain	02:30	KAC 562	Amman	15:35	KAC 417	Manila	02:00	KAC 673	Dubai	15:40
QTR 1086	Doha	02:40	OMA 645	Muscat	15:35	DLH 625	Frankfurt	02:25	SVA 501	Jeddah	15:45
OMA 643	Muscat	02:55	JZR 142	Al Najaf	15:40	THY 773	Istanbul	02:30	KAC 775	Riyadh	15:50
JZR 1736	Cairo	03:00	KAC 304	Mumbai	15:40	MSR 619	Alexandria	02:40	KAC 743	Dammam	15:55
ETD 305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	UAE 857	Dubai	15:45	PGT 859	Istanbul	02:55	KNE 530	Jeddah	16:00
MSR 612	Cairo	03:15	JZR 732	Cairo	15:50	IGO 1758	Kochi	02:55	KAC 619	Doha	16:10
JZR 502	Lahore	03:35	SVA 504	Madinah	16:00	UAE 854	Dubai	03:40	ETD 563	Amman	16:10
QTR 1076	Doha	04:00	SAW 705	Damascus	16:00	KLM 446	Amsterdam	03:55	KAC 304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KAC 796	Madinah	04:10	JZR 152	Mashhad	16:00	OMA 644	Muscat	03:55	KAC 283	Dhaka	16:30
IGO 1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC 118	New York	16:05	THY 765	Istanbul	04:00	OMA 646	Muscat	16:35
KAC 418	Manila	04:25	ABY 127	Sharjah	16:05	QTR 1087	Doha	04:00	KAC 785	Jeddah	16:40
KAC 784	Jeddah	04:30	JZR 212	Jeddah	16:25	ETD 306	Abu Dhabi	04:05	ABY 128	Sharjah	16:45
FDB 069	Dubai	05:00	KAC 502	Beirut	16:30	MSR 613	Cairo	04:15	JZR 105	Bahrain	16:55
KAC 382	Delhi	05:05	KAC 542	Cairo	16:30	JZR 701	Asyut	04:30	SAW 706	Damascus	17:00
JZR 404	Hyderabad	05:10	QTR 1072	Doha	16:35	IGO 1752	Chennai	04:30	SVA 505	Madinah	17:00
THY 770	Istanbul	05:10	FDB 051	Dubai	16:40	KAC 103	London	05:10	KAC 503	Beirut	17:15
KAC 1544	Cairo	05:10	KAC 522	Dubai	16:40	QTR 1077	Doha	05:10	KAC 361	Colombo	17:35
KAC 284	Dhaka	05:15	JZR 114	Al Najaf	17:00	FDB 070	Dubai	05:30	FDB 052	Dubai	17:40
JZR 112	Doha	05:25	KAC 118	Doha	17:10	KAC 303	Mumbai	05:50	UAE 858	Dubai	17:45
KAC 332	Doha	05:40	SVA 510	Riyadh	17:15	JZR 713	Sohag	06:10	JZR 405	Kochi	17:45
KAC 344	Chennai	05:50	GFA 215	Bahrain	17:30	KAC 707	Dubai	06:15	QTR 1073	Doha	17:50
JZR 402	Mumbai	06:05	JZR 214	Jeddah	17:45	JZR 1153	Mashhad	06:25	KAC 615	Bahrain	18:00
KAC 302	Mumbai	06:25	UAE 875	Dubai	18:00	JZR 121	Dubai	06:35	KAC 331	Trivandrum	18:00
KAC 678	Dubai	06:55	FDB 063	Dubai	18:15	THY 771	Istanbul	06:40	KAC 343	Chennai	18:00
BAW 157	London	07:05	JZR 302	Istanbul	18:15	KAC 167	Paris	07:10	JZR 733	Cairo	18:10
KAC 206	Islamabad	07:35	JZR 124	Dubai	18:20	GFA 212	Bahrain	07:15	SVA 511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC 354	Bengaluru	07:35	QTR 1080	Doha	18:20	KAC 171	Frankfurt	07:15	GFA 216	Bahrain	18:20
FDB 053	Dubai	07:50	MSR 620	Cairo	18:30	KAC 165	Rome	08:20	JZR 127	Dubai	18:35
KAC 384	Delhi	08:00	RJA 640	Amman	19:00	KAC 511	Mashhad	08:25	JZR 253	Amman	18:40
KAC 358	Kochi	08:05	KAC 744	Dammam	19:00	FDB 054	Dubai	08:50	JZR 403	Hyderabad	18:40
UAE 855	Dubai	08:35	ABY 123	Sharjah	19:25	KAC 501	Beirut	09:00	KAC 381	Delhi	18:55
JZR 408	Ahmedabad	08:45	GFA 217	Bahrain	19:30	KAC 613	Bahrain	09:05	JZR 721	Alexandria	19:20
ETD 301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC 156	Istanbul	19:30	KAC 787	Jeddah	09:05	FDB 064	Dubai	19:20
ABY 125	Sharjah	09:05	FDB 057	Dubai	19:50	BAW 156	London	09:10	UAE 876	Dubai	19:30
QTR 1070	Doha	09:30	KAC 776	Riyadh	19:50	JZR 731	Cairo	09:10	MSR 621	Cairo	19:30
FDB 055	Dubai	09:40	KAC 104	London	19:55	KAC 541	Cairo	09:30	QTR 1081	Doha	19:55
IRC 6511	Lamerd	09:50	JZR 106	Bahrain	20:00	KAC 561	Amman	09:40	RJA 641	Amman	20:00
JZR 410	Delhi	10:00	KNE 381	Taif	20:00	ABY 126	Sharjah	09:45	ABY 124	Sharjah	20:05
IRA 665	Shiraz	10:10	KAC 166	Rome	20:10	KAC 101	London	09:45	GFA 218	Bahrain	20:15
GFA 213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC 620	Doha	20:15	KAC 671	Dubai	09:45	FDB 058	Dubai	20:35
SYR 341	Latakia	11:00	OMA 647	Muscat	20:20	JZR 151	Mashhad	09:50	KNE 232	Riyadh	20:50
JZR 702	Asyut	11:05	KAC 674	Doha	20:25	UAE 856	Dubai	10:00	KAC 353	Bengaluru	20:55
AXB 889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	QTR 1088	Doha	20:35	JZR 301	Istanbul	10:05	KAC 301	Mumbai	20:55
JZR 122	Dubai	11:20	KAC 674	Dubai	20:35	ETD 302	Abu Dhabi	10:10	JZR 401	Mumbai	20:55
QTR 1074	Doha	11:35	DLH 624	Frankfurt	20:45	FDB 056	Dubai	10:35	KAC 357	Kochi	21:00
IAW 157A	Al Najaf	11:55	RBG 217	Asyut	20:50	KAC 617	Doha	10:35	JZR 723	Alexandria	21:05
MEA 404	Beirut	11:55	JAV 621	Amman	21:15	IRC 6512	Lamerd	10:40	OMA 648	Muscat	21:20
AHY 119	Baku	12:05	KAC 172	Frankfurt	21:15	JZR 211	Jeddah	10:40	DLH 624	Dammam	21:30
MSC 415	Sohag	12:10	ETD 307	Abu Dhabi	21:20	QTR 1071	Doha	10:45	RBG 214	Sohag	21:30
KAC 614	Bahrain	12:25									

Macron holds surprise talks with Sisi, meets top clerics

CAIRO: French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday held a surprise second meeting with his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi after talks with the country's top clerics, ending a three-day visit aimed at boosting ties while raising human rights concerns. Before traveling on to Cyprus for a summit of southern EU countries, Macron and Sisi held an unscheduled 45-minute meeting at Cairo airport.

