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Amir holds talks with Pompeo on Kuwait-US relations, issues

US-Kuwaiti Strategic Dialogue held • FM: Visit significant amidst regional developments



KUWAIT: (Left) HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at Bayan Palace yesterday. (Right) Pompeo and Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah exchange documents during the third US-Kuwaiti Strategic Dialogue yesterday. — KUNA/AFP

By Faten Omar and Agencies

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, with the attendance of HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, received at Bayan Palace yesterday Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who was accompanied by visiting US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who conveyed greetings of US President Donald Trump to HH the Amir. During the meeting, the Amir also relayed his greetings to Trump, and discussed a number of issues of mutual interest and the historical relations between the two nations.

At a joint press conference later yesterday at the foreign ministry, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said Pompeo's "significant" visit to Kuwait comes amidst "critical" regional developments. "In light of such global changes, we keenly listened to the wise directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah," he said. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's remarks came after holding the third US-Kuwaiti Strategic Dialogue, with Pompeo heading the US side.

Welcoming Pompeo on his first visit to the country, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled reaffirmed "distinguished, historic and deep-rooted" relations with the US, recalling its "firm" stance towards Kuwait's safety and stability, which bravely manifested in the 1991 US-led military operation to liberate Kuwait from the Iraqi occupation.

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Zain Group holds general assembly Zain a premier digital lifestyle provider



KUWAIT: Zain Group Chairman Ahmed Al-Tahous and Zain Group Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi address the annual general assembly meeting at Zain Group headquarters yesterday.

KUWAIT: The annual Zain Group ordinary general assembly was held yesterday at the Zain Group's headquarters in Kuwait, attended with a quorum of 73.91 percent that approved the recommended cash dividend of 30 fils per share. "Zain continued to achieve positive results and drive its operations to further growth in 2018, despite operational challenges being faced by the regional telecom sector including competition, regulatory and socio-economic factors. The group has been able to enhance its competitive position thanks to its transformation programs, which are turning the company into an efficient digital lifestyle provider," said Zain Group Chairman Ahmed Al-Tahous.

"Zain Group was resilient towards internal and external challenges and exited the year with healthy

profitability and a good reason to be optimistic about 2019 and beyond. We are focused on fulfilling our strategic vision of transforming into a fully integrated and innovative digital lifestyle provider and exceeding customers' expectations in all aspects of the services we provide them," Zain Group Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi.

"Zain prides itself in remaining a forward-looking organization, and a central theme of Zain Group's '4Sight' Digital Strategy is to maximize shareholder value through business growth and efficiency while seeking value enhancing opportunities and new revenue streams in the digital arena. We are particularly interested in the profitable growth areas of smart cities, IoT and Enterprise (B2B)," he added. (See Page 11)

Assembly delays 35-day annual leave amendment

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly yesterday approved capital spending for the next fiscal year but delayed the second and final reading on the labor law amendment to increase annual leave in the private sector from 30 to 35 days. The voting will take place in a later session. Minister of Public Works Jenan Bushehri told the Assembly that repair works on the roads, damaged by

the torrential rains that hit the country in November, will begin in the first week of next month. She said the work was delayed because the ministry was assessing studies on loose gravel from the roads and ways of treatment, adding that the new paving material had been sent overseas for examination.

The minister said repairs will first start on motorways and some lanes will be closed for 12 hours daily to complete the work, but she gave no deadline for finishing the repairs. She however hoped the repairs will be completed before the end of the year. Bushehri apologized to the people for taking so long to start the repairs. She said that a number of senior officials and contractors will be held to account and that cases will be filed in court against those who caused the flying gravel problem.

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Father and son laid to rest as NZ burials start

CHRISTCHURCH: A Syrian refugee and his son who fled the chaos of their homeland only to meet tragedy in New Zealand were buried yesterday in the first funerals of those killed in the mosque massacres. Hundreds of mostly Muslim mourners gathered at a cemetery in the southern city of Christchurch to lay to rest Khalid Mustafa and his 15-year-old son Hamza, who were among 50 people slaughtered at two mosques by an Australian white supremacist.

The pair had fled to New Zealand seeking sanctuary from the Syrian maelstrom but died in last Friday's hail of bullets, a bitter irony that New Zealand Prime

Minister Jacinda Ardern called "gutting". "I cannot tell you how gutting it is to know that a family came here for safety and for refuge, and they should have been safe here," Ardern said at a press conference in Christchurch after the funeral.

Khalid, 44, and Hamza were shot dead at the Al Noor Mosque, the first site to be attacked, but not before Hamza called his mother in a panic. "After that I heard shooting and he screamed and after that I didn't hear him," she told New Zealand media this week. Their younger son Zaid, 13, was also wounded in the attack and attended the funeral in a wheelchair. In a powerful scene, he held his hands aloft as he prayed alongside rows of mourners. "I shouldn't be standing in front of you. I should be lying beside you," Zaid said at the graves of his brother and father, according to Jamil El-Biza, who travelled from Australia for the funerals.

Also attending was Abdul Aziz, an Afghan refugee who confronted the gunman at Linwood Mosque.

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CHRISTCHURCH: Zaid Mustafa (in wheelchair) attends the funeral of his slain father Khalid and brother Hamza at the Memorial Park cemetery yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

UAE deports man who praised attacks

DUBAI: An employee at a Dubai-based security company was fired and deported for celebrating the deadly New Zealand mosque attacks under a fake identity on Facebook, the group said yesterday. "Over the weekend, a Transguard employee made inflammatory comments on his personal Facebook account celebrating the deplorable mosque attack in Christchurch, New Zealand," the Transguard security group said. "We have a zero-tolerance policy for the inappropriate use of social media, and as a result this individual was immediately terminated and turned over to the authorities to face justice." Transguard said the man had been deported by the UAE government. — AFP

Girl raped, killed by bros, uncle

NEW DELHI: Two brothers have been arrested in India for allegedly raping their 12-year-old sister who was later beheaded with a sickle, police said yesterday. The girl's uncle, 40, has also been arrested and police are searching for the eldest brother after the body was found in the central state of Madhya Pradesh last week. "All the men (three brothers and the uncle) were involved in raping the girl and when she threatened to tell the police, they strangled her to death and chopped off her head and dumped the body," Sagar district police superintendent Amit Sanghi said. He said the autopsy had confirmed the victim was gang-raped and subjected to "unnatural sex". — AFP

Local

Amir, Crown Prince receive newly-elected MPs, governors

Amir meets visiting Iraqi Minister of Electricity



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh and the newly-appointed governors. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Iraqi Minister of Electricity Dr Louay Al-Khateeb.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Later, His Highness the Amir received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, who introduced to His Highness the Amir the new MPs Bader Hamed Al-Mulla and Abdullah Ahmad Al-Kandari, who won the parliamentary by-elections in the 2nd and 3rd Constituencies. His Highness the Amir congratulated the new MPs, and wished them the best of luck in the service of the nation. His Highness the Crown Prince also received the newly-elected MPs, wished them success in fulfilling their legislative and supervisory tasks, along with their fellow members of the parliament, for sake of elevating level of the parliamentary practice in a manner that would achieve progress and

development for the dear homeland and attain "our kind people's aspirations."

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, who introduced to His Highness the Amir the newly-appointed Hawally Governor Lieutenant General Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah, Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, Jahra Governor Nasser Falah Al-Hajraf, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governor Mahmoud Abdulsamaad Bushehri, Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness wished them all success in their new posts.

His Highness the Crown Prince also received the governors, and congratulated

them on the confidence accorded to them, wishing them success in fulfilling their duties in a manner that would address citizens' needs and contribute to the development of the dear homeland. Minister Saleh also introduced the governors to His Highness the Prime Minister. Furthermore, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir received Oil Minister and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel accompanied by the visiting Iraqi Minister of Electricity Dr Louay Al-Khateeb. Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah attended the meetings. His Highness the Prime Minister and Speaker Ghanem also received the visiting Iraqi minister. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and MPs Bader Al-Mulla and Abdullah Ahmad Al-Kandari.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh and the newly-appointed governors.



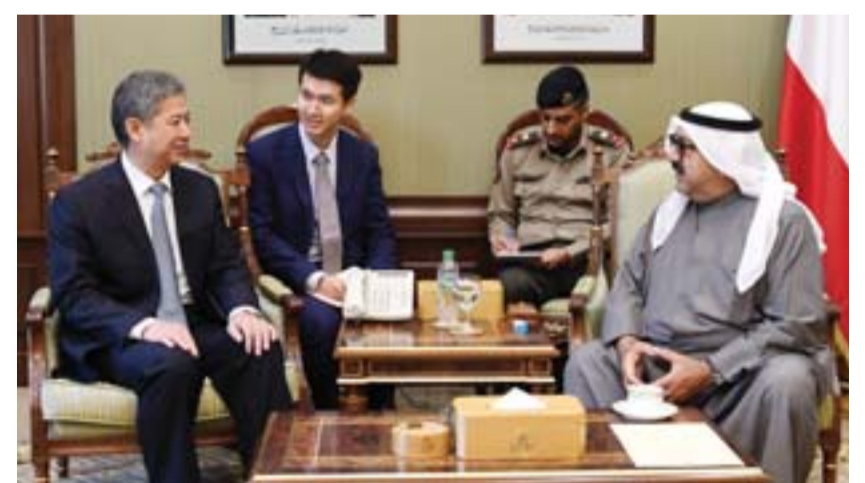
His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh and the newly-appointed governors.

Sheikh Nasser, chamber chief discuss mega projects

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held talks yesterday at his bureau with Chairman of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ali Al-Ghanem on a host of issues. The Ministry of Defense said in a statement that the two sides held a cordial conversation on diverse topics. The meeting coincided with recurring calls at various local levels to engage the private sector in Kuwait's mega development projects. Meanwhile, Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad met with the undersecretary of the Chinese Commission for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense. Friendly talks, issues of mutual concerns, especially on the defense level and ways to enhance them, were discussed during the encounter, the Ministry of Defense said in a press release. — KUNA



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ali Al-Ghanem. — Defense Ministry photos



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with the undersecretary of the Chinese Commission for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense.

Sheikh Jaber center hosts honoring of Al-Hajraf award

KUWAIT: Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center has hosted final ceremony for honoring winners of the second edition of Falah Mubarak Al-Hajraf Award for National Works. Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah attended the ceremony on behalf of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, patron of the activity, held late on Tuesday. Addressing the ceremony, the Amir's Representative, Minister Sheikh Ali noted His Highness the Amir's special concern for empowering the youth. His Highness the Amir has repeatedly said that the youngsters are the most precious wealth of Kuwait. Minister Sheikh Ali called for sharpening the youth's skills, boosting their capacities through education and protecting them from adopting harmful conducts. Meanwhile, Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Me'jel, the award chairman, addressed the attendees, saying in part that he was elated to partake in honoring a group of junior Kuwaitis who won the award in short story, poetry, painting and short films. Sheikh Ali handed the awards for the winners, from among 231 contesting artists. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Winners of the second edition of Falah Mubarak Al-Hajraf Award for National Works pose for a group photo with Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah at the final ceremony. — Amiri Diwan photo

Local

Kuwait drops six spots in 2019 World Happiness Report

Down to 51 out of 156 countries; Finland tops list for second year

KUWAIT: Kuwait dropped six places in the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network's 2019 World Happiness Report which was released yesterday. The report ranks Kuwait in the 51st place (with a score of 6.021), down from 45 in last year's report which ranks 156 countries according to things such as GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, social freedom, generosity and absence of corruption. Kuwait ranked fifth among Gulf states in the report, trailing the United Arab Emirates (21st world-wide), Saudi Arabia (28), Qatar (29) and Bahrain (37) (Oman is not ranked in the report).

Finland topped the ranking of the world's happiest countries for the second year in a row, with the Nordic countries taking the leading spots, while South Sudan came last. The top 10 was again dominated by the Nordics, with Denmark, Norway and Iceland taking the other leading spots followed by Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, New Zealand, Canada and Austria. The United States dropped one place to 19th.

Among the 20 top gainers since the 2005-2008 average ranking were 10 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, five in sub-Saharan Africa and three in Latin America, while the five that fell the most were

Yemen, India, Syria, Botswana and Venezuela. Benin saw the largest gain over that period, rising 50 places in the rankings.

Despite the political turmoil brought by Brexit, Britain rose four places in the rankings to 15th. The United States, meanwhile, continued its slide of recent years, dropping one spot to 19th place. "This year's report provides sobering evidence of how addictions are causing considerable unhappiness and depression in the US," said professor Jeffrey Sachs, one of the report's authors.

Released on the International Day of Happiness on March 20, the report warned that world happiness has declined in recent years, driven by a sustained fall in India, which this year ranked in 140th place. This has coincided with a rise in negative feelings, "comprising worry, sadness and anger, especially marked in Asia and Africa, and more recently elsewhere," it said. This year's publication also looked at how countries have performed in the happiness rankings since 2005. Of the 20 largest gainers, half are in Central and Eastern Europe, five are in sub-Saharan Africa, and three in Latin America. The five largest declines since 2005 were in Yemen, India, Syria, Botswana and Venezuela. — Agencies



Released on Int'l Day of Happiness



KUWAIT: This archive photo shows a general view of Kuwait City.

GCC hopes free trade pact with EU would see light soon

By Ben Garcia and KUNA

KUWAIT: Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General Abdullah Al-Zayani has stated that the GCC countries were eager to finalize free trade agreement with the EU soon to boost trade exchange. "In 1990, negotiations for a free trade agreement was launched and all articles, except for only one related to the export tariffs, were approved, we hope a constructive formula would be agreed soon to serve our mutual interests," Al-Zayani told the audience at the Third EU-GCC Business Forum which kicked off on Tuesday.

He described the European Union one of the main trade partners to the GCC member states. "The trade exchange between both sides have jumped from \$37 billion in 2001 to \$172 billion in 2017," he unveiled. Zayani stated that the GCC countries were trying to create safe, stable and sustainable environments for achieving aspired prosperity through partnering with global economic blocs, unifying legislations, encouraging private sector contributions to development projects, upgrading procedures and administrative systems to streamline entrepreneurship, and promote creativity and innovation. The GCC and its six-member states had emerged as the most stable, prosperous, attractive countries for foreign investments in the region thanks to the growth of oil revenues and the adoption of ambitious national strategies and vision to diversify and boost national economies, he explained. He added that the GCC countries had witnessed in the past few years a significant growth in the flow of foreign direct investments as a result of the government reforms, initiatives and economic measures which have shown an increasing interest of investors in the Gulf region. He boasted that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has become an important economic bloc. The GCC's gross domestic product has surpassed \$1.5 trillion, the value of imports and exports exceeded \$1 trillion annually and local



GCC Secretary General Abdullah Al-Zayani speaks during the forum.



Director General of KDIPA Sheikh Dr Meshaal Al-Sabah delivers a speech.



Chairman of KCCI Ali Al-Ghanem addresses the audience.

investments rose to \$430 billion in 2017. Moreover, the intra-GCC trade also jumped to \$133 billion in 2017, he said. "Gulf countries are looking forward to raising the level of cooperation and strengthening relations with the European Union and this forum is a clear evidence of the depth of Gulf-European relations," he concluded.

Ideal platform

Meanwhile, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr Meshaal Al-Sabah said the two-day forum provides an ideal platform for exchanging information and exploring promising investment opportunities. Kuwait's hosting of the third session of the forum, embodies its eagerness to showcase the new legal, executive and procedural reforms introduced by GCC states to improve investment environment, he said. He hailed the forum also a platform for exploring nascent projects in the EU and GCC markets and providing new investment prospects to their companies for cooperation in a variety of domains at the forefront of which infrastructure, logistical services, sustainable energy and smart cities.

In the meantime, Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Ali Al-Ghanem

highlighted a number of factors which would influence EU-GCC relations and cooperation in the future. He cited oil as the main factor as it is the prime component of bilateral trade and investment. The projections about a future decline in the importance of the oil, coincide with affirmed indications about the weight of global economy was moving from the West to the East which would have deep impacts on the region and the world, he said.

He argued that the second was the start of the fourth industrial revolution which would bring intrinsic transformations that create a virtual digitalized world and a new economy in which feasibility and creativity other than the cost and price would be decisive in market competitiveness. Thus if the EU hesitated in helping the GCC enter this era, the development gap would be a difficult obstacle hindering their future cooperation, he suggested. Third factor is the EU stances towards Arab causes, especially the Palestinian one. He regretted that the EU stances of the repercussions of the Arab Spring in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen, "do not augur well in this regard."

Ghanem said that the fourth factor was the issues of security and refugees as well as the political and economic changes in the EU, such as Britain withdrawal of the European bloc. It was in the interest of the European Union to know in depth the dimensions of the changes and risks that the region was going through and in the interest of the parties to employ security and immigration issues to emphasize the importance of their economic and development cooperation, he asserted. He recalled that the Mediterranean Sea is no longer a European-Arab lake. Now on its coasts emerged news cities, routes, bases and forces that protect interests of other countries that are highly competitive. The forum brings together an array of high-level speakers and experts from the Gulf and the EU.

In recognition of the importance of knowledge, creativity and innovation, which are vital elements of economic development in a modern world of rapidly expanding technology, the participating experts tackle pressing subjects such as developing and supporting innovation in business and investment, seizing oppor-

tunities in the healthcare sector, digitalization and doing business in the GCC.

EU-GCC Business Forum offers significant opportunities for cross-cutting networking and identification of opportunities to engage in the ongoing diversification strategies and the corresponding projects underpinning them, in particular in key economic sectors where representatives from the GCC and EU will present ongoing initiatives and planned investments. It offers an excellent opportunity for partners from the GCC region and the EU to meet and explore new trade and investment partnerships between businesses in two of the world's major economic regions.

Economic relations

Michele Cervone D'urso, EU Ambassador to the Delegation of European Union to Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, said trade and economic relations between the EU and GCC have been increasing in the past decade. However, he admitted that the investment area is underperforming and they are not yet realizing the numerous potentials. "There is a lot of space to improve and this forum will tackle this issue on how we can go further. The potential is huge - we are not talking about oil or petrochemicals - there are more areas. There is a lack of knowledge about regulations and regulatory aspects. Most importantly, we will try to understand barriers for investors - maybe we can come up with a solution to this," he said. "At the same time, we have challenges, but we have lots of potential. The Gulf has been more and more attractive, thanks to your efforts of diversification and the domestic reforms you've been undergoing, which aim to attract foreign capital and knowhow and technologies," he said.

Entitled, Oasis of Opportunities, the European Union-GCC Business Forum is an event organized by the EU, Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Kuwait Supreme Council for Planning and Development. The event aims at directly addressing issues of innovation and entrepreneurship and investment opportunities, especially in healthcare sector, digitalization and doing business in the GCC.



KUWAIT: A general view of people in attendance of the Third EU-GCC Business Forum. — KUNA photos

Kuwait seeks to cement ties with Tunisia

TUNIS: Kuwaiti Minister of Information Mohammad Al-Jabri said yesterday that Kuwait is partaking in Tunisia's celebrations marking Tunis as Capital of Islamic Culture for cementing the bilateral ties between the two countries. In a statement to the press, minister Jabri said Tunisia deserves to be designated Capital of Islamic Culture 2019

for its rich Islamic heritage and hosting of communities of diverse cultures.

Minister Jabri, also Chairman of the National Council for Arts, Culture and Letters, was speaking on margins of a reception, held by the Kuwaiti Ambassador Ali Al-Dhafiri in the minister's honor. Minister Jabri congratulated Tunisia on the 60th independence anniversary, which fell yesterday, and its hosting of the 30th Arab summit, due on March 31. Tunisia and Kuwait are bonded with solid ties, backed by the two countries' leaders, namely His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi.

