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Civil ID to be proof of residency after iqama sticker scrapped

Online process to begin with domestic workers from March 10

Lavrov meets Amir, holds talks



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received visiting Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his accompanying delegation at Bayan Palace yesterday. HH the Amir requested that the foreign minister relay to Russian President Vladimir Putin his greetings and good wishes.

Later, speaking at a joint press conference with Lavrov, Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said Kuwait welcomes Lavrov's second visit within two years, which is a clear indication of the friendly country's keenness of

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By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The interior ministry yesterday announced the cancellation of the use of residency stickers on expats' passports, saying all the needed data will be on their civil IDs, which will be considered as proof of residence for expats. During a press conference yesterday, Director-General of the Residency Affairs Department Brig Abdulqader Al-Shaaban said the decision to scrap the residency sticker on the passport will go into effect on March 10, 2019.

The decision does not include holders of article 14 (temporary residence) visas and those who received residency stickers before the implementation of the resolution. Shaaban said foreign residents in Kuwait will not be allowed to enter or leave the country unless they hold a valid passport and a civil ID card issued by the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI). He noted that in case of losing the ID card during travel, the same procedures should be followed for a lost passport.

PACI Director General Musaed Al-Assousi affirmed that the cancellation of the residency sticker was on the direct order of Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, who gave this project attention and direct follow-up because of its impact on most segments of the society and to simplify and facilitate the transition towards electronic services.

"Expats should go on the website that serves as a link between the interior ministry and PACI. The authority will update the individual's data and send a text message to the concerned person upon completion of the ID. The message will have a link to complete the procedures for issuing the civil ID and paying the necessary fees for issuing it," Assousi explained.

He noted that expatriates who have received residency stickers on their passports or travel documents before the decision will remain valid until the expiration of the residency. "We stress the need to ensure the first and last name as well the passport number match what is printed on the civil ID card to avoid any obstacles while traveling," he added.

General Manager of the General Administration of Information Systems Ismail Al-Yassin said: "We will first start this with domestic workers (article 20). The website will allow sponsors to renew residencies that will expire within two months, starting from March 10. Soon, the rest of expats will also be able to get their residencies online."

Last month, Assistant Undersecretary for Residency Affairs Maj Gen Talal Maarafi said the new measure will consume fewer passport pages. It will also help stop sponsors from holding expats' passports and put an end to this problem for good, he added, although it remains to be seen if sponsors will be willing to do so, despite it being illegal.

News in brief

No driving licenses for nurses, muezzins

KUWAIT: The Traffic Department's Assistant Director General for Traffic Regulations Col Yousuf Al-Khaddah issued a decision banning the issuance of driving licenses to muezzins and nurses. A source said the ban on these two groups is due to the fact that the majority of muezzins stay in the mosques where they work. As for nurses, they are supposed to travel in health ministry buses. — Al-Anbaa

Moody's downgrades Oman to junk

DUBAI: Moody's cut Oman's credit rating to junk with a negative outlook, citing fiscal challenges at a time of moderate oil prices in a move to keep its borrowing costs high. Moody's said in a statement on Tuesday that Oman could face external vulnerability as wide fiscal deficits will contribute to wide current account deficits, perpetuating Oman's dependence on steady inflows of external financing. — Reuters

EU vetoes money-laundering list

BRUSSELS: Envoys from the 28 EU member states yesterday unanimously rejected a proposal by the European Commission to add Saudi Arabia and other nations to the bloc's money-laundering blacklist, European sources said. The ill-fated plan infuriated Saudi Arabia as well as the US and exasperated European capitals. The EU governments "cannot support the current proposal," said a strongly worded draft statement. — AFP

UN rights chief slams 'divisive policies'

GENEVA: UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet warned India yesterday that its "divisive policies" could undermine economic growth. "We are receiving reports that indicate increasing harassment and targeting of minorities - in particular Muslims and people from historically disadvantaged and marginalized groups, such as Dalits and Adivasis," Bachelet said in her annual report to the UN Human Rights Council. — Reuters

Rape victim kills attacker

KOLKATA: An Indian woman who was raped and set on fire killed her attacker by dragging him into the flames, police said yesterday. The woman survived with burns to her face and hands while the man died in hospital from his injuries. The widow, 35, told police that the man, 42, attacked and raped her in her home north of Kolkata on Monday, when her daughters were out. "Then he poured kerosene on her body and set her on fire," police officer Sajal Kanti Biswas said. — AFP

Initial nod to 35-day leave; probe into 400 'male couples'

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly yesterday overwhelmingly approved in the first reading a key amendment to the labor law in the private sector to increase annual leave from 30 to 35 days. All 45 MPs present voted for the amendment, which will become final when the Assembly holds the second and

final voting on the law. The government did not object but refused to make it retroactive from 2010, saying it is not possible to apply the law in this fashion. The law applies to both Kuwaitis and expatriates working in the private sector. The last time the annual leave was increased was in 2010, when the current labor law underwent massive changes.

The Assembly also asked the housing ministry to investigate allegations that official documents show that 400 couples who applied for government housing are in fact "male couples". MP Abdullah Al-Roumi said Minister of State for Housing Affairs Jenan Bushehri has said that authorities found the names of husband and wife applicants were all male names. He said that these alleged forgers did so to benefit from housing

Continued on Page 24



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah speaks during a National Assembly session yesterday. — KUNA



ST ADOLPHE, Canada: People play in a maze built by farmers Clint and Angie Masse on March 3, 2019. — AFP

Canadian couple builds the world's largest snow maze

ST ADOLPHE, Canada: A-maze-ing: A snow labyrinth in the frigid, windswept prairies of Western Canada has broken the record for the world's biggest. According to Guinness World Records, the whopping 2,789.11 square meters of terrain dwarfs the previous Canadian record

holder at the Fort William Historical Park in Thunder Bay, Ontario. For years, farmers Clint and Angie Masse would ring in the fall harvest by building a corn maze on their property just outside of the small town of St Adolphe, a short drive from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

With a long, cold winter in the Canadian forecast, they decided late last year to try to extend the experience of finding one's way through the network of paths and hedges by several months. And despite temperatures plunging to a low of -40 degrees Celsius in January, people kept coming in droves. But it was no easy feat, Clint Masse told AFP.

Continued on Page 24

Kerala to give workers siesta to beat the heat

MUMBAI: Workers in India's Kerala state are now getting a three-hour afternoon siesta as part of a series of benefits aimed at combating soaring temperatures and improving labor conditions, government officials said yesterday. Kerala, which suffered its worst floods in a century last year, is bracing itself for more extreme weather conditions in 2019 and the state's disaster management authority last week issued sunstroke warnings for the next three months.

"There is extreme heat in Kerala. So we are making arrangements for workers and have announced a three-hour break from noon until 3 pm," said Sreedharan Tulasidharan, a labor commissioner with the Kerala government. There are an estimated 3 million migrant workers in Kerala, which offers daily wages that are up to three times higher than in other Indian states, labor rights campaigners say. Most work in the construction, agriculture, mining and fishing industries.

"We call them our guests. Migrant workers' output is very high. Their productivity contributes to our GDP. We are nurturing and treating them well," Tulasidharan told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone. Climate experts have warned that the world can expect higher temperatures and more frequent heat waves, with the poorest communities likely to be worst-affected as the impacts of climate change kick-in.

The World Health Organization says heat-stress, linked to climate change, is likely to cause 38,000 extra deaths a year worldwide between 2030 and 2050. Home to 60 percent of the world's population, Asia-Pacific is the planet's most disaster-prone region, according to the Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2017. India, with approximately 1.3 billion people, is the second most populous country in the world and also among the most disaster-prone.

Continued on Page 24

Amir hosts top officials



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



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

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. —KUNA

Amir patronizes Kuwait Grand Quran Contest



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attends the final ceremony for honoring winners of Kuwait 22nd Grand Contest for the Holy Quran Memorization and Recitation. —KUNA photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday patronized the final ceremony for honoring winners of Kuwait 22nd Grand Contest for the Holy Quran Memorization and Recitation at Bayan Palace Theater. His Highness the Amir was deputized by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the broad ceremony. The representative of His Highness the Amir was warmly welcomed at the ceremony venue by the Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Fahad Ali Al-Shula. The ceremony was attended by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and senior State officials. It began with playing the National Anthem, followed with the Holy Quran's recitation, then the minister addressed the attendees.

Minister Shula noted that the contest has reached its 22nd year due to the kind sponsorship by His Highness the Amir and his keenness on upbringing a new generation, manners of whom are in line with the Holy Quran. Greeting His Highness Sheikh Nawaf, the minister declared that 1,901 people took part in the 2019 contest and number of winners reached 204. Elaborating, he said number of the male winners was at 103, along with 101 female winners, 25 of special cases, 52 from correction facilities and 12 who got



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and senior state officials attend the ceremony.

100 grades. The event concluded with His Highness the Amir Representative distributing the awards to the winners. He was presented with a memorial award. —KUNA



A memento is presented to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is seen with the honored winners.



Some of the winners of the Kuwait 22nd Grand Contest for the Holy Quran Memorization and Recitation.

Local

Visitors' health insurance likely enforced before Ramadan

Fee hoped to curb entry of beggars on visit visas

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Both the government and lawmakers agreed to accelerate the issuance of a law to impose health insurance on visitors to Kuwait, well-informed ministerial sources said. The sources added that the new health insurance is expected to go in effect within two months and before the holy month of Ramadan, when demand increases for visit visas. Furthermore, the fees should help deter people who take advantage of increased charity during the holy month and come to Kuwait in Ramadan on visit visas to practice begging; an issue that local authorities have been fighting in recent years.

Medicine practice law

Kuwait Medical Association (KMA) conducted a one-month survey on the proposed amendments to the medicine practice law, including Kuwait Lawyers Association and law professors at Kuwait University.

KMA Chairman Dr Ahmad Thuwaini Al-Enezi announced coordinating with the Ministry of Health's committee entrusted with setting the new law for the final touches, since KMA is the official body representing doctors and protecting their rights.

Multi-storey parking

Kuwait Municipality's legal department manager Rajaan Al-Ghareeb rejected a proposal by municipal councilmember Abdul Aziz Al-Mejel to allocate land for the private sector to build multi-storey parking buildings in the Capital governorate. Ghareeb said land had been previously allocated and the private sector volunteered to build and maintain the buildings, but has failed to keep its promises so far.

Drainage system

Allowing increasing the height of buildings built along the coastline by 150 to 400 percent will overload

the drainage system grids in the southern regions, said Ministry of Public Works (MPW) sources, adding that this will lead to large inflows into the southern purification and sewage water treatment plants, far more than that assessed in the 2002 and 2012 structural plans. The sources added that MPW has set many solutions to absorb the extra influx, including expanding Um Al-Haiman plant, installing a temporary treatment plant in Sabah Al-Ahmad City and cancelling the Riqqa plant.

Low-cost housing

Manager of the low-cost housing project at the public authority for housing welfare Memdeh Qobailan Al-Shemmari said the first phase of the project includes building 9,800 200-sq-m housing units, a 250,000-gallon irrigation reservoir and another for underground water. Shemmari added that the project being built over a total area of 830 hectares 16 km south of Salmi highway will cost KD

68.1 million and house around 88,700 residents.

National grid

The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) has plans to add 11,000 megawatts to the national grid within the next 10 years in order to meet the growing demand for water and electricity caused by urban expansions, power plant projects' chief engineer Ahmad Qassim said. He added that MEW is currently executing three projects, including the third phase of Subbiya plant with a 931 megawatt capacity, the first phase of Subbiya project with a 250 megawatt capacity and the third phase of South Zour project with a 250 megawatt capacity, which are all expected to be finished during the summer of 2019. Qassim added that documents needed to offer a tender on hiring a consultant for the first phase of Nuwaiseeb project for public bidding during the fourth quarter of 2020 to generate 3,600 megawatts are currently in progress.



KUWAIT: (From left) Dr Rashad Salamah, Dr Khalid Al-Saleh and Dr Abdelsalam Al-Najjar attend a press conference to announce launching an awareness campaign against colon and rectal cancer.

CAN launches campaign against colon, rectal cancer

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The national campaign for fighting cancer, also known as Cancer Aware Nation (CAN), launched an awareness campaign against colon and rectal cancer with a press conference at the Radisson Blu Hotel in the presence of Deputy Chairman Dr Khalid Ahmad Al-Saleh, Dr Rasheed Al-Hamad, Dr Hussa Al-Shaheen, Dr Rashad Salamah and Dr Abdelsalam Al-Najjar.

Saleh said there is a 60 to 70 percent recovery rate from cancer. "As we have succeeded in spreading an early detection culture, this will reach 80 percent," he said, adding all CAN board members believe awareness is the cornerstone in fighting cancer. He said true awareness has three basic concepts - the first is making people understand risk factors. "When we stay away from risk factors, we reduce incident rates. The

second is early detection - the secret of cancer fighting success."

According to Saleh, cancer is no longer a deadly disease as it once used to. "Here comes the third and last concept - awareness, which means we send a positive message to everybody in Kuwait that cancers are not fatal diseases, and people must be 'reprogrammed' to not be afraid. They will be ready to go and see their doctor when they feel any symptom, and be ready to go along with the treatment," he said.

"We as doctors have noticed that the treated person has a greater recovery rate and has nutritional, spiritual and family support, better than the person who is treated outside Kuwait. Cancer is a complex disease, which means that it needs medicine, family support and nutrition, and this formula is the secret of success," Saleh said.

Saleh said CAN has an agreement with the public food and nutrition authority. "This agreement constitutes a new era in Kuwait because we will start with sound nutrition from childhood. Students will learn in schools how and what to eat, so that a person in Kuwait can learn the culture of nutrition since childhood." He added that food culture is very important, "because when we spread this culture among the youth, we will guarantee the reduction of cancer cases."

laborers were referred to relevant authorities pending further measures.

'Bachelors' phenomenon

A Kuwait Municipality committee formed by ministerial resolution number 57/2019 to follow up the issue of 'bachelors' residing in private and model residential areas met under the chairmanship of the municipality's deputy director for Farwaniya and Mubarak Al-Kabeer affairs Ammar Al-Ammar. The meeting was also attended by Farwaniya security director Maj Gen Ahmad Al-Ali and representatives from several state departments to discuss setting a mechanism to fight this phenomenon. Ammar said that this phenomenon is alien to the Kuwaiti society and has been snowballing and posing extra burdens on public facilities in these areas. He also noted that relevant authorities had been invited to the committee's meeting next week to discuss solutions to evict bachelors from those areas. Ammar added that municipal branch managers had been instructed to list the buildings turned into bachelors' houses in private and model residential areas.

Drug overdoses behind 115 deaths last year

KUWAIT: Around 115 people died of drug overdoses in 2018, including 50 Kuwaitis, Al-Qabas reported yesterday. The majority of the victims were youths, while morphine was the main cause of death, informed sources said. Among the dead are six women and 109 men, said the sources. Bedoons rank second after Kuwaitis with 18 victims of both genders, followed by Egyptians in third place with 10 males. The rest of the victims are of various nationalities.

Money laundering

The criminal court will look on March 26 into the case of money laundering and real estate fraud in which a former MP is accused, following complaints from citizens. The detention renewal judge released the former MP on KD 20,000 bail, while the public prosecution

banned him from traveling over other cases, Al-Rai reported yesterday. The misdemeanors court had earlier sentenced the former MP to one year in jail in a swindling case worth millions of dinars. He made investors believe in the existence of projects and residential apartments in Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

Bootlegger arrested

A driver was arrested by Ahmadi police for selling liquor, and 28 bottles of liquor were found in his sponsor's car. Police pulled over the car driven by an Asian. When they approached it, a strong liquor odor was noticed. The driver was in an abnormal condition, so he was arrested and the liquor was found in the trunk, Al-Rai reported. He said he took advantage of his job to deliver the liquor.

Family dispute

Policemen arrested an expat in Kuwait, who after getting a call from his brother who is outside Kuwait, stormed his sister-in-law's apartment and beat and threatened her due to a financial dispute. The woman called police for help, and the suspect was arrested. A police source said the suspect confessed to heeding his brother's demands, who urged him to commit the crime, so he was detained, Al-Rai reported.

181 labor law violations detected at university project's site

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Authorities filed 181 citations against violators of the labor law at the Shadadiya university site during an unscheduled campaign yesterday. The crackdown came as part of the activities of a joint committee that includes members from the Public Authority for Manpower, Interior Ministry and Commerce Ministry to adjust local labor market conditions, Manpower Authority Director Ahmed Al-Moussa announced. Inspection teams found 117 laborers holding article 20 residency visas (domestic helpers), 15 shepherds and 49 private sector workers working at the site. Moussa explained, adding that the arrested



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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Bird's eye view of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center. —Photo by Jassem Al-Motar (KUNA)

UNRWA lauds Gulf contribution for Palestinian refugees in Syria

Kuwait, Saudi, UAE, Qatar donated \$50 million each

BRUSSELS: A top official of The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) yesterday heaped praise on Gulf countries for their generous contributions to help the Palestinian refugees in Syria. "Gulf countries last year really responded to our appeal for funding and gave \$200 million. Kuwait gave \$50 million, Saudi Arabia gave \$50 million, UAE \$50 million and Qatar \$50 million," UNRWA Director in Syria, Michael Ebye Amana, told journalist at a breakfast meeting in Brussels. "We thanked them and it really made a difference. We ask that this year they provide the same or even more because we have huge funding needs," he noted, stressing that "the Kuwait representative is a very big supporter of UNRWA."

Amana is visiting Brussels to meet with the EU and its Member States ahead of the 3rd Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region on March 12-14. Referring to the three international pledging conferences on Syria organized by Kuwait and three

by the EU, he noted that the situation has improved but millions of people are still displaced, expecting that this upcoming conference in Brussels on Syria will not be the last one. "There have been improvement but we are not out of the woods yet," he said, noting that there were 560,000 registered Palestinian refugees in Syria before the war but 120,000 left the country as a result of the war, including 30,000 to Lebanon, 17,000 to Jordan and 72,000 dispersed all over the world with many coming to Europe.

UNRWA has appealed for a \$221 million aid for Palestinian refugees in Syria for 2019. He clarified that the UN position is that conditions are still not right for the return of the refugees to Syria. Amana highlighted the plight millions of Palestine refugees, who continue to be one of

the most vulnerable populations in Syria, with 90 percent living in absolute poverty; on less than \$2 a day. UNRWA has the largest UN footprint in Syria, with nearly 4,000 staff across the country working on the frontline to provide emergency education and health, cash assistance, he noted. Three out of 12 Palestine refugee camps, including UNRWA schools and clinics, have been severely affected by the conflict.

After the US stopped its contribution to UNRWA, the biggest contributor is now the EU followed by the four Gulf countries Kuwait, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, he said. "The role of UNRWA as a stabilizing factor in a very volatile region needs to be recognized," he stressed. UNRWA has launched a global appeal for

\$1.2 billion for this year to provide services for 5.4 million Palestinian refugees in the region.

Meanwhile, Nathalie Stanus liaison officer for UNRWA in Brussels warmly welcomed the decision by the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on March 2nd to establish and operationalize a 'Waqf' endowment fund, in support of Palestine refugees. "This represents a major milestone in the efforts to diversify funding sources in support of UNRWA," she noted. Amana, a Ugandan national, has been appointed Director of UNRWA Affairs in Syria as from February 15, 2019. He joined UNRWA in March 2017 as Deputy Director of Programs, Syria Field Office. —KUNA



UNRWA appeals for future funds

Kuwaiti women partners in planning: Minister

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs Saad Al-Kharraz yesterday affirmed keenness on women's participation in development planning and decision making as well as activation of their role in civil societies. The minister, in a statement marking the International Women's Day which falls tomorrow, said Kuwait had pledged to implement the 17th Global Goals for Sustainable Development, namely with respect of attaining gender equality. The Kuwaiti women's history is rich in sacrifices and successful standing up to challenges, since girls were enrolled at schools in 1937, he said. Later on, the female citizens were employed in various sectors, occupying senior posts and rising to prominence at the regional level. The Kuwaiti women interests have gradually mushroomed covering political, economic, cultural and economic domains. Minister Kharraz added that the Kuwaiti Constitution recognizes rights of mothers and children, protects them against violence, grants them franchise in associations and cooperative societies. Elaborating, he noted that the cabinet, in June 2015, approved a motion declaring May 16 'The Kuwaiti Woman Day.' Moreover, the Kuwaiti women have attained a host of other rights namely the right to education, housing, employment, in addition to personal freedoms, equality in duties and rights, beside active participation in politics. —KUNA

AUB participates in career fair

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) participated in the 24th Career Fair hosted by Kuwait University's faculty of administrative sciences, on March 5-7, 2019, with an aim to support Kuwaiti youth and attract the talented staff to the Bank. The activities at the Career Fair give the new graduates a better chance to meet the different participating companies and greater understanding of the work environment.

Through its participation in this event, AUB hopes to connect with students and recent graduates across various disciplines and provide them with the support they need, and understand their capabilities and evaluate them in order to be able to offer them job opportunities that best suit their ambitions and skills.

With a firm belief that Kuwaiti youth are the nation's real treasure, AUB hosted a booth at the Career Fair of Economy Makers and Job Opportunities, to explain the nature of work to the students and address any questions or thoughts they have on a career in Banking. AUB also endeavored to provide them with proper guidance to help them make well-informed decisions. The bank held a comprehensive presentation about the internship program and allowance, so that the students can complete their studies with confidence on their future opportunities.

Naqeeb Amin, General Manager, Human Resources at Ahli United Bank said "The bank is always seeking to better understand the aspirations of the youth,



especially Kuwaiti, and will offer excellent job opportunities within a great work environment that will guarantee professional growth."

AUB is known to regularly participate in many similar job fairs held by government bodies and universi-

ties in Kuwait, with a commitment and social responsibility that the bank considers a priority. AUB focuses on encouraging the youth to find work in the private banking sector, in line with the bank's strategy to increase the national workforce.

Local

Kuwait Municipality continues to fight littering in public places

Fines' nonpayment stops processing paperwork at state departments

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Although littering in public places has been punishable by law for more than 30 years, many people still litter. According to law 9/1987, Kuwait Municipality is in charge of issuing tickets for various kinds of littering, including throwing paper, cigarettes and other garbage on roads, yards, parking lots, gardens and other public places. The violations also include spitting, urinating and defecating in public places. This law also included damaging trees, plants, and flowers as forbidden acts in public places.

Municipal inspectors are authorized to enforce the law on violators by handing them fines. "The inspectors are judicially empowered similar to policemen to give tickets to violators. They have the right to stop violators if they see them littering and ask for their civil ID. But if they refuse to identify themselves, the inspector is not authorized to force them to do so or detain them," Salah Al-Farhan, Assistant Cleaning

Supervisor of the Capital governorate told Kuwait Times.

Police officers usually accompany Municipality inspectors to enforce the law. "The inspectors always display their IDs on a visible part of their outfits. If the violator

“ Violators are cooperative in general ”

refuses to give their ID and leaves, and if police officers were not present, the inspector calls the police to come. If the violator escapes before the police arrive, then they can't do anything," Farhan said.

According to him, in general, violators are

cooperative. "The violators mostly give us their IDs. We then write the ticket and give them a copy to pay it at the Municipality. The fine is only KD 5, but if the violator doesn't pay it, they won't be able to process any transactions. It will remain in the system till it's paid, so they won't be able to renew their residency, driving license or other paperwork," explained Farhan. "If a violator litters from a vehicle, the inspector can ask them to pull over. If they refuse, the inspector can register the number of the license plate, time and place in the system," he added. While Farhan noted that the fine is always valued of KD 5, article 3 of law No. 9/1987 indicates that the fine may reach up to KD 200.

Inspectors go regularly on inspection raids. "The inspectors focus on crowded places, especially outdoor markets such as Mubarakiya and others. The number of violators is really huge. We issue 150 to 200 tickets a day at one location. We have 16 inspection centers only in the Capital governorate," concluded Farhan.



KUWAIT: A man throws a plastic bag on the ground at a street in Kuwait. These pictures are used for illustrative purposes only.

Bahraini businessmen laud Kuwait's role

MANAMA: Board members of the Bahraini Businessmen's Association yesterday praised Kuwait's role in supporting economic and development sectors in the Kingdom. This came in a statement by

Kuwait embassy in Manama during a meeting between Ambassador Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah and Chairman of the Association Rashid Al-Zayani, who expressed hope for further cooperation between the two countries through activating economic and trade agreements. Meanwhile, Sheikh Azzam stressed the importance of the private sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain, praising the distinguished historic relations between the two countries and stressing keenness on strengthening these relations in various fields. — KUNA



MANAMA: Board members of the Bahraini Businessmen's Association with Kuwait's Ambassador Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah. — KUNA

MEW presents water quality experiment in Jordan

DEAD SEA, Jordan: Undersecretary of Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) Mohammad Bushehri presented to the Fifth Arab Water Week 2019 the pioneering experiment of his ministry in ensuring the best quality of the potable water. "This

experiment, contained in Kuwait's paper to the gathering, entitled the ministry to win the top rating on the Arab level for two years running," Bushehri said on Tuesday at the end of the event, which held under the theme of 'Towards Sustainable Development in Water and Sanitation.'

The Kuwaiti paper, titled 'Quality of Drinkable Water in the State of Kuwait,' focuses on how Kuwait got 100 percent mark in the ratings of the World Health Organization (WHO) and winning the best Arab rating for 2017 and 2018, he revealed. "The paper explains the exemplary role of Kuwait in desalinating the seawater, expanding the output capacity, and controlling the quality of freshwater. It also shed light on the coordination between the Kuwaiti ministry and WHO in this field," Bushehri pointed out.

On the biennial Arab Water Week, the senior Kuwaiti official said the gathering provided an ideal platform for water experts from the Arab region and beyond to share experience, exchange views, find durable solutions to the problem of potable water shortage and make better use of modern technology in this domain. "The discussions covered vital topics relating to the water and sanitation systems, the impacts of climate change, and the strategic planning for upgrading the water management sector. Over the last three days, we have also explored ways for conserving energy and water supplies in case of emergency and facilitat-



DEAD SEA, Jordan: Ministry of Electricity and Water Undersecretary Mohammad Bushehri presents Kuwait's pioneering experiment to produce quality potable water. — KUNA

ing the transfer of relevant technologies, as well as the management of water resources and sanitation at refugee camps," Bushehri added.

The Arab Water Week, organized by the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA), in collaboration with the Arab Water Council - an Arab League affiliate, and the Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation, gathered water experts and decision makers and representatives of 19 regional and international organizations. Founded in 2009, the Amman-based ACWUA is a global center of excellence that partners with water supply and wastewater utilities in the Arab countries on building capacities within the utilities and on instituting best practices in order for the utilities to achieve their objectives. — KUNA



Kuwait's delegation at the Fifth Arab Water Week 2019.

'Kuwait is Proud' hosts forum



KUWAIT: A forum organized by the Kuwaiti National Youth Project at the National Library of Kuwait in progress. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti National Youth Project, otherwise known as 'Kuwait is Proud' or 'KAFO', held a special forum at the National Library of Kuwait on Tuesday, aiming to achieve all the general objectives of the project. The Executive Director of the 'KAFO' Project of the Amiri Diwan and a member of the Executive Team of the National Youth Project Dr Fatma Al-Mousawi said that one of the most important objectives was to highlight the national identity.

Meanwhile, Dr Ahmad Nabil elaborated the importance of New Kuwait Vision

2035 with its seven pillars, stressing "our role as individuals to take advantage of our expertise in accomplishing this vision." The general objectives of the National Youth Project is to introduce a New Kuwait 2035 and to identify new youth competencies to highlight their energies and complete the journey of their achievements. KAFO is the first national platform to display achievers to ease the process of searching, connecting and collaborating with young achievers it is an initiative by the Amiri Diwan in collaboration with the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs. — KUNA

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Stray pup emerges top dog in the elite India sniffer squad

Learning the ropes: Sri Lankan ad for hangmen draws 102 applicants



BAGHOUZ: Women and children queue at a screening point as hundreds of civilians, who streamed out of the Islamic State group's last Syrian stronghold, arrive in an area run by US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces outside Baghouz in the eastern Syrian Deir Ezzor yesterday. — AFP

Dying 'caliphate' empties itself of last survivors

Hundreds limp out of besieged Syria jihadist enclave

BAGHOUZ: Veiled women carrying babies and wounded men on crutches hobbled out of Baghouz yesterday after US-backed forces pummeled the last jihadist village in eastern Syria. The Syrian Democratic Forces leading the assault expected more fighters to surrender with their families in tow before moving deeper in the Islamic State group's last redoubt. Bandaged and bedraggled, gaggles of suspected jihadists in long brown robes limped away from the hellscape of Baghouz across fields of yellow flowers to reach an SDF screening centre.

The tiny village on the banks of the Euphrates River where diehard IS fighters have made a bloody last stand has regurgitated unexplained numbers of people. Kurdish officers in the SDF and aid groups have voiced their surprise that the flow of evacuees never seemed to dry up after weeks of evacuations. On Tuesday alone, "3,500 people were evacuated from Daesh-held territory," said SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali, using an Arabic acronym for IS.

Around 10 percent of the 57,000 people who have fled IS's last bastion since December were jihadists trying to slip back

into civilian life, SDF officers and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights have said. The operation to smash the last dreg of the "caliphate" Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed in 2014 resumed Friday after a long humanitarian pause. The assumption was that close to no families remained holed up in Baghouz and that those who did were refus-

Suspected jihadists limped away from the hellscape of Baghouz

ing to surrender and choosing to die there.

Nearby, hundreds of men who also chose to quit the redoubt stood wearily in line as troops from the US-led coalition backing the SDF processed them for detention. Bandaged and bedraggled, more than several of them on crutches, the suspected fighters made for

a telling image — the dying days of the jihadists' once-sprawling proto-state. At its peak more than four years ago, IS ruled over millions of people in a patch of territory the size of the United Kingdom. But the jihadists have been rolled back to just a scrap of land tucked into a bend along the Euphrates River near Syria's border with Iraq.

'People inside'

The deluge of fire unleashed by SDF artillery and coalition air strikes at the weekend appears to have broken the determination of some families. Syrians, Iraqis and jihadists who travelled to the "caliphate" from France, Finland and other countries turned themselves in to Kurdish troops. "There's still lots of people inside," said Safia, a 24-year-old Belgian woman who was among those trucked out by the SDF on Tuesday, adding that her French husband was still inside.

Western forces from the US-led coalition which also includes France, one of the main purveyors of foreign fighters to IS—could be seen looking for wanted individuals among the new arrivals. On Tuesday, the wife of French jihadist Jean-Michel Clain confirmed



BAGHOUZ: Men suspected of being Islamic State (IS) group fighters walk together towards a screening point for new arrivals run by US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces. — AFP

her husband had been killed in Baghouz, days after his brother Fabien.

The brothers were featured in a video claiming responsibility for a 2015 shooting rampage in the streets of Paris that remains France's deadliest ever terrorist attack. Clain's widow Dorothee Maquere fled the embattled enclave with her five children and told AFP she did not want to return to France. "I want to be left alone after everything I've been through... some place where I can live, where I won't be bothered, where I can live

my life." More than 50,000 evacuees have been squeezed into the Kurdish-run camp of Al-Hol, where the foreigners await a decision on their fate. Their countries of origin have been reluctant to take them back, wary of the security risk some of them could pose and of a negative reaction from the public. The SDF have warned however that they would not carry that burden much longer and other avenues are being explored. Iraq has already confirmed receiving 14 French nationals from Syria to be tried there. — Agencies

Tradition or trafficking? Children suffer in Senegal schools

VELINGARA: There is no school in the thatched-hut village where Bubacar Cande raised his twin sons, so it was with resignation but hope that he sent them to neighboring Senegal to study the Quran. The 10-year-old boys were meant to live at an Islamic school, or daara, until they finished their education. But a year later his boys were back, having been found on the streets and brought home to Guinea-Bissau by a charity that rescues child victims of human trafficking and forced begging.