Earlier, Macron met with Pope Tawadros II at St. Mark's Cathedral, seat of Egypt's ancient Coptic Orthodox Church. They both stressed the need for "dialogue between religions". "I decided that a new conference will be held in Paris to see how to act more effectively," he said, without giving details. A diplomatic source said the French capital would host a forum on religious minorities in the Middle East, but without giving a date.

Macron visited the church adjacent to the cathedral that was the site of a Dec 2016 attack which killed 29 people. He also met in Cairo with Ahmed Al-Tayeb, the grand imam of Al-Azhar, the most prestigious seat of Sunni Islamic learning in Egypt. Their talks centered on "the training of imams (prayer leaders) in France and the fight against the misguided vision of religion", the French presidency said.

Activist, Brotherhood arrests

Also yesterday, Macron lunched with civil society members "active in the areas of judicial protection of detainees, press freedom, gender equality and children's defense", the presidency said. Egyptian authorities arrested six activists critical of Sisi's government this

week, including members of Karama, according to lawyer Negad Al-Borai and Mohamed Al-Bassiouni, a member of the opposition party. There was no immediate confirmation of the report from the interior ministry, which for its part announced the arrest of 54 suspected members of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood.

The human rights situation in Egypt was at the center of talks between Macron and Sisi on Monday. Their different visions were on show at a joint news conference where Macron said respect of freedoms was inseparable from stability while Sisi said security was the priority for Egypt's 100-million population. During the visit, Macron and Sisi oversaw the signing of some 30 deals worth nearly a billion euros including in transportation, education and health. No arm deals were signed.

But Amnesty International yesterday stood by a 2018 report that French security equipment including armored vehicles were used by the Egyptian government in "violent repression" of protests, charges that Sisi denied at the press conference. "French vehicles were not merely assisting the security forces, but were themselves tools of repression, playing a very active role in the crushing of dissent," Amnesty's report said in October.

The Egyptian president said: "It's not possible to use weapons against an unarmed citizen unless they take up and use a weapon." Macron also said Egypt only used French weapons for military purposes. A year after Sisi took office in 2014, Egypt signed deals worth six billion euros (\$6.8 billion) to buy 24 Rafale fighters from France as well as other military hardware such as Mistral warships and missiles. — AFP



CAIRO: French President Emmanuel Macron (left) is received by Ahmed Al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, the most prestigious seat of Islamic learning in Egypt, during his visit to the Azhar headquarters in Cairo yesterday — AFP

Morning lark? Night owl? Blame it on your genes

TOKYO: If you find you just can't spring out of bed on time every morning, you may be able to blame it on your genes, a new scientific study has found. The research analyzed a wealth of genetic data gathered from the DNA testing website 23andme and a British "biobank" to better understand what makes someone a "morning lark" or a "night owl". "This study is important because it confirms that your morning or evening preference is, at least to some extent, determined by genetic factors," said Michael Weedon, a professor at the University of Exeter Medical School, who led the research.

The study is the largest of its kind - it looked at data from nearly 700,000 people - and found that significantly more genetic factors are tied to when people sleep and wake than previously known. Researchers knew of 24 genes linked to sleep timing, but the new study published today in the *Nature Communications* journal found an additional 327 play a role.

The analysis also showed that those with a genetic tendency to sleep later have a higher risk of mental health problems such as schizophrenia, though the authors cautioned that more work was needed to understand the link. The initial phase of the research involved analyzing the genes of people who self-reported as either a "morning person" or an "evening person".

Because those terms can mean different things to different

people, the researchers examined a smaller set of participants who were using activity trackers. They looked at information from the wrist-worn trackers of more than 85,000 participants in the UK Biobank to find objective data about their sleep patterns. They found the genes they had identified could shift a person's natural waking time by up to 25 minutes, but there were no apparent links between the genes and how long or how well people slept.

The study also looked at why certain genes influence when people sleep and wake up, finding differences in the way the brain reacts to light and the functioning of internal clocks. To test long-standing theories about the links between sleep patterns and certain illnesses, the researchers also analyzed the correlation between "morning" and "evening" genes and various disorders. They found that a genetic inclination to sleep and wake earlier appears to be tied to a lower risk of depression and schizophrenia, and improved well-being.

However, Weedon acknowledged it was not immediately clear if the link was the direct result of being a "morning person", or caused by the fact that early risers have an easier time in the 9-5 work environment. The researchers plan to look at whether "genetically evening people have worse outcomes if they are active in the morning, compared to those whose genetics and activity are aligned," he said.

The study did not find evidence of a causal link between genes that affect sleep times and metabolic diseases, like type 2 diabetes. But further research will look at the issue in individuals whose natural sleep inclinations are mismatched with their lifestyles. "For example, are individuals who are genetically evening people but have to wake up early because of work commitments particularly susceptible to obesity and diabetes?" the study asks. — AFP

Kuwait improves seven ranks in...

Continued from Page 1

This year's Corruption Perception Index reveals that the continued failure of most countries to significantly control corruption is contributing to a crisis in democracy around the world. The index, which ranks 180

countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and businesspeople, uses a scale of zero to 100, where zero is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.

More than two-thirds of countries score below 50 on this year's CPI, with an average score of just 43. While there are exceptions, the data shows that despite some progress, most countries are failing to make serious inroads against corruption. The top countries are Denmark and New Zealand with scores of 88 and 87 respectively. The bottom countries are Somalia, Syria and South Sudan, with scores of 10, 13 and 13 respectively.

within the military. As for the protesters, he was incredulous. "You block the entire country because a decision is not in your favor?" he told the court.

Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry, the lawyer who filed a petition on behalf of the cleric who made the original complaint against Bibi in 2009, remained unmoved. "All religious scholars also verified later that this agreement was wrong. This was wrong," he said outside court. Blasphemy remains a massively inflammatory issue in Pakistan, where even unproven accusations of insulting Islam can spark lynchings. Many cases see Muslims accusing Muslims, and rights activists say blasphemy charges are frequently used to settle personal scores.

Minorities - particularly Christians - are often caught in the crossfire. Calls to reform colonial-era laws against blasphemy have provoked violence. In 2011 Salmaan Taseer, the governor of Pakistan's Punjab province who offered to support Bibi, was assassinated by his own bodyguard in Islamabad. "Justice! #AsiaBibi" his son Shehryar tweeted after yesterday's decision. Taseer's murder was followed the same year by the killing of minority affairs minister Shahbaz Bhatti, a Catholic, who had also defended Bibi.

"This shameful delay in enforcing Asia Bibi's rights only reinforces the need for the Pakistani government to repeal the blasphemy laws as soon as possible," Amnesty stated. The EU called on Pakistan's government to protect Asia Bibi and her family, "as they would do for any Pakistani citizen". The allegations against Bibi date back to 2009, when Muslim women accused her of blasphemy against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The accusation emerged from an argument after Bibi was asked to fetch water while working in the fields, but the women objected to her touching the water bowl as a non-Muslim. Bibi has denied the charges, and her prosecution rallied international rights groups, politicians and religious figures. Pope Benedict XVI called for her release in 2010, while in 2015 her daughter met his successor Pope Francis. — AFP

iPhone bug lets callers eavesdrop

SAN FRANCISCO: A newly discovered FaceTime bug lets people hear and even see those they are reaching out to on iPhones even if the other person hasn't answered their phone. When a phone number is dialed on FaceTime - the iPhone's Internet-based voice and video calling feature - the caller can swipe up from the bottom of the screen and tap an option to add a person, according to video demonstrations.

If the caller then enters their own number as that of the added caller, a group call begins even though the person being called hasn't even answered. The caller can then eavesdrop on the person being called, and in some demonstrations even watch them through the camera app. Declining a call breaks the connection. The bug, initially outlined by Apple product and review website 9to5Mac.com, was reported by several media outlets.