Meanwhile, Issa Al-Ansari, Assistant

Secretary General of the Kuwaiti council of culture, said the council is partaking in the country's celebrations with a large number of popular artistic troupes and teams tasked with promoting the Kuwaiti culture. The Kuwaiti delegation will also take part in the Arab Cultural Week, coinciding with the upcoming Arab summit. Jabri had earlier described Tunisia as "one of the countries that has promoted tolerance, rejected extremism and fought against destructive ideas through its media and culture tools." Meanwhile, Tunisian Minister of Cultural Affairs Mohamed Zine El-Abidine said in a press conference that his country deserves the lead, especially after activating the cultural policy. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Advisor to the Amiri Diwan Dr Abdullah Maatouq Al-Maatouq left for New Zealand yesterday evening to offer condolences to Governor-General Patsy Reddy over the victims of the shootings at two mosques in Christchurch. — KUNA

Local

4.7 million passengers expected to use Kuwait Airways this year

5% increase in total income for Q1 of 2019: KAC Chairman

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Established in 1954, Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) is celebrating its 65th anniversary. During these years, KAC has improved its services and notched up many achievements, which were announced during a press conference held yesterday. "KAC will achieve a five percent increase in total income for the first quarter of 2019 compared to the same period of 2018, and an eight percent increase in number of passengers this year compared to the same period in 2018. In 2017, 4.1 million passengers used KAC, that rose to 4.5 million in 2018, and is expected to reach 4.7 million passengers this year," KAC Chairman Yousef Al-Jasim said.

The 65th anniversary celebrations include various activities. "The marketing and public relations department of KAC has set a schedule of activities that will be held from today till the end of this year as part of the celebrations. These will include various promotions and special offers that will be announced later," he said.

The officials and staff of KAC strive to achieve the planned goals. "We at KAC maintain the highest standards of safety in our operations. Furthermore, we have reached the highest standards of flight schedule discipline that reached between 90-95 percent, which is higher than the international average of 85 percent. In addition, we provide the best services for our clients before, during and after their trip," explained Jasim.

"We will never go below this high standard of achievements and performance. We will put more efforts to have more achievements and always rank on top of the best airlines. Today we want to announce the new official slogan of celebrating 65 years of establishing KAC - Sure We Can, which expresses our long history of leading in this field and the loyalty of our clients," he pointed out.

After the appointment of a new board of directors of KAC in April 2018, the board set a complete strategy (strategic business plan) for the period between 2018 to 2026, which includes commercial, operations, financial and administrative aspects, in addition to the fleet plan during this period. Jasim also spoke about some achievements of this strategy in 2018. "Achievements include

approving the complete organizational structure, appointing an executive director, strategic cooperation with Boeing to establish a regional center in the Middle East and North Africa to train pilots and engineers and launching the new Integrated Operations Control Center (IOCC)," he noted.

Other achievements include revising a contract with Airbus on purchasing the A350-900 and signing a contract to purchase the A330-800 and renew the contract for the A320 NEO, which saved over \$100 million and averted any expected losses due to the previous schedule. The final fleet will consist of 10 Boeing B777-300 ER aircraft, eight Airbus A330-800 NEO, five Airbus A350-900 and 15 Airbus A320 NEO planes.

Also, all flights were transferred to Terminal T4 from T1 from Nov 2018 except New York flights. T4 includes a total of 14 gates with a parking lot for 2,000 vehicles. The First Class, Business Class and Oasis Club members lounge was opened in T4. A limousine service was added for first class and royal class passengers. In addition, KAC signed a contract to change the old buses with new ones and increase their number, along with increasing the number of aircraft stairs.

During summer 2018, KAC launched new destinations including Malaga (Spain), Trabzon (Turkey), Tbilisi (Georgia), Munich (Germany), and Vienna (Austria) - the last two are seasonal. KAC is planning to start operating to four new destinations - Nice (France), Sabiha Airport in Istanbul (Turkey), Larnaca (Cyprus) and Guangzhou (China), in addition to plans to launch seasonal destinations including Baku (Azerbaijan), Tbilisi (Georgia), Casablanca (Morocco) and Sarajevo (Bosnia).

KAC increased sales by 14 percent in 2018 comparing to 2017, hiking revenues by 11 percent compared to 2017. The estimated sales for the first quarter of 2019 have reached KD 76.9 million compared to the same period of 2018 with KD 73.1 million. A 24/7 call center, and a new service of communicating with clients through WhatsApp were launched. The Baker Street office of KAC in London was reopened, while a KAC office at The Avenues opened in October. Building of a new tower for KAC on Hilali Street in Kuwait City also began.



Kuwait Airways celebrates 65th anniversary



KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Chairman Yousef Al-Jasim (center) attends a press conference yesterday. —KUNA

Kuwait calls for a world free of nuclear weapons

NEWYORK: Kuwait called yesterday for a world free of nuclear weapons, stressing on the major risk and dangers in the spread of such weapons. This came during a speech delivered by member of Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the UN Nawaf Al-Ahmad to Security Council's session on UN Security Council committee (1540).

Ahmad affirmed on the importance work of the committee in preventing individuals and terrorist parties from possessing, manufacturing, or transferring all kinds of mass destruction's weapons. Ahmad mentioned 1540 Committee agenda 2019, which considered strategic planing in order to prohibit owning any kind of these weapons, aiming for a sustainable and peaceful future. The committee also shed light on the role of civil society in preventing these weapons, he added.



Member of Kuwait's Permanent Mission to the UN Nawaf Al-Ahmad

"Our goal is to develop work needed for the committee and its four group's effort by co-operating and activating the national and regional mechanisms at all levels," he said. He also notified that the consequences that follow weapon's spreading are serious and preventive measures has to be taken in order to keep the world safe and secure. —KUNA

Technician dies after falling from winch

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: An Indian repair technician was killed yesterday after he fell from a window cleaning winch between the buildings of the ministries of social affairs and commerce at the ministries complex. The incident happened only one day after a ceiling collapse at the site of a mosque under construction killed three Egyptian construction workers in Nahdha. Following up on this case, the Egyptian minister of manpower Mohammed Saafan issued immediate instructions to the manpower office at the Egyptian consulate in Kuwait to obtain compensation and due wages of the three workers as well as that of the two injured workers. He also ordered shipping the three bodies back to Egypt and expressed condolences to their families, said the ministry's official spokesperson Haitham Saaduddin.

Policemen assaulted

A Kuwaiti man was arrested by security guards outside Farwaniya governorate's security directorate when he insulted and assaulted them for preventing him from driving into the building, said security sources. The sources explained that on showing up at the gate, the man kept honking and shouting that he had received a

traffic ticket and that he wants to enter. When he was denied entry, he insulted and assaulted the policemen on guard. The man is facing charges of slandering and assaulting a public servant on duty.

Automatic renewal

The manpower authority's official spokesperson and public relations and media manager Aseel Al-Mazyad said renewal of national labor permits is done automatically without checking with the authority, noting that this measure has been in effect since Dec 2018 with the aim of facilitating the procedures citizens working for the private sector have to go through.

Meanwhile, the manpower authority's deputy director for the national manpower sector Iman Al-Ansari said in implementation of the Cabinet resolution number 1439/2018, citizens with two-year post-secondary school certificates who apply for national labor support allowances will not get it unless they attend a one-year training course, while those with lesser certificates will not get it unless they attend two-year training courses, adding that the new measures will take effect by the beginning of April.

Residents protest

A number of Wafra residential city residents yesterday protested outside the public authority for housing welfare, demanding the immediate completion of public services in the area, paying their rent allowances and the sums deducted for infrastructure. Informed sources said the housing authority's public relations manager Omar Al-Rowayyeh arranged a meeting between the protesters and the authority officials to discuss the demands.

- an ex-convict jailed for drugs offences. He was arrested and sent to concerned authorities.

Separately, firemen put out a blaze reported in a power transformer in the Rahaya desert area in Jahra yesterday. A call was received about an explosion and fire in a transformer, so occupational Jahra and Tahreer fire stations responded under the command of Meshaal Al-Abdally. The power was cut off and fire put out. No injuries were reported.

issued without the engineering society's approval, and that they forged their work permits based on which they received residency permits. Atal said residency detectives asked about three Indian engineers in the oil sector. The three had files at the society but they were denied accreditation. Investigations are under way.

Maid found dead

The body of an Indian domestic helper was recovered by the coroner after she was found dead in her room under mysterious circumstances in her sponsor's house. Interior Ministry operations received a call from a citizen claiming he found her dead in her room. Ahmadi police, and paramedics responded, then when death was confirmed forensics were called in. Investigations are ongoing to find out the reasons of the death. —Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

Ex-con robs ambulance

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Efforts by Capital traffic patrols helped determine the identity of the suspect involved in the theft of an ambulance from Farwaniya Hospital

Three 'engineers' arrested for work permits' forgery

KUWAIT: The electronic linking between government and private entities led to the discovery of a large number of people who entered Kuwait with forged degrees and qualifications, and got jobs and residencies based on them. Head of the Engineers Society Eng Faisal Al-Atal said the prosecution detained three Indian engineers for forging work permits and official documents. He said investigations revealed that the three do not meet conditions of issuing work permits, which is not

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Priyanka lambasts Modi on home turf

US drone strikes in Somalia escalate as death toll mounts

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BAGHOUZ: Fighters from the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) fire a cannon on the frontline of battles in the Islamic State group's last remaining position in the village of Baghouz in the countryside of the eastern Syrian province of Deir Ezzor. — AFP

Syria war on IS holdout wraps up

SDF delivers killer blow to the last vestige of IS 'caliphate'

BAGHOUZ: Their battle against the last jihadists holding out in the besieged Syrian village of Baghouz hasn't quite ended but Kurdish-led fighters have already started celebrating. When they returned from the front on Tuesday, they put the lamb skewers on the grill and broke into dance as the radio of their battered truck sputtered a Kurdish tune.

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) delivered the killer blow to the last vestige of the Islamic State group's "caliphate" this week and the end of the bruising six-month-old operation is now within touching distance. With backing from the US-led coalition's warplanes, they forced holdout jihadists from their main encampment and into a few hectares (couple of acres) of farmland by the Euphrates River. The prospect of an imminent victory announcement combined with early leave for the Kurds' Nowruz New Year holiday drew dozens of smiling fighters to a base on the edge of Baghouz.

The front porch of a plush villa the SDF turned into a temporary military headquarters is littered with the duffle bags, ammo belts and body armor the



Kurdish-led fighters celebrate victory

fighters discarded to join the impromptu party. One fighter remained on the roof, on barbecue duty, while the others formed a circle to start a "dabke" folk

dance. "It's a day of celebration, the nightmare is over," said Majid Hejjo, a 23-year-old SDF fighter still wearing his fatigues and a khaki cap. The young Kurdish soldier is originally from the northeastern province of Hasakeh but is stationed in Raqa, the former jihadist "capital" which the SDF seized in 2017.

'Twice happy'

Since December, he has been regularly mobilized on two-week fighting missions to help wipe out the very last remnants of a jihadist proto-state that once covered territory larger than Britain. Now the young man wants to hang up his rocket-propelled grenade launcher and return to his pregnant wife. "We're doubly happy. We're going to see our families and we have vanquished IS," he said.

Next to him, his younger half-brother Mohammad is checking he hasn't forgotten anything as he stuffs his belongings into his green wheeled suitcase,

including the yellow tea mug he takes everywhere. An unknown number of diehard jihadists are still refusing to surrender and dodging SDF fire in their hideouts along the reedy banks of the Euphrates. Syrian and Iraqi government forces and their allies are deployed on the other side of the river and the border, making any escape impossible.

Although IS has already started regrouping in some of its desert and mountain hideouts in the region, the fall of Baghouz will mark the end of the group's territorial control. His backpack already thrown over his shoulder, Mohammed Hallush doesn't plan to stay to witness the historic announcement and is heading back to his family in Hasakeh. "I've been here 11 days, the battle is over, the war is over," said the lanky 24-year-old with grey woolly hat and short trimmed beard. "This leave will not be like the previous ones. This time we're returning home from Baghouz." — AFP

Anger sweeps Indian Kashmir as teacher dies in custody

SRINAGAR: Schools and businesses shut across Indian-administered Kashmir yesterday as protests grew over the death in police custody of a young school teacher that sparked outrage across the restive territory. Police bundled Rizwan Asad Pandit from his home in a late-night raid Sunday to a detention centre in the main city of Srinagar, where he died in the early hours of Tuesday. No official explanation has been offered for his death.

Police say Pandit—who spent his 29th birthday in custody—was taken "in pursuance of a terror case investigation". He was a campaigner for Jamaat-e-Islami, the largest religious political group in Kashmir, which was outlawed by New Delhi this month. Authorities launched a sweeping crackdown that has seen hundreds arrested since.

But his family said Pandit had no links to militancy and was murdered. "He has been murdered in cold blood, and now they are telling lies about his death. How could that be? He has been tortured to death," Pandit's brother Zulfarnain Pandit told local newspaper Kashmir Reader. News of his death spread quickly in Kashmir, where popular anger against Indian rule in the Muslim-majority region often erupts into violent clashes between civilians and government forces. Local authorities have ordered an inquiry into Pandit's death but police have not



KASHMIR: The mother (right) of school teacher Rizwan Asad Pandith, who died in police custody, mourns her lost at a house in Awantipora of Pulwama district, south of Srinagar. — AFP

registered an official investigation yet.

Shops and schools were shut in Srinagar and large parts of Kashmir in protest after three major separatist groups in the region called for a strike. Rights groups, including the UN rights office, have accused Indian forces of acting with "virtual immunity" in Kashmir, protected by laws that shield soldiers from prosecution. There have been more than 100 official inquiries into civilian deaths in Kashmir since 2008 but none has resulted in convictions, said Khurram Parvez, a high-profile local activist. "This absolute impunity completely scuttles justice," he said.

At the height of major demonstrations against Indian rule in 2016, another teacher died in military custody, fuelling popular anger. The soldiers accused of murdering the man were never prosecuted. Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since their freedom from British rule in 1947. The rivals have fought two wars over the Himalayan territory. Militant groups have waged an insurgency against Indian rule for 30 years, some seeking independence or a merger with Pakistan. India accuses Pakistan of supporting armed groups inside its portion of Kashmir, an allegation Islamabad denies. — AFP

Indonesia's Aceh whips five amorous couples

BANDA ACEH: A group of unmarried couples were whipped in Indonesia's Aceh province after they were caught behaving amorously - a crime under the conservative region's Islamic law. Flogging is common for a range of offences in the region at the tip of Sumatra island, including gambling, drinking alcohol and having gay sex.

It is the only province in the world's biggest Muslim-majority country that

imposes Islamic law. The five couples flogged Thursday received between four and 22 strokes from a rattan cane outside a mosque in the provincial capital, Banda Aceh, after they served several months in prison. Religious police caught the amorous couples cuddling and holding hands or, in some cases, having sex.

Hundreds of spectators, including children, watched as a masked sharia officer lashed the offenders as they winced in pain. "We hope in the future there will be no more cases like this - it's embarrassing," said religious officer Safriadi, who goes by one name. In December, two men caught having sex with underage girls were whipped 100 times each in Aceh. Rights groups have slammed public caning as cruel, and Indonesia's President Joko Widodo has called for it to end, but the practice has wide support among Aceh's population. — AFP



BANDA ACEH: An Indonesian woman is whipped by a member of the Sharia police in public in Banda Aceh yesterday. — AFP

International

No! 'This does not show 350 accept Islam' in New Zealand

Australia summons Turkish ambassador

NEW DELHI: A video of a religious ceremony has been viewed more than one million times on Facebook posts alongside a claim 350 people "accepted" Islam in New Zealand after last week's deadly mosque shootings. The posts are misleading—the video is from an unrelated Islamic event in Germany available online since 2007 – and contain no other evidence to back up the claim of 350 people accepting Islam in New Zealand in recent days.

What are we verifying?

The 90-second video starts with a bearded Caucasian man wearing a skullcap passing a microphone to another man, who then speaks in Arabic. It continues with a ceremony spoken in Arabic and German. The video was viewed more than one million times in 48 hours after being uploaded on Monday to the Facebook page of Sajid Hashmat, who identifies himself as a "senior leader" with a regional political party in India that represents Muslims.

The caption alongside the video in the misleading Facebook post states in English: "50 Muslims were killed on Friday in New Zealand & 350 people accepted #Islam today in #NewZealand". AFP created an archived version of this false post (1). The post was published after 50 worshippers in two mosques were shot dead in the southern New Zealand city of Christchurch on Friday. An Australian man has been charged over the murders. AFP found dozens of other posts with the same video and misleading caption on Facebook and YouTube, some of which had been viewed tens of thousands of times.

What do we know?

Through an investigation using video analysis tool InVid and multiple keyword searches, AFP established the video appeared on YouTube on November 24, 2007 (2). The German-language caption in that post translates to: "Five people adopt Islam". Through further searches, AFP identified the man wearing the

skullcap as Pierre Vogel, who describes himself on his verified Facebook page as "the most famous preacher in Germany".

AFP contacted Hashmat to ask why he posted the video alongside the caption, and whether he had any proof to back up his claim that 350 people had accepted Islam in New Zealand after the attacks. Hashmat said by phone: "That video is symbolic, a reference. There is a news link below that video from where I got the information". The link he referred to was a blog post that similarly made the claim of 350 accepting Islam, without citing any evidence or sources. AFP published a blog post on Wednesday that gives an in-depth report on its investigation into the misleading posts (3).

What can be concluded?

AFP found more than 70 posts on Facebook that had the same video and caption, with similar posts also on YouTube and Twitter. Comments on these posts indicated many people believed the 2007 German video was a recent one from New Zealand, and they did not understand Hashmat's stated nuance about it being "symbolic".

Turkish envoy summoned

Meanwhile, Australia's prime minister said he would summon Turkey's ambassador in Canberra yesterday to explain "very offensive" comments made by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the wake of the Christchurch massacre. Erdogan, while campaigning for local elections, presented the attack as part of an assault on Turkey and Islam and warned anti-Muslim Australians would suffer the same fate as soldiers at Gallipoli, a blood-drenched WWI battle.

"I find it a very offensive comment, of course I do, and I will be calling in the Turkish ambassador today to meet with me to discuss these issues," Scott Morrison told national broadcaster ABC. Erdogan had already been sharply rebuked by New Zealand



CHRISTCHURCH: Floral tributes to those who were gunned down at the two mosques are seen against a wall bordering the Botanical Garden in Christchurch. — AFP

for his comments and for using gruesome video shot by the Christchurch mosque gunman as an election campaign prop. Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters protested on Monday that such politicization of the massacre "imperils the future and safety of the New Zealand people and our people abroad, and it's totally unfair".

Peters announced on Tuesday that he would be travelling to Turkey this week at Istanbul's request to attend a special meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Three Turkish nationals were wounded in the rampage that killed 50 worshippers at two mosques in the southern New Zealand city of Christchurch on Friday. The accused gunman, a self-avowed white supremacist from Australia,

livestreamed much of the attack and spread a manifesto on social media claiming it was a strike against Muslim "invaders".

The manifesto references Turkey and the minarets of Istanbul's famed Hagia Sophia, now a museum, that was once a church before becoming a mosque during the Ottoman empire. "This is not an isolated event, it is something more organized," he said during a campaign event on Monday in Canakkale in western Turkey. "They are testing us with the message they are sending us from New Zealand, 16,500 km (10,250 miles) from here." Erdogan did not project the video at the Monday event. Peters said he had complained directly to visiting Turkish Vice-President Fuat Oktay and Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu. — Agencies

Hamas' crackdown quells Gaza demos; protest calls persist

GAZA: Gaza has seen regular protests along the Israeli border for the past year, but new demonstrations in recent days have been much less to the liking of the strip's rulers Hamas. Over the course of several days beginning last week, hundreds of Palestinians gathered in multiple locations in protests against rising prices but also in opposition to the Islamist group, which has controlled Gaza since 2007. Hamas security forces cracked down harshly, beating protesters and arresting hundreds, rights groups say.