In Senegalese cities, thousands of small boys in tattered clothes roam the streets asking for change. Some said they were hit if they failed to raise about \$1 a day for their teachers. They are the students, known as talibe, of Koranic schools that human rights groups say are often a money-making scheme disguised as religious education yet founded on the exploitation and trafficking of children from several West African nations.

But to parents like Cande, who went through the same ordeal as a child, beatings and begging in Senegal are a rite of passage, and having their children sent back home a frustration. "I can't say if the children or the marabout (teacher) is to blame. I can only say I had no luck," he said, sitting under a tree next to a cow herd in his village of Velingara. "I was a little angry because I wanted them to reach a

higher level of learning," added Cande.

There has been a crackdown on the schools in Senegal, and years of advocacy campaigns, but government and charity sources in Guinea-Bissau said a rising number of children may be at risk of being sent across the border although hard data is lacking. Lack of awareness, cultural beliefs and parents' desperation to educate their children all fuel the practice, they said. "The families don't think it's trafficking. It's a way of educating your child," said Benjamin Monteiro Barbosa, regional director for the charity Amigos de Crianca ("Friends of Children"), or AMIC, based in the Gabu region of Guinea-Bissau.

In Velingara, a village of about 400 people in Gabu, parents identified at least 16 boys who had been brought back from Senegal after escaping their daaras, some of them by AMIC. Several of the children, ranging in age from 10 to 15, said they were sent to beg daily and beaten by their teachers. "Here in the village, there are still families who are thinking of sending their children," village chief Califo Baldo told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "If there were a school here, they wouldn't go."

No school

A third of primary school-aged children in Guinea-Bissau are missing out on education — often because there is not a school nearby — said the United Nations children's agency (UNICEF). Velingara used to have a teacher who held lessons in a hut. He left last year because they could not pay him, parents said.

The closest public school is 5 kilometers away but is also shut because teachers' salaries went unpaid — a common issue in a poor country stuck in an entrenched political crisis. Parents said unanimously that if they had a local school, religious or state-run, they would not send their children away. "We want

our sons to be in the military, or work in an office," said Bacari Embalo, a father in the village. Others wanted their sons to become religious leaders or doctors.

Several parents said beating was a normal form of discipline, and begging necessary to pay the students' room and board. Activists say this is part of the traffickers' deception. The United Nations estimates that child begging generates \$8 million a year for Koranic teachers in Dakar, Senegal's capital, while the children remain sick, poorly clothed, and underfed. They gather outside shops holding plastic buckets and beg, often just as happy for a piece of fruit as for a coin.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) said that the children live in conditions "akin to slavery" and that it has documented numerous cases of sexual abuse and child deaths in 2017 and 2018. "Marabouts come here and trick the parents," said Almeda Da Silva Quibumba, a coordinator for AMIC, which started raising awareness on the issue in 2005. While there is no evidence that the trend is slowing, Quibumba said conversations with parents are getting easier. "In the beginning it was like a war. They said we were fighting against their religion," he said. "Now they're starting to understand."

Prevention

Guinea-Bissau has no data on its trafficked children. HRW estimates there are at least 100,000 talibes in Senegal, and in recent years between 20 and 40 percent of children rescued from the streets were from Guinea-Bissau, UNICEF says. The lack of data has hampered the country's response, as has low funding and poor coordination, said Ussumane Embalo, a government official in charge of tackling child trafficking. "It (child trafficking) continues to rise because we're having difficulty with prevention measures. There are not enough resources," he said. — Reuters

Indian minister's comment sparks outrage

NEW DELHI: Indian opposition leaders who question the country's bombing raid on Pakistan last week should be tied under fighter jets and dropped like bombs when they stage a new mission, a government minister said yesterday. The comments inflamed an already bitter showdown between Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with the opposition over its claims that he has used the military strike to boost his standing ahead of a national election. The BJP has given conflicting accounts about the success of the air raid on a militant camp run by a group blamed for a February 14 suicide bombing in Kashmir that left 40 Indian paramilitaries dead.

Twelve days later Indian jets bombed what New Delhi called a "terrorist" training camp inside Pakistan territory taking the neighbors to the verge of a new war. BJP leaders, including party president Amit Shah, claimed up to 250 people were killed in the cross-border raid. But the opposition has demanded the toll be backed up and accused Modi of making political capital out of the attacks. "I think when India does something (like this) again then the people from opposition parties raising these questions can be tied under the jets during the raids so that they can look at the targets," junior foreign minister VK Singh told media.

"They can look at the targets when the bombs are fired and then can also be dropped (there) to count before coming back," Singh added. After the raid, the Indian government said "a very large number" of Jaish-e-Mohammed militants, commanders and trainers had been "eliminated". But no official figure on the damage has ever been given and Pakistan has denied there were any casualties. With a national election to be called imminently, Modi's BJP has still touted the mission at political rallies across the country.

"The government under Modi's leadership carried out the air strike and killed more than 250 terrorists," Shah, one of Modi's closest lieutenants, told one rally this week. SS Ahluwalia, a junior minister, came up with a different claim earlier however, saying the raids were intended to give a lesson and not kill anyone. The differing accounts have increased demands that the government clarify its toll. "PM Modi has blatantly politicized the bravery and martyrdom of India's soldiers as a political pamphlet," said Randeep Singh Surjewala, spokesman for the main opposition Congress party.

Modi "is indulging in shameless credit-seeking for the velvet of armed forces as a last resort for the 2019 elections," Surjewala added on Twitter. A heated exchange between a top Modi cabinet minister, Piyush Goyal, and a television journalist went viral earlier this week. The journalist, citing international media reports, asked Goyal why the government has not given more details to back its claims of the mission's success. Goyal said such questions were part of a "shameful" campaign "to belittle our armed forces". — AFP

International

Israeli planes hit Hamas military targets over incendiary balloons

Al-Aqsa officials to defy Israeli court over prayer

GAZA: Israeli jets struck a Hamas military target in the Gaza Strip in retaliation for balloon-borne explosive devices late Tuesday, the army said, the fourth such strike in recent days. A Palestinian security source confirmed the strikes, with no injuries reported. The army said in a statement late Tuesday that "fighter jets and aircraft struck a number of terror targets in a Hamas military compound in the northern Gaza Strip." "The strike was conducted in response to explosive balloons that were launched from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory."

A Palestinian security source in Gaza said a number of Hamas sites, including an observation post, were hit near Gaza City, causing damage but no injuries. Eyewitnesses also described an explosion at a Hamas site in southern Gaza, though the Israeli army statement did not mention such targets. The Israeli strike was the fourth since Saturday, each in response to either balloons or explosive devices hurled at the border fence.

Islamists Hamas have controlled Gaza since 2007 and have fought three wars with Israel since. The so-called incendiary balloons involve flaming devices floated across the border with the aim of starting fires in the Israeli communities and farmlands on the other side. Clusters of balloons have been flown during regular protests and clashes along the frontier.

They largely stopped after an informal Egyptian-brokered truce agreement between Hamas and Israel in November. Under that deal Israel agreed to ease its

crippling blockade of Gaza in exchange for calm. Hamas has accused Israel of breaching the terms of the agreement. An Egyptian security delegation met with Hamas leader Ismail Haniya in Gaza Tuesday. At least 251 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since March 2018, the majority shot during the weekly border protests and others hit by tank fire or air strikes in response to violence from Gaza. Two Israeli soldiers have been killed over the same period.

Defy Israeli court

In another development, the Muslim foundation which runs the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem, the Waqf, said yesterday it will defy an Israeli court order barring access to part of the flashpoint holy site. There have recently been scuffles between worshippers and police there over the use of a side building called the Golden Gate, closed by Israel since 2003.

Arguing there was no longer any reason for it to remain shut, Palestinian officials reopened the building last month and crowds of worshippers prayed inside despite the Israeli closure. A Jerusalem court this week gave the Waqf until March 10 to explain why the clo-

sure order should be lifted, Israeli watchdog group Ir Amim said in a statement.

"As the Waqf does not formally recognize the Israeli court system, it is unlikely to issue a formal response, in which case the court is expected to approve closure of the building," the NGO said. "It is anticipated that a forced closure by the police will trigger significant numbers of Palestinians rallying or breaking the closure." That, it said, was liable to lead to "a harsh police reaction" at the compound, known as the Haram al-Sharif, or Holy Sanctuary, which includes the Al-Aqsa mosque and Dome of the Rock. Asked to confirm the latest ruling, a justice ministry official told AFP details of the case were "confidential".



Balloons or explosive devices hurled at the Israeli border fence

'Our right'

"The decisions of the courts do not apply to the mosque of Al-Aqsa," Sheikh Abdel Azim Salhab, the leader of the Waqf council, said in a video clip published on Tuesday. "It is our right, religious and contractual, to access the Golden Gate and keep this door open for Muslims to pray," he said. Salhab and his

assistant were briefly detained last week for what police said was violation of an order preventing entry into a prohibited area of the holy site. They were released later the same day but the arrest drew condemnation from Jordan, the custodian of the Haram al-Sharif, in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem.

Waqf spokesman Firas Al-Dibs said that since the latest dispute erupted Israel had arrested nearly 130 Palestinians in Jerusalem, including senior Muslim officials. It has temporarily barred more than 60 people from the compound, he said. Access to Golden Gate was closed by an Israeli court order in 2003 during the second Palestinian intifada over alleged militant activity there, police say. Waqf officials argue that the organization that prompted the ban no longer exists. The compound is the third-holiest site in Islam and a focus of Palestinian aspirations for statehood.

It is also the location of Judaism's most sacred spot, revered as the site of the two biblical-era Jewish temples. Jews are allowed to visit but cannot pray there and it is a frequent scene of conflict between the two sides. Palestinians fear Israel will seek to assert further control over it, while Israel accuses Palestinians of using such claims as a rallying cry to incite violence. It is in the walled Old City in east Jerusalem, occupied by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed in a move never recognized by the international community. — Agencies

'Explosive devices' found in London

LONDON: British counter terrorism officers are investigating three "small improvised explosive devices" believed capable of starting small fires that were found in separate locations in London on Tuesday. The suspicious packages containing padded envelopes were found at an office block next to Heathrow Airport, the post room at Waterloo station, and at offices near London City Airport in the east of the capital, according to Scotland Yard.

"The packages—all A4-sized white postal bags containing yellow Jiffy bags—have been assessed by specialist officers to be small improvised explosive devices," London's Metropolitan Police said in a statement. Irish police later said they were "assisting the Metropolitan police with their enquiries", as Sky News reported that the packages had Irish stamps on them.

The item sent to the Compass Centre, close to Heathrow's north runway, was opened by staff resulting in "part of the package burning", although there were no injuries and flights were not affected, according to police. "These devices, at this early stage of the investigation, appear capable of igniting an initially small fire when opened," it added, noting they were treating the incidents as "a linked series". Officers were called to the Compass Centre at 9:55 am local time (09:55 GMT), and two hours later the alarm was raised at Waterloo Station in central London.

"The package was not opened. Specialist officers attended and made the device safe," police said of the parcel found at the rail hub. It was not evacuated and train services were not impacted. At 12:10 pm, another suspicious package was reported at the offices of City Aviation House, at the Royal Docks in the east of the capital close to London City Airport. The package was also not opened and flights continued to operate as normal. — AFP



LONDON: A handout picture shows an improvised explosive device that was sent to London Waterloo train station. — AFP

Sri Lankan ad for hangmen draws 102 applicants

COLOMBO: A Sri Lankan advert for hangmen has attracted more than 100 applicants, including an American, a prison service spokesman said yesterday, as the country pushes ahead with a plan to reintroduce the death penalty for drug offences.

President Maithripala Sirisena said last year he wanted to resume hangings after a decades-long hiatus. The government began advertising last month. The hardline policy is in part inspired by the Philippines' war on drugs, where thousands have died in encounters with police. Thushara Upuldeniya, a spokesman for the prison service, said 102 people applied for the position of executioner after a newspaper ad called for applicants with "excellent moral character" and "mental strength". The American's application was rejected as foreigners are not eligible for the role. Drug trafficking is a capital offence in Sri Lanka although no one has been executed for any crime in the country since 1976 when all death penalties were commuted to life in prison. Sri Lanka's last hangman quit in 2014 without ever having to execute anyone, citing stress after seeing the gallows for the first time. Another hired last year never turned up for work. — Reuters



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International

Social media breaks 'wall of fear' for Algerian protesters

War veterans back protests demanding end to Bouteflika's rule

CAIRO: Tens of thousands of Algerians have rallied against their president's bid for a fifth term in office, spurred on by social media which one observer says has helped "break the wall of fear". "No to a fifth term", "civil disobedience" and "Algeria rises up" are just some of the popular hashtags urging Algerians to protest against ailing President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's determination to seek re-election. The 82-year-old leader has been in power for 20 years and has rarely been seen in public since suffering a stroke in 2013.

He went on to win polls the following year, but since then something has changed. "The internet has allowed Algerian youth to see what is happening in other countries culturally, economically, politically, as well as seeing younger presidents compared to theirs," said Brahim Oumansour, a Paris-based researcher at the Institute of International and Strategic Relations (IRIS).

"All this serves to amplify the anger, disappointment and frustration of not reaching the achievements of other countries," said Oumansour. When protests began on February 22, young Algerians were not only calling for the president to go but also voicing their bitterness at a lack of opportunities. The virtual space has helped "break the wall of fear", Oumansour added.

Groups mobilizing people online include the Active Youth Collective, a network of activists founded in December which runs a Facebook page. "Social networks play a very important role and the transmission of words can spread faster," said Okba Bellabas, one of its 25 founding members. Lawyers, journalists and students are all part of the group, which has members in Algeria and the diaspora. Although Bellabas believes the Collective "cannot do without" social media, he noted regular in-person meetings also played an impor-

tant part in cementing their presence on the ground.

Journalists slam censorship

While social media platforms are not banned in Algeria, there have been reports of internet disruption in the capital and elsewhere during protests. Well before the demonstrations began, the government in June cut the internet nationwide in a series of pre-planned blackouts to stop students cheating in their high school exams. But Algerians have expressed surprise that despite their rallying cries online against the president, so far there have been no publicized arrests over their use of social media.

Across the continent in Sudan, meanwhile, protests against President Omar al-Bashir's rule have been met with sweeping new powers which criminalize publishing news "that hurts the citizens or the constitutional system". Sudan already has a dire reputation for media freedom-ranked 174th out of 180 countries on Reporters Without Borders' press freedom index-although Algeria also comes in at a poor 136th place. In Algiers, around 100 journalists held a protest on

Thursday against what they deemed censorship of coverage of the demonstrations against Bouteflika. A dozen of them were arrested but later released, according to a police official.

'Best weapons'

In Algeria, as elsewhere, the vital step has been to translate discontent aired online to the streets. "The mobilization did not just stop at Facebook," said Dalia Ghanem, a researcher at the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut. "These are not anonymous internet users. They are citizens who know that the only way to challenge those in power is precisely through organiz-



ALGIERS: Algerian students demonstrate in the capital Algiers against their ailing president's bid for a fifth term. Algerians yesterday dismissed President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's promise to quit early if re-elected for a fifth term in April and eyed fresh protests to push him from office. — AFP

ing," she added. Amateur footage of the protests has been widely circulated on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram.

"Algerians know that their best weapons are non-violence and social networks," said Ghanem. Demonstrators in both Algeria and Sudan have received plenty of support online from disenchanted youth in the Arab world, particularly in Egypt where protests are effectively outlawed. Last week a sole demonstrator was arrested in downtown Cairo after holding a poster with the words "Sisi, Leave",

according to human rights lawyers.

War veterans

Meanwhile, Algerian war veterans said that protesters demanding ailing President Abdelaziz Bouteflika step down after 20 years in power had legitimate concerns and they urged all citizens to demonstrate - another sign of cracks in the ruling elite. The ongoing unrest poses the biggest challenge yet to the Bouteflika and his inner circle which includes members of the military and intelligence services and businessmen. — Agencies



Tens of thousands rallied against the Algerian president

News in brief

Flash floods, snow kill 19

KABUL: Flash floods, heavy rains and snowfall have killed at least 59 people across Afghanistan during the past two weeks and left thousands homeless, with the southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar the worst-hit, an Afghan official said yesterday. Some 5,000 people were displaced in Kandahar alone, the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) said, though a UN relief agency reckoned at least 15,300 people in the province had been affected by the calamitous weather. Hashmat Khan Bahaduri, spokesman for ANDMA, said the damage and casualty estimates could rise as some provinces had still to conduct assessments. — Reuters

Irishman brutally murdered

KUALA LUMPUR: An Irishman has been brutally murdered in Malaysia, with his body found tied up and covered with stab wounds in a high-end condominium, reports said yesterday. Brian Patrick O'Reilly's body was discovered Monday in George Town, on the northern island of Penang, where he had been working as an IT manager for about a month, official news agency Bernama reported, citing police. Two people, a man in his 40s and a woman in her 30s, have been arrested as part of investigations. Police are also hunting a "fair-skinned foreign man". The Star newspaper reported. The 50-year-old's hands had reportedly been tied together with shoelaces and his legs were bound with cloth. — AFP

Gabon seizes 'sacred' wood

LIBREVILLE: Customs officers have seized a major haul of kevazingo, a precious wood whose exploitation is banned in Gabon where it is considered sacred, a report said yesterday. About 1,000 cubic meters of the rare hardwood-or 30 large container-loads-were confiscated along with other wood in a warehouse at the Owendo timber port on the Libreville peninsula last week, campaigning group Conservation Justice reported. The head of the Chinese business that owned the warehouse and two other employees had been arrested and remained in custody, the group said. Timber from kevazingo trees, which take many years to mature, is highly valued in Asia and fetches very high prices. — AFP

Russia cracks down on spies

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin yesterday said the Russian special services had ended the work of hundreds of spies and informers in the country last year. In a speech to the officers of the FSB security service, which he led before becoming president, Putin said foreign intelligence agencies were stepping up activity in Russia. "Thanks to successfully executed special operations, the activity of 129 spies and 465 informers was stopped" in 2018, he said. "Foreign intelligence agencies are striving to increase their activity in the Russian space, looking for access by any means to political, economic, scientific, technological information," he added. The FSB's work "must be efficient, especially regarding the production of Russian weapons systems," Putin said. — AFP

White farmers jailed for murder of black teen in South Africa

MAFIKENG: A South African court yesterday handed jail terms of 23 and 18 years to two white farmers who murdered a black teenager suspected of stealing sunflowers in a remote farming community. Pieter Doorewaard, 28, and Philip Schutte, 35, were found to have killed 15-year-old Mathomola Mosweu, also spelt Moshoeu, on April 20 2017, after claiming they caught him taking a plant from a farm in the area.

Doorewaard was jailed for at least 18 years and Schutte was jailed for at least 23. The boy died after being thrown out of a moving vehicle driven by the pair and suffering a broken neck, in a case that sparked rioting and looting of white-owned businesses in the town of Coligny. The men had claimed that the teen jumped off the truck as they drove him to the police but it was Schutte who was found to have thrown the boy to his death.

Judge Ronald Hendricks previously also found the pair guilty of kidnapping and intimidation. "Murder is undoubtedly

the most serious offence that can be committed," said Hendricks. "You picked up the deceased and threw him from the van onto the ground. Your actions that day... were indeed disgraceful." Ahead of the sentencing, Schutte's wife fixed his collar and kissed him in the dock. The judge paused as his comments were translated into Afrikaans, the language often spoken by white farmers in South Africa. "It cannot be ignored that the community revolted as a result of this incident," added the judge.

'Inaction of the police'

"This was largely because of the inaction of the police. The community of Coligny was polarized as a result of this incident." Other family members watched on as the judge announced his ruling-as did members of the radical Economic Freedom Fighters Party which has vigorously opposed racism against the country's black majority. Mosweu's father said after the hearing he had hoped for 30 to 40 year sentences and that he would be negatively affected if the sentences were appealed. "I want to say to white ladies, don't allow your husband, brother, uncle or son to indoctrinate their kids with this racism," said a community leader speaking inside the court.

"It's not all whites in Coligny who are racist-it's a pocket." "(Society) has to operate like a piano-you play black and white keys together you get a melody," he



MAFIKENG: Pieter Doorewaard, 28 (left) and Philip Schutte, 35, wait for their sentencing procedure yesterday at the Mahikeng High Court in Mahikeng, South Africa. — AFP

added. Racially-charged incidents between white farm owners and managers and poor black farmhands are common in South Africa. In 2016 two white farmers in eastern Mpumalanga province forced into a coffin a black man they accused of trespassing. The case sparked outrage after a video of the incident emerged on social media and the two were handed jail terms of 19 and 16 years.

Judge Hendricks said in mitigation of Doorewaard and Schutte's sentences that

"there was no direct intention to kill the deceased". "(You are) first time offenders," he added giving reasons for not imposing life sentences. "However the aggravating circumstances of this case far outweigh mitigating (factors)." The government said in a statement that "South Africans should not allow actions like that of the two men to divide our country and communities". "Government calls on all parties to work together to foster reconciliation," it said. — AFP

Women can defeat 'angry white men'

LONDON: To fight a rising wave of populism that threatens to swamp women's rights, women of diverse backgrounds need to get into politics, the outgoing head of Britain's first feminist political party said. Sophie Walker, who resigned from the Women's Equality Party in January, said the wave of right-wing populism around the world was "deeply sinister" and threatened basic women's rights. "I've been to many places around the world and heard testimonies from political feminist leaders about the massive impact on women's rights that this populist movement is having. The threat is very real," the former Reuters journalist said.

Walker's view is shared by a global group of women's leaders who released a letter this week that said rising right-wing populism was eroding hard-won women's rights around the world, with abortion rights as a primary target. "Politics has failed when we run out of ideas and a bunch of angry white men are able to repackage traditional ideas of patriarchy as the solution for our future," said Walker in a phone interview with the Thomson Reuters Foundation late Monday.

Diversity

To counteract that, Walker said, the answer is simple: mobilize more women into politics, especially those from diverse and minority backgrounds. And that is exactly what Walker said she plans to do after leaving the WEP, nearly four years after taking the helm of the newly-formed party in 2015.

"We have to make more women from more diverse backgrounds to become leaders and activists. For women in minority backgrounds, it is essential that they see space for themselves in the feminist movement," she said ahead of International Women's Day on Friday. While the 2017 UK elections led to a record 208 female members of parliament (MPs) - about a third of all MPs - just 4 percent were from black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds, according to women's rights group Fawcett Society.

Britain sits at number 39 out of 193 countries in a league table by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) that tallies the number of women in parliament, far behind Rwanda, Cuba and Bolivia, which have female majorities. As her party prepares to appoint an interim leader, Walker said she plans to work with grassroots women activists to guide them into political careers so they too can lead from the front. "Those are the women who are going to be the next generation's politicians, and I want to find them and I want to help them in any possible way I can," she said.



London: A video grab from footage broadcast by the UK Parliament's Parliamentary Recording Unit (PRU) shows Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May as she speaks during the weekly Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) in the House of Commons yesterday. — AFP

Vitriol

It is not secret that being a woman in politics is difficult, Walker said, and the amount of abuse that female politicians receive is partly to blame. Nearly 45 percent of all women parliamentarians had received threats of death, rape, beatings or abduction during their term, according to a 2016 study by the IPU. Many politicians in Britain have become more vocal about the abuse they face after opposition Labor politician Jo Cox, a 41-year-old mother of two children, was shot and stabbed to

death a week before Britain's 2016 vote to leave the European Union.

"I think it is still extremely hard for women in politics. Women are still more subjected to abuse than their male counterparts. The vitriol takes my breath away," Walker said. But that is precisely why more women need to be in politics, she added. "There's a hugely long way to go, but I would say that to any woman who is considering moving into politics: there is a sisterhood waiting to help you," Walker said. — Reuters

International

Indian opposition attacks Modi over alleged political use of armed forces

Modi seen benefiting from crisis with arch enemy Pakistan

NEW DELHI: Indian opposition parties are launching a united attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for what they see as his politicization of the armed forces as he tries to ride a patriotic wave into a second term in office at a general election. It is a high-risk bet that could backfire given the jingoistic fervor that has overtaken India since a suicide bomber from the Pakistan-based Islamist militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) killed 40 paramilitary police in Indian-controlled Kashmir on Feb 14.

Pollsters say opposition parties may be making a mistake by questioning Modi on national security instead of focusing on more basic issues, such as a shortage of jobs and farmers' distress. Voters concerned about those issues ousted Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in three state elections late last year.

But amid mounting doubts about the success of an Indian air strike on an alleged JeM camp in Pakistan's northeast on Feb 26, the opposition sees Modi as potentially vulnerable over both the government's claims and its behavior. "The opposition is coordinating this and talking to each other every day," said Derek O'Brien, a lawmaker from the West Bengal-based All India Trinamool Congress, the third-biggest opposition party in the lower house of parliament.

"The strategy is to first keep exposing them and bringing out the fact that they are trying to appropriate the armed forces. And two, we show that this is being done purely for election purposes."

O'Brien was referring to Modi speaking at a rally with the pictures of the paramilitary police killed in the bombing in the background, as well as a BJP leader in Delhi attending a public event in army fatigues. The BJP denies the accusations that it's misusing the armed forces for political benefit.

Diverting attention?

The main opposition Congress party said that most opposition parties - there are more than 20 of them, some caste-based - were on one page in launching a counter-attack on the BJP line that India needs a leader like Modi to take on Pakistan. "What we are convinced about is that the government is diverting attention from its failures

because it saw defeats in the three state elections, and the narrative is against the government," Congress spokesman Sanjay Jha said.

Pollsters say that they expect Modi and the BJP to get a boost from India's aggressive response to the suicide bomb attack. He is seen as decisive and resolute by voters, they say. The only problem may come if the government line - that it killed a large number of Islamist militants in the attack - turns out not to be true.

Satellite images reviewed by Reuters indicate that the madrasa and related facilities that were targeted by the Indian air force were not destroyed, and the government has declined to provide evidence to back up its claims. "We will expose the BJP's failures, the number of security forces killed, the rise in militancy, and, most important, the elephant in the room that people are not talking about, is Modi's monumental failure in terms of put-

ting Kashmir in a serious crisis," Congress' Jha said.

Modi's policies in Kashmir, claimed by both India and Pakistan but ruled in part, have been harder-line than his Congress predecessors in government, with greater use of the security forces and fewer attempts to engage with those in the Muslim community who believe in some kind of separatist state. Since a crackdown was launched on militants in the region after the bomb attack, 15 militants have been killed in six separate gun battles. Twelve Indian security personnel and two civilians have also died during the operations.

In recent days, BJP leaders, and Modi himself, have slammed the opposition for demanding evidence about the success or otherwise of last week's strike. On social media and in political rallies, the BJP has accused Congress and its partners of helping Pakistan by questioning the success of the military strike. Political strategists and pollsters are convinced that Modi can weather any attacks from the opposition on security issues. "I'm confident that the opposition will not be able to turn the narrative in its favour on this issue," said Sanjay Kumar, director at think-tank Centre for the Study of Developing Societies that also conducts opinion polls. —Reuters



Attack on Modi may backfire, Pollsters say

Pakistan navy stops an India submarine entering its waters

KARACHI: Pakistan has stopped an Indian submarine from entering its waters, the navy said Tuesday, as tensions continue to run high between the nuclear-armed foes. The development came days after a rare aerial dogfight between India and Pakistan over the disputed territory of Kashmir ignited fears of an all-out conflict, with world powers rushing to urge restraint. "The Pakistan navy stopped an Indian submarine from entering our territorial waters," a naval spokesman said.

He added "the Indian submarine was not targeted, in line with the government's policy of maintaining peace". It was the first such incident since 2016, when Pakistan said it had "pushed" an Indian submarine away from its waters. The navy later said the submarine was detected on Monday within Pakistan's maritime zone, or 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone, but did not give further details on the location.

It also released what it said was video of the submarine, with the grainy black and white footage showing only what appeared to be a periscope above water. The timestamp at the beginning of the video clip read 8:35 pm on Monday. India said its navy remained "deployed as necessary". "Over the past several days we have witnessed Pakistan indulging in false propaganda," an Indian Navy spokesman tweeted Tuesday.

An Indian government source also dismissed the video, telling AFP: "Why would a submarine in Pakistani waters have its periscope up?" Tensions between the arch-rivals have escalated significantly over recent days, after a suicide bombing in Indian-administered Kashmir killed 40 Indian paramilitaries. A militant group based in Pakistan claimed responsibility for the February 14 blast, and 12 days later Indian jets bombed what New Delhi called a terrorist training camp deep inside Pakistan.

Pakistan has denied any damage or casualties, and independent reporting has shown the strikes hit a heavily forested area with little infrastructure nearby. Residents have said just one person was injured. The next day Pakistani aircraft entered Indian airspace and the two nations' jets engaged in aerial dogfights, with at least one Indian aircraft shot down and its pilot captured by Pakistan. The pilot was handed back to India last Friday in what Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan called a "peace gesture". —AFP

Stray pup emerges top dog in the elite Indian sniffer squad

KOLKATA: Some 18 months after being rescued from stone-throwing children, an Indian street mutt has emerged top dog in an elite bomb- and drug-sniffing squad. "Asha"-meaning "hope" in Hindi-was rescued by West Bengal police when they found her being mistreated outside their training facility. "The dog was bleeding when she was taken inside the campus," senior West Bengal Police Training Academy official Dipankar Bhattacharya told AFP.

Officers originally intended keeping the mixed-breed stray as a pet, but Asha turned out to have a nose every bit as good as the German Shepherds and Labradors usually trained to sniff out explosives and drugs. Sajal Mondal, the head of the academy, said she passed the grueling training with flying colors and that drugs and explosives like TNT were no match for Asha's keen sense of smell. "She performed better than her pedigree peers, jumping nearly six feet (two metres) high and crossing hurdles," he said. "She is also our fastest runner." Asha is the first mixed-breed dog to join the 30-strong unit. —AFP



KOLKATA: In this picture, 'Asha', a rescued dog turned police dog, performs a training exercise at the Barrackpore around 35 kms north of Kolkata. —AFP

Madrassa buildings still standing at the scene of 'Indian bombing'

NEW DELHI: High-resolution satellite images reviewed by Reuters show that a religious school run by Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) in northeastern Pakistan appears to be still standing days after India claimed its warplanes had hit the Islamist group's training camp on the site and killed a large number of militants. The images produced by Planet Labs Inc, a San Francisco-based private satellite operator, show at least six buildings on the madrasa site on March 4, six days after the airstrike.

Until now, no high-resolution satellite images were publicly available. But the images from Planet Labs, which show details as small as 72 cm, offer a clearer look at the

structures the Indian government said it attacked. The image is virtually unchanged from an April 2018 satellite photo of the facility. There are no discernible holes in the roofs of buildings, no signs of scorching, blown-out walls, displaced trees around the madrasa or other signs of an aerial attack. The images cast further doubt on statements made over the last eight days by the Indian government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that the raids, early on Feb 26, had hit all the intended targets at the madrasa site near Jaba village and the town of Balakot in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. India's foreign and defense ministries did not reply to emailed questions sent in the past few days seeking comment on what is shown in the satellite images and whether they undermine its official statements on the airstrikes.