A video posted at Twitter account @BmManski showing how simple it is to take advantage of the flaw and listen in on an iPhone being called using FaceTime, logged nearly two million views and was shared 14,000 times by late evening in California. Some Twitter users offered advice to disable the FaceTime application until a fix was in place. An Apple support page listed Group FaceTime calling as "temporarily unavailable" as of 7:16 pm here (03:16 GMT) due to an ongoing "issue" that was not specified.

An Apple statement quoted in US media said the iPhone maker was aware of this issue and has "identified a fix that will be released in a software update later this week". "Disable FaceTime for now until Apple fixes," Twitter co-founder and chief executive Jack Dorsey advised in a tweet. Dorsey's message included a forwarded post by technologist Andy Baio. "Want to see a really bad bug?" Baio asked in his post. "You can FaceTime any iOS device running 12.1 and listen in remotely - WITHOUT THE OTHER PERSON ANSWERING THE CALL." Apple did not immediately respond to requests for comment. FaceTime software enables voice or video calls using iPhones, iPads, iPod Touch, and Macintosh computers. — AFP

Sea of white: 'Hundreds of thousands' of fish dead in Australia

SYDNEY: "Hundreds of thousands" of fish have died in drought-stricken Australia in the last few days and more mass deaths are likely to occur, the authorities warned yesterday. Locals around the Darling River were confronted with a sea of white, as dead fish carpeted the waters near the southeastern Outback town of Menindee. Just weeks after up to a million were killed - with scientists pointing to low water and oxygen levels as well as possibly toxic algae - another mass death occurred in the key agricultural region.

Inspectors from the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries have visited the site and said they found that "hundreds of thousands of fish have died". "Further fish deaths in the Darling River are anticipated as a significant number of fish have been observed under stress," the department said in a statement. Some 700 kilos of dead fish were removed from the river Monday, with similar amounts expected to be collected yesterday, it added.

The Darling River is part of the Murray-Darling River system that stretches thousands of kilometres across several states. Fisheries officials were also investigating reports of another fish kill further south in the Murrumbidgee River, which flows into the

Murray-Darling system. With temperatures expected to rise and no rain forecast, there remained a "high risk of further fish kills over the coming days and week", officials said.

While the federal government has blamed the deaths on a severe drought, experts and locals say they stem from the systemic depletion and pollution of the river. The inspectors added that the latest bout of kills were likely linked to "critically low levels of dissolved oxygen" caused by a sharp drop in temperatures after an extended period of hot weather.

New South Wales Regional Water Minister Niall Blair, who visited Menindee Tuesday, told national broadcaster ABC his government was out of options, with installing aerators in rivers only a "band-aid solution". Six aerators were installed along parts of the Darling River to give surviving fish localised oxygenated water. "It's not a case of not being able to spend money on something, there just isn't any other alternative that anyone has offered up," Blair said. "The only thing that will really change these conditions at the moment is fresh water coming through the system and there is just no possibility of that at the moment." — AFP



MENINDEE, Australia: This handout photograph taken yesterday shows scores of dead fish floating on the Darling River. — AFP

Bibi expected to leave Pak after...

Continued from Page 1

"I think at this time she is here (in Pakistan) - but by tonight, I don't know," he told reporters outside the court. Extremists "said they would kill her despite the judgment of the Supreme Court," he said. "Therefore, I think she should leave the country."

"She should now be free to reunite with her family and seek safety in a country of her choice," Amnesty International said in a statement echoed by other rights activists. Unconfirmed Pakistani reports claim her children have already fled to Canada. France said it was ready to welcome Bibi and her family "if they wish".

Earlier yesterday, the Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) party, which led violent protests demanding Bibi's execution last year, called for its members to be ready for action. Small protests were reported in some cities late yesterday. But most of its leaders remain in detention after a government crackdown, and few protesters could be seen at the court in Islamabad, where security appeared normal.

That did not prevent the handful who did show up from calling for violence against Bibi prior to the court's ruling. "If she goes abroad, don't Muslims live there?" Hafiz Ehtisham Ahmed, an Islamist activist linked to the extremist Red Mosque in Islamabad, told AFP. "If she goes out of Pakistan... anybody can kill her there."

Chief Justice Khosa expressed frustration at the furious reaction to Bibi's case by an extremist minority. "Is this the face of Islam that we want to show to the world?" he told the packed courtroom. He had harsh words for those who first brought the case against Bibi, and the Islamists who over the years have used it to ignite violence, threaten judges, and call for mutiny

Sports

Brady, Goff raring to go as Super Bowl circus kicks off

Rams ace taunts Brady over age ahead of Super Bowl

ATLANTA: Rival quarterbacks Tom Brady and Jared Goff declared themselves raring to go on Monday as the final countdown to the Super Bowl got under way with the traditional opening night media circus. A day after the New England Patriots and the Los Angeles Rams touched down in Atlanta, the teams who will battle for the biggest prize in US sport were presented to around 9,000 raucous fans packed into the city's State Farm Arena basketball venue.

Monday's media extravaganza marked the start of week-long festivities which will culminate with next Sunday's Super Bowl showpiece at the futuristic Mercedes-Benz Stadium. For Brady, the now customary hoopla surrounding the opening party is nothing new.

The 41-year-old Patriots quarterback will be appearing in a record ninth Super Bowl this weekend, chasing a record-breaking sixth championship. Unsurprisingly, Brady looked at ease on Monday as he surveyed a throng of hundreds of journalists which included the usual array of comedians, celebrities and bizarre costumes. One credentialed media member arrived dressed as a clown.

"I think the most important thing is to keep the week as normal as possible, try to limit the distractions," Brady said when asked for the key to his Super Bowl preparations. Brady and Rams counterpart Goff, 24, had earlier shared a friendly exchange after being introduced on stage by a moderator.

Asked what advice Brady would give to Goff as the young Rams signal caller prepared for his first Super Bowl, Brady laughed: "I'm not giving him advice." Goff, who would replace Brady as the second-youngest quarterback to win a Super Bowl with a victory on Sunday, meanwhile underscored the generational gap between the two players.

Asked what memories he had of Brady's first Super Bowl appearance—way back in 2002 — Goff replied: "None. I was seven, I think."

Brady by contrast said the memories of the win, against the then St. Louis Rams, remained etched on his mind. "The most important memory is that ball going through the uprights at the end and us winning," he said. "So to do it 17 years later with a new bunch of guys means as much as ever."

Goff, meanwhile, said he would attempt to make the build-up as normal as possible. "It's just knowing what to make important, what not to make important," Goff said. "Try to keep your routine the same. If you normally go out to a dinner on Friday at home, go to dinner on a Friday out here."

Goff said he didn't believe Brady and the Patriots' familiarity with the Super Bowl environment would give them a decisive advantage. "Maybe it helps, but we're certainly not seeing it that way," Goff told AFP. "Last week we were inexperienced in playing in the NFC Championship game against the Saints, and we came through that challenge. You try to put that stuff to one side and play your game."

Goff said the Rams had been emboldened by coming through their nail-biting 26-23 overtime win over the Saints in Louisiana, where the deafening noise had created "the most difficult environment I'd ever played in."

"It speaks to the resiliency of this team," Goff said. Rams coach Sean McVay said the win over New Orleans had emphasized the coolness under pressure of his quarterback, the No.1 overall pick in the 2016 draft.

"That's one of the things I've been impressed with since day one," said McVay, who would become the youngest coach to win the Super Bowl this week at the age of just 33. "He's unfazed, good or bad. His ability to handle and adversity the same way, demonstrates the poise and confidence you want from your quarterback. Against New Orleans he handled it. He didn't flinch, he didn't blink, and he played his best when his best was required. It's a big reason why we're here."

Goff, for his part, is looking forward to the biggest game of his career. "Yeah, I'm ready," Goff told reporters. "I think you don't have a choice. It'll be fun. I'm excited." Los Angeles Rams cornerback Nickell Robey-Coleman has fanned the wrath of Tom Brady after claiming age had finally caught up with the New England Patriots quarterback.

