

5 Kuwaiti envoy's wife among top 100 party hosts for 2019



16 SpaceX capsule back on Earth, paving way for manned flights



22 'Glamping': Dubai's new take on desert camping



28 Southampton stun fading Spurs, Newcastle edge Everton thriller



Boy raped, woman killed, teen abducted in spate of crimes

Two suspects arrested • 4 doctors blamed for cadets' deaths



RIYADH: Soldiers take part in joint Gulf military exercises in Saudi Arabia yesterday. The 10th edition of the Peninsula Shield drills kicked off on Feb 23, with the participation of Gulf land, naval and air forces, and concluded yesterday. — Defense Ministry (See Page 3)

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A man claiming to be a detective abducted three boys - aged 9 to 11 years - from a playground in Abdullah Al-Mubarak and raped one of them. Amidst outrage on social media, the interior ministry's relations and security information department confirmed yesterday that police received a call about the kidnappings, adding the suspect was arrested and charged. He admitted to raping one of the children in a toilet.

Police also arrested another suspect hours after a 33-year-old Kuwaiti woman was found dead by her 31-year-old brother in Ardiya. The suspect said he killed her along with others. Police are looking for his accomplices. The body was recovered by the coroner. Later yesterday, a man was rushed to hospital after being stabbed in Jaber Al-Ahmad.

In another incident, a Jordanian man told police his 16-year-old daughter was kidnapped from his car when he went for Friday prayers in Mahboula. The man said he had parked the car

with his wife and two daughters inside. He said when he returned to the car, nobody was in it. After a while, his wife and one daughter returned, saying they had gone shopping and had left the other daughter in the car, but she was missing. Police are investigating. The Jordanian foreign ministry later said it is following up the case in coordination with the Jordanian embassy in Kuwait.

Meanwhile, the Kuwait army chief of staff announced yesterday the conclusion of a probe into the recent deaths of non-commissioned officers Mubarak Al-Azmi and Faisal Al-Obaid. The military noted in a statement that the criminal aspect of the case had been shifted to the public prosecution and the public directorate for investigations. Therefore, the panel's task is now confined to cross examining "the administrative responsibility" in the case, where "responsibility has been restricted to four doctors". Notably, First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah had ordered the immediate suspension from work of any staff found responsible in the case.

1m expats have driving licenses but no vehicles

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Recent statistics issued by the interior ministry concerning the total number of expat driving licenses and vehicles compared to those of citizens showed 616,000 vehicles are registered under expats' names, while those registered to citizens number 1.39 million, which does not reflect their proportion of Kuwait's population - 3.31 million expats out of a total of 4.715 million.

Further, statistics showed 1.664 million expats hold driving licenses, compared to 616,000 vehicles registered to expats, which means that over a million expats with driving licenses do not own their own vehicles. Moreover, the statistics showed that 624,000 citizens hold driving licenses, which means that over 63 percent of licenses are held by expats. This shows Kuwait's responsibility for traffic jams exceeds 40 percent of that of expats, despite citizens being outnumbered 3 to 1 by expats.

Govt slammed after UK teen's baby son dies

LONDON: The British government drew fresh criticism yesterday over its decision to revoke citizenship from a London teenager who joined the Islamic State group in Syria, after her baby died in a refugee camp. Shamima Begum, 19, had asked to return home after giving birth to her son Jarrah last month in the camp in northeastern Syria, but London refused. A spokesman for the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, Mustafa Bali, told AFP the baby had died, without giving further details. The BBC said he had pneumonia, citing a medical certificate.

Begum's fate has sparked heated debate in Britain, which like many other countries is facing a dilemma over whether to allow jihadists and IS sympathizers home to face prosecution, or stop them from returning at all. She was 15 when she left east London for Syria with two other schoolgirls, and was found by journalists in the refugee camp after fleeing fighting between the terror group and US-backed forces. Begum told them she wanted to return home to save her baby, saying that her two older children had died, apparently from illness and malnutrition. "I don't want to lose this baby as well and this is really not a place to raise children, this camp," she told the BBC at the time.

Continued on Page 24

Trump brands Democrats as 'anti-Jewish'

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump blasted Democrats as "anti-Israeli" and "anti-Jewish" Friday after they passed a congressional measure opposing hate speech in general instead of specifically condemning alleged anti-Semitic comments by a Muslim congresswoman. His remarks follow days of tense debates in Congress addressing sensitive questions about national allegiance, discriminatory tropes aimed at Jews, and accusations of show votes that failed to call out a member for controversial comments.

US protesters demand 'regime change' in Iran

WASHINGTON: Hundreds of people turned out in Washington Friday demanding regime change in Iran and denouncing "atrocities toward the people" under Tehran's regime. Protesters waved Iranian flags as they chanted for "regime change now" - with some holding portraits of Maryam Rajavi, leader of the People's Mujahedin, an Iranian opposition group banned in the country. "The regime inside Iran is doing so much atrocity toward the people. Iran in whole has been destroyed

US town elects goat as 'mayor'

WASHINGTON: In a divided America where politics seems increasingly to get people's goat, a small town in Vermont has taken the concept to heart - this week electing one as mayor. He may be a political novice but the goat's name, Lincoln, brings with it a storied pedigree. And the leading human official in Fair Haven - population about 2,500 - hopes the long-eared, three-year-old animal's election can serve as a bit of a lesson in democracy.

In Tuesday's poll, Lincoln was victorious over 15 other candidates including Crystal the gerbil and many dogs and cats. Fair Haven has no official mayor but the Town Manager, Joseph Gunter, holds similar functions. When Gunter read in

"I thought yesterday's vote by the House was disgraceful," Trump said at the White House. The resolution was originally intended to deliver a direct rebuke of anti-Semitism following comments by a Muslim Democratic congresswoman, Ilhan Omar, that were deemed anti-Semitic and offensive by many colleagues. But after blowback from progressives, it was revised to broadly condemn discrimination against Muslims and other minorities as well.

Trump seized on the shift, injecting a new angle of attack as he readies a 2020 re-election bid and fellow Republicans seek to claw back ground they lost in the House in last year's midterms. "The Democrats have become an anti-Israel party, they've become an anti-Jewish party," he said. The issue has caused a deep rift.

Continued on Page 24

by this regime," said Michael Passi, an Iranian-American engineer.

"There are a lot of executions, a lot of tortures and a lot of export of terrorism by this regime," he alleged. "We want separation of religion and the state," added Mina Entezari, an Arizona-based designer who was a political prisoner in Iran for seven years. "We want freedom for people." The administration of US President Donald Trump consistently blasts a lack of freedoms in Iran and its "destabilizing" influence on the Middle East.

A firm adversary of the Islamic republic, he has re-implemented harsh economic sanctions - but Washington insists it is not pushing for regime change, only a change to Iran's policy in areas including missile development and support for militant groups. "I'm 100 percent behind President Trump's policy," Passi said. — AFP

a newspaper that the village of Omena, Michigan, had made Sweet Tart the cat its "top" official, he got the idea to organize a similar election to raise funds for building a playground.

Lincoln's 13 votes were enough for him to squeak past Sammie the dog. The goat, which belongs to a school math teacher, will get an education in the town's major festivals which it will represent during its one-year mandate: "Memorial Day parade, the Apple Fest and the events we organize every Friday in the summer," Gunter says.

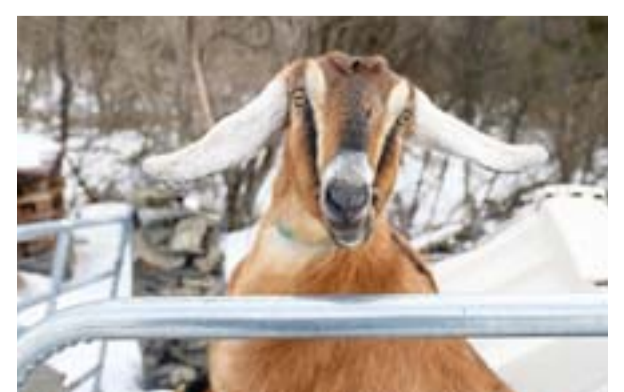
Although the playground fundraising effort only generated about \$100, at five dollars per candidate, Gunter isn't bleating because he says the animal election was also "a good way to get the kids involved in local government". With 53 votes cast the turnout was low, Gunter admits, "but it was the first time, we expect it to be better next year". That happens to be the year that US voters will also elect a human president, in a contest expected to shake out like a barnyard brawl. — AFP



WASHINGTON: Ilhan Omar (left) talks with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi during a rally with fellow Democrats on the East Steps of the US Capitol on Friday. — AFP



WASHINGTON: The Organization of Iranian-American Communities holds a rally and march in support of "nationwide uprisings in Iran for regime change" on Friday. — AFP



FAIR HAVEN, Vermont: This March 6, 2019 handout photograph shows Lincoln, a Nubian goat, who was elected "Pet Mayor" of this town. — AFP

Local

NoufEXPO to organize 2nd Consulting Services for Development Plan Forum

Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad's sponsorship makes ENCON2 a national event: Salman

KUWAIT: Engineer Bader Al-Salman, President of the Federation of Kuwaiti Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses, announced yesterday that the '2nd Consulting Services for the Development Plan Forum' will convene under the motto of 'Role of the Private Sector in Execution and Automated Integration among Related Agencies to boost Productivity and combat Corruption.' The announcement came through a press release issued yesterday.

Salman said that he is delighted that Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense - Chairman of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, will patronize ENCON2. NoufEXPO will organize the event from April 30 to May 2, 2019 at the Diamond Grand Ballroom of Sheraton Kuwait.

He moved on saying, "The patronage of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad makes ENCON2 much of a national event. Many ENCON2's agenda and topics are reflections of His Excellency's vision and have their significant impact on Kuwait's growth and prosperity."

Joint cooperation

Commenting on the organizing agencies, Salman said "ENCON2 is a result of the cooperation of the Federation of Kuwaiti Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses with the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, the Central Agency for Public Tenders, the Central Agency for Information Technology, Kuwait

Municipality, and the other executive and supervisory government agencies.

ENCON2 objectives

Commenting on the topics that will be discussed, Salman said that ENCON2 aims at boosting the efficiency by which the phases of Kuwait's 2035 Development Plan are executed. It also aims at ensuring that projects are executed accurately according to their specifications and allocated budgets. Shortening the documentary cycle and sig-



Boosting productivity of Development Plan's execution

nificantly limiting variation orders to boost transparency and combat corruption are among the hot topics of ENCON2.

He added, "To achieve these objectives, ENCON2 will focus on increasing the level of cooperation and coordination among all agencies mandated with the delivery of consulting services, particularly those related to Kuwait's Development plan. As a first step, ENCON2 will discuss the requirements for developing a healthy administrative and technological environment among the executive and supervisory government agencies to automate the issuance of approvals and permissions of Development Plan projects."

Unified electronic portal

ENCON2 will also discuss the development of a web portal to be the unified gateway for issuing all approvals and permissions by government and supervisory agencies to execute consulting services for government and private sector projects. As a first step, the focus will be on issuing approvals and permissions for Development Plan construction projects by qualified consulting houses. ENCON2 will also discuss the best approach to empowering the private sector to execute all phases of Development Plan projects while mandating the public sector to carry out an effective supervisory role only. The event will highlight the technical and legal requirements of implementing such a policy which conforms to Kuwait's strategy of allowing the private sector to play a more important role in Kuwait's economy."

Notable participation

Salman also welcomed the participation of many related government agencies in ENCON2, namely: Agency for Developing Madinat Al-Hareer (Al-Subiya) and Boubyan Island, Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate, Ministry of Electricity and Water, Environment Public Authority, Ministry of Public Works, Public Authority for Roads and Transportation, Ministry of Health, Kuwait University, Ministry of Education, and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, and the World Bank.

He also welcomed the participating supervisory authorities: State Audit Bureau, Department of Legal Advice and



Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah



Bader Al-Salman

Legislation, Kuwait Anticorruption Authority (Nazaha), the Financial Supervisory Authority, and the Government Performance Follow-up Agency. Salman also welcomed the participation of many engineering offices and consultant houses. These are highly appreciating the proposed policy to mandate the private sector with projects' execution while limiting the public sector's role to a supervisory role. "The Federation of Kuwaiti Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses and all its members are looking forward to carrying on this responsibility. We believe this is a recipe for success in achieving Kuwait's 2035 vision and objectives," Salman said.

Salman emphasized that ENCON2 and its accompanying exhibition will provide participating and sponsoring organizations,

agencies, and companies with an ideal platform to network and display their specialized services and technologies. Finally, Salman welcomed the continued cooperation between the Federation of Kuwaiti Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses and NoufEXPO to organize ENCON2 while appreciating NoufEXPO's professionalism and dedication. He invited all interested sponsors, organizations, and individuals to contact the organizing company, NoufEXPO on their phone number +965 22469921. They can also send their inquiries to info@noufexpo.com.kw, or visit ENCON2 website at www.noufexpo.com.kw/encon2. The Federation of Kuwaiti Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses may also be contacted on +965 22420482 or website www.oiaec.com.

Burgan Bank supports special needs exhibition

KUWAIT: For the second year in a row, Burgan Bank successfully concluded its sponsorship of the Kuwaiti Project for Special Needs Exhibition that took place on February 20, 2019 under the patronage of Shaikha Sheikhha Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah. Burgan Bank representatives presented how the special needs segment are fully accommodated with a comprehensive banking experience backed by enhanced accessibility and modern world-class technological applications.

The annual exhibition is conducted to

showcase Kuwait's concentrated efforts in facilitating their overall requirements and ensuring the optimal comfort of the special needs segment. In support of the Central Bank of Kuwait's instructions and regulations, Burgan Bank has maintained six fully-equipped branches at convenient locations, in Adaliyah, Bayan, Khaitan, Qurain, Riqqa and Al-Qosour, allowing physically disabled, visually impaired and seniors to carry out their banking transactions proficiently, independently and with utmost ease. A number of highly proficient employees trained to communicate via sign language are positioned in each branch.

Part of Burgan Bank's long-standing mission is to ensure best-in-class services for all segments of society and as one of the leading sponsors, the bank has played an important role in being the first to develop innovative solutions that comprehensively serve the requirements of vulnerable groups in Kuwait.



AUB sponsors launch of simplified application for hearing impaired

KUWAIT: Within the framework of its social partnership with Al-Manaber Al-Quraniya Society, Ahli United Bank (AUB) has announced its sponsorship of the 'Kairokoum' application for the simplified interpretation for the hearing impaired, being keen to support creative social projects that contribute to achieving a sustainable social development in line with the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The 'Kairokoum' service was launched at a celebration sponsored and attended by Ahli United Bank's Acting Chief Executive Officer Tareq Muhmood. The celebration was attended by Sahar Dashti, General Manager Customers Protection Department and the responsible for social responsibility programs at Ahli United Bank, along with a number of the bank's executive management.

In his speech at the launching ceremony, Muhmood said that Ahli United Bank has always been careful to build a social partnership with Al-Manaber Al-Quraniya Society in Kuwait, inspired by the bank's vision of harnessing modern technology and digital transformation in order to achieve a wider spread and better service. The result was this sponsorship of the application in its first stage, to become the first application of its kind that serves this underprivileged segment of society locally and internationally. In doing so, the bank demonstrates its understanding of the importance of supporting this worthy social segment, the need to help them overcome the obstacles that face them, and the vital importance of teaching them the Holy Quran and the important elements of religion. He added that this step is the first, and involves supporting the



KUWAIT: Tareq Muhmood and AUB executive management during the celebration of launching the application.

application. It will eventually be followed by similar steps in the coming years, with the grace of Allah.

Meanwhile, Dashti emphasized that this sponsorship reflects the bank's firm belief in the importance of empowering and supporting individuals with handicaps by helping them overcome hardships. This position, she added, "is in line with the objectives of the United Nations and the plan of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah for 'New Kuwait 2035'. We interpret Ahli United Bank's concept of social responsibility into a constructive participation in and a deep belonging to society and Kuwait."

It is worth mentioning that the 'Kairokoum' application for a simplified interpretation for the hearing impaired will serve 18 million persons in the Arab world through the sign language, five thousand of whom are in Kuwait. It will also serve all Muslims because it includes a simplified interpretation that addresses synonyms and the lessons learned from the verses of the Holy Quran, to serve as a guide for conduct in our lives. It will also benefit non-Muslims who wish to understand the means of the Quranic verses and suras, since the committee that supervised the production of the application was carefully to ensure that the interpretation be simple in order to be readily understood by all.

In turn, The Chairman of the West Asia



Tareq Muhmood honored by the Al-Manaber Al-Quraniya's Chairman.

Association for the Deaf, Dr Saeed Al-Qahtani, said that he was extremely happy with this unique application, indicating that this amazing work marks a remarkable shift in serving individuals who are hearing impaired both locally and internationally because it provides a simplified interpretation, the meanings of Quranic words and an explanation of essential matters of religion translated into sign language and expressive meanings. Equally important is the fact that it translated the interpretation and religious matters into sign language in line with the Arabic sign language dictionary under the supervision of a team of sign language experts.

KFH participates in Business Administration College's career fair

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the 24th Kuwait University Job Fair, which was organized by the College of Business Administration under the patronage of the Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Dr Jenan Bushehri.

KFH's participation is part of its continuous efforts to attract, train and qualify distinguished national recruits and unlock the available jobs in the market, the Islamic banking and private sector environment.

The fair also represents an opportunity to identify the competencies of graduates.

Held from 5 to 7 March, the fair was inaugurated by the college of Business Administration's dean Dr Meshari Al-Hajri and the assistant dean for Student affairs Dr Nayef Al-Shammari, along with the Executive Manager HR Operations and Rewards at KFH Talal Al-Mutairi, as well as several representatives of the exhibition participants. The event offered career opportunities for students and graduates of Kuwait University.

Dr Hajri expressed his delight for the launch of the exhibition, appreciating KFH's participation and its remarkable efforts in supporting the students. Attracted high demand and interesting, a specialized team from the human resources department at KFH provided information about employment and the relevant conditions and terms, importance of human resources role in corporates. Also, KFH explored the need to determine the career path and the employer, as well the local job

market requirements.

On the sidelines of the exhibition, KFH continued the event of 'Your Coffee is on Us' as part of the bank's interest in students and youth. This is to ensure the continuous organization of events and surprises that aim to meet their expectations. The event created a positive impression on students who praised the initiatives of the bank and its focus on the interests of students and youth.

In line with the relevant parties, KFH pays attention to strengthen its role and efforts to attract and develop the local skills as per the international standards. Thanks to the growth opportunity and its large market share, KFH continues employing and developing the Kuwaiti youth to achieve the desired success in all areas.

KFH has recently participated as a platinum sponsor in the exhibition 'Because You Deserve 2' which was hosted by the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program, with the aim of providing jobs for Kuwaiti youth in the private sector, specifi-



KUWAIT: Talal Al-Mutairi with the dean and several officials at the launch of the fair.

cally in banks and financial institutions. KFH accepted during the event 110 applications for employment. KFH has also participated in various job exhibitions organized in Kuwait, either by official bodies or by public

or private universities. Additionally, KFH is the only bank to launch the 'Forsah' program for young outstanding Kuwaiti graduates to develop their skills and equip them with the highest standards to enter the job market.

Local

Gulf war games wind up in Saudi Arabia



RIYADH: Army chiefs and officials of GCC member states attend the conclusion of joint Gulf military exercises in Saudi Arabia yesterday. —Defense Ministry photos



RIYADH: Joint Gulf military exercises came to a close in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia yesterday, with the army chiefs and officials of GCC member states attending. Land, air and naval forces from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members partook in the 10th edition of the



Peninsula Shield Drill. Speaking at the wrapping-up ceremony, Commander of the Exercises Gen Abdullah Al-Qahtani commended the joint drill as one of the fruits of inter-Gulf cooperation in the kingdom. The annual exercise came in the context of integrated military cooperation



involving preparedness, sharing of expertise and upgrading of capabilities and efficiency, he added. Spokesman of the Joint Drill Brig Gen Abdullah Al-Subaie said that the last stage of the significantly sophisticated joint drill was conducted with live ammunition. It is part of Saudi Arabia's

wider strategic and comprehensive vision of boosting security and military preparedness and maintaining regional and world security and stability, he added. The Peninsula Shield Drill kicked off on February 23, with the participation of Gulf land, naval and air forces. —KUNA

30 evacuated from burning Mahboula building

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Firemen put out a blaze reported in a Mahboula apartment yesterday. The fire was on the third floor of a six-floor building. Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) said. Mangaf and Fahaheel fire stations responded and firemen evacuated 30 persons from the building. One person suffered from smoke inhalation and was taken to hospital. Separately, firemen put out a fire in an annex in a Khaitan building. Residents were evacuated and the fire was put out without injuries.



KUWAIT: The scene inside a Mahboula apartment where a fire was reported yesterday.

Free services waste of public funds: MoH

By Meshal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) explained that the new fees collected for some services provided by the medical licenses department, the general medical council and the radioactivity prevention department

are mainly for logistical services. MoH's official spokesperson Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti said that the new resolutions include reviewing and updating fees of some services that had remained unchanged since 1993, making those fees match those collected in other GCC states and excluding citizens from the fees collected by the general medical council. Shatti added that continuing to offer public services for free, namely for non-Kuwaitis, is a waste of public funds, and noted that the new fees had been set after careful studies. Shatti's statement refuted social media condemnation of the resolutions on the new fees that were made without full understanding of the new changes and the exclusion of citizens from them.

Panel formed to support road maintenance efforts

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Jenan Bushehri issued a decision forming a technical consultancy committee comprising elements from the Ministry of Public Works (MPW), the defense ministry, Kuwait University and Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) to support MPW's efforts in roads and infrastructure maintenance. The committee will be headed by the MPW undersecretary and include six members. The decision also said that the committee will provide full support to MPW and Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) officials on plans to repair roads, provide technical and consultation support during repairs, supervise and document the process and report back to Bushehri.

Project delays

The Public Authority for Housing Welfare said construction in Mutlaa residential city is going according to schedule despite delays in some contracts, adding that it reschedules delayed tasks on a daily basis. The authority added that construction orders are made by the municipality in collaboration with other relevant bodies. The authority's official spokesperson Ibrahim Al-Nashi said the body's role lies in preparing plans and the needed infrastructure before having each relevant government body take over. Nashi explained that the city has four contracts - the first started in Sept 2016 to build main roads and is due to be completed in Sept 2020. He added that the project is ahead of schedule with 57.41 percent actual achievement so far. The second contract involves building infrastructure for 18,519 housing units. Nashi noted this project, which started in April 2017 and is scheduled to be concluded in Oct 2019, is 37 percent behind schedule because of some problems the contractor faced. He added that the third contract involves building infrastructure for 4,770 units in the suburbs, adding that work on the project is expected to conclude in March 2020 and is on schedule. Finally, Nashi said the fourth contract involves building infrastructure for 4,999 units in the suburbs, adding that work on the project is expected to be concluded in March 2020 and is on schedule.

Troopers died

The British Daily Mail newspaper said two US troopers died in a traffic accident in Kuwait on Tuesday after their vehicle collided into a truck in northern Kuwait. The US Department of Defense said Jackson Johnson (aged 20) and Holly Polanski (37) had been killed in a non-combat incident, while a third unidentified soldier was injured. The statement said the three soldiers were airlifted by a US army chopper to Camp Arifjan hospital, where Polanski died on arrival. Johnson died later and the third soldier is awaiting medical evacuation from Kuwait.

Committee meeting

Chairman of the parliamentary legislation and legal committee MP Khaled Al-Shatti said that the committee will meet tomorrow to discuss three bills including the establishment of a judicial disputes council proposed by MP Ahmad Al-Fadhil, amending decree law number 38/1980 pertaining civil and commercial pleadings proposed by MP's Abdulwahab Al-Babtain, Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei, Omar Al-Tabtabaei, Thamer Al-Thafeiri and Mubarak Al-Hajraf, and adding a new chapter to law number 38 proposed by MP Khaled Al-Shatti.



KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Essam Al-Naham, accompanied by Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs and Operations Maj Gen Jamal Al-Sayegh, and Assistant Undersecretary for Residency Affairs Maj Gen Talal Maarafi visited the Kuwait Embassy in London and was received by Ambassador Khalid Al-Duwaisan.

Kuwait pleased with development in South Sudan's deal

NEW YORK: Kuwait expressed joy over the development in the South Sudan peace deal, hoping all sides would complete the pre-transitional stage before May. The remarks were made by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi during the UN Security Council's (UNSC) session on Friday.

Otaibi welcomed the return of conflicting leaders to the capital Juba, hoping that other parties would also join in the peace deal. Meanwhile, he called for allowing women to take part in executing the deal and play a role in ending the conflict. Although the security condition in Juba is improving, the UN mission must exert more efforts to protect civilians and boost the political process, he noted.

Otaibi also thanked South Sudan's neighboring countries, especially the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) member-countries for sup-

porting the peace process. Moreover, the Ambassador called for a safe return of refugees and displaced citizens to their homes in the country.

Separately, Kuwait had underlined the important role of regional organizations in settling disputes, particularly when the UN cannot confront such disputes on its own. Otaibi made those remarks during a Security Council briefing session by the Organization for Security and Peace in Europe (OSCE). Otaibi said, "if the United Nations plays an important and fundamental role in the entire cycle of conflicts and in post-conflict peace and building periods, the support of regional and sub-regional organizations in this process is indispensable."

"Chapter VIII of the UN Charter guides us, and also encourages us to promote such cooperation, but it is also clear that regional and sub-regional organizations are critical cost effective to learn more about the reality of some conflicts," Otaibi added. He pointed out that these organizations are the first sensor of the international community and are better able to understand the nature of any conflict, and how to deal with it and respond better.

The commitment to continue the annual briefing by OSCE chief since the first meeting in 2004 was a translation and confirmation of the Organization's commit-

ment to strengthening cooperation with the United Nations, particularly in the area of international peace and security, Otaibi noted. The ambassador said that OSCE is the largest geographical organization of regional security, which includes the European, Asian and Euro-Asian Mediterranean regions, which adds great value to the common pursuit of international peace and stability and its promotion and effective use in facing the security challenges facing the international community.

Otaibi welcomed the first high-level meeting between the European Union (EU) and OSCE last December and the agreement between the two organizations to formalize their relationship through high-level annual meetings. Otaibi added that the European continent is witnessing some prolonged conflicts that require radical solutions, for example the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus and Moldova.

OSCE traces its origins to the detente phase of the early 1970s, when the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) was created to serve as a multilateral forum for dialogue and negotiation between East and West. Meeting over two years in Helsinki and Geneva, the CSCE reached agreement on the Helsinki Final Act, which was signed on August 1, 1975. —KUNA

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A colorful Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium. —Photo by Khaled Al-Hajri (KUNA)

Kite team eager to represent Kuwait, highlight volunteerism

Al-Farsi Kite Team participants in Qatar's Aspire International Kite Festival

DOHA: Head of Kuwait's Al-Farsi Kite Team Abdulrahman Al-Farsi said on Friday that the team is eager to be Kuwait's representatives in events, highlighting Kuwait's enhancement of hobbies and spreading the culture of volunteerism. Kite flying is one of the most popular sports, Farsi said on the sidelines of his participation in the third Aspire International Kite Festival in Qatar.

Al-Farsi team, also affiliated with Kuwait Voluntary Work Center (KVWC), contributed in several festivals and tournaments in this area and globally to obtain great achievements, he added. The team aims to spread the culture of volunteerism in Kuwait and the GCC countries, he said, pointing out that the team uses models of his kites in designs that reflect the Kuwaiti environment, drawing a painting on the history of Kuwait.

In 2002, the team was recognized by Peter Lynn from New Zealand, who has great expertise on flying kites, the team have been staying up-to-date on the global development of kite flying in Kuwait. In one year the team developed kites designed as the Kuwaiti flag, which was 60-1000 square meters, as documented in the 2004 Guinness World Record, still holding the record he noted. The Kuwaiti team was able to achieve new records the size of 1,650 square meters, he added. The 2019 Aspire International Kite Festival kicked off last Wednesday was attended by 80 professional kite flyers representing 18 teams from 20 Arab and other countries. Al-Farsi Kite Team also includes Mohammed Al-Farsi, Mubarak Bumarzouq, Mohammed Al-Musawi and Saud Al-Ghareeb. —KUNA



Kites participating at the third Aspire International Kite Festival in Qatar. —KUNA



Head of Kuwait's Al-Farsi Kite Team Abdulrahman Al-Farsi with his team members and other participants.



DOHA: Al-Farsi Kite Team members Mubarak Bumarzouq, Mohammed Al-Musawi and Saud Al-Ghareeb.



Al-Farsi Kite Team members prepare a kite during the third Aspire International Kite Festival in Qatar.

Kuwait chosen as coordinator for Asian countries at WFP

ROME: Kuwait's representative has assumed again responsibility of coordinator for the Asian countries in the Executive Board of the World Food Program (WFP) for a one-year term. Speaking on Friday, Kuwait's permanent mission to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said permanent representative Yusuf Juhail this week was chosen a coordinator for Asian countries inside the board of the WFP until March 2020. This is the second time for Kuwait to be selected for

this post, it added. Juhail expressed his pride for confidence given by the Asian countries to Kuwait. He noted that this came after Kuwait's recent election as WFP board member for the fourth time. This confidence and responsibility inside the board show Kuwait's international status, thanks to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's role on the global level and his key humanitarian initiatives through the WFP as well as Kuwait's active role in the organization, Juhail said. Kuwait chaired the Executive Board consisting 36 member states over the last term ended last February. It was chosen as a member of the board for two consecutive terms from 2006-2010. Last week, Juhail elected head of the Near East and North Africa group at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Kuwait has been chosen for the sixth time in five years to lead the group. —KUNA



ROME: Kuwait's Representative at the WFP Executive Board Yusuf Juhail, together with representatives of Egypt, Germany, Guatemala and Russia. —KUNA

Kuwait aims to boost economic relations with Italy

FLORENCE: Head of the visiting Kuwaiti Economic delegation and Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (KCCI) treasurer Abdullah Al-Humaithi affirmed on Friday the success of their visit to Florence, Italy, that aims to boost economic relations between the two countries. Humaithi said in a statement that the delegation toured around the world for the purpose of strengthening Kuwaiti economic ties. This visit is an opportunity for the delegation, consisting of Kuwaiti economists and members of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), to experience all possible potentials to improve the Italian-Kuwaiti ties, he continued. "These visits helped pave the way for future economic cooperation between Kuwaiti and Italian companies," he added. Similar fashion, members of the Kuwaiti delegation expressed in various statements keenness to explore business opportunities in Italy, which will have numerous economic benefits for both countries. —KUNA

Local

Kuwaiti Ambassador's wife named among US top 100 party hosts for 2019

Sheikha Rima credited for raising millions to support women, children causes

WASHINGTON: As the world observes International Women's Day, the wife of Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikha Rima Al-Sabah was named by a prominent US magazine among America's top 100 party hosts for 2019. Rima Al-Sabah, who is both a Goodwill Ambassador to UNHCR and a philanthropist who over the last 19 years was able to raise over \$18 million through her gala dinners to support women and children causes, was named among the Saloniere 100 this year along such celebrities as Oprah Winfrey and Hollywood's Jennifer Aniston. The magazine noted that Rima Al-Sabah "is known for hosting purpose-driven fundraisers that are bridge-builders, attracting politicians from both sides of the aisle as well as Hollywood luminaries." It indicated that "in 2018, her parties raised millions of dollars to support refugees and displaced women."