Jeffrey Lewis, director of the East Asia Nonproliferation Project at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, who has 15 years' experience in analyzing satellite images of weapons sites and systems, confirmed that the high-resolution satellite picture showed the structures in question.

"The high-resolution images don't show any evidence of bomb damage," he said. Lewis viewed three other high-resolution Planet Labs pictures of the site taken within hours of the image provided to Reuters.

The Indian government has not publicly disclosed what weapons were used in the strike. Government sources told Reuters last week that 12 Mirage 2000 jets carrying 1,000 kg (2,200 lbs) bombs carried out the attack. On Tuesday, a defense official said the aircraft used the 2,000-lb Israeli-made SPICE 2000 glide bomb in the strike. A warhead of that size is meant to destroy hardened targets such as concrete shelters.

Lewis and Dave Schmerler, a senior research associate at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation studies who also analyses satellite images, said weapons that large would have caused obvious damage to the structures visible in the picture. "If the strike had been successful, given the information we have about what kind of munitions were used, I would expect to see signs that the buildings had been damaged," Lewis added. "I just don't see that here." —Reuters



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Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
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Chinese, local drones reflect changing Mideast

Ever since 9/11, drones have been amongst the most visible, and often controversial, signs of American power in the Middle East and beyond. But as regional powers look to chart their own course, a new generation of cheaper unmanned aerial vehicles - Chinese or locally built, with far fewer restrictions on their use - are taking to the skies. The last five years have seen a dramatic rise in their use. Forbidden to purchase weapons-carrying US drones due to export restrictions, several countries - particularly Iraq, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia - have bought armed Chinese models and use them extensively in action.

Turkey - increasingly isolated from other Middle East powers and with its own spat with Washington and Beijing - has invested heavily in building its own, its latest model carrying out its first combat strike in January. So has Iran, lifting technical secrets from captured US and Israeli drones and providing UAVs to non-state groups, including Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syria, and the Houthis in Yemen.

The latter have used them to target government bases, and claimed July and August 2018 attacks on major UAE airports in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Independent observers doubt the latter drone attacks really happened, an indication of just how opaque this unmanned warfare can become. In the skies over Yemen, Saudi and UAE drones may already be more plentiful than their US counterparts, as Washington pulls back its involvement in the conflict following the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. According to the New America think-tank, February was the first month in which not a single US drone strike was reported in Yemen. The United States stopped refuelling Saudi and UAE warplanes targeting Yemen last year, and now seems to be scaling down its strikes there against Al-Qaeda and associated groups as well. Commercial satellite footage published last year by Bard College's Center for the Study of the Drone showed armed Chinese-built CH-4B and Wing Loong II drones operating from Jizan Air Base in southern Saudi Arabia.

The unmanned aircraft - believed to be both Saudi and Emirati - appeared to be operating in tandem with unarmed US-built Predators also acquired by both nations. Because the United States deems Chinese technology a security risk, the Chinese systems cannot interface with the US-built platforms that many Middle Eastern states - including Iraq, UAE and Saudi - remain heavily reliant on. That makes it much harder to integrate the video footage and intelligence they gather into US and Western-linked command chains, such as those used to coordinate the fight against Islamic State.

Less scrutiny

For regional governments, this brings what may be a tacit advantage - the activities of Chinese-made drones are much less likely to be scrutinized closely by Western advisers. Beijing puts much fewer constraints on their use - and may well be keen to see how they fare in combat. While the People's Liberation Army has used drones extensively for reconnaissance, the only time Chinese-built drones have fired munitions in anger appears to be in the Middle East. Some have done so heavily.

A December report by the London-based Royal United Services Institute said Iraq's estimated five Chinese-built CH-4Bs had chalked up some 260 strikes between them up to mid-2018, primarily against Islamic State. The UAE's Chinese-built drones are believed to have been used in politically controversial strikes in Libya, possibly flying from Egyptian bases. They are also believed responsible for an April strike on the Houthi-held city of Hodeida that killed top political figure Saleh Al-Samad and others. Clearly, Beijing sees drone exports as an increasingly significant part of its military-diplomatic toolkit, particularly when it comes to countries frustrated by US limits on how they can use American weapons. In October, China's "Global Times" reported the sale of Wing Loong II drones to Pakistan. This January, Chinese media reported the first test flights of a more advanced variant, the Wing Loong II, also slated for export.

The Chinese-Saudi relationship appears to be deepening particularly quickly. Last month, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman visited China as part of a wider tour of Asia, meeting Premier Xi Jinping and signing a \$10 billion investment deal. He also pointedly supported China in its crackdown on ethnic Muslim Uighurs in its northwest, where a UN panel said last year up to one million people have been interned in "reeducation" camps.

Mysterious 'swarm'

Not all regional powers appear open to buying Chinese, however. Turkey - increasingly at loggerheads with the United States, Saudi Arabia and lately China over the Uighur internments - has ploughed considerable resources into building its own armed drones. In January, its ANKA-S UAV carried out its first combat sortie, while earlier types have become a mainstay of Turkish military strikes against Kurdish militia and other targets. While Beijing only sells large military drones to fellow governments, much smaller Chinese commercial drones are also common on many battlefields, often adapted to carry grenades or other explosives. Islamic State used them extensively during the battle of Mosul and elsewhere.

The origin of other UAVs is more opaque still - particularly a swarm of small drones that Russia says attacked one of its bases in Syria in Jan 2018. While the drones looked homemade and primitive, Russia says they contained unusually advanced technology. It accused the United States of coordinating the attack, which Washington denied. Even when the United States was the only nation operating drones in the Middle East, getting to the bottom of their activities was hard enough. As UAVs get smaller, smarter, and otherwise more powerful, it will only get more difficult. —Reuters



Algerian anti-riot police stand guard during a demonstration in the northern coastal city of Oran on Tuesday against President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for a fifth term. —FP

Cracks in elite as Bouteflika buys time

The biggest demonstrations in Algeria since the 2011 Arab Spring uprising have died down since the weekend, but cracks are appearing within a ruling elite long regarded as invincible. Ailing President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's offer on Sunday to limit his term after April's election took some of the steam out of the protests which began late last month, although students and other young people are still on the streets. Some officials from his ruling FLN party joined tens of thousands of people who turned out on Friday to call on Bouteflika, in power for 20 years, to step down along with his inner circle.

Several public figures have announced their resignations in a country where personnel changes normally take place behind closed doors. "Our duty in this country is to listen, to listen and to imbibe great wisdom to accompany this important social movement for the future of our country," Sidi Ahmed Ferroukhi, a former minister, wrote on his Facebook account as he announced his resignation from the FLN and parliament.

The FCE, a top business association whose leaders have been long-time supporters of Bouteflika, has also seen resignations in sympathy with the protesters, including of its vice president Laid Benamor. He said the association had moved away from its mission of helping to lead the country to a brighter future. "Meeting this challenge requires the support of the people too," he said. "To run counter to the will of our fellow citizens is ineptitude. A nonsense. It's the negation of our values and our history."

An anonymous call for a general strike has gone largely unheeded but the leadership faces another test - an online call for a "march of 20 million" - this coming Friday. The so far peaceful protests are unlikely to quickly unseat the embattled president, one of the veterans of the 1954-1962 independence war against France who still dominates Algeria, a major oil producer. But steady departures from his inner

circle as protests rage could make his position untenable, raising concerns among army generals who have dark memories of the civil war which raged in the 1990s after Islamists took up arms when the military cancelled elections they were poised to win.

'Not the military's business'

"It (the army) will not interfere for now because it is up to the civilian ruling elite to clean the mess. This is not the military's business," said a retired general, speaking on condition of anonymity due to sensitivities. "But it will not accept a remake of the 1990s scenario." Algeria's army will guarantee security and not allow a return to an era of bloodshed, its chief of staff said on Tuesday. Gaed Salah referred to the war, saying there were some parties he did not name which wanted Algeria to return to the "years of pain".

Bouteflika and his closest allies fired dozens of generals last year to remove any possible opponents from the military and previously took similar measures within the security services. Protesters have praised the military, which has stayed in barracks throughout the unrest. A former minister expressed doubt that Algeria's entire political establishment would be dismantled, even if Bouteflika, is pushed out of office. "Bouteflika's men will leave, no doubt, but the political system based on consensus among the ruling elite will stay no doubt," he said. "I can't see an alternative to the system which will be updated as usual to adapt to the changes and demands of demonstrators."

For years, rumors have swirled about potential successors for Bouteflika, but no one credible has emerged who has the backing of the army and elite and is not in their 70s or 80s. The 82-year leader, in office since 1999, said on Sunday he would run in the April 18 poll but call early elections to find a successor after holding a national conference to discuss

reforms and a new constitution.

That message was sent by letter, highlighting the disconnect between the president and young Algerians, who express their frustrations on social media. Bouteflika has not spoken in public since suffering a stroke in 2013. He remains at a hospital in Geneva for medical checks. Political sources say he is believed to be accompanied by family members including his younger brother Said, a former teacher and unionist who is his advisor. Many Algerians believe he is actually running the country.

"I am sure that the president is no longer ruling. So we cannot accept this situation," said one protester. Bouteflika managed to stay in power during the 2011 protests that toppled other Arab leaders because Algeria had plenty of foreign reserves to boost state spending and appease citizens. Older Algerians still haunted by the civil war have tolerated crackdowns on dissent in exchange for stability.

But young protesters have no real connection to the war of independence that gives Algeria's elderly leaders their credentials and, desperate for jobs, have lost patience. European countries which value the north African country as a gas supplier and security partner in a volatile region have largely stayed silent. An exception is the former colonial power, France, which has called for the vote to be held in best possible conditions. France has major business interests and is home to a large Algerian community. "Abdelaziz Bouteflika: Too little, too late," French newspaper Le Monde commented in an editorial. A joke circulating in Algiers this week summed up the frustrations with the absent leader after one of his aides presented his candidacy for the election in his place and a report said he had sacked his campaign manager. "So we have one Bouteflika in hospital in Geneva," it went, "a second Bouteflika who sacked his campaign manager and a third who submits his candidacy." —Reuters

Colombia wants to break its coffee free from NYSE

Colombia's coffee may be known as the best in the world, but that doesn't mean the South American country can ask top dollar for it. Coffee prices are regulated by the New York Stock Exchange, which growers blame for the crash that has devastated their industry. "We want to offer our coffee at a fair price, which covers the production costs and a reasonable profit," Jose Sierra, manager of the National Coffee Growers Federation (FNC), told AFP.

The problem is that being tied to a stock exchange not only restricts the ability to set your own prices, but also leaves you at the mercy of traders. "Stock market speculators who buy coffee securities... can dump them the moment they like, which then sends the price tumbling to the floor," said Sierra. "That's why we want to stop using the New York price as a reference."

Colombia is the third largest coffee producer in the world, after Brazil and Vietnam, and number one amongst those known for their high quality soft beans. The international reference price for coffee has dropped from a high of \$1.5 per pound in 2016 to less than a dollar in February. And while Colombian coffee has a 20-cent premium due to its high quality, that's not enough.

'Dramatic situation'

"I've never seen such a dramatic situation as this," said Sierra, who has been FNC's manager for 25 years. "They're paying us 640,000 pesos for a 125kg shipment of coffee and the production costs are 790,000 pesos," said Sierra. That's a loss of \$53.60 for every transaction. The price crash is also a result of surplus. According to the International Coffee Organization (OIC), production-measured in 60-kilogram bags - in 2018/19 should hit 167 million bags compared to the expected worldwide consumption of 165 million.

At \$1.20 per pound the current price for Colombian coffee is less than the \$1.40 it fetched in 1983, said Fernando Morales-De La Cruz, from the Cafe for Change organization campaigning for a greater distribution of coffee profits going to those working in its production. He says that a pound of coffee produces 55 cups, but while "the consumer pays \$1-\$3, depending on the



In this file photo taken on July 27, 2017, a coffee picker collects coffee in the mountains near Ciudad Bolivar, Antioquia department, Colombia. —AFP

country, for a cup of coffee, the producer is sacrificing the value of his land."

The FNC says the coffee market generates around \$200 billion a year, but producers see only 10 percent of that. In order to break away from the stock exchange, Colombia needs to find allies amongst other soft coffee producers in Central America and Africa whose quality would allow them to negotiate their own prices, the FNC says. Colombian coffee has been priced on the New York Stock Exchange for decades, and such a radical change must first find approval amongst the country's coffee growers. If such a consensus is found, it would then need to be discussed at the OIC meeting at the end of March in Kenya and then a meeting of producers in Brazil in July.

Top export

In Colombia, 540,000 families work in the coffee sector. It's the country's top export, ahead of oil and mining. The government has announced some drastic measures to help, including the revision of debts, potential refinancing, support to purchase fertilizers and the renovation of coffee plantations, while also reactivating a subsidies fund. But the coffee growers insist it's not enough. "Coffee growers should be paid more than three times the current price," said Morales-De La Cruz.

He says coffee producers need to organize themselves into an equivalent of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which sets its own prices and coordinates production. Only then could Colombia reap the rewards of its prime export. "Colombia's soft coffee is the best of its type in the world," said Sierra. "Those who want to drink a cup of soft coffee should recognize its value" and pay a price that provides producers with "a worthy profit". —AFP

Origin and species: Fighting logging with science

A timeworn laboratory in Britain's Royal Botanic Gardens may not seem like the obvious epicenter of efforts to halt international illegal logging. Beakers bubble away on a hotplate, while suspect guitars that have been sent by customs officials for testing sit on top of shelves lined with tattered old journals and reference books in a multitude of languages. But scientists at the Wood Anatomy Laboratory, part of the research center at the gardens in Kew, southwest London, are working on a new global project to help precisely identify the origin and species of timber.

Illegal logging is estimated to account for 15 to 30 percent of all timber traded worldwide, according to Interpol, with an estimated annual value of \$51 billion to \$152 billion in 2017. Much of the import and export business relies on paper trails for verification. However experts hope that their new project can, in future, provide enforcement agencies with some hard science that can quickly identify through checks whether a wood species is as claimed, and exactly where it was grown. "I'm hoping it will really help to reduce illegal logging," said Peter Gasson, the Kew institution's research leader in wood and timber.

'Comprehensive library'

Chunks of wood from Laos are stacked in a pile, alongside other slices of timber with yellow sticky notes identifying them. The laboratory's samples originate from far and wide and some date back well over a century. Lying around besides the Leica and Nikon microscopes is a piece of African blackwood collected during British explorer David Livingstone's Zambezi expedition, dated 1860. There is method however in the apparent miscellany at one of the world's largest wood sample collections.

Six chests of drawers hold 100,000 microscope slides of fragments, sorted in Latin by family, genus and then species. Each specimen contains three different slices through the wood: transverse, tangential and radial. "We're trying to build up and future-proof the reference collection of wood samples of all the commercial timbers used in the world," said Gasson. "We want a big, comprehensive library - and that's going to take a long time," added the expert, who started his life's work in the Kew lab as a student in 1977.



Peter Gasson, research leader in wood and timber, poses with wood used for DNA sampling at Kew Gardens laboratory in west London on Feb 19, 2019. —AFP

Accurate to 10 km

While the Kew experts have the know-how to identify the species, they need help pinpointing where the tree originates, an expertise being provided by a separate partner team in northern England. By combining the wood analysis at Kew with isotope testing of different timbers in Yorkshire, the project should provide law enforcement agencies with a key tool to help rapidly establish whether the timber has come from legal sources.

Kew will be able to determine the species of wood and the so-called stable isotope testing - looking at the chemical composition within the wood and patterns reflecting local rainfall and prevailing winds - can identify where the tree was grown. The project is also in partnership with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), a not-for-profit body certifying sustainably-managed forests around the world which account for about 10 percent of the planet's productive forests.

The 200 million hectares of FSC-certified forests hold around 2,000 species and the Germany-based organization will be collecting geo-referenced samples to start amassing the database for use in fighting illegal logging. Michael Marus, FSC chief information officer and information technology director, said: "The science is there: what is needed is reference samples from forests which contain location data. "Complex compounds create a type of isotope fingerprint that can be measured and obtained," he told AFP. "The science can get us down to even 10 kilometres to the source of something."

These scientific tools could help save forests that are crucial for environmental, economic and social sustainability, and combating climate change and biodiversity loss. Marus noted that if law enforcement agencies can rule out wood from certified legal origins, resources could be freed up to target illegal imports and exports. "Illegal logging is one of the most massive global forest-related problems," he said. —AFP

Business

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TOKYO: Former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn (center-light blue cap) is escorted as he walks out of the Tokyo Detention House following his release on bail in Tokyo yesterday.—AFP

In cap and mask, Ghosn leaves Japan jail

Former Nissan chief's release comes after paying \$9 million bail

TOKYO: Ousted Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn walked out of a Tokyo prison on a \$9 million bail yesterday, slipping past reporters in a face mask and moving closer to mounting a defense against financial misconduct charges that he has called "meritless".

Ghosn, among the world's most prominent auto executives whose dramatic rescue of Nissan two decades ago made him a celebrity in the industry and in Japan, was barely recognisable as he left Tokyo Detention House where he had been detained for more than 100 days in a small cell with no heating.

Surrounded by security guards and dressed in a workman's uniform and a blue cap, Ghosn's face was obscured by thick glasses and the surgical-type mask, a far cry from his usual tailored suits. He managed to avoid many of the reporters camped at the site before being whisked away in a small Suzuki van. Ghosn paid the 1 billion yen (\$9 million) bail, among the highest ever in Japan, after the Tokyo District Court rejected a

last-ditch appeal by prosecutors to keep him in jail.

Ghosn, also the former chairman of Renault and Mitsubishi Motors, has agreed to strict bail conditions and given assurances he will remain in Tokyo, surrender his passport to his lawyer and submit to extensive surveillance. He has agreed to set up cameras at the entrances and exits to his residence, and is prohibited from using the internet or sending and receiving text messages. Ghosn is also banned from communicating with parties involved in his case, and permitted computer access only at his lawyer's office.

He faces charges of aggravated breach of trust and under-reporting his salary by about \$82 million at Nissan for nearly a decade. If convicted on all charges, he faces a maximum jail sentence of 15 years, prosecutors have said. "I am innocent and totally committed to vigorously defending myself in a fair trial against these meritless and unsubstantiated accusations," he said in a statement on Tuesday.

The finance minister of France welcomed Ghosn's release, saying the executive would now be able to defend himself "with greater ease". Ghosn holds a French citizenship.

Building defence

The release will allow Ghosn - the architect of Nissan's automaking partnership with Renault and Mitsubishi - to meet his new legal team more frequently and build a defence ahead of trial, which could be several months away.

Last month, Ghosn hired lawyer Junichiro Hironaka, nicknamed "the Razor" for his success at winning acquittals in several high-profile cases, to replace Motonari Otsuru who once ran the prosecutor's office investigating him. Hironaka's appointment suggests a shift to a more aggressive defence strategy. He has already said that the charges against Ghosn should have been dealt as an internal company matter and that

Japan was out of step with international norms by keeping his client in jail.

The case has cast a harsh light on Japan's criminal justice system, which allows suspects to be detained for long periods and prohibits defense lawyers from being present during interrogations that can last eight hours a day.

While the bail is a significant step, Ghosn still faces a criminal justice system with a conviction rate of 99.9 percent. Credited with reviving Nissan in the early 2000s, Ghosn was one of the auto industry's most powerful figures as head of the Nissan-Renault-Mitsubishi alliance, whose combined sales rank it as one of the world's biggest automakers. At the time of his arrest, he had been seeking a full merger of the companies, an idea opposed by many Nissan executives. However, his arrest has since muddied the outlook for the alliance, which is based on a web of cross-shareholding and operational integration. — Reuters

US zooms past Europe in electric car sales

PARIS: The United States overtook Europe to become the world's second largest market for electric cars last year, according to a report yesterday that accused EU carmakers of holding back sales ahead of new emissions rules. China remained in the top spot in 2018 with more than a million electric vehicles (EV) sold, followed by the US with 361,000 and Europe with 302,000, according to an analysis by clean energy campaign group Transport and Environment.

The Brussels-based group said Europe's results were depressed because European car companies were delaying sales ahead of new strict EU emissions limits kicking over the next couple of years. It pointed to the delayed launches of seven all-electric models in Europe as well as the fact that fewer new battery electric and fuel cell models were introduced last year than in 2017.

"EU carmakers have seen electric cars as a necessary evil to comply with regulation and evidence shows they've been suppressing supply and sales in 2018, in an attempt to protect their diesel business," said Transport and Environment analyst Lucien Mathieu. "Meanwhile China is racing ahead and even (US President Donald) Trump's America has now overtaken



US automaker Tesla is a key reason why the US has overtaken Europe as the world's second largest market for electric cars.

Europe thanks to the Tesla-fuelled EV sales boom."

The new EU emissions limits, as well as Volkswagen's pollution-cheating "dieselgate" scandal, has caused demand for diesel-powered vehicles to plummet in Europe. Automakers will risk being hit with heavy fines if they do not meet the more severe EU limits in 2020 and 2021.

Transport and Environment said the US surpassed Europe due to a 120-percent surge in sales in the last three months of 2018, while Europe had a 33 percent rise over the same period.

But Mathieu said Europe's electric car market was still showing positive signs for long-term growth.

"The car industry is gearing up to comply with the 2020-21 CO2 standard and will soon start boosting the sales of plug-in cars," he said. — AFP

OECD cuts global growth forecast over trade, Brexit crises

PARIS: Trade tensions and political uncertainty including Brexit are weighing on the world's economy, the OECD warned yesterday as it again cut its 2019 forecast for global economic growth. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development lowered its forecast to 3.3 percent for this year, down from the 3.5 percent it predicted in November, which was itself a downgrade from a previous 3.7 percent. "High policy uncertainty, ongoing trade tensions, and a further erosion of business and consumer confidence are all contributing to the slowdown," the OECD said in an interim version of its Economic Outlook.

The OECD, which groups the world's top developed economies, revised growth estimates lower in almost all of the countries in the G20 group of industrialized and emerging nations.

The 19-nation eurozone was particularly hard hit, with predicted growth dropping from 1.8 percent to

0.8 percent. The growth forecast for European powerhouse Germany sank to 0.7 percent from 1.4, while Italy's fell from 0.9 percent growth into a recession at -0.2 percent.

The OECD said the sharp downturn in the two countries reflected "their relatively high exposures to the global trade slowdown compared with that of France", which slipped from 1.5 percent to 1.3.

"Substantial policy uncertainty remains in Europe, including over Brexit. A disorderly exit would raise the costs for European economies substantially," the OECD said.

Britain's growth forecast was chopped from 1.4 to 0.8 percent, which would mark the first time it had fallen below one percent since 2009 following the global economic crisis. However the OECD emphasized that even this projection was based on the assumption of a smooth Brexit. If Britain crashes out of the European Union without a deal on future economic relations, the OECD said its outlook would be "significantly weaker".

With just 23 days remaining before the scheduled Brexit date March 29, the latest round of talks between Britain and the EU aimed at getting their deal through the British parliament ended on Tuesday. Yesterday, chief EU negotiator Michel Barnier said "no solution" had been found to break the deadlock. The OECD warned that a disorderly no-deal Brexit would likely pitch Britain into a recession and the knock-on effects could spill over into Europe and beyond.— AFP

NBK Economic Report

Oil prices on the rise, but tighter market fundamentals stoke bullish sentiment

OPEC+ compliance off to a sluggish start

KUWAIT: Almost two months into the New Year and oil prices have staged a remarkable turnaround, recovering nearly half of their losses from the last quarter of 2018, when prices dropped by almost 35 percent. Brent crude, the international oil benchmark, is up by around 21 percent so far in 2019 at \$65.1/bbl, having posted in January its best monthly return in almost three years. Its light US crude counterpart, West Texas Intermediate (WTI), has gained almost 23 percent year-to-date to top \$55/bbl.

Prices have been riding a crest of bullish sentiment since late December, centered largely but not exclusively on the expressed commitment of OPEC and its Vienna agreement partners to drain excess supplies from the market. Geopolitical risk factors have also come into play on the supply side. The imposition of US sanctions on Venezuela in January, added to the impending expiry of the 180-day US sanctions waivers on Iran in May and crude rationing in Canada due to pipeline bottlenecks, has helped feed into the narrative of tightening crude markets, especially in heavy sour crude.

On the oil demand side, the outlook over the next six to twelve months is also supportive. The International Energy Agency (IEA) expects global oil demand in 2019 to increase by 1.4 mb/d to 100.6 mb/d. This compares with 2018's increase of 1.3 mb/d. In its forecast, the IEA cites the start-up of petrochemical projects in the US and China and the lower oil prices of 4Q18 as being positive for oil demand growth. Colder temperatures in the northern hemisphere winter (heating oil) are also bound to be supportive, at least in 1Q19.

The relatively healthy oil demand outlook comes despite projections of weaker global economic growth this year by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Fund recently lowered its estimate of global growth for 2019 by 0.2 percent to 3.5 percent on softer Eurozone and China output, tighter monetary conditions and potentially deteriorating China-US trade relations. On the latter, oil markets appear to be currently adopting a less alarmist attitude, however, although given the ebb and flow of these trade discussions, tensions could come to the fore at any time.

The change in the outlook is especially evident in the futures market, where over the last two months, the Brent futures curve has flipped from a contango structure, in which near-term (or spot) prices for delivery of crude oil are lower than prices for delivery further out, to the opposite, backward-dated structure. Here, prices for immediate delivery (M1) are higher than prices for delivery in twelve months (M12), for example, a sign that markets are getting tighter.

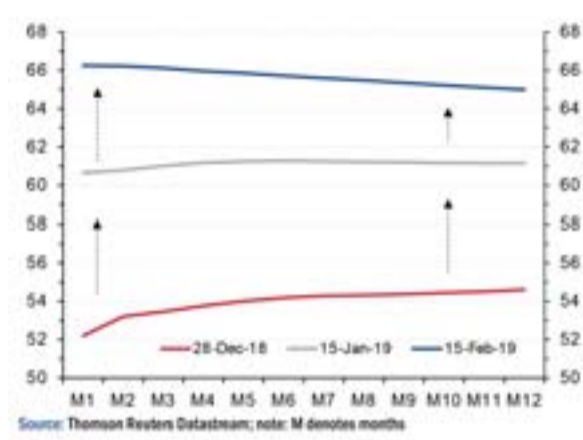
Hedge funds and speculators are also moving back into oil. Money managers' net positioning on Brent, the difference between bets that Brent will rise (longs) and bets that the oil price will fall (shorts), have increased every week in 2019 so far to 266,057 futures and options as of 12 February. There are almost six times as many long contracts as there are shorts, the most the market has been bullish since last October.

This current situation is in marked contrast to the situation in the second half of 2018, when oil supplies were rising at least twice as fast as oil demand, leading to a build-up of global oil stocks. Amid relentless US shale gains, oil producers had ramped up output to compensate for Venezuelan and Iranian supply losses, only to be caught off guard when the Trump administration, fearful of higher oil prices ahead of the US mid-terms, extended sanctions waivers to Iran's major crude importers, thereby mitigating the more severe Iranian supply losses that many had been anticipating. Trump's tough anti-Iran rhetoric had led most to expect a very strict application of sanctions.

OPEC+ compliance off to a slow start

Total OPEC+ production in January came in at 44.75 mb/d, implying that the group had achieved only 66 percent of its target of reducing production by 1.2 mb/d over the first half of 2019. However, this masks considerable overachievement so early into the agreement period on the part of large oil producers such as OPEC Saudi Arabia (130 percent) and Kuwait (117 percent) and non-OPEC Kazakhstan (135 percent) and Mexico (132 percent). Russia (18 percent) and Iraq (-11 percent) stand out among the major producers as having made the least progress, with the latter actually increasing output to above its October baseline reference level.

Nevertheless, there is every reason to believe that, like the 2016 Vienna agreement, the current OPEC+ deal will achieve its objective in the next few months. Saudi Arabia, in particular, appears determined to restore prices to what it probably views as the most appropriate equilibrium range in the age of US shale, around \$65-75/bbl. This level is closer to the kingdom's fiscal breakeven oil price level and not too high to crimp oil demand. Saudi's Al-Falih indicated that the country is prepared to go above and beyond the level which is mandated by the OPEC+ production cut and reduce output further from January's 10.2 mb/d to 9.8 mb/d by March, more than 500 kb/d below its target quota. Moreover, conscious of the outsized influence that US data has on oil market perceptions, the kingdom began reeling in exports of its crude to



the US market, where every barrel that isn't refined only adds to the country's closely-watched crude stock levels. The question is will that be enough to bring the market to balance and reverse global crude stock builds amid burgeoning US shale production?

seem likely, and makes no distinction between demand for heavy and light crudes this year. Heavy crude premiums on the rise amid supply outages. With refineries largely geared to maximize petroleum products processed from heavier, sour crudes of the varieties supplied by OPEC and not the light sweet grades supplied from US shale, the issue of the type of crude available on oil markets has come to the fore. Amid cutbacks in OPEC supplies, sanctioned Venezuelan and Iranian crudes and outages in Canada, the supply of heavy sour crude has been dramatically reduced. Pressure on heavy crude prices has been upward, as can be seen in the narrowing spread between Brent (light, sweet) and Dubai and Kuwait Export crude (KEC), which are both heavier and sourer. Over the last several months, these grades have traded at a premium over Brent.

Continued US and non-OPEC supply gains in 2019

US crude production is projected to rise in 2019 by up to 1.5 mb/d to 12.4 mb/d, having posted an incredible increase of 1.6 mb/d (19 percent y/y) in 2018 to reach 10.9 mb/d, according to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA).

Growth of 1.5 mb/d in US crude output in 2019 would, therefore, alone outpace the 1.2 mb/d of cuts that OPEC+ is orchestrating. And while the IEA is not so aggressive in its estimate of US crude production growth in 2019, it places non-OPEC supply growth at around 1.3 mb/d in 2019—still higher than the OPEC+ cuts. In light of this, the IEA has revised down the 'call on OPEC', the volume of OPEC crude needed to meet demand, to 30.65 mb/d in 2019. Assuming OPEC achieves 100 percent compliance by the end of 1Q19 and maintains that level through to the end of 2019, we estimate that output from the producers' group will be around 100 kb/d higher than the 'call' at 30.75 mb/d. Importantly, this assumes no further declines in Venezuelan and Iranian production, which is highly unlikely in our view given the structural declines and US sanctions in the former and the high probability that US sanctions waivers will not be extended for the latter. Crude stock increases could therefore be limited to an average of 0.1 mb/d in 2019.

This scenario also does not take into consideration further cuts by Saudi Arabia, which, as mentioned above,

Tighter market on the cards

Current market dynamics imply that once excess supplies from 2H18 are worked off, global supply and demand could balance by mid-2019. The balance of oil price risks, we believe, are to the upside, at least over the first half of the year. Of course, any number of variables could come into play or recede from view that could push prices down or up. Global demand growth could underwhelm, for example, stoked perhaps by weaker-than-expected emerging market economic growth and continuing irresolution to the US-China tariff dispute. US and non-OPEC supply could also surge by more than expected, while OPEC+ could fail to achieve its production cut target, with Russia perhaps cooling on the deal. And then the US could extend Iran sanctions waivers for another six months. Markets should prepare for a bumpy ride in any case.