Demonstrations have since petered out, though organizers have called for fresh rallies in the coming days. United Nations envoy Nickolay Mladenov on Sunday condemned a "campaign of arrests and violence" by Hamas security forces. "The long-suffering people of Gaza were protesting the dire economic situation and demanded an improvement in the quality of life in the Gaza Strip," said Mladenov, envoy to Israel and the Palestinian territories. The protests are a rare internal challenge to Hamas, which has fought three wars with Israel since 2008.

Small numbers gathered in various spots from Thursday to Sunday, calling for Hamas authorities to reduce taxes and improve the economic situation. Youth unemployment in Gaza is 70 percent, according to the World Bank, which says the main cause is the Israeli blockade of the strip along with Egypt's border having been largely closed in recent years. Israel says the blockade is necessary to restrict Hamas, but rights groups argue the measures amount to collective punishment of the roughly two million residents.

Facing financial shortfalls, Hamas has increased taxes on cigarettes and other imported goods. Tomatoes have up to trebled in price, while many other basic goods have spiked.



RAFAH: Palestinian protesters take part in a night demonstration near the fence along the border with Israel, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP

In response to the protests, hundreds of people have been at least temporarily detained, according to rights groups, while a number have talked of arbitrary beatings at the hands of Hamas forces.

More than 1,000 people have been questioned or detained, according to the Independent Commission for Human Rights, founded by the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority, which Hamas chased from Gaza in 2007. Osama Kahlout, a journalist based in Deir Balah in central Gaza, was broadcasting the protests live on Facebook as they occurred outside his house. He said a group of men stormed his house and beat him for 10 to 15 minutes, which he said left his back covered in bruises.

A senior member of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas's Fatah, Hamas's rivals, was badly beaten near his

home Monday evening. Fatah accused Hamas gangs of being behind the attack on Atef Abu Seif, though Hamas denied it and pledged to investigate. Demonstrators insist the protests are not primarily political, but instead economic. The rallies have been watched closely in Israel, including by those hoping to draw further attention to them.

Fatah has also expressed support for protesters, and Hamas accuses outside hands of stirring trouble. Iyad al-Bozum, spokesman for Hamas's interior ministry, said the authorities were "not against demonstrations protesting the difficult conditions of our people in Gaza because of the blockade". "But we will not allow them to be exploited in order to provoke chaos and sabotage," he said, adding Hamas believed calm had been restored. He did not respond to questions about violence by the security forces. — AFP

Indonesia death toll tops 100, dozens still missing

SENTANI: The death toll from flash floods and landslides that tore through Indonesia's Papua region has topped 100 with dozens more still missing, the disaster agency said yesterday. Nearly 10,000 people have moved to shelters while at least 104 victims are confirmed to have died and 79 are unaccounted for in the aftermath of the disaster, triggered by heavy rain on Saturday.

Scores have suffered injuries, including cuts and broken bones, while some 40 unidentified bodies would be buried in a mass grave on Thursday, officials said. Many survivors fear more floods will rip through hard-hit Papua, which shares a border with independent Papua New Guinea on an island just north of Australia. "The increasing number of evacuees has made the shelters very crowded and uncomfortable," said national disaster agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho.

As teams loaded mud-caked corpses into body bags, the search for survivors was hampered by mountains of debris including rocks and fallen trees. Hundreds of homes, bridges, schools and other public facilities were destroyed. More than

2,300 personnel have been deployed to search for the missing victims and to clean up debris. Flooding is common in Indonesia, especially during the rainy season which runs from October to April.

In January, floods and landslides killed at least 70 people on Sulawesi island, while earlier this month hundreds in West Java province were forced to evacuate when torrential rains triggered severe flooding. Meanwhile, three people were killed—including two Malaysian tourists—and some 182 were injured after an earthquake on Sunday triggered a landslide on the Indonesian tourist island of Lombok, next to Bali.

Lombok was rocked by several earthquakes last summer, killing more than 500 people and leaving over 150,000 homeless. And in September last year, the country was hit by an earthquake and tsunami in Palu on Sulawesi island which killed around 2,200 people. The Southeast Asian archipelago of some 17,000 islands is one of the most disaster-prone nations on Earth, straddling the Pacific Ring of Fire, where tectonic plates collide. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are common. — AFP



SENTANI: Soldiers put victim's bodies into body bags in Sentani. Flash floods in Indonesia's eastern Papua province have killed at least 100 people. — AFP

Czech Muslims cry foul over imam's call to take up arms

PRAGUE: Czech Muslims cried foul yesterday after the head of Prague's Muslim Community called on them to take up arms in the wake of the Christchurch attack. Leonid Kushnarenko published his video message on Facebook Sunday, two days after an Australian white supremacist killed 50 people in two mosques during a rampage in the New Zealand city.

"In light of the recent tragic events I inform all our members, in particular men—all who want... to get armed to protect their health and property, contact me and I'll help you," Kushnarenko said. The Denik N daily quoted the Ukrainian-born lawyer as saying he made his appeal due to "Islamophobic sentiments" in the Czech Republic. Czech President Milos Zeman won his second term last year with some strongly anti-Muslim rhetoric, while the anti-migrant far-right SPD party has 22 lawmakers in the 200-seat parliament.

"It's a matter of prevention. I said it to prevent crazy people from going to a mosque and doing evil," Kushnarenko told the daily. "We won't support such appeals, I disagree," Muneeb Hassan Alrawi, head of the Czech Muslim Communities Centre, told Denik N. "It's a wrong step." The Prague Muslim Community said on Facebook Tuesday that "any statements or acts by... chairman Kushnarenko are his private (activity) and do not represent the views of Muslims living in Prague or the Czech Republic". — AFP

'\$8 fine' for elevator sexual assault sparks outrage in Vietnam

HANOI: Vietnamese citizens were outraged after a man was fined \$8 for forcibly kissing a woman in an elevator, a rare public outburst in a country where sexual assault is scarcely spoken about openly. The #MeToo movement never took off in Vietnam, a conservative communist country where gender-based violence is widespread but remains a taboo topic. Citizens took to social media this week after a man was fined 200,000 dong, or \$8.61, for forcibly kissing a woman in an elevator in her Hanoi apartment building.

CCTV footage showed the man chatting to the woman before cornering her and suddenly jumping on her before she scrambles out of the elevator as he grabbed her arm. The footage quickly went viral, stoking public anger. "The fine... was a mockery and humiliation against the dignity of Vietnamese women," said Facebook user Duong Dai Trieu Lam yesterday. Office worker Nguyen Trang told AFP: "It's ridiculous, I can't accept this... I'm worried for my kids and myself".

Unlike rape, sexual assault is not a criminal offence in Vietnam, but is considered an administrative violation falling under the category of "indecent speech and behaviour". The maximum fine for sexual assault is \$13. An online petition calling for an amendment to the law gathered steam yesterday. Official data on sexual harassment is not routinely published in Vietnam, though 87 percent of women and girls experienced sexual harassment in public, according to a 2014 survey of 2,000 women by the NGO ActionAid.

The last comprehensive survey on gender violence in 2010 published by the World Health Organization and the Vietnamese government said 34 percent of women reported regular abuse by their spouses. — AFP

International

Stakes rise for Boeing; EU and Canada step up scrutiny of MAX after crashes

Boeing and US regulator face awkward questions

ADDIS ABABA: Europe and Canada said they would seek their own guarantees over the safety of Boeing's 737 MAX, further complicating plans to get the aircraft flying worldwide after they were grounded in the wake of two accidents killing more than 300 people. As the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) analyses Boeing's plans for a software fix prompted by the first crash five months ago, the European Union's aviation safety agency EASA promised its own deep look at any design improvements. "We will not allow the aircraft to fly if we have not found acceptable answers to all our questions," EASA Executive Director Patrick Ky told an EU parliament committee hearing.

Canada said it would independently certify the 737 MAX in the future, rather than accepting FAA validation, and would conduct an "exhaustive review" of the automated flight control system in MAX aircraft, known as MCAS, which experts believe may have played a role in both crashes. Canada also said it would send a team to help US authorities evaluate proposed design changes and decide if others were needed. Boeing Co declined to comment, the company on Tuesday reshuffled the top executives in its commercial airplanes unit to focus on the accident investigations. US government officials do not believe the two crashes will lead to a worldwide shift away from FAA certifications but US lawmakers, as well as federal prosecutors, are scrutinizing the certification of the Boeing 737 MAX. The chairman of the US House of Representatives transportation committee and another key Democrat asked the Transportation Department's inspector general on Tuesday to examine key decisions made by the FAA in certifying the 737 MAX jet for use.

The FAA declined to comment on that request or on

actions taken by other countries, but said in a statement that "the current, historic aviation safety record in the US and globally is achieved through the FAA's robust processes and full collaboration with the aviation community." The US Transportation Department's inspector general plans to audit the FAA's certification of the jet, an official with the office said on Tuesday. The office can recommend changes or improvements to how the FAA operates. Boeing said it would cooperate with the audit.

The unusual public intervention by two leading regulators came as a probe into the final minutes of Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 turned toward secrets hidden in the cockpit voice recorder. The voices of Captain Yared Getachew and First Officer Ahmednur Mohammed could help explain the March 10 crash of the Boeing 737 MAX that has worrying parallels with another disaster involving the same model off Indonesia in October.

The twin disasters killed 346 people, but there is no conclusive evidence so far that they are linked. Black box data was downloaded in France but only Ethiopian experts leading the probe have access to the dialogue between Getachew, 29, and Mohammed, 25. The data was back in Addis Ababa on Tuesday, sources familiar with the probe said. Experts believe the new MCAS system, which is designed to stop stalling by dipping the nose, may have been a factor in both crashes, with pilots unable to override it as their jets plunged downwards. Both came down just minutes after take-off after erratic flight patterns and loss of control reported by the pilots. However, every accident is a unique chain of human and technical factors, experts say. The prestige of Ethiopian Airlines, one of Africa's most successful companies, and Boeing, the



LE BOURGET: Photo shows one of the two black box recorders of the Ethiopian Airlines 737 MAX which crashed minutes after taking off from Addis Ababa airport. — AFP

world's biggest planemaker and a massive US exporter, are at stake.

Lawmakers and safety experts are questioning how thoroughly regulators vetted the MAX model and how well pilots were trained on new features. For now, global regulators have grounded the existing fleet of more than 300 MAX aircraft, and deliveries of nearly 5,000 more - worth well over \$500 billion - are on hold. Pressure on Chicago-headquartered Boeing has grown with news that

federal prosecutors are scrutinizing how carefully the MAX model was developed, two people briefed on the matter said. The US Justice Department is also looking at the FAA's oversight of Boeing, one of the people said. And a federal grand jury last week issued at least one subpoena to an entity involved in the plane's development. US President Donald Trump plans to nominate former Delta Air Lines executive Steve Dickson to head the FAA on Tuesday. —Reuters

News in brief

Power plant 'triggers quake'

SEOUL: A rare earthquake in South Korea was triggered by the country's first experimental geothermal power plant, a team of government-commissioned experts said yesterday. The southeastern port city of Pohang was rattled by a 5.4-magnitude earthquake in November 2017 - the second-most powerful tremor ever in the normally seismically stable South. Dozens of people were injured and more than 1,500 left homeless - while a nationwide college entrance exam was postponed in an unprecedented move as authorities scrambled with recovery efforts. A year-long government-commissioned study pointed to the geothermal power plant as the cause. —AFP

6 police killed in SW Pakistan

QUETTA: At least six Pakistani policemen were killed in a raid on a checkpoint in southwestern Balochistan province, officials said yesterday, in the latest Taliban-claimed attack in the restive area. The assault took place in the mountainous Sanjawi area of Ziarat district, some 80 kilometers east of the provincial capital Quetta. "It was a sudden attack. The attackers came on motorcycles and killed all six personnel on duty," Qadir Bakhsh, a senior government official in Ziarat said. Bakhsh said the attackers were armed with automatic weapons and fled after the assault yesterday, adding that a search operation has been launched in the area. The Pakistani Taliban later claimed responsibility for the attack in an email sent to media. Faisal Agha-another senior government official-confirmed the attack and toll. —AFP

China backs Pakistan efforts

BEIJING: China backed its "iron friend" Pakistan yesterday, applauding its recent counter-terrorism measures as Islamabad faces criticism for harboring militants. An attack on Indian-administered Kashmir last month killed 40 Indian security personnel and was claimed by a Pakistan-based militant group. "China commends Pakistan's recent strong counter-terrorism measures at home," Foreign Minister Wang Yi told reporters after meeting with his Pakistani counterpart. "We fully support Pakistan in carrying through its counterterrorism campaign," Wang said. Since March 5, Pakistani authorities have arrested hundreds of suspected Islamist militants and shuttered more than 700 madrassas, mosques, and clinics linked to banned groups. —AFP

Karadzic sentence increased

THE HAGUE: UN judges yesterday ordered former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic to spend the rest of his life in jail for the "sheer scale and systematic cruelty" of his war crimes a quarter of a century ago. Karadzic, 73, stood motionless and grim-faced in the dock as judges said they had upheld his 2016 convictions for genocide and war crimes during the conflict in Bosnia, and increased his original 40-year sentence. The panel of appeals judges in The Hague "imposes a sentence of life imprisonment" after rejecting Karadzic's appeal against his conviction for atrocities including the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, head judge Vagn Joensen said. Judges at the original trial "underestimated the extreme gravity of Karadzic's responsibility for the most grave crimes committed during the period of conflict, noted for their sheer scale and systematic cruelty", Joensen said. — AFP

Probe shows parallels with Indonesian disaster

The twin disasters killed 346 people, but there is no conclusive evidence so far that they are linked. Black box data was downloaded in France but only Ethiopian experts leading the probe have access to the dialogue between Getachew, 29, and Mohammed, 25. The data was back in Addis Ababa on Tuesday, sources familiar with the probe said. Experts believe the new MCAS system, which is designed to stop stalling by dipping the nose, may have been a factor in both crashes, with pilots unable to override it as their jets plunged downwards. Both came down just minutes after take-off after erratic flight patterns and loss of control reported by the pilots. However, every accident is a unique chain of human and technical factors, experts say. The prestige of Ethiopian Airlines, one of Africa's most successful companies, and Boeing, the

Trump and right-wing Bolsonaro announce a special relationship

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump heaped praise yesterday on right-wing Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and received plenty back-in announcing a special relationship that he said could even see the Latin American country join NATO. At a joint news conference on the sun-soaked Rose Garden lawn, Trump and the man dubbed "Trump of the Tropics" let the mutual compliments flow.

"I have always admired the United States of America. And this sense of admiration has just increased after you took office and the presidency," Bolsonaro said. Trump, stressing Brazil's partnership in the US-led campaign to force hard-left Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro from power, said Bolsonaro

British PM seeks brief Brexit delay from hesitant EU

LONDON: Prime Minister Theresa May asked EU leaders yesterday for a three-month delay to Brexit amid continued political deadlock in London, but Brussels warned the postponement carried "serious legal and political risks". Exactly 1,000 days on from Britain's seismic 2016 referendum vote to leave the European Union and with just nine days left until the scheduled departure date, the divorce deal is blocked in parliament and political turmoil grips the country. Faced with the potentially catastrophic impact of Britain leaving its biggest trading partner with no deal on March 29, May said she would try one last time to pass her deal next week.

If it passes, it would still need to be ratified, and she told MPs she has written to EU President Donald Tusk asking to push Brexit back until June 30. If she fails a third time, May said parliament would have to decide what happened next - but said she viewed any longer extension as "a failure to deliver on the referendum decision". She hinted that her own future was on the line, saying: "As prime minister, I am not prepared to delay Brexit any further than June 30."

And the prospect of Britain having to hold European Parliament elections at the end of May would be "unacceptable", she said. May will travel to Brussels today for an EU summit where she will put her request in person to the other 27 EU leaders, who must unanimously approve any delay. But European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said it was unlikely they would reach a decision without a clear signal from London on what MPs want, suggesting another meeting might be needed next week.

The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, also warned EU leaders against the June 30 date saying a shorter delay to May 23 or a longer one to "at least until 2019" would be preferable.

'End of the road'

May and the EU hammered out a divorce agreement over the past two years but MPs have twice rejected the plan by heavy margins. Her original plan to hold a third vote this week, before the EU summit, was dramatically blocked by Commons speaker John Bercow, who said May could not keep bringing the deal back to MPs without changes. European leaders are now demanding

was "doing a fantastic job" and had "brought the country together."

For years Bolsonaro was little more than a marginal congressman, but his Trump-like campaign in 2018, promising to combat corruption and crime, and to end politics as usual, propelled him to surprise victory. His hard-right views, including frequent expressions of support for Brazil's past period of military rule, horrified the left and drove deep divisions in Latin America's biggest nation. But at the press conference, his condemnation of what he called "fake news"-opponents say he is referring merely to critical reports-and references to deeply conservative social values pleased Trump. "We have many views that are similar," Trump said.

Brazil in NATO?

Trump spent much of the news conference discussing efforts to squeeze Venezuela's authorities, which he warned could face many more sanctions than those already imposed in an attempt to cripple the government's finances. Brazil, which shares a long border with Venezuela, is important in the strategy. In Bolsonaro, an ex-soldier who idolizes the former lead-



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump and Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro (left) leave after a press conference in the Rose Garden at the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

ers of Brazil's anti-communist military dictatorship, Trump has a ready ally against Maduro. In return, Bolsonaro got one of the main items on his wish list: agreement for Brazil to be given NATO privileges. This "major non-NATO ally" status would ease Brazil's access to US weaponry and other military links. —AFP



LONDON: Britain's Leader of the House of Commons Andrea Leadsom reacts as she leaves from 10 Downing Street in London yesterday. — AFP

Britain tells them clearly what it wants. "As long as we don't know what Britain could say yes to, no decision can be taken on our side either," Juncker told German broadcaster Deutschlandfunk. He said the deal agreed was the final offer, warning: "Nothing more can be done, we've reached the end of the road."

"If other scenarios are being discussed, we'd need a new road." Juncker said May needed to present Brussels with an agreement approved by parliament as well as "a clear timetable". Given that this was unlikely before the summit's start today, "we will probably need to meet again next week". European Parliament vice-president Mairead McGuinness said she expected the EU will be willing to grant a Brexit extension if the purpose is clear. However, she told BBC television there were concerns over continued uncertainty from a "rolling cliff-edge".

'National humiliation'

Brexit-backing British newspapers echoed the general sense of frustration. The Daily Mail's editorial read: "1,000 days of incompetence, betrayal and now national humiliation... how did victory turn to this?" Addressing MPs at her weekly question and answer session in the House of Commons, May expressed her own frustration at the deadlock. She said any delay to Brexit beyond June would require Britain to take part in May elections for the European Parliament, which would be "unacceptable". However, opposition Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn blamed the prime minister's "incompetence, failure and intransigence", saying she refused to accept her deal had failed. —AFP

US drone strikes in Somalia escalate as death toll mounts

NAIROBI: Amnesty International yesterday accused US forces of killing several civilians in Somalia as they "dramatically increased" the number of air strikes in the volatile country, but the US military denied the deaths. The US military said it had carried out 110 strikes by drones and manned aircraft in the past two years in Somalia, killing over 800 people, but insisted every death was that of a "terrorist." But Amnesty researchers who investigated five air strikes in detail reported at least 14 civilians had been killed-raising fears the total dead in the scores of attacks may be far higher.