WASHINGTON: The wife of Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikha Rima Al-Sabah speaks during a function held at the UN earlier this week by the UN Women for Peace Association to celebrate International Women's Day. — KUNA

"She has strengthened ties between the US and Kuwait and changed our view of Arab women," the magazine added. On this occasion, Sheikha Rima said "I was honored to have been selected to be among the America's 100 best party hosts in 2019." She added "I am grateful to be able to host events that help causes close to my heart and be able to attract power players who prove helpful for such causes."

Sheikha Rima was asked to speak at the UN earlier this week to celebrate International Women's Day by the UN Women for Peace Association, an Association that honored her last year with the 2018 Peace Award. Founder and Editor in Chief of The Saloniere Carla McDonald said in a statement that The Saloniere 100 "is our way of honoring those who are extraordinary at hosting events with passion and purpose and using the power of parties to unite, enhance,

and improve the lives of others." This year's list includes honorees from 33 US cities and represents "a diverse and brilliantly creative group of people who share one common trait: an exceptional ability to leverage the power of parties to enhance the lives of others." McDonald affirmed that "social gatherings play a vital role in our lives and communities, whether to connect people, advance ideas, support causes, or promote joyfulness, and those who host them well provide a great gift to humanity." — KUNA



Ranked among celebrities including Oprah Winfrey

Decisions on women's rights recognize their struggles: Institute

KUWAIT: Head of the Women's Institute for Development and Peace Kawthar Al-Jowaan affirmed Friday that issuing fateful decisions on Kuwaiti women's rights is a recognition and appreciation of their struggle and achievements in all fields. On the occasion of celebrating International Woman's Day, Jowaan said in a press statement that Kuwaiti women are honored and capable, and the decision that became possible through efforts led by His Highness the Amir Sheikh

Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to grant Kuwaiti women their political rights is a source of pride. Kuwait is proud of its women and have always believed in their struggle and sacrifices, therefore it mobilizes support for further women's rights. Jowaan added. Women have been granted their full political rights in election, nomination and leaderships after a long journey in order to attain their constitutional and political rights, Jowaan said. On May 16, 2005, the National Assembly approved a government proposal to amend Article one of the electoral law to allow women exercise their right to run in elections. Many factors regarding such an achievement, especially the development of the legislative and social systems, which allowed many talented women to occupy the highest positions locally and regionally, and then came the role of "their brother, the man, who supported them to achieve their full rights." — KUNA

Audit Bureau discussed sovereign rating with Fitch

KUWAIT: Acting Chairman of the State Audit Bureau Adel Al-Saraawi has recently met a visiting delegation of the internationally renowned rating agency Fitch, discussing Kuwait's 2019 sovereign rating. Sulaiman Al-Bsairi, the assistant undersecretary of the supervision sector for ministries and government departments at the bureau, said in a statement yesterday that the delegation's visit came in light of the bureau various positive achievements and oversight tasks.

The delegation, which visited the country on March 4-8, sought to get acquainted with the Audit Bureau experience, its legal jurisdictions, coordination with relevant bodies, namely the National Assembly and the Cabinet. Representatives of the bureau, during the meeting with the Fitch team, filled the guests in about annual reports, Bsairi said. In an unprecedented move, the Cabinet had hosted the bureau chairman, ranking and technical personnel to discuss topics enclosed in the latest report. The government has pledged to take the bureau remarks in these reports into consideration, take necessary measures for reforming the public administration, bring to account civil servants suspected of slackness, negligence or misappropriation of public funds, Bsairi said.

The two sides, during the meeting, touched on the Audit



KUWAIT: Acting Chairman of the State Audit Bureau Adel Al-Saraawi meets with a visiting delegation of Fitch. — KUNA

Bureau report regarding high-hazard issues and its views on partnership between the private and public sectors. The Kuwaiti side presented the co-conferes with the first edition of 'Al-Muwaten (Citizen) Report' that included key remarks by the bureau with respect of the 2017-2018 fiscal year and some financial issues. It has been determined that each dinar spent on the bureau works leads to saving 5-6 dinars, the bureau official explained to the guests. The diwan officials had also briefed the Fitch delegation about diverse work mechanisms, such as holding debates with authorities suspected of irregularities and briefing the parliamentary budgets and financial account committee of the registered shortcomings and flaws. — KUNA

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International

SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 2019



Outrage as 'honor-killing' whistleblower shot dead

On North Korea, Trump clings to 'all or nothing' strategy

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NEAR BAGHOUZ: Civilians evacuated from the Islamic State (IS) group's embattled holdout of Baghouz wait at a screening area held by the US-backed Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), in the eastern Syrian province of Deir Ezzor. —AFP

IS clings to last scrap of 'caliphate'

Thousands of men and women pour out of Baghouz

SOUSA: Holdout Islamic State group fighters hunkered down in a riverside camp in eastern Syria yesterday as US-backed forces looked to expel them from the last shred of their dying "caliphate". Thousands of men and women have poured out of the pocket of territory in the village of Baghouz near the Iraqi border in recent days, suitcases and dust-covered children in tow. The exodus has sparked a humanitarian emergency, with an aid group saying one camp for non-combatants has reached "breaking point" after receiving 12,000 people from Baghouz in the past 48 hours.

IS carved out a proto-state across large parts of Syria and Iraq in 2014, ruling millions of people, but has since lost all of it except the last tiny patch by the Euphrates River. The group's fighters and their families are cornered by the advancing US-backed forces in an improvised encampment on the water's edge. Footage obtained by AFP showed men, as well as women draped in black, walking among a sea of pick-up trucks and rudimentary tents scattered across the uneven riverbank. A black cow grazed on a patch of dry grass between the makeshift dwellings.

The images, filmed by the Free Burma Rangers aid group, showed a motorbike darting between a dark earth berm topped with clumps of reeds and a line of temporary shelters. Just a few meters from the river, a few figures sat behind a wall of breeze-blocks erected among a thick bed of reeds, shielding them from the other side of the waterway, which is held by regime troops. The Syrian Democratic Forces, who are backed by air power of a US-led coalition, are waiting for all civilians to be evacuated before moving in to retake the last scrap of IS-held territory.

'Breaking point'

SDF spokesman Adnan Afrin said no civilians had been evacuated on Friday, but expected more to flow out on Saturday. "The situation has completely stalled except for some intermittent clashes," he added on the situation on the frontline. Nearly 58,000 people have left the last IS redoubt since December, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. It is unclear how many people remain inside, but the SDF has been surprised by the seemingly endless flow from the IS pocket. The International Rescue Committee on Friday

said that 12,000 women and children had arrived at the Kurdish-run Al-Hol camp since Wednesday.

The latest batch of evacuees, including 6,000 people who came on Thursday, has pushed the camp's population to over 65,000, exacerbating to a tent shortage and "health crisis", it said. "The IRC and other agencies are doing all they can do to help the new arrivals but Al-Hol camp is now at breaking point," IRC's Misty Buswell said. The organization said there have been "hundreds of cases of severe acute malnutrition, including 220 children who needed to be transferred to a local hospital for treatment". A large number of people are also arriving with shrapnel wounds and are in need of immediate surgery, it added.

'Blood to your knees'

At the height of its rule, IS imposed its brutal interpretation of Islam across an area the size of the United Kingdom. After it lost major cities in both countries in 2017, the fall of Baghouz would be a symbolic end to its territorial control. But many warn the battle is far from over, and some of those fleeing jihadist territory appear to have their devotion intact.

At an SDF position outside Baghouz this week, women covered from head to toe in black stood in front of journalists, pointing their index fingers to the sky in a gesture used by IS supporters to proclaim the oneness of God. "The Islamic State is here to stay!" they cried in unison. One woman added: "We will seek vengeance, there will be blood up to your knees." General Joseph Votel, head of the US Central Command, warned Thursday that many of those being evacuated are "unrepentant, unbroken and radicalized". He stressed the need to "maintain a vigilant offensive against this now widely dispersed and disaggregated organization".

Beyond Baghouz, IS fighters are still present in Syria's vast Badia desert and have claimed deadly attacks in SDF-held territory. US President Trump stunned allies in December when he announced all 2,000 US troops would withdraw from Syria as IS had been defeated. The White House later said that around 200 American "peace-keeping" soldiers would remain in northern Syria. Baghouz is the latest front in Syria's eight-year civil war, which has killed more than 360,000 people and displaced millions. —AFP

Facts and alternative facts between India and Pakistan

NEW DELHI: India and Pakistan have retreated from the brink of possible war but an information conflict still rages over their tit-for-tat air strikes and an aerial dogfight between the nuclear-armed arch rivals. A suicide bombing on February 14 killed 40 troops and was the deadliest attack in Kashmir on Indian forces in a 30-year insurgency by militants wanting independence or to be part of Pakistan.

Delhi has long accused Islamabad of supporting the insurgents and the attack was claimed by Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM). India and Washington say Islamabad uses groups like JeM as proxies to attack India, which despite repeated "crackdowns" manage to resume their activities. Here is a brief summary of what both countries, which have fought three wars since 1947, have said in recent days about their most serious standoff in years.

'250 dead'

India launched air strikes on February 26 on what it called a JeM training camp at Balakot inside Pakistan, 12 days after the suicide bombing. Vijay Keshav Gokhale, Indian foreign secretary, hours after its pre-dawn air raid said the target of the "pre-emptive strike" was "jihadis" in the "biggest training camp of JeM". Gokhale said "a very large number of JeM terrorists, trainers, senior commanders and groups of jihadis who were being trained for fideen (suicide) action were eliminated". While the Indian government has given no official statement about the numbers of dead, Indian local media ran several source-based

reports claiming as many as 350 killed.

Leading politicians linked to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) including notably BJP president Amit Shah put the death toll at 250. Some of those asking for proof—such as opposition politicians accusing Modi of using the crisis to boost his standing ahead of looming elections—have gotten short shrift. In the next raids, "opposition parties raising these questions can be tied under the jets... so that they can look at the targets," thundered junior foreign minister VK Singh.

Just trees?

Pakistani officials have said that Indian warplanes did breach its airspace, dropping what military spokesman Major General Asif Ghafoor described as "payloads" near Balakot. But Islamabad has denied there was any damage or casualties. "Once again (the) Indian government has resorted to a self-serving, reckless and fictitious claim," Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said.

Local residents reported hearing explosions in the night, but said only one person was injured and that no infrastructure was destroyed. The army escorted reporters to the area, but independent reporting by multiple local and international outlets who visited the site also found no evidence of a major terrorist training camp—or of any infrastructure damage at all. An AFP reporter visited what his Pakistani military escort and locals said was the site and saw a crater, two trees snapped in half and three mud houses, one of which had a collapsed wall.

AFP has not independently verified if any JeM training camps are nearby. Some media have reported that a madrasa run by JeM was in the vicinity, but undamaged. The Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab said that open-source satellite imagery indicated "only impacts in the wooded area, with no damage being visible to the surrounding structures." Pakistan has even—perhaps tongue-in-cheek—floated the possibility of lodging a complaint against India for "eco-terrorism" for killing of "dozens" of trees.



KASHMIR: Representatives (front left to right) of the Buddhist, Sikh, Muslim and Hindu faiths walk past holding holy books as recruits from the Indian Army's Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry Regiment (JAKLI) take an oath during a passing out parade after graduating in Srinagar yesterday. —AFP

Dogfight

A further bone of contention is the air raid by Pakistani aircraft into Indian airspace and the subsequent aerial dogfight in the skies over Kashmir on February 27. Pakistan said it shot down two Indian planes, one falling on the Pakistani side of the Line of Control frontier and the other on the Indian side. Initially Pakistan said it had captured two Indian pilots but the military later clarified it had just one pilot in custody. Attacking Pakistani "disinformation", India's Air Vice Marshal R.G.K Kapoor said India had lost just one plane, whose pilot was captured—and later released—by Pakistan. Kapoor also said an Indian Mig21 had shot down one Pakistani F16, crashing on the Pakistani side, but Islamabad denied this. "The fact... is that Indian

army units had reported sighting two parachutes falling (in Pakistani Kashmir), which were of two F-16 pilots (from) the aircraft that was shot down by (a) Mig21," Kapoor said.

'Open space'

Pakistan said its planes had crossed the Line of Control (LoC), their de-facto border, in broad daylight and locked on to six targets to show they could, but then hit "open space" instead. But India rejected this too, saying that Pakistan had intended to attack Indian military installations but had been "foiled" by its aircraft. "Although PAF bombs have fallen in the Indian army formation compounds, they were unable to cause any damage to our military installations," Kapoor said.—AFP

International

Libyans fear showdown as Eastern commander, forces target capital

Haftar has backing from UAE and Egypt

TUNIS: Forces from eastern Libya who have swept through the south and taken control of remaining oilfields in recent weeks have now reinforced a base in the centre of the country and signaled to the capital Tripoli that it may be next. The United Nations, stunned by the southern advance, is scrambling to mediate between eastern commander Khalifa Haftar and Tripoli's internationally-recognized government led by Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj, Western diplomats say.

They fear it may be the last UN attempt to unify the rival administrations and end the chaos that followed the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 with free elections. Haftar, a 75-year-old former general, is increasingly taking the situation into his own hands, backed by the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, which see him as a bulwark against Islamists and the man to restore order.

He has not said whether he wants to march on Tripoli, which would dramatically escalate tensions. But his Libyan National Army (LNA) has hinted heavily that it might do so if Haftar is not recognized as the country's overall military commander, his aim since he began assembling the force in 2014. "Some military sources say the LNA will move towards Tripoli after the announcement that the south has been secured," read an item on an LNA website. "The same sources said there is coordination with some units inside Tripoli and its suburbs for the army to enter Tripoli."

The LNA spokesman said a purported order from Haftar for troops to move, seen by Reuters and publicized by his supporters, was not genuine. But the capital has been rife with rumors of invasion and residents have reported seeing young people driving around playing loud songs praising Haftar from their car radios. While several LNA units returned this month to Benghazi, Haftar's power base, some units went to Jufra,

a city in the desert straddling east and west, LNA sources say.

From there they could go home, or—the implied threat according to diplomats—move northwest towards Tripoli, should talks over power sharing and elections fail. Haftar taps into fatigue among Libyans yearning for electricity, petrol and banknotes scarce in a country which once enjoyed some of highest living standards in the region.

For many, especially in the east, the general is the only one who can end fighting by myriad groups with ever-changing names. For his enemies in western cities and Islamists who were oppressed under the old regime, he is a new Gaddafi.

Oil

Haftar took the southern El Sharara and El Feel oilfields last month, completing a campaign which has given him effective control of the country's crude output of around one million barrels a day. He does not, as yet, have the means to profit from them because oil exports are managed by the state oil firm NOC in Tripoli, which is working with Serraj. But the situation on the ground is changing fast. UN envoy Ghassan Salame visited the main southern city Sabha just one day before some 80 LNA vehicles drove in through the desert from the east, and Haftar's growing clout was on show again this week. The NOC agreed to reopen El Sharara, closed since rogue guards and tribesmen seized it in December, after the UAE called two meetings.



Some Libyans fear return of Gaddafi-like leader

The first was with Serraj and NOC chairman Mustafa Sanalla to agree on a security plan and the second was between the Tripoli premier and Haftar. But while some communities in western Libya have signaled support for the LNA, it is far from clear whether Haftar would be able to muster enough. The LNA says it has 85,000 men but this includes soldiers paid by the central government who it hopes to inherit. Its elite force, Saiqa (Lightning) numbers some 3,500, while Haftar's sons also have well-equipped troops, LNA sources say.

Diplomats say much of the LNA is an umbrella of less trained ex-Gaddafi soldiers, tribesmen and Salafists as well as Sudanese and Chadian fighters; the LNA denies this. Thanks to covert UAE and Egyptian support documented by the UN, Haftar has gradually built up superiority since 2014, allowing him to stop Tripoli flying in reinforcements during his southern campaign and pressure the NOC by closing airstrips on oilfields. Serraj has no real troops—depending on armed groups who control many of the buildings his ministers work in and who, Tripoli residents say, regularly demand business contracts.

His only asset is his official title and access to state funds, though Western powers have increasingly embraced Haftar - with Italy, for example, addressing him as (Field) Marshal, his official title. There has been some Western support for Haftar. French special forces in conjunction with Britain and the United States had been advising the LNA during the Benghazi campaign.

On Monday, Serraj unexpectedly praised cooperation with Haftar, saying they needed to work together, in a speech to western mayors just after rumours of approaching LNA troops first surfaced.

Haftar and Serraj could agree to a new transitional government, which would help the commander steadily entrench his power without invading Tripoli. But it is unclear whether Haftar's supporters would agree to putting him under civilian control as proposed by Western and UN mediators. "There is no reconciliation with Serraj for power because talks are not with him but with people behind him who do not want Haftar," said Hamad Bandaq, a lawmaker in the eastern parliament.

Offensive

The biggest obstacle for Haftar is Misrata, a western city home to forces which could at least partly match LNA ground troops, analysts say. The city is known for a spirit of resisting old regime figures, developed during 2011 when Gaddafi forces besieged it for three months. Weeks after Haftar started his Benghazi campaign in 2014 Misrata forces moved on Tripoli, expelling a government allied to a Haftar partner in one-month battle that split Libya. The main motive was fear of a Haftar coup.

There have been belligerent comments from Misrata residents in recent days but it is unclear whether they would fight. "A mix of conflict fatigue, cautiousness and internal divide has so far forestalled a military mobilization," said Emad Badi, a Libya researcher. "However that could change very quickly." Tarek Megerisi, a policy fellow at the European Council, said Serraj and Haftar could agree on a transitional government, with the commander steadily entrenching his power without actually invading Tripoli.—Reuters

Tens of thousands protest as Bouteflika remains defiant

ALGIERS: Tens of thousands protested across Algeria in the biggest rallies yet against ailing President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for a fifth term, despite the defiant leader's warning of the risk of "chaos". A march in the capital Algiers was slowed to a near-crawl by the huge numbers taking part, swelled by women marking International Women's Day and chanting "No fifth term-he, Bouteflika!" Waving Algeria's green-white-and-red flags, men and women converged on the city's landmark Grand Post Office square after weekly prayers. "The people are here, from all social classes, from the youngest to the eldest, everyone is saying 'no to a fifth term, please, leave, you won't even be judged'," said Kamel, a 37-year-old protester in the capital.

The police fired tear gas and stun grenades to disperse those who tried to force their way through a police cordon that was blocking access to a road leading towards the presidency, an AFP journalist said. While demonstrators dispersed calmly as darkness fell, small groups of young people clashed with the police. The unrest left 112 members of the security forces injured, according to police, who said they had arrested 195 people suspected of "vandalism".

The overall atmosphere through the day was calm and festive, and numerous people attended with their children. Huge crowds—again far surpassing those seen the previous Friday—also protested in the second and third cities of Oran and Constantine, local journalists on the ground told AFP. A journalist in Oran said the whole city "is out (on the streets)... this has never been seen before". Major demonstrations were reported in other cities across the country by security sources, Algerian media and social networks.

In a message released on Thursday night, Bouteflika—who uses a wheelchair and has rarely been seen in public since a 2013 stroke—warned that troublemakers may try to infiltrate the demonstrations. "Many of our fellow citizens" have demonstrated across the North African country "to peacefully express their views", he said.

"However, we must call for vigilance and caution in case



ALGIERS: Algerian female protesters shout slogans during a demonstration in the capital Algiers against ailing president's bid for a fifth term. — AFP

this peaceful expression is infiltrated by some insidious party... which could cause chaos," he said, without mention of the demands that he abandon his bid to seek re-election on April 18. Bouteflika flagged the risk of a return to the "national tragedy" of Algeria's decade-long civil war in the 1990s and of the "crises and tragedies caused by terrorism" in neighboring countries. The head of state has been in Switzerland since February 24 for what the presidency describes as "routine medical tests", and a date for his return home has not yet been announced.

Swiss police said Rachid Nekkaz—a businessman and political activist opposed to Bouteflika—was arrested on Friday outside the Geneva hospital where the president is being treated. He will be held overnight and appear

before a prosecutor on Saturday, police spokesman Jean-Philippe Brandt told AFP. Nekkaz fell foul of Algerian electoral laws because he has previously held French nationality and stood aside for a cousin of the same name to run on his behalf.

Algeria has largely avoided the conflicts unleashed by the Arab Spring uprisings that brought down rulers in neighboring Tunisia and Libya. But discontent, particularly among the young, turned to anger after the veteran leader announced on February 10 that he would seek another term. Calls had circulated widely on social media under the hashtag "March 8 Movement" for massive but peaceful demonstrations in the capital and cities across the North African state on Friday.—AFP

Israel forces hit Gaza in response to 'projectile'

GAZA: Israeli forces said yesterday they had launched several strikes against Hamas sites in Gaza in response to a projectile launched from the besieged coastal territory the night before. "IDF fighter jets and aircraft struck several military targets in a Hamas compound in the southern Gaza Strip and underground structures in the northern Gaza Strip," it said in a statement. "The strike was conducted in response to the projectile that was launched from the Gaza Strip at Israeli territory" as well as the "balloons carrying explosive devices" into Israel and attempts to damage "security infrastructure", it said.

Security officials in Gaza said the strikes had not caused any casualties. A Palestinian was killed and at least 45 others wounded by Israeli fire Friday in new protests and clashes along the Gaza border, the enclave's health ministry said. An Israeli army spokesman said around 8,400 demonstrators had gathered along a barrier between the blockaded territory and Israel, throwing explosive devices and rocks and setting fire to tyres. The Gaza Strip has been the scene of mass protests and clashes since late March last year. Demonstrators have been calling for Palestinian



RAFAH: Palestinian mourners carry the body of Tamer Arafat, aged 23, during his funeral in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. — AFP

refugees and their descendants to be allowed to return to former homes now inside Israel. Israeli officials say that amounts to calling for the Jewish state's destruction. At least 253 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since the rallies began, the majority shot during 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. Israel and Hamas, which has controlled the blockaded Gaza Strip for over a decade, have fought three wars since 2008.—AFP

Hezbollah calls on supporters to donate money as sanctions bite

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Hezbollah has called on its supporters to donate money as it comes under increasing pressure from Western sanctions intended to isolate it financially. The United States deems all parts of Hezbollah a terrorist organization and has been steadily increasing financial sanctions against the Iran-backed movement.

"I announce today that the resistance is in need of its (popular base)," Hezbollah Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah said, adding that donations were needed to support the group's activities. The Shiite Muslim Hezbollah is part of the Lebanese government. It is also heavily armed and has sent fighters to the conflict in neighboring Syria. Britain last month said it would list all elements of Hezbollah as a terrorist organization for destabilizing the Middle East, breaking with the rest of the European Union which proscribes only its military wing.

In a televised speech, Nasrallah said other nations may follow Britain's example. "The sanctions and the terror lists are a form of war ... we should deal with them as if they are a war," he said. He called on Hezbollah supporters to remain steadfast in the face of these pressures and said the group's enemies would be "disappointed". "Their actions will not be able to make us poor, hungry or isolated. Those that support us will continue in their support - be they countries, people or our people and the people of resistance in Lebanon," Nasrallah said.

Hezbollah was founded in 1982 by Iran's Revolutionary Guards. Its influence has expanded at home in Lebanon and in the region. The group controls three of 30 ministries in the Lebanese government led by Western-backed Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri, the largest number ever. It does not acknowledge having separate political and military wings. Hezbollah and political allies that view its arsenal as an asset to Lebanon won more than 70 of parliament's 128 seats in an election last year, a major blow to Lebanese parties that oppose its possession of weapons like the Christian Lebanese Forces, which enjoys close ties to U.S.-allied Gulf states. — Reuters



Hassan Nasrallah

International

What Brexit game is EU playing? Parliament leader Leadsom asks

Britain rejects latest EU Brexit proposal

LONDON: The leader of Britain's parliament Andrea Leadsom said she was beginning to wonder what game the European Union was playing over Brexit as relations between London and Brussels deteriorated ahead of a vote by lawmakers next week. Less than three weeks before Britain is due to leave the EU on March 29, Prime Minister Theresa May has failed to secure the changes to the divorce agreement she needs to gain the support of lawmakers who rejected it in a record rebellion in January.

At the heart of the dispute is a disagreement over how to manage the border between the British province of Northern Ireland and EU-member Ireland. On Friday, the EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier put forward a proposal to keep the border open and keep the province subject to EU rules, prompting London to reject it. "There is still hope, but I have to say I'm deeply disappointed with what we're hearing coming out of the EU," Leadsom told Reuters. "I do have to ask myself what game are they playing here."

Asked who would be to blame if May loses the parliamentary vote again on Tuesday, Leadsom said: "I would point to the EU needing to work closely with us. 'We are hoping we will be able to win that vote but that does depend on the EU coming to the table and talking seriously the (UK's) proposals.'" Guy Verhofstadt, Brexit coordinator for the European Parliament, backed Barnier. "He has put forward constructive additions, now we wait for a credible

response from the UK to ensure an orderly Brexit," he said yesterday.

No breakthrough

Talks will continue in Brussels but without a major breakthrough, May looks set to lose her second attempt to get lawmaker's approval and smooth Britain's exit from the EU, its biggest shift in trade and foreign policy in more than 40 years.

The main sticking point is the so-called Northern Irish backstop, an insurance policy to prevent a return of border controls in Ireland that eurosceptics believe is an attempt to trap the country in the EU's customs union indefinitely. Barnier's solution would potentially create a "border" in the Irish sea between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom, a move that is particularly unpalatable to Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).

As defenders of the union with Britain, the DUP opposes any change that would treat Northern Ireland differently from the rest of the United Kingdom. May relies on DUP votes to get her legislation

passed after she lost her parliamentary majority. Brandon Lewis, the chairman of May's ruling Conservative Party, said yesterday the government could never accept a deal which threatened the integrity of the union. Leadsom said were Britain to leave the EU without a withdrawal deal it would be harder to guarantee the smooth flow of goods and people across



Relations sour; talks continue



LONDON: Britain's Leader of the House of Commons Andrea Leadsom leaves after the weekly cabinet meeting at 10 Downing Street in London. — AFP

the Irish border that has been possible since 1998.

"In making it impossible for us to sign up to that (deal), it actually makes the problems with the Northern Irish border harder to solve, not easier to solve," she said. May warned on Friday that were lawmakers to reject her deal on Tuesday, it would increase the chance

that Brexit never happens, leaving voters feeling betrayed. If her deal is rejected, lawmakers will be able to vote on Wednesday and Thursday on whether they want to leave the bloc without a deal or ask for a delay to Brexit beyond March 29 - all but wresting control of Brexit from the government. — Reuters

News in brief

100 injured in ferry collision

TOKYO: At least 87 passengers in a high speed ferry were injured in an apparent collision with a marine animal in the sea of Japan yesterday, coastguards and media said. Five people were seriously injured in the accident, which occurred just before the hydrofoil was due to arrive on Sado island after a short trip from the mainland, the Japan Coast Guard said. It is likely the ferry hit a whale, as both humpbacks and minke whales are often found in the area, public broadcaster NHK quoted a marine wildlife expert as saying. "It was a huge impact," a passenger told public broadcaster NHK. "One person was bleeding." There was damage to the back of the vessel, local media said, but the ferry-with 121 passengers and four crew on board-reached its destination without outside help, local media said. — AFP

Floods kill 23 in Malawi

BLANTYRE: Floods caused by incessant downpours have left 23 people dead across Malawi, the country's Homeland Security Ministry said yesterday. In addition to the confirmed deaths, 11 people were also reported missing with around 110,000 affected, a statement said. Twelve districts, all in the south of the country, had been blighted by the deluges. Malawi defense force and police search and rescue teams were working in collaboration with the Malawi Red Cross, the statement added. In one affected district, Mulanje, camps had been set up for displaced people, Commissioner Charles Makanga said. The rains also hit transport links with two major bridges submerged, cutting off access to Blantyre, Malawi's second largest city. — AFP

Trump's aide Shine resigns

WASHINGTON: White House communications director Bill Shine has resigned as Donald Trump's top White House communications aide and will move to work on the US president's 2020 re-election campaign, the White House said on Friday. Shine, a former Fox News executive, resigned on Thursday and will serve as a senior campaign adviser ahead of the 2020 presidential election, White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said in a statement. A source close to Trump, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the president had lost confidence in Shine and was relying heavily on Sanders to run the communications operation. Shine is the latest in a string of communications directors who have had short tenures in the Trump White House, where the president in many ways serves as his own communications chief. His is one of several high profile departures from the president's staff during Trump's two years in office. — Reuters

Finland government resigns

HELSINKI: Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipila's centre-right government resigned on Friday after failing to push through a flagship social and health care reform package, just five weeks ahead of a legislative election. There has been a hard fought struggle for the wide-reaching reform for over a decade, dividing successive governments. Sipila called the failure to pass the reform "a major disappointment". He has since 2015 headed a coalition made up of his Centre Party, the conservative National Coalition, and the eurosceptic Blue Reform party, a moderate faction spun off from the far-right. The three parties were unable to agree among themselves on the package, which Sipila had made one of his top priorities in office. He had repeatedly threatened to resign if the reforms did not go through. — AFP

Political crisis hurts Trudeau's image as elections loom

OTTAWA: Justin Trudeau rose to power in Canada as a champion of feminism and indigenous rights, quickly earning him golden boy status at home and abroad as a progressive leader. But a major political scandal that sparked the resignation of two of his ministers-both women, one indigenous-has tarnished his image just seven months before national elections. Pundits say the 47-year-old premier faces a tough battle just to stay in office, with the latest polls showing his Liberals trailing the Conservatives for the first time.

For weeks, Trudeau's government has been rocked by accusations of meddling in the criminal prosecution of engineering giant SNC-Lavalin, which was charged with corruption over alleged bribes paid to secure contracts in Libya. His attorney general Jody Wilson-Raybould, who said she experienced "consistent and sustained" political pressure to shield the company from a trial, stepped down. Budget minister Jane Philpott followed suit, as

did longtime Trudeau friend and top aide Gerry Butts.

On Thursday, Trudeau addressed the allegations head-on, telling reporters in Ottawa that he had learned "lessons" from the crisis-but denying any wrongdoing. For the opposition, that wasn't enough. On Friday, they renewed their calls for Trudeau to resign. "Trudeau is facing a serious crisis of confidence in his leadership," said Stephanie Chouinard, a politics professor at the Royal Military College of Canada. "Seeing not one, but two members of his cabinet slamming the door like that, it's unheard of for many years in Canada and it augurs very badly for him ahead of the October elections."