France unveils new tax for Internet giants

PARIS: France was set to unveil legislation yesterday to increase taxes on global internet giants such as Google and Facebook, putting it among a vanguard of countries seeking to force the companies to pay more in the markets where they operate. President Emmanuel Macron came to power in 2017 promising to increase levies on global tech and internet groups, seeing their often minimal tax rates as part of a backlash in France and Europe against globalization.

Having failed to persuade his European partners to introduce an EU-wide tax—because of objections from low-tax jurisdictions such as Ireland and fears of provoking US President Donald Trump—France is to go it alone with its own new mechanism. Under a proposal set to be discussed by cabinet ministers and submitted to parliament, large companies operating in France would face a tax of three percent on their digital sales in the country.

"The amount obtained from this three

percent tax on digital gross sales in France from January 1, 2019 should soon reach 500 million euros (\$566 million)," Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire told the French daily Le Parisien at the weekend. The new levy is known as the "GAFA tax" in France—an acronym for US giants Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon—who have until now routed their sales in France through subsidiaries in low-tax EU members.

In one of the most best known cases, the European Commission concluded that Apple had paid an effective corporate tax rate of just 0.005 percent on its European profits in 2014 — equivalent to just 50 euros for every million. In 2016, it was ordered by the European Commission to pay 13 billion euros in back taxes to Ireland which were judged to amount to illegal state aid. Under EU law, internet giants can choose to report their income in any member state, prompting them to choose low-tax nations such as Ireland, the Netherlands or Luxembourg.

Fiscal justice

Under the draft legislation set to be presented by Le Maire, only digital companies with global annual sales of more than 750 million euros and sales in France of at least 25 million euros would be taxed.

"If these two criteria are not met, the taxes

will not be imposed," Le Maire said. About 30 companies from the US, China, Germany, Spain and Britain as well as France would be affected, he said. For Le Maire, taxing the companies "is a question of fiscal justice" as "digital giants pay 14 percent less tax than small- and medium-sized European companies". Ireland, Denmark and Sweden have blocked EU efforts to devise a new tax for fear of deterring investment, and Germany has proved lukewarm on the issue, fearing US retaliation against its car industry.

Despite the failure to reach consensus at the European level, France is still hoping an agreement can be reached globally by 2020. Paris says it is seeking "common ground" on the issue with fellow members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a group of the world's advanced economies.

Low-tax nations

Britain, Spain and Italy are also working on national versions of a new digital tax, while Japan, Singapore and India are planning schemes of their own. France's move to legislate comes after aggressive action from tax authorities to pursue the companies in the courts, with mixed results.

Apple said last month it had reached an agreement to settle 10 years of back taxes,



PARIS: A protestor wears a mask representing French President Emmanuel Macron while another one holds a placard reading "tax justice" during an anti-government demonstration called by the Yellow Vests (gilets jaunes) movement in Lyon, central-eastern France. — AFP

reportedly for nearly 500 million euros. In 2017, however, France's tax collection drive suffered a setback with a local court ruling that Google was not liable to pay 1.1 billion euros in taxes claimed on revenues transferred from France to Ireland. Raphael

Pradeau from the anti-globalization Attac lobby group said the proposed French tax is "symbolic and does not solve the problem of massive fiscal evasion". "It's as if we accept that such firms can practice tax evasion in return for a few crumbs," he said. — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar/Transfer	304.550
Euro	346.430
Sterling Pound	403.530
Canadian dollar	230.370
Turkish lira	57.680
Swiss Franc	306.390
US Dollar Buying	303.350

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.773
Indian Rupees	4.320
Pakistani Rupees	2.222
Sri Lanka Rupees	1.691
Nepali Rupees	2.693
Singapore Dollar	225.680
Hongkong Dollar	38.801
Bangladesh Taka	3.611
Philippine Peso	5.850
Thai Baht	9.617
Malaysian Ringgit	77.890

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.268
Qatari Riyal	83.702
Omani Riyal	791.553
Bahraini Dinar	809.220
UAE Dirham	82.972

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.650
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Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.366
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.223
Tunisian Dinar	103.240
Jordanian Dinar	430.160
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.030
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.433

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer Selling Rate

US Dollar	303.990
Canadian Dollar	229.335
Sterling Pound	403.950
Euro	348.045
Swiss Frank	306.250
Bahrain Dinar	808.290
UAE Dirhams	83.155
Qatari Riyals	84.390
Saudi Riyals	81.945
Jordanian Dinar	429.975
Egyptian Pound	17.345
Sri Lanka Rupees	1.693
Indian Rupees	4.289
Pakistani Rupees	2.192
Bangladesh Taka	3.612
Philippines Peso	5.868
Cyprus pound	18.085
Japanese Yen	3.715
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.685
Malaysian Ringgit	75.580
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.740

Thai Bhat	10.555
Turkish Lira	57.025
Singapore dollars	224.844

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY BUY SELL

	BUY	SELL
Europe	0.392637	0.406537
British Pound	0.005395	0.014695
Czech Korune	0.042002	0.047002
Danish Krone	0.336259	0.349959
Euro	0.113039	0.113039
Georgian Lari	0.001188	
Hungarian 0.000998	0.030989	0.036188
Norwegian Krone	0.055459	0.072309
Romanian Leu	0.004617	0.004617
Russian ruble	0.009106	0.019106
Slovakia	0.028589	0.033588
Swedish Krona	0.296308	0.0307306
Swiss Franc		
Australasia	0.205698	0.217698
Australian Dollar	0.199448	0.208948
New Zealand Dollar		
America	0.222263	0.231263
Canadian Dollar	0.300450	0.305750
US Dollars	0.300950	0.305750
US Dollars Mint		
Asia	0.003055	0.003856
Bangladesh Taka	0.043987	0.047487
Chinese Yuan		

Hong Kong Dollar	0.036708	0.039458
Indian Rupee	0.003647	0.004419
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002638	0.002818
Korean Won	0.000269	0.000274
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070932	0.076932
Nepalese Rupee	0.002611	0.002961
Pakistan Rupee	0.001538	0.002308
Philippine Peso	0.005801	0.006101
Singapore Dollar	0.218789	0.228789
Sri Lanka Rupee	0.001364	0.001944
Taiwan	0.009741	0.009921
Thai Baht	0.009262	0.009812
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013

Arab	0.793254	0.809754
Bahraini Dinar	0.017127	0.019727
Egyptian Pound	0.000084	0.000086
Iranian Riyal	0.000211	0.000271
Iraqi Dinar	0.424644	0.433644
Jordanian Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Kuwaiti Dinar	0.000151	0.000251
Lebanese Pound	0.022140	0.046140
Moroccan Dirhams	0.784721	0.790401
Omani Riyal	0.079362	0.084302
Qatar Riyal	0.080127	0.081427
audi Riyal	0.001291	0.001511
Syrian Pound	0.096283	0.104283
Tunisian Dinar	0.050330	0.061830
Turkish Lira	0.081493	0.083193
UAE Dirhams	0.000990	0.001070
Yemeni Riyal		

Business

Gulf Bank participates in the 'Digital Transformation Leadership' program

Program held at INSEAD Abu Dhabi campus

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is proud to announce its participation in the "Digital Transformation Leadership" Program, as part of its continued efforts in succession planning and executive development. Held at the INSEAD Abu Dhabi Campus, the program saw three Gulf Bank managers attend the residential program. Introducing the latest trends in digitization and transformational strategies in line with global trends, the "Digital Transformation Leadership" Program falls under Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies' ongoing partnership with INSEAD. The partnership provides regional banking and finance executives with an executive education program, designed to support professional development.

During the program, participants expanded their knowledge of digital trends, transformational leadership, progressive strategies and influential business plans.

Commenting on Gulf Bank's participation, Salma Al-Hajjaj, General Manager of Human Resources, Gulf Bank said: "Digitalization is arguably the most challenging transformation

faceted by modern businesses, with digital technology and trends making up the core of industry advancement. Through program participation, Gulf Bank is supporting the professional growth of employees, while enhancing the bank's traditional strategy frameworks with innovative digital approaches to create outstanding digital experience. Gulf Bank continues to support the development of employees, adding value and growth to both the bank's, and their own, development."

In addition to participation in external programs, Gulf Bank offers internal learning and development programs, which include a range of trainings and courses for employees across all levels and departments.



Salma Al-Hajjaj



Gulf Bank management with KIBS Director Prof Yaqoub Al-Reafel, INSEAD Management / Deputy Dean and the Program Director.

Philip Morris paid for India manufacturing despite a ban

NEW DELHI: Philip Morris International Inc has for years paid manufacturing costs to its Indian partner to make its Marlboro cigarettes, circumventing a nine-year-old government ban on foreign direct investment in the industry, internal company documents reviewed by Reuters showed.

The Indian government in 2010 prohibited foreign direct investment (FDI) in cigarette manufacturing, saying the measure would enhance its efforts to curb smoking. Restricting foreign investment leaves cigarette manufacturing largely in the hands of domestic players, and is supposed to prevent any foreign-funded expansion. A year after the government's decision, Japan Tobacco exited India, citing an "unsustainable business model". Philip Morris, though, stayed in India and used another route, according to company documents dated between May 2009 and January 2018. A year before the FDI ban, it struck an exclusive deal with India's Godfrey Phillips to locally manufacture the world-famous Marlboro cigarettes.

Ever since then, Godfrey has publicly acted as a contract manufacturer of Marlboro cigarettes in India, while Philip Morris's majority-owned local unit acts as a wholesale trading company and promotes the brand. But dozens of internal company documents - including invoice bills, legal agreements, e-mails and accounting statements - show Philip Morris has for years indirectly paid costs related to Marlboro cigarette manufacturing in India.

Some former Indian enforcement officials said the practice of indirectly paying for manufacturing-related costs violates regulatory rules. However, some lawyers such as Pratibha Jain, a partner at Nishith Desai Associates, disagreed, pointing out that the federal rules did not explicitly prohibit such payments. Philip Morris' director for corporate affairs in India, R Venkatesh, in an e-mail, said the company's "business arrangements with Godfrey Phillips India comply with Indian Foreign Direct Investment Rules". He did not elaborate.

The company did not answer detailed questions for this article and did not offer any executive for interview, despite repeated requests from Reuters over the past month.

Manufacturing charges

Six invoices issued by Godfrey showed billing of 45.5 million Indian rupees (\$644,200) to Philip Morris between December 2013 and January 2018 for manufacturing-related charges. Philip Morris paid for items ranging from large cigarette-making machines to costs of smaller equipment such as barcode scanners and printers deployed in Godfrey's factories. One invoice from January 2018 sent from Godfrey to Philip Morris showed the Indian company had spent 206 million rupees (\$3 million) on capital expenditure for Marlboro-related manufacturing activities since 2009, though it was not clear how much of that was paid by Philip Morris.

Godfrey Phillips' head of corporate affairs, Harmanjit Singh, said in an email that all the commercial arrangements "are in complete compliance with the extant regulations governing the Indian Foreign Direct Investment and other applicable laws, and, incidentally, all transactions are in Indian Rupees. Also, it is our considered view that no illegality can be impugned to these commercial transactions between the parties."

Philip Morris' local unit and Godfrey arranged a mechanism for such transfer of funds around the time they struck the 2009 deal. A 94-page "procurement agreement" signed between the two sides that year, which is not public but has been reviewed by Reuters, said that Godfrey may acquire new machinery for solely manufacturing Marlboro cigarettes and will then "invoice PM (Philip Morris) India" for charges in a phased manner. Philip Morris "shall pay such invoice by bank transfer", the agreement said. The agreement specified Philip Morris would make periodic payments calculated according to the normal depreciation charge of the machinery, plus 10 percent per annum on its net book value.

Other than those regular payments, Philip Morris also signed off on one-time expenses and refurbishment costs incurred by Godfrey on at least two occasions in 2013 and 2014, according to internal e-mails and accounting records. It then accounted those transactions internally under a heading "Packaging - Research", accounting records showed.

"They are camouflaging"

Three former officials and one former head of India's main financial crime-fighting agency, the Enforcement Directorate, reviewed the Philip Morris documents for Reuters and said the dealings should be investigated for circumventing India's foreign investment rules.

One of the former officials said that paying for machines to manufacture cigarettes essentially resulted in the promotion of cigarettes, and the government's intent of banning foreign direct investment in 2010 was to deter that. Bhure Lal, a former head of India's Enforcement Directorate,

parent IAG, said at the Airline for Europe summit in Brussels. "The industry manages (these uncertainties) better than any other industry ... I'm fairly confident that IAG and other airlines will be able to manage this situation whatever happens."

Ryanair chief executive Michael O'Leary told Reuters that even if a deal is passed, it would only clinch a transition arrangement until the end of 2020, with further political instability delayed but not resolved.

"(A deal) is good news in the short term but fixes nothing over the medium term because they are still going to have to negotiate the trade deal. And what the UK government have demonstrated in the last two years is that they are incapable of negotiating the purchase of a packet of crisps," he said.

"So short term I think the threat of a cliff edge is moving away but it is only going to be postponed for another 21 months and now we are back to the same situation all over again."

Britain and the EU have said that flights will continue, even in the event that there is a no-deal Brexit. The EU has proposed a provisional arrangement to mitigate the



AMRITSAR: Indian farmers block train tracks during the third day of a protest against the alleged anti-farmer policies imposed by the central and state government demanding complete farm debt waiver, in Jandiala some 20 km from Amritsar yesterday. —AFP

said the companies "should be investigated ... they are camouflaging".

The current chief of India's Enforcement Directorate, Sanjay Kumar Mishra, did not respond to a request for comment. If the Enforcement Directorate investigates a company and finds it to be in violation of the rules, Indian law allows it to impose a penalty of up to three times the amount contravened.

Jain of Nishith Desai Associates, which also advises global companies on foreign investment rules and reviewed the Philip Morris documents for Reuters, said the company was able to circumvent the FDI prohibition in cigarette manufacturing by paying for the machines through invoices. That's because the Indian regulations only restrict direct foreign investments into a company and were silent on such indirect payments for machines, she said.

"The company can argue in its defense that it is only funding the equipment purchases and not investing directly in an Indian cigarette manufacturing company, and they would be technically correct," Jain told Reuters.

India cigarette market

The Indian journey of Philip Morris, which is one of the world's largest international tobacco companies, began in the late 1960s when it acquired a majority stake in the London-based parent of Godfrey Phillips. It gradually reduced its stake in Godfrey over the years, in part due to regulatory changes, and currently holds a 25 percent equity stake. Though India banned foreign investment in cigarette manufacturing in 2010, it still allowed tobacco companies to invest through technology collaboration and licensing agreements. Investments could also be made by forming a trading company.

Ahead of the 2010 ban, Philip Morris formed a new wholesale trading company with Godfrey. The New Delhi-headquartered local unit, named IPM India Wholesale Trading Pvt. Ltd, is 50.1 percent owned by the global tobacco giant, with the rest owned by Godfrey and an investment firm. Among the payments outlined in the documents, Godfrey in January 2018 sent an invoice to Philip Morris's local unit for 10.2 million rupees (\$144,500), billing for charges for the preceding six-month period, an invoice showed. In August 2017, Godfrey sent an invoice for manufacturing-related charges of 9.5 million rupees (\$134,600).

The documents also showed that Philip Morris at times would discuss with Godfrey which type of equipment should be used for Marlboro manufacturing, and then sign off on related payments.

In July 2016, the head of Philip Morris' India supply chain operations, Nilay Mehta, asked a Godfrey Phillips executive in an e-mail to raise a purchase order for an embossing roller, a type of equipment used in cigarette manufacturing. Given the equipment had to be used only for Marlboro manufacturing, "IPM will be picking the cost for this", Mehta said in an email to a Godfrey executive on July 26, 2016. Mehta did not respond to an e-mail from Reuters.

India has 106 million smokers, second only to China, and a young demographic makes it an attractive market for tobacco companies. Philip Morris is a small player in India's estimated \$12 billion cigarette market but has seen its market share rise steadily in recent years. That was aided by its marketing activities, such as advertising at roadside kiosks and free distribution of cigarettes at parties. Both tactics were described as illegal by health officials in a Reuters investigation published in 2017. —Reuters



Willie Walsh, CEO of British Airways and Iberia parent IAG

Chiefs: Airlines can handle Brexit but frustrated by the politics

BRUSSELS: Airlines will be able to withstand the impact of Britain leaving the European Union, even without a deal, but the lack of political progress is frustrating and has dampened consumer demand, airline chiefs said.

Britain is due to leave the European Union on March 29, and Prime Minister Theresa May has yet to seal a deal that has the approval of lawmakers in Westminster. "I don't think it's concern that we've expressed-it's frustration ... We do really need the politicians to resolve this," Willie Walsh, CEO of British Airways and Iberia

We need it now: US farm country pins hopes on China trade deal

WASHINGTON: Corn and soybean farmer Lorenda Overman from North Carolina has been selling her crops at a loss and delaying paychecks to her workers since the US trade war with China tanked agriculture prices, and her farm's debt recently topped \$2 million.

If the Trump administration fails to clinch a deal with Beijing soon to end the trade dispute, she says, her operation may have a hard time staying afloat.

"We need some stability, we need some action and we need it now," Overman, who farms in Goldsboro, said via telephone. Her desperation reflects the mounting urgency across US farm country over ongoing talks aimed at ending Washington's trade dispute with China and pulling the US agriculture industry out of its worst crisis since the 1980s.

US trade negotiators currently locked in talks with their Chinese counterparts are demanding Beijing change the way it does business with the United States, providing more access for US companies, enforcement of intellectual property protection and an end to industrial subsidies. While the talks mark the closest point yet to an end to the nine-month trade war, the two sides are yet to agree on the core issues which are essential for a deal that would reopen a critical market for US farm goods like soybeans, sorghum and corn-based ethanol. So far, the American rural heartland that helped carry President Donald Trump to victory in 2016 remains largely supportive of his hard line on trade, saying unfair Chinese practices had to be addressed for longer-term economic gain.

But it has also taken the brunt of the dispute, losing a massive export market. With credit conditions eroding in the agrarian economy and total debt hitting levels unseen for decades, the pain has deepened and patience is wearing thin.

"I voted for Trump and I have no regrets. I still feel like he has a handle on what needs to be done but I am frustrated that we are still sitting here with no deal," Overman said. Beijing imposed tariffs last year on imports of US agricultural goods, including soybeans, grain sorghum and pork as retribution for US levies. Soybean exports to China have plummeted over 90 percent due to the trade dispute and sales of U.S. soybeans elsewhere failed to make up for the loss. Trump last week delayed plans to deepen tariffs on China, citing progress in the current talks.

Planting amid uncertainty

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue last week said the current debt levels in farm country have rapidly risen to levels seen in the 1980s, when thousands of farm operations financially collapsed after producers dealing with low crop prices fell behind on high-interest land and equipment loans. Meanwhile, Chapter 12 bankruptcy filings have hit the highest level in a decade in parts of the US Midwest and Great Plains states, according to federal data, though stable farmland prices and low interest rates have helped.

The administration sought to protect farmers from some of the impacts of the trade war with an aid package of up to \$12 billion last year. But it has said it will not provide additional support in 2019 even if the dispute continues. That heaps pressure on farmers, who must decide what to plant this spring without guarantees they will have a market for it, and without any safety net if they make the wrong choice. US farmers planted 89.1 million acres of soybeans in 2018, the second most ever, but without a market much of it ended up plowed under, rotting in piles, or in storage.

"If we get a trade deal done and soybeans are worth 20 percent more over the next six months, but we decided to plant all corn because we didn't know - that's something that worries a lot of people," said farmer Derek Sawyer, 38, from Kansas. He said his debt has risen into the millions of dollars. "Bankers so far have been OK to work with us as far as restructuring some debt," he said. "But that rope keeps getting shorter." —Reuters

Business

Boubyan Bank launches an all-new mobile banking app

Boubyan App becomes smoother and provides customers with a lot of services

KUWAIT: Abdulla Al-Najran Al-Tuwaijri, Boubyan Bank's Deputy CEO, stated that any introduction or innovation of a new service is the fruit of interacting with customers and continuously listening to their opinions, meeting their needs, and requirements in order to make their life easier and more comfortable.

These statements came in the press conference held to announce the launch of the all-new mobile banking App, and to review the most prominent developments introduced to services, and digital banking products which were offered for the first time in Kuwait by the bank, that made the bank stand out over the past years. Al-Tuwaijri added that updating the mobile banking app comes in line with the bank's steps towards providing the best levels of customer service, by contacting customers directly to know their views, wishes and needs.



KUWAIT: Abdulla Al-Najran Al-Tuwaijri, Boubyan Bank's Deputy CEO, addresses a press conference to announce the launch of the all-new mobile banking App yesterday.



machine in Kuwait.

Speaking of the possibility of opening accounts through the online or mobile banking services, Al-Tuwaijri stated that Boubyan customers could open any additional accounts in the main currencies or make any type of deposit in a minute through Boubyan App.

By doing this, Boubyan reiterates that it is the bank which provides its customers with a special way of life. "For the digital banking services, everyone knows that Boubyan Bank was the first to launch many personal digital banking services for the first time in Kuwait, the last of which was Msa3ed, the first chatbot in the Kuwaiti private sector," he stated.

Msa3ed, by Boubyan Bank, is the first service of its kind to be launched by a Kuwaiti bank as a chatbot service. It presents a new way of managing the relationships between companies and customers who seek to have quick access to information any time whether inside the country or abroad.

Msa3ed features include a lot of traditional banking services as customers can complete a lot of banking services and find answers to many queries related to their banking accounts including balance inquiries, credit card inquiries, and various forms of transfers in addition to other banking services.

A new group of e-Vouchers were added to the App including PSN cards, BeIn vouchers, Xbox, etc.).

An all-new mobile banking app

"What is easy has become easier, and simple things have been simplified even more with Boubyan Bank. This is what just happened. It is already known that Boubyan App is easy to use and user-friendly, but it became even easier, smoother and more user friendly with the recent update," Al-Tuwaijri stated.

He added: "As we keep an eye on the continuous international developments in the field of digital applications, and since Boubyan App is one of the top Apps in use in Kuwait, we thought it is necessary to roll out an update to keep pace with international developments." In this context, he referred to the App rating, which is the top among similar Apps in terms of ease of use, or growth of users, their feedback and rating of the App which all put the App in the lead.

In response to how the customer would

receive the new update, Al-Tuwaijri stated: "It is no secret that any change goes through a testing period, and this is what we have already done as the new App was tested by a group of customers and staff and was well-received by all of them; they even enjoyed how easy and simple it was."

All the needs of our customers in the app

Al-Tuwaijri went on to add: "Customers' needs include core services such as opening accounts, performing various banking transactions such as transfers and payment of invoices, and obtaining financing (murabaha) in addition to credit cards. Customers have quick and easy access now to these services through Boubyan App without the need to visit the branch even for once." "In Boubyan, we are about to achieve this, and we are closer than any other party aspiring to achieve this goal. Customers can now finalize the digi-

tal murabaha procedures and complete all the necessary procedures for obtaining the necessary financing online, then they will have to make a single visit to the branch to sign the contracts," he added.

He continued: "As for obtaining credit cards digitally, the bank is ready to offer this service immediately after receiving the required official approvals. It will be possible to obtain the required card in easy and simple steps, and the customer will have two options: either to be issued a digital credit card whose information is fully stored on his mobile, or online without the need for the traditional plastic card while linking the card's information to the smart phone instead of the credit card where the phone itself will serve as a credit card to be used at any store or with any POS, or the customer may be issued the plastic card to receive the same at a convenient time through any of the card issuance

Infiniti QX60 receives '2019 Best Car for the Money' award from US News & World Report

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait, announces that its 2019 INFINITI QX60 was named in US News & World Report's 2019 Best Cars for the Money awards as the winner in the Luxury 3-Row SUV category.

The Best Cars for the Money methodology combines quality and value data into a composite score. Within each of the 14 categories, the vehicle with the highest score is named the 'Best Car for the Money' in that category. Quality is measured by the overall score a vehicle achieved in the US News car rankings. The rankings, updated regularly, compare cars on the basis of safety, reliability

and a consensus of industry experts' opinions. Value is measured by a combination of a vehicle's five-year total cost of ownership, provided by Vincentric, LLC, and the average price paid for the vehicle at the time the awards are tabulated, as calculated by TrueCar.

The popular and highly awarded INFINITI QX60 offers the best of both luxury and practicality with a combination of family-oriented features as well as a welcoming, carefully crafted design inside and out. With a third row of seating, the spacious interior adjusts to customers' needs.

Standard on all QX60 models is a breakthrough technology designed especially for active families - Rear Door



Alert. The new Rear Door Alert system, first introduced on the 2018 QX60, can help remind customers of things that may be forgotten in the rear seat, such as pets, valuables, dry cleaning, groceries and more. Other available driver assist technologies include: Around View Monitor with Moving Object Detection;

Lane Departure Warning and Lane Departure Prevention; Backup Collision Intervention; Blind Spot Intervention; and Intelligent Cruise Control (Full-Speed Range). Also offered are the advanced Predictive Forward Collision Warning system and Forward Emergency Braking with pedestrian detection.

KFH adopts Robotic Process Automation solutions by Blue-Prism

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced that it has adopted Robotic Process Automation solutions by Blue-Prism, built on Microsoft technologies. This makes KFH the region's first company in the financial services industry (FSI) to implement a fully automated workflow system for retail credit and enables the organization to empower its employees to better engage customers, optimize operations and transform services.

"Automation of our retail credit application creation and review process is a natural extension of our ongoing journey to introduce new, digitally driven efficiencies for customers and employees," said Waleed Mandini, Group Chief Retail, Kuwait Finance House. "Microsoft has been an invaluable partner and mentor for us throughout this journey, aiding our technology team in the development of the Baitak Assistant and enabling us to empower our service teams to deliver enhanced customer experiences. Automation allows us to reduce waiting times for credit-application creation, and streamline the approval process".

Working autonomously, the bot will calculate the customer's eligibility status, accounting for current KFH policy and national regulations, and issue a credit-eligibility report. It will forward all relevant material to the Relationship Manager. The result will be a companywide reduction in workload, freeing up time for selling and cross selling. The bot will also represent a significant cost reduction, stemming from error reduction and increases in compliance.

"Kuwait Finance House has become a digital-transformation pioneer in the regional FSI sector, working tirelessly to engage customers, empower employees, optimize operations and reinvent products and services," said Charles Nahas, Country Manager, Microsoft Kuwait. "Improvement of the company's internal processes and customer experience through digitization has become part of KFH's DNA. By ensuring that customers need to spend less time in branches when applying for housing or consumer financing, KFH provide higher customer satisfaction and more efficient services".



Waleed Mandini



Charles Nahas

Mimecast report: Phishing attacks with malicious URLs up 126%

DUBAI: Mimecast Limited (NASDAQ: MIME), a leading email and data security company, yesterday announced the latest Email Security Risk Assessment (ESRA) report, an aggregated analysis of tests that measure the efficacy of widely used email security systems. This quarter's report found that email delivered with malicious URLs, a recently added part of the testing, has increased by more than 125 percent in comparison to last quarter's results.

The data was analyzed and, as in past periods, Mimecast was found to deliver superior efficacy. New to the ESRA report, was testing for malicious URLs. Mimecast detected 463,546 malicious URLs contained in the 28,407,664 emails delivered were deemed "safe" by an organization's existing email security system, averaging to one malicious URL in every 61 emails. Recent research Mimecast conducted with Vanson Bourne independently also confirms that malicious URLs are a rampant problem, with 45 percent of the 1,025 respondents saying the volume of these URL-based attacks or those with dangerous attachments have increased over the last year. Despite the fact that the majority of cyberattacks start with an email, the lines between email and web security are blurring.

In addition to malicious URLs, the latest ESRA report also found 24,908,891 spam emails, 26,713 malware attachments, 53,753 impersonation attacks, and 23,872 dangerous file types of the 232,010,981 total emails inspected were all missed by these incumbent security solution providers and delivered to inboxes, putting individuals and organizations at risk.

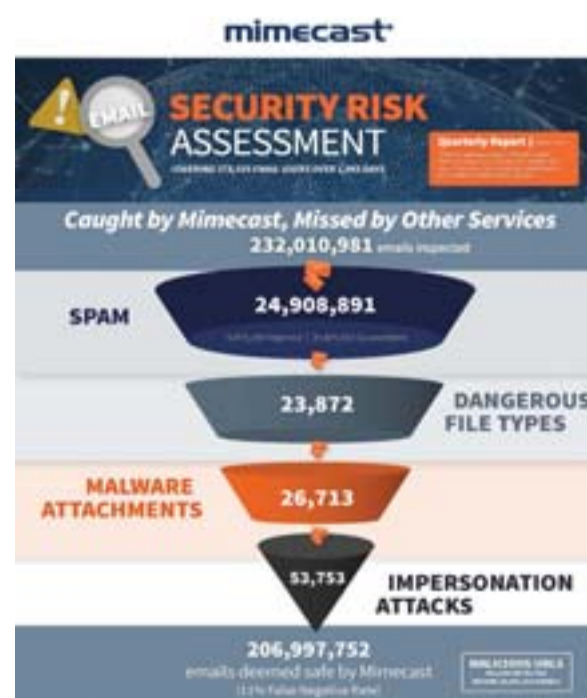
"Email and the web are natural complements when it comes to the infiltration of an organization. Email delivers believable content and easily clickable URLs, which then can lead unintended victims to malicious web sites. URLs within emails are literally the point of intersection between email and the web. Organizations need the visibility across both channels in order to have the



Matthew Gardiner

protection required to stay on top of today's ever evolving and expanding threats and having a single vendor in an integrated solution can help," said Matthew Gardiner, cybersecurity strategist at Mimecast. "Cybercriminals are constantly looking for new ways to evade detection, often turning to easier methods like social engineering to gain intel on a person or pulling images from the internet to help 'legitimize' their impersonation attempts to gain credentials or information from unsuspecting users."

Impersonation fraud also continues to grow and present challenges. The new research from Mimecast and Vanson Bourne revealed that 41 percent of respondents reported seeing an increase in impersonation fraud from vendors or business partners asking for money, sensitive information or credentials - with 38 percent saying they've seen an increase of impersonation fraud from well-known internet brands.



Tesla's Chinese rival NIO scraps factory plan after losses

SHANGHAI: Chinese electric vehicle start-up NIO has abandoned plans to build a manufacturing plant in Shanghai after net losses doubled to \$1.4 billion last year. US-listed NIO has been working with state-owned automaker JAC Motors in eastern Anhui province to make its ES8 model but wanted to add its own factory in Shanghai. The company, which is backed by Chinese tech giants Baidu, Tencent and JD.com, said in a statement Tuesday that it was dropping the plans after posting losses of 9.6 billion yuan in 2018 while generating revenue of 5.0 billion yuan.

Launched in 2014, NIO went public on the New York Stock Exchange in September 2018 after filing for a \$1.8 billion initial public offering. NIO produced 8,000 ES8 models in the fourth quarter last year, double from the previous three-month period, with quarterly revenue rising by 133.8 percent.

But the company said it experienced a "greater than anticipated slowdown" in sales in the first two months of this year to around 2,600 units.

The drop was attributed to a reduction in a subsidy for the purchase of electric vehicles, the seasonal slowdown around the Lunar New Year holidays and a sluggish Chinese economy, notably in the auto sector. NIO signed framework agreements with the Shanghai government in 2017 to build the factory, hoping to complete it by the end of 2020. The end of the factory plans comes as competition in the electric car sector is heating up, with China's government having announced plans to ban fossil fuel vehicles by a yet-to-be-decided date. Tesla chief Elon Musk was in China in January for the groundbreaking of a factory in Shanghai. —AFP

What's On

The smallest chef in the world comes to the Regency Hotel

The Regency Hotel Kuwait welcomes the association with the Dinner Time Story, an entirely innovative and entertaining dining concept, bringing "Le Petit Chef" exclusively for the first time to Kuwait after an extremely successful launch around the globe. Olto Kurzenorfer, General Manager of The Regency Hotel Kuwait, expressed his enthusiasm for this new and exclusive dinner show that will enrich the experience of the hotel's guests and will bring more entertainment to their dining table.