"The attacks appear to have violated international humanitarian law, and some may amount to war crimes," Amnesty said in the report, titled "The Hidden US War in Somalia". The study is based on 150 interviews including witnesses, family members of those killed and security experts. Their reports were corroborated by satellite imagery, photographs of the deep craters of the explosions, as well as munition fragments collected from the sites.

US strikes, which included missiles fired by manned aircraft as well as drones, targeted Somalia's Al-Qaeda linked jihadist insurgents, Al-Shabaab. Amnesty said that since April 2017, the US "has dramatically increased the number of air strikes - from manned aircraft and unmanned drones - it has launched in Somalia, tripling the annual rate of attacks." It said the number of US air strikes is more than the number of those it carried out in Yemen and Libya combined during the same period.

But the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) insisted they had all been legitimate targets as members of Al-Shabaab, and that the Amnesty report was incorrect. "Since June 2017, AFRICOM conducted 110 airstrikes in Somalia, eliminating more than 800 terrorists," it said in a statement, adding that "our assessments found that no AFRICOM airstrike resulted in any civilian casualty or injury." AFRICOM added that it was "in the interest of the terrorist group al-Shabaab to untruthfully claim civilian casualties."

Amnesty's military expert Brian Castner said that "the civilian death toll we've uncovered in just a handful of strikes suggests the shroud of secrecy surrounding the US role in Somalia's war is actually a smokescreen for impunity. —AFP

International

Billionaire remanded in custody after London court appearance

Indian diamond magnate wanted over bank fraud

LONDON: Fugitive billionaire jeweler Nirav Modi, wanted by Indian authorities over a \$2 billion loan fraud at state-run Punjab National Bank (PNB) was remanded in custody after appearing before a British court yesterday. India asked Britain last August to extradite Modi, 48, whose diamonds have sparkled on famous Hollywood stars, after he was accused of massive bank fraud, charges he denies. The diamond magnate was arrested in the Holborn area of central London on Tuesday after he went into a bank to open an account and a member of staff contacted police.

Yesterday, he appeared at London's Westminster Magistrates Court accused by India of two charges of conspiracy to fraud and conspiracy to conceal criminal property. He spoke only to confirm his name, age and address, and that he did not agree to being extradited. His lawyer, George Hepburne Scott, said his client would deny the charges which he believes are politically motivated.

Despite offering to put up 500,000 pound (\$658,650) security, he was told he would not be given bail. District Judge Marie Mallon said there were substantial grounds to believe he might not surrender to bail and no conditions would satisfy her to grant his release. He was remanded in custody until his next appearance at the same court on March 29. PNB shares closed up 3 percent on the news of

Modi's arrest. Modi left the country before India's biggest banking fraud came to light early last year.

PNB, India's second-largest state-run bank, said in 2018 that two jewellery groups headed by Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi had defrauded it by raising credit from other Indian banks using fraudulent guarantees issued by rogue staff of the bank. Modi and Choksi have both denied wrongdoing. Prior to his arrest, India's main opposition Congress party had used it as a weapon to target the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party ahead of an April-May general election. Prakash Javadekar, a minister in Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet, said all the fugitives would have to come back and "return the looted money to the nation".

In December, a British court agreed that another high-profile Indian businessman, aviation tycoon Vijay Mallya, could be extradited to his homeland to face fraud charges. Mallya is currently appealing the decision. Separately, the Enforcement Directorate (ED), India's main financial crime-fighting agency, said that a court yesterday issued a non-bailable warrant against Nirav Modi's wife. The court also allowed the ED to auction 11 vehicles belonging to Modi - including Rolls Royce, Porsche, Mercedes and Toyota models - and allowed income tax authorities to auction 68 paintings owned by him. —Reuters



Modi arrested in London after bank tip-off



NEW DELHI: An Indian supporter of the Congress Party keeps his hand on the face of the photo of billionaire jeweler Nirav Modi during a protest in New Delhi. —AFP

Chasing youth vote, Indian parties blitz smartphones with political cartoons

PUNE: Ganesh Bhalerao is a cartoonist hoping to go viral in the battle to secure Prime Minister Narendra Modi's re-election when India votes over the next two months. Hired by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to find amusing ways to lionise Modi or lampoon opposition leader Rahul Gandhi, Bhalerao is a social media warrior in an election campaign being fought online as never before. "Political parties are realizing the importance of cartoons as they elicit a huge response," the 29-year-old former art teacher told Reuters while feverishly sketching a piece glorifying the Modi government for ordering India's recent air strikes against Pakistan.

Cartoons posted on BJP-run Facebook pages, Twitter handles and WhatsApp groups are shared hundreds of times and reach millions, Bhalerao told Reuters as he worked in his apart-

ment in the western city of Pune. "A cartoon conveys the message of a 500-1,000 word article in just a minute," he said. The scale of elections in India means voting is staggered, with the first regions going to vote on April 11, and the count to be completed on May 23.

Each day Bhalerao reads the local newspapers, watches the television news, and checks his WhatsApp messages, seeking ideas for an image or issue that might resonate with supporters of the Hindu nationalist BJP. Being a Modi supporter himself makes it easier. Like the BJP, Gandhi's Congress Party and other rivals have their own armies of artists, video editors and journalists to create online content for the social media war. Hired for the campaign season, they get paid a few hundred dollars a month, according to half a dozen party workers who spoke with Reuters.

Social media has made it a lot easier for political parties to get out their message to more voters. But nowadays, India's masses want politics served with more pizzazz. Nearly two-thirds of the population is under 35 years old. Most have little time or patience for attending political rallies, or wading through turgid party manifestoes. "The larger audience is now more inclined to short videos, cartoons and visuals," Diptansu Chaudhury told Reuters in Kolkata, where he heads the IT wing of Trinamool Congress, a powerful regional party in West Bengal.

Crisis at Jet Airways worsens as it grounds planes, faces strike

MUMBAI: India's Jet Airways was fighting multiple crises yesterday after grounding six planes, leaving it with only a third of its fleet flying, while pilots have threatened to walk out and a major shareholder is reportedly looking to offload its huge stake. The problems at India's number-two carrier come as other airlines struggle to turn a profit despite the sector rapidly expanding in the country over recent years. Jet, which employs more than 20,000 people, is gasping

under debts of more than \$1 billion and has now been forced to ground a total of 78 of its 119 aircraft after failing to pay lenders and aircraft lessors.

In a statement late Tuesday announcing its latest grounding, the firm it said it was "actively engaging" with lenders to secure fresh liquidity and wanted to "minimize disruption". But with hundreds of customers left stranded, Jet's social media accounts have been flooded with often suddenly stranded passengers demanding information, new flight tickets and refunds. "@jetairways We book our flights in advance so that we save on travel cost and you are sending cancellation (message) now?!", read one irate tweet yesterday.

"I have sent a DM (direct message) regarding my ticket details. Please respond!" said Sachin Deshpande, according to his Twitter profile a design engineer. Another, Ankit Maloo, wrote: "Received an email for all together cancella-

Limited oversight

India is by far the world's biggest democracy, but most of its 1.3 billion population belong to lower income groups. And, at a time when more mature democracies than India's are grappling with the impact of social media, there are concerns about the electorate's susceptibility to false messages spread online. As more than two-thirds of Indians live in rural areas, political parties are trying to extend their social media reach through regional languages, to go beyond urban areas where Hindi and English are more commonly spoken.

When Modi's BJP won a landslide victory in 2014, social media had not become as pervasive as it is today. Data plans were expensive and pricey smartphones were unaffordable for far more people. Now there are more than 400 million smartphones users and consumers are able to access nearly 50 gigabytes of data for as little as \$3 per month. It all helps explain why social media platforms like Facebook, its messenger WhatsApp and micro-blogging site Twitter have become such fierce political battlegrounds. In 2014, parties spent less than half a million dollars on digital advertising, but this time round it is likely to be closer to \$26 million, according to a top media and marketing firm, which did not want to be named. India's Election Commission has asked candidates to report their spending on social media and it also requires them to seek approval for advertisements, but such rules can be bypassed by the use of proxies. —Reuters

India scion Priyanka Gandhi lambasts Modi on home turf

VARANASI: The newest star in India's Nehru-Gandhi dynasty wrapped up a pre-election boat tour along the Ganges river yesterday, disembarking in Narendra Modi's home constituency to attack the prime minister's record. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, sister of Rahul Gandhi who wants to unseat Modi in elections starting on April 11, announced her long-awaited entry into politics in January, bolstering the hopes of the opposition Congress party, which has been dominated by her family for generations. Their father was Rajiv Gandhi, assassinated in 1991, their grandmother Indira Gandhi, killed by her Sikh bodyguards in 1984, and their great-grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister.

Arriving after her three-day cruise in Varanasi, the northern holy city famous for its riverside cremations where Modi stood for election in 2014, Priyanka said people must stand up against his "anti-people" policies. "You can bring about a change. You must raise your voice for a new government who will make policies for you and understand your problems," the 47-year-old said. "The farmers of this country are suffering. He is neck-deep in debt and is committing suicide. He does not get seeds and fertilizers on time, he is not getting the right price for his produce," she added.

The opposition has been targeting Modi's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over a lack of jobs, slowing growth and the desperate situation of farmers in the lead-up to the gargantuan election which ends May 19. The centre-left Congress party, which has ruled India for about half a century since the country became independent in 1947, was thrashed by the BJP five years ago, with Modi promising to create jobs, stamp out corruption, and bring "Achhe Din" ("Good Days"). —AFP



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Venezuela doctors under regime pressure during UN visit

Venezuelan doctors have come under pressure from President Nicolas Maduro's government for trying to alert a visiting UN mission about the severe lack of hospital medicine and equipment, NGOs say. Venezuelan authorities say that US sanctions freezing \$30 billion in assets have blocked imports of basic items including medicine. But they have roughly stomped down on dissenting voices saying much of the resulting medical emergency is the fault of mismanagement, the NGOs allege.

"They forcibly booted out the head of a medical school in Maracay (west of Caracas) and since then we haven't heard from her," said Jaime Lorenzo, executive director of one association called Medicos Unidos (Doctors United). "She protested against the repression of medical staff," he said. An opposition lawmaker, Jose Manuel Olivares, who is also an oncologist and radiotherapist, on Twitter said she was "the third doctor in two weeks to be persecuted for having denounced the situation in the hospitals."

On Sunday a clash erupted when a pro-regime crowd threw stones at hospital staff in the northwest city of Barquisimeto as they waited for the arrival of representatives of the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights. According to Medicos Unidos, the repression has worsened over the past two weeks. "We have drawn attention to our patients dying for lack of supplies and equipment. Doctors have been arrested without any reason at all," Lorenzo said.

'Precarious situation'

On Saturday, a young doctor in the state of Carabobo, Ronnie Villasmil, tweeted that he was leaving Venezuela after being summoned by police for having contacted the UN mission. "Now I have to flee like a criminal and my mother is crying over it," he wrote. "They want to deprive me of liberty. My only crime is wanting to raise the alarm over the precarious situation in Carabobo's hospitals," he said.

The visiting five-member UN team has declined all contact with media. It is officially in the country on a "preliminary technical mission" to prepare for a possible visit by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet, who was formally invited by Maduro's government in November.

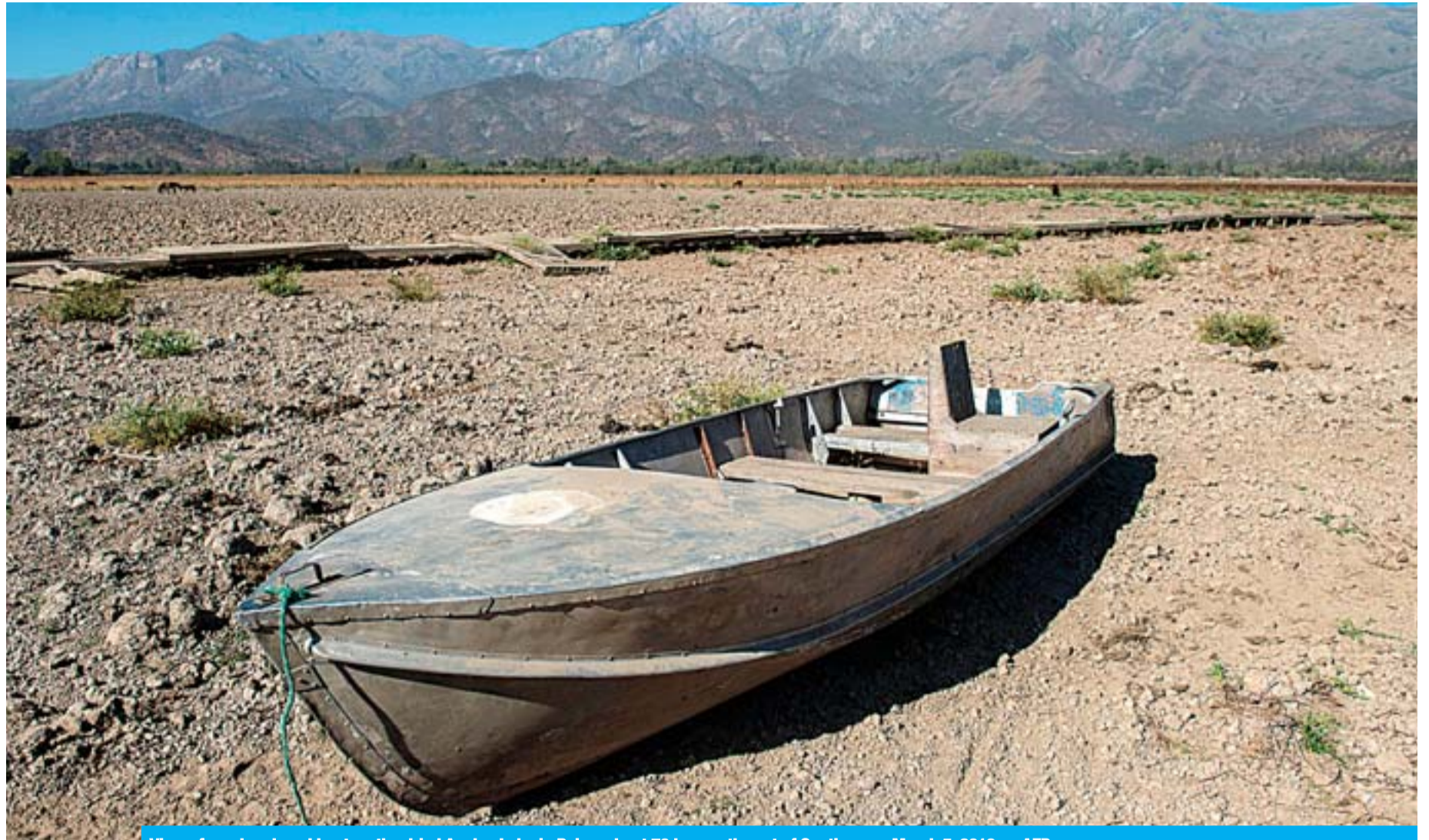
The team was finally able to visit the hospital in Barquisimeto when doctors and local officials provided an escort. A doctor who spoke with the visitors said she told them of all that was missing at the hospital. "I told them that patients we operated on can't get chemotherapy here and those unable to buy it abroad die. And when I told them how much we earn, their jaws dropped," she told AFP on condition of anonymity.

In crisis-hit Venezuela, a doctor earns between 18,000 and 30,000 bolivars per month—the equivalent of \$6 to \$10. The non-governmental organizations also said authorities had gone to length to try to cover up the extent of the problems by hastily slapping fresh paint down and hauling in last-minute deliveries. "In Valencia (in Carabobo state) and Barquisimeto we saw two trucks delivering medicine and equipment to hospitals the mission was going to visit," Lorenzo said.

Exodus of doctors

A human rights NGO critical of the government, Provea, slammed "these camouflage operations before the UN mission's arrival," saying the sudden appearance of supplies was "testimony to the government's negligence and cruelty". In Venezuela's public hospitals, 90 percent of medical items are missing and nearly all the state laboratories are closed, according to a survey by another NGO, Doctors for Health, with the opposition-ruled National Assembly. Maduro's government has released no official figures on the state of public hospitals for three years.

The situation in the impoverished yet oil-rich South American country has been worsened by an exodus of doctors, tens of thousands of whom have left, according to Lorenzo. According to the UN, 3.4 million Venezuelans have abandoned their country, with more than three-quarters of them - 2.7 million - leaving since 2015. Matters were made worse when a weeklong, nationwide blackout early this month paralyzed the country and knocked out power to hospitals, many of which did not have working generators. —AFP



View of an abandoned boat on the dried Aculeo Lake in Paine, about 70 km southwest of Santiago on March 5, 2019. —AFP

Drought wipes Chilean lake from map

The cows and horses would have come for the last blades of grass. Now their bones are scattered on the cracked earth, victims of drought that wiped Santiago's weekend playground Lake Aculeo from the map. Lake Aculeo's demise is so sudden and complete it seems as if someone had pulled a giant plug and let all the water out. So sudden was it that as recently as 2011 the 4.6 square-mile (12 square-kilometer) lagoon was a thriving weekend getaway for people from the Chilean capital an hour away.

Thousands came here to swim, water-ski, sail or simply cool off in the long austral summer. They camped along its shores and lined up for tables at busy lakeside restaurants. Now, water and cooling summers on Lake Aculeo are a fast receding memory. "We have been suffering drought for 10 years, and now the lake has disappeared, with tourism, camping, business, everything," laments Marcos Contreras, a campsite employee.

Wooden jetties now poke out grotesquely over the flat plain of the lakebed. Canoes and speedboats gather dust on the former lakeshore. A giant sign on the approach shows the lake as it was - stark blue against the back-

drop of the towering Andes - saying "Help us to protect the lagoon."

Rainfall dries up

Once boasting a depth of 20 feet (six meters) the water level began to fall from 2011. By last May, the lake had dried out completely. There's no single explanation, though climate change is a key factor. Locals and experts point to a drastic decrease in rainfall. But agricultural practices requiring vast amounts of water and lakeside development are also factors. "My grandparents remember when torrential rains fell for a minimum of a week, and today, if it's raining for two days, we're lucky," said Camila Nunez, 20, who works in a nearby restaurant.

Average annual rainfall in central Chile during the 1980s was nearly 14 inches (350 millimeters). By 2018, that had fallen by half. Scientists predict it will continue to fall because of global warming. "We are living through a very prolonged period of drought that has lasted several years," said Eduardo Bustos, director of climate change research at the Catholic University of Chile. "In the future, we see that there is a tendency for rainfall to decrease, so it is

very likely that the next few years will be as dry as those we have experienced."

Around 70 percent of Chile's population live in drought-prone areas where rainfall has decreased significantly. Experts estimate temperatures will continue to rise until 2030 and water levels inland will drop by as much as 30 percent. But other factors have contributed to the ecological disaster at Lake Aculeo. A viable lake meant booming tourism. It proved a magnet for developers. Second homes and shops mushroomed, hiking up domestic water demand in a short time.

Farming put added pressure on the ecosystem which led to over-exploitation of the lake for irrigation purposes, particularly for the lucrative avocado crop. "The need for water by crops in the adjacent agricultural area generated pressure on the lagoon" until it was empty, said Bustos. What's left behind is a dusty landscape of crusty earth and spindly, dried shrubs. And summer memories for people like Antonia Romero. The 26-year-old who grew up on its shores and is now employed at one of the few functioning campsites, left to reflect on its demise: "We were killing the lake little by little." —AFP

At orphanage, elephants find new life, love

Luggard, a lively three-year-old, limps behind the rest of his ragtag troupe of orphan elephants, halting to graze or rub against a tree. When he was just five months old, Luggard was found struggling to keep up with his herd in Kenya's Tsavo East National Park. He had been shot twice. One bullet pierced his left front foot, and another shattered his right, hind femur just above the knee joint. The calf was discovered "too late for successful surgery," said Edwin Lusichi, 42, head keeper at the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (SWT) elephant nursery in Nairobi National Park, Luggard's new home.