Meanwhile, Brady, 41, will overtake Peyton Manning as the oldest quarterback to win a Super Bowl on Sunday if he guides the Patriots to victory over the Rams in Atlanta. Brady has looked in superb form during the NFL playoffs, leading the Patriots to a lopsided win over the Los Angeles Chargers before a thrilling



NEW ORLEANS: This combination of file pictures created on January 20, 2019 shows Jared Goff #16 of Los Angeles Rams reacts in the first half against New Orleans Saints in the NFC Championship game and Tom Brady #12 of the New England Patriots looks on against the Los Angeles Chargers during the first quarter in the AFC Divisional Playoff Game in Foxborough. — AFP

overtime victory against the Kansas City Chiefs in the AFC title game.

Robey-Coleman, whose unpunished pass interference in the Rams win over New Orleans sparked uproar, is adamant that Brady is on the wane. "Age has definitely taken a toll," Robey-Coleman told Bleacher Report. "For him to still be doing it, that's a great compliment for him. But I think that he's definitely not the same quarterback he was."

Robey-Coleman said he had pinpointed Brady's throwing as a possible area of decline. "He still can sling it, but he's not slinging it as much," he said. But speaking at the Super Bowl's Opening Night in Atlanta on Monday, Robey-Coleman sought to downplay his remarks, suggesting his words had been "taken out of

context." "Everybody just made a big deal out of the situation. Tom Brady's a great quarterback. I wasn't trying to say nothing bad about him," Robey-Coleman said. "I respect him as the G.O.A.T. (greatest of all time) He is the legend. And I think words got misconstrued, and they got spinned out of context," he said.

Robey-Coleman's words are nevertheless likely to be motivational manna from heaven for Brady and the Patriots, who have been eager to cast themselves as underdogs despite another successful season, which has ended with a ninth Super Bowl appearance since the 2001-2002 campaign.

Asked for his response to Robey-Coleman's comments on Monday, Brady paused before telling reporters: "Yeah I don't have much to add." — AFP

Northern exposure for 2021 World Cup

LONDON: The 2021 Rugby League World Cup will take place mainly in the game's northern English heartlands, with just two out of the tournament's 31 matches being played south of the Yorkshire city of Sheffield.

Wembley, the traditional venue for the Challenge Cup final has been ignored, but the nearby Emirates Stadium in north London will stage a rugby league match for the first time when Arsenal Football Club's home ground plays host to one of the semi-finals.

The other last-four clash will take place at Elland Road, best known as the home of Leeds United Football Club but no stranger to rugby league. Football giants Manchester United's base at Old Trafford will again stage the final after drawing a crowd of 74,468 for the 2013 showpiece match between Australia and New Zealand.

Meanwhile Coventry's Ricoh Arena in the English Midlands will stage a group match. But the bulk of the fixtures will take place at traditional league venues. It is all very different from 2013, the last time the Rugby Football League was responsible for a World Cup, when matches were played at such outposts as Avignon (France), Limerick (Ireland) and Neath (Wales).

But although the tournament has been increased from 14 teams to 16, organisers have decided to concentrate on traditional league venues. There will, however, be World Cup matches in the northeast with Newcastle United's St James' Park, which lost the lucrative Super League Magic Weekend to Anfield this year, staging the opening ceremony, which will be followed by the opening game featuring England.

The men's, women's and wheelchair tournaments will all be played concurrently for the first time, with the women's final part of a double-header with the men's event at Old Trafford.

Jon Dutton, chief executive of Rugby League World Cup 2021, said: "This was an incredibly tough process given the large number of interested parties and the impressive nature of their bids." — AFP

Murray has hip resurfacing surgery

LONDON: Andy Murray has undergone hip resurfacing surgery in London, the British tennis great told his Instagram followers yesterday. The two-time Wimbledon champion had been weighing up the pros and cons of the operation, which involves putting a metal plate into the joint, in one last bid to prolong a career plagued by injury.

The 31-year-old double Olympic gold medallist had previously said ahead of this month's Australian Open earlier that he intended to retire following the 2019 edition of Wimbledon. "I underwent a hip resurfacing surgery in London yesterday (Monday) morning... feeling a bit battered and bruised just now but hopefully that will be the end of my hip pain," Murray said on Instagram.

There are no guarantees that the operation will allow Murray to play top-flight tennis again but it should enable him to live a pain-free life off the court. At the Australian Open, Murray showed his competitive spirit and talent were undimmed in a five-set defeat by Roberto Bautista-Agut.

That match led Murray to say he would do all he could to prolong his career but Monday's operation may mean he is not fit in time for Wimbledon, where he had thought of making his farewell to tennis.

Monday's operation was the second time Murray had undergone surgery in the past 12 months after a first operation failed to ease the pain in his hip. Ahead of this latest bout of surgery, Murray spoke to US doubles specialist Bob Bryan, who has just returned to the game following the same procedure last year.

Bryan urged Murray to have similar surgery, although the greater physical demands of singles compared to doubles, mean there is no guarantee this operation could help the British tennis great to regain a place among the world's top players.

Dr Edwin Su, who operated on Bryan, though, told Britain's Mail on Sunday: "I think it would absolutely be able to help him. Ideally, it is with no pain. Most of the time, right away from the time they wake up from the surgery, patients say that the pain is gone."

Su, however, added: "What is unknown in elite athletes is whether they can return to sport... Singles is much more strenuous than doubles. It's uncharted territory. Meanwhile Bryan, 40, said of Murray's position: "I

just represent an option for him. That guy does everything you can possibly do as far as training and rehab."

Murray made a long-awaited comeback at Queen's last year but then pulled out of Wimbledon.

He underwent an extensive rehabilitation period in Philadelphia, followed by pre-season training in Miami might prove the answer, but the Australian Open showed he was still suffering significant pain while on court. — AFP



Andy Murray

Kvitova hails end to Grand Slam issues at Australian Open

PRAGUE: Australian Open finalist Petra Kvitova hailed the end of her Grand Slam bad luck—and of a two-year transition following a knife attack that almost ended her career. Having played only two Grand Slam quarter-finals since her Wimbledon triumph in 2014, Kvitova joked last year that she might as well quit playing at the top four events.

This year's Australian Open offered a different picture of the left-handed Czech who did not lose a single set on her way to the final in which she lost to Japan's Naomi Osaka in three sets on Saturday.

"I'm glad it was only a joke, that it didn't happen," the 28-year-old, who also won Wimbledon in 2011, told reporters in Prague. "I guess it's a compensation for last year which wasn't the best when it comes to Grand Slams," added Kvitova, who in 2018 reached the last-32 phase at the French and US Open, bowing out of the Australian Open and Wimbledon at the first hurdle. "I wasn't too happy after the loss but now the positive things prevail," said the new world number two.

"I felt very well throughout those three weeks I played in Australia." Kvitova started the year poorly at Brisbane where she lost in the last 16, but she took the top honours at Sydney a week later—at a tournament where she initially was not expecting to play.

Besides the on-court battles, Kvitova is fighting memories of an attack at her Czech home by a knife-wielding burglar in December 2016, which left deep scars on her left hand. She identified the man and is willing to give her testimony in court in early February on the condition she does not meet the suspect.

"Petra takes this as an inevitable thing. She knows it's necessary to put an end to the whole affair," her spokesman Karel Tejkal told reporters. Kvitova herself declined to speak about the attack that required a complicated surgery and saw her sink from sixth to sixteenth in the world. "Such questions make me a bit angry but I can't do anything about it. But it will be over some day." "I guess this trophy is a chequered flag on those two years," Kvitova said, looking at the silver plate she won at Melbourne.