Le Petit Chef is a two-hour dining experience which is based around a mini animated chef, Le Petit Chef, and his culinary adventures on the Silk Road using cutting edge 3D visual technology. Michel Gesthuizen, the Director of Food and Beverage at The Regency Hotel Kuwait, was pleased to announce the launch of the new dining concept that combines creativity and leisure at the same time.

The Dinner time story's six-course menu takes the din-



er along a unique culinary journey across the regions visited by the legendary traveler Marco Polo on the silk route. It starts from the birth place of Le Petit Chef in Marseille to the Middle East, then India crossing over the Himalayas to China before landing back in France.

Accompanying the menu will be clever props, sound tracks and scents, allowing the guest to breath the icy air of The Himalayas one moment and feel hot and heady in an Arabic souk the next. The mood, music, table patterns, props and decoration all change with the chapters of the story to immerse the diner into one continuous 3D projected tale.

"Unlike other dinner shows, we have created our story around the food and not reversed. We believe that people, when they want to eat, focus on the menu. The entertainment content fascinates and impresses when the respective course was enjoyed" said Nadine Beshir, Dinner Time Story's producer. "The tables are transformed into live screens and draw the spectators into an imaginative story that is shared with the others at the table while enjoying masterfully crafted gourmet food"

The Regency Hotel Kuwait is a five-star hotel with 203

elegantly designed rooms and suites, reflecting the traditional style and values of the region. The hotel is a luxurious retreat with exceptional hospitality at its core. The Regency is ideally situated on the shores of the Arabian Gulf, located just a short 20 minutes' drive from Kuwait International Airport and within easy reach to Kuwait's prime business, shopping and entertainment destinations.

An array of outstanding cuisine and dining options are on offer, whilst the hotel's welcoming lobby lounge provides the perfect place for even more comfortable appointments. The Regency's private beach situated on the shore of the Arabian Gulf also features a range of customized swimming pools. The private Ladies' Lounge provides a swimming pool and Le Petit Chef's Dinner Time Story will be showing daily prior seat bookings are mandatory, except Sundays, at Balsamico restaurant in The Regency Hotel.

KIB celebrates anniversaries with Public Authority of the Disabled

As part of its social responsibility initiatives and its efforts to participate in landmark national events, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) sponsored the national celebrations organized recently by the Public Authority of the Disabled at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's Social Care Centers Complex.



Nawaf Najia

Held in commemoration of National and Liberation Days, the event saw more than 200 participants from the disabled community, as well as invited guests from various social care centers.

On this occasion, Senior Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia, said: "KIB has always been keen

on engaging with all different segments of the community during various national events, particularly National and Liberation Days celebrations. Therefore, we are especially delighted to be able to celebrate our country's proudest moments with this very important segment of our society: people with disabilities." Adding: "People with disabilities have always had a special place within our social responsibility program, and we at KIB seek to embrace and empower this segment of the population, as we truly believe they are an integral part of our society and play a pivotal role in building our future."

Najia further added: "KIB is fully committed to participating in various social and humanitarian initiatives and events organized during this very special time of year, where we all come together to celebrate an occasion dear to the hearts of all the people of Kuwait. We are adamant on supporting, contributing to and participating in events and celebrations which bring people together in unity and love for this great nation."



Jumeirah Messilah Hotel presents evenings of Mexican mariachi music

Explore the true feel of Mexican culture with our Mexican Mariachi Week. From the mouth-watering smells and tastes to the live cultural dances, Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa brings you a special performance of the Mariachi band from 11th through 15th March in collaboration with the Mexican Embassy in Kuwait. Guests can enjoy the lively rhythm of Mexican folk music that represents the cultural and musical heart of Mexico. The grand festive performance will be held in Garden Cafe which will be themed with Mexican-inspired decor.

The audience will be transported to the land of Mexico with soulful and joyful melodies of the Mariachi Band and traditional Mexican dancers. A Mexican buffet, taco station and an extensive selection of Mexican and international mocktails will be featured in Garden Cafe nights on March 11th, 12th and 14th, while families and friends can enjoy an outdoor Mexican BBQ by the pool on Wednesday March 13th. Moreover, guests can start their weekend with a breath-taking Friday Brunch with authentic Mexican mouth-watering flavors on Friday March 15th including exciting kids' outdoor activities for the children.

Georges Akar, Director of Sales & Marketing said: "We are delighted to collaborate with the Mexican Embassy for the fifth year running. We are also pleased to have the Mariachi Band back to perform another fantastic show to entertain our guests with the cultural spirit of Mexico." Mariachi is a form of folk music which originates from the rural area of west-central Mexico. Since the beginning of the 19th century and through a series of historical-cultural processes, it has since become a strong symbol of national identity.

CBK organizes recreational day at Kuwait Autism Center

CBK recently organized a recreational open day for children at Kuwait Autism Center. This came under the ceremonials organized by the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) to celebrate the National Anniversaries and as part of its social responsibility activities. In this regard, CBK's deputy director for corporal communication affairs, Amani Al-Wer'a said that the activity was meant to reach out for all social sects, especially children with special needs. Notably, the open day activity included painting and coloring Kuwait flag with artists from 'Art Space' and was entirely joyful for all kids.



IWG celebrate International Women's Day

The International Women's Day falls on March 8 of every year, and this year the International Women's Group celebrated this special day on March 3 in Al Afrah Ballroom at the Crown Plaza Hotel Farwaniya, in the presence of Ambassador's wives and prominent women in the Kuwaiti society.

IWG President, Clethe Gubler, welcomed members and guests who were present in participation on that special day. She added that the International Women's Day is an

annual stop that is made to measure and value the extent of women's achievements and sacrifices made for their countries and their contributions to the advancement of regional and international developments across all fields. Women, worldwide, have gained and earned rights by defending themselves and demanding equality as effective members of society. We all agree that women deserve to be allocated a day where all this is globally recognized and appreciated.

On this occasion, the group hosted several Kuwaiti and international women whom have gained high educational degrees to share their experiences with the members. Ms Chaitali Roy, a journalist in an English newspaper in Kuwait, spoke about the role of Kuwaiti women as leaders in the society after proving their efficiency and resilience across all fields. She added that women are able to coordinate their work with social and domestic life, a burden carried by women more than men.

Mrs Krysia Derecki, the wife of the Australian Ambassador to Kuwait, explained more about her political role and how she is an active media representative and has had projects with the BBC and the Australian Radio. She is very passionate about being part of non-profit causes. She further explained how she manages to coordinate all that with her family life while still working on positioning the female leadership correctly in both the society and politically.

Dr Dorthiya Krimitas, who works in the field of volunteer medicine at the Red Cross, spoke about her role in monitoring the health conditions in the world. Last but not least, Mrs Zeinab Boushehri, the general manager of a beauty clinic, a graduate of Kuwait University with a degree in business administration and marketing, spoke to the women about the importance of taking time to carefully choose the appropriate medical center in order to avoid

medical mistakes that sometimes occur. Additionally, she highlighted the importance of maintaining their aesthetic appearance to keep up with the modern era while still preserving the social values.

We would like to thank all those who supported Kuwaiti women in their long journey to claim and receive all their rights and benefits. A film about the celebration of International Women's Day was presented, highlighting the development of women in various fields of work, locations and positions, as well as their international standing in global forums and their numerous successes, all of which reflects the great trust that society has given them. On this occasion, Ms Carol Souki and Ms Lillian Maria played the guitar and violin through musical performances that were thoroughly enjoyed by the guests. As always, the Crown Plaza Hotel Chefs had prepared a delicious variety of food including special platters made especially for the occasion.



LOYAC starting theatre training workshops

In celebration of the World Theatre Day (WTD) due on March 27, LOYAC's Academy For Performance Arts (LAPA) will organize a number of theatre training workshops to be presented by experts over a period of ten days starting on March 17. The workshops program includes actor training workshops by Sami Belal, a workshop on theatrical improvisation by the Dutch

theatre artist, Anna Maria in the period of March 17-21, stage theatre basics by Khaled Al-Shatti (March 16-26) and diction by artist Taleb Al-Shehri in the period of Marhc 23-26, 2019. LOYAC will also allow participants take part in one of its productions. Those interested in registration can do so online through LAPA's website or visit LOYAC's quarters at Al-Qebliya School.



Health

Climate change forces Arctic animals to shift feeding habits

'Large collapse in sea-ice conditions in 2006 that has continued to the present day'

TOKYO: Seals and whales in the Arctic are shifting their feeding patterns as climate change alters their habitats, and the way they do so may determine whether they survive, a new study has found. Researchers harnessed datasets spanning two decades to examine how two species of Arctic wildlife — beluga whales, also known as white whales, and ringed seals — are adapting to their changing habitat.

The research focused on the area around Svalbard — northwest of Norway — which is experiencing rapid impacts from climate change and particularly a "large collapse in sea-ice conditions in 2006 that has continued to the present day," said lead researcher Charmain Hamilton. "Both white whales and ringed seals were tagged in Svalbard before this collapse occurred to study their basic ecology. Repeat sampling after the sea-ice collapse occurred thus offered the opportunity for a natural experiment," added Hamilton, who works with the Norwegian Polar Institute.

Both species traditionally hunt for food in areas with sea ice and particularly at so-called tidal glacier fronts, where glaciers meet the ocean. But with climate change melting sea ice and prompting glaciers to retreat, researchers in Norway decided to look at whether — and how — animals in the affected areas were adapting. "The Arctic is the bellwether of climate change," the researchers wrote in the study published yesterday in the Royal Society Biology Letters journal.

"With the rapid pace of change rendering genetic adaptation unfeasible," they reasoned that behavioral and dietary changes "will likely be the first observable responses within ecosystems". They compared datasets produced by trackers attached to seals and whales over two sets of time periods. For the seals, they compared tracker data from 28 individuals between 1996-2003 and then 2010-2016, and for the whales they looked at data from 18 animals between 1995-2001 and 16 animals from 2013-2016.

Arctic 'refugia'

The data showed that two decades ago, both species spent around half their time foraging at glacier fronts and eating a diet dominated by polar cod. But ringed seals now spend "significantly" higher proportions of time near tidal glacier fronts "while the white whales had the opposite response and had moved elsewhere to look for food. "Tidal glacier fronts appear to be serving as Arctic 'refugia' for RS (ringed seals), explaining why this species has increased the amount of time spent near glaciers," the study said.

White whales meanwhile now "have larger home ranges and spent less time near glacier fronts and more time in the centre of fjords". The researchers, from the Norwegian Polar Institute and the University of Tromsø, speculated that whales have shifted their diet, taking advantage of the fact that climate change is allowing new fish

species to move further north as waters warm.

Seals in contrast stuck with their old diet, but appeared to spend more time searching for the food at the glacier fronts. "What was most surprising about the results were the limited changes we found in the ringed seals' behavior," Hamilton said. "It is not clear why this species is becoming more tightly associated with tidal glacier front refugia and not also foraging on Atlantic fish and invertebrates in other areas of the fjords."

The study points out that beluga whales tend to be dietary generalists compared to ringed seals, and said the "flexible" response of whales would improve their chances of adapting to warming climes. By contrast, the apparent doubling down by the ringed seals on their traditional hunting grounds "reflects limited adaptability and resilience". And that could be bad news for the seals in a changing world. "Species and subpopulations that are not able to make such changes are almost certain to decline, perhaps to extinction where refugial areas become too limiting for species survival," the study said.

Beluga whales are protected, so studies examining their stomach contents for clues on diet are not possible, but research on how the ringed seal's diet has changed will be completed later this year, Hamilton said. And further research on both species is planned, including into how sea-ice collapse is affecting reproduction among ringed seals. —AFP

UN finds herpes killed millions of Iraqi carp

BAGHDAD: The sudden death last year of millions of Iraqi carp, used in the country's signature dish, was caused by a strain of herpes harmless to humans, the United Nations said yesterday. Iraqi fish farmers south of Baghdad were left reeling in late 2018 after piles of dead carp were found washed up on the banks of the Euphrates River or floating in their cages.

Rumors swirled over whether the fish were sick or the river had been poisoned, and Iraqi politicians put the issue at the top of their agenda. Yesterday, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) said a months-long international investigation had pinned down the slippery source: the Koi Herpes Virus. "KHV is a very serious and lethal disease that is known to cause almost 100 percent mortality rates in carps," said Dr. Thomas Wahli, who heads the Swiss Reference Laboratory for Notifiable Diseases.

Flame-grilled carp seasoned with sauces made from onions and tomato and known as masgoof, is Iraq's national delicacy. The mass deaths in the fish farms of Saddat Al-Hindiya in Babylon province, about 80 kilometers south of Baghdad, had panicked carp farmers, who said they had lost thousands of dollars overnight. Samples of the dead fish, water, sediment and feed were sent to Wahli's lab as well as facilities in Jordan and Italy.

They confirmed the carp were killed by the viral outbreak, which does not pose a threat to humans, the UN said. Temperatures in the Euphrates dropped to around 24 degrees in November, a prime environment for KHV. The overstocking of fish farms and low-quality river water may have also spread the disease further, it said. Iraq produces 29,000 tons of fish each year, according to 2016 statistics gathered by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization. "This is the first case of Koi Herpes Virus disease in Iraq, and it is a significant case report which will need to be notified to the World Organisation for Animal Health," Iraq's Environment Minister Ala Alwan said. "We are pleased to have been able to get to the bottom of this difficult case," Alwan added. —AFP

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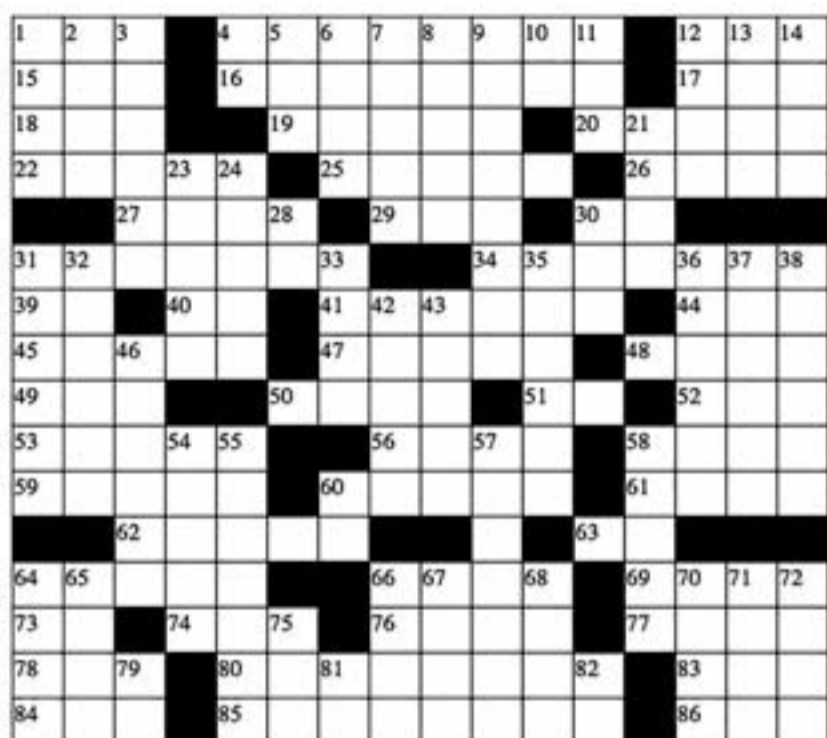
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Stars

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ACROSS

- 1. Narrow wood or metal or plastic runners used for gliding over snow.
4. A tan discoloration of a woman's face that is associated with pregnancy or with the use of oral contraceptives.
12. Standard time in the 6th time zone west of Greenwich, reckoned at the 90th meridian.
15. (Informal) Uncomplimentary terms for a policeman.
16. Informal or slang terms for mentally irregular.
17. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
18. Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
19. A landlocked desert republic in north-central Africa.
20. Relating to the deepest parts of the ocean (below 6000 meters).
22. Russian country house.
25. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
26. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
27. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
29. Any of various long-tailed rodents similar to but larger than a mouse.
31. Common black-and-gray Eurasian bird noted for thievery.
34. A member of an ancient people living east of Babylonia as early as 4000 BC.
39. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
40. The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.
41. One of two flaps attached to a cap to keep the ears warm.
44. Nocturnal mouse-like mammal with forelimbs modified to form membranous wings and anatomical adaptations for echolocation by which they navigate.
45. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
47. African mahogany trees.
48. Capital and largest city and economic center of Peru.
49. French writer whose novels described the sordid side of city life (1804-1857).
50. Material used to daub walls.
51. 1,000,000,000 periods per second.
52. A barrier constructed to contain the flow of water or to keep out the sea.
53. Small tropical American tree bearing edible plumlike fruit.
56. Grains used as food either unpolished or more often polished.
59. A unit of elastance equal to the reciprocal of a farad.
61. A primeval personification of air and breath.
62. The Uralic language spoken by the Yeniseian people.
63. Being nine more than ninety.
64. The lofty nest of a bird of prey (such as a hawk or eagle).
69. Open-heart surgery in which the rib cage is opened and a section of a blood vessel is grafted from the aorta to the coronary artery to bypass the blocked section of the coronary artery and improve the blood supply to the heart.
73. A bachelor's degree in religion.
74. A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
76. Toward the mouth or oral region.
77. A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.
78. A doctor's degree in education.
80. Trees or shrubs of the families Ebenaceae or Sapotaceae or Syzygiaceae or Symplocaceae.
83. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
84. A light touch or stroke.
85. (Botany) Having stalked flowers along an elongated stem that continue to open in succession from below as the stem continues to grow.
86. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).

DOWN

- 1. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
2. Tree bearing large brown nuts containing e.g. caffeine.
3. A medicinal drug used to evoke vomiting (especially in cases of drug overdose or poisoning).
4. Being ten more than one hundred ninety.
5. Hormones (estrogen and progesterin) are given to postmenopausal women.
6. The state of needing something that is absent or unavailable.
7. Of a moderate orange-yellow color.
8. Jordan's port.
9. In a sedate manner.
10. A form of address for a man.
11. The residue that remains when something is burned.
12. The closing section of a musical composition.
13. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
14. The basic unit of money in Western Samoa.
21. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
23. Australian shrubs and small trees with evergreen usually spiny leaves and dense clusters of showy flowers.
24. Type genus of the Ardeidae.
28. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
30. (Scotland) A small loaf or roll of soft bread.
32. A river that rises in northern Colombia and flows generally eastward to the Orinoco in central Venezuela.
33. Flightless New Zealand rail of thievish disposition having short wings each with a spur used in fighting.
35. (South African) A camp defended by a circular formation of wagons.
36. In the same place (used when citing a reference).
37. (Mexican) Corn and commeal dough stuffed with a meat mixture then wrapped in corn husks and steamed.
38. A soft cotton or worsted fabric with an open mesh.
42. (Zoroastrianism) Title for benevolent deities.
43. Marked by excessive enthusiasm for and intense devotion to a cause or idea.
46. (comparative of 'near') Being the one of two that is less distant in space.
54. Any of various fissiped mammals with nonretractile claws and typically long muzzles.
55. More often or more frequently.
57. Hardy breed of cattle resulting from crossing domestic cattle with the American buffalo.
58. The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
60. A state in New England.
65. Tropical starchy tuberous root.
66. The quality of a person's voice.
67. The biblical name for ancient Syria.
68. In the Roman calendar.
70. Type genus of the Amidae.
71. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
72. Stairway in India leading down to a landing on the water.
75. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
79. A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.
81. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
82. A toxic nonmetallic element related to sulfur and tellurium.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Stick close to your work friends today. You may need their support because you're in the mood to try out some, although practical, still far out ideas in your career. You need work friends whom you trust to help guide you in something you may have missed. Also, those same workmates will have your back while you study the merits of your ideas when someone who doesn't hold you in the highest esteem confronts you today. Aries. Instead of a bad situation, you have friends who buffer it for you. All-in-all this is a great day at work though. Go home to someone you love and make it even better. Talk while dining and finish off the day in the arms of your lover.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Looking your work situation over, eyeing the problems and creating a solution that works is your forte today. Furthermore, it's not just at work. You have a knack for this today more so than you generally do. Though you can get irritated a little more easily than usual, you want to be out with friends you love. A younger friend or family member might be the cause of some frustration, Taurus. It has to be a person you love in order to move you into feeling angry during such a good day. Find some time to entertain those who make you feel good about yourself today.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You don't want to be bothered by anyone now because you have visions of the future where financial concerns are made manifest in great ways. All you want to do with your time is to make money, secure your future and encourage business growth. Your intuition is urging you on and you know it'll work correctly for you now. You're using your logic to make gut decisions that will pay off later but allow you to see the results now, Gemini. You've got the passion and the desire to do work. Make it real. Enjoy the loving nature of your lover tonight as you've done the last few days. You feel on top of the world now.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You're intelligent and you know it but watch how you personalize that to others now. You want to create your best life but you need help to get all you visualize accomplished. Your words are good but your approach might need a little work. Cancer. Taking for granted someone knows what you mean isn't the road you need to walk. If you've got a new concept in mind you have to present it to others in such a way that they know exactly what it is. They can't use their perception on your behalf to love it like you can. Enjoy a restful night at home without worry tonight.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Actions at work will dictate how others really feel about you. Coworkers can't understand your ideas but that doesn't matter. Your practical application of your brilliant ideas will change their minds, especially the boss's when he or she sees them working. Financial savvy is your strong suit. You know how to turn a penny into a dollar and make it look easy afterwards. That skill is one few people have. You should be proud. Most find you intelligent and fun to be around. It's just your coworkers, not your boss, that holds out a little in giving you kudos. That'll change.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Being practical comes into play now but so does creativity. Yesterday you were thought by some to be psychic. That has carried over into today and gives you a sense that you can do anything needed to make your job wealthier and better in many ways. You like being thought of as financially savvy and go a long way towards making the most of that title. It seems to come naturally now, Virgo. Anything that is cutting edge gets your attention where you find ways to make it fit your needs. You feel intelligent and capable of more than you've given in a long time. It shows, people notice.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Practicality and ingenuity are keywords of your life right now. You're well aware of the responsibility these two words bring. Those you work with know you think of them as you do yourself and are willing to help you in any new endeavors. You marry those two words well. Financially you want more and it shows. Libra, you also want to be respected for your work ethic and for decisions made at home too. Love is on your mind and you want the pleasure it brings. Take the time to blow off some steam from your pressure cooker life tonight with your lover. Enjoy.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Looking to break from your normal outlook on life, you may find yourself researching other areas in which you can take your career. You want something challenging but also practical. A place to show off your investigative talents might be just the thing to tax your mind, Scorpio. Being a part of a group of friends with whom you can talk about anything is truly appreciated now. Also, that group of friends will give you good advice as to what you should look into for your new job and may even be able to direct you in getting an interview. Try to keep your insecurities to a minimum. Once you're hired, they'll see quickly your potential value to the company.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Here you go. You're watching creative applications you've thought of become concrete and produce what you need at work. That's gotten people's attention. Your emotions still don't feel as if everything is quite right but you have evidence now life is going your way. There's still some frustration. However, that'll soon melt away. Be grateful. A good friend tells you that he or she understands what you've been going through and gives their story to back it up. He or she also mentions that you have helped them anytime you ask and that they'll respect your privacy. What more could you want.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Right now is the time to make your life what you desire. You can take innovative steps to make practical decisions on work, and believe it or not, home life and love. You're building all these feelings you're having with your business-like attitude combining and creating better making them real and practical situations. You can't stand to be wishy-washy and you have been while feeling a little sorry for self lately. Now you're taking the steps needed to change your life to what you require, Capricorn. Being happy is the primary purpose of your being but it's done in a methodical manner like all else in your life.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Practicality is your motto at work today. Putting into practice good practical, innovative structures will only drive your life into better places. This new cycle has you working hard and enjoying it more. You feel, Aquarius, that if you stop for even a moment, you'll get stuck in a bogged down work situation. You have a need for speed now at work. Keep it up. You have the energy to create and invent as well and the wherewithal. Take time to settle down and enjoy life in other directions at home. Those you love will help you decompress.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

The cycle that's begun for you now is powerful in that it'll change your life. Your ideas can be transformed into products easily. Innovation becomes real. That's exciting and you look forward to each day now. People look to you for answers. That's just where you shine, Pisces. You're capable and willing to make giant strides now in finances and any material items. With power comes great responsibility. You're willing to shoulder that too. At lunch make your day better with a touch of romance. This added perk and its enjoyment goes with the rest of your life now.

Wordsearch Puzzle

70's Songs 3 - Word Search

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

BABE BAD BLOOD BARRACUDA CAR WASH DANCING QUEEN DREAMING FAME GREASE
HOT STUFF LADY LET IT BE MAGGIE MAY MONEY MY SHARONA POP MUZIK
RICH GIRL SAD EYES SIR DUKE SKY HIGH TRAGEDY VENUS YOUR SONG

Yesterday's Solution

70's Songs 2 - Solution

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

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BAD GIRLS LAST DANCE REUNITED
BROWN SUGAR LOLA SIGNS
DREAM ON LOVE HURTS SUNDOWN
DREAMS LOW RIDER SUPERSTAR
DRIFT AWAY MAGIC MAN THE GAMBLER
EBONY EYES MY LOVE WITHOUT YOU
FEELINGS NIGHT FEVER WOODSTOCK

Yesterday's Solution

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

Sudoku grid with numbers 1-9 in some cells and empty spaces for solving.

Yesterday's Solution

Sudoku grid with numbers 1-9 in some cells and empty spaces for solving.

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2019



Revellers covered in talcum powder take part in 'Los Indianos' street carnival in Santa Cruz de la Palma, on the Spanish Canary island of La Palma. The over month long carnival including 'Los Indianos' sees orchestras playing Caribbean and Brazilian rhythms throughout the festivities that range from elections for the Carnival Queen, the Junior Queen and the Senior Queen, children and adult murgas (satirical street bands), comparsas (dance groups) to performances on the streets. — AFP

Culture or cruelty? Camel fighting persists in Pakistan despite ban



Thousands cheer as a caravan of camels outfitted in decorative saddles and garlands lumber across a dusty pitch to fight—a sport that is officially banned in Pakistan but remains popular. The crowd scream to the din of dhol drums and inch closer to the animals as anticipation mounts ahead of the bout, which is part of a festival in the central city of Layyah. Before the fight begins, the camels are stripped of their festive pom poms and bells. Then the games begin.

Animals wrestle with their necks and bite as they attempt to pin their adversary to the ground. There are howls of pain and grunts. "It is a cultural fair and people came here to see it with passion and zeal," spectator Aliq ur Rehman told AFP. "You can see the excitement around here. Eventually the referee declares a winner, prompting fans to surge forward to encircle the victorious animal."

The owner sits proudly on the camel's back celebrating success—but also prize money of around 100,000 rupees (\$715). Camel fighting is illegal in Pakistan but the event at the Layyah festival still draws a significant crowd. The country has a long history of bloodsports—with bears, cocks, and dogs, among the other creatures forced to fight.

"According to the Pakistani law, all animal fights are illegal," said lawyer Abdul Ahad Shah of the Animal Welfare Organization. He added that most camels injured in the fights are not given proper medical care. "Villagers use local remedies to treat wounds. It's cruel," Shah explained. Enthusiasts brush away the criticism, saying the fights are a tradition in the country's Punjab heartland. The animals are usually trained for more than a year before they take part in any fights. "It shows our culture," said local elder Muhammad Ali Jatoi. "People gather here, greet each other and forget the anxieties of life."

Pakistan does little to enforce its bans on any kind of animal fighting, though there are sporadic crackdowns.



Last year it passed an amendment to its Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Bill which suggested the fine for inciting animals to fight should be increased from 50 rupees to 300,000 rupees. The original law was set by the British in 1890 and had not been amended. The Koran also instructs Muslims to avoid animal fighting as a sport. Camel wrestling is also common in Afghanistan and the Middle East. The practice dates back thousands of years. In Turkey, which hosts the hugely popular Selcuk Camel Wrestling Festival, local media reported attempts by local politicians for the activity to be listed on the UNESCO Intangible World Heritage List. — AFP

In this file photo owners separate their camels with sticks during a traditional camel fight at an annual festival in Rajin Shah in Layyah District. — AFP photos

“ According to the Pakistani law, all animal fights are illegal ”



A camel owner separates camels during a traditional camel fight at an annual festival in Rajin Shah in Layyah District.



Owners celebrate after a traditional camel fight at an annual festival in Rajin Shah in Layyah District.



An owner watches his camel during a traditional camel fight at an annual festival in Rajin Shah in Layyah District.

JACKSON'S DEFAMED LEGACY HAS SUPERFANS UP IN ARMS

A documentary on pedophilia accusations against Michael Jackson has left some fans grappling with the late superstar's tarnished legacy—but among his outraged superfans, protecting it is all that matters. Celebrity fandom has morphed into a vicious online tool, with superfan gangs-Beyoncé's Beyhive, Justin Bieber's Beliebers, Cardi B's Bardi Gang, to name a few—attacking whenever their idol's reputation is thrown into question, no matter the circumstances. And when celebrities face accusations of grievous crimes, as is the case with Jackson, psychiatrist Sue Varma said the urge to push back grows.

The phenomenon stems from a "need to have an escape, a fantasy, someone we aspire to be," she said. "It's a form of denial," according to Varma. "They are superhuman and we want—rather, we need—to believe that they can do no wrong." Jackson diehards swarmed Twitter as the disturbing documentary "Leaving Neverland" aired, hijacking the film's eponymous hashtag to smear accusers while also defending their idol under #MJInnocent. "Shame on you for dragging an innocent man," wrote one Twitter user with the handle @Claudia20195, calling alleged victims Wade Robson and James Safechuck "money hungry."

"The more I read into and watch this whole #FindingNeverland documentary the more angry I get," wrote another, @bailey_hensel. "These guys are exploiting a dead man to make a dollar... My heart is breaking for the Jackson family." The documentary's director, Dan Reed, told AFP he has been receiving vitriolic messages from Jackson fans for months. "They have a blind devotion to him," he said. "It's almost like it's a religious cult."

'Toxic fandom'

Superfandom—a relationship to a figure, object or ideology that often spills over into obsession—is nothing new, said media scholar Paul Booth of Chicago's DePaul University, but social media has increased its visibility. "Fans have always had disagreements and antagonisms," Booth said, "but the difference today is people who aren't fans have ready access to view it." The internet, he said, allows entry into "fan communities," heightening feelings of identification and a need to defend.

"When our object of fandom, which we have associated so much with who we are, is accused of something heinous, it some ways we want to deny that because it seems to reflect on us as people," Booth said. Today, he said "it's not enough to mount a defense," as social media discourse offers a platform to "attack back." "The best defense is a good offense" to many superfans, Booth said, calling this attitude "the basis of toxic fandom."

For digital media scholar Mel Stanfill of the University of Central Florida, the online venom is encouraged by "the shifting way people converse." "You can just fire it off," she said. "You don't reflect, you just react." "Our expectations about what is socially appropriate has changed."

Man or mirage?