'Virtue' at issue

The Liberals built their brand around the handsome young Trudeau, a one-time bartender and snowboard instructor with Hollywood good looks and a father who was widely admired when he served as premier. Trudeau brought rock star energy to the job, and his brand of progressive politics-he made bold statements on climate action, legalized cannabis and helped refugees make a new life in Canada. The Liberals' 2015 victory marked the return of the party, which had governed for most of the last century before being relegated to third-place status in a 2006 ballot. Trudeau was hailed. Now, his "virtue is being questioned," Chouinard said. "He



OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks to the media at the national press gallery in Ottawa, Ontario. — AFP

promised to do politics differently and introduce real change, but (in many eyes) has showed himself to be a politician like any other."

Libya, bribes and Trudeau's 'brand' SNC-Lavalin was charged in 2015 with corruption for allegedly bribing officials in Libya between 2001 and 2011 to secure government contracts during the rule of former strongman Muammar Gaddafi. The Montreal-based firm openly lobbied the government for an out-of-court settlement that would result in a fine and agreeing

to compliance measures, saying a conviction would lead to job cuts.

But Wilson-Raybould, Canada's first indigenous attorney general, refused to ask prosecutors to settle, and the trial is set to proceed. She later testified to lawmakers that she had received "veiled threats" over her stance-and Trudeau's inner circle came under suspicion. Since the crisis erupted a month ago, Trudeau has seemed "disconnected" and "not in control" of his government, said Eric Montigny, a politics professor at Laval University in Quebec City. — AFP

Chaos as machines fail, patients die, in Venezuela blackout

CARACAS: Venezuela's nationwide blackout left large areas of the country in chaos on Friday, crippling day-to-day functioning of hospitals and other public services. Witnesses described scenes of chaos at several hospitals as relatives tried to move patients in the dark to clinics with better emergency power facilities. Marielsi Aray, a patient at the University Hospital suffering from an aggravated infection, died at dawn on Friday after her respirator stopped working, her uncle Jose Lugo said.

"The doctors tried to help her by pumping manually, they did everything they could, but with no electricity, what were they to do?" a distraught Lugo said. Wiping away tears, he described how his niece had been brought to the bottom of the 11-story Caracas hospital on a stretcher after the elevators stopped working. "They got her to the ground floor where they had electricity, and connected her up but because of the transfer and the waiting and everything, she faded away," he said.

The power cut compounded an atmosphere of chaos that has gripped the South American nation, already battered by economic collapse, since opposition leader Juan Guaido declared himself interim president in January and asserted that President Nicolas Maduro was no longer legitimate. Lugo said another patient had died in the parking lot in the chaos of the blackout, as people "tried to get sick people out of here and move them to other places where they had generators and equipment that would work." "The screaming was brutal," he said.

Emergency generators fail

Backup generators at the JM de Rios children's hospital in downtown Caracas failed to kick in when the



CARACAS: View of Caracas during the worst power outage in Venezuela's history. Venezuela was plunged into darkness after a massive electricity blackout paralyzed almost the entire country. — AFP

blackout hit, said Gilbert Altuve, whose eight-year-old boy is among the patients. "The night was terrible. Without light. Total madness," he said. When more generators were brought to supply emergency power, they weren't enough. "None managed to supply it completely," said Altuve, 38.

Emilse Arellano said urgent dialysis for her youngest child had to be canceled Friday, after a night during which staff worked by the light of cellphones. "The children were very scared," she told AFP. The putrid odor of rotting flesh hung around the entrance to Caracas' main Bello Monte morgue on Friday where the refrigeration system had stopped working. Worried relatives gathered outside, waiting for bodies to be

handed over so they could bury their dead. "We can't take in any more corpses," an employee said on condition of anonymity.

Luis Moises Guerra had come to collect the body of his son, Johan, a gunshot victim killed three days ago. "This is the second day I've spent here and now there is no light," said Guerra. "If they don't give me the body of my son today I'll leave it here and I won't come back anymore." Guaido told supporters in Caracas it wasn't normal "that 50 percent of the hospitals in the country don't have electric plant" to be able to cope with such an emergency. The National Assembly leader is recognized as interim president by more than 50 countries who agree that Maduro's re-election was illegitimate. — AFP

International

India blows up the mansion of fugitive celebrity jeweler

Modi accused of playing a central role in a \$1.8 billion fraud

MUMBAI: Indian authorities on Friday dynamited the multi-million-dollar seafront mansion of fugitive billionaire and jeweler to the stars Nirav Modi, officials said. The 33,000 square-foot property near Mumbai, believed to be worth \$14 million, was seized after Modi was accused of involvement in a massive bank fraud that rocked India's corporate community. "We have razed the structure to the ground using dynamite," Bharat Shitole, an official for government of the western state of Maharashtra said.

Video footage aired by Indian news channels showed the sprawling bungalow crumble to the ground within seconds of the controlled blast. Modi, 48, owned luxury jewelry stores in several major cities across the world and boasted celebrity customers including actresses Naomi Watts, Kate Winslet and Priyanka Chopra-Jonas before his downfall last year. He fled India in February 2018 after being accused of playing a central role in a \$1.8-billion fraud involving Punjab National Bank (PNB), the country's second-largest public lender.

Modi and his uncle and business partner Mehul

Choksi, also a diamond merchant, allegedly defrauded PNB out of more than \$40 million. Authorities say the pair diverted large sums of the loan money illegally to invest in foreign companies. Choksi fled to Antigua while the Financial Times reported last June that Modi was in Britain. Indian authorities have seized assets of Modi worth around \$90 million including his jewelry business, overseas bank accounts, a London property worth around \$7.8 million and two others in New York valued at \$29 million.

Shitole said authorities decided to demolish the seaside mansion rather than put it up for auction because it was illegally built and had violated environmental regulations. Forbes estimated Modi's wealth at \$1.73 billion before

the alleged fraud, placing him 85th on India's rich list. Modi is not the only Indian billionaire facing heat from authorities. Vijay Mallya, a business tycoon who until recently owned a Formula One team, left India in 2016 after authorities filed money-laundering charges against him. He is currently fighting extradition from Britain. —AFP



MUMBAI: The remains of the structure of Nirav Modi's mansion are seen in Allibaug, off Mumbai coast yesterday. Indian authorities dynamited the multi-million-dollar seafront mansion of fugitive billionaire and jeweler to the stars Nirav Modi. —AFP



Multi-million dollar mansion dynamited

Outrage as 'honor-killing' whistleblower shot dead

ISLAMABAD: Women's rights activists Friday condemned the murder of a whistleblower in a notorious "honor killing" case that has shone a years-long spotlight on female victims-and the men who defend them-in deeply patriarchal Pakistan. Afzal Kohistani, the man who first drew attention to the infamous incident in 2012, was gunned down in Abbottabad on Wednesday, police have said. He had pursued a case in which a local cleric order the deaths of male and female wedding guests shown enjoying themselves in a video. Precise details remain shrouded in mystery but Kohistani had long been adamant that women shown in the video had been murdered.

He was shot five times on a busy road and died on the spot, Abdul Aziz Afridi, a senior police official, told AFP.

Officials said Friday that at least two arrests had been made. "The perpetrators of this heinous crime will be brought to justice," provincial information minister Shaukat Yousafzai said. Kohistani's murder has ignited anger in Pakistan, where rights activists have long fought against the patriarchal notion of "honor", which remains prevalent across South Asia.

Women have been shot, stabbed, stoned, set alight and strangled for bringing "shame" on their families for everything from refusing marriage proposals to wedding the "wrong" man and helping friends elope. Men can be victims too, though it is rarer. "Will be raising this shocking murder of Afzal Kohistani in parliament," opposition leader Sherry Rehman tweeted. Rights activists participating in a march to mark International Women's Day on Friday condemned Kohistani's shooting.

"This incident has brought to the focus, once again, how vulnerable those that raise their voice still are," said Benazir Jatoi, a human rights lawyer and march organizer. Witness protection was "almost non-existent", she added. "Today's march in Islamabad will remember Afzal and other brave Pakistanis like him and we will that perpetrators be held accountable," said Jatoi. The independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) said it was concerned the killing would "have a ripple effect on human rights defend-

ers who monitor and report 'honor' killings and are reminded of what their work could cost them".

Wedding video

The wedding video emerged in 2012, showing women clapping as two men danced in the deeply conservative mountainous area of Kohistan, 175 kilometers north of the capital Islamabad. The men and women had allegedly been in the room together, in defiance of strict tribal customs that separate men and women at weddings-though the video does not show them together. A local cleric sentenced several women and men to death over the video. Kohistani is believed to have been related to some of the men in the video. His entire family were banished from Kohistan as a result.

He took the rare step of pushing the case before the media and the justice system. The Supreme Court launched a commission to investigate-but in June 2012 was told the women had never been murdered at all. A fact-finding team met women who were purportedly those shown in the video and said they were alive. But Kohistani insisted that the women shown to the fact-finding officials were different women, and that the death sentences had been carried out. Three more men-Kohistani's brothers-were later killed by a rival family. A Pakistani court convicted six of their killers in 2014. —AFP

On North Korea, Trump clings to 'all or nothing' strategy

WASHINGTON: In Hanoi, Donald Trump overturned the widely held assumption he would be willing to settle for an interim agreement on North Korea's denuclearization. But despite the breakdown of the summit and the atmosphere of skepticism that now abounds, the US president seems determined to stick with his "all or nothing" approach, betting on his personal "chemistry" with Kim Jong Un to save the day. Trump insisted Friday his relationship with Kim "remains good" even as his aides attempted to paper over the collapse of the high-stakes second summit which concluded last week without even a modest deal on reducing Pyongyang's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

"Nobody in the administration advocates a step-by-step approach," a senior State Department official told reporters this week. In other words, Washington wants what administration officials have called a "big deal"-the complete elimination of their weapons of mass destruction program," the State Department official said. In return, Washington would ease the pain of the crippling sanctions that have strangled the isolated North's economy.

"It really seems there's an all or nothing approach right now from the administration," Frank Aum, a former advisor to the Pentagon, said at a recent meeting hosted by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). "That seems to be backtracking" which "the Kim regime would not be very happy about," Aum added. It's a position that has taken many observers by surprise given how, in the run-up to the summit, the administration dropped numerous hints it was willing to take a more incremental approach to the talks.

"In no rush" was how Trump repeatedly described his stance-a position echoed by his Secretary of State

Mike Pompeo, who emphasized: "We've always known this would be a long process." The administration's point man on North Korea, Stephen Biegun, said the US would be prepared to pursue commitments "simultaneously and in parallel" while suggesting there was room for maneuver when it came to sanctions. That created the impression that Washington could be willing to countenance the step-by-step disarmament and sanctions relief sought by Pyongyang.

Trust deficit

But when Kim proposed dismantling the Yongbyon nuclear complex in exchange for lifting the main sanctions, Trump refused. "It has very much been characteristic of past negotiations to take an incremental approach to this that stretches it out over a long period of time, and quite honestly, has failed on previous occasions," the senior State Department official said. In Washington, the new line has been interpreted as a victory for National Security Advisor John Bolton, long a hawk on North Korea, over Pompeo and Biegun. —AFP

How abused boy scouts made Church tremble

LYON: The conviction of the archbishop of Lyon for covering up paedophilia in his diocese is a victory for victim and campaigner Francois Devaux, whose dogged efforts to publicize the abuse have made him a hero - and a reluctant cinema star. Archbishop Philippe Barbarin, 68, the most senior French cleric caught up in an abuse scandal, was handed a six-month-suspended jail sentence on Thursday for failing to report a priest under his responsibility to police.

The verdict was another shock to the French Church, but a triumph for the victims who have worked for years for justice - none more so than Devaux who has become one of the public faces of the fight. The bearded 40-year-old interior decorator sounded relieved and satisfied at the court on Thursday, calling the verdict "the end of a long journey" that has come at personal cost.

"For everyone, all the people who joined us - lawyers, journalists, writers, film makers - it has been very invasive, very heavy in our lives for the last four years," he told AFP. In December 2015, Devaux co-founded a group called La Parole Liberee (Freed Speech) with another victim, Alexandre Dussot-Heze, who had been abused by the same priest in a parish in Lyon in southeast France. As a 10-year-old, Devaux had reported being kissed inappropriately by the priest, Bernard Preynat, during a trip with fellow boy scouts in 1990.

His parents later confronted church leaders. Twenty-five years later, his aim with the victims' group was to create a "space for expression and support for the victims of paedophilia" which would encourage others to testify against Preynat. A trickle of initial testimony soon turned into a deluge, with more than 80 other people coming forward to denounce Preynat's acts over a 20-year period starting in the 1970s. The retired priest has since been charged with sexual abuse and will go on trial this year. He has admitted his guilt. —AFP



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EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
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WASHINGTON WATCH

Shameful attack that backfired

By Dr James J Zogby

What happened to Congresswoman Ilhan Omar was troubling. On the one hand, because she dared to challenge the way supporters of Israel have worked to silence debate on US policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, she became a victim of incitement, and the target of legislation meant to shame her. At the same time, however, the heavy-handed tactics employed against her by some pro-Israel members of Congress backfired, exposing new fault lines in the US-Israel relationship.

The weapon of choice utilized by Omar's opponents was to demonize her as an anti-Semite. Her "sin", it appears, was her continued umbrage over the double-standard that exists in American policy toward Israel and its treatment of Palestinians. During Israel's assault on Gaza, for example, she criticized the failure of the US media to pierce through Israeli propaganda and see what was actually happening to Palestinians in that impoverished strip of land. Once in Congress, she was deemed to have "sinned" again when she challenged the power of AIPAC to intimidate politicians and silence debate on Israel/Palestine.

New to Washington and the "acceptable language" one should use to discuss these issues, she admitted that her word choices had been unfortunate and apologized for the pain she may have caused. Despite her apology, she remained a target. Because she is a hijab-wearing Muslim, who was critical of Israel, the GOP sought to exploit her in their continuing effort to drive a wedge between the Jewish community and Democrats. For their part, some Democrats reacted with hyperventilated outrage. Extreme language was used to denounce Omar. Her words were described as "bigoted," "vile," and, of course, "anti-Semitic slurs."

Never, in all this time, was there a critical examination of what she actually said. In fact, she never accused the Jewish community of controlling the media (unless one assumes that Israel's ability to dominate media coverage of events occurring in the occupation can be attributed to the Jewish community). Nor did she accuse the Jewish community of using money to buy influence in Washington (unless one suggests that AIPAC speaks for and acts on behalf of the entire Jewish community). It didn't matter, her opponents continued to call her an "anti-Semite," and did so with such frequency that the term stuck, putting her at risk to threats of violence from bigots.

The entire affair came to a head when, at a town hall last week, Omar attempted to explain herself. Asked to address the controversy that had erupted over her advocacy of Palestinian rights, Omar's colleague, Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, spoke first noting that to her the question of Palestine is personal - her grandmother still lives in the West Bank and Congresswoman Tlaib desires that she receive equal justice and recognition of her rights to live in dignity. Reacting to what she had just heard, Omar said that she couldn't agree with those who fight for human rights and dignity for others and yet exclude Palestinian rights and dignity.

For her part, she said, the focus should be universal - leaving no one out. She then chided those in Congress who have pressed her to reject her commitment to call out Israeli abuses and ignore Palestinians rights. Because she is a Muslim, Omar said, her criticism of Israel has been automatically seen as anti-Semitic in order to silence her.

Even more troubling she noted was that, as a result of the manufactured controversy over her words, the discussion became whether or not she was an anti-Semite, while ignoring "the broader debate about what is happening in Palestine". At that point, Omar said that she resented those who are pushing her to demonstrate allegiance to Israel. She concluded by saying that she wanted to have this conversation about "the political influence in this country that says it's okay to push for allegiance to a foreign country."

The reaction to this newest "sin" was near hysteria. Without ever listening to what she actually said, some members of Congress accused her of saying that the Jews had dual-loyalty - despite the fact that she had said no such thing. They demanded that Omar be censured or removed from her committee posts. And the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee proposed a resolution that would have denounced anti-Semitism in a way that was clearly directed at the congresswoman.

What was disturbing about this proposed resolution was that none of "Whereas" clauses included had anything to do with what Omar actually said. She never accused Jews of "dual loyalty because they support Israel"; nor did she display "prejudicial attitudes" towards Jews; nor did she ever make "mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews". What she did do was challenge official American, and in particular, Congressional silence on the suffering of the Palestinians: the efforts by pro-Israel groups to silence debate on this issue; and the way that some have sought to create a virtual identity being pro-Israel and American interests.

Despite the obvious falseness of their claims, Omar's opponents in Congress plowed ahead with their proposed bill in order "to teach her a lesson."

In their remarks rebuking Omar, they unwittingly made her point. One congressman said, "Questioning support for the US-Israel relationship is unacceptable." Another said, "there are many reasons to support Israel, but there is no reason to oppose Israel." While still another said that Democrats and Republicans, alike, are committed to insuring that the "United States and Israel stand as one." It is exactly this attitude to which Omar objected when she wrote, "I am told every day that I am anti-American if I am not pro-Israel. I know what it means to be an American and no one will ever tell me otherwise...I have not said anything about the loyalty of others, but spoke about the loyalty expected of me."

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute



A woman holds a placard as she participates in a women's march in Amsterdam yesterday, one day after International Women's Day, to stand up for equality for women and other minorities. —AFP

Africa's #MeToo more a murmur than outcry

Ugandan parliamentarian Sylvia Rwabwogo knows only too well the anguish, fear and paranoia of being stalked incessantly. For almost a year, her stalker phoned her and sent hundreds of text messages declaring his undying love - telling her she could never belong to anyone else. A knock on the door or unknown phone call would make her panic he was coming for her.

"I told him to stop calling and I blocked his number but he would just call and text from another number. For months, I was confined to my home. I was scared to go to work or even the supermarket," Rwabwogo, 42, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "It took eight months before I reported the harassment to the police as I was worried I would not be taken seriously and the media would blow up the issue and sensationalize it."

Rwabwogo was right - and the backlash was severe. Not only was she ridiculed by fellow politicians, local media and the public for "making a big issue out of nothing", she was accused of ruining the life of a "love-struck" man by seeking justice for the trauma. Women's rights campaigners say fear of backlash is one of the main reasons why the #MeToo movement has been more of murmur than an outcry in African nations.

Although women and girls face a plethora of threats - ranging from child marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual and domestic violence, campaigners say, few are able to speak out fearing they will be blamed, criticized and stigmatized. "We witnessed #MeToo in pockets across Africa - especially with university students in some countries speaking out about being forced to have sex with lecturers," said Agnes Odhiambo, women's rights researcher at Human Rights Watch. "But it has been slower to take off in Africa. Women are still shamed for speaking about sexual violence. The retaliation they face can be brutal and their character is assassinated - and yet there is little support available to them."

Slow, but not absent

The #MeToo movement that began in the United States in late 2017, in response to accusations of sexual assault and harassment in the entertainment industry, has emboldened women from Britain and France to India and Iran to speak out. Tens of thousands have taken to social media recounting their experiences of being verbally abused, groped, molested and raped by bosses, teachers, colleagues and family.

Top company chief executives, actors, journalists, politicians and celebrities have been accused of sexually harassing colleagues and subordinates - leading to sackings, resignations and court cases filed against many powerful men. In Africa, where women across Africa have been protesting over physical and sexual abuse for years, the movement - while not totally absent - has been much slower to take off, say campaigners.

"I would agree it's not been as big on the continent as it probably was in the U.S. and in other parts of the world," said Comfort Mussa, Cameroonian journalist who started an online campaign against sexual harassment in the media industry. "But at the same time, the movement is not insignificant. The feedback we've had as media women and media houses in Cameroon is amazing. There has never been a time in our history where we've had more than 20 female journalists talking about the same thing at the same time and coming out to say #Metoo."

In countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, the movement prompted female university students to protest against sexual violence by their lecturers on social media. The African Union had its own version of #MeToo

when an internal probe in November revealed that short-term staff, youth volunteers and interns were being sexually harassed by their superiors. The investigation found 44 cases and said the young women were being "exploited for sex in exchange for jobs".

Accountability missing

Even so, the cases have been few and far between - due largely to fear of a backlash, but also to a sense that sexual harassment claims are not taken seriously. "Women in Africa have been at the receiving end of most grievous gender-based violations - from rape to femicide - to the extent that there's a little bit of desensitization when it comes to sexual harassment," said Judy Gitau, a human rights lawyer with campaign group Equality Now. "Although it is as serious as every other form of gender-based violence, women here often see it at the lower end of the spectrum and would rather just let it go than deal with it."

Campaigners said the fact those accused of sexual violence were rarely held to account also discouraged women from speaking out. Many countries do not have laws specifically against sexual harassment in the workplace, while most corporates, government bodies and universities do not have guidelines or committees to deal with such cases, they said. For Rwabwogo, the nightmare continues. While her stalker was sentenced to two years in jail for cyberstalking in July last year, He has appealed against the verdict.

But she remains defiant. "I suffered first because of this man, and then because of how people trivialized the whole thing," she said. "But I have no regrets. I encourage women to seek support from other people such as women's rights groups. We all have to stand together and speak out. Only then, this will end." —Reuters

Tunisia divided over equal inheritance

Souad Gharsalli lives in a rented flat in the center of Kasserine, in western Tunisia, baking and selling artisanal bread to make money. But she should be growing olive trees for a living, she says. Gharsalli, 47, grew up with three brothers and six sisters on her family's 7 hectares of land in the region of Kasserine, on which they grew olive trees and grains. When their father died in 1997, Gharsalli and her sisters inherited half as much land as their brothers, in accordance with Tunisian law.

Then one of the brothers asked his sisters to sign a document. The women, who are only partially literate, later found out they had given up any claim to their father's land. "We thought we were just giving them the right to work on our land," Gharsalli told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "But after that, we had no right to any of it."

Despite laws protecting their right to inherit, many women in Tunisia struggle to get their allocated share. According to government figures from 2014 - the latest available - in 85 percent of cases women got no land at all when their fathers died. Now, a proposed new law could give women and men an equal share of inheritance. The proposal, due to be debated by parliament, has divided opinion across Tunisia, as well as other parts of North Africa and the Middle East.

Supporters say the law, which was presented to the country's legislature in February, could give Tunisian women greater financial autonomy. Government figures show that less than five percent of women in Tunisia are registered land owners. National polls show almost 60 percent of women in Tunisia are against the proposal, however, as it seeks to replace legislation that is based on Islamic law.

After opposition from conservatives, the original draft law was amended to allow individuals to "opt out" and continue to allocate inheritance according to the current rules. "This will be the first Arab country that will have legislated on this question, which is sensitive and taboo because it is said to be written in the religious texts," said Khadija Cherif, coordinator of the commission on inheritance at the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD). "But (for me) this is not a question of religion. It is a question of economic power, which gives men

power in the family and over the women."

'You will get land from your husbands'

Advocates of the proposal know that even if the text is passed into law, social pressure and informal family arrangements could still block women's access to land. Before Hayet Nasri's father died, he told his family he would leave his 14 hectares of land to only one of his four sons. After their father's death, the brothers instead agreed to share the land between them. Now they have 200 olive trees each, and Nasri and her five sisters have none.

"The sharing of the land is not legal, it is not official. It's done within the family, not the court," said Nasri, who rents a house in Kasserine with her husband and five children. To justify their actions, her brothers told her and her sisters: "You are married. You will get land from your husbands, not from us."

But if all the land a woman has is from her husband, a divorce can leave her with nothing, said Ahmed Mbarki, a lawyer in Kasserine. Tunisian divorce law provides for an equal split of property acquired during the marriage, but that applies only to residences, not land. Even so, "the husband will try to get around it," said Mbarki. "The land is always in the hands of the man, the husband, the father. If there is a divorce - and there are many - the husband gives nothing to his wife." Mbarki has also seen many inheritance cases where women willingly give up their rights to a portion of their fathers' land. "The sisters say, 'I love my brother. I want to give them my part. I don't want to cause any problems,'" he said.

First steps

Cherif of the ATFD - which has been leading the campaign for the new law - sees the proposed law, and the debate surrounding it, as promising "first steps" toward change. "There is a lot of silence around injustice against women," she said. "The law will allow those who think in silence that their situation is unjust to defend themselves, and it will allow others to become conscious of the fact that they have and can use this right. That will take time." She added that the ATFD is seeing more women fighting for their inheritance rights in court today compared to 20 years ago.

Gharsalli is still waiting. After divorcing her husband in 1998, she did not re-marry and now lives with her son. Last year, her brothers promised to give her a plot of land but later changed their minds. "My wish is to get the chance to own some part of this land to plant even just 20 olive trees to live off of," she said. —Reuters

On tiger trail, Indian women roaring ahead

Bobbing along a dirt track in a central Indian tiger reserve, Varsha Hinge surveyed the landscape for pawprints and listened out for deer calls warning of tigers before holding up a finger for silence - as a tigress appeared in front of her jeep. Hinge is one of 10 women safari guides at the Pench Tiger Reserve who are earning their stripes through long days helping tourists catch a glimpse of tigers, leopards and wolves.

From entrepreneurs to restaurateurs, dozens of women living near the national park are breaking with tradition in Madhya Pradesh, where village women veil themselves in front of men and are usually confined to their homes as mothers and homemakers. "In the beginning, I was very hesitant and I doubted myself, thinking I wouldn't be able to do this," said Hinge, ahead of International Women's Day on Friday. "I live in a village with my in-laws and (initially) I just couldn't get comfortable with the idea of wearing pants and shirts in front of them," the mother-of-two told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The journey has not been easy for these women. Girls in Madhya Pradesh often drop out of school young and wed soon after to live a restricted life bound by age-old customs. The female guides are helping to upend sexist views in India, which has one of the fastest growing major economies globally but startlingly few female employees, in large part due to prejudice against working women.

Only about one in four women work in India - home to 1.3 billion people - which is a lower rate than in most countries, according to the World Bank. With no prior work experience and homes full of children and in-laws, the women had to overcome not only their own anxieties but also stiff opposition at home and in their new workplace. Hinge said it took a lot of coaxing to get her husband's support. "I realized that as a homemaker, I would be limited to the four walls of my house and wouldn't grow or contribute anything to my family," she said. "So, I decided to convince everyone and go for the job."

Evil eye

Forsaking their traditional saris and kurta tunics, the national park's first 10 female guides underwent months of training in spotting big cats to prepare for their unusual jobs, where they spend hours cooped up in jeeps with strangers. "Before this, I didn't even know

how to interact with people properly ... or know what the word for 'tree' or 'bird' was in English," said safari guide Sunanda Kawal, 24. "But after joining, I've seen a great improvement in myself. I've gained a lot of knowledge and my fears have started to fade away."

As a series of safari jeeps lined up to enter the park, one male guide advised a tourist to stick with the men "if you really want the best experience", saying his women counterparts were not as qualified. The women guides said such comments were common. Most of the 50-odd male guides remain bitter, three years after the women joined their ranks, saying they are not up to the job and are taking their share of safari rides and pay, the women said.

Guides can earn up to 12,000 rupees (\$170) a month - far exceeding the average for a rural Indian household. "The male guides didn't want us to work here at all. Even now, they keep to themselves and talk to each other, but not us," said Kawal, adding that her male colleagues accuse the women of "casting an evil eye" on the park. Hinge's husband Pradeep Kumar, also a safari guide, said he was ostracized by his workmates for supporting his wife.

Yet he believes female safari guides have something new to offer - to their communities and customers. "We have seen a change in the women since they got these jobs. It allows them to earn money and that automatically makes a difference at home and within the family," said Kumar. "Plus, there are always some women guests who come here and say, 'We want a woman guide, not a man'. That way it is a win-win."

Change

While male guides may still be icy, the women say villagers have started warming up to them after noticing the extra money they bring home, with many now supportive of their girls working outside the home. That was one of the main goals for the Satpuda Foundation, which helps women to make and sell everything from pickles to takeaway meals as part of its community-based conservation work in the area - one of the world's largest tiger landscapes. "We have seen a change in attitude of locals," said Kishor Rithe, the charity's founder. "The tiger definitely plays an important role in the women's economic development."

Studies show that women who have financial control invest more in their children's education, healthcare, businesses and communities, which can be a step out of poverty. One of the Satpuda Foundation's latest initiatives is the Mowgli Restaurant - a small, dimly lit roadside eatery named after the boy in Rudyard Kipling's childhood classic "The Jungle Book", which is believed to have been inspired by Pench. —Reuters

Business

SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 2019

12 NBK's AGM approves distribution of 35% cash dividends, 5% bonus shares**14** Ooredoo participates in GUST Career Fair**15** Norway sovereign wealth fund will dump oil and gas: Minister

NEW YORK: Construction workers are seen at a building site on Friday in New York City. — AFP

US job creation screeches to a halt

Blow to Trump's hopes for undiminished economic growth in 2019

WASHINGTON: US job creation ground to a virtual halt last month, the government reported Friday, a blow to President Donald Trump's hopes for undiminished economic growth this year.

But after the unusually dramatic swing in the critical monthly data, economists-whose forecasts missed badly-hastened to say that underlying employment trends remained strong, and highlighted the hefty boost in worker pay. The figures also will be revised. Job creation was the slowest since September 2017, which adds to widespread reports from firms nationwide complaining that worker shortages are beginning to impede growth in their businesses.

Despite the drop, the unemployment rate fell and hourly wages saw their biggest gains in nearly a decade, more evidence of the tight labor market. The sudden collapse in hiring-including deep job cuts in the construction retail and transportation sectors-is sure to revive worries about the dwindling supply of American workers.

US employers added just 20,000 net new positions for the month, only a fraction of what economists had

been expecting, while unemployment fell two tenths to 3.8 percent, its lowest level since October, according to the closely-watched Labor Department report.

Economists had been projecting a far stronger 173,000 gain. Over the last three months, job creation has averaged a slightly higher 186,000. Trump downplayed the decline, but February still marked a dizzying tumble from January's blow-out 311,000 net new positions—a number the White House had held out as a sign that robust economic growth would continue.

"I think you will find probably find out it averages out," Trump told reporters on Friday. "The unemployment rate just went lower.... I think the big news really was that wages went up and that's great for the American worker." The decline in the unemployment rate may seem contradictory to the weak job creation, but the figure is derived from a different survey and reflects a shrinking labor force.

The data can produce the occasional blip due to weather or other one-off factors and these numbers are subject to revision. Economists said the weakness may have been exaggerated after a big gain in the pri-

or month or due to seasonal adjustment, meant to smooth out sharp swings due to weather or other expected elements.

Unwelcome news

The hiring slowdown may weigh on first-quarter GDP calculations, threatening to take the shine off the economy's in the first quarter. The US unemployment rate has been hovering 50-year lows since last year, with a hot economy's hunger for new employees seeming to turn up new pockets of available labor every month. But the construction, retail, mining and transportation sectors shed a combined 45,000 positions while the education sector added only 4,000 workers, down from 64,000 the prior month.

And there were no hires in February to work America's in leisure and hospitality—a stunning halt after January's gain of 89,000 jobs. The 94 percent drop in total net new hiring was the biggest since August 2010.