With the rest of the gang of 20 elephant babies in this unusual orphanage, Luggard comes charging with great enthusiasm, though hobbling heavily on his deformed leg, out of the bush for a 9:00 am feeding. The calves greedily slurp from oversized "baby bottles", rumbling contentedly and trumpeting excitedly as they ingest the special mix of human baby formula, water and vitamins. Each calf at the nursery has a tragic story: Orphaned by poachers, drought, or in conflict with humans encroaching ever further into the few wild places left. "We rescue them from just a few days old," DSWT administrator Kirsty Smith told AFP.

The youngest elephant in the center's care is Larro, 10 months. She was found lost and alone in the Maasai Mara game reserve, likely after her family clashed with humans. "Sometimes the elephants get into the communities, farms and homes, people fight them, chase them away, and in the process of the fight they (the babies) get separated from their families," Lusichi explained. Without its mother, an elephant calf will die. They are weaned between the ages of five and 10, when they enter adolescence. Adulthood starts around the age of 18, and left undisturbed, elephants can live to be 70. But poaching claims many prematurely.

Killing for ornaments

About 20,000 African elephants per year - 55 per day - are killed, mainly for their tusks, according to the WWF. "You're killing a whole elephant just to have the tusks! For what - just to have an ornament?" asks an exasperated Lusichi. He points to Enkesha, a tiny two-year-old. "You see the trunk? She was found trapped in a snare" which all but severed the appendage elephants use to breathe, eat, drink water, and communicate.

Enkesha was rescued, stitched up, and after a long rehabilitation, now uses her badly-scarred trunk almost as normal, ripping up grass to eat and sucking up water. The nursery keeps babies like Luggard, Larro and Enkesha until they are about three - the age at which elephants start craving more independence. But until then, they receive 24-7 care with a bottle feeding every three hours. The babies sleep in single wooden rooms at night, and the youngest each have a keeper with them.

"It's similar to spending a night in a bedroom



An orphan elephant is fed with milk by a keeper at the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (DSWT) elephant orphanage in Nairobi on March 12, 2019. —AFP

with... a human baby," said Julius Shivegha, 43, one of the caretakers. "We have to make sure that they are well-covered with a blanket, to keep them warm... They keep waking up for the milk... We are around for reassurance and for company, just to make sure they don't feel lonely."

The bond between animal and human is a close one. During the daytime, the keepers accompany the group as they wander about the savannah, browsing and playing. They call their charges by name, and the elephants respond. As a treat, the keepers prepare mud baths into which the babies dive with abandon, rolling and sliding about, blowing bubbles, and wildly splashing the wet earth around with their trunks.

'Sometimes we just cuddle'

"We sometimes play soccer with them," said Shivegha of the daily routine. "Sometimes we just cuddle them, we hug them. Some of them will keep on trying to just grab your hands or suck your fingers like a pacifier. All of this makes them really close to us... We are their mothers." This makes for a "bittersweet" separation: when the elephants graduate from the nursery, they go to one of three reintegration centers at Tsavo. Here they spend several years learning to live independently, eventually joining a herd or forming their own and setting off into the wider park.

For disabled elephants like Luggard, the SWT runs a haven in Kibwezi Forest with abundant food and water all year round, and no human settlements nearby. In 42 years, the trust has rehabilitated more than 230 orphan elephants. Over 120 are living wild and have given birth to 30 known calves, said Smith. Ending attacks on elephants will be difficult in a part of the world where poverty and the danger posed to human life and property by wild elephant herds, are seen as justification.

To try and change mindsets, the SWT takes children on excursions to cultivate a love for wildlife and provides schools with books and desks with money raised through its projects. Shivegha called for "everyone's support", in creating alternatives to poaching, such as small business opportunities, for people who live near game reserves. Also, crucially, "let's try and stop the end product market, let's tell people to stop buying (ivory)," he urged. —AFP

The powerful meteor that no one saw

At precisely 11:48 am on Dec 18, 2018, a large space rock heading straight for Earth at a speed of 19 miles per second exploded into a vast ball of fire as it entered the atmosphere, 15.9 miles above the Bering Sea. From below, the only witnesses to this fiery event may have been the fish that inhabit the frigid waters between Russia and Alaska, as no human eye caught sight of it. A meteor is the luminous phenomenon that results when an asteroid or other celestial body enters the Earth's atmosphere. It is commonly called a shooting star. If it does not fully vaporize and some part of it hits the Earth's surface, it is called a meteorite.

One of the first researchers to detect the event was Peter Brown, a meteor scientist at the Department of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Western Ontario. On March 8, he was poring over December data from the system used by the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization to detect atmospheric explosions caused by nuclear tests. The system is comprised of seismic and acoustic sensors capable of picking up infrasound, inaudible to the human ear, at a distance of tens of thousands of miles. "Many of them detected the sound waves from this explosion," he told AFP. "If you were directly under it, it would have been deafening."

10 meters in diameter

US military satellites spotted the explosion immediately. But it was not until March 8 that the Air Force officially informed NASA, which logged the event in the database of fireballs it has kept since 1988, according to Lindley Johnson, NASA's Planetary Defense Officer. "It was almost immediately published on our website, within 10 minutes, I would say," he told AFP. NASA's Center for Near Earth Object Studies calculated the energy released by the explosion to be 173 kilotons, more than 10 times as destructive as the 15-kiloton atomic bomb that leveled Hiroshima in 1945.

It was the most powerful explosion in the atmosphere since the fireball that burst over the Russian town of Chelyabinsk in 2013. That was 440 kilotons, and left 1,500 people injured, mostly from glass flying out of smashed windows. The event was described on Monday by scientists at the 50th Lunar and Planetary Science Conference in Texas. When he read a report on the subject on the BBC, Simon Proud, a meteorologist and specialist in satellite data at Oxford University, decided to check the archive of images collected by a Japanese weather satellite, Himawari, which his center permanently monitors.

Bingo: the satellite was in the right place at the right time, he told AFP. Proud published the image on his Twitter account: what looks like an orange ball of fire above the clouds and sea, but which is in fact a cloud of dust from the meteor caught in the sunlight. Brown said. As it turns out, NASA's MODIS satellite also photographed the dust cloud, the agency's Kurtis Thome told AFP Tuesday. "It doesn't surprise me," said Patrick Michel, research director and asteroid specialist at the observatory of the Cote d'Azur in southern France. —AFP

Business

THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2019

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13 Investors flee Bayer after glyphosate trial blow

14 Rags-to-riches Skoda mulls post-Brexit sales miseries



Zain investing heavily in its '4Sight' digital strategy

Zain Group holds AGM with a quorum of 73.91%; dividend of 30 fils for 2018 approved



KUWAIT: Zain Group Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi addresses the Annual General Assembly meeting at Zain Group headquarters in Kuwait yesterday.

KUWAIT: The annual Ordinary General Assembly of Zain Group was held yesterday at the Zain Group's headquarters in Kuwait with a quorum of 73.91 percent that approved the recommended cash dividend of 30 fils per share.

Excerpts from Zain Group Chairman, Ahmed Al-Tahous's statement at the Ordinary General Assembly

Zain continued to achieve positive results and drive its operations to further growth in 2018, despite operational challenges being faced by the regional telecom sector including competition, regulatory and socio-economic factors. The Group has been able to enhance its competitive position thanks to its transformation programs, which are turning the company into an efficient digital lifestyle provider.

2018 witnessed a significant transformation of Zain Group in terms of operational and investment plans, with strong growth in all its financial indicators. This growth was underpinned by the successful implementation of the turnaround strategy in Saudi Arabia which has driven the operation to profitability, coupled with the beneficial regulatory changes and consolidation of Zain Saudi Arabia into Zain Group.

Both Zain Kuwait and Zain Iraq also enjoyed a strong year, with the growth of data revenues and the tremendous development in the enterprise and business sector, all having gained traction.

Today, Zain Group is one of the leading telecommunications companies in the region, focusing on investing in digital services and adopting business models that exceed the expectations and aspirations of its customer base. This strategic approach has helped the company evolve its operations, successfully opening up new revenue streams in digital services, with the aim of establishing a powerhouse for digital transformation in the Middle East.

Excerpts from Zain Group Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi's statement at the Annual General Assembly

Zain Group was resilient towards internal and external challenges and exited the year with healthy profitability and a good reason to be optimistic about 2019 and beyond. We are focused on fulfilling our strategic vision of transforming into a fully integrated and innovative digital lifestyle provider and exceeding customers' expectations in all aspects of the services we provide them.

Zain prides itself in remaining a forward-looking organization, and a central theme of Zain Group's '4Sight' Strategy is to maximize shareholder value through business growth and efficiency while seeking value enhancing opportunities and new revenue streams in the digital arena. We are particularly interested in the profitable growth areas of smart cities, IoT and Enterprise (B2B).

We continue to reinvent, transform and enable the core digitally to support vast investments in network



Zain Group Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi.



Zain Group Chairman Ahmed Al-Tahous addresses the Ordinary General Assembly

Highlights

- Zain Group Chairman, Ahmed Al-Tahous: "All operations have undergone decisive changes to boost operational performance and growth plans"
- Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi: "Company's exceptional performance during 2018 due to digital transformation and focus on profitable growth areas"
- Growth in Zain Saudi Arabia sees company's market capitalization rise by \$780 million in last 6 months
- Sound operational performance in Zain Iraq and Zain Sudan highlight period
- Zain Kuwait continues to focus on innovation and digital services especially on B2B
- The Group's roadmap focuses on upgrading networks, fiber optics and 5G readiness
- Zain continues to support the entrepreneurial startup ecosystem across the region

upgrades and expansions across all our markets. Furthermore, we are partnering with leading global entities to enhance the appeal and quality of the products and services we make available to our customers via fast and reliable connectivity while carrying out various initiatives to re-engineer customer experience.

As a sustainable conscious company, one of Zain's primary missions is to have a positive impact on the communities we serve, while undertaking initiatives to participate actively in the Fourth Industrial Revolution and promote social innovation. For us at Zain, the maturing of social innovation is of great importance as it not only addresses society's most pressing challenges such as youth unemployment, the plight of refugees, economic stagnation and environmental issues, as it provides a legitimate avenue for youth

across our footprint to engage in a meaningful manner and be active participants in the socio-economic development of their communities.

Financially, Zain is committed to consistently creating value for shareholders and other stakeholders, and we remained focused on cost optimization and increasing new revenue streams resulting in an impressive Group financial performance as evident above. These inspiring results on multiple levels for 2018 are a true reflection of the dedicated efforts of Zain's 6,000 strong and talented workforce who work with passion every day, in all that they do.

Major developments and highlights of 2018

2018 was memorable on multiple fronts, building on Zain's digital transformation efforts in seeking growth

and expanding beyond standard telecom services to diversify revenues and create value.

Groupwide API: The company started the year announcing a landmark agreement in support of the launch of the Zain Group Application Program Interface (API) Platform, which will see Zain exposing its APIs, thus helping to remove a significant barrier to developing potential digital partnerships globally. This strategic initiative is set to bring about greater agility to Zain as we consider new market opportunities, accelerating innovation and expanding into new business verticals.

Zain Drone: The launch of Zain Drone as-a-Service (DaaS) is set to unlock opportunities in various industries, offering state-of-the-art bespoke drone solutions and advanced analytics for governments and businesses in an efficient, safe and fast manner. Zain Drone will focus on the Kuwait market initially and then expand to other key markets where it makes commercial sense to do so.

ZINC in Kuwait: Living our belief in innovation, the company opened a Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) in Kuwait, located within the Zain Group head offices. This is the first facility to be located outside of the ultra-successful ZINC in Jordan, featuring a co-working hub, a first-of-its-kind development in Kuwait provided by a corporate entity. The facility's main aim is to bolster youth entrepreneurship and the country's startup ecosystem. ZINC Kuwait is set to encourage young minds to think and act creatively outside of the norm in an open, supportive environment. Apart from the inspiring co-working hub facilities, ZINC will provide aspiring entrepreneurs and startups access to experts in various fields and advice from mentors from the region and across the globe, including Zain senior personnel and associated technology partners.

Omantel strategic relationship grows stronger: Following the completion of Omantel's acquisition of Zain Group shares that brought its total holding to 21.9 percent at the end of 2017, both entities spent 2018 focusing on synergies and building on the creation of a new digital telecom powerhouse looking for opportunities to lead digital transformation across the MENA region. The scale and diversification of the partnership will result in the generation of incremental revenue and accelerated introduction of innovative products and services.

Highlights of Zain Kuwait during 2018: The operation in Kuwait provides Zain with a conducive platform for digital innovation in products and services that will be launched there, and that knowhow exported across our footprint. Kuwait also sets the foundation for the performance of the rest of the Group, and 2018 was another year that the team's successful efforts were punctuated by strong partnerships, digital innovation and market leadership in all key business facets at Zain Kuwait.

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Business

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New Kuwait 2035 Vision

Zain Kuwait focused on the areas of Customer Experience, Smart Homes, and Digital Entertainment continuing its transformation into a digital services provider in support of the New Kuwait 2035 Vision introduced by His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The operator's focus on Smart Security, Smart Education, Smart Health, Smart Mobility, Smart Living, Smart Economy, and Smart Infrastructure aims on empowering a smart life, a safe community, and an efficient business sector.

Zain Saudi Arabia enjoyed an especially successful 2018: The Group and KSA team's relentless turnaround efforts in the Kingdom are bearing fruit, as our operation in KSA experienced some incredibly positive milestones during the year, which boosted its financial and operational position in that market. This had a very positive effect on the Group on many levels, as evident in our financial results.

As a result of the step-up acquisition of Zain KSA in mid-2018, the operator began to be treated as a subsidiary of Zain Group. An immediate consequence of this development was to have various key financial indicators of Zain KSA's financial results consolidated with the results of Zain Group commencing from the third quarter of 2018. The consolidation of Zain KSA resulted in an additional increase of \$1.1 billion in total revenues and \$487 million in EBITDA to the Group.

As a result of this transaction, Zain Group's net debt to EBITDA ratio (including Guarantees) is currently at 2.3 times, which otherwise if we excluded the consolidation of Zain KSA, the ratio would be 3.2 times. This is below the industry averages and we always aim to reduce such levels to avoid future interest rate increases and associated costs.

Furthermore, Zain KSA recorded its best-ever annual financial performance since inception in 2018, with several key financial indicators showing record growth levels, reflecting the successful implementation of the telco's turnaround strategy. This landmark was achieved as the company celebrated a decade of commercial operation of mobile voice and data services in the Kingdom.

The market capitalization of Zain KSA has risen by approximately \$780 million over the last 6 months, after it reported its best-ever net profit of \$89 million for 2018 (a 29-fold annual increase). EBITDA also increased 20 percent Y-o-Y to reach \$800 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 40 percent and revenue rose 3 percent to \$2 billion.

At the end of 2018 the company signed an agreement with the Kingdom's Ministry of Finance (MOF), Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), and Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC) to consolidate the annual royalty fee for commercial service, reducing the tariff from 15 percent to 10 percent of net revenues retrospectively, commencing 1 January, 2018.

Additionally, the agreement included the settlement of disputed amounts related to the payment of annual royalty fees by Zain Saudi Arabia to the CITC for the nine-year period between 2009 and 2017, under the condition that Zain invests further in expanding its infrastructure in addition to other conditions over the next three years. The expected financial impact of this settlement is forecast to reach SAR 1.7 billion (\$453 million) over the next three years.

During the fourth quarter of 2018, the company made a second early voluntary payment towards its Murabaha financing agreement, following a voluntary payment in September 2018 for a total of SAR 1.125 billion. These early payments reflect the company's solid cashflow generation ability and shrewd cash management. Following such repayments, the net debt to EBITDA ratio of Zain KSA has improved.

Given the abovementioned positive developments, the company is in a much stronger fiscal position that will only grow stronger. 2018 shall go down as a milestone for us and shall be looked back on many years from now as the year Zain Saudi Arabia truly came into its own.

The revival of Iraq: The revival and healthy growth of Zain Iraq is remarkable, which had to deal with challenging social and economic conditions in recent years.



Zain Group Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi speaks to the media on the sidelines of the ordinary general assembly meeting

Highlights of Zain Saudi Arabia's remarkable year

- The market capitalization of Zain KSA has risen by more than \$780 million over the last 6 months.
 - Revenues rose 3% to \$2 billion.
 - Net profit of \$89 million, a 29-fold increase, the best-ever since the company was founded
 - Significant benefits from the settlement agreements signed with the Kingdom's government
 - Reduction of annual royalty fees on commercial services from 15% to 10% of net proceeds retroactively from 1 January 2018.
 - This impact is not a one-off benefit but will continue to reap the benefits of about SAR 300 million annually.
 - Settlement of disputed amounts related to the payment of annual royalty fees to the CITC for the nine-year period. The expected financial impact of this settlement is forecast to reach SAR 1.7 billion (\$453 million) over the next three years Zain Saudi Arabia is in a strong financial position now.
 - The company made early payments of its Murabaha facility totaling SR 1.125 billion in 2018, reflecting the company's solid cashflow generation ability and shrewd cash management
- The impact of the Zain Group's consolidation of Zain Saudi Arabia**
- Zain KSA's consolidation was phenomenal on several levels, as Zain Group's net debt to EBITDA ratio (including Guarantees) is currently at 2.3 times, which otherwise if excluded the consolidation of Zain KSA, the ratio would be 3.2 times. This is below the industry averages.
 - Resulted in an additional increase of \$1.1 billion in total revenues of the Group.

Data Usage on Zain networks and locations during 2018

- 8.7 Petabytes (PB) daily across all Zain networks
- Zain operates 56,000 sites, with 13,307 sites for 4G network
- 22% increase of 4G customers
- 4G sites cover 72% of data traffic
- Smartphones account for 53% of all devices used in Zain markets.

With the improvement in social conditions, the team's focus on driving business growth and restoration of numerous network sites notably in the West and North regions, as well as expansion of 3.9G network sites across the country saw the operation return to profitability. This is combined with numerous customer acquisition initiatives, especially in core regions, that has resulted in impressive customer additions. Another contributing factor to the operation's financial revival was the significant growth of data revenues and robust growth in the Enterprise (B2B) segment.

Major financial institutions continued to show confidence in Zain Iraq with the IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, agreeing to provide a financing package worth \$269 million to help reconstruct Iraq's telecom

operations and spur economic growth. The debt package includes \$100 million from the IFC's own account, and a further \$169 million in mobilization. The financing helped Zain Iraq enhance its capacity as well as the quality of its 3G network, allowing the operator to expand coverage to unserved areas in the country. Zain Iraq was also able to modernize its networks and customer service in northern Iraq.

Sudan's operational performance continues to improve: In local currency SDG terms, the operator continues to perform exceptionally well, as revenues grew by 37 percent Y-o-Y to reach SDG 9.7 billion (\$316 million, down 24 percent in USD terms) for the full-year 2018. EBITDA increased by 29 percent to reach SDG 3.7 billion (\$121 million, down 27 percent in

USD terms), while net income increased 11 percent to reach SDG 1.2 billion (\$45 million, down 31 percent in USD terms). Data revenues (excluding SMS and VAS) formed 18 percent of total revenues, with an impressive annual growth of 56 percent.