One of those to ask her was former world number one Jim Courier—on court, following her quarter-final win against the home crowd's favourite Ashleigh Barty. "I suppose he didn't want to make me cry—but he did," Kvitova said. "The interview was pretty tough—but he's a nice guy." — AFP



Petra Kvitova

CBK chairman honours Suleiman Al-Qassar

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK)'s board, Sheikh Ahmed Duaij Al-Sabah recently received CBK employee, Suleiman Jamal Al-Qassar, the winner of the 9th Banks Union Shooting Championship recently organized at the Shooting Ranges Complex for male, female bankers as well as bankers' children.

Speaking on the occasion, Al-Qassar expressed his joy for winning the male employees championship noting that he had competed with very excellent shooters from other banks.



Honoring Suleiman Al-Qassar.

Sports

Nuggets' comeback stuns Grizzlies, Young, Hawks soar past Clippers

Curry sizzles as Warriors rout Pacers 132-100

NBA results/standings

LA Clippers 118, Atlanta 123; Boston 112, Brooklyn 104; Memphis 92, Denver 95; Charlotte 101, New York 92; Indiana 100, Golden State 132.

Eastern Conference

	W	L	PCT	GB
Milwaukee	35	13	0.729	-
Toronto	37	15	0.712	2
Indiana	32	17	0.653	3.5
Philadelphia	32	18	0.640	4
Boston	31	19	0.620	5
Brooklyn	27	24	0.529	9.5
Miami	24	24	0.500	11
Charlotte	24	25	0.490	11.5
Detroit	21	27	0.438	14
Washington	21	28	0.429	14.5
Orlando	20	30	0.400	16
Atlanta	16	33	0.327	19.5
Chicago	11	39	0.220	25
New York	10	39	0.204	25.5
Cleveland	10	41	0.196	26.5

Western Conference

	W	L	PCT	GB
Golden State	36	14	0.720	-
Denver	34	15	0.694	1.5
Oklahoma City	31	18	0.633	4.5
Portland	31	20	0.608	5.5
Houston	29	20	0.592	6.5
Utah	29	22	0.569	7.5
San Antonio	29	22	0.569	7.5
LA Clippers	28	23	0.549	8.5
LA Lakers	26	24	0.520	10
Sacramento	25	25	0.500	11
Minnesota	24	26	0.480	12
Dallas	22	27	0.449	13.5
New Orleans	22	28	0.440	14
Memphis	20	31	0.392	16.5
Phoenix	11	41	0.212	26

MEMPHIS: Nikola Jokic scored 24 points, including a go-ahead basket with 28.9 seconds left, and the visiting Denver Nuggets rallied from 25 points down to beat the Memphis Grizzlies 95-92 on Monday night. Will Barton had 20 points, and Malik Beasley scored 13 of his 18 points in the fourth quarter when the Nuggets trailed by as many as 19 — to help Denver win without Jamal Murray. The point guard missed his second consecutive game due to an ankle injury. Denver was down by 19 at halftime, 17 after three quarters and 13 with 4:31 left but outscored the Grizzlies 23-7 down the stretch to win its third in a row. Marc Gasol had 28 points and nine rebounds, and Mike Conley had 23 points and 11 assists for Memphis, which has lost 15 of 17 games.

WARRIORS 132, PACERS 100

Stephen Curry scored 23 of his game-high 26 points in the first half as Golden State routed Indiana in Indianapolis. The Warriors won their 11th straight, their 10th in a row on the road, against a Pacers team that last season became the first Eastern Conference club in the five-year Steve Kerr coaching era to sweep a season series from Golden State. Playing in just his fifth game, DeMarcus Cousins dropped in a season-best 22 points for the Warriors, who capped a 5-0 road trip. Kevin Durant and Klay Thompson added 16 points apiece. Myles Turner led the Pacers with 16 points.

CELTICS 112, NETS 104

Jaylen Brown and Marcus Smart scored 21 points apiece, and Boston dominated the fourth quarter while extending its home winning streak over Brooklyn to six. The Celtics beat the Nets for the 11th time in the past 12 meetings overall on a night when Kyrie Irving sat out with a strained left hip. Boston coach Brad Stevens said he thought the injury occurred Saturday during the first half of the Celtics' 115-111 home loss to the Golden State Warriors. Boston blocked 16 shots, its highest total since the 1983-84 season, according to basketball-reference.com. D'Angelo Russell scored 25 points for



MEMPHIS: Mike Conley #11 of the Memphis Grizzlies shoots the ball against the Denver Nuggets on Monday at FedExForum in Memphis, Tennessee. —AFP

the Nets, who had their six-game winning streak end.

HORNETS 101, KNICKS 92

Tony Parker and Jeremy Lamb led a balanced attack with 15 points each, and host Charlotte added to New York's misery. The Hornets trailed by as many as eight points in the third quarter but went on a 14-0 run early in the fourth to take control of the game. They led by as many as 14 down the stretch and never let the Knicks closer than nine again. Kevin Knox scored 19 points for the Knicks, who have lost 10 straight and 18 of their past 19 games.

HAWKS 123, CLIPPERS 118

Rookie Trae Young scored 26 points and John Collins added 22 as Atlanta earned a victory over Los Angeles to improve to 2-1 at the start of a season-high, seven-game road trip. Alex Len added 19 points for the Hawks, who defeated a Pacific Division team for the first time in six tries this season. Tobias Harris scored 30 points for the Clippers, who have lost five of their past six home games. Los Angeles reserve Lou Williams opened the game 0-for-11 from the field, a day after a 2-for-16 shooting performance, and finished with 21 points on 4-of-17 shooting. — Reuters

Pakistan, India to kick off T20 World Cup in Australia

SYDNEY: Hosts Australia will take on Pakistan's men and India's women for the opening fixtures of the Twenty20 World Cups in 2020, organisers said yesterday as the draw for the tournaments was announced.

The T20 World Cups are being held in the same year and in the same country for the first time, with the men's and women's finals to be played at one of the world's biggest stadiums, the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Ten women's teams will play in 23 matches

from February 21 to March 8, with reigning champions Australia to clash with India in the opening game in Sydney. The men's competition, from October 18 to November 15, will feature several qualifying matches before Australia kicks off the Super 12 group stages on October 24 against top-ranked Pakistan at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Australia, Pakistan, the West Indies, New Zealand and two qualifiers make up one side of the draw, with defending champions the Windies starting their title defence against the Black Caps on October 25.

India, England, South Africa and Afghanistan and two qualifiers make up the other side of the draw.

For the women's fixtures, four-time winners Australia are in Group A with New Zealand, India, Sri Lanka and one qualifier, while West Indies and 2009 champions England join South Africa, Pakistan and a second qualifier team.

The women's final will be played on March 8 to coincide with International Women's Day, and the men's final will be held on November 15.

Women's group stages (February 21 - March 3)

Group A: Australia, New Zealand, India, Sri Lanka, Qualifier 1

Group B: England, West Indies, South Africa, Pakistan, Qualifier 2

Semi-finals: March 5

Final: March 8

Men's qualifiers: October 18 - 23

Group stages (October 24 - November 8)

Group 1: Pakistan, Australia, West Indies, New Zealand, two qualifiers

Group 2: India, England, South Africa, Afghanistan, two qualifiers

Semi-finals: November 11 and 12

Final: November 15. — AFP

ICC urges S Lanka to come clean on corruption

COLOMBO: The International Cricket Council has urged Sri Lanka's scandal-ridden sporting community to come forward with information about corruption before an amnesty expires or risk expulsion from the game.

Sri Lankan cricket has been mired in corruption allegations in recent years, including claims of match fixing ahead of an international Test against England last year, and the sport's world governing body is in the middle of a major inquiry into the island nation.