Meanwhile, average hourly wages rose 11 cents for the month to \$27.66, putting them up 3.4 percent over the same month last year—more than twice as fast as

inflation. That is an indication that at long last firms are being forced to pay more to attract workers.

The data present a mixed bag for the Federal Reserve, which has said it will hold off on additional rate increases amid signs economic growth is moderating and the absence of inflation. But if wage gains pick up speed, it could fuel concerns of inflation hawks at the central bank. The report was also unwelcome news on Wall Street, as US stocks followed global equities lower, closing down for the fifth consecutive day to end the worst week of the year.

Jim O'Sullivan of High Frequency Economics agreed with others that special factors may be to blame for the sharp drop in hiring. "The slowing may reflect some moderation in the trend but much of it was likely due to payback for exaggerated strength, due in part to weather effects," he said.

Others have said the five-week government shutdown—which delayed release of the jobs data—also played a role in the January spike, as idled government employees who found other jobs temporarily may have been double-counted. — AFP

Gulf Bank's monthly salary draw to be held tomorrow

KUWAIT: Tomorrow, Gulf Bank will be holding the second monthly salary draw. The draw will be held in the Mishref branch, in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce.

The salary account gives new customers the opportunity to receive either a KD 100 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank or an interest-free loan of up to KD 10,000. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and will be eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank.

Customers can also enjoy additional benefits like a free of charge Visa or MasterCard credit card for a year, as well as a chance to apply for a loan of up to KD 70,000, or a consumer loan of up to KD 25,000.

With the new 2019 Kuwaiti salary offer new customers, who transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank are automatically enrolled in the monthly draws, giving them the chance of winning cash prizes of up to 12 times their salary, and a yearly draw of Kuwait's largest salary prize of up to 100 times their salary.

Trump won't sign China trade pact unless it's 'great'

WASHINGTON: Optimism about a rapid resolution of the months-long US-China trade war was undercut by conflicting comments out of Washington and Beijing, sending global stock markets on a downward slide on Friday. President Donald Trump said he remains optimistic but will not agree to a pact with China unless it is a "very good deal." And an economic advisor said Trump could walk away from the negotiations.

The economic superpowers have been locked in a trade battle since last summer, striking out with steep tariffs on more than \$360 billion in two-way trade, which is beginning to sap economic growth and business confidence.

"I am confident but... if this isn't a great deal, I won't make a deal," Trump told reporters as he departed the White House to visit tornado-dam-

aged Alabama.

But he added: "We will do very well either way, with or without a deal."

US and Chinese officials have said they are making progress toward a resolution of the dispute but a US diplomat in Beijing said Friday that an agreement was not imminent. Washington is demanding deep structural changes, including to how Beijing treats foreign investors and its own state-owned enterprises, and the deal is expected to require commitments on the Chinese currency and protections for American technology.

White House economic advisor Larry Kudlow acknowledged that Trump's planned meeting at his Florida resort with Chinese President Xi Jinping—which officials said was expected to be held late this month to seal an agreement—could slip into April. The more cautious tone, coupled with weak Chinese trade data showing plummeting exports and imports, sent global stock markets falling.

And weak US employment data added to the pessimism, causing Wall Street to dive at the open, and although it recovered some ground by the end of session, all three main indices closed lower for the fifth consecutive day.

Trump could walk away

Kudlow told CNBC that talks have "advanced enormously," echoing comments from Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi earlier Friday. But "you saw them walk away from North Korea and just saying that... it could apply to trade," he said, referring to Trump's recent summit in Hanoi with the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, which ended early and without an agreement.

"I don't want to hang a timetable on this," Kudlow said. US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer "is doing the best he can." "There may be a meeting in Florida, Mar-a-Lago between the two leaders, maybe late this month or early next month."

He credited Trump's tough negotiating strategy and "aggressive tariffs" for bringing Beijing to the negotiating table. "We have them over a barrel," he said.

Terry Branstad, the US ambassador to China, told The Wall Street Journal in an interview that preparations for a Trump-Xi meeting are not yet under way either.

"Both sides agree that there has to be significant progress, meaning a feeling that they're very close, before that happens," he said. — AFP

Business

NBK's AGM approves distribution of 35% cash dividends, 5% bonus shares

AGM, held with a 79.97% quorum, approves all BOD's proposals



KUWAIT: Nasser Al-Sayer delivers a message at NBK's Ordinary (AGM) and Extraordinary (EGM) General Assembly meeting for 2018 that was held yesterday.

KUWAIT: NBK's Chairman Nasser Al-Sayer affirmed that "NBK Group has achieved strong performance across all business segments in 2018. Such strong results reflect the success of the bank's strategy aimed to expand its international operations and increase their contribution to the Group's profits, in line with NBK's keenness to affirm its leadership in the local market".

This was part of Al-Sayer's message at NBK's Ordinary (AGM) and Extraordinary (EGM) General Assembly meeting for 2018 that was held yesterday (9 March 2019), at which there was a quorum of 79.97 percent. The AGM and EGM approved the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute 35 percent cash dividend to shareholders (equivalent to 35 fils per share) and the distribution of 5 percent bonus shares (5 shares for every 100 shares owned).

Al-Sayer added that NBK continued its strong financial performance in 2018, achieving a record annual net profit of KD 371 million compared to KD 322 million in 2017, a growth of 15 percent y-o-y.

Comprehensive diversification

Al-Sayer said that NBK has made significant progress in its pursuit of the diversification strategy. He added that the strategy is not limited to the Bank's products and services but extends to expanding its operations in all the markets it operates as it continuously seeks more opportunities, in addition to committing to digital transformation, which will enable the Group to continue its growth in the future.

Al-Sayer also assured the role that NBK plays in supporting economic growth and the agenda of 'New Kuwait 2035', stating that NBK is the no.1 bank for financing public and private projects, a status that it intends to maintain.

As global oil prices improved in the first half of last year, it gave a major boost to GCC sovereign balance sheets - with improved fiscal positions, although these were somewhat dented by bearish market conditions later in the year. He confirmed the strength of the Kuwaiti economy despite fluctuations in oil prices and this is borne out by the strong sovereign credit ratings that it has maintained, adding that further reforms are still required to boost longer-term growth potential.

Nasser Al-Sayer

- NBK Group achieved solid growth across all business segments in 2018
- Our Solid results reflect the success of NBK's strategy in expanding its international operations and maintaining its leadership in the local market
- NBK has managed to achieve significant progress in implementing its diversification strategy across all the markets in which we operate
- NBK has established its prominent presence as the preferred financing partner for developmental and private projects
- We will continue to foster NBK's role in supporting our local economy and "New Kuwait 2035" National Development Plan
- The continuous pursuit of economic reforms supports more longer-term growth



Isam Al-Sager

- NBK has firmly established its leading position in the Kuwaiti banking sector, based on its solid fundamentals reflected by its financial strength across various indicators
- NBK's financial performance is supported by diversified income and the expansion of international operations
- We continue to adopt a conservative risk approach as our NPL coverage ratio at 228.1%
- NBK's balance sheet continued to grow, with our assets up by 5.4% y-o-y and shareholders' equity up by 3.3% in 2018
- We achieved a remarkable growth of 6.9% in our loan portfolio and attracted more customer deposits, which increased by 4.4% y-o-y



Record results

NBK's Group CEO Isam Al-Sager said that "NBK continued its strong performance during 2018 achieving record net profits. The solid results reflect the Bank's solid financial performance and the soundness of its risk-mitigation strategy through diversifying its sources of income and expanding into new geographies, while maintaining competitive advantage in the local market by providing conventional and Islamic banking services through our subsidiary Boubyan Bank".

He highlighted that NBK maintained a conservative approach to risk mitigation, reflected in the confirmation of strong long-term credit ratings. The Bank's robust asset quality metrics held steady, with the NPL/gross loans ratio at 1.38 percent and an NPL coverage ratio of 228.1 percent. The Group maintained a high level of capitalization, with a capital adequacy ratio of 17.2 percent as of the end of 2018, comfortably in excess of the Central Bank of Kuwait's requirement.

He highlighted the growth of NBK's balance sheet in 2018, with total assets increasing by 5.4 percent to reach KD 27.4 billion, whereas shareholders' equity was up by 3.3 percent y-o-y, as it stood at KD 2.95 billion. Customer loans and advances increased by 6.9 percent to KD 15.5 billion, while customer deposits increased by 4.4 percent to reach KD 14.4 billion.

Al-Sager added: "NBK managed to maintain high profitability as it constituted 38 percent of the aggregate profits reported by the banking sector in Kuwait, which is a testament to the strength of our leading position in the local market".

Strong leadership

Al-Sager stressed that NBK's has a leading and prominent position in the Kuwaiti market based on solid fundamentals reflected by the strength of all financial indicators and large balance sheet.

Al-Sager mentioned that a core component of the diversification theme in 2018 was the considerable

effort made by the Bank towards its digital transformation. The program is cross-segment and cross-geography, impacting internal processes and systems as well as the experience and opportunities of our customers. He highlighted that the successful efforts in that regard positioned the bank for the next generation in digital banking services.

He also pointed out to NBK's Key role in supporting Kuwait's economic growth as it is the no.1 bank for financing mega public projects, besides that, the Bank's strategy is aligned with the objectives outlined in the government's development plan 'New Kuwait 2035'.

Al-Sager concluded: "Our primary objective is to deliver superior returns to shareholders, which we will achieve by defending our leadership of core businesses, maintaining our dominant share of the domestic Kuwaiti market, achieving growth in target segments and exploiting our international presence".

The bank of the future

Commenting on NBK's solid performance throughout 2018, NBK's Deputy CEO Shaikha Al-Bahar said: "What we achieved in 2018 makes it a special year across the board. We successfully managed to develop a road map to attain our strategic objective to be the bank of the future, thus maintain our leadership both locally and internationally. That was made possible through the successful implementation of our digital transformation strategy, which in turn, reflected throughout all our activities and services, in addition to exponentially growing our international operations across all markets we operate in".

These successes were clearly reflected in the Group's performance in 2018 with operating profit growing by 8.9 percent to KD 606.9 million, noting that the increase in profit was driven by growth in financing activities, growth in income from fees and commissions, and the effective cost management policies resulted in a cost-to-income ratio of 31.3 percent.

Expanded global footprint

Al-Bahar reflected on the expansion of NBK Group's international banking operations in 2018, as it accounted for 30.4 percent of the Group's net profit, increasing from a contribution of 29.4 percent in 2017.



Business

Shaikha Al-Bahar



- NBK has developed a road map aimed at building a “digital mindset” to support our effort towards offering our customers the most innovative products and services
- We have made great strides in 2018 towards achieving our strategic goal to position NBK as the bank of the future, thus cementing its leadership position in the local and regional markets
- Our digital transformation strategy is compressive and covers all the activities and the markets which we operate
- International operations continued 30.4% of NBK Group’s aggregate profits, a crucial step in maintaining NBK’s leading position
- We are working towards growing our operations in the Egyptian market though focusing on expanding our activities in retail banking services
- Launching Al-Watani Wealth Management affirms our presence in the Saudi market and supports our strategic goals for NBK Capital
- Transforming Paris branch to a subsidiary is part of NBK’s contingency plan in anticipation of BRXIT and to maintain our position in the European market
- We successfully managed to reduce our cost to income ratio to 31.3%, thanks to the diligent execution of our expenditure management plan

Salah Al-Fulajj



- Our leadership in the banking sectors is backed up by continuous development of our offerings and unique offering upgrades provided to our customers
- NBK had a great performance in 2018 despite the challenging business environment in Kuwait and wide fluctuation in oil prices
- We maintained our dominant market share of 25% of total major financing deals in the local market
- We have close relations with KPC, as the ‘house bank’ for KPC and its subsidiaries
- NBK is the bank of choice for foreign companies, continuing to serve at least 75% of them locally, and trade finance market share of over 30%
- The awards and accolades we received in 2018 for our banking services reflect how far we have advanced in our digital transformation
- NBK is the biggest contributor towards CSR in Kuwait and a pioneer in introducing environmental and economic sustainability concepts

She highlighted the importance of NBK’s international operations, stressing that: “The growth of international operations is a key factor in maintaining NBK’s leadership. International operations are not limited only to geographic expansion but also increase the Bank’s ability to provide a wider range of unique services that sets us apart from our competitors”.

“Our focus on expanding NBK’s international operation in 2018 was mainly focused on the Egyptian market which constitutes about one third of our international banking group’s profits, as we provided a wider range of unique services that differentiate the Bank from other competitors. This year in Egypt, a strong emphasis was placed on building the quality and reach of the Consumer Banking business, to diversify in terms of both income and operations”, Al-Bahar added.

She pointed out that NBK managed to affirm its position, as it injected more investments through increasing its branches in the Kingdom, and the launch of Al-Watani Wealth Management business, as it managed to finalize hiring staff and started to attract assets under management. This is a huge milestone which supports NBK Capital in its broader objective to become the Group’s investment product design platform, product manager and asset manager for clients in Kuwait and the region.

As for the Bank’s operations in Europe, Al-Bahar pointed out that NBK’s Paris office was converted into

Year	Event
1952	Emiri Decree issued to establish NBK with a capital equivalent to KD 1 million
1959	Indian Rupee substituted for Gulf Rupee, issued by Reserve Bank of India and traded for the first time in Kuwait. NBK supports the substitution process
1950s	NBK supports the establishment of some of Kuwait’s most prominent companies, including Kuwait Airways, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, Kuwait Oil Tanker Company, Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries
1961	NBK replaces the Gulf Rupee with the Kuwaiti Dinar
1982	During Al Manakh crisis, NBK records no losses due to its conservative leadership
1990	Iraqi invasion of Kuwait forces NBK to manage its operations from its permanent branch in London
1991	NBK supports the Kuwaiti government with the region’s largest loan, worth USD 5.5 billion
1995	NBK provides a loan worth USD 1.2 billion to support the establishment of Equate Petrochemical Company
1998	NBK introduces the first internet banking service in the Middle East
2000	NBK is the first bank in the Middle East to offer electronic US stock trading through its website
	Opening of the NBK Children’s Hospital in Al Sabbah medical area
2002	NBK is the first bank in the GCC and Middle East to issue international bonds in global markets, worth USD 450 million
2004	NBK is the only bank in the GCC and Middle East granted a license to operate in Iraq
2007	NBK acquires Al Watany Bank of Egypt
2008	NBK avoids the negative impact of the global financial crisis, continuing to support its Kuwait and Middle East customers with all their international requirements
2012	NBK acquires a majority stake in Boubyan Bank
2015	NBK issues USD 700 million in capital securities and KD 125 million in subordinated bonds
2016	NBK provides financing for the largest clean fuel project
2017	NBK issues USD 750 million in senior unsecured notes
2017	Opening of the NBK Stem Cell Hospital for Children
2018	NBK reaches a new milestone with record profits exceeding USD 1.2 billion

a full subsidiary as a conservative and long-term positioning no-matter how Brexit ends up.

Digital transformation

Speaking on the Group’s investment in technology and innovation, Al-Bahar confirmed that NBK has made considerable strides in 2018, in line with NBK’s ongoing efforts to implement its comprehensive digital transformation strategy which covers all the activities and markets it operates in, as well as internal work systems and operations. This is an important driver for the growth of our digital offering, and an essential step towards maximizing coverage and improving the banking experience.

“The most important achievement of 2018 was the completion of NBK’s Digital Roadmap, which is focused on building a “digital mindset” for the Bank, to support our effort towards offering our customers the most innovative products and services,” Al-Bahar stated.

Al-Bahar mentioned that the digital transformation strategy aims at developing mobile and internet banking services. New features launched in 2018 included upgraded mobile banking, video chat through mobile and online banking, selfie-pay and a host of ATM enhancements.

Mega deals

Meanwhile, NBK-Kuwait CEO, Salah Al-Fulajj said: “NBK had a great performance in 2018 despite challenging business environment in the local and regional markets, in addition to the oil market volatility throughout the year”.

Al-Fulajj affirmed that NBK continued to consolidate its leadership through its participation in the largest financing deals across various key sectors in Kuwait. The priority was to confirm the bank’s leadership in the local market, as we managed to have 25 percent of the market.

Al-Fulajj highlighted the key transaction that NBK participated in which included participation in a KD 390 million term loan for KIPIC, of which NBK accounted for 35 percent, i.e. KD 140 million. NBK also provided a \$500 million credit facility in the international commercial finance tranche of Duqm Refinery in

Oman, in which NBK also acted as the credit facility agent for the \$1.43 billion international trade financing segment provided to the refinery.

He pointed out that the above mentioned mega deals were alongside a series of other smaller deals for the KPC group of companies, with whom the Bank has a close relationship, as the ‘house bank’ for KPC and its subsidiaries.

“The Group’s main objectives are to act as the primary banker for leading local companies and to remain the bank of choice for foreign companies, continuing to serve at least 75 percent of them locally. It also aims to maintain a Trade Finance market share of over 30 percent. In achieving the above, we continue to offer a wide range of services, expanding our coverage and broadening the range of products we offer,” Al-Fulajj said.

Innovative services

Al-Fulajj confirmed that NBK has been at the forefront of promoting digital transformation, stating that in recognition of its leadership in digital banking products, Global Finance presented three awards to NBK, including Best in Mobile Banking (Consumer, Kuwait), Best Consumer Digital Bank (Kuwait) and Best Mobile Banking App (Consumer, Kuwait).

That prominent position was a result of introducing new services and unique enhancements in 2018 in NBK Mobile banking offerings such as an easy registration process, e-payment services for various services in the education, telecom, entertainment sectors.

Al-Fulajj pointed out that the excellence of the services provided by the bank is supported by the key role played by our human capital. Currently, NBK employs over 6,000 employees from 53 different nationalities across four continents around the world. We are also proud of having a 45 percent female employees representation within the Group, which is a remarkable achievement in the banking sector and the regional labor market.

Al-Fulajj concluded by saying that NBK is the biggest contributor to CSR, as it is at the forefront of private sector organizations when it comes to dedications of environmental, social and economic initiatives and programs, including NBK’s ongoing and direct investment in NBK Children’s Hospital, which houses a

Stem Cell Therapy Unit along with Pediatric Hematology and Oncology facilities, in addition to NBK awareness campaigns covering a wide range of health, environmental, cultural, mother and child initiatives.

Human Capital

Board of Directors’ Formation

The EGM elected a new board of directors for the upcoming 3 years, consisting of the following members:

- 1 - Nasser Musaed Al-Sayer
- 2 - Hamad Abdul Aziz Al-Sager
- 3 - Yacoub Yousef Al-Fulajj
- 4 - Hamad Mohamed Al-Bahar
- 5 - Ghassan Ahmed Al-Khaled
- 6 - Muthana Mohamed Al-Hamad
- 7 - Talal Jassim Al-Kharafi
- 8 - Emad Mohamed Al-Bahar
- 9 - Haitham Sulaiman Al-Khaled

Gratitude and appreciation
On behalf of NBK Group’s board of directors and executive management, Al-Sayer expressed his deep thanks and sincere appreciation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for their ongoing support of Kuwait’s economy and prosperity. Appreciation was also extended to the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) for making Kuwait increasingly attractive to international investors.

Al-Sayer also thanked NBK’s shareholders for their confidence and expressed his deep appreciation to NBK’s customers in Kuwait and across all markets for their continuous loyalty and support.

Furthermore, Al-Sayer extended his gratitude to the board of directors for their leadership and guidance, expressing his appreciation to NBK’s Executive Management, who have endeavored to maintain the Bank’s strategic path while exploring new avenues for growth, and the bank employees who made customers’ confidence and trust possible.

Distributions date

Cash dividends and bonus shares will be distributed starting Monday, 1/4/2019. The distribution will be to the shareholders on the bank’s records as of the record date Thursday, 28th March 2019.



Business

Samsung Gulf Electronics rolls out the Galaxy S10 in Kuwait

Premium smartphones help celebrate 10 years of Galaxy innovations

KUWAIT: Celebrating a decade since the launch of the first Galaxy S, Samsung Gulf Electronics launched the Galaxy S10 range with three premium smartphones engineered to meet the distinct needs of today's smartphone market. Each device delivers a next-generation experience in the categories consumers care about most: groundbreaking innovations in display, camera and performance.

"Samsung is celebrating 10 years of excellence by writing the next chapter in mobile innovation history. Our next generation devices deliver breakthrough display, camera, and performance in three cutting-edge smartphones that herald a new era of smartphone technology," said Tarek Sabbagh, Head of IT and Mobile (IM) Division at Samsung Gulf Electronics. "It will offer Kuwait consumers an incredible experience and expands the possibilities of what they can accomplish."

A testament to a decade of innovations, Galaxy S10 is designed for those who want a premium smartphone with powerful performance and sets the stage for the next generation of mobile experiences. For consumers looking for a supercharged device, Galaxy S10+ takes every spec - from display, to camera, to performance - to the next level.

Galaxy S10e is built for those who want all the premium essentials in a compact package on a flat screen. Featuring the all-new Dynamic AMOLED display, next-generation camera, and intelligent performance, the Galaxy S10 line offers consumers more choices and sets a new standard for the smartphone.

Introducing the Dynamic AMOLED Display

Galaxy S10 is made with Samsung's best screen yet, the world's first Dynamic AMOLED display. As the first HDR10+ certified smartphone, the display delivers vivid digital content, and with dynamic tone mapping, you'll see a wider range of color for a brilliant, realistic picture. Galaxy S10's Dynamic AMOLED display is also VDE-certified for vibrant bright colors and extraordinary contrast ratio for even deeper blacks and brighter whites.

Verified by DisplayMate, you'll also enjoy exceptionally accurate colors on your mobile device - even in harsh sunlight. What's more, the Dynamic AMOLED display also reduces blue light through its T-V Rheinland-certified Eye Comfort display⁴ without compromising picture quality or adding a filter. The result of a groundbreaking engineering process, Galaxy S10's unique Infinity-O Display packs an array of sensors and camera technology into a hole-in display - so you can maximize your screen real estate without any distractions.

Galaxy S10's Dynamic AMOLED display also includes the first-ever in-display Ultrasonic Fingerprint Scanner⁵ that reads the 3D contours of your physical thumbprint - not a 2D image of it - for improved anti-spoofing. With the world's first FIDO Alliance Biometric Component certification, this next generation biometrics authentication offers vault-like security to keep your device safe.

Pro-Grade Camera

Building on Samsung's camera leadership

of Dual Pixel and Dual Aperture firsts, Galaxy S10 introduces new camera technology and advanced intelligence that makes it easy to take epic shots and videos:

- **Ultra Wide Lens:** A first for the S Series, Galaxy S10 offers an Ultra Wide Lens with a 123-degree field of view, like the human eye, so what you see is what's in frame. Perfect for impressive landscape shots, big panoramas and even fitting the entire extended family into the photo, the Ultra Wide Lens ensures that you'll always be able to capture the full scene.

- **Super Steady & High-Quality Video Recording:** Galaxy S10 offers Super Steady recording with digital stabilization technology. Whether you're dancing in the middle of an amazing concert or trying to record every detail of a bumpy bike ride, Super Steady allows you to capture the moment. Both front and rear cameras can shoot in up to UHD quality, and in an industry first, the rear camera gives you the flexibility to record in HDR10+.

- **AI Camera:** Galaxy S10 makes already smart features more accurate with a Neural Processing Unit (NPU) so you can get pro-grade shots worth sharing without having to manually select any advanced camera settings. Scene Optimizer can now recognize and more accurately process additional scenes because of the NPU. And with Shot Suggestion, Galaxy S10 offers automatic composition recommendations so you can frame your photo better than ever.

Intelligent performance features

Galaxy S10 is built with premium hardware

and machine-learning-based software that works hard so you don't have to. From brand new power sharing capabilities to AI-powered performance enhancement and Intelligent Wi-Fi, Galaxy S10 is Samsung's most intelligent device yet, from the inside out.

- **Wireless PowerShare⁷:** Samsung introduces Wireless PowerShare on Galaxy S10, making it possible to easily charge Qi-certified smartphones and even compatible wearable devices. In addition, Galaxy S10 is capable of charging itself and a second device simultaneously via Wireless PowerShare⁸, while connected to a regular charger, enabling you to leave your second charger at home while on a trip.

- **Intelligent Performance:** The new AI software on the Galaxy S10 automatically optimizes battery, CPU, RAM, and even device temperature based on how you use your phone and continues to learn and get better over time. Leveraging AI capabilities, Galaxy S10 also learns how you use your device to launch your most frequently used apps faster.

- **Intelligent Wi-Fi:** Galaxy S10 comes with Intelligent Wi-Fi that allows for an uninterrupted and safe connection by seamlessly switching between Wi-Fi and LTE, as well as alerting you of potentially risky Wi-Fi connections. Galaxy S10 also supports the new Wi-Fi 6 standard, making it possible for better Wi-Fi performance when connected to a compatible router.

- **Bixby Routines:** On Galaxy S10, Bixby automates your routines and provides personalized recommendations to make your life easier. With pre-set and personalized rou-



times, such as Driving and Before Bed routines, which are customized based on your habits, Galaxy S10 makes things simpler by automatically reducing device touches and cutting steps out of your day.⁹

Ooredoo participates in GUST Career Fair

KUWAIT: Out of its commitment to supporting youth embark on successful career journeys, Ooredoo Kuwait participated with a Diamond sponsorship in the two-day Gulf University for Science and Technology Career Fair, which concluded its activities last Thursday. The career fair was attended by more than 20 private sector companies, in addition to representatives from the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program.

Ooredoo's Human Resources Department participated in the career fair by providing visitors for their booth with information about job descriptions and roles in the company's different departments and sectors, answering queries about job opportunities, job descriptions, career paths, in addition to introducing



them to the different training and internship opportunities Ooredoo provides annually in collaboration with different entities.

Omar Al-Bassam, Chief Human Resources and Administration Services Officer at Ooredoo Kuwait reiterated the company's belief in the major role that the youth play in the future of our country. "We are happy to participate in the GUST Career Fair, which attracts a number of Kuwait's most talented fresh graduates and alumni who received extensive academic education in a variety of fields. Our support for youth is deep-rooted within our strategy across the organization in

Ooredoo. Our aim is to help them discover their potential, open new horizons for the ambitious youth by giving them opportunities to apply their educational knowledge to the professional world."

Ooredoo boasts a dynamic and fresh corporate culture where new ideas are nurtured, and everyone is given a fair chance to grow and maximize their potential. Ooredoo employees are always given opportunities to develop their skills and enhance their knowledge through extensive year-round training programs along with new challenges to develop their interests.

Industry, as well as NBK representatives.

The winner of Al-Jawhara's KD 125,000 prize was Hussam Ahmad Sulaiman Alhaj Asad, while the three winners of the "Transfer Your Salary" campaign for 2018 were: Amnah Jumaah Rashed Boftain, Ali Sadeq Mousa Alostath and Afrah Asri Shlah Alanzi.

The winners won each a prize worth their salary for one year and up to KD 1,000 a month. The "Transfer Your Salary" campaign for 2018 rewarded new and existing customers with instant prizes ranging from KD 100 to KD 10,000, or an interest-free loan, in addition to the chance to enter the draw and win a prize worth their salary for one year, and up to KD 1,000 a month. Commenting on the announcements, Naser Alduwaisan, Cards Products Officer, National Bank of Kuwait, said, "Every customer at NBK has a chance to win, as we remain committed to rewarding

our customers in unique ways that complement our products and services, in addition to campaigns that meet their banking needs."

Alduwaisan highlighted that NBK recently launched its 2019 campaign of "Transfer Your Salary", as part of its commitment to providing superior services that are safe and innovative, in addition to offering a range of exclusive features and advantages to reward customers for their loyalty.

The "Transfer Your Salary" 2019 campaign enables customers to benefit from advantages such as instant prizes ranging from KD 100 to KD 10,000 or an interest-free loan by simply transferring their salary to NBK.

The campaign also enables existing and new salary account customers to enter the quarterly draw for a chance to win their annual salary worth with a salary limit of KD 1,000 per month.

Turkish Cargo brings circus lions back to natural habitat

KUWAIT: Offering service to 124 countries as the fastest-growing air cargo brand around the world, Turkish Cargo brought home three lioness sisters Luca, Charlie and Kai along with baby lion Nathan to South Africa, their natural habitat. They were airlifted from Kiev via Istanbul, with utmost regard for animal rights as the driving force.

The baby lion Nathan and the three lioness sisters Luca, Charlie and Kai had been used as circus animals. They lived in concrete and steel cages of 35 square meters in Ukraine under harsh conditions without direct sunlight and clean air, far away from their natural habitat.

The lions were saved by the Lawrence Anthony Earth Organization (LAEO), an organization that acts with the mission of defending animal rights. They were then transported to their natural habitat in South Africa with the sponsorship of Turkish Airlines' global air cargo brand, Turkish Cargo.

The lions were airlifted in special con-



Turkish Cargo brought circus lions to their natural habitat

Huawei sues US govt for unconstitutional sales restrictions imposed by Congress

SHENZHEN: Huawei announced that it has filed a complaint in a US federal court that challenges the constitutionality of Section 889 of the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Through this action, Huawei seeks a declaratory judgment that the restrictions targeting Huawei are unconstitutional, and a permanent injunction against these restrictions.

"The US Congress has repeatedly failed to produce any evidence to support its restrictions on Huawei products. We are compelled to take this legal action as a proper and last resort," Guo Ping, Huawei Rotating Chairman said. "This ban not only is unlawful, but also restricts Huawei from engaging in fair competition, ultimately harming US consumers. We look forward to the court's verdict, and trust that it will benefit both Huawei and the American people."

The lawsuit was filed in a US District Court in Plano, Texas. According to the complaint, Section 889 of the 2019 NDAA not only bars all US Government agencies from buying Huawei equipment and services, but also bars them from contracting with or awarding grants or loans to third parties who buy Huawei equipment or services, without any executive or judicial process. This violates the Bill of Attainder Clause and the Due Process Clause. It also violates the Separation-of-Powers principles enshrined in the US Constitution, because Congress is both making the law, and attempting to adjudicate and execute it.

Song Liuping, Huawei's Chief Legal Officer, stressed, "Section 889 is based on numerous false, unproven, and untested propositions. Contrary to the statute's premise, Huawei is not owned, controlled, or influenced by the Chinese government. Moreover, Huawei has an excellent security record and program. No contrary evidence has been offered."

"At Huawei we are proud that we are the most open, transparent, and scrutinized company in the world," said John Suffolk, Huawei's Global Cyber Security & Privacy Officer. "Huawei's approach to security by design development and deployment sets a high standards bar that few can match."

From Huawei's perspective, the NDAA restrictions



Huawei press conference in Shenzhen

prevent the company from providing more advanced 5G technologies to US consumers, which will delay the commercial application of 5G, in turn, impeding efforts to improve the performance of 5G networks in the US. Beyond this, network users in rural and remote regions of the US will be forced to choose between government funding and high-quality, cost-effective products. This will impede the network upgrade process, thus widening the digital divide. Even worse, the restrictions on Huawei will stifle competition, leaving US consumers paying higher prices for inferior products.