The struggle for fans to reconcile art with its maker reaches far back, Booth said, pointing to Roman Polanski and Woody Allen, both accused of pedophilia, as examples. But the issue has become particularly prescient in the #MeToo era that has changed the way society views alleged sex abuse victims, with celebrities like R&B super-

star R. Kelly facing fresh legal challenges over grave accusations of misconduct. In terms of Jackson, that "Leaving Neverland" has revived pedophilia accusations in stark relief nearly a decade after the artist's overdose death only exacerbates the desire to protect his legacy, said Varma.

"People can be legends in their lifetime but somehow they become angels upon death," she said, citing Elvis and Princess Diana as examples. "Culturally, we are taught to not speak ill of the dead—and somehow we just want to exonerate them." Jackson's estate—which categorically denies all accusations and is suing HBO for \$100 million—has praised the online community passionately defending the late King of Pop. "Thank you to all the fans that are always standing by my uncle and my family," tweeted Jackson's nephew Taj. "You are the backbone behind this fight. I wouldn't have the strength, if it weren't for you."

"I wouldn't be armed with all the facts, if it weren't for you." But despite fan backlash, director Reed said "support for the film has been a lot greater than I expected." "I think the fans will never accept that, because the Michael Jackson that they have a relationship with is not the real Michael Jackson," he said. "It's not the man, it's the mirage; it's the image; it's the icon." — AFP



In this file photo American pop music star Michael Jackson sings October 13, 1988 at the Capital Center in Landover, Maryland. — AFP



Brie Larson attends Marvel Studios "Captain Marvel" Premiere in Hollywood, California. — AFP photos



US actor Samuel L. Jackson attends the world premiere of "Captain Marvel".

Captain Marvel, a superhero with girl power to spare

Iron Man, Thor, Captain America: scores of Marvel movies had superheroes taking turns to save the world on the big screen before a woman finally captured a leading role in the comic franchise's films. But "Captain Marvel"—which hits screens around the world later this week—is making up for lost time, firing girl power on all cylinders. There are women masterfully piloting war planes, at the front lines of important scientific experiments—and of course, there's Carol Danvers, Brie Larson's mighty Captain Marvel. Larson, who won an Oscar in 2016 for her role in "Room," has until now been best known for her work on independent movies and her outspoken feminism.

To play Danvers, Larson spent nine months in rigorous physical training. "I was able to push myself further than I ever thought possible," Larson said at the movie's premiere Monday evening. An Air Force fighter pilot who is trained to be a member of the alien Kree warriors, Danvers lands in the middle of an intergalactic war with the Skrulls. To carry out her mission, she teams up with Agent Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson) — a recurring Marvel character who makes his first contact with planet Earth in the movie—and with her four legged sidekick Goose the Cat.

Of the decision to set the story more than 20 years in the past, Marvel Studios Director Kevin Feige said at the film's premiere in Hollywood, "We wanted Carol to have her origin all to herself." Danvers can fly. She can shoot cosmic rays. She can absorb energy. But she is strong in other ways too, and tough enough to hold her own in a universe that doesn't always value women-driving home the feminist message of the movie, co-directed by Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, which says women have nothing to prove to men.

Competing with 'Wonder Woman'

Feige told Entertainment Weekly there are "are a lot of reasons" this movie was not made before now. "Not

the least of which was fighting for many years the erroneous notion that audiences did not want to see a female-led hero (film) because of a slew of films 15 years ago that didn't work," he said. "And my belief was always that they didn't work not because they were female-led stories—they didn't work because they were not particularly good movies." Of the few female-led superhero movies attempted until now many were box office flops, like Jennifer Garner's "Elektra" in 2005 and Halle Berry's "Catwoman" in 2004.

As a result, Marvel spent more than a decade relegating its female characters to secondary parts, such as Avengers member Black Widow, played by Scarlett Johansson starting in 2012. Seeking to be more representative, Marvel, a Disney subsidiary, finally responded to demands for more strong female characters on the silver screen—which were further spurred by the #MeToo movement. Telling Captain Marvel's story was also a way to compete with DC Comics, owned by Warner Bros, whose superhero hit "Wonder Woman," directed by Patty Jenkins, premiered in 2017 and raked in more than \$800 million worldwide.

Its sequel, "Wonder Woman 1984," is due out in 2020. "Obviously I was elated to feel times changing a little and women being more accepted below the line but I think there is still a lot of work to be done with that," said Debbie Berman, the editor of "Captain Marvel." "I think the noise doesn't necessarily match the action right now, but it starts with the noise, so we'll take it."

Marvel got a critical and financial boost from last year's "Black Panther," the first film to focus on a black superhero, set in the fictional African kingdom of Wakanda. The film won three Oscars and has become a pop culture phenomenon.

With "Captain Marvel" the studio serves up the special effects pyrotechnics typical of the genre—but also a validating message for female audiences. Goose the Cat injects an element of humor—and surprise—while the movie's '90s setting comes with nostalgic winks at an era without ubiquitous cellphones and with painfully slow broadband connections. And to complete the scene, the movie's soundtrack borrows from a roster of 1990s bands including Garbage, Hole and No Doubt—bands for the most part led by women. — AFP



(From left) Chloe Bennet, Elizabeth Henstridge, Henry Simmons, Ming-Na Wen, and Jeff Ward attend the Marvel Studios "Captain Marvel" premiere in Hollywood, California.

Hello Kitty hits Hollywood with planned film debut

Hello Kitty, Japan's moon-faced global icon of cute, will soon appear in a Hollywood film for the first time in her 45-year-old history, her creator said yesterday. Sanrio, the feline character's operator, announced it was teaming up with New Line Cinema and FlynnPictureCo for the film after a near five-year discussion about rights for the big screen. "A search for writers and creative talent will commence immediately," Sanrio said in a statement.

The mouthless character, with her child-like hair bow and a registered height of five apples, has spawned a multi-billion-dollar industry since Sanrio introduced her in 1974. Immediately recognizing Hello Kitty's cash cow potential, the company branched out into merchandising the year after and she now adorns everything from pencil cases and pyjamas to double-decker buses and airliners. Last year, a Japanese railway firm even splashed images of Hello Kitty over a special shinkansen, or bullet train, painted in shocking pink and white.

To mark her 40th year, toymaker Bandai released yet another licensed Kitty product: so-called "smartpants"



that slip on the bottom of a smartphone for those who think their device needs underwear. Hello Kitty is now found in 130 countries on more than 50,000 branded products every year, according to Sanrio. The firm also operates two theme parks in Japan and licenses characters such as Hello Kitty for amusement parks overseas, including in China. — AFP

Netflix film tells tale of Malawian eco boy genius

A new Malawian film, Netflix's latest offering to raise the profile of African cinema, has caused a stir back home, facing accusations of mangling the language and relying on foreign actors. "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind", which launched on Netflix last Friday, is based on the true-life story of Malawian child inventor William Kamkwamba, who built a windmill to save his village from drought. Swiss-based Malawian critic Onjezani Kenani complained that "Malawians were never the target audience of this movie." The film, which won the Alfred P. Sloan Prize for promoting science at this year's Sundance Festival, is directed by and stars Oscar-nominated Nigerian-British actor Chiwetel Ejiofor in his directorial debut.

The film, set in 2001 and 2002, shows Kamkwamba as a young teenager aged around 13, scrambling around a dump looking for batteries so he can study at night when his family can no longer afford kerosene. Inspired by his teacher's bike dynamo and having found a pump at the tip, he sets about building a working windmill to extract water from the ground, using only an outdated book from his school's library. It is the latest Netflix original film on the African continent, and follows the success of "Catching Feelings", a film directed by and starring South African artist Kagiso Lediga.

The platform also announced in December that it had commissioned a series of comedy specials from acclaimed African comics. But "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind" has received mixed reviews in Malawi for hardly using Malawian actors, with critics panning the cast for their poor attempts at speaking Malawi's Chichewa language.

'Malawians were never the target'

"The Chichewa sounds funny and unrealistic," Kenani said. "Malawians were never the target audience of this movie, and so the global audience for which the movie is intended does not care whether or not the Chichewa is mangled," he told AFP. But leading Malawian filmmaker Shemu Joyah, who saw the movie at a press screening in Germany, praised the production. "It is a beautifully-executed film with powerful performances by both the main and minor cast," he said.

"I was very impressed with Lily Banda, who is the only Malawian with a main role. (She) puts up a resolute performance in the presence of much more vastly experienced actors like Chiwetel Ejiofor and Aissa Maiga."

Ejiofor plays Trywell Kamkwamba, William's father, while Maiga plays his mother Agnes. (But) the language

was still a problem for a Malawian like me—but then I was probably the only one who understood Chichewa in the whole cinema and so it did not matter to the rest of the audience," Joyah said. He pleaded with filmmakers to "next time give local actors a chance—they might surprise the world."



'Maybe the movie can inspire'

Kamkwamba's struggle to harness the power of the wind and convince those around him of his audacious scheme is set against a backdrop of social unrest as crops fail and taps run dry. A strongman president character is shown visiting the village before his henchmen beat an elder who dared to raise the issue of drought and soaring grain prices, giving the film a political edge. "It is a great film that captures a real-life drama and builds tension even when you already know the ending, a sign of a well-made movie," Joyah added.

But filmgoer Gertrude Chimanga said the cod Chichewa was distracting. "In some phrases, the actors are saying Chichewa words that do not make sense," she complained. Malawian cinematographer Chipiliro Khonje was more forgiving. "I give them a thumbs-up for trying. They should have taken more time to study the language," he said. Kamkwamba, today aged 31, told AFP that he appreciated the use of his language in the film. "Learning a language is one of the hardest things for people," he said. "When I was writing the book with my co-author, Bryan Mealer, I wanted to share my story. I hope the movie will be able to reach some people who weren't able to access the book."

"Maybe the movie can inspire some people who hear my story to do something similar in their own lives." Kamkwamba said that "for the most part I was not involved" with the film's production, but he did answer questions about the windmill he built against the odds. "I did visit the set while they were filming in Wimbe very close to my home," he said of his home village, 150 kilometers (90 miles) north of the capital Lilongwe. Kamkwamba is now raising funds to open an innovation centre with his non-profit organization, the Moving Windmills Project. "It is hard to watch because it's reliving tough times from my past," said Kamkwamba, who went on to do environmental studies at Dartmouth College in the United States. "But some parts were joyful moments, so I have mixed feelings re-watching the movie." — AFP



Louis Vuitton ends Paris fashion week with night in two museums

Designer Nicolas Ghesquiere had teased that his Louis Vuitton Paris fashion week show late Tuesday would be a "shock". He wasn't kidding. While guests had been invited to the Louvre Museum in the center of the French capital, when they took their seats they actually found themselves in the Pompidou Centre, a kilometer away to the east. This wasn't some sort teleporter trick from "Star Trek". Ghesquiere had recreated the groundbreaking architecture of the Pompidou's modern art galleries inside the Louvre—"a museum inside a museum"—to demonstrate the shock of the new.

And his clothes for autumn/winter were just as tricky, mixing stripes, checks, floral and all sorts of prints and patterns in what the New York Times's Vanessa Friedman quickly called a "good taste, bad taste mash up". On the last of nine packed days of shows, it was hard for some exhausted fashionistas to get their heads round, particularly as many had shed a silent tear earlier in the day as the late Karl Lagerfeld's final collection was shown at Chanel.

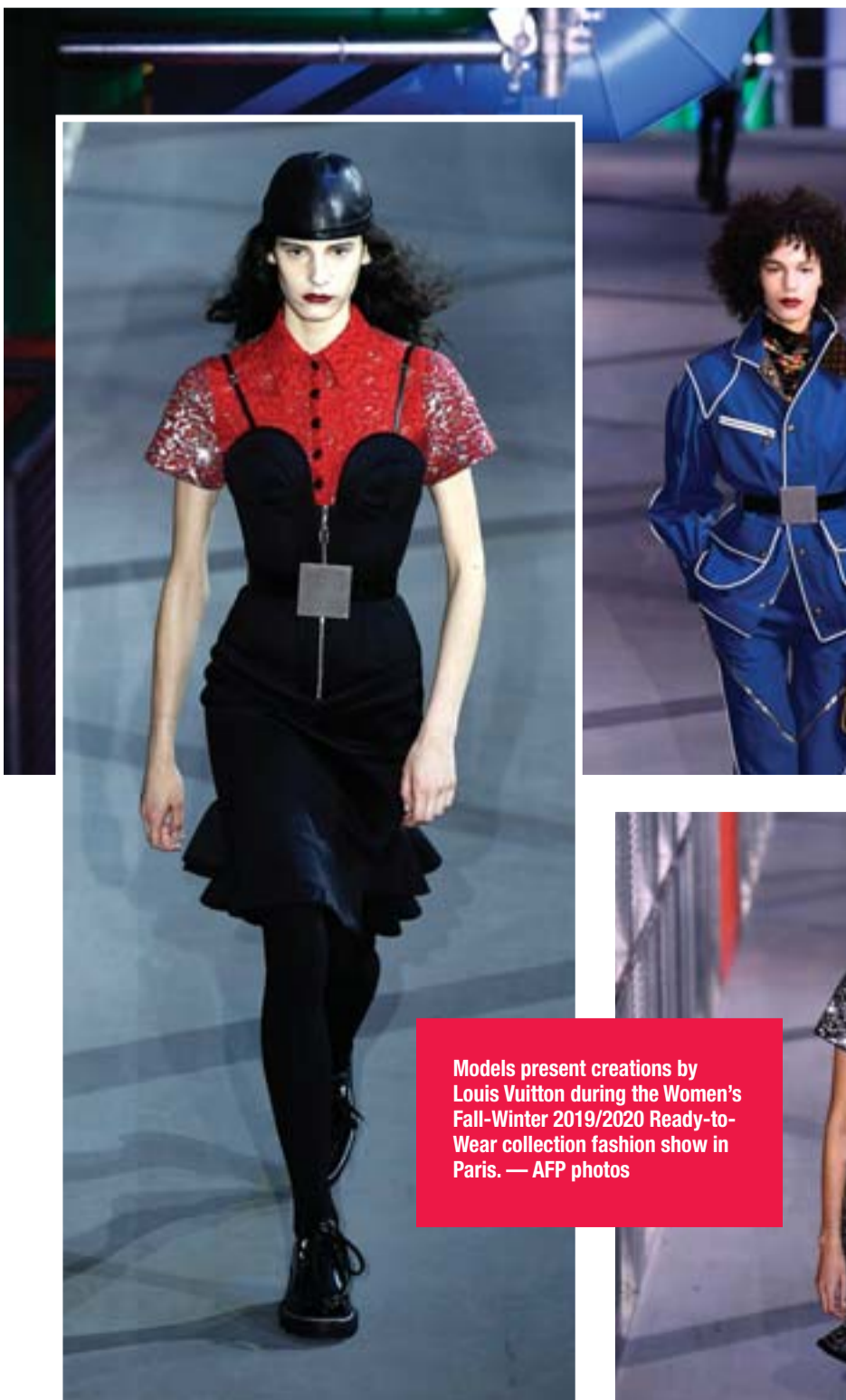
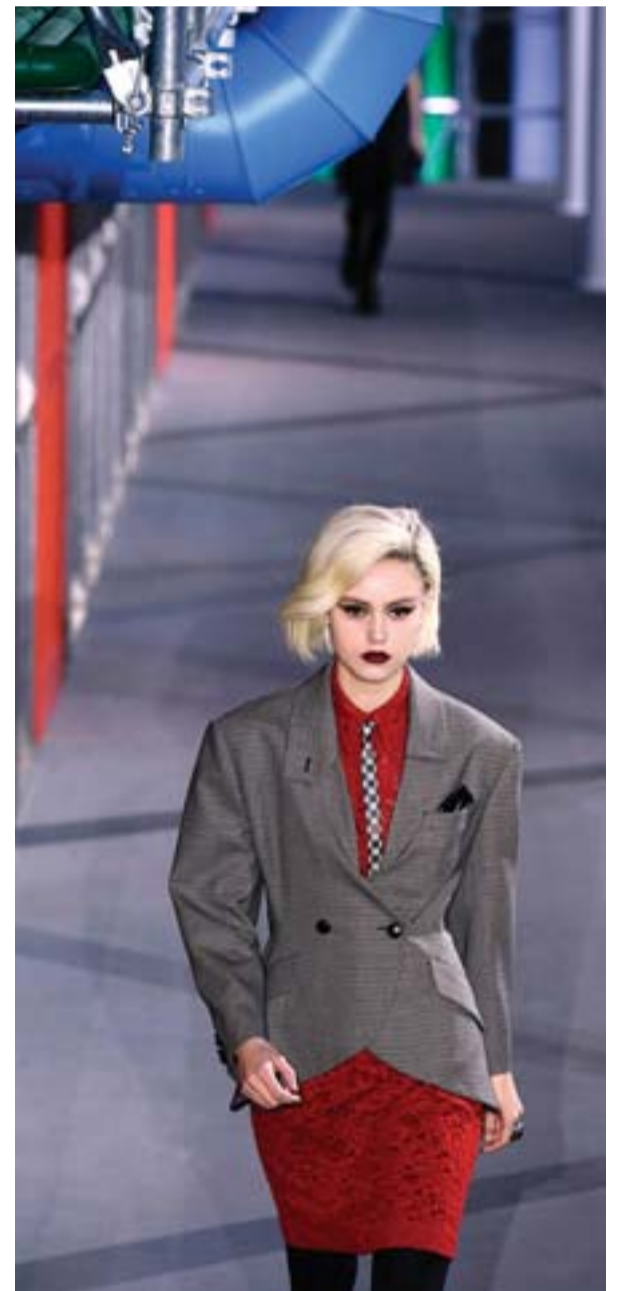
But Ghesquiere had warned that change was a-coming in a tongue-in-cheek social media teaser video from his "muse". American actress and model Indya Moore, the transgender star of the US television series "Pose", "I was busy admiring myself being admired by myself," Moore drawled archly in what may have been a swipe at the latest trendy modern tribe, the autosexuals.

No need to panic

Excessive self-regard is not something fashion designers as smart as Ghesquiere could be accused of. Before the shareholders of the world's richest fashion brand start panicking, there was method to this. In fact, the pick 'n' mix pattern palate was an homage to what Ghesquiere called the "sartorial melting pot" of the still rather rough-edged shopping district near the Pompidou Centre, where the timelessly tasteful wardrobe codes of upper class Parisians rub up uneasily against the more eclectic street style of the youthful multicultural suburbs.

"It's an incredible mix which converges towards this epicentre" near the Chatelet transport hub, Ghesquiere said. "That is where I am taking Louis Vuitton today: a house of multiple expressions," he added. The supernova of Hollywood stars on the show's front row who have hitched themselves to the Vuitton wagon—Emma Stone, Jennifer Connolly, Lea Seydoux and Swedish Oscar winner Alicia Vikander—definitely dug it. Supermodel Karlie Kloss also seemed to lap up the mash-up mix of inspirations from Mondrian to Cubism to futuristic street, typified by the black leather swimming hats.

A big shouldered floral kaftan coat with a stripey interior somehow worked, and there was plenty of expensively sleek black leather also in the mix for the woman who likes to keep it rock 'n' roll. Despite all the talk of innovation, there was lots of the classic luxury casual looks—and classics with a casual luxury touch—that has won Ghesquiere such a fan club, one that extends to the nearby Elysee Palace and France's first lady Brigitte Macron. — AFP



Models present creations by Louis Vuitton during the Women's Fall-Winter 2019/2020 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP photos

Moroccan climber inspires girls to conquer fears

The first Moroccan to scale the seven summits of the world's continents, Bouchra Baibanou wants to inspire a new generation of women who "dare to believe in themselves". "With will power and perseverance, you can get there," said Baibanou, 49, weeks after reaching the summit of Antarctica's Mount Vinson. Conquering the 4,897 meter (16,066 foot) peak capped an eight-year journey, during which Baibanou travelled the globe to climb each continent's highest mountain. "I am proud, as a Moroccan and as a woman," she said from her home in Sale, neighboring the capital Rabat, where trophies adorn her living room. That pride was evident atop Vinson, where Baibanou clutched her country's flag-and a banner with a campaign message-at temperatures of minus 40 degrees Celsius (Fahrenheit).

"From the summit of Vinson, Baibanou continues to support the fight combatting violence against women and girls," UN Women Maghreb wrote on Twitter on January 1, after her ascent. Wearing a beige headscarf and black shirt, Baibanou described the mountain as "a great school" as she reeled off the attributes needed to scale a peak. "Courage, optimism, perseverance, determination and humility." But her passion has required a financial slog.

Baibanou is a government engineer and climbed the seven peaks with a budget of two million dirhams (185,000 euros, \$210,000). Sponsorship raised 60,000 euros for the Vinson expedition and 80,000 for Everest. "It's not very rewarding to be a mountaineering adventur-

er in Morocco," she said. As well as doing community work, Baibanou gives talks in schools and universities around the country.

She is also campaigning to develop mountain tourism in Morocco, especially improving the Toubkal National Park and "reinforcing security". In December, Morocco was shaken by the murder of two Scandinavian women hiking in the mountains. "This terrorism act does not represent my country-one of peace and tolerance," said Baibanou, who was outraged by the killings.

Overcoming fears

Despite her mountaineering success, Baibanou only discovered hiking aged 15 during a summer camp. Her father, a mechanic, and her stay-at-home mother were not very interested in nature or sport. It was not until she was 26 that Baibanou climbed her first peak in Morocco-Toubkal. It was an exhilarating experience, spurring her on to take up mountaineering in France's Chamonix region and climb Mont Blanc.

She still hikes close to home and last year took a group of around 30 teenagers up Toubkal, the country's highest peak at 4,167 meters. "I hope to be a role model, above all for young women-for those who dare to believe in themselves," said Baibanou. While she travelled the world mountaineering, her 14-year-old daughter was looked after by family, including her husband, who supported her ambitions.



Moroccan mountaineer Bouchra Baibanou is pictured in her home with her trophies in the Sidi Moussa district of Sale near Rabat. — AFP photos



Moroccan mountaineer Bouchra Baibanou pauses in her harness in her home in the Sidi Moussa district of Sale near Rabat.

For Baibanou, there's nothing better than an extreme sport to "overcome ones' fears" and learn to "not give up at the first hurdle". She has seen young women who were hesitant at the start of their first climb transformed by the experience. They face "a lot of discrimination" in

Morocco, said Baibanou. "A lot of girls don't continue their studies but, if we give them the power, they will achieve."—AFP



In this file photo taken R&B singer R. Kelly leaves the Cook County jail after posting \$100 thousand bond in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

R. Kelly speaks up to deny sex abuse charges

R&B superstar R. Kelly denied allegations he sexually abused women and girls in his first public comments since being indicted last month. "I didn't do this stuff. This not me," Kelly told "CBS This Morning", saying he was "fighting" for his life in an interview to air Wednesday. Excerpts were released Tuesday. He dismissed the allegations against him as rumors. "Whether they're old rumors, new rumors, future rumors, not true," said Kelly, who became upset and emotional during the interview. Kelly, 52, pleaded not guilty late last month in Chicago to 10 counts of aggravated criminal sex abuse.

He spent three nights behind bars and was released after coming up with \$100,000. 10 percent of the \$1 million bail set in court. The sex acts are alleged to have occurred between May 1998 and January 2010, according to prosecutors. Kelly has been accused of sexual misconduct before. In 2002 he was charged after allegedly filming himself having sex with a 14-year-old girl. He was tried and acquitted of child pornography charges in 2008. Now he says his reputation is being used against him.

"People are going back to my past, OK? That's exactly what they're doing. They're going back to the past and they trying to add all of this stuff now to that. To make all this stuff that's going on now feels real to people," Kelly said, according to the CBS transcript of the interview. He also addressed a report by BuzzFeed in 2017 that said Kelly had kept women as virtual sex slaves at homes he owns in Chicago and Atlanta. Kelly denied ever holding anyone against their will. "I don't need to. Why would I? How stupid would it be for R. Kelly, with all I've been through in my way, way past, to hold somebody," he asked. "That's stupid," Kelly added, looking right into the camera. The BuzzFeed allegations did not lead to any charges. In January, a six-part documentary called "Surviving R. Kelly" was released. It alleged he engaged in sexual, mental and physical abuse of girls and women.

'A long time coming'

The new 10-count indictment included three people who were minors aged between 13 and 16 when the alleged abuse occurred. Kim Foxx-the state's attorney for Cook County, which includes Chicago-told journalists the charges carry three to seven years of prison time each. Kelly's lawyer Steve Greenberg has said the charges are based on old and false accusations, adding that "all of the women are lying." Lizzette Martinez-who detailed allegations against Kelly in the docu-series and is now a client of prominent women's rights lawyer Gloria Allred-lashed out against Greenberg's comments, calling them "irresponsible."

"I'm a mother and I have a daughter," said the 41-year-old, who claims Kelly abused her between 1995 and 1999. Kelly is known for marrying his protegee Aaliyah in 1994, when the late R&B star was 15. Kelly, then 27, had produced the teenage singer's debut album titled "Age Ain't Nothing But a Number." Their marriage was later annulled, and Aaliyah died in a plane crash in 2001.

Despite the slew of disturbing claims against him, the award-winning musician continued to perform for years and maintained a solid fan base. Last month's release of the "Surviving R. Kelly" series once again brought accusations against him to the fore. A #MuteRKelly movement-aimed at preventing his music from airing-has gained steam. Lisa VanAllen, who spoke out against Kelly in the 2008 criminal trial and again in the recent documentary, wrote in The New York Times that she had feared no vindication would come for "a young, struggling, black girl victim like me." —AFP

Stolen mummified head recovered in Dublin

Irish police have recovered the head of an 800-year-old mummified body known as the 'Crusader' after it was stolen from a Dublin crypt last weekend. "Gardai (police) have recovered the head of 'The Crusader' and another skull taken from a crypt in St Michan's church," a statement issued late on Tuesday said. The Archbishop of Dublin, Michael Jackson, said he was "delighted" at the

return of the artefacts, which he said were left for the police to find. "The emphasis will now be able to turn to consideration of future security and display of the remains in the crypt of St Michan's," he said. Police said the investigation into the theft continues.

"The Crusader" was given the title because he is believed to have perished during or shortly after partici-

pating in a campaign to capture the holy city of Jerusalem. The church-founded in 1095 — is a popular tourist attraction in the Irish capital. According to local lore, during a visit to the vault author Bram Stoker found inspiration for his gothic vampire "Dracula". —AFP

'Los Indianos' street carnival



Revelers covered in talcum powder take part in 'Los Indianos' street carnival in Santa Cruz de la Palma, on the Spanish Canary island of La Palma, on March 4, 2019. The over month long carnival including 'Los Indianos' sees orchestras playing Caribbean and Brazilian rhythms throughout the festivities that range from elections for the Carnival Queen, the Junior Queen and the Senior Queen, children and adult murgas (satirical street bands), comparsas (dance groups) to performances on the streets. — AFP photos

Classifieds

Thursday, March 7, 2019

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Warm and Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times variable wind to north easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 40 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain.

BY NIGHT: Cool and Clouds will decrease gradually with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 38 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 06/03/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	23 °C	17 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	24 °C	12 °C			
ABDALY	27 °C	11 °C			
BUBYAN	** °C	** °C			
JAHRA	25 °C	13 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	24 °C	13 °C			
SALMIYAH	20 °C	17 °C			
AHMADI	20 °C	17 °C			
NUWAISIB	23 °C	14 °C			
WAFRA	25 °C	10 °C			
SALMY	24 °C	15 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	03/07	Warm and with a chance for rising dust over open areas	25 °C	12 °C	NW	15 - 42 km/h
Friday	03/08	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear	27 °C	10 °C	NW	12 - 40 km/h
Saturday	03/09	Warm	22 °C	11 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h
Sunday	03/10	Warm	25 °C	13 °C	NW-VRB	15 - 40 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:50
Sunrise	06:09
Zuhr	11:59
Asr	15:20
Sunset	17:50
Isha	19:07

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	24 °C
MIN. Temp.	07 °C
MAX. RH	85 %
MIN. RH	21 %
MAX. Wind	SE 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

Airlines

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

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DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 7/3/2019						Departure Flights on Thursday 7/3/2019					
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	KNE	531	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	MSR	611
JZR	254	Amman	00:05	QTR	1078	JZR	611	Cairo	14:10	QTR	1078
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	IAW	1578	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05	UAE	872
THY	766	ISL	00:30	IAW	157A	MSC	502	Alexandria	00:05	AXB	394
KAC	504	Beirut	00:45	KAC	774	FDB	072	Dubai	00:40	KNE	532
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KAC	792	JZR	409	Dubai	00:40	JZR	103
KAC	102	London	00:50	JZR	602	JZR	707	Luxor	01:00	IAW	158A
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	IRA	667	JAI	571	Mumbai	01:15	IAW	158B
SAI	441	Lahore	00:50	KNE	231	JZR	111	Doha	01:45	KAC	661
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	SVA	500	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50	QTR	1079
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	FDB	059	SAI	442	Lahore	01:50	KNE	382
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	KAC	672	KAC	417	Manila	02:20	IRA	666
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	KAC	618	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:25	FDB	060
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	FDB	8065	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30	JZR	125
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	GFA	221	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:30	GFA	222
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:05	KAC	412	IGO	1758	Kochi	02:55	FDB	8066
JZR	722	Alexandria	02:15	KNE	529	THY	767	ISL	03:05	KAC	673
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	788	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05	SVA	501
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	ETD	303	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40	KAC	775
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	JZR	222	GPT	861	Istanbul	03:45	KNE	530
QTR	1086	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	562	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55	KAC	615
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	OMA	645	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55	KAC	619
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	UAE	857	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00	KAC	563
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	JZR	732	QTR	1087	Doha	04:00	ETD	304
MSR	606	Luxor	03:10	SAW	705	KKK	1269	Istanbul	04:00	OMA	646
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KAC	118	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05	KAC	785
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	ABY	127	MSR	607	Luxor	04:10	ABY	128
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	JZR	212	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15	SAW	706
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	502	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00	KAC	675
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC	542	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10	KAC	503
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	QTR	1072	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30	KAC	691
JZR	406	Kochi	04:45	FDB	051	FDB	070	Dubai	05:50	FDB	050
UAE	873	Dubai	04:55	FEJ	341	JZR	215	Jeddah	06:00	KAC	283
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	JZR	114	JZR	713	Sohag	06:15	JZR	405
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	SVA	510	JZR	121	Dubai	06:35	UAE	858
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	GFA	215	THY	771	Istanbul	06:40	QTR	1073
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	JZR	214	UAE	874	Dubai	06:50	FEJ	242
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	JZR	104	JZR	251	Amman	07:05	KAC	343
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	UAE	875	KAC	167	Paris	07:10	KAC	331
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	FDB	063	RJA	643	Amman	07:15	KAC	331
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	JZR	124	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15	JZR	733
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	QTR	1080	KAC	413	Bangkok	07:20	SVA	511
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	MSR	620	JZR	115	Doha	07:30	GFA	216
KAC	362	Dhaka	06:10	RJA	640	KAC	173	Munich	08:20	KAC	621
KAC	382	Colombo	06:10	ABY	123	JZR	601	Baku	08:30	JZR	127
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:25	RBG	555	KAC	163	MXP	08:40	JZR	403
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	KAC	156	FDB	054	Dubai	08:50	JZR	253
BAW	157	London	07:05	KAC	616	KAC	501	Beirut	09:00	KAC	381
JZR	708	Luxor	07:15	GFA	217	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:05	JZR	721
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	NIA	161	KAC	613	Bahrain	09:05	FDB	064
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:35	KAC	662	KAC	791	Madinah	09:10	UAE	876
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	776	JZR	731	Cairo	09:10	MSR	621
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	FDB	057	BAW	156	London	09:10	QTR	1081
QTR	8511	Doha	08:00	JZR	126	KAC	541	Cairo	09:30	RJA	641
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	KNE	381	KAC	561	Amman	09:40	RBG	556
KAC	304	Mumbai	08:20	KAC	620	KAC	671	Dubai	09:45	ABY	124
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	OMA	647	KAC	101	London	09:45	GFA	218
MSC	411	Asyut	09:00	KAC	674	KAC	126	Sharjah	09:45	NIA	162
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	QTR	1088	QTR	741	Dammam	09:45	KAC	301
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	DLH	624	UAE	856	Doha	10:00	FDB	058
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	KAC	174	MSC	412	Asyut	10:00	KNE	232
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	ETD	307	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10	JZR	401
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	ALK	229	MSC	402	Riyadh	10:10	KAC	357
IAW	157	Al Najaf	09:55	KAC	402	KAC	617	Doha	10:35	OMA	648
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	MEA	402	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35	DLH	624
SYR	341	Damascus	10:00	UAE	859	JZR	211	Jeddah	10:40	DHX	171
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	RBG	551	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40	QTR	1089
SAW	703	Damascus	10:30	KAC	676	KAC	155	Doha	10:45	ETD	308
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	GFA	219	QTR	1071	Doha	10:45	KAC	1543
IRA	675	Lar	10:50	KLM	445	IAW	158	Al Najaf	10:55	KAC	203
AZQ	4565	Baghdad	11:00	KAC	564	SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00	MEA	403
JZR</											

Feminism is the word in Spain electoral campaign

MADRID: Women's rights have taken center stage in election campaigns for Spain's left- and right-wing parties as International Women's Day approaches even as ultra-conservative groups hit back at what they dub "radical feminism". Unions, feminist associations and leftwing parties have called for a work stoppage for two hours on March 8, hoping to recreate the strike and mass protests seen nationwide to mark the same day in 2018.