Regarding the currency devaluation in Sudan, unfortunately it keeps getting worse as the Central Bank of Sudan decided to set its daily currency exchange rate effective from 7 Oct. 2018. This resulted in the official exchange rate being set at 1 USD = 47.5 SDG, noting the official exchange rate before that was 1 USD = 28.3 SDG as of February 2018.

Zain Jordan continues to lead the telecom sector in the Kingdom: The team there are focused on transforming the operator on multiple levels and focusing heavily on expanding both its fiber and 4G networks across key parts of the country. This has resulted in immediate success with Zain Jordan reporting impressive take-up of new customers in both the household and enterprise segments. The operator is focused on offering home broadband packages geared towards increasing its market share in gaming, content, streaming apps, devices and IoT services.

The operator's ZainCash offering is proving to be instrumental as its unique value proposition consisting of nationwide mobile coverage, an extensive agent network and ability to transfer instantly to individuals, is proving popular.

Zain Bahrain focus on operational efficiency: Celebrating its 15th year of operation in the Kingdom, Zain Bahrain team's focus delivery of state-of-the-art technology was evident by the profit increase the operator recorded. The team also focused on the offer of appealing innovative digital services that provide greater value to enterprise (B2B) and individual customers. Catering for increased demand for high-speed and reliable connectivity solutions of business customers, Zain Bahrain joined the MEETS regional cable system to boost business offerings supporting the Kingdom of Bahrain's vision to become a major hub for ICT and data transmission in the MENA region.

Zainiac, digital innovation from within the organization's human talent: Zain's Human Resources strategy builds on the strength of the 6,000 talented workforce from across operations. To remain innovative and competitive we need to generate ideas from wherever we can find them and seeking them out internally is prudent. Accordingly, in recent years has been the tapping into Zain's internal human resources to generate innovative ideas. During 2018 we witnessed significant progress on Zainiac, an online platform and community for Zain Group employees. The platform allows employees across the Group to suggest innovative ideas, share challenges, and collaborate in a bid to achieve common goals.

The platform is an acknowledgement of the huge talent pool assembled within Zain Group, and aims to promote synergies among country operations, leveraging the benefits of crowd-sourcing of new ideas and business models. As part of the initiative, Zain organizes workshops with leading partners focusing on establishing and fostering startup competencies.

Healthy growth in Enterprise (B2B) revenues during 2018: Zain continues to strengthen its positioning as the operator-of-choice for connectivity services to governments and companies of all sizes across the Middle East. B2B is one of the most dynamic and innovative areas and is a growth engine for many key operations. Our ongoing focus on developing innovative value propositions and offering a superior customer experience to enterprise customers delivered strong revenue growth in 2018.

We are addressing the ICT needs of governments and companies across our footprint with a comprehensive suite of mobile, fixed, IoT, IT security and cloud services; building end-to-end solutions to grow our B2B businesses. Our operations serve the entire spectrum of customers, from Small Office, Home Office (SoHo) companies to large corporations and government entities with dedicated B2B units. We also continue to invest in our customer-facing staff and capabilities and expanded the key account manager teams, the Zain B2B shop-in-shop locations, and after-sales care teams.



KUWAIT: Zain Group's ordinary General Assembly is in progress

Business

KAMCO 2018 net profit reaches KD2.56m, an increase of 124%

EBITDA KD5.19m, revenue KD18.36m, earnings per share 10.77 fils

KUWAIT: KAMCO Investment Company ("KAMCO"), a leading investment firm with one of the largest AUMs in the region, announced its consolidated financial results for the year ended December 31, 2018. KAMCO reported a net profit attributable to the equity holders of KD 2.56 million, which is an increase of 124 percent from KD 1.14 million in 2017. Earnings per share increased to 10.77 fils compared to 4.80 fils in 2017. EBITDA for the period was KD 5.19 million versus KD 2.78 million in 2017, an increase of 87 percent. Total revenues increased by 91 percent to reach KD 18.36 million in comparison to 2017.

While the Firm reported an increase in the operational expenses due to implementing its expansion plan, net cash generated from operating activities amounted to KD 5.44 million. Total expenses for the

period were KD 15.68 million, a KD 7.21 million increase as a result of higher financial and operational costs related to the Firm's growth strategy, as well as other provisions.

In addition to the majority stake acquisition in Global Investment House ("Global"), the Firm's performance was underpinned by an increase in fee income, a growth of KD 3.22 million, from KD 7.0 million in 2017 to KD 10.22 million in 2018. The increase was mainly due to the growth in management and advisory fees driven by the rising level of assets under management and investment banking mandates. Fees from fiduciary activities for the full year were KD 8.08 million, with a 16.69 percent increase in total assets under management to KD 3.93 billion (including the effect of the acquisition). Investment bank-

ing mandate growth for the year was also strong, successfully closing 9 transactions worth around KD 534 million.

Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, CEO of KAMCO, said, "We are moving forward towards fulfilling our vision to become the preferred asset management and investment banking player in the region. Despite challenging market conditions, we continue to maintain strong liquidity with a financial robust structure and the flexibility to harness the development our integrated business model. In 2018, which also marks our 20th year anniversary, we increased our AUM with a long-term mindset taking advantage of opportunities during periods of disruption."

Sarkhou added, "The acquisition of a 69.528 percent stake in Global was one of our key achievements for the year. We believe that this move will help us in

enhancing our operational model, despite incurring additional one-off expansion related expenses this year. The strong investor confidence in KAMCO was seen in our bond issuance which was covered within an exceptionally short period, marking another successful transaction in 2018. In addition to achieving significant milestones throughout the year, we increased the number of portfolios under management and further increased the size of our international real estate portfolio."

Commenting on the market performance during 2018, Sarkhou added, "GCC equity markets outperformed global peers with a yearly return of 12 percent amid high volatility in 2018 as compared to flatish returns in 2017. We have a positive outlook for 2019 given the stable macro-economic conditions, improvement in



Faisal Mansour Sarkhou

investment climate and increased investor confidence. However, geopolitics influence, and volatile energy prices remains an overhang on the region."

Investors flee Bayer after glyphosate trial blow

FRANKFURT: The threat to German chemical giant Bayer and subsidiary Monsanto from US litigation swelled yesterday, when its share price plunged after a jury ruled weed-killer Roundup was a "substantial factor" in an amateur gardener's cancer.

A wave of lawsuits has put pressure on Bayer since its \$63-billion takeover of Monsanto last year, spooking investors who worry damages payouts could quickly mount into the billions if the firm fails to convince courts its product is safe. Chief executive Werner Baumann said last month the company faced a total of 11,200 US cases over Roundup and its active ingredient glyphosate, a herbicide key to Monsanto's business model that has come in for intense scrutiny around the world.

That mass of lawsuits meant markets shuddered after a federal court finding Tuesday that Roundup was behind the non-Hodgkin's lymphoma suffered by 70-year-old Edwin Hardeman, who used the product for decades on the garden at his California home.

The second major legal setback in a year set the Leverkusen-based group's stock ebbing well into Wednesday trading after an initial plunge. By 11:20 am in Frankfurt (10:20 GMT), the shares were trading down 13.2 percent at 60.53 euros (\$68.71), dragging down the DAX index of blue-chip German shares.

Since the merger was completed, Bayer's stock has shed almost 40 percent of its value.

Tuesday's "decision... has no impact on future cases and trials because each one has its own factual and legal circumstances," Bayer said in a statement, adding that it stood behind science it says demonstrates glyphosate is safe. But IG analyst Chris Beauchamp told AFP the prospect of thousands of plaintiffs potentially being awarded tens of millions of dollars each means



BERLIN: A view of the compound of German chemicals and pharmaceuticals giant Bayer in Berlin. — AFP

investors "start doing the numbers, and it doesn't look very pretty at all".

The latest case has so far brought no damages award against Bayer, as jurors now have to decide whether Monsanto is liable for the harm suffered by Hardeman.

"Monsanto has not taken a responsible, objective approach to the safety of Roundup," Hardeman's lawyers Aimee Wagstaff and Jennifer Moore said in a joint statement.

"Instead, it is clear from Monsanto's actions that it does not particularly care whether its product is in fact giving people cancer," they alleged.

Science battle

Jurors in the earlier California state court case of Dewayne "Lee" Johnson, a school groundskeeper who suffers from terminal non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, found in August that Monsanto acted with "malice".

Its glyphosate weedkillers Roundup and Ranger Pro substantially contributed to the terminal illness, they judged. Monsanto was initially ordered to pay \$289 million to Johnson, who has two young sons and is in the end stages of his cancer, before the damages were reduced to \$78.5 million.

said Ralph Sutton, a veteran of the industry who raised \$250 million to launch his own company, Validity Finance, last June.

Litigation funding can "improve their ability to access the legal system more effectively," because it "helps level the playing field and permits cases to be adjudicated on merits and not on money plaintiffs or defendants may have," he said.

In a few clicks

On the LexShares internet platform, created in 2014, accredited investors can choose the case they want to bet on, from patent infringement, to breach of contract or theft of trade secrets. Companies that are filing the lawsuit can, in just a few clicks, raise funds from the site. But the platform also actively searches for cases that would make attractive investments.

"We created a piece of software that mines in the raw text when cases are filed," said LexShares founder Jay Greenberg. Using an algorithm with 17 parameters the cases are given a ranking, after which a team of lawyers assesses the merits of the case, the abilities of the lawyers, and verifies that the defendant will be able to pay any compensation.

Of the 80 cases funded by LexShares so far, involving amounts ranging from \$35,000 to \$4 million, there have been 20 victories in the 24 completed cases.

While an investor can also lose his investment if the ruling goes the wrong way, on average, the return on investment is 65 percent each year,

Bayer has filed an appeal, betting it can do better at convincing judges in appeals courts than sceptical juries in lower tribunals. The two US cases have turned on a 2015 finding from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), an arm of the World Health Organization, that Roundup is "probably carcinogenic". But Bayer points to more recent findings from regulators around the world, especially in advanced economies like the US, Europe and Canada, and reams of scientific studies as proof of the safety of its product.

"Regulatory authorities around the world consider glyphosate-based herbicides as safe when used as directed," the group said in its statement, highlighting "800 rigorous studies" of glyphosate's effects.

Its confidence in its evidence and its legal strategy may not be enough to convince investors to hold on through the turbulence, IG's Beauchamp said. "If you are expecting stock markets as a whole to do better then you don't want to be stuck with the one company that is facing huge legal claims," he judged.

"A lot of (investors) will probably decide to cut back exposure quite dramatically and see how it plays out." — AFP

Greenberg said. And many people want to try their luck.

"Investor demand is very high, we sell out within hours."

Frivolous lawsuits

It is difficult to measure the size of this industry since the litigation finance companies are discreet about their business. But America's very litigious society could offer a wealth of opportunities. Bentham IMF estimates legal services expenditures total \$357.6 billion a year in the United States, far ahead of the United Kingdom (\$54.9 billion), Canada (\$25.72 billion) or Australia (\$19.7 billion).

But the company is starting cautiously: Bentham IMF funded only four US cases in the second half of 2018. But the firm raised another \$500 million in December for a fund geared at new cases. Some observers cringe at this new type of investment, fearing the influx of money could fuel a profusion of frivolous lawsuits. The American Chamber of Commerce in particular wants to require that plaintiffs disclose if they are using this kind of financing for their cases.

Maya Steinitz, a professor at Harvard University's law school, said giving the plaintiffs the means they need to seek justice is beneficial.

But she acknowledged that the market is "mostly unregulated." Investors are not subject to the same ethical obligations as lawyers, for example, so they potentially could force a plaintiff to refuse or agree to a financial settlement of the case.

"Finance is a utility which can be used or abused," she said. — AFP

Asian business sentiment lingers near 3-year low

SEOUL: Confidence among Asian companies held near three-year lows in the first quarter as a US-China trade dispute dragged on, pulling down a global economy that is already on a downward path, a Thomson Reuters/INSEAD survey found.

The Thomson Reuters/INSEAD Asian Business Sentiment Index tracking firms' six-month outlook was flat in the March quarter from the previous quarter's 63, compared with a near three-year low of 58 set in the September quarter. A reading above 50 means optimistic respondents outnumbered pessimists, but the latest index still marks one of the five worst since the world started its recovery from the 2008-2009 global financial crisis.

"Things have not gotten worse but a lot of uncertainty is putting companies in wait-and-see mode," Antonio Fatas, a Singapore-based economics professor at global business school INSEAD, said of US-China talks on trade relations.

"In one week, it looks like they are promising and the week after it looks like they are going nowhere, and so there's a lot of wait-and-see attitude," he added, saying the uncertainty is forcing companies to put off investment decisions.

A global trade war was cited as the chief business risk by respondents for the third quarter in a row, though by a smaller margin. Higher interest rates emerged as the second-biggest risk, outpacing a slowing Chinese economy. A total of 100 companies from a range of sectors responded to the survey, conducted from March 1-15 in 11 Asia-Pacific countries where 45 percent of the world's population live and 32 percent of global gross domestic product is generated.

Recession unlikely

The United States and China have put on hold a planned escalation of their trade war pending negotiations, but the much-awaited conclusion of the latest round of talks has also been delayed even though remarks from the two sides have been optimistic. Global agencies including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have said failure to resolve trade tension could further slow a downward-trending global economy.

Regional powerhouses China, Japan and South Korea all saw exports fall last month, with China and South Korea suffering their worst annual declines in overseas sales in around three years.

The index staying above the neutral point of 50 suggests companies in Asia are not expecting an imminent global recession, but languishing near multi-year lows indicates companies are exerting caution. "We don't see a global hard landing as a likely scenario when we look at economic factors such as inflation and credit conditions," said Young Sun Kwon, economist at Nomura in Hong Kong. "But there are big uncertainties in politics."

Lessons from the 2008-2009 global financial meltdown have forced countries to strengthen economic defenses, but factors such as Britain's planned exit from the European Union and the US Federal Reserve's uncertain path are posing threats. With less than two weeks before the March 29 divorce date, British Prime Minister Theresa May's government is still struggling to push a departure deal with the EU through the British parliament.

In the United States, the Fed has declared a pause in its tightening campaign, but economists foresee at least one more increase later this year despite increasing signs of slowdown in major economies.

Respondents to the survey included Canon Inc, Suzuki Motor Corp, Thai Beverage PCL, Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co and Delta Electronics Thailand PCL. — Reuters

Lawsuits hot new option for Wall Street investors

NEW YORK: Lawsuits can provide big payoffs. And betting on the outcome of a lawsuit is becoming a hot new way for Wall Street investors to cash in.

Investment companies specializing in financing legal proceedings are moving in to capitalize on the new business line, allowing one side to finance the costs of litigation-lawyers and expert witnesses-in exchange for a percentage of the award either after the trial concludes or from any settlement between the parties.

This practice began in Australia about 20 years ago but has recently gained momentum in the United States. The simplest way for private investors to get in on the action is to buy shares of the companies that specialize in litigation finance, like heavyweight Burford Capital, which is worth 4 billion pounds on the London Stock Exchange, or Bentham IMF on the Australian Securities Exchange.

But more and more institutional investors, hedge funds and pension funds are buying into the investment vehicles created by these firms that specialize in finding lawsuits with potential for big payouts. "It's really difficult for a small business to fight a big company,"

UK inflation edges higher as Brexit looms

LONDON: British annual inflation nudged higher in February, official data showed yesterday, as Britain faces uncertainty over its planned departure from the European Union. The Consumer Prices Index 12-month rate climbed to 1.9 percent last month, up from a two-year low of 1.8 percent in January, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement. "Rising prices for food, alcohol and tobacco, and across a range of recreational and cultural goods produced the largest upward contributions to change in the rate between January and February," the ONS said.

"The largest, offsetting, downward contribution came from clothing and footwear, with prices

rising between January and February... but by less than between the same two months a year ago."

Britain's annual inflation remains under the Bank of England's 2.0-percent target, which today is widely expected to announce no change to its main interest rate, currently at 0.75 percent. "The Bank of England is clearly going to sit tight on interest rates until there is greater clarity on the Brexit situation and it can see how the economy is being affected," noted EY economist Howard Archer.

"Indeed, there is a very real possibility that the Bank of England will keep interest rates at the current level of 0.75 percent through 2019. "The current muted state of the UK economy hardly calls for higher interest rates despite the tightness of the (UK) labor market and recent firmer earnings growth," he added. The new data was released yesterday-just nine days before Britain is scheduled to leave the EU-as it was revealed British Prime Minister Theresa will request a short delay to Brexit from Brussels. — AFP



LONDON: Britain's International Trade Secretary Liam Fox arrives in 10 Downing Street in London yesterday. — AFP

Business

Rags-to-riches Skoda mulls post-Brexit sales miseries

UK exit from EU could deal a heavy blow to Skoda brand and Czech economy

MLADJ BOLESLAV, Czech Republic: Once the butt of jokes, Czech-made Skoda cars have won over Brits, but the UK's looming exit from the European Union could deal a heavy blow to the brand and the entire Czech economy. Britain is the fifth largest export market for the Czech Republic, an EU member of 10.6 million people heavily dependent on overseas shipments, especially cars.

British lawmakers voted to postpone Brexit from March 29 to at least June, but a no-deal hard Brexit that would slap high tariffs on imports like cars is still possible.

Controlled by Volkswagen since 1991, Skoda exports some 80,000 cars to Britain a year, almost 10 percent

of its annual output. In an e-mailed statement, Skoda told AFP it was "worried and getting ready for all scenarios" and called for a "solution acceptable for all parties", but declined to elaborate.

Radek Spicar, vice-president of the Czech Confederation of Industry, went further, warning that the company might suffer a heavy blow.

"A hard Brexit would mean 10-percent import duties slapped on cars, and that would hurt," he told AFP. "It would stifle demand for cars. Companies like Skoda wouldn't collapse, but they would lose part of an important market," Spicar added.

"Besides, Britain is a symbolic market for Skoda-it has come a long way from being the butt of jokes to one of the most respected makes."

No joke anymore

"How do you double the value of a Skoda? Fill the tank with petrol," went a popular joke about Skoda's clunky models produced in the 1980s when Czechoslovakia-the predecessor of the Czech Republic and Slovakia-was still communist. "Do you know why

Skoda has heated rear windows? So when you're pushing it home in the winter, your hands stay warm," said another.

But Britons gradually melted-Skoda's Fabia model was named the car of the year by What Car? magazine in 2000, while the Skoda Yeti became the best car to own in a 2013 poll of 46,000 British drivers conducted by the Auto Express magazine.

"Nobody is ashamed of driving a Skoda now, Jeremy Clarkson praised it in Top Gear, it is driven by taxi drivers," said Spicar. "Britain is simply a symbolic, important market, and Brexit would be terribly unpleasant for the make."

A hard Brexit would "slash Czech exports to the UK by 20 percent, Czech GDP growth by 1.1 points, and employment by 40,000 staff", analysts at the Ceska sporitelna bank, a Czech unit of Austria's Erste Bank, have warned. Czech companies sell goods worth 210 billion koruna (8.2 billion euros, \$9.2 billion) to Britain a year, with auto exports making up more than half of the total, according to Ceska.

Accounting for more than 20 percent of Czech industrial output, the car industry "is the most threatened by Brexit because of its size within the economy", David Marek, chief economist at Deloitte Czech Republic, told AFP.

Three global carmakers with Czech plants turned out more than 1.4 million cars in 2018, a new record, with Skoda making up over 60 percent of that. South Korea's Hyundai, and TPCA, a joint-venture of Japan's Toyota and France's Peugeot-Citroen, also have Czech factories.