Estimates from industry sources show that allowing Huawei to compete would reduce the cost of wireless infrastructure by between 15 percent and 40 percent. This would save North America at least \$20 billion over the next four years. Guo Ping added, "If this law is set aside, as it should be, Huawei can bring more advanced technologies to the United States and help it build the best 5G networks. Huawei is willing to address the US Government's security concerns. Lifting the NDAA ban will give the US Government the flexibility it needs to work with Huawei and solve real security issues."

Business

Norway sovereign wealth fund will dump oil and gas: Minister

Move to reduce vulnerability of wealth due to oil price decline

OSLO: Norway's sovereign wealth fund, the world's biggest thanks to petrodollars, will sell off stakes in oil and gas exploration and production companies to reduce its exposure to black gold, the government said Friday. While the decision is based solely on financial considerations and not on the environment, a divestment—even partial—by an investor worth more than \$1 trillion was seen as a major blow to the fossil fuels industry and hailed by the environmental lobby.

The government of Norway, the biggest oil and gas producer in western Europe, said the divestment was specifically targeting exploration and production companies, "rather than selling a broadly diversified energy sector."

"The objective is to reduce the vulnerability of our common wealth to a permanent oil price decline," Finance Minister Siv Jensen said, stressing the move should not be interpreted as a lack of confidence in the future of the oil sector.

As the decision only concerns companies specialized in upstream operations, it could affect 134 groups like Chesapeake of the US, Canada's Encana, China's CNOC, France's Maurel and Britain's Tullow, among others. Companies involved in downstream operations, such as distribution and refining, and,

more importantly, integrated companies which do both down- and upstream—such as giants ExxonMobil, Shell, BP and Total—will not be affected.

Expected to sail through parliament

Friday's proposal therefore concerns \$7.5 billion of the around \$37 billion the fund held in the oil and gas sector at the end of 2018. The government's proposal is expected to sail through parliament.

Sovereign funds are state-owned investors in various kinds of assets that aim to generate revenue for government programs and pensions. The Norwegian decision follows a headline-making 2017 recommendation by the Scandinavian country's central bank, which manages the fund, aimed at limiting the state coffers' exposure to a steep drop in oil prices, as in 2014.

Oil and gas represent almost half of Norway's exports and 20 percent of the state's revenues.

The state's oil revenues are placed in the sovereign wealth fund—commonly referred to as the "oil fund" but formally known as the Government Pension Fund Global—which Oslo then taps to balance its budget. The finance minister insisted that Friday's decision "does

not reflect any specific view on the oil price, future profitability or sustainability of the petroleum sector."

Jensen noted that the oil industry "will be an important and major industry in Norway for many years to come."

'Shockwave'

For environmental organizations and climate change activists, Norway's new position is a clear victory as the world struggles to meet Paris Agreement goals. "If this passes through parliament, it will cause a shockwave on the market, dealing the biggest blow yet to the illusion that the fossil fuel sector still has decades of business ahead of it," said Yossi Cadan of 350.org, an organization engaged in the fight against climate change.

"The decision should be seen as a red flag for private banks and investors whose oil and gas stocks are becoming increasingly high-risk and morally untenable," he said in a statement.

Beyond the sums involved, the decision is also important because positions taken by the fund—which controls 1.4 percent of global market capitalization—are closely watched by other investors.

"When one of the biggest sovereign funds



OSLO: Norwegian Finance Minister Siv Jensen arrives for a press conference on sovereign wealth fund and oil stocks on Friday in Oslo. — AFP

in the world concludes that it can yield high returns on its investments with moderate risk by reducing its exposure to oil and gas, investors take note," Jan Erik Saugestad, head

of asset management at Norwegian insurer Storebrand said. The fund has already pulled out of the coal industry, both for environmental and financial reasons. — AFP

Deutsche Bank board agrees to Commerzbank merger talks

FRANKFURT: The management board of Deutsche Bank has agreed to hold talks with rival Commerzbank on the feasibility of a merger, a person with knowledge of the matter told Reuters yesterday. First unofficial contacts took place within a very small group and the mandate from Deutsche's board was given more than a week ago, said the source, speaking on condition of anonymity. Talks were at a very early stage and could fall apart, the person added, confirming information reported earlier by the Welt am Sonntag newspaper.

A spokesman for Deutsche Bank and a spokeswoman for Commerzbank both declined to comment.

Speculation about a possible merger between Germany's two largest listed banks has been rife for months, heightening under the tenure of Finance Minister Olaf Scholz, who has emphasized the importance of strong banks. Both lenders have struggled to return to sustainable profitability since the global financial crisis, and the government holds a stake of more than 15 percent in Commerzbank following a bailout.

Deutsche is regarded as one of the most important banks in the global financial system, but has been plagued by three years of losses, ratings downgrades, failed stress tests, and money laundering scandals. Its chief executive, Christian Sewing, has said publicly in recent months he was focused on restoring profitability before taking on a complicated merger project.



Deutsche Bank headquarters in Frankfurt.

Sewing is expected to report back to the board before the bank takes further steps, the source said.

Commerzbank's chief, Martin Zielke, has been more open to the idea of a tie-up, a person with knowledge of his thinking said. Last month, he said speculation about a merger was "understandable".

The two banks flirted with a merger in 2016 but talks fizzled out after they decided to focus on restructuring. Last month, a person familiar with the matter said that US investor Cerberus Capital Management, a major shareholder in both Deutsche Bank and Commerzbank, was open to a merger, increasing chances of a tie-up. Deutsche Bank has more than 20 million personal and business customers, and Commerzbank around 18 million.

Based on Friday's closing prices, a combination of the two banks would have an equity market value of more than 24 billion euros (\$27 billion). — Reuters

Wall St extends losing streak after weak US jobs data

NEW YORK: Wall Street's main indexes fell for a fifth straight session on Friday and posted their biggest weekly declines since the market tumbled at the end of 2018, as a weak U.S. jobs report ignited more concerns about the global economy. But Friday's declines were only slight. Stocks significantly pared losses late in the day as investors reassessed the employment report and considered whether the market's recent slump was ending. The eventful session came as some Wall Street watchers prepared to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the start of the S&P 500's bull market run that took root during the financial crisis.

US employment growth almost stalled in February, with the economy creating only 20,000 jobs, adding to signs of a sharp slowdown in economic activity in the first quarter. The payroll gains reported by the Labor Department were the weakest since September 2017.

The weak US report added to economic fears also fanned by a sharp fall in China's exports and after the European Central Bank slashed growth forecasts for the region on Thursday. "People are worried about the jobs report and global growth in general and that is pushing markets lower," said Brent Schutte, chief investment strategist at Northwestern Mutual Wealth Management Company in Milwaukee.

But stocks finished well above their lows for the session, as investors noted the jobs report was affected by seasonal effects and the federal government shutdown. "As people

take a step away from the headline number, they say, 'Hey, this is just one report. The economy is likely not as weak as this one report would suggest,'" said Keith Lerner, Chief Market Strategist, SunTrust Advisory Services in Atlanta.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 22.99 points, or 0.09 percent, to 25,450.24, the S&P 500 lost 5.86 points, or 0.21 percent, to 2,743.07 and the Nasdaq Composite dropped 13.32 points, or 0.18 percent, to 7,408.14. The Nasdaq snapped a 10-week streak of weekly gains.

The closely watched Dow Jones Transportation Average fell 0.5 percent, dropping for an 11th straight session, its longest streak of declines since 1972, according to S&P Dow Jones Indices.

The recent pullback has paused a rally to start 2019 that has been fueled by optimism over a US-China trade deal and by beliefs the Federal Reserve will be less aggressive in raising interest rates. The S&P 500 is up 9.4 percent this year.

"In the first part of the year, what we have largely done is clawed back what we lost in the fourth quarter that was based upon geopolitical and Federal Reserve fears that are now ebbing," Schutte said.

Energy fell the most among the 11 major sectors, declining 2.0 percent as oil prices also fell.

Exxon Mobil shares dropped 1.4 percent and were among the biggest drags on the S&P.

Utilities led gains among the sectors, while two other defensive groups, consumer staples and real estate, finished positive. In corporate news, Costco Wholesale shares rose 5.1 percent after the warehouse club operator's quarterly profit topped estimates.

Declining issues outnumbered advancing ones on the NYSE by a 1.35-to-1 ratio; on Nasdaq, a 1.21-to-1 ratio favored decliners. The S&P 500 posted six new 52-week highs and five new lows; the Nasdaq Composite recorded 28 new highs and 51 new lows. About 7.1 billion shares changed hands in US exchanges, below the 7.3 billion daily average over the last 20 sessions. — Reuters

China consumer price index at lowest level in a year

BEIJING: The consumer price index in China fell to its lowest level in a year last month, while producer prices hardly budged, according to figures published yesterday by the National Bureau of Statistics.

The consumer price index (CPI) — a key measure of retail inflation—rose just 1.5 percent in February year-on-year, compared with 1.7 percent in January. It has now declined for four consecutive months and is at its lowest point since January 2018. China is grappling with a decline in global demand—notably from the United States, which launched a trade war against Beijing last summer.

Growth in China dropped to 6.6 percent last year, its lowest level in 28 years. The government this week announced it is aiming for growth of between just 6 and 6.5 percent this year.

The producer price index (PPI) — an important barometer of domestic demand—edged up by only 0.1 percent in February, in a further sign the Asian giant's economy is slowing.

That figure, matching January results, is the lowest for more than two years. The indicator has been in constant retreat for seven months. The increase in consumer prices is in line with analyst forecasts, but the rise in producer prices is weaker than expected. A Bloomberg news survey found an average forecast growth of 0.2 percent by economists.

"CPI inflation will most likely remain far below the 2019 government target of 3.0 percent," said Nomura economist Ting Lu in a note. Production prices could fall into negative territory this year, he added. "Disinflation continues, and deflation in the manufacturing sector may be around the corner," said Hong Kong economist David Qu, according to Bloomberg.

"The weak consumer and producer price data underline the need for continued government support for the economy," he added. Faced with a slowdown in activity, Premier Minister Li Keqiang announced a series of support measures on Tuesday including a reduction in company charges and VAT. — AFP

Canada jobless rate holds at 5.8% in Feb

OTTAWA: Canada added 56,000 mostly full-time jobs in February, but the unemployment rate remained unchanged at 5.8 percent, the government statistical agency said Friday.

Coming on the heels of a jobs surge at the start of the year, economists had forecast a slight drop in the unemployment rate. But only Ontario—the most populous region and an economic hub—saw an uptick in jobs in the month, according to Statistics Canada.

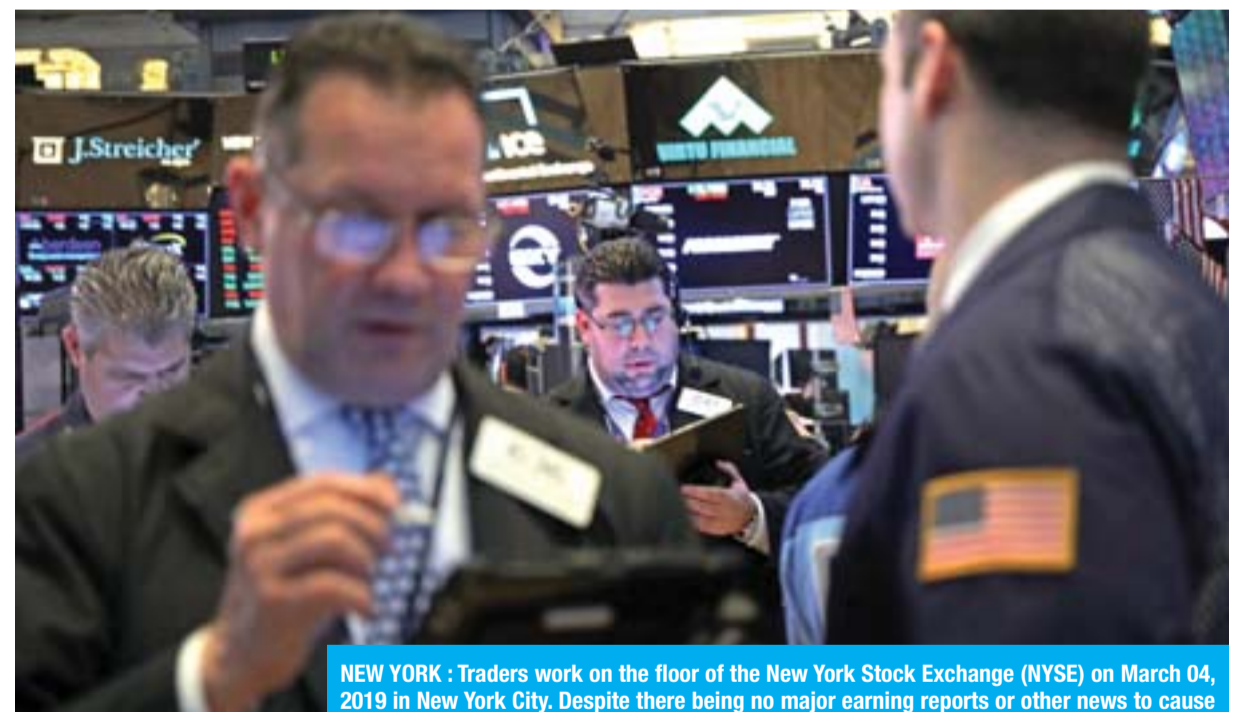
The Western prairie province of Manitoba shed 3,300 net jobs, while others saw no real change.

"Is the Canadian economy a dead parrot, or like the one in the Monty Python skit, maybe it's just resting, since today's jobs data seem to suggest that there's a lot of life left in it," CIBC Capital Markets chief economist Avery Shenfeld mused in a research note. Following a string of interest rate hikes over the past year from a near record low, and then a pause, Shenfeld said the latest job numbers and other recent economic data could put pressure on the Bank of Canada to resume raising rates—eventually.

"While there's nothing in this that spells a rate hike any time soon, the market might rethink the idea that the next move is sure to be a cut," he said.

According to Statistics Canada, more people were employed in professional, scientific and technical services; public administration; natural resources; and agriculture in February.

At the same time, there were fewer workers in hotel and food services, as well as transportation and warehousing. — AFP



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) on March 04, 2019 in New York City. Despite there being no major earning reports or other news to cause volatility, the Dow finished the day with a 206-point drop after initially gaining after this morning's opening. — AFP

WB panel orders Venezuela to pay ConocoPhillips \$8.7 billion

WASHINGTON: A World Bank arbitration panel on Friday ordered Venezuela to pay oil major ConocoPhillips \$8.7 billion after taking control of three of its operations in 2007. It was the latest blow for the once wealthy oil-producing nation, which has seen its economy collapse and has faced other such rulings favoring foreign companies seeking compensation.

The International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) said compensation for the three facilities "shall be paid together with interest at an annual rate of 5.5 percent, compounded annually, until the date of full and final payment of these amounts."

ConocoPhillips welcomed the decision which it said reaffirms "governments cannot unlawfully expropriate private investments without paying compensation."

The ICSID tribunal ruled in 2013 that the expropriation of ConocoPhillips investments in the Hamaca and Petrozuata heavy crude oil projects and the offshore Corocoro development project violated international law. The decision Friday set the payment amount.

Another international arbitration panel last year ordered Venezuela's state oil company PDVSA to pay ConocoPhillips \$2 billion in compensation for two of the projects.

The Houston-based oil firm's investments came in the late 1990s when Caracas opened the heavy oil projects in the Orinoco Belt to foreign investment.

PDVSA, once the lifeblood of OPEC-member Venezuela, has seen production plummet in recent years with the collapse of the economy. President Nicolas Maduro has come under intense international pressure. His rule is being challenged by National Assembly leader Juan Guaido, who Washington and dozens of countries have recognized as the interim leader. — AFP

Health & Technology

SpaceX capsule back on Earth, paving the way for new manned US flights

WASHINGTON: SpaceX's Crew Dragon capsule splashed down in the Atlantic Ocean on Friday, completing a NASA demonstration mission that paves the way for the resumption of manned space flights from the US. After hours of suspense, the Dragon spacecraft touched down at 8:45 am some 230 miles off the coast of the US state of Florida.

The seven-seat capsule brought its "crew" of one test dummy back to Earth in the same way that American astronauts returned to the planet in the Apollo era in the 1960s and 1970s, before the 1981-2011 Space Shuttle Program. NASA TV footage showed the capsule drifting down into the ocean, its descent slowed by its four main orange and white parachutes, which gently folded into the water around it as boats sped toward the site.

Pending the analysis of flight data, everything indicated that SpaceX — founded in 2002 by Elon Musk — had passed its test from beginning to end, a result that drew widespread praise. NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine hailed the splashdown, saying it "marked another milestone in a new era of human spaceflight." The head of the Russian space agency Roskosmos sent his congratulations via Twitter to his "dear colleagues Jim Bridenstine and Elon Musk!" And former president Barack Obama noted that it was

his government that launched the commercialization of astronaut space transport. "We invested in the @Commercial_Crew program to strengthen the US space program for the long haul, and it's great to see that happening," he tweeted.

Launched on March 2 from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, Dragon docked at ISS the following day before successfully undocking Friday some 250 miles over Sudan. The re-entry into Earth's atmosphere tested the vehicle's heat shield for the first time, and Musk had previously said that the phase was "probably my biggest concern." Even though the capsule came back to Earth looking like a "toasted marshmallow" — in the words of SpaceX engineer Kate Tice — the heat shield held.

Preparation for crewed mission

While Dragon's crew member was a dummy named Ripley this time, the mission sets the stage for a manned flight, which will see two US astronauts book a return trip to the ISS. In June, the capsule's in-flight abort system will be put to the test: the rocket will take off without human passengers, after which the capsule will eject using its own engines and return safely in a simulation of an incident.

"I don't think we saw really anything in the mission, so far — and we've got to do

the data reviews — that would preclude us having the crewed mission later this year," Steve Stich, deputy program manager at NASA, said on Friday. Separately, Boeing is scheduled to carry out an unmanned demo mission in April of its Starliner capsule.

Both systems must give NASA two independent means — and at a lower cost than that of the Space Shuttle Program — to access the ISS by 2020. The SpaceX mission represents the first private venture to the ISS, as well as the first time a space vessel capable of carrying people was launched by the US in eight years. Dragon also marks a return to a "vintage" format: it is the first US capsule since the pioneering Apollo program. Capsules have no wings and fall to Earth, their descent slowed only by parachutes — much like the Russian Soyuz craft, which lands in the steppes of Kazakhstan.

The last generation of US spacecraft, the space shuttles, landed like airplanes. Shuttles took American astronauts to space from 1981 to 2011, but their cost proved prohibitive, while two of the original four craft had catastrophic accidents, killing 14 crew members. Until SpaceX and Boeing are certified by NASA, Russia will continue to be the only country taking humans to the ISS. NASA buys seats for its astronauts, who train with their Russian cosmonaut counterparts. —AFP

Chimps' cultural diversity threatened by humans: Study

WASHINGTON: Like humans, chimpanzees are culturally diverse but those differences are being eroded by human incursion, international researchers say in a groundbreaking study published Thursday. The striking results, published in the American journal "Science," show that the behavioral diversity of chimpanzees was reduced by an average 88 percent in areas with the highest human impact, compared to remote pristine forests.

In the tropical rainforests and savanna woodlands that are the chimpanzees' natural habitat, the researchers observed 31 behaviors that were not universal or innate among chimpanzees and varied from one group to another, in a total of 144 chimpanzee communities studied in 17 Equatorial African countries where the animals live. Reflecting the diversity, not all communities of chimpanzees use the same tools to hunt or dig. Neither do they extract termites and ants in the same way. Ditto for honey and nuts. Their use of stones, ponds and caves also varies.

Researchers assume this diversity is passed between individuals within the group. They based

their findings on existing studies supplemented with their own field observations of 46 communities over the past nine years. Such data had never before been compiled on chimpanzee behavior, the researchers said. Until now, scientists have focused on the loss of genetic diversity, or human-caused population decline.

Their findings mean that the more humans disturbed the environment with roads, infrastructure, deforestation, agriculture, plantations and so on, the less chimpanzee behavior was diverse. For instance, researchers have observed areas where nut cracking had ceased. "These are very noisy behaviors, and hunters could locate you easily," Hjalmar Kuehl, an ecologist at the German iDiv research center and the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, told AFP as a hypothesis of why the behavior may have been lost.

Another example of noisy and potentially vulnerable behavior: "accumulative stone throwing" by chimpanzees in Guinea-Bissau, a form of communication where chest-pumping apes throw rocks at trees. Fishing for algae with sticks, seen in Guinea, is also threatened by encroaching humans. "Our findings suggest that strategies for the conservation of biodiversity should be extended to include the protection of animal behavioral diversity as well," said Kuehl. He proposes to create "Chimpanzee cultural heritage sites," a concept that can be extended to other species with high degrees of cultural variability, including orangutans or whales. —AFP

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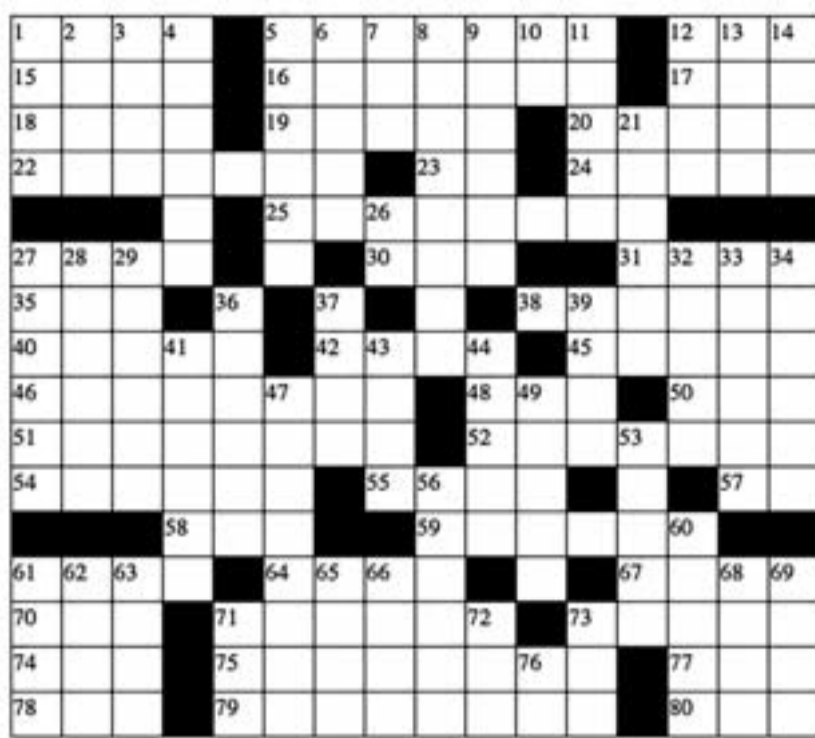
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Stars

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ACROSS

1. A hard smooth ivory colored dentine that makes up most of the tusks of elephants and walruses.
5. Tropical American insectivorous bird having a long sharp bill and iridescent green or bronze plumage.
12. Not divisible by two.
15. A fee charged for exchanging currencies.
16. Corn bread wrapped in cabbage leaves and baked in hot ashes (Southern).
17. Extinct flightless bird of New Zealand.
18. Wearing or provided with clothing.
19. Of or relating to Chios.
20. A grant made by a law court.
22. Heavy-bodied small-winged South American game bird resembling a gallinaceous bird but related to the ratite birds.
23. An informal term for a father.
24. A form of Japanese poetry.
25. Light carriage.
27. (Old Testament) The eldest son of Isaac who would have inherited the Covenant that God made with Abraham and that Abraham passed on to Isaac.
30. A chronic skin disease occurring primarily in women between the ages of 20 and 40.
31. A written agreement between two states or sovereigns.
35. (Irish) The sea personified.
38. Of or relating to or resembling the eye.
40. Come into existence.
42. Little known Kamarupan languages.
45. More than enough in size or scope or capacity.
46. Gregarious burrowing rodent larger than the chinchillas.
48. A Kwa language spoken by the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria.
50. An accidental happening.
51. The Palestinian uprising (beginning in 1987) against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
52. A loose cloak with a hood.
54. An athlete who bounds or leaps (as in basketball).
55. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
57. An associate degree in nursing.
58. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
59. A port city in southwestern Iran.
61. A city in east central Texas.
64. (British) Colloquial terms for an umbrella.
67. A island in the Netherlands Antilles that is the top of an extinct volcano.
70. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
74. A bachelor's degree in theology.
75. Large arboreal boa of tropical South America.
77. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
78. A shape that sags.
79. Financially ruined.
80. A workplace for the conduct of scientific research.

DOWN

1. Consideration in dealing with others and avoiding giving offence.
2. Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
3. A city of central China.
4. A member of an aboriginal people living in the hills in southeastern India.
5. German mathematician (1804-1851).
6. (Assyrian) Chief god of the Assyrians.
7. The 22nd letter of the Greek alphabet.
8. A port and fashionable resort city on southern Mexico's Pacific coast.
9. Be successful.
10. A state in northwestern North America.
11. A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
12. A strategically located monarchy on the southern and eastern coasts of the Arabian Peninsula.
13. A dull stupid fatuous person.
14. An informal term for a father.
21. Small beads made from polished shells and formerly used as money by native Americans.
26. A doctor's degree in optometry.
28. A sweetish crystalline amino acid involved in the synthesis by the body of cysteine.
29. Bristlelike process near the tip of the antenna of certain flies.
32. First in order of importance.
33. West Indian tree having racemes of fragrant white flowers and yielding a durable timber and resinous juice.
34. A surgical instrument used to remove sections of bone from the skull.
36. Having leaves or leaves as specified.
37. King of Saudi Arabia since 1982 (born in 1922).
39. part of the peritoneum attached to the stomach and to the colon and covering the intestines.
41. Roman general who commanded the invasion of Carthage in the second Punic War and defeated Hannibal at Zama (circa 237-183 BC).
43. South African term for 'boss'.
44. The seventh month of the Moslem calendar.
47. Any plant of the genus Caragana having even-pinnate leaves and mostly yellow flowers followed by seeds in a linear pod.
49. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
53. Property that is leased or rented out or let.
56. A person who captures and holds people or animals.
60. Of or in or relating to the nose.
62. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
63. 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.
65. A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
66. Constituting a copy or imitation of something.
68. A small cake leavened with yeast.
69. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
71. A light touch or stroke.
72. (Babylonian) The sky god.
73. Having only superficial plausibility.
76. A person forced to flee from home or country.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Well, you've just added another dimension to your life's choices. The feeling of being stagnated is permeating your career too now. Good thing this is Saturday and you may have the time to think this over. Don't make sudden moves. Instead study your options. This time can be a time of making better decisions toward creating your best future life. You can make a change but make it a great one for you. You're also having issues with your love life but you find you feel a little more compassionate towards your lover's feelings today. Think about your whole life situation and you're your decision. It may be changing directions in career and love at the same time. Aries. Whatever it is, look it over well.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Don't be surprised if you don't hear from your boss this weekend. He or she has the feeling you're thinking of leaving your job. The need to keep you is high so you might be offered something to add to your list of contemplation chores while you enjoy your weekend. You have clear, concise thoughts but are willing to listen to others' opinions, not that it'll change yours. Taurus. You don't mind discussing your options today even though you may have already made up your mind. Knowing you're loved though makes life even better. Have dinner or maybe a good game of poker with friends. Psychology plays a role in your life now.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Tenseness hasn't left since yesterday. If anything, it's gotten a tad more pronounced. Be aware of this tendency and work around it now. Don't allow a coworker to make your mood worse. When you fall into the argument, that invites another to control your life and you know Gemini, how much you don't want anyone but you in control of your actions. This is a good time to be around people who love you and appreciate your expertise in different subjects. Perhaps if you like sports you should coach a youth team on the side. You may want to help someone who looks up to you learn something they'd never have the chance to learn such as philosophy. That will help your mood.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Today is a day you're just thankful. You appreciate everything your life has to offer. You don't consider your actions yesterday a bad thing. You know that you are moving towards better no matter what. What's funny is you know deep in your heart that you are making the right moves to secure your material success even if you're resting at home now. This happens although you don't fully realize how you'll accomplish that feat at this time. Cancer. The universe works to help. Karma, for past assistance with another, comes to assist you in realizing a new manner of making the money you desire. Just ask.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may want to stay in bed getting the loving you feel is needed from your lover instead of getting up to face the real world. Your feeling of isolation except from those you love the most makes you feel worse about yourself but this too shall pass. Some of those you call friends may challenge your ideas if they're able to speak with you now. Stay home and enjoy good times with your family. That's your best course of action at this time. Take it easy and reflect upon your life.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This is a day to rest, relax and be alone. If you're with others you may not be seen as the ideal person to enjoy. Your ideas may run counter to theirs because you're feeling very unconventional today. Some people can't handle that. They need the laws of the land and need a stern program for life in which to follow. You want to make your own agenda that they're not familiar with and that makes family and friends nervous. Virgo. It's not that you're unloved. You're loved more than you know but you need to take time alone and think today.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Acting on instinct today may bring you exactly what you want in a material sense. If you feel like approaching your boss for a raise, do so but make sure your gut agrees. This could be a great time for making boundless strides in work and home progress. Patience isn't a virtue you have now, nor is there the need for such tolerance. Ask anybody you know if you're one who possesses this quality right now, especially those at work. You do, however, think your attitude today is you. It might be but you need to give in order to receive. Make both a priority and you'll reap the rewards you seek.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Today is the day to do anything you'd like if you're not on the job. Get out and clean up your garden, take a walk or take a nap. You're not on the clock now so you can enjoy just being. Scorpio. Perhaps you've thought of a cooking class or something working with numbers but not in the conventional sense. Numerology might come to mind. Watching a good series or movie and enjoying the day with a pet could be your best. At any rate take your time to enjoy now. It's needed.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

From asking the self-examination questions you have about your future, your mind has become set on a hair trigger with thoughts coming at you before you can formulate a question. That's the psychic part of you that everyone possesses. Generally, you go about without thinking too much about this sort of thing but when you focus and concentrate on an issue, the Universe thinks you want help. Perhaps you requested it. Well, now you've gotten that help and you're not sure you believe. You change your mind again and again but always come back to the answer. Sagittarius. Thank your God you believe in for the help.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Someone whom you trust and believe in may go against your ideas today. There could be an argument that leads to a fracture in your relationship. You can't live for other people but you don't want this to occur because you love this trusted, more experienced person. You're having second thoughts and he or she is only offering their opinion. If you're having this much trouble settling on your initial opinions perhaps you should think some more. Capricorn. Frustration seems to be part of your life now and you don't like the feeling. It'll pass.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

This is a time to see your lover as the person with whom you fell into love and work towards clarifying your relationship. That is if you want this partnership to continue in a better loving manner. Look it over as if it were work related to you so that you can find ways of creating a healthier loving climate. Feeling good about yourself can start that ball rolling. Aquarius. Then start looking for one thing that you found good about your lover. Make a mental list of the pros in your association. See if it's worth continuing to work at your love.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Today is a wonderful day. You're thinking in creative ways and it feels good. Things are coming together in your mind. You feel as if you're life is getting a fresh, new start and it is. Revel in the sensation. Prepare to create the things you desire most. Friends call on you for your understanding. You're glad to help. It's only a part of your pay back to the universe for everything good given to you. Perhaps you should think about some kind of artistic endeavor to add to your growing repertoire. Things come easily. Pisces. Enjoy the day with friends and family.