But things are different this year. Political parties are already busy campaigning for upcoming snap general elections on April 28 and European, regional and municipal polls on May 26. The ruling Socialist party, centre-right Ciudadanos and the conservative Popular Party (PP) have all raced to pledge to do their bit against gender inequality in a country with a strong feminist movement. But virulent anti-feminist rhetoric has also made its entrance, with far-right party Vox and an ultra-conservative association that chartered a bus with the slogan "#StopFeminazis" coupled with a picture of Hitler wearing pink lipstick.

Feminism - defined as the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes - like poverty or wealth redistribution, are usually more the remit of the left, says Cristina Monge, sociology professor at the University of Zaragoza. Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has made them a central theme of his campaign. On Friday in its cabinet meeting, the socialist government - which has the most female ministers in Spain's history - approved a number of progressive measures. Among them, a gradual increase in paternity leave so that it equals maternity leave by 2021, and more transparency on salaries in companies.

They aim to reduce the gender pay gap, which stood at 14.2 percent in Spain and 16.2 percent in the European Union in 2016, according to the latest Eurostat figures. But Spain's rightwing parties have also embraced feminism for years, even if they have not called to mobilize on March 8. Centre-right party Ciudadanos on Sunday unveiled a manifesto for "liberal feminism" that defends gender equality and "doesn't exclude men."

Conservative PP meanwhile has glossed over a speech by its leader Pablo Casado criticizing abortion and is pledging to reduce the gender pay gap and help women enter the labor market. "Let's not let them speak in our name," said outgoing parliament speaker Ana Pastor in a PP campaign video - in reference to the left. "That's tangible proof that feminism is here to stay and sells" politically, Professor Monge said. "Many right-Counter-protest

In Spain, 77 percent say a strike on March 8 is justified, according to a survey by polling firm Metroscopia published Monday. That, however, is five percentage points less than a year ago, particularly among those on the right as Vox's popularity increases. The far-right party, which could play a decisive role after elections in helping other right-wing parties secure a majority in parliament, opposes a law against gender violence that it feels is "ideological" and "discriminatory" towards men.

The bus chartered by conservative, Catholic association HazteOir ("Make yourself heard"), which compares feminists to Nazis, has been driving around the country for several days. It is protesting against a law fighting gender violence, another for gender equality and yet more for LGBT



VALENCIA: Spokesperson of the conservative association "Hazte Oir" (Make yourself heard) Teresa Garcia speaks to the press as an activist displays a flag behind her reading "Antifascist action" on Tuesday. — AFP

rights, arguing these all discriminate against men. Prosecutors in Barcelona asked the bus to be stopped when it came to the Mediterranean city, charging it incites hate and discrimination, but a judge refused to do so, citing freedom of expression.

Meanwhile the "Women of the World Global Platform," a Spanish initiative that groups together conservative associations from around the world, has called for a counter-protest in central Madrid on March 10. International Women's Day "has

converted into a day for those who reject femininity as well as masculinity, complementarity, maternity and dedication to the family," spokeswoman Leonor Tamayo said in a statement. "But we want to celebrate it, confirm it and reclaim it." — AFP

School attended by Trump says it concealed grades

WASHINGTON: A military academy that Donald Trump attended as a teenager concealed his academic records in 2011 in response to pressure from Trump allies, The Washington Post reported Tuesday. The New York Military Academy came under such pressure after Trump challenged then president Barack Obama to release his own academic records, with Trump saying he was surprised such a "terrible student" got into Ivy League Schools.

Evan Jones, the headmaster of the military academy at the time, told the Post that the superintendent of the private school "came to me in a panic because he had been accosted by prominent, wealthy alumni of the school who were Mr. Trump's friends" and wanted to keep his academic records secret. Trump has consistently boasted he was a superb student throughout his youth.

The school's superintendent, or director, at the time, Jeffrey Coverdale, told the paper that he rejected a request from members of the school's board of trustees to hand over Trump's records to them. "I moved them elsewhere on campus where they could not be released. It's the only time I ever moved an alumnus's records," Coverdale told the Post. Trump spent five years at the military academy starting in the fall of 1959. He has said his parents concluded he needed more discipline.

Last week Trump's former personal attorney, Michael Cohen, testified to a congressional committee last week that one of his jobs was to threaten lawsuits against the schools that Trump attended so they would never release his grades. Jones said he did not know if the original request to obtain Trump's records at the military academy came from Cohen.

Jones said he found the records in a filing cabinet in the basement of a building on the campus, which is about an hour's drive north of New York City. "I don't know if we should be doing this," Jones recalled telling his boss. "He told me that several wealthy alumni, including a close friend of Mr. Trump, were putting a lot of pressure on the administration to put the record in their custody for safekeeping." — AFP



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump speaks prior to signing an executive order on 'National Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End Veteran Suicide,' in the Roosevelt Room of the White House on Tuesday. — AFP

Initial nod to 35-day leave...

Continued from Page 1

allowance and housing loans provided by the government. Bushehri, who was present during the Assembly debate, agreed to investigate the issue. The revelation came during a special debate on the housing problem, as MPs claimed that the number of those waiting for government housing is still very large despite government assurances to distribute more houses. MP Saleh Ashour accused the government of lacking a clear picture of how to tackle the housing problem in the country, adding this issue relates mainly to Kuwaiti youths, who represent some 65 percent of the population.

He said only six percent of Kuwait's territory is utilized for housing, and accordingly the problem is not the unavailability of land for housing or a lack of funds, but in the management. Ashour called for establishing border cities like other countries in the world. First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said the government has plans in place to set up border cities, adding that Kuwait has a free trade zone with Iraq and the economic zone project in the north. He said details of these projects will be made public soon. He said the economic city in the north will be launched with both Iraq and Iran.

The minister said that there are two major projects in the north - Silk City, which has been merged with the islands' project and the economic zone, both of which

will require investments between \$400 billion to \$650 billion. Investments will be open to all and the Chinese will contribute to the management of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Harbor in Boubyan Island and will have the right to select the investments they want.

Bushehri stressed that the government is continuing with its plans to resolve housing problems by providing 12,000 units annually to cut the waiting period, which some MPs claim has exceeded 15 years. MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei said there are around 100,000 housing applications with the ministry, adding that large numbers of citizens have refused houses in certain areas. MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari criticized the government's plans to send Kuwaiti citizens to border cities while good and nearby residential areas like Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh are populated by unmarried expatriates.

Roumi's announcement about the 400 male couples triggered uproar in the house, as he himself clashed with MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei. Kandari said these are clear forgery cases and must be referred for criminal investigations. The Assembly then voted to ask the housing minister to investigate these cases and report back to the Assembly within two months, and then refer the issue to the public prosecution if proven. Several MPs called on the government to resort to residential towers instead of building standalone houses in a bid to accelerate the process of distributing houses to citizens.

During yesterday's session, the Assembly approved amendments to the food law in which it toughened penalties against those trading in spoiled food products, as MPs complained of rife corruption in this field. The Assembly also rejected a draft law for the right of obtaining information, because MPs found that some articles are suspected to violate the constitution.

Lavrov meets Amir, holds talks...

Continued from Page 1

developing bilateral "historic" ties. The top Kuwaiti diplomat noted that the visit is significant, especially amidst current regional and global changes in which Russia plays a 'pivotal' role.

Despite the fact that diplomatic ties with Moscow date back to 1963, "yet they run even deeper and are more historical, since when a Russian vessel docked in Kuwait in 1902," Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled noted, recalling Russia's support of UN Security Council resolutions on the 1990 Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait. "We were honored to meet His Highness the Amir, where we listened to His Highness' valuable and wise directives in terms of buttressing joint relations (with Russia)," the foreign minister told the press conference on him being received, along with Lavrov, by the Amir earlier yesterday.

Describing talks with the Russian side as "inclusive and intensive", Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said the meeting covered most cooperation areas, significantly the economic one. "We appreciate the Russian Federation's efforts and full support of His Highness the Amir's mediation efforts to mend the GCC rift," he added.

Lavrov praised the results of the meeting held with HH the Amir, pointing out the important bilateral talks with Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, which dealt with the agreements concluded between the two countries during the Amir's visit to Russia in 2015. He said that the sixth meeting of the joint economic and trade committee, which was held on the sidelines of his current visit, contributes to enhancing relations and investment between the two countries, adding that Russian Investment Fund and Kuwait Investment Authority are discussing projects estimated at \$200 million.

He confirmed that Moscow supports military cooperation with Kuwait, pointing out to the participation of a

Kuwaiti military delegation at the Russian Arms Expo last year. Lavrov also underlined parliamentary cooperation between the two countries, pointing to the expected visit of National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem to Moscow in the coming period to enhance cooperation and coordination between the two parliaments on various issues of common concern.

The Russian foreign minister added that his talks in Kuwait dealt with political dialogue on regional and international issues, cooperation at the UN Security Council, developments in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Libya, Palestinian-Israeli talks and the Arab peace initiative. Regarding the GCC crisis, Lavrov said that his talks in Kuwait tackled the developments in the Gulf region and the Russian proposal to ensure security and stability among GCC countries and Iran.

Lavrov confirmed that Russia supports the efforts of the Syrian government to return refugees to their homes through opening safe corridors for them to return, pointing out that Saudi Arabia considers it necessary to speed up the activation of the Syrian Constitutional Commission. On the developments of the so-called "Deal of the Century", Lavrov said: "We would like to hear more details about the (deal of the century), especially since what we hear from the Americans is very worrying," adding that it would destroy all progress made so far in negotiations between Palestine and Israel.

On the latest developments on the issue of Russian citizen Marsha Lazareva, who was sentenced in Kuwait over suspected involvement in a financial crime, Lavrov said: "We dealt with this subject in accordance with Kuwaiti law and international conventions." Lazareva was detained in Kuwait on charges of misusing public funds.

The joint press conference came after both sides held official talks during the sixth session of the Russian-Kuwaiti joint committee for economic, commercial, scientific and technological cooperation. The session was chaired by the Kuwaiti Minister of Oil and Electricity and Water Khaled Al-Fadhel, while the Russian side was headed by Russian Minister for North Caucasus Federal Affairs Sergey Chebotarev. — KUNA

Kerala to give workers siesta...

Continued from Page 1

Heat waves in India caused over 2,400 deaths in 2015, according to government data.

Officials of the Kerala's disaster management authority said cases of heat stroke and sunburn were already being reported and they had asked various government departments to take precautionary measures. "Summer

in Kerala was never harsh," said Sekhar L Kuriakose, a senior official with the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority, which issued the sunstroke warning last week. "This year we saw temperatures rise by 3 degrees in 14 days during February. That is not normal," said Kuriakose.

Kerala announced health and pension benefits for migrant workers in November. Last week, the state inaugurated hostels for migrant workers in Palakkad town and now plans to expand the scheme. With high levels of literacy and an ageing population, Kerala leans heavily on migrant workers, said Benoy Peter, executive director at Kerala's Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development, a non-profit. — Reuters

Canadian couple builds the world's...

Continued from Page 1

He said building the maze required weeks of planning, tens of thousands of dollars and 370 truckloads of snow to supplement the relatively thin powder on their fields.

"Making snow is really expensive," he said, pointing to the cost of renting generators, tractors and other equipment, fuel and weeks of labor. There were design challenges too. "You're not designing a path, what you are is designing walls and every wall has a double duty: It's got a path on this side and a path on that side," Masse said. "I wanna say it took me a better part of a week. The corn maze I think I could do in a day and a half so it's a lot of more work to design."

The couple used commercial computer-aided design and drafting software. Inside the labyrinth, visitors walk between walls of snow that are 1.8 meters high, and atop a layer of snow packed tightly to prevent it from melting too soon into slush under the pedestrian traffic. They are greeted by ice sculptures around several corners, and benches have been set up around campfires burning in five nooks to allow visitors to warm up before continuing on and trying to solve the puzzle.

The fire pits also act as markers, which first-timers Jillian Crooks and Cassidy Wegner said were indispensable for finding their way. "It was fun," Crooks said. "We just kept turning every which way. It took us a while. We didn't time it, we should have. Maybe like half an hour? Yep!" That bested the posted average of 30-45 minutes. If cold temperatures hold, the labyrinth could stay open for a few more weeks, by which time Clint Masse said he hopes to have had more than 10,000 visitors and turn a small profit. — AFP

Sports

Price downs Kings, ties Habs' record mark for goalie wins

Mackinnon sends Avalanche past Wings in overtime

LOS ANGELES: Carey Price tied the Montreal Canadiens' record for all-time wins by a goaltender Tuesday, and he did it in dominating fashion, making 26 saves in a 3-1 victory over the host Los Angeles Kings. Price's 314th victory in net for the Canadiens tied him with Jacques Plante, a Hall of Famer who played at Montreal from 1952-63. Price had a shutout midway through the third period before the Kings finally broke through.

Brendan Gallagher, Shea Weber and Jordan Weal scored goals as the Canadiens won for the fifth time in their past eight games. Weal was making his debut for Montreal, his third team of the season, after he was acquired from the Arizona Coyotes last week. Matt Luff scored a late goal for the Kings, the last-place team in the Western Conference who lost for the 11th time in their past 12 games (1-7-4).

AVALANCHE 4, RED WINGS 3 (OT)

Nathan MacKinnon scored 2:29 into overtime, and Colorado rallied to beat Detroit in Denver. Mikko Rantanen had a goal and two assists, Tyson Barrie had a goal and an assist and J.T. Compher also scored for the Avalanche. Colorado's Semyon Varlamov stopped 20 shots. Niklas Kronwall, Danny DeKeyser and Filip Zadina scored for the Red Wings, who have gone 0-5-3 over their last eight games. Jonathan Bernier had 30 saves.

BRUINS 4, HURRICANES 3 (OT)

David Krejci scored early in overtime and also had an assist as Boston rallied to extend its point streak to 17 games with a win over visiting Carolina. Krejci scored 1:46 into the extra session as the Bruins capped their comeback from a 2-0 deficit to improve to 13-0-4 since a 3-2 regulation loss to the New York Rangers on Jan. 19. It's the longest point streak in the NHL this season. Sebastian Aho matched a career high with 29 goals after scoring two for Carolina, which had won five in a row and 13 of 16.

LIGHTNING 5, JETS 2

Steven Stamkos and Adam Erne each had a goal and an assist, Nikita Kucherov tied the team record for points in a season and Tampa Bay beat Winnipeg to extend its home winning streak to eight games. Mathieu

Joseph posted two assists, and Yanni Gourde, Cedric Paquette and Brayden Point found the net for the Lightning, who won for the 12th time in their past 13 games. Kucherov's two assists pushed him to 108 points, tying the franchise mark for a season with Vincent Lecavalier (2006-07). Andrei Vasilevskiy made 30 saves to win his 10th straight start.

ISLANDERS 5, SENATORS 4 (SO)

Jordan Eberle and Mathew Barzal scored in the shootout as New York overcame the loss of goaltender Robin Lehner late in the third period and edged Ottawa at Uniondale, NY. Thomas Greiss made two saves and was awarded the win after replacing Lehner, who exited with an undisclosed injury with 4:40 remaining. Brady Tkachuk barreled into Lehner after getting by Brock Nelson at the right side of the crease. The victory was the 800th of Islanders coach Barry Trotz's career. He's the fourth coach to reach that mark.

PREDATORS 5, WILD 4 (SO)

Ryan Johansen scored the winner in the fourth round of the shootout as Nashville defeated visiting Minnesota to move into first place in the Central Division. Craig Smith, Brian Boyle, Roman Josi and Victor Arvidsson scored in regulation for the Predators, who swept the home-and-home series after beating the Wild 3-2 in a shootout Sunday in Minnesota. Goaltender Pekka Rinne made 29 saves plus stopped all four Wild attempts in the shootout. Minnesota's Kevin Fiala scored twice in his return to Nashville after being dealt last week at the trading deadline. Pontus Aberg and Eric Fehr also scored for the Wild, which extended their points streak to a season-high seven games, and goalie Devan Dubnyk stopped 21 shots.

BLUE JACKETS 2, DEVILS 1 (SO)

Cam Atkinson scored his career-high 36th goal in regulation and converted in a shootout as Columbus skated past New Jersey at Newark, N.J. In the first round of the shootout, New Jersey's Blake Coleman missed his attempt. Atkinson then skated wide before backhanding the puck past Cory Schneider (17 saves) and inside the left post. After Blue Jackets goalie Sergei Bobrovsky (29 saves) poke-checked the puck away from Drew Stafford in the second round, Artemi Panarin beat Schneider



LOS ANGELES: Carey Price #31 and Brett Kulak #17 of the Montreal Canadiens defend as Adrian Kempe #9 of the Los Angeles Kings dodges a shot on goal during the second period of a game at Staples Center on Tuesday in Los Angeles, California.—AFP

between the pads to seal the win for a Columbus club that registered a season-low 18 shots on goal.

PENGUINS 3, PANTHERS 2 (OT)

Jake Guentzel's second goal of the game, at 2:44 of overtime, gave Pittsburgh a win over visiting Florida. Guentzel took a pass from Sidney Crosby and outbattled Florida's Michael Matheson at the blue line, drove down the slot and backhanded the puck past goaltender Roberto Luongo for his 33rd goal. Crosby, who earlier in the game reached the 1,200-point level of his career, had a goal and two assists. Henrik Borgstrom and Vincent Trocheck scored for Florida.

STARS 1, RANGERS 0

John Klingberg scored a goal, and Ben Bishop made 28 saves for his fourth shutout of the season as Dallas

outlasted visiting New York. Klingberg lit the lamp for Dallas 1:16 into the second period when he collected a pass from fellow defenseman Miro Heiskanen and fired a wrist shot past New York rookie goaltender Alexandar Georgiev off the post and into the net. Georgiev stopped 31 of the 32 shots he faced.

DUCKS 3, COYOTES 1

Jakob Silfverberg had a goal and an assist for the second consecutive game, and Anaheim beat Arizona in Glendale, Ariz., to snap the Coyotes' six-game winning streak. Adam Henrique and Troy Terry also scored, and Ryan Miller made 22 saves for the Ducks. Lawson Crouse scored, and Darcy Kuemper made 28 saves for the Coyotes, who fell three points back of the Minnesota Wild for the second wild card from the Western Conference.—Reuters



Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah congratulates Federer, invites him to Kuwait

KUWAIT: Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, President of Kuwait and Arab Tennis Federations met the big Swiss tennis star, Roger Federer in Dubai, UAE, after the Final Ceremony of Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships 2019. He congratulated him on winning his ATP 100th title.

President of Kuwait and Arab Tennis Federations informed Federer that Kuwait is about to fulfill and open Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex later this year and invited him to visit Kuwait assuring that Kuwait and Arab tennis fraternity and all tennis fans in Kuwait will be very happy to see him in Kuwait and its state-of-art international tennis complex.

The world tennis star welcomed the idea. In the meanwhile, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber thanked Hasher Al-Maktoum, President of Tennis Emirates for his kind invitation to attend the finals. He praised the great success of the tournament every year thanks to the sincere efforts of the organizers hoping them most of success in the future.

Murray 'pain free' but unsure over future

LONDON: Andy Murray says he is no longer in pain but the former world number one is unsure whether he will be able to play top-level tennis again following a second hip operation. The 31-year-old underwent hip resurfacing surgery at the end of January in a final throw of the dice to try to overcome the problem that first became a serious issue in 2017.

"I want to continue playing, I said that in Australia," Murray said at a sponsorship event at London's Queen's Club. "The issue is I don't know whether it's possible." "I'm a lot happier now than I was, certainly the last 12 months, because I have no pain in my hip now and I was in pain for a long time," he added.

"The rehab is slow but it's been going pretty well. I just need to wait and see how things progress. If it's possible, I'd certainly love to compete again." —AFP

Ooredoo ambassador Al-Hasawi wins Amir Cup competition

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait's brand ambassador, Rakan Al-Hasawi, won first place in the Amir Cup Competition show jumping Competition which took place at the Hunting and Equestrian Club. A large number of equestrians from local riding clubs participated in the competition.

Al-Hasawi won a number of awards locally and regionally, such as the Atiyab Al Marshoud Championship, Al Diriyah Junior Jumping Championship, the Kuwait Police Show Jumping Tournament and the Kuwait Riding Center Tournament.

Ooredoo takes great pride in the achievement of the young and promising Kuwaiti showjumper Rakan Al-Hasawi. The company's commitment to supporting youth is deep-rooted within the core values in Ooredoo Kuwait. Ooredoo is especially proud of the young athletes that it sponsors, such as Kuwaiti champion Abdulaziz Al-Rashed, and Kuwaiti athlete Najlaa Al-Jeraiwi who represented Kuwait in the Asian Games last year.

Empowering youth is among Ooredoo's top priorities through its CSR strategy. The company has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, to support youth



projects and initiatives. Ooredoo is continuously working with the Ministry to enrich youth experience in a variety of fields, with a focus on volunteerism.

'Nothing is impossible' as reinvigorated Lorenzo eyes Marquez crown

PARIS: Jorge Lorenzo concedes he could have "thrown in the towel" after a frustrating two-year spell at Ducati, but the three-time MotoGP champion feels rejuvenated and once again ready to challenge the supremacy of title-holder Marc Marquez - his new Honda stablemate.

Marquez has taken the sport by storm since his 2013 debut in the top category, winning the championship in five of the past six seasons, with fellow Spaniard Lorenzo standing between him and perfection having captured the 2015 title.

Yet injury clouds hover over both ahead of this weekend's season-opener in Qatar. Marquez has rated his fitness at "almost 100 percent" following a gruelling rehabilitation from December shoulder surgery, while Lorenzo missed the first pre-season test at Sepang after fracturing his wrist in a dirt bike crash.

Marquez has won just once among the elite at the Losail circuit in Doha, a venue where Lorenzo has triumphed on six occasions across three categories including a hat-trick of MotoGP victories. "This winter has been different due to the surgery, I worked hard with five hours of physio per day with only one goal: start in the best conditions in the first race of the year," the 26-year-old Marquez said.

"At the Qatar test I felt much better than at the Malaysia test and now I can say that I start at almost 100 percent." "Honda have done a lot to improve the bike and in the test we were feeling strong, especially for a circuit which usually isn't the best for us," he added. After a fruitless 2017 campaign, Lorenzo

rebounded with three wins a year ago in Italy, Catalonia and Austria-before injury wrecked the latter part of his season. He finished a career-worst ninth after missing four races having hurt his wrist following a nasty crash ahead of October's Thailand Grand Prix.

"Last year, honestly, was tough and I went through a period of emotional instability. I could have thrown in the towel, but that's not who I am," Lorenzo wrote on the official MotoGP website.

"Signing with Honda has been a massive injection of motivation. I'm convinced that, through my mentality, ambition and sacrifice, I can be very competitive. Fighting with Marc is a challenge for any rider and, at this point in my career, it's a great boost."

"So far, I'm the only rider who has managed to win a title against Marc. Nothing is impossible and with effort, I want to prove it again." Italy's Andrea Dovizioso, who finished second to Marquez, is confident of launching of a more consistent title bid and will be joined by compatriot Danilo Petrucci at Ducati this term. "2018 was a very positive year for me. We started with a victory and, even if we had some ups and downs, the difficulties pushed us to look in new directions and half-way through the season we made a big step forward," he said.

"The expectations are high, I have a great feeling with both the bike and my crew, and we can count on more experience." Valentino Rossi, who turned 40 last month, is coming off just a third winless season in 19 at the top level as he finished a distant third overall.

The seven-time premier class champion lagged behind factory Yamaha teammate Maverick Vinales during February's testing in Qatar, but team boss Massimo Meregalli is convinced the iconic Italian will shake off his early struggles.

"He hasn't been that fast and hasn't set very nice lap times, but I'm not worried because, considering our previous experiences, we know that on Sundays at race time he's in front," Meregalli told Motorsport.com.—AFP

All Blacks skipper to quit after WCup

WELLINGTON: All Blacks captain Kieran Read announced yesterday he will retire from international rugby after this year's World Cup to play for Japanese club Toyota Verblitz. The two-time World Cup winner, who will be chasing a third straight trophy this year, said the time felt right to leave.

"My family and I are looking forward to an overseas experience and Japan presents an awesome opportunity to immerse ourselves in Japanese culture as part of the Toyota club," the 33-year-old veteran of 118 Tests said.

Read said he wanted to get the announcement out early in the Super Rugby season so he could concentrate on playing for the Canterbury Crusaders and the All Blacks at the World Cup. "Knowing it's my last opportunity, I'm very motivated and can't wait to get into it," he said. "It's an exciting time."

All Blacks coach Steve Hansen wished the number eight well after an "outstanding" career. "He's developed into a fantastic leader who has the utmost respect of all his peers," Hansen said. "What he has achieved has been remarkable, and it's fair to say that he is one of the greats of our game."

Read made his All Blacks debut in 2008 and swiftly became the team's first-choice number eight, earning a World Rugby player of the year award in 2013. He first tasted captaincy of New Zealand in 2012 as part of the All Blacks long-term succession plans, and eventually became the full-time skipper after the 2015 World Cup when Richie McCaw retired.

At the time, New Zealand were facing an exodus of talent, with the likes of McCaw, Dan Carter, Conrad Smith and Ma'a Nonu either retiring or moving overseas. But Read maintained the All Blacks' high standards and ensured there was no post-tournament slump, keeping the team's win rate above 85 percent.

He also won three Super Rugby titles with the Crusaders and said he intends to live in Christchurch after his two-season deal in Japan ends. Read said he was looking forward to working with former Springboks coach Jake White at Toyota.

"Japan's a bit closer to home than Europe and probably a bit easier on the body as well considering where I'm at in terms of my career," he said. "They brought me in not just to play but also to mould their team and use all the experiences I've had in trying to help them out."

He hinted late last year that 2019 would be his final World Cup after lengthy spells on the sidelines caused by a wrist injury and a bulging spinal disc. The All Blacks are keeping him in cotton wool ahead of the tournament, with Read missing at least the first six rounds of Super Rugby to minimise the risk of further injury.

Sam Whitelock has stepped in as captain during Read's injury-enforced absences but whether the 30-year-old is a long-term option remains to be seen. Whitelock is rumoured to be eyeing a sabbatical playing in Japan after the World Cup, along with Brodie Retallick and Beauden Barrett.—AFP

Sports

Bairstow powers England to win in opening T20

There were too many extras conceded: Holder

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard from the first day/night T20 international of a three-match series between the West Indies and England at the Darren Sammy Stadium in St Lucia yesterday:

West Indies Innings	
S. Hope c Root b Curran	6
C. Gayle c Rashid b Jordan	15
S. Hetmyer c Plunkett b Curran	14
D. Bravo c and b Jordan	28
N. Pooran b Curran	58
C. Brathwaite c Bairstow b Rashid	0
F. Allen c Jordan b Denly	8
J. Holder c Billings b Curran	7
A. Nurse not out	13
Extras (bl, w10)	11
Total (20 overs, 8 wickets)	160
Fall of wickets: 1-7 (Hope), 2-31 (Gayle), 3-37 (Hetmyer), 4-101 (Bravo), 5-102 (Brathwaite), 6-127 (Allen), 7-137 (Pooran), 8-160 (Holder)	
Did not bat: S. Cottrell, O. Thomas	
Bowling: D. Willey 2-0-20-0 (1w), T. Curran 4-0-36-4 (2w), C. Jordan 3-0-16-2 (2w), A. Rashid 4-0-15-1 (1w), L. Plunkett 4-0-44-0 (3w), J. Denly 3-0-28-1 (1w)	

England Innings	
A. Hales b Cottrell	11
J. Bairstow c Brathwaite b Nurse	68
J. Root lbw Cottrell	0
E. Morgan c Morgan b Brathwaite	8
J. Denly c Pooran b Holder	30
S. Billings b Cottrell	18
D. Willey not out	1
T. Curran not out	2
Extras (b8, lb7, w8)	23
Total (18.5 overs, 6 wickets)	161
Fall of wickets: 1-17 (Hales), 2-32 (Root), 3-83 (Morgan), 4-103 (Bairstow), 5-153 (Denly), 6-154 (Billings)	
Did not bat: C. Jordan, L. Plunkett, A. Rashid	
Bowling: S. Cottrell 3.5-0-29-3 (3w), O. Thomas 2-0-18-0 (1w), A. Nurse 4-0-32-1, J. Holder 4-0-26-1 (2w), C. Brathwaite 4-0-33-1 (2w), F. Allen 1-0-8-0.	
Result: England won by four wickets	

GROS ISLET: Jonny Bairstow made the most of the absence of a few specialists with a blistering early assault to set England on the way to a four-wicket victory over the West Indies in the first day/night T20 international of a three-match series at the Darren Sammy Stadium in St Lucia on Tuesday.

Replying to the home team's total of 161 for eight, Bairstow led the charge at the top of the order with his best T20I score of 68 off 40 balls with two sixes and nine fours. His entertaining innings ended in the 12th over via a catch on the boundary by Carlos Brathwaite off spinner Ashley Nurse.

"A few guys are not playing in this series so it was an opportunity to continue from the one-day series," said the wicketkeeper-batsman after receiving the man-of-the-match award. "It was great fun because you get to play with a lot of freedom."

Joe Denly (30) and Sam Billings appeared to have finished the job with a 50-run fifth-wicket stand. However both were dismissed with victory in sight although the target was still easily attained with seven balls to spare.

As well as England batted the West Indies did not aid their cause with a succession of errors in the field throughout their opponents' innings. Left-arm pacer Sheldon Cottrell was the Caribbean team's most successful bowler with three for 29.