The ICC said it had received a "positive response" after granting a 15-day amnesty this month for players, coaches or anyone else linked to the sport to come clean, free of the threat of punishment. Council anti-corruption chief Alex Marshall said new cases had come to light and urged others to come forward before the amnesty expires on Thursday. "In the final few days, I would request the cricket fraternity to come forward and share any other information concerning corrupt conduct or approaches in the strictest of confidence," he said in a statement issued late Monday.

Those who refuse to share information with ICC investigators could face five-year bans if caught. The ICC considers Sri Lanka the world's most corrupt cricketing nation and the sport's governance riddled with graft "from top to bottom", Sri Lankan sports minister Harin Fernando said last month.

The crisis-ridden Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) governing body is expected to hold elections in February after a nine-month delay from the end of president Thilanga Sumathipala's term last May. Sumathipala has been accused of violating ICC rules by holding office despite alleged links to gambling. He denies the charges.

In November, former Sri Lankan fast bowler Dilhara Lokuhettige was suspended for corruption linked to a limited-over league in 2017. Lokuhettige was the third Sri Lankan player charged for violating the ICC's anti-corruption code, following charges levelled against former captain and ex-chief selector Sanath Jayasuriya, and former paceman Nuwan Zoysa. Jayasuriya was charged with failing to cooperate with a match-fixing probe and concealing information. Zoysa was suspended over match-fixing accusations. — AFP



Alex Marshall

After Barbados bruising, England ponder changes

ANTIGUA: A year in which England will host the World Cup and the Ashes started in the worst possible way with an emphatic 381-run defeat by West Indies in Barbados and they face major selection choices for the second Test in Antigua starting tomorrow.

For West Indies, led by one of the game's most exciting talents in all-rounder Jason Holder, the contest at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, offers a chance to prove they are a team on the rise-capable of more than just occasional triumphs.

For all the focus on England's decision to play two spinners and leave out experienced seamer Stuart Broad, the fact remains that England's loss was caused by a shocking first-innings batting effort as they were skittled out for a paltry 77.

Concerns over England's batting increased when part-time spinner Roston Chase took eight wickets in the second innings. Questions are being asked of England's left-handed opener Keaton Jennings who is struggling again after showing his capabilities with a century in Sri Lanka in November.

It would be a surprise, however, if England's selectors decided to immediately jettison him for 32-year-old back-up Joe Denly but Jennings will again be under pressure to show he merits that faith.

Jennings will need to show real toughness to rise to the challenge but that is a quality former skipper Michael Vaughan feels the team is lacking. "They do not have the mental strength to fight through tough sessions by working hard and forcing bowlers into their third or fourth spells. They are fine when they bowl a team out or make a big score batting first themselves but poor when they are under a little bit of pressure," Vaughan wrote in his Daily Telegraph column.

Vaughan pointed the finger firmly at Jennings and is worried he won't be able to handle Holder's pace attack. "Keaton Jennings is a good player against spin but every time he faces pace I shut my eyes. He does not know where his off stump is and, as an opening batsman, that is your number one task," he said. — Reuters



Yang Yang

Chinese Olympic legend finds her calling on road to 2022

SHANGHAI: She was China's first Winter Games gold medalist, a two-time Olympic champion and regarded as one of the finest short-track speed skaters of all time. Few know better than Yang Yang what it takes to succeed at the pinnacle of sport.

Now retired, the 42-year-old is harnessing that know-how to help China, already a force in the Summer Olympics, replicate that success on the snow and ice. There is no time to waste—Beijing hosts the 2022 Winter Olympics and embarrassment on home soil is unthinkable. "Definitely, winter sports is not very big in China. There used to be only two provinces that played winter sports, in the northeast of China," Yang told AFP in Shanghai, where snow and ice are a rarity and summers fiercely hot.

"(But) the Olympics is not only Beijing, it's the whole of China," added Yang, who retired from skating after the 2006 Turin Olympics. Yang has fulfilled a decade-long dream with the temporary installation of what she said was Shanghai's first outdoor ice rink, with the city's Oriental Pearl Tower serving as a stunning backdrop.

Backed by private investment, it is her third rink in Shanghai, underlining her commitment to generating interest in ice sports among a broader swathe of

China's 1.4 billion population.

Yang, who won short-track gold in the 500m and 1,000m at the 2002 Salt Lake City Games, has more than 1,000 budding athletes training in ice hockey, figure skating or speed skating. They age three and upwards and her programme, which she started five years ago, is beginning to bear fruit with nine of them called up to China's junior team for short-track speed skating. It is possible that one of her charges could represent China at Beijing 2022. "I am the mother of two kids and I always encourage them to experience sports because I believe it is very important for kids growing up," said Yang. "They learn how to face challenges, they learn how to fight, they learn how to follow the rules, they learn teamwork, leadership." According to Yang, who was born in frigid far-northeast China, interest in her Shanghai club doubled as soon as Beijing was awarded the Games in 2015 — testament to the enduring pull of the Olympics.

China's tepid performance at the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics underlines how far the country—which topped the 2008 Beijing Summer Games medals table—has to go in winter sports. China won only one gold in short-track speed skating when Wu Dajing triumphed in the men's 500m and according to Yang, Chinese skaters buckled under pressure.

She hopes the hosts can show a better face in Beijing. "For the elite sports we are going to build a bigger team and have a bigger budget," said Yang, a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), who is closely involved in the 2022 Games as chairman of the athletes' commission. "In 2022 our goal is to participate in all of the events. "For the top sports we want more medals for sure because it's a great opportunity to make heroes to promote sports and encourage more kids to skate or ski." — AFP

Sports

Liverpool dish out new deals to ensure sustained success

‘The club gave us fantastic opportunity to bring outstanding players’

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool are working to ensure this season's Premier League title push is not a one-off as they lay the foundations for continued success after struggling in recent years to sustain a challenge.

Within 20 months of running a Manchester United side containing Cristiano Ronaldo and Wayne Rooney close in 2008/09, the core of the side built by Rafa Benitez had been dismantled by the departures of Xabi Alonso, Javier Mascherano and Fernando Torres.

Five years ago, after the goals of Luis Suarez propelled Liverpool to the verge of the title, the Uruguayan packed his bags for Barcelona at the end of the season. Just a year ago Philippe Coutinho forced his way out of Anfield to join Suarez in Catalonia.

After receiving a £142 million (\$187 million) transfer fee for the Brazilian, Liverpool bought goalkeeper Alisson Becker and dominant defender Virgil van Dijk. Now they are investing heavily in keeping together the squad they have assembled.

Mohamed Salah, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane were joined by promising full-backs Andy Robertson and Trent Alexander-Arnold recently in signing extended deals, with eight players in total agreeing new contracts to 2023 or beyond in the past eight months.

“The club gave us a fantastic opportunity to bring in outstanding players, to keep outstanding players. My job is to make sure we perform on the pitch,” said Klopp after the raft of contract renewals.

“Where will we be in two or three years? I have no idea but the age group is good. This season will not fin-

ish our development. “It doesn't look like we'll lose any key player (and) we build a new training ground, another step in the future.”

According to The Times, the contract renewals will cost the club a total of up to £200 million extra. “We want to write our names alongside the many great ones in the story of this club,” said Mane when penning his deal that runs until 2023. “Hopefully it's the beginning of something special.”

LIVERPOOL BREAK

Klopp's league leaders, who host Leicester on Wednesday, have a four-point cushion over Manchester City at the top of the Premier League but their lead could be whittled down to a solitary point by the time they kick off, with Manchester City in action 24 hours earlier at Newcastle.

Liverpool's early FA Cup exit has given Klopp's men the bonus of extra rest and rehabilitation after a gruelling festive schedule and before returning to Champions League action next month.