Wordsearch Puzzle

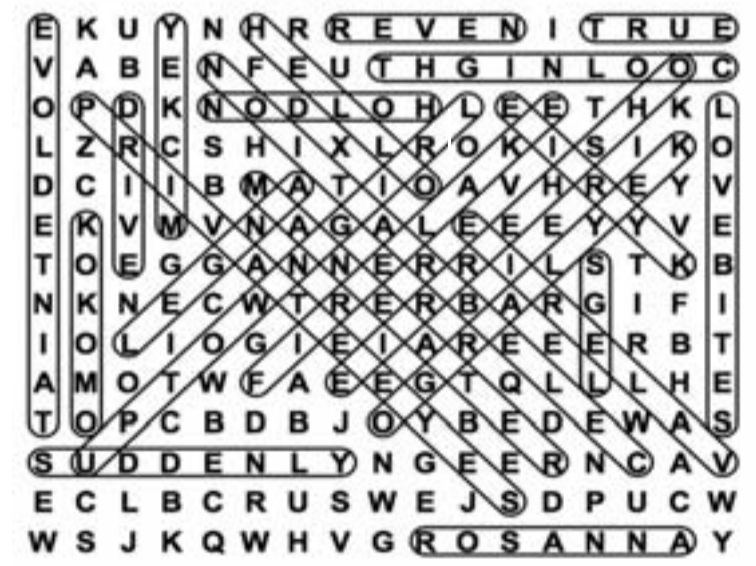
80's Songs 2 - Word Search



- | | | |
|-----------|------------|--------------|
| ALLENTOWN | JEOPARDY | RAPTURE |
| ALONE | JUMP | SARA |
| BEAT IT | LADY | SHOUT |
| CARS | LOVE SHACK | SWEET DREAMS |
| CONGA | MAGIC | TIME |
| CRYING | MANIAC | VENUS |
| FOOTLOOSE | NOTORIOUS | YOUNG TURKS |
| HIM | PHYSICAL | |

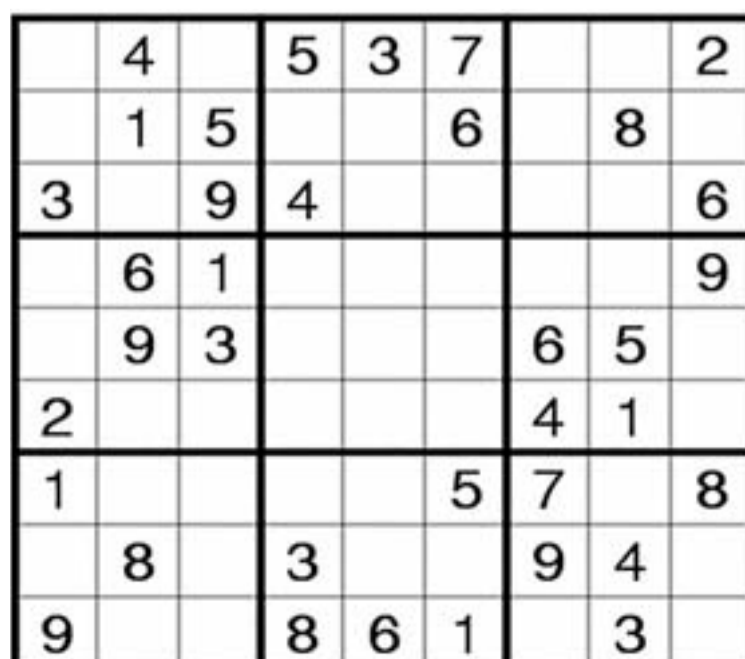
Friday's Solution

80's Songs 1 - Solution

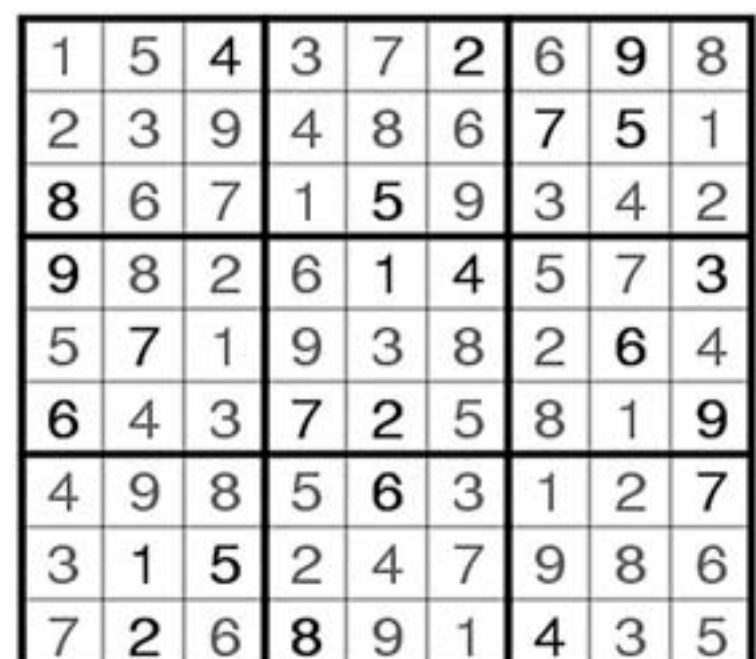


- | | | |
|-------------|------------|--------------|
| ANGEL | KEY LARGO | OH SHERRIE |
| TRUE | KOKOMO | PRIVATE EYES |
| CELEBRATION | KYRIE | ROSANNA |
| COOL NIGHT | LEGS | SUDDENLY |
| DRIVE | LOVE BITES | TAINTED LOVE |
| FIRE LAKE | MANEATER | UPTOWN GIRL |
| HELLO | MICKEY | VALERIE |
| HOLD ON | NEVER | |

Daily SuDoku



Friday's Solution



Lifestyle

SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 2019



Contestant Jazell Barbie Royale of the US reacts while being crowned the Miss International Queen 2019 by Miss International Queen 2018, Nguyen Huong Giang during the transgender beauty pageant in Pattaya. — AFP photos (See Page 21)



Barbie role model and actress Yara Shahidi participates in the ceremonial lighting of the Empire State Building in celebration of Barbie's 60th Anniversary and International Women's Day in New York City. — AFP

Iconic Barbie doll celebrates 60 years of evolution

Barbie, the fashion doll famous around the world, celebrates her 60th anniversary yesterday with new collections honoring real-life role models and careers in which women remain under-represented. It is part of Barbie's evolution over the decades since her debut at the New York Toy Fair on March 9, 1959. To mark the milestone, manufacturer Mattel Inc created Barbie versions of 20 inspirational women from Japanese tennis star Naomi Osaka to British model and activist Adwoa Aboah.

The company also released six dolls representing the careers of astronaut, pilot, athlete, journalist, politician and firefighter, all fields in which Mattel said women are still under-represented. Barbie is a cultural icon celebrated by the likes of Andy Warhol, the Paris Louvre museum and the 1997 satirical song "Barbie Girl" by Scandinavian pop group Aqua. She was named after the daughter of creator Ruth Handler.

Barbie has taken on more than 200 careers from surgeon to video game developer since her debut, when she wore a black-and-white striped swimsuit. After criticism that Barbie's curvy body promoted an unrealistic image for young girls, Mattel added a wider variety of skin tones, body shapes, hijab-wearing dolls and science kits to make Barbie more educational. Barbie is also going glamorous for her six-decade milestone. A diamond-anniversary doll wears a sparkly silver ball gown.

The full line-up of Barbie's 2019 "Sheroes" is: Adwoah Aboah, Activist and model, UK; Yara Shahidi, Actor, model and activist, US; Naomi Osaka, Tennis player, US; Kelsea Ballerini, Singer and songwriter, US; Kristina Vogel, Cycling champion, Germany; Dipa Karmakar, Gymnastics champion, India; Chen Man, Visual artist, China; Melodie Robinson, Sports journalist and presenter, New Zealand; Karla Wheelock, Mountaineer, writer and lecturer, Mexico; Tessa Virtue, Ice skater, Canada; Lisa Azuelos, Director, France; Eleni Antoniadou, Nasa scientist, Greece; Rosanna Marziale, Chef, Italy; Ita Buttrose, AO, OBE, journalist and editor, Australia; Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, Actor, talk show host and author, Japan; Mariana Costa, Entrepreneur and activist, Peru; Iwona Blecharczyk, Professional truck driver, Poland; Gulse Birsal, Columnist, screenwriter and actor, Turkey; Laysan Gabeira, Big-wave surfer, Brazil; Maysan Utiashova, TV show host and rhythmic gymnastics champion, Russia. — Reuters/Bang Showbiz



Kane Tanaka, a 116-year-old Japanese woman, celebrates with the official recognition of Guinness World Records' world's oldest verified living person in Fukuoka. — AFP

Japanese woman confirmed as world's oldest person aged 116

A 116-year-old Japanese woman who still enjoys studying math and playing board games has been recognized as the world's oldest person, the Guinness World Records said yesterday. Kane Tanaka was born on 2 January 1903, the year when the Wright brothers launched humanity's first powered flight, according to Guinness. Tanaka's recognition was celebrated at the nursing home where she lives in western Japan's Fukuoka by city mayor Soichiro Takashima and other well-wishers.

Asked what moment she was the most happy in life, she replied: "Now." She married Hideo Tanaka in 1922, giving birth to four children and adopting a fifth. Kane normally wakes each morning at 6 am and passes the afternoons by studying mathematics and practicing calligraphy. "One of Kane's favorite pastimes is a game of Othello and she's become an expert at the classic board game, often beating rest-home staff," Guinness said.

Japan has one of the world's highest life expectancies and has been home to several people recognized as among the oldest humans to have ever lived. They include Jiroemon Kimura, the longest-living man on record, who died soon after his 116th birthday in June 2013. The oldest verified person ever—Jeanne Louise Calment of France—died in 1997 at the age of 122, according to Guinness. — AFP

'Simpsons' drop classic episode featuring Michael Jackson

The creators of "The Simpsons" have shelved one of the animated series' classic episodes because it features Michael Jackson's voice, the show's executive producer told The Wall Street Journal Friday. Simpsons producers made the unanimous decision after viewing the bombshell documentary "Leaving Neverland," which revives pedophilia accusations against the late megastar in excruciating detail. "It feels clearly the only choice to make," Simpsons executive producer James L. Brooks told the WSJ.

The move appears to be the first such artistic ban in the United States since the documentary aired on US network HBO earlier this week. Several radio stations in Canada, New Zealand and Australia have stripped Jackson songs from their playlists in light of the film. The 1991 episode in

question sees Homer Simpson meet a mental hospital patient who believes he is the popstar Michael Jackson, and speaks in the star's signature high pitch.

Entitled "Stark Raving Dad," the segment that aired on Fox in the show's third season triggered intense fan speculation because Jackson's name was not in the credits. But just last year, Simpsons creator Matt Groening confirmed Jackson had indeed done the voice work—but not the song bit. "When it came time to sing the songs, he had a soundalike singer," Groening told Australian television. "And he stood there and watched the guy who was so nervous, who had to sound like Michael Jackson."

Brooks told the paper the episode had been one of his favorites—but that pulling it was necessary in light of the documentary. "This was a treasured episode. There are a

lot of great memories we have wrapped up in that one, and this certainly doesn't allow them to remain," Brooks said, citing "evidence of monstrous behavior."

Prior to his 2009 death, Jackson emphatically denied molesting children, and was acquitted of child abuse charges in 2005 after a dramatic trial. The late superstar's estate has smeared the documentary as a "posthumous character assassination," and is suing HBO for \$100 million. Brooks told the paper the Simpsons episode would be removed from streaming services, TV stations and box sets, a process that "has started." "I'm against book burning of any kind. But this is our book, and we're allowed to take out a chapter," Brooks said.—AFP

Khloe Kardashian claims hearts should be 'treasured, not broken'

The 34-year-old reality star broke up with Tristan - with whom she has 10-month-old daughter True - after he kissed Jordyn Woods at a party last month, and has now taken to social media to share cryptic messages which touch on the subject of heart break. One passage posted to Instagram reads: "Maybe we held on a little too long to the people who didn't deserve us because we had more good in our heart than they did. Maybe we saw them for how they could have been if they had a heart like ours. But they didn't and maybe they never will. Hearts like ours are special. - They should be treasured, not broken." Whilst another message shared by the 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star said everything she's been through was "meant" to happen in order to make her who she is. It read:

"What if I told you that every single thing that has happened to you has happened exactly as it was meant to? I know a lot of things have happened. I know there are cracks in your spirit from losses too great to name, and hurts from people who should have kept you safe. "But those cracks created a warrior. Those cracks are iridescent fissures that light you up and reflect every beautiful thing in your soul." Meanwhile, although the former couple are not on the best terms right now, it was recently reported they're "on the same page" when it comes to co-parenting their daughter.



The Rolling Stones launches Happy Socks exclusive collection

The 'Satisfaction' rockers - who consist of Sir Mick Jagger, Ronnie Wood, Keith Richards and Charlie Watts in the iconic group - have joined forces with the Swedish sock and underwear company to create a limited edition range of multicolored socks inspired by the band's legendary 'lick' logo. Happy Socks founder and creative director, Viktor Tell, said in a statement: "It's great to work with such a legendary band and its famous visuals. Every time I've seen that iconic logo I've wished that someone would unleash its colorful potential. And now we finally have.

Makes us feel like Sock n' Roll Stars." The iconic group have unveiled their much-anticipated combed cotton six-piece capsule collection - which are available on their own or as part of collectible gift boxes in packs of three or six - as they embark on the U.S leg of The Rolling Stones: 2019 No Filter Tour next month in Miami. Happy Socks have also previously teamed up with The Beatles, Andy Warhol, Snoo Dogg and Wiz Khalifa to make a range of vibrant limited-edition collections for excited fans around the globe.



Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, started campaigning for feminism at the age of 11

The 37-year-old former actress - who was known as Meghan Markle before she joined the royal family when she married Prince Harry last year - has said that although she didn't "know what sexism meant" at the time, she knew something was "wrong" when she saw an advertisement for dishwashing soap that declared, "Women all over America are fighting greasy pots and pans." Speaking at a panel for International Women's Day on Friday, she said: "At age 11, I had seen a commercial at the time that I thought to be very sexist. Truth be told, at 11 I don't think I even knew what sexism meant. I just knew that something struck me internally that was telling me it was wrong, and I knew that it was wrong. And using that as my moral compass and moving through from the age of 11, at that age I was able to change this commercial." Meghan added: "It really set up the trajectory for me to say, if there was a wrong, if there is a lack of justice, and there is an inequality, then someone needs to do something. And why not me?"

'Roma' actress brings star power to support of domestic workers

She was nominated for an Oscar playing a maid in "Roma" and now Yalitza Aparicio is using her fame to campaign for the rights of domestic workers and indigenous women around the world. The Mexican actress got a standing ovation as she joined an International Women's Day discussion in Geneva on the position of women who earn on average about 20 percent less than men for work of equal value around the world, according to the UN's International Labor Organization (ILO). "My mother is a domestic worker, I know many domestic workers, so I did have a concept of how that work shapes up, how that person participates in the family," Aparicio told the audience. In the Netflix film she plays a maid named Cleo struggling with her own problems as she looks after a middle-class family deserted by their father. It won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, two Oscars and the British Academy award, or BAFTA, for best film. Now 25, Aparicio, the first indigenous woman to be nominated for a best actress Oscar, had completed teacher training when cast in director Alfonso Cuarón's autobiographical film named after the Mexico City neighborhood where he grew up. "My passion has always been to educate people, to teach them," Aparicio said. "Throughout my career people have told me I haven't stopped teaching, I opted for acting but constantly try to teach the community. "It is possible to demonstrate that one can achieve many things though society might say no. If you are a woman and are told 'no', try again ... continue insisting because at some point in time you will be a success," she said. The ILO says there are at least 67 million domestic workers worldwide, 80 percent of them women.



Serena Williams sells her daughter's clothes for charity



The 37-year-old tennis star has 18-month-old daughter Olympia with her husband Alexis Ohanian, and on Thursday, she made the move to add 36 items from her tot's closet to her Poshmark account, with the intention of giving the proceeds from the clothes to charity. Money raised from Olympia's clothes will go to Serena's charity the Williams Sister Fund - which she set up with her sister Venus in 2016 - and their Yetunde Price Resource Center, whose mission is to "offer trauma-informed programs that promote individual and community-wide healing and resiliency." Serena previously donated money to the cause when she put up clothes from her own collection for sale on her Posh Closet for Charity last month, which saw all items sell out completely within minutes. Olympia's selection of garments include a tracksuit, three dresses, Gucci sneakers, overalls, and a t-shirt featuring her superstar mother in the middle of a tennis match. Meanwhile, Serena recently admitted she wants her tot to "embrace" being a strong woman. When asked what she wants to teach her daughter about being strong, Serena said: "Embrace it." The sporting superstar then spoke about her partnership with Bumble, a dating app in which women make the first contact with matched users, which also has a business version designed to make contacts to further careers. Serena - who is a global ambassador for the app - added: "I want to teach her that it's OK to make the first move. It's OK to ask and to say, 'Listen, I want a chance at being in this play. Like put me in. Or just give me this first opportunity.' There's so many different ways to showcase that."

Sophie Turner credits Joe Jonas with helping her find her "happiness"

The 'Game of Thrones' star is engaged to the Jonas Brothers musician, and has said that after struggling with her "sense of self" for several years, finding love with Joe - whom she plans to marry this summer - helped her find herself, and discover happiness outside of acting. Speaking in a joint interview with her co-star and best friend Maisie Williams for Glamour magazine, she said: "I think for the longest time I didn't have a real sense of myself. I had a bit of an identity crisis where I was playing all these people and I'd grown up faster than I probably should have done. I hadn't been able to experience university, or just spend a lot of time with friends, so for a while, I kept thinking, 'Who am I?' "A lot of [my happiness now] is to do with being with a person I've fallen in love with, who loves me more than he loves himself, and who wants to see me find my own happiness. That was probably the biggest thing that pushed me to find who I am - and find my happiness in things other than acting." The 23-year-old star and the 'Sucker' hitmaker got engaged in October 2017 following almost a year of dating, and previously revealed she was enjoying her engagement. "It's lovely to be engaged. Not like I achieved anything, but I found my person like I'd find a house that I love and want to stay in forever. "There's a sense of peace that comes with finding your person. But there's a drive that comes with your career." And although their wedding is still a little way off, 21-year-old Maisie already knows she'll be a bridesmaid at the event. When asked if she was hoping to secure the position, she said last year: "Oh, already got it. Yeah, it's very, very exciting. It's kind of bizarre though."



Karlie Kloss gets 'Project Runway' tips from Heidi Klum

The 26-year-old model is set to take over as host and executive producer of the popular TV series when it returns next week, and has said the program's former host Heidi - who held the role for 16 seasons - has been "really supportive" of her throughout the transition. Karlie said: "Heidi has been really supportive. I really believe that this is such a powerful platform to showcase these designers and this next generation talent, and for me it was really important to bring everything that I had, the experience, and everything that I can to this show to help these designers grow and learn." And the blonde beauty said she's "really excited" to take over the show, and bring the program back to screens after a two-year hiatus. Speaking to People magazine, she added: "I'm really excited to be a part of this next chapter of the show, to be a part of this incredible cast and bring the show back to Bravo." Karlie announced she would be hosting the show in October, and said it was an honor to take on the role after growing up watching the fashion program.

— Bang Showbiz





Contestant Jazell Barbie Royale of the US reacts while being crowned the Miss International Queen 2019 by Miss International Queen 2018, Nguyen Huong Giang during the transgender beauty pageant in Pattaya. — AFP photos



Contestant Jazell Barbie Royale of the US competes during the Miss International Queen 2019 transgender beauty pageant in Pattaya.



Contestant Jazell Barbie Royale of the US waits backstage.

American crowned queen in Thai transgender pageant



Contestants compete during the Miss International Queen 2019 transgender beauty pageant in Pattaya.

American contestant Jazell Barbie Royale was crowned "Miss International Queen" in Thailand on Friday at a beauty pageant for transgender women, becoming the first person of color to win the competition since it started in 2004. Royale buried her face in her hands, spread her arms in victory and willed up with tears when news of the victory was announced in the seaside city of Pattaya. The community leader and HIV activist edged out 19 other candidates from around the world including Brazil, Peru and several Asian countries.

"Please don't run for next term"

She said she hoped her triumph inspired other people of color around the world who might say "if she can do it, I'm coming to Miss International Queen next year and I'm going to compete". Hailing from Florida, Royale said she wanted to use her newfound platform to educate others about the importance of HIV testing, safe sex and medical care. "There are a lot of living with HIV but don't go to get treatment," she said. The theme for this year's contest was world equality.

Royale's victory in Thailand came as the Trump administration back home tries to stop transgender recruitment in the military, a battle being waged in the courts. She said that if she had to send a message to Trump she would tell him "please don't run for next term". The 31-year-old also took home the Best Talent award. Before the show, aspiring Miss Queens took selfies, glanced in the mirror for a final look or sat still as stylists put the finishing touches on their makeup and hair.

Host country Thailand has a more visible and empowered transgender community compared to its neighbors.



Jazell Barbie Royale, second left, of the US, the Miss International Queen 2019 receives a kiss from first runner up Kanwara Kaewjin, left, of Thailand and second runner up Yaya, third left, of China during the transgender beauty pageant in Pattaya.

The first transgender candidate for prime minister made headlines this month ahead of March 24 elections. When Thailand hosted the Miss Universe contest last year Miss Spain was the first-ever transgender contestant. But same-sex marriage is still not legally recognized in the country and discrimination persists. The Miss International Queen pageant has been hailed for offering contestants a chance to bond with others from around the world.

Thailand's relatively open-minded attitude on LGBT issues is a welcome break for contestants who hail from less tolerant countries, including Malaysia, where anti-

LGBT rhetoric has picked up in recent months. An opposition leader said last year that a quake-tsunami that killed thousands in neighboring Indonesia was "punishment from Allah" for the activities of gay people. Malaysia's Larra Jassinta, 24, highlighted the discrimination problem. "Some of the LGBT community in Malaysia, they don't have work, home nor family because the family cannot accept them," Jassinta said.—AFP



Lifestyle | Features



This picture shows a view of a tourist caravan camped at a mountain campsite in the Dubai emirate's exclave of Hatta, near the Omani border. — AFP photos



'Glamping': Dubai's new take on desert camping

Just over 100 kilometers from Dubai's skyscrapers, Mohammed al-Kaabi strolls through the tranquil desert with his friends as the sun sets. Kaabi, 27, hails from a long line of Emiratis, a people with a centuries-old bedouin history tied inextricably to the local desert. Today, he is among a fast-growing group drawn to a new wave of a tradition of desert camping but with all the trappings of comfort, style and modernity.

“Safety, comfort are provided for”

With “glamping”, short for “glamorous camping”, Dubai aims to expand on its renown for luxurious city living and its tradition of camping. Betting on tourism at a time of low oil prices, Dubai is now offering stays in chic desert trailers, in plush mountainside lodgings and beach camps, as it seeks to put its own mark on the glamping trend that has swept world tourism destinations.

“This place is far from the cities and the high-rises,” said Kaabi, sporting the traditional full-length white Emirati robe worn by men. “Camping is very popular in the UAE, but when you want to bring the family it becomes more complicated,” he added, at a campsite in Hatta, near the Omani border. “But here, safety and comfort are provided for.”

A room with... a bed

Camping is still a beloved way of life for many Emiratis, who take their equipment and head for the desert from the fall months onwards, when the scorching summer heat has faded. Tourists and expat residents also increasingly opt to escape the hustle and bustle of the city. Dubai welcomed a record 15.9 million visitors in 2018, many of whom were drawn to its mega malls, luxurious hotels and pristine beaches. It hopes to push the figure up to 20 million visitors annually by next year, when it hosts the six-month global trade fair, Expo 2020.

The mountainous eastern Hatta desert has lots to offer “glampers” with a taste for adventure but also for their home comforts. Near the Hatta dam, campers have a choice between a trailer, caravan or five-star lodge fully equipped with TVs and power points for charging a smartphone. Seated outside a trailer, Jamil Fahmy, a Dubai resident from Saudi Arabia, said glamping was the perfect way to escape the city without compromising on hygiene.

“It's fun, with the fire and hanging with friends and all that, but I personally prefer to sleep in a room with a bed and a private bathroom, and that's what we get here,” he told AFP. “It's great to be an adventurer and explore and cook fire-side, and that's what we did. “But when the time came, we retreated into the beautiful room and slept on a bed.”

Five-star camping

Rooms with modern amenities, including bathrooms and beds, start from 400 dirhams per night at the Hatta site, which opened in October. The Hatta camping project, part of Dubai's plan to use



tourism to diversify revenues, is also home to a 350-metre zip wire. Last year, Dubai faced a downturn in the real-estate market due to a supply glut, while oil prices also dropped, affecting the UAE as a whole. Several glamping sites, some on the beach, have popped up across the UAE in recent years, with options to participate in yoga classes, star gazing or kayaking.

For Jay, a 37-year-old Briton, glamping offers a new experience after a decade in the UAE. “We're fairly outdoorsy, we came here kayaking before, we did the big zip line,” he told AFP, referring to the Hatta zip wire. But, he added with a

laugh that with the usual no-frills style of camping “you haven't got a shower or all the facilities” so glamping is a welcome step-up. “You get the outdoors and all of that, and nature, and you can barbeque-but you can also have a shower and get clean! “It's not five-star hoteling, but five-star camping.”—AFP

This picture shows boats and kayaks cruising in the reservoir at the Hatta Dam.



QNET launches QNETCity Champions Swiss watch series

QNET, Asia's leading direct selling company, introduced a new series dedicated for Manchester City enthusiasts called QNETCity Champions Series developed by CIMER. The glorious world of football has inspired QNET to create modern timepieces which apply technologies and designs that serve the active lifestyles of the most passionate Cityzens. The series include three watches: QNETCity Victory, QNETCity Triumph Gold, and QNETCity Triumph Blue. The limited edition series is dedicated for a winning lifestyle and showcase the true passion of the Cityzens.

QNETCity Victory Automatic Watch

The QNETCity Victory is engraved with its unique serial number and the label “Manchester City Official Product” on its case back. The Victory watch features a sandblasted stainless-steel body with forged carbon fiber, which allow it to be both ultra-light and super sturdy. The watch's double-curved sapphire glass face tops its shape and firmly secures its complex machinery, making the QNETCity Victory a great companion for the football enthusiast who is quick to make the most out of every opportunity. The QNETCity Victory watch is limited to 777 pieces only.

QNETCity Triumph

The QNETCity Triumph is an exceptional wrist-watch that comes in two types - the QNETCity Triumph Gold and QNETCity Triumph Blue. Each watch is engraved with its unique serial number and the label “Manchester City Official Product” on its case back, making it a treasure that can be passed on from generation to generation. Both watches are water resistance of 10 ATM. The QNETCity Triumph Gold is a chronograph quartz watch. It features a black matte dial with gold and black white-luminous hands. The Triumph Gold is the perfect teammate to have with you in every victorious moment. The QNETCity Triumph Gold is limited to 1880 pieces only.

The QNETCity Triumph Blue features a stainless-steel dial with silvery blue white-luminous hands. The Triumph Blue is a loyal teammate in conquering every challenge - be it in business or on the field. The QNETCity Triumph Blue is limited to 2777 pieces only. The series will be a great collectible for all Manchester City fans whom understand the importance of time put into the journey, leading to the final goal. Make this limited edition yours before they're gone.

Sara Baras, the flamenco superstar wearing the pants

A seductive Spanish art form characterized in the popular imagination by a bright frilly dress, the tradition of flamenco is fast becoming an arena for innovation. And flamenco superstar Sara Baras is at the forefront, using her heels to pierce gender stereotypes by trading the ruffled gown for a pair of pants to dance “farruca”—a style normally limited to men. The 47-year-old from the southwestern Spanish city of Cadiz, who is starring in New York's Flamenco Festival USA series this weekend, says she enjoys the traditionally masculine style farruca because she “likes the risk, it makes you grow.”

“It's an elegant, sober style; it's a trouser and a shirt, not your dress or your flowers or anything.” “You cannot hide. You have to have truth.” Baras begins her show in a shirt with black pants, before transitioning to a spectacular dress with undulating folds. Today, she says, the “farruca” belongs to both men and women. “It does not matter what the movement is,” she told AFP. “Before men could not move their hips and women did not use their feet.”

But today, she said, “a man can move his hips beautifully without being feminine, and a woman can dance with her feet without being masculine.” She even says dancing farruca allows her to tap into her femininity, citing “the sensuality of the movement in pants.” “The body is more naked; therefore you have to be more careful with placement—your hip, your legs, your waist, everything has to be in place.”

Straight to the heart

Spanish sensation Rosalia has earned global acclaim for her fusion of flamenco with electronica and trap, a style of



hip hop born in the southern United States. But she's also stoked controversy: some accuse her of cultural appropriation, as the tradition comes from Spain's southern Andalusia region where the gypsy community created it to express their suffering. Baras dismisses those criticisms, saying flamenco belongs to everyone.

“Anyone who feels and lives it can do it,” she said. “Flamenco does not understand borders: it is an art that goes straight to the heart.” “It has no passport, it has no schedule, it has no limitations,” Baras continued. “Flamenco is free.” The acclaimed dancer says her art has changed since she became a mother nearly eight years ago, seeing her place less emphasis on technical perfection and speed. “Silence, a gesture, a sweet moment,” are now the goals, she said. “Being still and being able to express something almost without moving.”

Baras—whose tour began in Switzerland and will soon visit Miami, Abu Dhabi, Valencia and Barcelona—vows to keep dancing “as long as the body endures.” “I do not know my life without dancing,” she said. “You dance and release everything; you communicate with everyone as if you had an additional form of expression.” “You wear your shoes and fly.”—AFP



Flamenco superstar Sara Baras from Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras performs a scene from “Shadows” (Sombras) during her opening night at the City Center during the 2019 New York City Center's Flamenco Festival. — AFP photos

What's On

TOYOTA GAZOO Racing takes on Kuwait's unique terrain as '5 Continents Drive' starts final stage



Following the success of its expedition in Africa, TOYOTA'S GAZOO Racing has arrived in Kuwait for the final stage of its 5 Continents Drive project in Asia, which starts in the Middle East. As part of the itinerary, the team had stopovers in Subiya and Kuwait City. The 5 Continents Drive has been introduced to help everyone at Toyota to develop vehicles that excite the company's customers and exceed their expectations. The seven-year project of unparalleled scale that has the power to unite all of Toyota's 370,000 members around the world, has now covered four of the world's continents, since its launch in 2014.