"There were too many extras (conceded)," said captain Jason Holder in reflecting on his team's loss. "We were a bit scrappy in the field and the wicket was a bit two-paced."

England will defend the early advantage when the series heads to St Kitts for the final two matches of the T20 contest and the tour on Friday and Sunday. Nicholas Pooran's pyrotechnic half-century had lifted the West Indies to a respectable total as the hosts suffered early setbacks, including big-hitting opener Chris Gayle, after being put in.

He was one of two wickets to fall to Chris Jordan, the Barbados-born all-rounder also removing Darren Bravo (28) via a spectacular diving effort off his own



SAINT LUCIA: Sam Billings of England is bowled by Sheldon Cottrell of West Indies during the 1st T20I between West Indies and England at Darren Sammy Cricket Ground, Gros Islet, Saint Lucia, on Tuesday. — AFP

bowling to break a 64-run fourth-wicket stand with Pooran.

Tom Curran was England's top wicket-taker though with four for 36. He dismissed makeshift opener Shai Hope and then Shimron Hetmyer before returning to york the rampant Pooran in the 18th over. Curran also removed Holder to the final ball of the innings to finish with his best figures in T20Is.

Dropped after his one-day international debut in

the opening fixture of the preceding five-match series, Pooran smashed four sixes and three fours in getting to 58 off 37 deliveries to underline his value in the shortest form of the international game.

Leg-spinner Adil Rashid made amends for dropping Hope on the third man boundary off David Willey in the first over of the match with an excellent effort with the ball, conceding just 15 runs off his four overs and claiming the wicket of Brathwaite. — AFP

Cruyff's children prove they are the latest Ajax golden generation

AMSTERDAM: Johan Cruyff would have been proud. The spectacular qualification by Ajax for the Champions League quarter-finals at the expense of Real Madrid on Tuesday bore the stamp of the Dutch great who died three years ago.

In 2011, no longer recognising his Ajax, Cruyff undertook the task of rebuilding the famous youth school, by now known as 'De Toekomst' (the future), where he had learned his football. Cruyff's declared aim was "to focus on the individual, because it is by training exceptional individuals that we will build a great team".

De Toekomst is a complex of 12 pitches located a few hundred metres from the club's main stadium, now named the Johan Cruyff ArenA. There Ajax train the young talent uncovered by the club's eight full-time scouts and 90 volunteers, generally from within 60 kilometres of Amsterdam.

It took time for Cruyff's reforms to bear fruit. But the

backbone of the team that won 4-1 at the Santiago Bernabeu on Tuesday night was molded at the Toekomst. Frenkie de Jong (21), Matthijs de Ligt (19), Donny van de Beek (21), Kasper Dolberg (21), Andre Onana (22) and Rasmus Kristensen (21) are all products of the youth system.

Of the older players who add experience, Daley Blind (28), who has returned after four years at Manchester United, was in the youth system when Cruyff started to implement his plan. Ajax won the last of their four Champions Cup trophies in 1995 under Louis van Gaal.

That was also a squad built around the young home grown talent, including Edwin van der Sar, Michael Reiziger, Frank and Ronald de Boer, Edgar Davids, Clarence Seedorf, Marc Overmars, Patrick Kluivert and Jari Litmanen, as well as another veteran who had returned to his first club, Frank Rijkaard.

"This generation is almost as strong as that of 1995," Van Gaal told Panenka magazine in February. "I said that in October when Ajax was going to face Bayern and people made fun of me."

Ajax probably need to win soon with this exceptional generation. The 1995 team quickly began to break up as players left for richer clubs, although Ajax hung on to Van der Sar and the de Boer brothers until 1999.

But that 1995 triumph was soon followed by the Bosman ruling which made it harder for clubs to keep talent. At a club which welcomes back its prodigal sons, Van der Sar, now the general manager, oversees

the youth project with technical director Marc Overmars.

"It is clear that we will have difficulties keeping these players together," said Overmars, who as a player left Ajax at the age of 23 to join Arsenal. Indeed the summer sale of de Jong to Barcelona, the other club rebuilt by Cruyff, for 75 million euros is already agreed.

Yet Overmars' pragmatism is not tinged with pessimism. The talent reservoir of Ajax seems deep. Ryan Gravenberch, a midfielder, became the youngest first-team player in club history when he made his debut in the Dutch first division in September at 16 years and 130 days old, 112 days younger than Seedorf when he set the previous record.

Brian Brobbey, a 17-year-old striker, is also talked of as a phenomenon. The club is good at making the most of all that young talent: 86 per cent of players trained at the club turn professional. Last summer the club made a video to convince the latest generation of their potential.

It compared goalkeeper Onana to Van der Sar, striker Dolberg to Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Ligt to Daley's father Danny Blind and Jong to Christian Eriksen, one of four former Ajax players, three of them products of the youth system, who were part of the Tottenham team that also recorded a notable away victory on Tuesday night.

At the Bernabeu, the latest generation of Ajax talent lived up to the video and won a remarkable victory in a style that would have made Cruyff proud. —AFP

Warne: Australia can win World Cup with Smith, Warner

SYDNEY: Steve Smith and David Warner's year-long exile has likely left them hungrier than ever and their return can spark Australia to World Cup glory, Test great Shane Warne said yesterday.

The star pair's ban from state and international cricket for ball-tampering expires later this month and they are expected to be rushed back into the Australian side for the defence of their title at the showpiece tournament in England this year.

Both players have recently undergone elbow surgery and the great unknown is how they will perform back on the world stage, particularly in what is sure to be a hostile atmosphere in England.

But Warne has no doubt they will be as good as ever, benefiting from the break rather than their skills being blunted. He is talking from experience. Warne was suspended in 2003 for a year after testing positive to banned diuretic drugs.

Many wrote him off, but the leg-spinning legend quickly bounced back and enjoyed several more years playing at the highest level with the Australian team. "Sometimes having an enforced lay off-like I'm used to, I had 12 months off myself-what that means is you become really fresh," he told Fox Sports.

"You freshen your mind up, you become hungry again and realise how important cricket is to you," Warne said both players would also "have a point to prove" when they eventually pad up again.

"That's why I reckon Australia can win the World Cup," he said, despite the team's recent patchy one-day form. "They'll walk straight back in, they'll be hungry. They'll be a bit nervous in the first few games but that'll be good for them, they'll be excited and I would expect them to play as good as they always have."



Shane Warne

Newly-appointed assistant Australia coach Ricky Ponting echoed similar sentiments recently. Both players are expected to feature at the upcoming Indian Premier League as they tune-up for the World Cup.

Smith only returned to the nets last week from surgery in January after being forced to drop out of the Bangladesh Premier League Twenty20 tournament with a ligament problem. Warner's injury, sustained at the same event, was less serious and he could play his first game since then for his club side Randwick-Petersham this weekend. — AFP

Finisher Dhoni best suited in lower middle order: Raina

MUMBAI: Mahendra Singh Dhoni's finishing skills remain unmatched and the former captain will be an asset in India's lower middle order at this year's World Cup, former team mate Suresh Raina told Reuters.

The sight of Dhoni depositing Sri Lanka seamer Nuwan Kulasekara into the Wankhede Stadium stands to seal victory in the 2011 World Cup final is etched in the memory of most Indians. No target was deemed out of reach with the hard-hitting right-hander at the crease but that clean striking and fluid swing of the heavy bat are rare these days and many believe Dhoni is no more the finisher that he was before. His sharp glove-work makes Dhoni India's first choice wicket-keeper in limited-overs cricket but his batting position for the World Cup, when he will be 38, continues to be debated. "For MS, the ideal position would be number five or six," Raina, who is an integral part of the Dhoni-led Chennai Super Kings side in the Indian Premier League, said in an interview.

"He is such a keen reader of the game and brings years of experience. When required he can build up an innings and his finishing skills are unmatched," Dhoni has played 340 ODIs for India and scored more than 10,000 runs at an average of just under 51. His role as a finisher is crucial for India's World Cup campaign with the team's number four batting position still to be sealed.

That has led to suggestions that captain Virat Kohli, also the team's best batsman, should bat a place lower than his usual number three spot. "I think number three or four should be good (for Kohli)," Raina, a member of India's 2011 World Cup team, said. "If the top order topples quickly, we need someone like Kohli to keep it together."

Raina believes top-ranked England will be a strong contender with their home advantage while India, Australia, West Indies and New Zealand are the other teams to watch out for. "For me the most balanced team will win the World Cup," the 32-year-old said. "English conditions are helpful for the seamers but in the recent years we have seen spinners also do well."

"Last year when I was playing against Ireland and England, our wrist spinners did really well. Team India is shaping up really well in this regard, a healthy mix of youth and experience. "And a pace attack that is bowling beautifully in all conditions. No grey areas as such."

Once considered an automatic selection in India's limited-overs sides, Raina played the last of his 226 one-dayers in July, 2018. An aggressive left-handed batsman and a part-time off-spinner, Raina is also known for his electric fielding and the all-rounder still harbours hopes of making the World Cup squad.

The IPL, which starts later this month, will be his last opportunity to impress the selectors before the World Cup kicks off on May 30. "I have a mix of activities that I do, I am currently doing a lot of high intensity workouts in the gym, followed by strength and conditioning sessions," the IPL's leading run-scorer said.—Reuters

F1 faces pressure over rights ahead of Bahrain Grand Prix

DUBAI: Rights groups around the world are pressuring Formula 1 to demand the Bahraini government release an activist jailed over social media posts criticising Manama's hosting of the 2017 Grand Prix.

Letters between Formula One and rights groups—including Human Rights Watch and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy—seen yesterday by AFP, raise the case of Najah Yousif, jailed for three years over what rights groups say is criticism of the 2017 Bahrain Grand Prix.

Yousif opposed Formula One's decision to hold races in Bahrain on social media over the kingdom's rights records. Prosecutors say Yousif was convicted of "broadcasting false and biased news" about conditions in Bahrain and "promoting terrorist acts".

A February 6 letter signed by 17 rights groups urged Formula One to "uphold its commitment to human rights" by calling for Yousif's immediate release and disclosing information obtained during the organiser's discussions with the Bahraini government. A March 4 response from Formula 1 general counsel Sacha Woodward Hill said F1 was "assured that Ms. Yousif's detention, the charges she faced, her trial and her subsequent conviction had nothing to do with the peaceful protest around the Bahrain Grand Prix"—a statement dismissed by rights groups as "absurd".

"Taking the Bahraini government's assurances that no punitive measures will be directed against activists for peacefully opposing the Grand Prix is absurd given Bahrain's track record of repressive measures to close down protests opposing the races in the country," said Aya Majzoub, Middle East researcher at Human Rights Watch. —AFP

Sports

Pochettino hails Euro goal king Kane as Tottenham march on

Spurs are in the last eight of Champions League since 2010/11

DORTMUND: Mauricio Pochettino heaped praise on Harry Kane as the England striker became Tottenham Hotspur's top scorer in Europe and fired them into the Champions League quarter-finals.

Kane's second-half goal at Borussia Dortmund on Tuesday put Spurs in the last eight after sealing a 1-0 last-16, return leg win to clinch a 4-0 aggregate victory. It was Kane's 24th European goal-his 14th in the Champions League added to 10 in the Europa League-to take him past Jermain Defoe's tally of 23.

"I'm so happy for him, you all know how I feel about him - he's one of the best strikers in the world," said Pochettino. Kane was not the only Spurs player to reach a key milestone at Dortmund as goalkeeper Hugo Lloris kept his 100th clean sheet.

"I want to congratulate Kane and Lloris too, because that was his 100th clean sheet for Tottenham, which is fantastic for him too," added Pochettino. "Hugo was great. We conceded more chances than we expected, but this type of game, when you beat them 3-0 in the first leg, is very difficult - they have nothing to lose."

This is the first time Tottenham are in the last eight of the Champions League since 2010/11 when they bowed out 5-0 on aggregate to Real Madrid. Pochettino said he received a single-word message from Spurs chairman Daniel Levy-"congratulations". Having beaten Dortmund 3-0 at Wembley in the first leg, Pochettino hinted Spurs could be back at the new White Hart Lane for the quarter-finals, due to be held in mid-April.

"I feel very proud, I am very happy for our players," said the Argentinian. "Tonight, it was an unbelievable effort, I'm proud for the fans and for the

club. "It's been a very particular season with a lot of circumstance, so to be in the quarter-final is a fantastic, I think this will be one to remember.

"It's a massive achievement for the team." In the build-up, Pochettino demanded Spurs "finish the job" after a substantial lead from the Wembley leg.

His side delivered, soaking up everything Dortmund threw at them in a one-sided first half before Kane's goal just after the break killed off the hosts' spirited challenge. "This is a huge step, but we have to keep growing and we need more nights like this," said Kane.

However, despite a mature performance, Pochettino denied suggestions his team had proved they can step up at this level. "To move to the next level, it's not just about being professional today, we need to do more," he said.

"You need more than just reaching the quarter-finals. "After the first leg result, you could see the risks Dortmund took. "When you have the possibility to reach the quarter-finals, but everyone thinks the job is done, it's so dangerous.

"It was the first time we faced this type of situation, we had a tough first half an hour, we started to play a bit and we did well to score after the break. "If you look over the two legs, we deserved to win - we scored four goals and didn't concede any goals."

After his first half-heroics in goal, Spurs goalkeeper Lloris said the Premier League side do not want to stop now in Europe. "As expected they pushed hard for the first half an hour, we stayed strong together thanks to the team spirit," said Lloris. "Now we can enjoy, because it is a big achievement - we don't want to stop." — AFP



DORTMUND: Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane (L) and Dortmund's English midfielder Jadon Sancho vie for the ball during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 second leg football match between BVB Borussia Dortmund and Tottenham Hotspur on Tuesday in Dortmund, western Germany. — AFP

Rummenigge 'irritated' after Loew ditches Bayern trio

BERLIN: Bayern Munich chief Karl-Heinz Rummenigge has slammed Germany head coach Joachim Loew for the timing of his decision to cut Thomas Mueller, Jerome Boateng and Mats Hummels from his plans.

Rummenigge is "irritated" that Loew dropped the bombshell on Tuesday - a week before Bayern's crunch Champions League home game against Liverpool and in the midst of the Bundesliga title race.

"We consider the timing and circumstances of the announcement, both to the players and public, as questionable", wrote Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge in a joint statement with sport director Hasan Salihamidzic.

"The last international match of the German national team took place on 19 November 2018" - three and a half months ago. Loew flew to Munich on Tuesday to tell Mueller, 29, Boateng and Hummels, both 30, who have 246 appearances for Germany between them, that their international careers are over.

Loew made the announcement with Germany to host Serbia on March 20 in a friendly, then play a Euro 2020 qualifier away to the Netherlands four days later and wants a "new start". The 59-year-old Germany boss has been under pressure to make sweeping changes since his side crashed out of last year's World Cup.

Mueller, Boateng and Hummels were at the core of the side which won the 2014 World Cup, but the trio were off form during poor displays by the entire team in Russia last year. The Bayern bosses are 'irritated' by Loew's timing, ahead of 'landmark' games at home to Liverpool in Europe next Wednesday and at home to Wolfsburg in the league this Saturday.

Bayern are neck-and-neck with leaders Borussia Dortmund on 54 points in the Bundesliga table with only a goal difference of two keeping the Bavarians off top-spot. "We were surprised that this happened as part of an unannounced visit at (Bayern training complex) Saebener Strasse," said Rummenigge and

Salihamidzic.

Former Bayern and Germany midfielder Lothar Matthaeus also questioned Loew's timing. "The decision is okay, because we are talking about making changes, but the moment is very unfortunate," said Matthaeus, a Sky pundit.

"A week before the game against Liverpool means Loew has only brought unrest to Bayern Munich. "You could have thrown these three players out of the national team two months ago, after so many years of merit, and not a week before the important match in the Champions League."

Mesut Ozil, who has not spoken to Loew since walking away from the Germany set-up last year citing racism, said he felt sorry about Loew's treatment of close friend Boateng. "I am sorry that one of the best German players in the last decades has to leave the national team in this way," wrote Ozil on Twitter.

Both Boateng and Hummels turned to youth to console themselves on Instagram. Boateng posted "Thank you for brightening my day" when his god-daughter posted a video to him saying "cheer up, they're balla balla (crazy)".

Hummels posted a picture with his infant son Ludvig alongside the text "cheerful". — AFP



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE	
Zenit St. Petersburg v Villarreal CF beIN SPORTS HD 4	20:55
Stade Rennais v Arsenal FC beIN SPORTS HD 2	20:55
Sevilla FC v SK Slavia Prague beIN SPORTS HD 3	20:55
Eintracht Frankfurt v Internazionale Milano beIN SPORTS HD 1	20:55
GNK Dinamo Zagreb v SL Benfica beIN SPORTS HD 5	20:55
Valencia CF v FK Krasnodar beIN SPORTS HD 3	23:00
SSC Napoli v Red Bull Salzburg beIN SPORTS HD 2	23:00
Chelsea FC v Dynamo Kyiv beIN SPORTS HD 1	23:00

Madrid failure puts Solari under fire and faith in youth to the test

MADRID: Santiago Solari said he would not give up as coach of Real Madrid but the decision will probably not be his to make. Zinedine Zidane earned the right to decide himself and chose to leave last summer.

"It would have been difficult for me to win again next year," Zidane said in May. "There have been good times but also difficult times. I do not forget that. I want to end with Real Madrid when everything is going well." Ten months on, Zidane's exit speech feels like a warning.

Madrid's season is up in smoke after seven days in which they were eliminated from the Copa del Rey, deemed irrelevant in La Liga and humiliated in the Champions League. "I did not come to the club in such a difficult time to give up," said Solari, after a 4-1 defeat to Ajax on Wednesday sent his side out in the last 16.

In the league and cup, they were proven to be clearly worse than Barcelona, their greatest rivals, and in Europe, inferior to Ajax, the club that are supposed to supply the elite not outplay them in their own back yard.

Three defeats, all of them in their own stadium, the last in the competition Madrid had begun to feel was their own after three consecutive triumphs and four in five years. "Here lies a team that made history," read the front page of Marca yesterday. "End of an era," said Diario Sport. "The disaster is huge," wrote Mundo Deportivo.

Solari had overseen a period of progress since taking over from Julen Lopetegui in November but the decline has been quick and familiar. Early improvement gave way to a lack of goals, which slowly sapped belief. Mediocre opponents took advantage and better ones ran riot.

The club's president Florentino Perez must now decide if Solari is worth keeping until the summer, although it is hard to see what would be gained by sacking him when there is nothing left to be gained from the season.

A new coach, with the same squad, would only surrender the feeling of freshness while for Perez, there might also be merit in waiting until June when more candidates could become available. Yet he must be aware now of what Zidane was indicating, the sense that there are bigger problems to fix than the coach. A Marca poll on Tuesday night asked fans who they thought was to blame, with 79 per cent answering either 'everyone' or 'the board' and only 7 per cent picking 'Solari and Lopetegui'.

After years of under-investment, Madrid's spine is creaking. Luka Modric is 33, Sergio Ramos 32, Toni Kroos 29 and Karim Benzema 31. Age is one thing but motivation is another. Success is hard to replicate.

Cristiano Ronaldo sought a new challenge with Juventus but was not replaced, either by a single star or two or three impact players that could collectively help bridge the gap. Mariano Diaz, signed last minute from Lyon, was not even on the bench yesterday. — AFP

Australia win Cup of Nations

MELBOURNE: Australia swept past Argentina 3-0 yesterday to secure victory in the inaugural four-team Cup of Nations and lay down their credentials ahead of this year's FIFA Women's World Cup.

First-half strikes by Sam Kerr and Alanna Kennedy plus a late penalty from Caitlin Foord sealed a comfortable win in Melbourne against the South Americans, who lost all three games in the round-robin event, leaking 10 goals and scoring none.

Earlier, South Korea snatched two late goals to beat New Zealand 2-0 and finish second. All four teams are bound for the World Cup in France, with the Cup of Nations designed to simulate a group stage at the global showcase, with three matches in a short timeframe.

The Matildas, ranked sixth in the world, came through with flying colours, beating the Koreans 4-1 and New Zealand 2-0 to give them a flawless record under new coach Ante Milicic. A former assistant with the Australian men's team, Milicic was appointed last month after previous coach Alen Stajcic was dumped amid concerns about "player welfare".

Irrepressible skipper Kerr got on the score-sheet after just four minutes, climbing unmarked to meet a corner at the near post and putting a powerful header past goalkeeper Vanina Correa. The second also came from a corner with Kennedy heading home from close range.

It was one-way traffic with the Matildas creating a host of other chances, and they finally got a third in injury time from the penalty spot after Steph Catley was hauled down during a goal-mouth scramble.

In the earlier game, 14th ranked South Korea battled past world number 19 New Zealand, largely against the run of play. Substitute Ji So-yun scored the opener on 74 minutes in a game of few chances, striking a superb shot from outside the area which beat keeper Erin Nayler. Despite pressing hard for an equaliser, Tom Sermanni's team couldn't find the breakthrough and South Korea grabbed a second with three minutes left when Moon Mi-ra pounced for a simple tap in after Nayler failed to hang on to a save. — AFP



LONDON: File photo shows Arsenal's Spanish head coach Unai Emery (L) looks on as Tottenham Hotspur's English defender Danny Rose (2nd L) is knocked off the ball by Arsenal's German defender Shkodran Mustafi (R) during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal at Wembley Stadium in London, on March 2, 2019. — AFP

Ben Arfa threatens Rennes revenge against Emery

LONDON: Arsenal manager Unai Emery will face a familiar foe when the Gunners look to move a step closer to Europa League glory and a return to the Champions League at Rennes today. The mercurial talent of Hatem Ben Arfa has helped the mid-table Ligue 1 side reach the last 16 of a European competition for the first time.

Ben Arfa endured an unhappy two years under Emery at Paris Saint-Germain where he was frozen out for an entire season and made to train with the club's reserves. However, at 31, Ben Arfa has relaunched his career in the more modest surroundings of Roazhon Park and will aim to inflict revenge upon Emery today.

Rennes may lie 10th in Ligue 1, but shocked a highly-fancied Real Betis in the last 32 with a thrilling 6-4 aggregate win. "We know it'll be a level up against such a club," said Rennes midfielder Benjamin Andre. "Arsenal is a name that resonates throughout Europe. They will obviously be the big favourites."

Arsenal's struggles on the road in Emery's first season in charge should give the French side reason to believe.

The Gunners have won just once away from home since November, suffering an embarrassing 1-0 defeat to BATE Borisov in the last 32 before turning the tie around at the Emirates. French international Alexandre Lacazette will miss out on a return to his homeland as he is suspended, but there will be a homecoming of another sort for Petr Cech, who spent two years at Rennes before joining Chelsea in 2004.

Chelsea remain favourites to win the competition for a second time in six years and will be confident of seeing off Dynamo Kiev at Stamford Bridge as Maurizio Sarri has bounced back from the brink of losing his job.

London derby victories over Tottenham and Fulham have given the Italian breathing space after a 6-0 Premier League thrashing by Manchester City and then seeing his authority questioned by goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga's refusal to be substituted in the League Cup final.

Sarri's fate, though, will likely depend on sealing a return to Champions League football next season and winning the Europa League may yet prove the best means to that end with Tottenham, Manchester United, Arsenal and Chelsea fighting for the final two places in the Premier League's top four. The biggest threat to the English duo's chances of reaching the final in Baku on May 29 is likely to come from Italian giants Napoli and Inter Milan. Defeat to Juventus on Sunday means Napoli's chances of a long-awaited Scudetto seem over for another season, allowing Carlo Ancelotti's men to focus on Europe, starting with a tricky tie against Austrian champions Salzburg, who reached the semi-finals last season. — AFP

25 Price downs Kings, ties Habs' record mark for goalie wins

26 Bairstow powers England to win in opening T20

27 Pochettino hails Euro goal king Kane as Tottenham march on



Celtics stun Warriors in blowout

Warriors make Evans first woman drafted by NBA 2K League



BOSTON: Boston Celtics guard Terry Rozier (12) dribbles the ball against Golden State Warriors center DeMarcus Cousins.

OAKLAND: Gordon Hayward scored 19 of his 30 points in the first half Tuesday night as the Boston Celtics stunned the Golden State Warriors with 73 points in the first 24 minutes en route to a 128-95 shellacking in Oakland, Calif. Kyrie Irving recorded 19 points and 11 assists for the Celtics, who were opening a four-game western swing after having lost five of their past six games. Stephen Curry had 23 points for the Warriors, who lost at home by at least 20 points for the fifth time this season. Golden State played without Klay Thompson, who missed his second straight game with a sore right knee.

ROCKETS 107, RAPTORS 95

James Harden scored 35 points — 19 in about the final seven minutes of the fourth quarter — as visiting Houston lost a 22-point lead before coming back to beat Toronto and extend its winning streak to six games. Gerald Green added 18 points for the Rockets, who won both meetings between the teams this season. Kawhi Leonard led Toronto with 26 points, Pascal Siakam had 17 points and 10 rebounds, and Serge Ibaka contributed 10 points and 15 rebounds.

TIMBERWOLVES 131, THUNDER 120

Karl-Anthony Towns scored 41 as Minnesota beat visiting Oklahoma City in Minneapolis for its third consecutive win this season over the Thunder. Oklahoma City's Paul George returned to the lineup after missing three games with a sore shoulder, but he struggled, making just 8 of 25 shots from the field and 4 of 14 from behind the 3-point arc to finish with 25 points. Russell Westbrook led the Thunder with 38 points and 13 rebounds, sinking 15 of 28 shots and five 3-pointers. Andrew Wiggins finished with 18 points for the Timberwolves.

GRIZZLIES 120, TRAIL BLAZERS 111

Mike Conley scored a career-high 40 points to lead Memphis over visiting Portland, draining 6 of 7 3-point attempts while connecting on 12 of 18 shots overall. Delon Wright added 25 points on 9-of-13 shooting for Memphis, and Jonas Valanciunas scored 17 points. CJ McCollum scored 27 points for the Trail Blazers, who finished 5-2 on a seven-game road trip. Damian Lillard scored 24 points, and Maurice Harkless added a season-best 20.

76ERS 114, MAGIC 106

JJ Redick scored 26 points, his 23rd 20-point game this season, to lead host Philadelphia past Orlando. Tobias Harris scored 21 points and grabbed 12 rebounds while Ben Simmons had 16 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists for Philadelphia. Evan Fournier paced the Magic with 25 points while Aaron Gordon added 24. Jonathan Isaac scored 16 points, and Nikola Vucevic had 12 points and 12 rebounds.

PACERS 105, BULLS 96

Bojan Bogdanovic scored 27 points on 9-for-14 shooting, and Indiana held on to win against Chicago in Indianapolis. Darren Collison added 22 points on 7-for-10 shooting for the Pacers. Myles Turner registered 10 points and 11 rebounds, and he set a career high with seven blocked shots. Zach LaVine scored 27 points to lead the Bulls. Robin Lopez finished with 20 points, and Lauri Markkanen posted his sixth double-double in the past seven games with 14 points and 13 rebounds.

Meanwhile, Chiquita Evans became the first woman even selected in the NBA 2K League Draft, going 56th overall Tuesday to Warriors Gaming Squad, the team

operated by NBA champion Golden State. The 30-year-old Chicago gamer, whose tag is ChiquitaE126, became emotional as she realized her groundbreaking eSports role beyond being the second pick in the fourth round. "I told myself I wasn't going to cry, that I was going to hold it in, but it was just too hard," Evans said. "It feels surreal. It's an amazing experience. I'm very glad to be here, excited to be here. It's a very humbling experience."

She will be among 126 players in the league, which had no women players in its inaugural campaign. "A lot of people want my perspective on the gaming scene for women in general and want me to answer questions as far as do I feel like it will improve," Evans said. "I feel like it will improve, but it starts with women ourselves."

"We have to go out here and get ourselves known. We have to learn to have tough skin and just go out there and compete, no matter what anyone says." The gym trainer credited playing actual basketball in high school, college and semi-pro levels with building the toughness she needed to excel as a gamer and draw the loudest ovation from draft spectators. "It has been amazing," she said. "The support that I have gotten over the last few months has been amazing." — Agencies

England rout Japan to take SheBelieves title

MIAMI: England laid down a marker for this year's FIFA Women's World Cup on Tuesday, defeating Japan 3-0 to clinch victory in the four-nation SheBelieves Cup friendly tournament in Florida. First-half goals from Lucy Staniforth, Karen Carney and Beth Mead sealed a comfortable win for Phil Neville's side at Tampa's Raymond James Stadium as they build towards the Women's World Cup in France.

The result means England, who had beaten Brazil in their opening game last week and drawn against the United States on Saturday, were guaranteed to finish on top of the round-robin standings. More significantly, the win hands England a psychological boost against the Japanese, who defeated the Lionesses 2-1 in the 2015 World Cup semi-finals. The two teams will meet again in Group D of this year's World Cup on June 19.

The United States edged Brazil 1-0 in the final game of the tournament, with Tobin Heath's goal in

the 20th minute lifting the hosts into second place overall. On Tuesday's evidence, England will head to the World Cup bristling with confidence after wrapping up an impressive SheBelieves campaign with an emphatic victory. Knowing a win would be good enough to take the title, England's women effectively sealed the outcome with a devastating first-half performance that saw them go 3-0 up within the first 30 minutes. Jodie Taylor was the first to test the Japanese defense after 11 minutes, shooting just wide of goalkeeper Erina Yamane's post. The English did not have long to wait to take the lead, however, when a minute later Taylor's clever reverse pass sent Staniforth in on goal. The Birmingham City midfielder still had plenty to do but calmly glided past the Japan defense before drilling a low shot past Yamane into the bottom corner.

Taylor was involved once more for England's second goal on 23 minutes, crossing for the unmarked Carney, who coolly nodded in from close range. The pick of the English goals came in the 30th minute, when a magnificent 50-yard pass from Keira Walsh sent Mead racing clear down the right flank.

The Arsenal winger cut inside and, after looking around to survey her passing options, chose to go for goal herself and lashed in a thumping left-foot finish to beat Yamane at the near-post. —AFP



TAMPA: England celebrates winning the SheBelieves Cup at Raymond James Stadium on Tuesday in Tampa, Florida. — AFP

S Africa thump Sri Lanka in second ODI

PRETORIA: South Africa's Quinton de Kock top-scored with a fluent 94 as they cruised to a 113-run victory over Sri Lanka and a 2-0 lead in their five-match One-Day International series yesterday. South Africa claimed an eight-wicket victory in the opening match on Sunday and were dominant again despite losing their last six wickets for 31 runs as they posted a below-par 251 all out.

Their bowlers picked up wickets at regular intervals though and dismissed Sri Lanka for 138 in 32.2 overs to claim an emphatic win. De Kock blazed away at the top of the order after South Africa were sent in to bat, racing to 94 from 70 balls before he top-edged a Thisara Perera delivery while attempting the six that would have taken him to

his century. South Africa captain Faf du Plessis (57) kept up his good run of form, but the home side will be concerned about a late order collapse that restricted their total when 300 had seemed a minimum at the midway point of the innings.

Sri Lanka never looked in control of the chase and lost wickets at regular intervals, with Oshada Fernando (31) providing the top score in their meagre total. South Africa seamer Lungi Ngidi (2-14 in 5.2 overs) was the pick of the home attack, but fast bowler Kagiso Rabada (3-43), leg-spinner Imran Tahir (2-39) and newcomer Anrich Nortje (2-25) also impressed. South Africa can wrap up the series in the third ODI in Durban on Sunday. — Reuters