'Hard Brexit would be unpleasant'

A thriving auto sector has been a major contributor to economic growth lasting since 2013, with 3.0 percent



A Skoda car leaves the plant of Czech carmaker Skoda Auto in Mlada Boleslav. Once the butt of jokes, Czech-made Skoda cars have won over Brits, but the UK's looming exit from the European Union could deal a heavy blow to the brand and the entire Czech economy. —AFP

expansion last year following 4.5 percent in 2017. Czech producers of electronics, nuclear plant components, sweets, photo equipment and others are also worried.

"We generate turnover of some 10 million euros in Britain, which is about four percent of our total turnover," says Tomas Kolar, chief executive of Linet, a producer of hospital beds and mattresses.

"A hard Brexit would be unpleasant but not critical," he added. For Linet, just like for car makers and other companies, Brexit will most probably mean their products will have to get a fresh certificate for sales in the British market. "This is a non-tariff trade barrier, inde-

pendent regulation present in all non-EU countries. It may take time before we get the certificates," said Kolar.

Stocking up is a way to avoid problems, but Linet could not do that as its products are tailor-made for each hospital or clinic. Instead, it has stocked up on welded mattress parts from a British supplier.

"We didn't want to end up empty-handed, it would hit us globally because we sell mattresses worldwide," said Kolar, who expects Britain to impose a 6.5 percent duty on special mattresses made by Linet should a hard Brexit occur. "It's tough. I still hope they will find some common sense," he said. —AFP

Sophos Intercept X achieves highest scores in NSS Labs 2019 AEP Test

KUWAIT: Sophos, a global leader in network and endpoint security, announced that its next-gen endpoint solution, Sophos Intercept X, was recognized for having the highest security effectiveness and the most efficient TCO (total cost of ownership) of the 19 endpoint security products tested in the 2019 AEP Group Test published by NSS Labs. The 2019 Advanced Endpoint Protection (AEP 3.0) Group Test tested 21 products from market-leading vendors out of which 19 comparable products were presented in the Security Value Map (SVM). These products were examined for security effectiveness and total cost of ownership (TCO).

"Measuring cybersecurity product effectiveness is unimaginably complex. With threats and attack techniques increasing and evolving at an ever-accelerating rate, testing houses need to make extraordinary investments in their laboratories if they are to produce meaningful and rigorous measurements of cybersecurity product effectiveness. But just like all cybersecurity products are not equal, not all testing houses are equal and this remains somewhat opaque to the consumers of their reports, particularly when there is insufficient transparency around methodologies or execution details. Competent independent testing labs provide a great service to vendors and buyers, and are critical to the cybersecurity ecosystem to drive higher standards of protection for all," said Joe Levy, Chief Technology Officer, Sophos.

Sophos Intercept X includes advanced deep learning technology, which delivers a massively scalable detection model that is able to learn the entire observable threat landscape. With the ability to process hundreds of millions of samples, deep learning can make more accurate predictions at a faster rate with far fewer false-positives when compared to traditional machine learning. Sophos Intercept X also includes innovations in anti-ransomware and exploit prevention, and active-hacker mitigations such as credential theft protection. By integrating deep learning technology, Intercept X is changing endpoint security from a reactive to a predictive approach to protect against unknown threats.



Joe Levy, CTO, Sophos

4 Cybersecurity questions every CISO should be ready to answer

By Kevin Flynn

IT infrastructure often grows up with a company. New tools, applications, systems, and user profiles are bolted onto the greater whole as the need for them emerges, usually without being given much strategic consideration. Organizational silos spring up around these additions as teams discover that each new tool requires new skills to deploy and maintain. Before long, the entire operation can resemble a ramshackle old house onto which each generation of homeowner has attached a new room.

Threats lurk in the dark corners. Unforeseen vulnerabilities, aging tech, distributed data centers, network sprawl, greedy insiders, and gullible users thrive. With the components of enterprise IT infrastructure scattered and compartmentalized, it's difficult for any one person or team to achieve holistic visibility into the entire network.

Lack of visibility makes it difficult to find these siloed threat vectors, and even tougher to address them once they are found. That's because, in most cases, the tools and tactics available are only designed to tackle specific and unintegrated areas of concern. We often see security tools being deployed scattershot throughout the organization. We see teams in operations, applications security, DevOps, network security, machine learning, high performance computing teams, Security Operations Center (SOC), and auditing and compliance all pursuing and deploying their own discrete tools. And there is no shortage of security tools.

While these issues are nothing new, addressing them has never been more urgent as the attack surface continues to expand. In our work with IT and cybersecurity professionals, we often hear about the challenges of protecting all the isolated apps-and the distributed computing and storage platforms-in use throughout the enterprise. Operational technology (OT) and internet of things (IoT) devices introduce their own sets of problems, since these internet-connected solutions are often deployed outside the auspices of the IT organization.

In most cases, organizations end up integrating apps through APIs and putting a multitude of clouds under a single



management platform purview in order to manage the lot of them at once. But even this approach is only a stopgap. It's no substitute for a holistic cybersecurity strategy which emphasizes visibility across the network and applies granular insights about the threats that may be lurking among them, so organizations can effectively prioritize responses. We call this approach Cyber Exposure.

Cyber Exposure is an emerging discipline for managing and measuring cybersecurity risk in the digital era. Cyber Exposure transforms security from static and siloed visibility to dynamic and holistic visibility across the modern attack surface. It's the foundation upon which to build a cybersecurity strategy that accommodates the entirety of the modern attack surface.

Building a holistic cybersecurity strategy using the discipline of Cyber Exposure enables you to answer each of these four questions about your organization at any point in time:

How secure - and exposed - are we? Answering this question requires visibility into all aspects of the organization's attack surface-including cloud resources, containers, industrial control systems, and mobile devices, which may or may not be on the radar of IT. It involves taking inventory of where specific threats to your company exist. For example, if your organization is particularly diligent about deploying patches, then the latest Windows vulnerability may not be as big a concern as it would be for an enterprise that hasn't patched its systems in seven years. By coming to terms with where your exposures are - or where they are likely to be - you reveal the larger picture of what's at risk.

What should we prioritize? The answers to this question should be based on a combination of threat intelligence to understand the exploitability of the issue and asset criticality to understand the business context of the asset. Effective prioritization of vulnerabilities needs to take in the business context in order to optimize your efforts, resources, and budget. It enables you to zero in on protecting the vulnerable areas likely to cost your organization the most in terms of labor, penalties, time, recovery, and reputation. It also helps reduce alert fatigue, as you can then prioritize how your team responds to vulnerabilities based on how critical the affected assets are to your business and the likelihood a given vulnerability will be exploited.

How are we reducing exposure over time? Your ability to answer this question is a measure of your progress. You'll need to identify the metrics and KPIs against which you'll measure your efforts. Such metrics should be viewable by business unit, geography and asset type. The goal is to understand how your exposure profile is changing month to month, quarter to quarter, and year to year, so you can help your business-side colleagues and the c-suite understand whether the company's investments in cybersecurity are paying off.

How do we compare to our peers? Answering this question forces you out of your company's internal bubble to help you understand how your cybersecurity practices stack up against those of others in your field, as well as those in other industries. How your organization ranks against industry peers, and against best-in-class security, is an important

factor to grow moderately because consumer spending and capital expenditure are holding up, a Cabinet Office official told reporters at a briefing.

For March, the government left unchanged its assessment that consumer spending is recovering and capital expenditure is increasing. However, there are concerns that companies will start cutting capital expenditure plans for fiscal 2019 in April due to uncertainty about global trade policy.

Japan's manufacturing sector is exposed to the trade war because it sends electronic parts and capital goods to China, where they are used to make finished products destined for the United States.

The government is scheduled to raise the nationwide sales tax to 10 percent from 8 percent in October, but there are concerns this will weaken consumer spending and harm growth. —Reuters

Japan government downgrades economy view

TOKYO: Japan's government downgraded its assessment of the economy in March for the first time in three years, blaming a bruising US-China trade war for slumping exports and industrial output.

The Cabinet Office, which helps coordinate government policy, said yesterday the economy is in gradual recovery, but exports and output are showing signs of weakness.

The monthly economic report for March was a down-



COLOMIERS: The first Airbus A380 to be delivered to All Nippon Airways (ANA) is pictured on the tarmac of the Airbus delivery center in Colomiers, southwestern France, yesterday. —AFP

What's On

Relaxing spa experiences await your mum at Symphony Style Kuwait

This Mother's Day treat your mum to a very special dine experience, in any of the outlets at Symphony Style Kuwait, A Radisson Collection Hotel. Whether you prefer celebrating her with a special card, bouquet of flowers, or dine experience, we have it all ready and packed for you. Furthermore, you can most definitely treat your mum to the personalized relaxation of our Six Senses Spa. It is time to uplift your gift-giving game to your mum this year, a unique dine experiences by a captivating view of the sea in Cucina. The contemporary outline of the restaurant is one that goes very much in line with the staff that will welcome your mum in celebration of the special lady's special day.

If diversity is what your mum seeks, then your reservation in Luna will be an alluring expression of love that she will most definitely appreciate. The vibrant view of the gulf will be one of many things your mum will enjoy at Luna restaurant, as the remarkable atmosphere will provide pure delight. Furthermore, expert chefs deliver inspiring



efforts in the diverse Tuscan menu in seafood, meats and salads that will enliven your special lady. A lovely meal is not the end of it, as the savvy drinks crated with style will give your mum a captivatingly memorable experience.



Once your special lady has eaten, she can experience the intuitive mix of science and human awareness at the Six Senses Spa, where she will experience a high tech mixed with high-touch approach defining a service

crafted around her as an individual. You and dear mum have 11 treatment rooms and two hammams with a design to meet your specific goals in your journey to wellness. The wellness therapies display the impeccable expertise of our skilled therapists in providing you and your special lady a personalized experience of an elevated sense of well-being. Dear mum is sure to have a skin glowing as bright as her heart with our facial treatments and our massages will most definitely be a discovery of healing powers.

An exuberant meal is not the only complementary treat your mum will receive on her special day, especially if she enjoys the buzzing flavor of chocolate. In ultra-chic Chococafe, every mother will indulge in the richly flavored chocolate that sure will delight your taste buds, proving to be nothing short of impeccable. We promise you to make this Mother's Day memorable for the lady who gave you life at Symphony Style Kuwait, A Radisson Collection Hotel.



Values workshop at Souda primary school

By Hassan Abdul Bari

Under the auspices of the school director, Soad Al-Rashidi, Souda Bint Zam' primary school for Girls recently organized a workshop on the significance of values in overcoming daily routine stress, which was delivered by Dr Mohammed Al-Harbi. The workshop was organized by teachers Rawan Al-Enezi, Fatima Al-Houli and Fatima Al-Hashash.

Speaking on the workshop, which was attended by various female teachers from the school and other schools at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Area, Al-Harbi stressed the importance of reviving and activating some of the long forgotten values to help us overcome the stress we face on tending to daily errands nowadays.

Al-Harbi gave several examples of certain values such as patriotism and cleanliness reminding participants of the need to set good examples to be followed and imitated by their children and students. Dr Mohammed Abdullah Al-Harbi is an educational consultant at the UN's World Fund for Development & Planning (WFDP)'s office in Kuwait. He also holds a PHD in teaching students with special learning difficulties and their psychological health.



South African tourism investment delegation in Kuwait

The South African Embassy in the State of Kuwait has the pleasure to announce that the South African Department of Tourism will lead an official tourism investment delegation to the State of Kuwait from 23-25 March 2019. The delegation comprises representatives of the Department of Tourism, Trade and Investment KwaZulu Natal, Industrial Development Corporation, the Hole in the Wall Development and the North West Tourism Board.

In collaboration with the Kuwaiti Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the delegation will hold an Investment Tourism Seminar at the Chamber's premises on 25 March 2019 at 10h00. The objective of the Seminar is to attract tourism investments to grow South

Africa's tourism sector. The Department has a number of prioritized projects to be promoted during the Seminar. The Department is also trying to promote South Africa as a country that is ready and attractive for tourism investment.

The presentation from the Department of Tourism paints a picture of the opportunities available in South Africa within the tourism space, and makes the linkages to other industries quite clear. The IDC is incidentally structured in such a way that tourism is grouped with light manufacturing, where it is understood that the tourism industry; particularly hotels, depend highly on light manufacturing.

This includes the manufacturing of furniture, linen, carpets, kitchen ware and a number of things that are critical to the hotel industry. The Embassy of the Republic of South Africa in the State of Kuwait and the Kuwaiti Chamber of Commerce and Industry cordially invite Kuwaiti relevant stakeholders to attend the Seminar to know about the investment opportunities South Africa has to offer.



ICSK Junior graduation day

Graduation is an exciting time. It is both an ending and a beginning. It is warm memories of the past and big dreams for the future. ICSK Junior celebrated the nursery graduation day on Wednesday, 13th March 2019 in the school premises. It was attended by 302 proud and bubbly students along with their parents and well-wishers.

The occasion was graced by the presence of our esteemed Chief Guest, Dr P Shankar Narayanan Menon. The program commenced with the recitation of the verses from the Holy Quran followed by the Kuwait and Indian National anthems. After lighting the auspicious lamp of knowledge, Principal, Mrs Sherly Dennis welcomed the gathering stressing on the importance of parenting.

She appreciated the hard work and dedication of the entire kindergarten team towards making the event a remarkable one. The tiny tots entertained the audience with their song and dance. Our chief guest spoke about the role of teachers in helping children bloom and grow. Vice Principal- Sheeja Maam delivered the vote of thanks. She thanked the entire team (teaching and non-teaching) staff for their team work, dedication and commitment.

TIES session

You are cordially invited to another session of our series about some prophets and messengers of Allah (SWT) today, March 21st at 7:00 pm, in which we will continue to learn more about Prophet Musa and Haroun (AS). In this class, we will ponder Allah's instructions to Musa and Haroun (AS) to prepare them to encounter Pharaoh, and briefly discuss the techniques of presenting Islam to people of other faiths, insisting on the importance of respect. We will also discuss the importance of avoiding assumptions, briefing anyone who is charged with responsibilities, and equipping him with proper tools. We will see what Musa (AS) did when he first arrived in Egypt, what happened when he and Haroun (AS) arrived at the Pharaoh's palace, and how Musa (AS) initiated discussion with Pharaoh. Finally, we will examine Prophet Muhammad's advice to avoid humiliating ourselves and what he meant, and elicit a lot of practical lessons from the life and times of Musa (AS).

Tjaria's 'Glimmer of Hope' festival successfully concludes

Out of its special responsibility leading role practiced under the motor of 'We Care', the Tjaria Real Estate Company recently concluded its 'Glimmer of Hope' festival recently held at the Symphony Style Hotel under the title of 'Together, We build hope...Let's Share their joy'. The festivities were held under auspices of the honorary chairperson of Kuwait Sports Club for the Disabled, Sheikha Shaikha Al-Abdullah Al-Khalifa Al-Sabah and with the attendance of Tjaria board chairman, Abdul Fattah Ma'rafi. Speaking on the occasion, Ma'rafi expressed his pride that the festival had been successfully run for seven years and hopes that it would continue for several more to come. Ma'rafi also thanked all charities, schools and public and private bodies taking part in the event.



Health & Technology

Not so fantastic: Can Japan end its love for plastic use?

TOKYO: From bento boxes to individually wrapped bananas, plastic reigns supreme in Japan. But amid global concern about single-use waste, new legislation could help end the country's love affair with plastic. The push comes ahead of the G20 summit, which Japan will host in Osaka in June. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government wants to use the meeting to push for an agreement on reducing marine plastic waste.

But the country's own record on single-use plastic is hardly exemplary: Japan generates more plastic packaging waste per capita than any other country except the United States, according to the UN. "We believe there is room to reduce that volume and we are now considering ways to do that," said Kentaro Doi, director of plastic waste strategy at Japan's environment ministry. In 2018, Japan's government unveiled a proposal to start tackling the issue, with the goal of reducing the country's 9.4 million tons of plastic waste a year by 25 percent by 2030.

A key part of the proposal is to require businesses to charge for plastic bags — a measure that has been already been widely adopted around the world. "What we are going to do is to put a value on it... we would like people to think about whether it is really necessary to use them," Doi said. But government officials acknowledge Japan is coming to the issue late — dozens of countries already require businesses to charge for plastic bags, and many have banned their use outright. "Other countries were ahead of us," con-

cedes Doi, adding that the policy in Japan "will be introduced in 2020, at the earliest."

'Pay a little bit'

So far, the proposals also lack any specific measures on limiting other types of single-use plastic waste, such as straws or cups. With the national government moving slowly, local governments and businesses in Japan have in some cases taken up the mantle themselves. The town of Kamikatsu near Kyoto has set a goal of zero plastic waste by 2020, while Kyoto city has long required large retailers to charge for plastic bags.

At a supermarket in Makuhari, east of Tokyo, customers line up with their groceries and reusable shopping bags. The store belongs to the Aeon group, which since November 2013 has been charging customers for plastic bags at all 1,631 of its large supermarkets.

"Most customers understand the purpose of it and bring their own bags, and if they forget to, they are willing to pay a little bit for a plastic one," said Haruko Kanamaru, division manager of Aeon's corporate social responsibility unit. Customers who request a bag can pay five yen (\$0.05) to receive a biomass bag that is biodegradable. Kanamaru said the firm estimates the policy saved 270 million plastic bags in 2017, though customers can still use smaller plastic bags for fruit and vegetables and cold items free of charge.

"About 80 percent of customers now bring their own bags or turn one down," she said. Yumi Takahashi is one of those consumers, and says she now tries to keep a reusable bag with her whenever she is out. "It takes only a little effort to not use plastic bags and plastic items," she said, explaining her shock at seeing images of marine life suffering the effects of such litter in the ocean. But Kanamaru said not everyone felt the same. "Some customers actually left and said they would shop elsewhere," she said. "So it's time for the government to introduce this system across all businesses... Not 100 percent of customers will accept this system if only Aeon does it," she added.

'Ambitious case'

A key obstacle, activists say, has been the association representing Japan's ubiquitous convenience stores, which are sprinkled across every block of the country's major cities. When Tokyo's local government wanted to ban free plastic bags in the city, the association strongly opposed the plan and it was dropped, said Kenji Ishihara, a campaigner with Greenpeace Japan. "That was a very symbolic case showing that the association has a very strong economic and lobbying power," he said.

Greenpeace and other environmental NGOs want Japan to commit to the bolder goal of reducing plastic waste by 50 percent by 2030 and more con-



CHIBA: In this picture taken on November 7, 2018, a man carries a plastic bag while shopping in a supermarket. —AFP

crete measures including bans on single-use plastics. Ishihara said while public awareness about plastic waste is growing in Japan, the country's famed waste sorting and pristine streets had the effect of "hiding" the scale of the problem.