They have made the most of their break since January 19 to jet off to Dubai for a warm weather training camp. “It's the best time in the year if you have a week like that and can train,” said Klopp. “We used these four days for that and that worked out pretty well. Of course, we have to see in the end what we can take from it.” The break has also eased an injury crisis in defence with Dejan Lovren fit to return, while Alexander-Arnold is also nearing a comeback. — AFP



LIVERPOOL: File photo shows Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp celebrates their victory on the pitch after the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Crystal Palace at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England on January 19, 2019. — AFP

Solskjaer: Trophies more important than top four for Man Utd

MANCHESTER: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer says trophies are more important for Manchester United than a top-four finish as he targets success in two cup competitions over the second half of the season. A run of eight successive victories to start his caretaker reign at the club has transformed a campaign that appeared to be heading nowhere under his predecessor Jose Mourinho.

United are still in the FA Cup and Champions League, while vastly improved league form now has the Reds looking at a potential best-case scenario of finishing third in the Premier League. Tottenham's Mauricio Pochettino, still in the frame to become

United's eventual long-term manager, has claimed a top-four finish and Champions League football is his club's primary target and not silverware.

But Solskjaer, who won many trophies at Old Trafford as a player under Alex Ferguson, has other aims. “I am not here to discuss what Pochettino says and what other managers say but we are about winning trophies, of course we are,” said Solskjaer.

“And we can't win the league this year, we are still in the cup, we are going to try to win the FA Cup of course. I think every manager wants to win every game so I don't think that is the point he was making.”

“If you win trophies that's a fantastic day for everyone in the club, it's just the best time of your life, that day when you win because you never know when the next one is going to come.”

Despite Solskjaer's hunger for silverware, the realities of modern football mean the importance of qualifying for the Champions League cannot be underestimated. “That's not the dream though, to be top four,” he said. “We're Man United, you should always aim to win the league. We can't do that this year but we've just got to look forward to that again because we have to get

back to that.

“We've got the Champions League, we've got the FA Cup, we can't just say ‘top four and that's it’. We've got to look at ‘can we win something this year?’ and I go into every single game as a Man United manager thinking we can win this game.”

Solskjaer is still looking for Brazilian midfielder Fred, a £52 million (\$68 million) summer signing from Shakhtar Donetsk by Mourinho, to start justifying his price tag. Fred has started just two games under Solskjaer, completing about an hour on both occasions, although his manager said he could see improvements.

“I don't think it's my challenge to incorporate players, it's about the players being ready when they get the chance and Fred's been working really hard in training,” he said. “He's a good lad, same with Andreas (Pereira), he's working really hard, you've got Scott (McTominay).”

“And when they get the chance, because they will, we want to see improvement. We know there's a very, very good player there with Fred so hopefully he'll adjust to the English game because there's no doubt there's talent, absolutely no doubt.” — AFP

Puel hopes Leicester can maintain ‘big club’ run

LONDON: Leicester City manager Claude Puel believes his side will be inspired by facing the Premier League's top teams as they begin a tough run of fixtures.

First up for the Foxes is a trip to league leaders Liverpool on Wednesday, with in-form Manchester United visiting the King Power Stadium on Sunday before Leicester travel to London for a match against Tottenham Hotspur at Wembley on February 10.

But French manager Puel is buoyed by the way Leicester beat both Chelsea and champions Manchester City during the Christmas holiday period, having drawn with Pep Guardiola's men in the League Cup earlier in December before losing in a penalty shoot-out. “The three next games is a fantastic challenge for them,” said Puel of the task now awaiting Leicester. “We have shown we can perform against good teams, we have won games also against good teams. I hope we can continue in this way.” Puel said the better the opponent, the better his side performed. “My players prefer to play against good teams like this and to show their level. It's less pressure, they can give their best with freedom. In this situation we can create an upset.”

“We know the difficulty, and people outside think we can not have a chance to win a point, but we are confident because we showed a lot of qualities in the last games against big teams and great teams.”

“I hope that we can have the possibility of winning against Liverpool, and then United at home. I hope we can create an upset,” he added. Leicester are currently ninth in the table, 12 points above the relegation zone, but if the 2015/16 Premier League champions are to press on they could do with ridding themselves of their recent habit of conceding early goals.

The Midlands club have been behind before 11 minutes were on the clock in each of their last three matches, going on to lose every time—including a shock defeat in the FA Cup by Newport County.

“We have some difficulties to start our games and after we have to chase the game against strong defensive units then it is always difficult, since the beginning of the season,” said Puel. “Sometimes we manage our game at the beginning and it is a good performance. The most important thing is to have the right intensity, focus and concentration for the beginning.” — AFP

Man City to take extra care over Mendy return: Pep

MANCHESTER: Pep Guardiola will monitor Benjamin Mendy's return to regular first-team football with Manchester City closely as he attempts to ensure that the France full-back suffers no repeat of his persistent injury problems.

Mendy has endured a frustrating 18 months playing for Guardiola's side, with a knee injury ruling him out of virtually all of last season.

This campaign has been scarcely better, with different knee problems limiting him to 11 starts in all competitions to date.

His latest, minor, setback came last week when the 24-year-old returned after more than two months on the sidelines as a substitute late in the League Cup semi-final win over Burton.

Mendy suffered swelling to his knee after his 30-minute run-out, prompting his manager to leave him out of the weekend FA Cup win over Burnley, and Guardiola will again take a cautious approach when he names his side to play at Newcastle in the Premier League on Tuesday.

“With this kind of injury, when you come back immediately to the real competition always you have to keep the balance,” he said.

“I think it will happen in the next month,” he added. “We have to have him fit and good but we demand a lot of his knee. He's going to take a little bit, three or four days.”

“Football is not just physical, run up and down, it's what you have to do, read the situations. He was out for a long time, he has got to go step-by-step, not game, game, game-or, after that, he will not survive.”

With City still active on four fronts, the City manager is clearly playing the long game with his extrovert left-back, which means his chances of being used for the weekend meeting with Arsenal also look remote.

No room for error

Guardiola has conceded that his team may not be able to lose another game—or even drop a point—for the remainder of this season if they are to overhaul leaders Liverpool and their four-point advantage at the top of the table.

City could still break their own Premier League record of 100 points, were they to win every one of their remaining 15 games. The Blues could finish with a maximum 101 points, while Jurgen Klopp's side have a maximum 105 to play for.

“The players know it—we spoke about it, they know that there is no margin for error. Before, 85, 87, 89 points you could be champions—now you have to be over 90 points,” he said.

Captain Vincent Kompany's long-standing injury problems continue at City, with the Belgian limited to just six league starts this season.—Agence



Arjen Robben

Robben mulling Tokyo move after Bayern exit

TOKYO: Superstar Dutch winger Arjen Robben is lining up a move to J-League outfit FC Tokyo after he leaves Bundesliga giants Bayern Munich, local media reported yesterday. The 35-year-old has already confirmed he is leaving Bayern at the end of the season after a glittering career that saw him win seven Bundesliga titles and nearly 100 caps for the Netherlands.

If confirmed, it would be the latest high-profile transfer to the Japanese league, after Spanish World Cup winner Andres Iniesta and German striker Lukas Podolski joined Vissel Kobe. Iniesta's World Cup winning teammate Fernando Torres is also playing at J-League rival Sagan Tosu.

The Sports Nippon daily said there was a “rapidly emerging” chance of Robben playing in Japan next season. “Robben's family, who are believed to have a big

say (in his decision), seem positive about coming to Japan,” it said.

“Several Japanese clubs are interested but FC Tokyo are close to clinching his signature,” the paper quoted anonymous sources as saying. A spokesperson for the club declined to comment when contacted by AFP.

The 35-year-old, in his prime considered one of the world's best wingers, told German football magazine Kicker last month he had no plans beyond the end of this season.