To mark the start of this event Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons held a press conference at their Ardiya Ballroom, which was attended by Mubarak Naser Al Sayer CEO, Bengt Schultz COO from ALSAYER Holding, Johan Heislitz Senior Business Director Toyota Sales, distinguished members from Toyota Motor Corporation lead by Toshiyuki Nakahara General Manager, Middle East & Central Asia Div., Engineering team from Toyota Gazoo Racing Team, student groups from leading Universities in Kuwait, Senior Members of the Management from ALSAYER along with representatives of the press and media.

Throughout the drive, around 24 members consisting of Toyota's employees and Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons covered a distance of around 250 kilometers across Kuwait. The team's itinerary included driving across the country's diverse and wide-ranging roads while experiencing first-hand the harsh conditions in which vehicles are used daily by Toyota's customers. The Toyota convoy of Kuwait 5 Continents Drive included popular models including Land Cruiser, Prado, Fortuner, RAV4 and Rush.

Part of this event AL SAYER also organized an interaction session for Mechanical Engineering students from American University of Kuwait, Australian College of Kuwait and American University of Middle East. Students were offered the opportunity to present topics relevant to the field of Automobile following which they interacted with Toyota Gazoo Racing team covering topics such as safety, advanced technology in cars, Toyota hybrids etc.

Speaking during the occasion Mubarak Naser Al Sayer said "This event reflects the spirit of KAIZEN - which means continuous improvement which is one of the fundamental principles of Toyota. As part of this project Toyota Gazoo Racing teams have been traveling the world for the past few years, driving cars on different road surfaces to learn about new challenges for Toyota to make ever better cars that will put a smile on customers face."

"On behalf of Middle East & Central Asia Division, TMC, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your daily effort to get more and more customers' smile in Kuwait. I also appreciate MNSS associates' support for this 5 Continent Drive activity" said Toshiyuki Nakahara.

"Roads train people, and people make cars"; that ethos has been the backbone of the 5 Continents Drive project. It is about enabling employees to get out from behind their work desks to feel the road, to experience first-hand how vehicle performance is impacted by the wide variety of driving conditions around the world and to gather new insights. By connecting with customers in a meaningful way and listening to their feedback, Toyota can better understand their needs and usage patterns.

"We are thrilled that the 5 Continents Drive have embarked on a journey of discovery in Kuwait," commented Abdullah

Alshuwaie, "By experiencing the unique culture, climate, and harsh conditions in which Toyota's vehicles are used, the drive will enable team members to gather insights into the value of Quality, Durability, and Reliability (QDR), which Toyota's vehicles are famous for, and elevate it to the next level. Our customers have remained an abundant source of inspiration for our pursuit of creating better, cleaner and safer vehicles, and we cannot thank them enough for their continued support," added Alshuwaie.

Reinforcing motorsports' pivotal role in the development of future vehicles, the 5 Continents Drive project is being run under the TOYOTA GAZOO Racing umbrella, the global brand for Toyota's motorsport operations. Kiichiro Toyoda, the founder of Toyota, once said that motorsports are vital to the evolution of car making and the entire auto industry. This belief has been passed down over the generations and embodied most recently as TOYOTA GAZOO Racing. It represents the company's commitment to overcoming every limit in the pursuit of creating 'ever-better' cars through motorsports. The learnings and insights gathered at the very limits of performance are transferred into benefits for everyday driving.

The long-term continuous human resources development project commenced in Australia in 2014, then moved to North America in 2015, Latin America in 2016, Europe in 2017, and Africa in 2018. Since the project started, 556 members from inside and outside Japan have covered a total of 99,600 kilometers over a period of 399 days. The project sees the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 as a milestone and will endeavor to continue its activities until this major event takes place.





Worshippers attend early morning prayers at the Camlica Mosque in Istanbul, which opened on Thursday. Hundreds of people arrived to attend the first-ever prayer at the largest mosque in Asia Minor, created by two female architects, Bahar Mizrak and Hayriye Gul Totu, and can host 60,000 worshippers, following completion of its construction which started in 2013. — AFP

Saudi court approves detained tycoon Sanea's bankruptcy

DUBAI/RIYADH: A Saudi court has approved an application by detained and indebted billionaire Maan Al-Sanea and his company, Saad, to have their case resolved through the kingdom's new bankruptcy law, the company's financial adviser and two sources familiar with the matter told Reuters. The ruling in February could provide a resolution to one of the kingdom's longest-running debt sagas.

Saad, with interests from banking to healthcare, defaulted together with another conglomerate, Ahmad Hamad Al-Gosaibi and Brothers (AHAB), in 2009, leaving banks with unpaid debts of about \$22 billion

Creditors have spent the past 10 years pursuing Saad, which is based in the city of Khobar in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, for claims that some observers familiar with the case last year estimated at between \$11 billion and \$16 billion.

"This is a landmark step for all stakeholders since 2009," said Ahmed Ismail, the chief executive of Reemas Consultants, which was appointed as Saad's financial adviser in late 2017 to find a settlement with creditors. "The regional and international creditors represent more than 85 percent of total debt, some of whom advised filing under the new bankruptcy law," he said. "Given that it is more or less aligned with regional and international commercial law practices, the probability of its success is much higher."

A commercial court in Dammam last month approved an application for financial reorganization under the terms of the Saudi bankruptcy law and appointed an independent trustee to oversee the process. Such decisions are not made public. The trustee, Saleh A. Al-Naim,

sent a notice to creditors - seen by Reuters - announcing the beginning of the financial reorganization proceedings, and asked them to submit their claims within 90 days.

Saad's filing is among the first to be accepted under Saudi Arabia's bankruptcy law, which came into effect last August and is part of the Saudi government's efforts to make the Arab world's largest economy more attractive to investors. Until last year the main options for debt defaults were liquidation or cash injections. The law provides more options and regulates procedures such as settlements and liquidation.

Sanea, ranked by Forbes in 2007 as one of the world's 100 richest people, was detained in Khobar in 2017 for unpaid debts dating back to 2009 when Saad Group defaulted. In late 2017 a three-judge tribunal established to resolve Saad's debt dispute appointed a consortium called Etqaan Alliance to liquidate assets owned by the billionaire by auctions in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, Riyadh and Jeddah. Etqaan Alliance has already held three auctions for Sanea's vehicles, ware-

houses and real estate assets. Sources told Reuters last month the auctions raised around 350 million riyals (\$93.34 million).

"In addition to strengthening investors' confidence with the local market, the new law will raise the value of the debtors' assets, since they will not be obliged to sell for low prices through an enforced liquidation," Ismail said. "The realized value of the last three auctions was at 30 percent of market value in a normal buyer-and-seller market, which would have significantly jeopardized the recovery ratio for all creditors."

AHAB, the other defaulted conglomerate, applied to begin a "protective settlement procedure" under the bankruptcy law, but in January the Dammam commercial court rejected the filing saying the company had not provided all the information needed as part of the law and its regulations. AHAB said last month it filed additional information with the commercial court of appeal at Dammam's commercial court, effectively appealing against its decision. — Reuters

Philadelphia says no to totally cashless future

NEW YORK: With an increasing number of US businesses no longer accepting cash, Philadelphia - the City of Brotherly Love - is taking a stand to protect the so-called "unbanked" and will force merchants to accept greenbacks. It will be the first major US city to outright reject a trend that has seen more and more retail outlets, especially restaurants, move to only accept payments via credit or debit cards and mobile phones. Consumers and businesses who support digital payments say they are faster and more practical, but opponents say such practices exclude the "unbanked" - those without bank accounts or credit cards.

Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney recently signed into law an amendment to the city's Fair Practices Ordinance prohibiting stores and restaurants from refusing to accept cash, calling it "unlawful discrimination." The measure will go into effect on July 1. Despite the cashless trend, the United States remains far behind other countries in terms of digital payment technology. In China, paying by smart-

phone is widely used.

According to data published by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, 32 percent of all consumer transactions were made with cash in 2015, down from 40 percent in 2012. According to a study by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, 6.5 percent of American households were "unbanked" in 2017 - a figure that has steadily declined since 2011, but which still accounts for nearly eight million households.

Beyond the action taken in Philadelphia, state lawmakers in New Jersey passed a bill in February that would make it illegal to run a cashless store, but Democratic Governor Phil Murphy has not yet signed it. In New York and San Francisco, initiatives are working their way through legislative channels, but no city council votes are scheduled for now. Lawmakers in Washington and Chicago have passed similar legislation, but they have not yet been ratified.

That makes Massachusetts the only US state so far which has a law on the books forcing all merchants to accept cash. But the measure, adopted more than 40 years ago, has not been applied in practice. Fast-casual salad chain Sweetgreen, which no longer accepts cash in any of its restaurants, declined to comment when asked by AFP how it would implement the measure passed in Philadelphia. — AFP

Trump brands Democrats as...

Continued from Page 1

Some Democrats wanted to include language condemning other forms of bigotry, and expressed concerns about singling out Omar. The resolution, which made no mention of Omar, ultimately passed 407 to 23. Republicans who voted against it complained it had been watered down.

The debate made clear that Democrats' growing diversity in Congress - in ethnicity, religion, gender, age and ideology - has created new challenges for the party. Among those is policy about Israel. Omar, a Somali refugee who resettled in Minnesota, had sparked fiery debate with her repeated criticisms of Israel and how a powerful pro-Israel lobby in Washington exerts influence on US politicians. "I am told every day that I am anti-American if I am not pro-Israel. I find that to be problematic and I am not alone," Omar tweeted. "Our nation is having a difficult conversation."

But Democrats insisted Trump was out of bounds to suggest their party was anti-Jewish. "Mr President, you have redefined chutzpah," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, who like Trump is from New York. "As illustrated by history and yesterday's overwhelming vote to condemn anti-Semitism, there is strong support for Israel and the Jewish faith among Democrats," congresswoman Elaine Luria, a military veteran who is Jewish, told AFP.

The debate comes amid a rise in anti-Semitic incidents across the United States. The Anti-Defamation League reported a 58 percent increase in such incidents between 2016 and 2017. In October a gunman killed 11 worshippers at a Pittsburgh synagogue, the deadliest attack ever on Jews in America. Trump proclaims himself as Israel's closest ally, having moved the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and forged a close alliance with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

But Trump and other Republicans have also courted controversy with the Jewish community, and have been accused of trafficking in age-old tropes about money that anti-Semites have used to attack Jews for centuries. Speaking to the Republican Jewish Coalition in 2015 during his presidential campaign, Trump said "you're not going to support me because I don't want your money." "But that's okay," he went on. "You want to control your own politician."

Trump drew outrage in 2016 with a tweet showing his rival Hillary Clinton and a Star of David with the word "corrupt" superimposed over stacks of \$100 bills. And his closing 2016 campaign ad contained alarming messaging, with images of prominent financial figures George Soros and Janet Yellen, both Jewish, as Trump speaks of "those who control the levers of power in Washington". As president, Trump sparked a firestorm by saying there were "very fine people on both sides" at a 2017 white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, where demonstrators chanted "Jews will not replace us".

Of the 535 members of the US House and Senate, 35

are Jewish, including just two Republicans, according to the non-partisan American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise. Pew Research Center says that among Jewish voters in the 2018 midterms, 79 percent supported Democratic candidates.

Many Democrats said House leaders were cowed by a Republican effort to divert attention from bigotry within their own ranks and that Omar is being held to a different standard. "Unfortunately, I think the Democratic leadership here has made what I think is a pretty serious mistake in caving to this pressure," said Democratic strategist Peter Daou, who has advised Hillary Clinton and John Kerry.

The disagreement began after Omar, in an appearance at a Washington book store, said she feared that statements she and fellow Representative Rashida Tlaib made about foreign policy and the pro-Israel lobbying group the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) would be viewed as anti-Semitic because they are Muslim. "I want to talk about the political influence in this country that says it's OK for people to push for allegiance to a foreign country. I want to ask why is it OK for me to talk about the influence of the NRA (National Rifle Association), of fossil fuel industries or Big Pharma, and not talk about a powerful lobbying group that is influencing policies?" Omar said.

Omar, in a joint statement issued after Thursday's vote with Tlaib and Representative Andre Carson, a Democrat from Indiana, said "we are tremendously proud to be part of a body that has put forth a condemnation of all forms of bigotry". Representative Liz Cheney, the No. 3 House Republican, told reporters on Wednesday that Omar "embodies a vile, hate-filled, anti-Semitic, anti-Israel bigotry." Trump on Twitter on Wednesday called the Democratic response "shameful".

Cheney, complaining that the House should have "rebuked" Omar by name and removed her from the Foreign Affairs Committee, voted against the resolution. Other Republicans who voted no, such as Chris Collins of New York, said the bill was not "strong enough in support of Israel, the only true democracy in the Middle East." Republican Representative Steve King, who was condemned by the House in January for questioning why white supremacy is considered offensive, voted present.

Young, progressive House newcomers like Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and several Democratic presidential candidates, however, came to Omar's defense. Senator Bernie Sanders said in a statement that "we must not ... equate anti-Semitism with legitimate criticism of the right-wing, Netanyahu government." Senator Elizabeth Warren said "branding criticism of Israel as automatically anti-Semitic has a chilling effect on our public discourse." Senator Kamala Harris said she was concerned about Omar's safety.

Daou, the Democratic strategist, said a political double standard was at play, pointing to a recent tweet from Republican Representative Jim Jordan that used a dollar sign for a letter in the name of Democratic donor Tom Steyer, who is Jewish. "Why is it that a white, male Republican can largely get away with the same thing and this massive outcry happened over a Muslim, progressive woman of color? That's something we have to grapple with," Daou said. — Agencies

Govt slammed after UK teen's...

Continued from Page 1

Opposition Labour MP Diane Abbott said the death of the baby was "a stain on the conscience of this government". She accused Home Secretary Sajid Javid of revoking Begum's citizenship "to appease the rightwing press", saying he had "failed this British child, and he has a lot to answer for". However, the chairman of Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservative party, Brandon Lewis, told BBC radio: "There is no question that the duty of a home secretary in this country is to keep British people safe."

Begum, who was married to a Dutch IS fighter who is now thought to be held in Syria, initially showed little remorse about IS attacks, sparking public outrage in Britain. But Javid's decision to revoke her citizenship drew mixed reactions. British law states that the government cannot remove a person's citizenship if that would make them stateless, unless there are "reasonable grounds" to believe they can become a citizen of another country.

It was reported that Begum could be eligible for Bangladeshi citizenship through her parents, but Dhaka said there was "no question" of her going there. Javid had hinted that her baby could be treated differently, telling MPs previously: "Children should not suffer, so if a parent does lose their British citizenship it does not affect the rights of their child." But he said it would be "incredibly difficult" to bring the child back from Syria,



Shamima Begum

where Britain has no consular presence.

Abbott said: "To leave a vulnerable young woman and an innocent child in a refugee camp, where we know infant mortality to be high, is morally reprehensible." Aid group Save the Children said the baby's death was "incredibly sad" and urged Britain and other countries to "take responsibility" for their citizens in Syria. "It is possible the death of this baby boy and others could have been avoided," said the group's Syria response director, Sonia Khush. "All children associated with (IS) are victims of the conflict and must be treated as such."

A mass exodus from the militants' last redoubt in eastern Syria has sparked a humanitarian emergency, as the SDF leads an offensive to smash the last remnants of the IS territory. The International Rescue Committee on Friday said that 12,000 women and children had arrived at the Kurdish-run Al-Hol camp since Wednesday. Since December, at least 100 people have died en route to the camp or shortly after arriving, mostly children under five, the IRC said. — AFP

Sports

Serena out-guns Azarenka to reach Indian Wells third round

Second-seeded Halep eases into Indian Wells next round

INDIAN WELLS: Serena Williams out-gunned Victoria Azarenka 7-5, 6-3 in an electrifying clash of former world number ones on Friday to reach the third round at Indian Wells. The two raised the temperature on a cold, windy night in the California desert, trading shots from every corner of the court before Williams wrapped things up after two hours and 17 minutes.

She finished it off in style, with a pair of unreturnable serves. "It was really good for me to kind of fight through that, because literally I had to fight for every point," Williams said. The display worthy of a final came in the second round thanks to Azarenka's current ranking of 48th in the world—and the bad luck of the draw.

The first set alone lasted one hour and 13 minutes. Williams, unable to serve it out at 5-3, was under pressure again at 5-5 but Azarenka was unable to convert five break points. Williams produced three service winners to take a 6-5 lead and broke Azarenka to pocket the set.

"She deserved to win," Azarenka said. "She played better on those important moments. I felt that every game was ad, deuce, ad, deuce. It was all about who was going to take that chance, and she took them a little better today."

While Williams took her record over Azarenka to 18-4, the Belarusian said she would always relish any chance to take on her longtime rival. "You know, as much as she's the toughest opponent I have ever played in my life, she's my favorite person to play against," Azarenka said. "Those type of challenges always motivate me."

Since their last meeting—Azarenka's victory in the 2016 Indian Wells final—both women have become

mothers, adding another dimension to their on-court rivalry and off-court friendship. "We're both moms, and we know how hard it is and how hard it's been for us to come back, starting literally from scratch and fighting our way back," Williams said.

They exchanged a warm hug at the net to cap what Azarenka called an "amazing" match. "I think it's not a surprise that we have mutual respect and love off the court," Azarenka said. "On the court it's a fight. It's a war, it's a lot of intensity."

"I think it was quite an amazing match. And having such a match on International Women's Day, I felt that was really incredible." Things won't get any easier for Williams in her pursuit of her first title since the birth of daughter Alexis Olympia in September of 2017.

In the third round she faces another former world number one, Spain's Garbine Muguruza, a two-time Grand Slam champion who breezed into the third round with a 6-1, 6-3 victory over American Lauren Davis.

Elsewhere on Friday, world number two Simona Halep eased into the third round with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over Czech veteran Barbora Strycova. Halep, who lifted the Indian Wells trophy in 2015, fired 18 winners and converted six of 11 break point chances to set up a third-round meeting with Ukrainian qualifier Kateryna Kozlova, a 6-4, 2-6, 6-0 winner over 31st-seeded Aliaksandra Sasnovich of Belarus.

But there was more misery for world number four Sloane Stephens, who was unceremoniously bundled out by Swiss qualifier Stefanie Voegele 6-3, 6-0.

Voegele, ranked 109th in the world, won the last eight games to sweep into the third round in just 68 minutes. It's the second tournament in a row that 2017



INDIAN WELLS: Serena Williams of the United States plays a forehand against Victoria Azarenka of Belarus during their women's singles second round match on day five of the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden on Friday in Indian Wells, California. — AFP

US Open winner Stephens has been toppled by a qualifier, coming on the heels of a straight-sets defeat to 172nd-ranked Brazilian Beatriz Haddad Maia in Acapulco. Voegele's victory is perhaps less of a shocker. She has now won the last four of five career meet-

ings with Stephens.

Stephens said the windy weather was a factor, but not the main problem. "I didn't play well," Stephens said. "It was unfortunate that I lost the second set 6-0. It happens." — AFP

Irish rugby icon Best says end is nigh for Test career

DUBLIN: Legendary Irish hooker Rory Best says he is going to feel "a little bit sad" when the final whistle goes on what is likely to be his final home Six Nations match against France today.

The Ireland captain—who turns 37 in August—all but confirmed this year will be his last hurrah in the green jersey that come Sunday he will have donned 116 times.

Best has enjoyed memorable times as skipper with two historic victories over world champions New Zealand—the first ever by an Irish side over the All Blacks in 2016 in Chicago and then a first home win in 2018 — plus a Six Nations Grand Slam last year.

A wistful Best—who made his Test debut back in 2005 — said he is enjoying his rugby so much at the moment because his decision over his international future is all but resolved.

"I think it's fairly certain that the World Cup will be the end for me," Best said at his eve of match press

conference. "I feel really good and I don't feel that I'm playing any worse! I'm really enjoying rugby and part of that might be because I haven't 100 per cent made the decision but I'd be fairly sure it will be."

"I think part of the reason that I'm enjoying rugby so much and playing well I hope playing well is because of that weight lifted off."

Best, who has been on two British & Irish Lions tours, said the Six Nations would always hold a special place for him when he looks back on his career.

"Now that we're upon this, the captain's run (eve of match training session at Lansdowne Road), being out there with the sun shining for the first time this week, it just reminded me how special this championship has been, for me personally," said Best. "To pull on that jersey in the Six Nations, it's been incredibly special for me. It's very hard to believe that in just over 24 hours, you'll potentially not get that opportunity again to play in a Six Nations here. It's a little bit sad."

"Whenever the game finishes and I get a little bit of time to reflect on it, it will be special." Best, who combines his rugby with working on the family farm in Northern Ireland, said he would not go down the route of another Irish legend Brian O'Driscoll when he played his last home Test in 2014.

The centre had a photo taken with his daughter while a banner went round the ground with his image on it. "I don't think there will be too many kids in the



Rory Best

crowd or too many kids who need to see that," said Best. "It would be like a scene out of Shrek, maybe leave that one off!"

Best, who all being well is set to play in his fourth World Cup, will not be the only big personality bowing out after the World Cup as head coach Joe Schmidt is to leave to. "Joe said he didn't want me going without him, so he did!" joked Best. — AFP

England thrash Italy 55-0 in Women's Six Nations Grand Slam

EXETER: England moved one step closer to sealing the Women's Six Nations Grand Slam with a commanding 55-0 victory over second-placed Italy in Exeter yesterday. The win gave a relentless England side a bonus point in front of a record 10,545 strong crowd at Sandy Park, more than double the previous record for a women's international outside the World Cup. "As the game's growing we're getting more exposure and it's great to see. We're still getting to know each other and having this crowd supporting us, we can't ask for more," flanker Sarah Beckett told Sky Sports.

Italy frustrated England until wing Jess Breach gave the hosts the lead with a try in the 13th minute before hooker Lark Davies and Sarah Hunter also scored to give Simon Middleton's side a 21-0 lead at halftime.

England refused to take their foot off the gas and Sarah Bern got England their bonus point in the 42nd minute with a run to power through the Italians before Marlie Packer added a fifth. Vickii Comborough scored the sixth before Breach scored her second try just after the hour mark, her 18th try in six appearances.

Abbie Scott and Vicky Fleetwood also joined in on the action to give England nine tries in the game. Katy Daley-McLean had four conversions, two in either half. It was the third time England had scored more than 50 points at the Six Nations this year after beating Ireland 51-7 in the opening round in Dublin and a 51-12 victory over Wales in Cardiff last month. England now have 20 points from four games and play their final match against Scotland, who are yet to win a game, at Twickenham next Saturday. On Friday, Wales picked up their first victory of the tournament with a dramatic last-minute conversion from teenage flanker Lleucu George to beat Scotland 17-15. — Reuters

Shiffrin sets 15 win World Cup record

SPINDLERUV MLYN: American sensation Mikaela Shiffrin won the slalom in Spindleruv Mlyn yesterday to set a new record for most World Cup victories in a single season of 15. The American, already assured of a third straight overall World Cup title, finished 0.85sec ahead of the Swiss Wendy Holdener.

She had been tied with Swiss legend Vreni Schneider who won 14 races in 1988-89, when the calendar was shorter. With the World Cup finals in Andorra still to come, Shiffrin can add to her total. It was a 58th career victory for the American, who does not turn 24 until Wednesday, and her 39th in the slalom. It took her to 1,954 points a for the season, well within reach of the talismanic 2,000 which has only been achieved twice, the first time, exactly, by legendary Austrian Hermann Maier, the second by Slovene Tina Maze who reached 2,414 points in 2013.

Shiffrin was already assured of a sixth straight globe in the slalom obliterated the field on Saturday with a combined time of 1min 38.98sec. Swiss Wendy Holdener was second 0.85sec behind, Petra Vlahova, who on Friday prevented Shiffrin clinching the giant slalom title, finished a distant third, 2.03sec back.

For Holdener, a 25-year-old who finds herself competing against Shiffrin and Vlahova, this was a 21st time she has stood on the podium in the slalom podium but she has yet to reach the top step. — AFP

IAAF weighs Russian reinstatement again

PARIS: The International Athletics Federation (IAAF) will look for the 10th time at the reinstatement of Russia, at meetings in Doha tomorrow and Tuesday. Russia has been suspended since November 2015 after the eruption of a vast state-sponsored doping scandal. The IAAF, which convenes three times a year, has discussed the issue at every meeting since then. While the situation has changed in recent months, the IAAF's requirements for the return of Russian colours to the track do not seem to have been satisfied.

At their meeting in Monaco in December, the IAAF set two conditions. The first, the recovery of data from the Moscow anti-doping lab seems, to have been met and the World Anti-Doping Agency is working its way through the files they have recovered.

The second is that Russia pays what the IAAF says are substantial costs created by the scandal. "For the moment all the conditions have not been met," Bernard Amsalem, French athletics federation president and one of the 27 members of the IAAF Council told AFP. "We must not go faster than the music."

The International Olympic Committee lifted their suspension of the Russian Olympic Committee a year ago. WADA reinstated Russia in September. Russia's Paralympic ban was lifted in early February.

Although the International Biathlon Federation still excludes Russia, the IAAF is the last of the high-profile international sports bodies to ban athletes from competing under the Russian flag, although many Russians are allowed to compete under a neutral banner.

Tremors from the scandal continue. A dozen more Russian athletes were suspended on February 1 based on the revelations of the McLaren report on the doping. The 12 included high jumper Ivan Ukhov who was stripped of his 2012 Olympic gold.

The IAAF Council will also discuss a proposal by its Race Walking Committee to reduce distances at major events, replacing the 20km and 50km races with 10km and 30km events for both sexes. — AFP

CBK sponsors Higher Education Institutes soccer league tourney



KUWAIT: Commercial Bank sponsored the Higher Education Institutes soccer league for school year 2018/2019, which was organized by Students Affairs Deanship at the Public Authority for Applied Education

and Training. Teams from universities in Kuwait participated in addition to sports teams from Sabah Al-Salem Military College, Saad Al-Abdallah Security Sciences Academy and KFSD.

China's Liu sets 50km walk world record

BEIJING: China's Liu Hong yesterday set a new world record for the women's 50km race walk, becoming the first woman to complete the event in under four hours.

The Olympic gold medalist completed the Chinese Race Walk Grand Prix in the eastern city of Huangshan in just 3hr 59min 15 sec, the International Association of Athletics Federations said.

She shaved more than five minutes off the previous record set by compatriot Liang Rui. It is the first 50km outing for the 31-year-old, who has just returned from two years of maternity leave in 2019, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

A two-time World Championships winner, she also holds the women's 20km world record of 1hr 24min 38sec set in Spain's La Coruna in 2015. Liu pipped Mexico's Maria Gonzalez by just two seconds to win the Olympic women's 20km race walk in a nail-biting finish in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

Chinese athletes dominated yesterday's Huangshan race, with Li Maocuo shaving 11 minutes off her personal best to finish second at 4hr 3min 51sec and Ma Faying coming in third at 4hr 7min 30sec. — AFP

Sports

England triumph as West Indies crash to second lowest T20 total

Chris Jordan wrecked Windies top-order batting

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the second day/night T20 International of a three-match series between the West Indies and England at Warner Park in St Kitts yesterday.

England	
A. Hales c Brathwaite b Allen	8
J. Bairstow c Bishoo b Cottrell	12
J. Root run out	55
E. Morgan c Hope b Brathwaite	1
J. Denly b Allen	2
S. Billings c Hope b McCoy	87
D. Willey not out	13
Extras (lb2, w2)	4
Total (20 overs, 6 wickets)	182
Did not bat: T. Curran, C. Jordan, L. Plunkett, A. Rashid	
Fall of wickets: 1-15 (Bairstow), 2-27 (Hales), 3-29 (Morgan), 4-32 (Denly), 5-114 (Root), 6-182 (Billings)	
Bowling: S. Cottrell 3-0-28-1, J. Holder 4-0-29-0, F. Allen 4-0-29-2, C. Brathwaite 4-0-33-1 (tw), D. Bishoo 2-0-17-0, O. McCoy 3-0-44-1.	

West Indies	
C. Gayle c Root b Willey	5
S. Hope c Morgan b Willey	7
S. Hetmyer c Willey b Plunkett	10
D. Bravo c Bairstow b Jordan	0
J. Holder lbw b Jordan	0
N. Pooran c Bairstow b Jordan	1
E. Allen c Root b Jordan	1
C. Brathwaite c Willey b Rashid	10
D. Bishoo c Billings b Plunkett	8
S. Cottrell b Rashid	2
O. McCoy not out	1
Total (11.5 overs, all out)	45
Fall of wickets: 1-12 (Gayle), 2-13 (Hope), 3-14 (Bravo), 4-14 (Holder), 5-20 (Pooran), 6-22 (Allen), 7-33 (Brathwaite), 8-35 (Hetmyer), 9-39 (Cottrell), 10-45 (Bishoo)	
Bowling: D. Willey 3-0-18-2, T. Curran 1-0-1-0, C. Jordan 2-0-6-4, A. Rashid 3-0-12-2, L. Plunkett 2-5-0-8-2.	

Result: England won by 137 runs

BASSETTERRE: West Indies were dismissed for the second lowest ever T20 international total of just 45 as England swept to a 137-win on Friday. Chasing 183 to win, the world champion West Indies just avoided the lowest ever total of 39 made by non-Test Netherlands against Sri Lanka in 2014.

Chris Jordan wrecked the West Indies top-order batting as England completed a crushing, series-clinching victory at Warner Park. After Sam Billings engineered an excellent recovery with 87 to lift the tourists to 182 for six, Jordan was almost unplayable in taking four wickets for six runs off three overs with the home side crashing in just 11.5 overs.

For England this was their largest margin of victory, in terms of runs, in T20s and gives them the series 2-0 with the final match of the tour coming up today at the same venue. David Willey, who partnered the rampant Billings in adding 68 runs for the sixth wicket after England were put in, started the rout of the Caribbean team with the critical wicket of Chris Gayle before adding opening partner Shai Hope two balls later.

Jordan then accelerated the slide in disposing of Darren Bravo and captain Jason Holder off successive deliveries before adding the scalps of Nicholas Pooran and Fabien Allen.

He was however deprived of the chance of a five-wicket haul as his skipper, Eoin Morgan, allowed Adil Rashid and Liam Plunkett to finish off the match, the leg-spinner and fast-medium bowler taking two wickets each.

Earlier Billings made the most of being dropped on 14 by debutant pacer Obed McCoy on the long-on boundary in finishing with a T20I career-best of 87 off 47 balls with three sixes and ten fours to take the man of the match award.

"It was a nice situation where I could give myself some time, then cash in at the end," he said in describing the innings and the situation he and Joe Root found themselves in with the early loss of wickets. "There's been lots to play for as a team and as



BASSETTERRE: Sam Billings of England hits 4 during the 2nd T20I between West Indies and England at Warner Park, Basseterre, Saint Kitts and Nevis, on Friday. — AFP

individuals going into a World Cup year." Billings put on 82 for the fifth wicket with Root (55) after the visitors had slipped to 32 for four in the sixth over following the decision by Holder to put them in.

"We've got to get ourselves attuned to the T20 game," said Holder in acknowledging that the squad selected for these matches was retained from the ODI series which finished 2-2 a week earlier.

"There's still pride to play for. The purpose of

keeping the squad together was to build towards the World Cup." Left-arm spinner Allen snared the wickets of Alex Hales and Joe Denly to finish with the best figures of two for 29. He also effected the run out of Root just as the partnership with Billings was threatening to accelerate.

Billings fell to the last ball of the innings, caught behind off McCoy, but not before he had taken 22 runs off the first five deliveries of the over. — AFP

Pant to replace Dhoni as WCup openings narrow

NEW DELHI: Rishabh Pant will take over as wicketkeeper from MS Dhoni for the final two matches of India's one-day series against Australia with the former captain being rested ahead of the World Cup later this year. The decision to rest Dhoni may signal the end of his international career in his home country, with the 37-year-old still to make an announcement on his future after the May 30-July 14 World Cup in England and Wales.

It also allows Pant the opportunity to make a late push for inclusion at the tournament, with captain Virat Kohli believing the final two games in Mohali and New Delhi the perfect opportunities for players to prove themselves.

"We will have a few changes in the next couple of games," Kohli said after Australia won the third game in Dhoni's hometown of Ranchi by 32 runs to leave India

with a 2-1 advantage in the series.

"We will have to figure out what those changes are. "But the idea is still to go out there and ask the guys to put in match-winning performances and take a lot of pride in winning for the country. That mindset will not change. "Yes, we'll have a few new faces and they'll be given chances, and they have to make the most of the chances because there's a World Cup coming in.

"Everyone wants to be on that flight as well." Pant has not featured in the series so far and only played three ODIs in his nascent career but is rated highly by the selectors who awarded the 21-year-old a lucrative central contract earlier this week.

The decision to rest Dhoni was not a surprise given he has been battling leg injuries and still has to play the Indian Premier League before the World Cup, while the selectors have managed the workload of key players over the last few months.

Kohli missed the final three one-day matches against New Zealand in late January, while pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah was rested after the test series in Australia ended in early January.

Bumrah has played the current series against Australia and looks set to get a fresh new-ball partner in Mohali on Sunday with Bhuvneshwar Kumar likely to come in for Mohammed Shami, who was hit in the leg



Rishabh Pant

on Friday by a shot from Aaron Finch. "Shami got hurt in his leg so we will need to check whether he can be fit for day after (the Mohali game)," said India assistant coach Sanjay Bangar. "If he does not get fit then Bhuvneshwar Kumar could come in." — Reuters

Panthers' Barkov hands out 5 assists

SUNRISE: Aleksander Barkov set a franchise record with five assists, and MacKenzie Weegar and Mike Matheson scored twice each to lead the Florida Panthers to a 6-2 win over the Minnesota Wild on Friday in Sunrise, Fla. Panthers rookie goalie Sam Montembeault, making just his second NHL start, stopped 26 shots for his first win. Jonathan Huberdeau and Mike Hoffman also scored for the Panthers. Florida's top line—Barkov, Huberdeau and Evgenii Dadonov—combined for 12 points. J.T. Brown and Marcus Foligno scored for Minnesota. Wild goalie Devan Dubnyk, who on Thursday shut out the best team in hockey, the Tampa Bay Lightning, lasted just one period, making four saves while allowing three goals. Alex Stalock entered and allowed three goals on 22 shots.

JETS 8, HURRICANES 1

Winnipeg scored three goals in the first 10 minutes on the way to a blowout win at Raleigh, NC. Andrew Copp scored twice, and Kevin Hayes, Blake Wheeler, Ben Chiarot, Nikolaj Elhers, Kyle Connor and Adam Lowry also had goals for the Jets, who delivered Carolina its most lopsided setback of the season. The Jets have won three of their past four games. The Hurricanes, who got a goal from Greg McKegg, had a season-best six-game points streak snapped. Coupled with an overtime loss at Boston on Tuesday, they have dropped consecutive games for the first time in nearly two months.

CAPITALS 3, DEVILS 1

Andre Burakovsky, Nicklas Backstrom and Lars Eller each scored, and Braden Holtby finished with 25 saves as Washington extended its winning streak to six games with a victory over visiting New Jersey. Burakovsky scored early in the first period, and Backstrom and Eller added their tallies in the third. Holtby improved to 6-1-0 in his past seven games. New Jersey, which dropped its fifth consecutive game, got a 33-save performance from Mackenzie Blackwood.

DUCKS 8, CANADIENS 2

Adam Henrique scored twice, and rookie Troy Terry produced his second consecutive three-point game as host Anaheim handed Montreal a second loss in as many nights. Goalie John Gibson stopped 35 shots for the Ducks, who got single goals from Terry, Corey Perry, Rickard Rakell, Devin Shore, Daniel Sprong and Max Jones (the first of his career). The eight goals were a season high for Anaheim, which went into the night the lowest-scoring team in the league. Montreal netminder Carey Price was looking to supplant the legendary Jacques Plante for most wins among goaltenders in franchise history, but he remains at 314 victories after saving 21 of 29 shots. Paul Byron and Shea Weber (the 200th of his career) found the net for the Canadiens. — Reuters

Australia's Smith, Warner will return stronger from bans

PERTH: Australian batsmen Steve Smith and David Warner will come back stronger than ever from their 12-month bans and the latter will be the best player at the World Cup this year, former leg spinner Shane Warne has said.

Smith and Warner were banned by Cricket Australia for 12 months in March last year for their roles in the ball-tampering scandal in a test match against South Africa in Cape Town.

Their bans end on March 28 and both players will be reintegrated into the national team after their participation in the Indian Premier League in March and April. "I think what you are going to see is a pretty quiet David Warner and Steve Smith. They are just going to try and let their bat do the talking and toe the line," Warne told The Telegraph in an interview <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/cricket/2019/03/09/david-warner-will-best-batsman-2019-world-cup-following-ban>.

"I think they will come back better than they were. They're going to come out and destroy attacks and I back David Warner to be the player of the World Cup. "Warner overstepped the line a lot in his early career. He then changed into a more placid player but was then told by Cricket Australia to be the enforcer and was doing what he was told."

Warne expects the duo to return with renewed vigour, like he did after his 12-month ban for failing a drugs test in 2003. Warne was suspended for taking a banned diuretic and missed Australia's World Cup winning campaign as a result. "All I can go on is experience having a year off myself. The next four years were the best I ever had," Warne, who took 708 wickets for Australia in 145 test matches, added.

"I was hungry for the game. My body and mind were fresh and it is amazing how excited you are to play again. "You get excited just going to the nets again because you have taken it for granted in the past." — Reuters



WELLINGTON: Bangladesh's players play with a ball as they wait for a decision on play due to the weather on day two of the second Test cricket match between New Zealand and Bangladesh at the Basin Reserve in Wellington yesterday. — AFP

NZ-Bangladesh Test washed out

WELLINGTON: Rain delayed the start of the second Test between New Zealand and Bangladesh in Wellington for the second consecutive day yesterday. The downpour which had persisted for a day and a half stopped long enough on day two for the covers to be lifted and for the players to start warming up.

But as the umpires conducted a pitch inspection,

about an hour before an expected start, the drizzle returned, reducing the match to three days at best. A result in three days is not unheard of in New Zealand.

In 2001, also at the Basin Reserve in Wellington, New Zealand only needed 17 overs on the third day complete a victory over Bangladesh by an innings and 74 runs. However, if the rain does not clear, matches have been abandoned in New Zealand twice before without a ball being bowled—against Pakistan in 1989 and India in 1998, both in the southern city of Dunedin.

New Zealand lead the series after taking the first Test in Hamilton by an innings and 52 runs. The third and final Test starts in Christchurch next Saturday. — AFP

Sports

Rockets extend win streak to seven with win over 76ers

Williams scores season-best 30 as Hornets edge Wizards

HOUSTON: James Harden scored 31 points, Eric Gordon chipped in 17 with five 3-pointers, and the Houston Rockets extended their winning streak to a season-best seven games with their 107-91 victory over the visiting Philadelphia 76ers on Friday. Harden added 10 rebounds, seven assists and two steals for the Rockets, who seized control with a 14-2 spurt midway through the first quarter. Philadelphia played its eighth consecutive game without All-Star center Joel Embiid (left knee), falling to 4-4 in that stretch. A combination of lethargic defense and errant shooting did the 76ers in, particularly early. While Houston rolled to a 37-point opening period on 56.5 percent shooting, Philadelphia missed all four of its 3-point attempts in the first quarter while shooting 10 of 24 (41.7 percent) overall.

WARRIORS 122, NUGGETS 105

Klay Thompson poured in 27 of his game-high 39 points in the first half Friday night, allowing Golden State to run away from Denver en route to a blowout win in Oakland, Calif. The win allowed the Warriors to increase their lead over the Nuggets atop the Western Conference playoff race to two games. Thompson sank 9 of 11 3-point attempts for Golden State, which also got 26 points from Kevin Durant. Malik Beasley and Monte Morris each scored 17 points to lead Denver.

CLIPPERS 118, THUNDER 110

Lou Williams scored 40 points off the bench, and Los Angeles defeated visiting Oklahoma City to move into sole possession of seventh place in the Western Conference. Danilo Gallinari scored a season-high 34 points and Ivica Zubac added 14 points and seven rebounds for the Clippers, who have won seven of nine. Oklahoma City's Russell Westbrook had 32 points, eight rebounds and seven assists before fouling out with 54 seconds left and the Thunder trailing by three points. Paul George scored 15 points on 5-for-16 shooting before fouling out with 3:49 left and the Thunder down a point.

RAPTORS 127, PELICANS 104

Kawhi Leonard scored 31 points and visiting Toronto pulled away from short-handed New Orleans in the sec-

ond half of a blowout victory. Leonard scored 24 first-half points and finished 14 of 20 from the floor. Kyle Lowry added a triple-double with 13 points, 12 assists and 11 rebounds while Pascal Siakam scored 19 points. The Pelicans played without three starters. Jrue Holiday (abdominal strain) and E'Twaun Moore (quad contusion) were ruled out for at least a week to 10 days, and Anthony Davis was a last-minute scratch because of back spasms. Frank Johnson led New Orleans with 20 points.

HORNETS 112, WIZARDS 111

Marvin Williams erupted for a season-high 30 points and career-high seven 3-pointers as Charlotte held on in the closing seconds for a victory over visiting Washington. The Hornets won when Washington's Bradley Beal missed a drive in heavy traffic with three seconds remaining. Jeremy Lamb had given the Hornets a 112-111 lead on a 3-pointer with 51.5 seconds remaining. The Hornets had lost nine of their previous 12. Bobby Portis had 23 points and nine rebounds to lead the Wizards. Beal scored 15 points but hit just 4 of 21 field-goal attempts.

PISTONS 112, BULLS 104

Blake Griffin scored 27 points, including 16 in the fourth quarter, and visiting Detroit rallied from a 21-point deficit to down Chicago. Andre Drummond recorded his 11th 20-20 game this season with 20 points and 24 rebounds as the Pistons won for the 11th time in 13 games. Reggie Jackson supplied 21 points. Langston Galloway added 15 and Luke Kennard chipped in 14. Detroit outscored Chicago 43-24 in the decisive fourth quarter. Zach LaVine led the Bulls with 24 points. Otto Porter Jr. supplied 23 points and eight assists while Lauri Markkanen added 18 points. Chicago had three starters in double figures by halftime in racing to a 66-49 halftime lead before being outscored 63-38 in the second half.

HEAT 126, CAVALIERS 110

Dwyane Wade sparked a third-quarter run, and Miami scored 10 straight in the fourth quarter to pull away for a win over visiting Cleveland. The Heat remain in eighth place in the Eastern Conference, just ahead of Orlando and Charlotte, both winners on Friday night. The victory also



HOUSTON: Gerald Green #14 of the Houston Rockets shoots the ball against the Philadelphia 76ers on March 8, 2019 at the Toyota Center in Houston, Texas. — AFP

was Miami's 16th straight against the Cavaliers at AmericanAirlines Arena. Eight Heat players scored in double figures. Josh Richardson led the way with 20 points. Justise Winslow finished with 16 points, nine rebounds and nine assists. Collin Sexton paced Cleveland with 27 points, and Jordan Clarkson added 21.

MAGIC 111, MAVERICKS 106

Terrence Ross scored 22 points in his return from a one-game absence caused by a sore left Achilles as host

Orlando beat Dallas. Orlando's Nikola Vucevic recorded his team-high 48th double-double of the season after collecting 20 points and 13 rebounds. Aaron Gordon chipped in with 18 points, and Ross went 6-for-11 from 3-point range for the Magic, who have won nine of their last 13 games. Dallas' Dirk Nowitzki, who finished with 15 points, moved past John Stockton for third place all-time in games played (1,505) in NBA history. The 40-year-old trails only Robert Parish (1,611) and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (1,560). — Reuters

Sala deal highlights problems of regulating player representatives

PARIS: The chaos that has followed the tragic death of Emiliano Sala has shone an unflattering light on the murky dealings of player agents and reinforced calls to properly licence them.

Even though France has stricter rules governing agents than other leading Western European football nations, at least six intermediaries have been named in connection to Sala's 17-million euro transfer from Nantes to Cardiff City in January.

Illustrating the problem of controlling who clubs and players choose to involve in negotiations, two of those thought to have had fingers in the Sala deal did not, in theory, have any authorisation to practise as agents.

FIFA is thinking about re-establishing licences, a spokesperson told AFP, having done away with them in 2015. World football's governing body has also said it is considering a "clearing house" to handle, among other things, the money involved in transfers, and a ceiling on the percentage an agent can take, a suggestion that has provoked heated opposition.

Since 2015, federations in major European nations have tended to adopt a minimalist policy, with "intermediaries" having to declare transactions in a national register and meet certain professional standards. Spain also conducts an interview and a background check and asks agents to sign a code of conduct.

However, the French Football Federation (FFF) has maintained a licence system, with a reportedly difficult entrance exam. French agents complain that the system means they are like registered taxi drivers competing with Uber.

Guardiola retains faith in Man City hierarchy over FFP claims

MANCHESTER: Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola trusts his club will be exonerated after UEFA opened an investigation into potential breaches of Financial Fair Play (FFP) regulations. German magazine Der Spiegel, using material purportedly obtained from the whistle-blowing outlet Football Leaks, alleged in November that Abu Dhabi backed City had set up sponsorship deals to circumvent regulations limiting how much money owners can put into a club.

UEFA announced on Thursday those claims were being investigated and should they be found guilty, the English champions could be hit with a ban from the Champions League. City responded immediately by saying they supported the investigation and that they had nothing to hide.

"Manchester City welcomes the opening of a formal UEFA investigation as an opportunity to bring to an end the speculation resulting from the illegal hacking and out of context publication of City emails," the club said in a statement.



NANTES: (FILES) In this file photo taken on February 8, 2019 people look at yellow flowers displayed in front of the portrait of Argentinian forward Emiliano Sala in Nantes. The chaos that has followed the tragic death of Sala on January 21, 2019 has shone an unflattering light on the murky dealings of player agents and reinforced calls to properly licence them. — AFP

"All's fair in the eyes of clubs trying to land a player and for the players who surround themselves with these pseudo-advisers," Stephane Canard, of the Union of French Sports Agents, told AFP.

"As nobody says anything, the authorities do very little. For us, there are agents on one side, and on the other ushers and imposters."

In the Sala case, the disappearance of the player led to an unsavoury argument over who was to blame and who was entitled to what from his transfer.

Attention quickly turned to Willie McKay, a Scot who lost his English Football Association licence in

2015 after the bankruptcy of his company. But he works with his son Mark, who is on the FA's list of recognised intermediaries.

In football dealings, it is not unusual to keep business in the family. It is hard to argue that a player should not lean on a parent or a sibling in negotiations.

At the club Sala was joining, Cardiff, manager Neil Warnock has used the services of Unique Sports Management, a company that employs his son James Warnock, to handle player transfers. The FA has said it is now monitoring the situation which has brought complaints of a conflict of interest. — AFP

"The accusation of financial irregularities are entirely false. The club's published accounts are full and complete and a matter of legal and regulatory record." One of Guardiola's biggest challenges when he took charge of City in 2016 was to lead the club to win the Champions League for the first time.

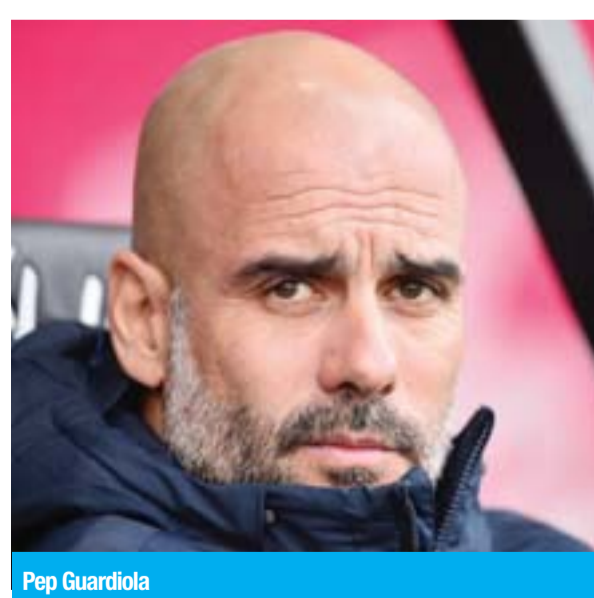
The former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss has seen his side eliminated in the last 16 and quarter-finals in the past two seasons, but they are favourites to win the competition this year and hold a 3-2 lead over Schalke from the first leg of their last 16 tie in Germany.

"I think the club made a statement yesterday. I can't add more than that," said Guardiola on Friday. "The club is open and hopefully it can finish as soon as possible. I trust what the club has done because I know them. 'Hopefully it can be solved as soon as possible.'"

Meanwhile, Guardiola insist his City legacy will not be impacted by any disciplinary action UEFA may take. Guardiola has won the Premier League title in record-breaking fashion and also lifted two League Cups with City. "No, absolutely not," said Guardiola when asked if his achievements with the club may be diminished by the affair. "I think the club made their statement yesterday, I can't add more than that. 'The club is open so hopefully it can finish as soon as possible and UEFA can decide what it sees.'"

"I said last season, I trust a lot what the club has done because I know them but hopefully they can solve it as soon as possible and stop for this environment." Asked whether he was happy with the club's position, Guardiola replied: "Yes, definitely."

On more routine football matters, Guardiola remains



Pep Guardiola

a supporter of VAR despite the latest high-profile decision that saw Manchester United awarded a dubious penalty in the last minute of their dramatic Champions League victory at Paris Saint Germain in midweek.

"We experienced it in our first game against Schalke. I'm a fan of this technology to help the referees," he said. "I think UEFA will analyse the situation, going bad going good. If VAR says penalty, we try to fix it the rules will be clear. It helps the ref make less mistakes." —AFP

Live		Matches on TV	
		(Local Timings)	
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE			
Liverpool v Burnley FC	beIN SPORTS HD 2	15:00	
Chelsea FC v Wolverhampton Wanderers FC	beIN SPORTS HD 2	17:05	
Arsenal FC v Manchester United	beIN SPORTS HD 2	19:30	
SPANISH LEAGUE			
Celta de Vigo v Real Betis	beIN SPORTS HD 6	14:00	
Girona v Valencia C.F	beIN SPORTS HD 3	18:15	
Sevilla FC v Real Sociedad	beIN SPORTS HD 3	20:30	
Levante v Villarreal CF	beIN SPORTS HD 13 EN	20:30	
Real Valladolid v Real Madrid CF	beIN SPORTS HD 3	22:45	
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE			
Bologna FC v Cagliari Calcio	beIN SPORTS HD 4	14:30	
Internazionale Milano v spal	beIN SPORTS HD 4	17:00	
UC Sampdoria v Atalanta	beIN SPORTS HD 8	17:00	
Frosinone Calcio v Torino FC	beIN SPORTS	17:00	

FIFA warns scandal-hit Oceania

AUCKLAND: FIFA warned the scandal-scarred Oceania Football Confederation yesterday that it was on its "last opportunity" to clean up its act. The message was personally delivered by Gianni Infantino, the president of world football's governing body, while in New Zealand to attend an OFC congress to elect a new president.

"It's vital that OFC turns the page. It's vital for the survival of football in this part of the world," Infantino told reporters, adding he had emphasised the point in his address to the congress. The strict message came just days after FIFA slapped a three-month ban on OFC vice-president and FIFA Council member Lee Harmon following an investigation into the resale of tickets at last year's World Cup in Russia.

The previous week, FIFA suspended former Oceania president David Chung for six years for corruption related to an NZ\$15 million (US\$10 million) OFC building project in Auckland. They were the latest in a series of scandals to hit Oceania, which is made up largely of small Pacific island nations and is the smallest and weakest of FIFA's six continental confederations.

"If there is still somebody in Oceania who is involved in football in any capacity, who has not realised yet that the time of abusing football for personal gain is over, then we can really not help it any more," Infantino said.

"But I'm sure from what I've heard, from what I've seen, that the message has definitely passed because this is really the last opportunity for Oceania." The confederation has a long history of governance problems, although new president, Lambert Matlock of Vanuatu, said they had been addressed in "immense reforms" since Chung's resignation last year.

"We believe we are now on the right path to ensuring ethical breaches like those of the former president cannot be repeated," he said. Chung's predecessor, Reynald Temarii of Tahiti, was forced out in 2010 after being implicated in a vote-selling scandal during an undercover newspaper sting. —AFP

25 Serena out-guns Azarenka to reach Indian Wells third round



26 England triumph as West Indies crash to second lowest T20 total



27 Sala deal highlights problems of regulating player representatives



Southampton stun fading Spurs

Newcastle edge five-goal Everton thriller



SOUTHAMPTON: Tottenham Hotspur's English defender Kyle Walker-Peters (C) vies with Southampton's English midfielder James Ward-Prowse (L) and Nathan Redmond during the English Premier League football match between Southampton and Tottenham Hotspur at St Mary's Stadium in Southampton, southern England yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Tottenham's winless run in the Premier League stretched to four games as Mauricio Pochettino's men threw away an early lead through Harry Kane to lose 2-1 at Southampton yesterday.

The Saints' spirited second-half comeback ensured they remain two points above the relegation zone despite Cardiff's 2-0 win over West Ham. Brighton also boosted their survival hopes thanks to Anthony Knockaert's brilliant strike to win 2-1 at Crystal Palace, while Newcastle battled back from 2-0 down to beat Everton 3-2.

Despite their poor domestic form of late, Spurs were boosted by victory at Borussia Dortmund in midweek to reach the quarter-finals of the Champions League. But Tottenham are now in grave danger of missing out on Champions League football next season. Pochettino's side remain in third but their lead over Manchester United, Arsenal and Chelsea is a precarious one with all three

chasing in action today.

Dele Alli made his return after seven weeks out with a hamstring injury and the England international duo combined to great effect for Kane's opener on 26 minutes. Kane freed Alli in behind the Southampton defence and he then returned the favour to pick out the England captain at the back post, who controlled and slotted low past Angus Gunn for his 200th career goal.

However, Spurs wastefulness in failing to add to their lead came back to cost them as Southampton improved after the break and secured a vital three points in their attempt to beat the drop. Fresh from scoring his first professional goal away to Manchester United last weekend, right-back Yan Valery levelled from Stuart Armstrong's cross. James Ward-Prowse then completed the comeback with a stunning free-kick curled into the top corner to leave Hugo Lloris helpless. Newcastle remain six points

above the relegation zone and moved up to 13th thanks to a thrilling fightback of their own to beat Everton.

Dominic Calvert-Lewin put the visitors in front on 18 minutes before a moment of high controversy when Jordan Pickford pulled down Salomon Rondon.

VARDY DOUBLE

A penalty was awarded, but the England number one was not sent-off and then saved Matt Ritchie's resulting spot-kick. Richardson soon put Everton 2-0 in front, but Newcastle struck three times in 19 second-half minutes through Rondon and Ayoze Perez's double for a deserved win. Brendan Rodgers secured his first win as Leicester boss thanks to Jamie Vardy's second-half double to beat Fulham 3-1, who are now 13 points adrift of safety. Huddersfield also look dead and buried as Bournemouth cruised to their first away win since October with a 2-0

victory at the John Smith's Stadium.

Callum Wilson opened the scoring on his return from a two-month injury layoff to aid his chances of making Gareth Southgate's England squad later this week before Ryan Fraser doubled the Cherries' advantage 24 minutes from time. Cardiff, though, gave themselves hope as early goals in each half from Junior Hoilett and Victor Camarasa gave the Welsh side a precious three points over a hugely disappointing West Ham.

Brighton also secured a much-needed win to move level on points with rivals Palace, five above the drop zone. Chris Hughton's side took the lead through Glenn Murray's early goal at Selhurst Park before Luka Milivojevic equalised with a second-half penalty.

However, Knockaert sparked wild celebrations from the Brighton fans when he curled into the top corner the winner 16 minutes from time. — AFP

Bayern crush Wolfsburg to take Bundesliga lead

BERLIN: Champions Bayern Munich crushed VfL Wolfsburg 6-0 yesterday with two goals from top scorer Robert Lewandowski, to move ahead of Borussia Dortmund and lead the Bundesliga on goal difference.

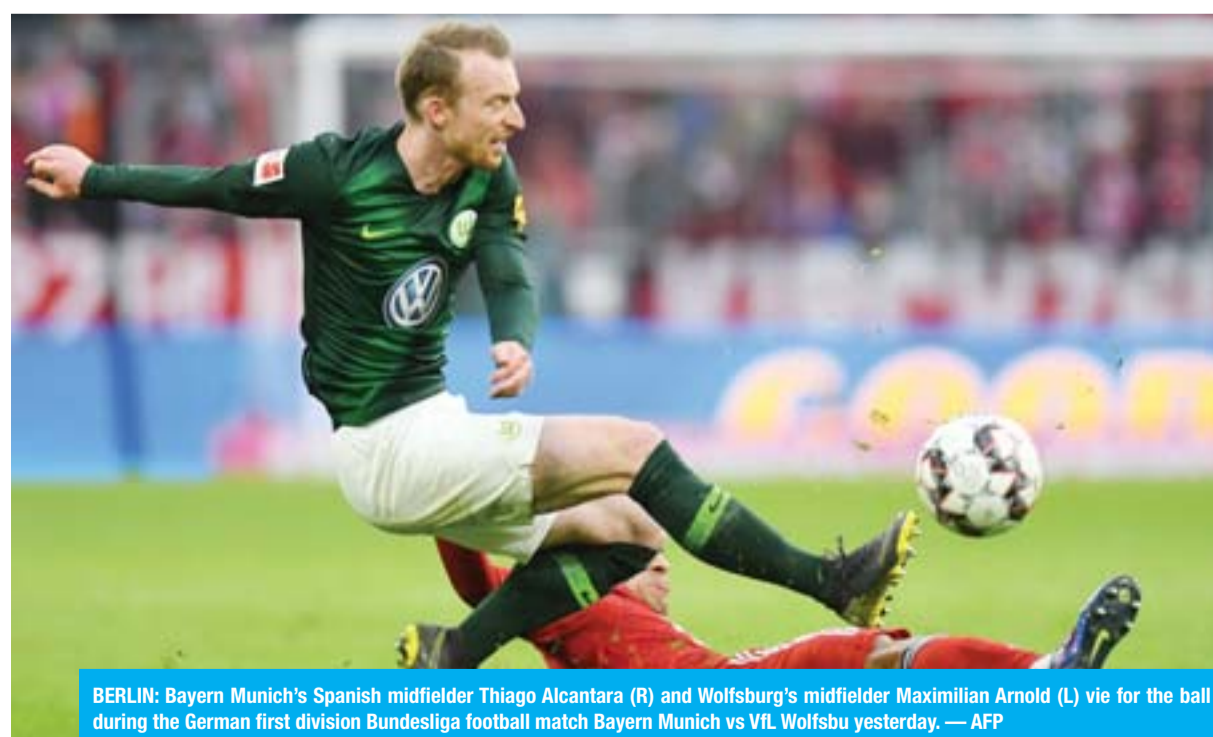
Four days before they host Liverpool in their Champions League last 16 second leg, the Bavarians were brutally efficient, scoring twice in three minutes through Serge Gnabry and Lewandowski late in the first half to take control.

James Rodriguez fired in their third in the 52nd and Thomas Mueller, dropped along with Mats Hummels and Jerome Boateng from the national team this week, added their fourth. Goals from Joshua Kimmich and Lewandowski completed their rout.

Bayern, who have now won 12 of their last 13 league matches, are on 57 points, ahead on goal difference from Dortmund, who won 3-1 against strugglers VfB Stuttgart. Earlier in the season Dortmund had a nine-point lead over Bayern.

It was also the 12th consecutive defeat for Wolfsburg coach Bruno Labbadia against Bayern, more than any other coach against a single opponent. Wolfsburg are now without a win in Munich after 26 matches.

"I am very satisfied and I liked the way we played,"



BERLIN: Bayern Munich's Spanish midfielder Thiago Alcantara (R) and Wolfsburg's midfielder Maximilian Arnold (L) vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match Bayern Munich vs VfL Wolfsburg yesterday. — AFP

said Bayern coach Niko Kovac. "We could have scored even more goals. We also want to win the game on Wednesday and see what the future brings."

Lewandowski's double meant that he has now got 197 goals in the Bundesliga and takes over as all-time foreign scorer from Werder Bremen's Claudio Pizarro,

on 195. The Poland forward also took his tally against Wolfsburg to 20 goals in 17 matches.

"I really don't know why it happens against Wolfsburg. But we played a very good game and it was good preparation for the Champions League," Lewandowski said. — Reuters

Atletico sneak narrow win over Leganes

MADRID: Atletico Madrid kept up their pursuit of La Liga leaders Barcelona by beating Leganes 1-0 at home yesterday as coach Diego Simeone rotated his squad in preparation for next week's Champions League game against Juventus.

Midfielder Saul Niguez struck the only goal of the match, following up to score on the rebound in the 50th minute after his penalty was saved. Atletico, who travel to Serie A champions Juventus on Tuesday defending a 2-0 lead in the last-16 second leg, were without first-choice defenders Lucas Hernandez, Diego Godin and Filipe Luis, allowing 21-year-old Colombian full back Andres Solano to make his debut.

Simeone withdrew talismanic forward and usual penalty taker Antoine Griezmann at halftime, bringing on Saul in his place, and he left in-form striker Alvaro Morata on the bench to keep him fresh for the trip to Turin.

The win took second-placed Atletico on to 56 points, four behind leaders Barcelona who play Rayo Vallecano later, and eight clear of Real Madrid, who visit Real Valladolid today. — Reuters