“That's not entirely clear, perhaps I will stop playing—it's about waiting and seeing what possibilities there are,” he said. “If offers come in, I'll really consider them 100 percent and if it's something nice, I'll play on, but if no ideal offers come, then that could be it.”

“I have three children and they also must be happy... The family plays a very important role in every decision of mine.” After spells at Chelsea and Real Madrid, Robben joined Bayern in 2009 and spent nearly a decade with the Bavarian giants. His winning goal in the 2013 Champions League final at Wembley sealed a 2-1 victory over Borussia Dortmund.

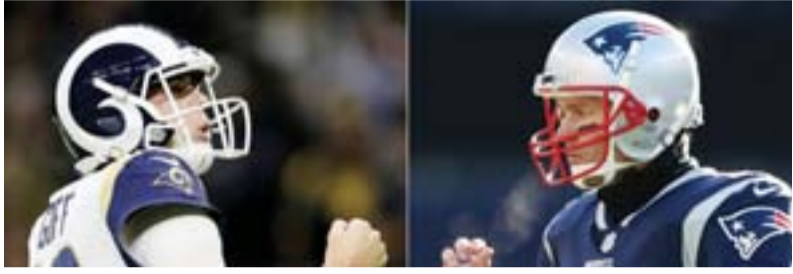
The fleet-footed, injury-prone veteran has won 19 trophies with Bayern and was named Bundesliga player of the year after his first season in Germany. FC Tokyo finished sixth in the J-League last year. — AFP

Live		Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE			
Southampton FC v Crystal Palace FC	beIN SPORTS HD 4	22:45	
Bournemouth FC v Chelsea FC	beIN SPORTS	22:45	
Liverpool v Leicester City	beIN SPORTS HD 2	23:00	
Tottenham Hotspur v Watford	beIN SPORTS HD 5	23:00	
FC Nantes v Saint Etienne	French League beIN SPORTS HD 6	23:00	
SPAIN COPA DEL REY			
Real Betis v RCD Espanyol	beIN SPORTS	21:30	
FC Barcelona v Sevilla FC	beIN SPORTS	23:30	
ITALIAN CUP			
ACF Fiorentina v AS Roma	beIN SPORTS	20:15	
Atalanta v Juventus FC	beIN SPORTS	22:45	

25 Brady, Goff raring to go as Super Bowl circus kicks off

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27 Robben mulling Tokyo move after Bayern exit



Qatar hammer UAE 4-0 to reach final

Maroons to meet Japan in Asian Cup final • Goalscorers pelted with missiles



ABU DHABI: United Arab Emirates' forward Ismaeil Al Junaibi (C) falls after a challenge from Qatar's defender Tameem Mohammed (L) during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup semi-final football match between Qatar and UAE at the Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday. —AFP

ABU DHABI: Qatar defied sandal-throwing local fans to storm into the Asian Cup final for the first time with a 4-0 win over hosts United Arab Emirates yesterday, setting up a decider against Japan in Abu Dhabi on Friday.

Boualem Khoukhi's early strike and an eighth goal of the tournament from striker Almoez Ali gave Qatar a 2-0 halftime lead and captain Hassan Al-Haydos and Hamid Ismail completed the rout in the last 10 minutes.

The UAE had been hoping to reach the Asian Cup final for the second time, but instead look likely to face sanctions after Ali was pelted with footwear as he celebrated his goal with Haydos and Ismail also the

target of missiles.

The cloud of the diplomatic and trade boycott of Qatar that Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt launched in June 2017 hung heavy over the stadium with the visitors' national anthem roundly booed by the majority of the crowd of 38,646.

The crowd were stunned into silence in the 22nd minute when Khoukhi cantered into the UAE half on the break and launched a speculative shot towards goal from the corner of the area that slipped under the hands of goalkeeper Khalid Eisa.

While Eisa should have stopped the first goal, there was little he could have done about the second 15 minutes later. Ali powered his way through a trio of

static defenders on the left edge of the box and curled his shot into the net off the far post to extend his lead as the tournament's top scorer.

The young striker was showered with sandals thrown by irate home fans as he celebrated in scenes that will surely elicit some response from the Asian Football Confederation. Sadly for the home fans, there was little response from their team, whose few first-half chances came from crosses launched into the area from the flanks.

Striker Ali Mabkhout, looking for his 10th goal over two Asian Cups, revived UAE hopes with a sizzling long-range drive in the 52nd minute that Qatar goalkeeper Saad Al Sheeb was forced to tip over the bar.

UAE captain Ismail Matar also looked lively when he came on as a substitute and had a shot blocked in the 69th minute, while Saad was again a match for a looping Ahmed Khalil header.

The breakthrough would not come, however, and Haydos scored the third for the visitors on the break, cheekily chipping Eisa before grabbing the badge on his shirt in celebration to attract a shower of drinks bottles from angry fans.

Insult was added to indignity in stoppage time when UAE defender Ismail Ahmed was sent off after a VAR review for an elbow to the face of Salem Al-Hajri and Hamid Ismail beat Eisa for the fourth time to trigger another barrage of bottles. — Reuters

Australia PM, AFC urge Thailand not to extradite Bahraini player

ABU DHABI: Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Asian soccer chiefs called on the Thai government to release footballer Hakeem Al Araibi as prosecutors in Bangkok yesterday acknowledged receipt of an extradition request from Bahrain.

Bahraini Araibi, who fled to Australia from his homeland in 2014 and was later granted asylum, was arrested in November in Bangkok on an Interpol notice issued at

Bahrain's request. The Australian Prime Minister's office confirmed that Morrison had written a letter to his Thai counterpart Prayuth Chan-ocha asking that Araibi be allowed to return home.

"The PM reminded the Thai prime minister that he is a refugee that has been given permanent residency, he should be released," one source familiar with the details of the letter told Reuters. The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) also wrote to the Thai Prime Minister, a significant move because the regional governing body, which had been criticised for its silence on the case, is run by a leading Bahraini, Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim al-Khalifa.

Araibi was a vocal critic of Sheikh Salman, a member of Bahrain's ruling family and a cousin of the king, when the AFC President contested the FIFA presidential election in 2015. The AFC said on Saturday that Sheikh Salman had been recused from matters relating to West Asia 18 months ago to ensure there were no accusations of a conflict of interest and that Vice President

Pratul Patel would oversee the Araibi case.

"I hereby respectfully request Your Excellency to take the necessary steps to ensure that Mr Al Araibi is returned safely to Australia, where he has been granted refugee status, at the earliest possible opportunity," Patel wrote to Prayuth. Araibi was convicted of vandalising a police station in Bahrain and sentenced to 10 years in prison in absentia. He denies wrongdoing.

FIFA APPEAL

Thailand's Foreign Ministry have been consistent in saying the case was a matter for their justice system to decide and yesterday reiterated that stance. Chatchom Akapin, Director-General at the International Affairs Department, Office of Attorney General of Thailand told Reuters that an extradition request had been received from the Bahrain government.

"We have to see whether the Bahrain request falls in line with Thailand's Extradition Act of 2008," he said. "If it matches then we will make the request to the

criminal court. It is the court who decides whether to send Mr. Hakeem to Bahrain or not."

Chatchom said that if the request did not fall in line with Thai extradition law then no request would be made to the court and Araibi would be released when his 60-day detention order expires on Feb. 5.

"The Extradition Act of 2008 stated clearly that for a country with no extradition treaty with Thailand, like Bahrain, we have to see various factors including their government request to determine whether it falls in line with our laws," Chatchom said.

Bahrain has criticised "external interference" in Manama's internal affairs and said Araibi can return to appeal against the sentence, noting that others arrested with Araibi who have done so have been acquitted.

Soccer's world governing body FIFA also released a statement yesterday in which Secretary General Fatma Samoura called on the Thai and Bahraini authorities to ensure Araibi could "go back safely to Australia as a matter of urgency". — Reuters