He praised a decision by Japan's government in February to ban plastic straws and cutlery in its cafeterias, but said the country was still lagging behind other nations. "The Japanese government needs more ambitious goals if they truly want to lead the G20 summit," he said. "The current proposals are not enough." —AFP

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- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
- ◆ Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

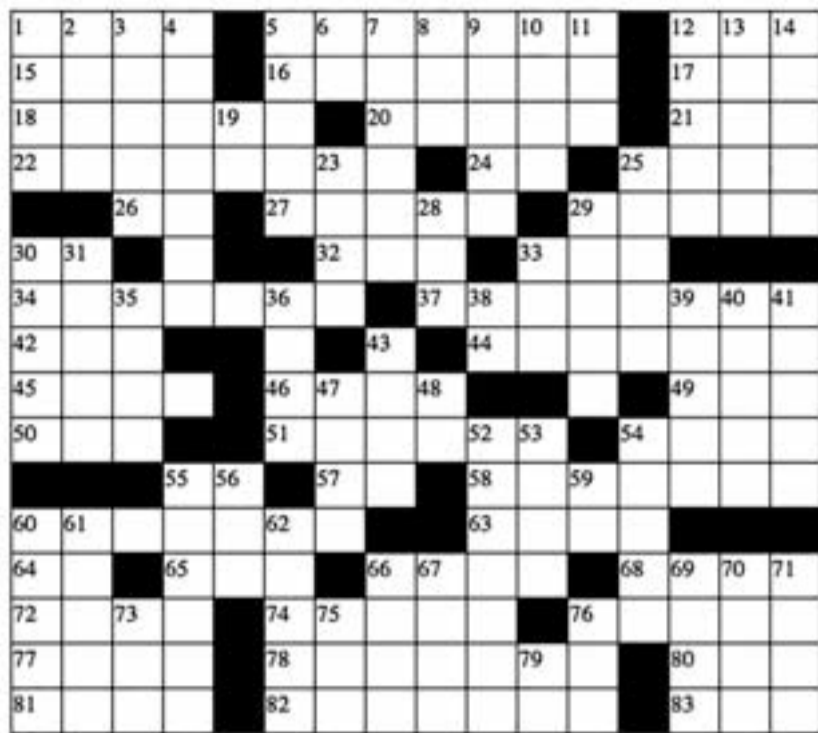
Scope of clinical Practice.

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

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Stars

CROSSWORD 2163



ACROSS

1. A branch of the Tai languages.
5. A case used to carry belongings when traveling.
12. A reproach for some lapse or misdeed.
15. Kamarupan languages spoken in western Burma and Bangladesh and east-most India.
16. The Fate who cuts the thread of life.
17. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
18. Oil palms.
20. A manner of speaking that is natural to native speakers of a language.
21. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
22. Talking idly or incoherently.
24. A state in northwestern North America.
26. A soft yellow malleable ductile (trivalent and univalent) metallic element.
27. American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
30. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
32. A depression in an otherwise level surface.
34. Indian nun and missionary (born in Albania) dedicated to helping the poor in India (1910-1997).
37. Any of various plants of the genus *Sabbatia* having usually pink cymose flowers.
42. Grass mowed and cured for use as fodder.
44. A flattened stem resembling and functioning as a leaf.
45. Advanced in years.
46. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
49. (used especially of persons) Having lived for a relatively long time or attained a specific age.
50. A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
51. A percussion instrument consisting of a pair of hollow pieces of wood or bone (usually held between the thumb and fingers) that are made to click together (as by Spanish dancers) in rhythm with the dance.
57. A metric unit of length equal to 1000 meters (or 0.621371 miles).
58. The state of being behind in payments.
60. Distinctive and stylish elegance.
63. The act of scanning.
64. A public promotion of some product or service.
65. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
68. An officer who acts as military assistant to a more senior officer.
72. An informal term for a father.
74. Port city on southern Honshu on Osaka Bay.
77. Type genus of the Anatidae.
78. A long-acting crystalline barbiturate (trade name Mebaral) used as a sedative and as an anticonvulsant in the treatment of epilepsy.
80. The sixth day of the week.
81. A narrow thin strip of wood used as backing for plaster or to make lattice-work.
82. Any customary and rightful perquisite appropriate to your station in life.
83. Up to the present time.

DOWN

1. A brace that extends from the rear of the keel to support the rudderpost.
2. A Polynesian rain dance performed by a woman.
3. Jordan's port.
4. United States Protestant theologian (1892-1971).
5. An oil port in southern Iraq.
6. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
7. An African amulet.
8. The supernatural being conceived as the perfect and omnipotent and omniscient originator and ruler of the universe.
9. Relating to or having the characteristics of bees.
10. Any thick messy substance.
11. Electronic warfare undertaken under direct control of an operational commander to locate sources of radiated electromagnetic energy for the purpose of immediate threat recognition.
12. A domain in which something is dominant.
13. A unit of dry measure used in Egypt.
14. A genus of *Ploceidae*.
19. Being nine more than forty.
23. A quantity of no importance.
25. Food mixtures either arranged on a plate or tossed and served with a moist dressing.
28. (Roman mythology) Goddess of abundance and fertility.
29. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
31. God of wealth and love.
33. Any of various units of capacity.
35. Having an eye or eyes or eyelike feature especially as specified.
36. A fraudulent business scheme.
38. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
39. Formerly included in genus *Cedrela*.
40. Person who does no work.
41. Yellow-fever mosquitos.
43. Found on a farm.
47. The lean flesh of a fish similar to cod.
48. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
52. Dried bark of the cascara buckthorn used as a laxative.
53. Type genus of the family *Arcidae*.
54. Fiber from an East Indian plant *Hibiscus cannabinus*.
55. A woman's large folded hooded hood.
56. (informal) Of the highest quality.
59. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
61. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
62. Leafless East Indian vine.
66. A metabolic acid found in yeast and liver cells.
67. A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
69. (informal) Subject to accident or chance or change.
70. Fraught with extreme danger.
71. An opening that permits escape or release.
73. Having only superficial plausibility.
75. The month following August and preceding October.
76. Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
79. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Routine duties help keep you on track and provide the sense of balance and security you require. Life may not be a bowl of cherries, but it's pretty dang good right now! Being thankful, realizing the blessings that are yours, beautifully highlights this current cycle; you can't complain when you truly look at your life. You're compelled to create schedules and systems; the trick is to stick to them, and you're truly ready to create a change for the better. Taking things apart and over analyzing things doesn't work, but you can't help yourself at certain times; don't beat yourself up, pick yourself up whenever possible!



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Today you're looking towards the horizon to accomplish your goals. You know what you want and you'll let nothing get in your way. Work related items are easily done even though you might find a condescending attitude from a workmate. Keep your goal in mind and don't let another control you. Love means more now and not just with friends and family. You're on the proverbial lookout for someone special. You might find that special someone while quick shopping for groceries, Aries. When you put emotional thought out to the universe for love, thought and emotion manifest. You don't have to chase anything it comes to you but you can't sit at home waiting either. That will only take longer. Enjoy your quest. If you're not shopping for love and you've got it, love the one you're with.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You feel physically, mentally and emotionally wonderful. You have goals and you want them completed both at work and at home. This is the time to make your life better and you can't wait. Get on with it, Taurus. This is what you think will become your new lifestyle. Whether it is or not, time will tell. You're more assertive now causing others to take a second look. Your significant other could be realizing they have a new lover in the house and not try to rock the boat too much. He or she may like the way you're approaching life now. Enjoy your new-found confidence.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Be grateful that the stars have moved and you're in a place you know very well. You're confident in your ability to beat any challenge. Thank goodness for your job and your extra ordinary life. You appreciate it today more than you have in days. Thank goodness for the small things. You know that all that happens in your life is a direct result of choices you've made. It feels as if you have an angel on your shoulder. Good or bad mental and emotional items can be handled at the drop of a hat, you conscious as it were. Today is better. Love and other sensitive ties mean so much more now.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You are confident today. Others look at you as if you know what you're doing and you do. They come to you with their issues because they know you're capable of helping them rectify any worrying situation quickly both personally and at work. You're thinking of marriage now, perhaps getting married if you aren't already, but most certainly having a partner with whom to go through life. Being alone is not what you've ever wanted. You need those close personal ties that only a life's partner can bring. Cancer. Being with family is important.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

His cycle of self-examination has brought you to today where you're thinking of your family, friends and loved ones, some of which may be at your work place. Knowing what you need, discovering who your real friends are take up time with your ever-growing truth in life emotional and mental search. You may even be thinking of changing your career path or becoming your own boss. With help from those you love, Leo, you can do anything. Close personal ties give you the encouragement to keep going in your search for becoming the very best you can be.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This is a new and perfect time for you to reflect what you desire in your life. You have a new sense of self and are assertive with your views. Doubts about your abilities fade. You're ready to face the future with new inventive, thoughtful assessments. Harmony in the family and in your love life bring immediate peace. Marriage or personal partnerships are high in your thoughts now. Virgo. Should you, shouldn't you but as always you do the accounting and let that figure in your decisions too. You're able to share your enthusiasm with all involved. You're back and stronger than ever.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

It seems when it rains it pours but you really are going to like today's rain. This outpouring is bringing you success you desire in every direction of your life. It's going too well really but you don't want it to stop and it seems it won't for a while. You get kudos from your boss who may be older than you and has your best interest at heart. That's a plus in your career. Your love life which Libra really needs to be balanced and running smoothly is doing just that now. If no one is there right now, he or she will be soon. Without someone to share your life with, you are not a happy camper. That's the one thing Libra needs most. You've got it all and are going towards a more prosperous future too.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

People interested in your business acumen come out of the woodwork now to let you know they're attracted to your ideas. These people are willing to put money where their mouth is and invest in your concepts. That should please you greatly, Scorpio. You like being seen as intelligent and innovative. Most people do. A new you is emerging. You're more self-confident and aware that you're making an impact on your life. As a result, you realize you're doing the same for others. This is great but it's also putting you into a place where you have to think of your love life, whether you want to be alone or whether you want that responsibility.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today you decide to let that old part of yourself that stood silently thinking go. You're here in full force now and you want others to understand you're in control of your work and home life. There's a confidence about you that no one cares to cross. No fading into the background for you, Sagittarius. You've got items you want to implement and you're not taking no for an answer. Marriage or renewing your marriage might even be in the cards for you now. You're proud of yourself and think the world is your oyster. It is.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Make sure your career path is making the money and giving you the happiness you deserve. Now's the time to look it over and make changes. Consider your own feelings rather than that of others now. You're feeling a more dynamic approach to life. That's a good thing because it allows you to see your life for what it's worth to you. You're able to dissect every part of it from work to love and figure out what you really need, Capricorn. This is the time for action and change if need be. Change isn't always catastrophic but may be a time for building stronger foundations.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Doubts about yourself fade as you get on with your work and get accolades for doing well now from your boss. A raise or more may be in the works. What you've been doing in the last few days only serves to create better for you. Your wish is to make everyone associated with your workplace shine. Coworkers and friends make use of your amateur counseling assistance because they take note of the sensitive nature you're exhibiting right now, Aquarius. Close personal ties mean more to you now.

Wordsearch Puzzle

90's Songs 7 - Word Search

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

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------|---------------|
| ALRIGHT | I KNOW | NO RAIN |
| ANGEL | I SWEAR | RUNAWAY TRAIN |
| BIG POPPA | INFORMER | SAVE TONIGHT |
| BLACK CAT | JUMPER | TELL ME |
| CREEP | LAST KISS | TOO CLOSE |
| DECEMBER | LATELY | TWO PRINCES |
| FOOLISH GAMES | LOUNGIN | WHO DAT |
| HERO | MR. JONES | |

Yesterday's Solution

90's Songs 6 - Solution

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

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|------------|
| BABY BLACK | INSENSITIVE | THIS HOUSE |
| DREAMLOVER | LULLABY | TOO MUCH |
| EVERY MORNING | ONE WEEK | UNPRETTY |
| HIGH ENOUGH | POISON | WATERFALLS |
| HYPNOTIZE | REGULATE | WHATTA MAN |
| I BELIEVE | SABOTAGE | WILD NIGHT |
| IMPULSIVE | SHINE | ZOMBIE |
| | TEMPTATION | |

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2019

MUSICIANS BRACE FOR BREXIT DISHARMONY

As the Brexit saga reaches a crescendo, classical musicians based in Britain fear that a disorderly divorce could threaten their European livelihood and stunt the development of potential maestros. Viola player Aliye Cornish told AFP she was particularly concerned because she is due to start a European tour in Spain on March 30 — the day after Britain is scheduled to leave the EU. “At the moment we have no formal guidance on how to prepare,” she said. Like many classical musicians in Britain, Cornish spends months every year working in the EU.

Their concern is that bureaucratic uncertainty will mean missing out on jobs. “I’ve heard stories of colleagues having offers of work retracted from ensembles in the EU 27, who are concerned there may be too many restrictions in place,” she said, taking a break from a rehearsal in the historic surroundings of London’s St Anne and St Agnes church.

Paul Smith, co-founder of the world-renowned Voces8 vocal ensemble, said Brexit was a central topic in discussions with promoters. “There’s so much planning that goes into taking a group of musicians into Europe,” he said. With a form from the tax authorities, British musicians can currently “hop on a Eurostar or a plane” and work in the EU, said Cornish. “After March 30, we don’t know if the HMRC form will be valid, we don’t know if we will need passports for instruments, we don’t know if we will need work permits.”

Risk of red tape

Musicians may have to prove that their instruments do not contain endangered materials, throwing up the prospect of lengthy custom checks post-Brexit, she said. “The worry is once you leave a common rule book. ‘If you’re trying to get an orchestra from a rehearsal in London today to a concert hall in southern Spain tomorrow... you really don’t want to be stuck at a border for four hours while people pore over every key of your harpsichord.’”

“
Hop on a
Eurostar
or a plane
”

Smith, a baritone singer, composer and conductor, said he too was concerned about the potential consequences. “The longer we have to spend doing this (red tape) the less opportunity we have to do the core things we want to be doing—performance and inspiring the next generation of young people to fall in love in music,” he said. Cornish used to play with the European Union Baroque Orchestra, which has relocated from Britain to Belgium due to Brexit.

He believes that young British musicians will miss out through not being able to play in EU projects. “It gave me the chance to see countries I’d not been to before, to



In these file photo British-German musician Simon Wallfisch, center, plays the cello and sings with supporters and fellow musicians outside the Houses of Parliament in London. — AFP photos

play music I didn’t know, meet people I wouldn’t have met otherwise and I came out of it knowing that was I wanted to do for the rest of my life.”

Bitterly divided

Smith worries that without EU-funded projects, Britain “might end up in a cultural wasteland... with no support from the top down.” He estimates that around 25 percent of the members of major British orchestras come from the EU, and that audiences could suffer if the talent pool was restricted. London-based Dutch viola player Michiel Wittink, a member of the European Union Youth Orchestra, which has also moved from Britain to Italy, told AFP that the introduction of visas “would make it a different story” for continental musicians.

But he also thinks that if they “really want to come,” they will find a way. “London is so big, and has so many orchestras in one city, there’s so much to do, there are amazing things to explore,” he said. London’s showpiece classical music event, the Proms, has also found itself centre stage in the Brexit debate. European flags were handed out at the final night, traditionally a colourful display of British patriotism.

Cornish, who took part in the initiative, said that “a lot of people really went for them”. “It makes me sad to see how bitterly divided we are as a country,” she added. “It’s permeated into every facet of our lives.”—AFP



London-based Dutch viola player Michiel Wittink



Musician Aliye Cornish



Gemma Chan thinks men should join feminism movement

The 'Crazy Rich Asians' star says it "really heartens" her when men become "allies" with women. She said: "It always really heartens me when a man does speak out not to just defend women but to make it clear they are an ally. It is so important ... We can't do it without bringing men along for the ride." And the 36-year-old actress hates the conversation surrounding women and their ageing process as she thinks it is just another form of "control". She added: "It's been a way of controlling women and making women feel insecure about ourselves and that they aren't adequate. We need to change things, especially in the beauty industry. The ageing process is going to happen to all of us, how are we going to deal with it? I think anti-ageing is a prehistoric term." Gemma has had to face racial prejudice in her life too but the rejection has just made her more "determined". She explained to GLAM-

OUR UK's March digital issue: "Back when I started out a lot of the parts that I would be asked to audition for would be specifically ethnic parts. But I was told things like, 'We really liked you, we liked your read, but can you do more of an accent, you sound too English!' There were preconceived ideas of what someone like me should sound like ... I put that energy into my work and it just makes me more determined to do what I do. That's why it's so important for a film 'Crazy Rich Asians' to come out and challenge and subvert people's ideas of what Asian people are like or perhaps what women are capable of ... I think we need to challenge prejudice as a whole, to be honest."



Dwayne Johnson identified as both Black and Samoan

The Hollywood star and former WWE champion responded to a social media debate between wrestling fans regarding his ethnicity and how he was portrayed on screen, with one arguing that Johnson - whose father Rocky was Black Canadian and whose mother Ata came from a Samoan family - identified with the latter professionally. Talking to Twitter to weight into the conversation, the actor said: "Glad I came across this and I'll give you guys some context & truth. I identify as exactly what I am - both. Equally proud. Black/Samoan. And my friend, let me expand your thoughts a bit here - I transcended race in wrestling so there was no 'booked that way'. Thx guys (sic)" While the 'Hobbs & Shaw' actor has gone onto become one of Hollywood's most recognizable stars, he remains proud of his WWE career and recently

opened up the 17th anniversary of his 'WrestleMania X8' match with Hulk Hogan, and counted the Hall of Famer amongst his top three wrestlers of all time. He wrote on Instagram: "My friend and childhood hero, Hulk Hogan passed the torch to me on this historic night which decreed me becoming 'THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME', but the truth is - to me - the GOAT are the three men below who paved the way for me and so many others in pro wrestling... "@hulkhogan @ricflairnatureboy @steveaustinbr... I just worked very hard, connected with the audience and caught a break. "These GOATS were good enough to recognize I had something to offer and graciously passed the torch. (sic)"



James Arthur gets new tattoo

The 'Say You Won't Let Go' hitmaker took to social media to show off the new inking on his chest, whilst praising his tattoo artist Clara Sinclair for achieving exactly what he wanted. She wrote on Twitter: "Finished this up on the lovely @James.Arthur23 yesterday ... The proof is in the pudding, you can be at the top of your craft and still be an awesome, down to earth human. Thanks for the trust and the great banter. (sic)" Whilst James replied: "Look forward to doing more with you! You're the woman to go to for great tattoos and great vibes :) ! (sic)" The new tattoo features a tiger roaring in the centre, whilst the words, 'All the world's a stage', a line from William Shakespeare's play 'As You Like It', is inked above. And James' fans also rushed to social media to praise the inking. One wrote: "It really looks great, the details, the shadows, the view of the eyes from it, and it looks perfect together with the all the worlds a stage part. And both together suites you wonderful, and is as unique as you are (sic)" Whilst another fan added: "The black ink is so crisp and brilliant! Love the shading! 95% done aye? Can't wait to see the finished product! (sic)" A third shared: "Gorgeous art on a gorgeous man! Obviously, there were two big talents in that room (sic)" James previously confessed he "regrets" all of his tattoos. He said: "I regret every one of them, yeah. Every single one, yeah."

Dev Patel spends his birthdays alone

The 'Lion' actor will be turning 29 in just over a month, but he says he won't be planning a big party for the special occasion, as he usually just stays at home and celebrates by himself. Speaking to the New York Post's Page Six Column, he said: "I won't do anything special to celebrate the special day. I'll be by myself. Maybe do something nice. Or hide altogether. I usually spend it alone." Dev may be too busy to celebrate his birthday, as his latest film project 'Hotel Mumbai' - which explores the terrorist attacks at the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in India in 2008 - is set to be released at the end of this month. The actor recently praised the thriller movie for "embracing" non-white actors, and said he doesn't think it would have been made a decade ago. He said: "A film like this, with a bunch of brown faces, would not have been made 10 years ago. "But people are embracing new faces. Why not embrace brown ones?" The former 'Skins' star has Gujarati-speaking Indian parents but was born and raised in London, and embraced the city he grew up in, so was overwhelmed when he first went to India to work on 'Slumdog Millionaire' with director Danny Boyle. He told the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper: "Growing up, the idea is to do as much as possible to fit into that place and rid yourself of all cultural and ancestral ties. "Being introduced to India by Danny Boyle blew my mind. It was so much more than I imagined."



Hailey Bieber supports Justin Bieber to work on his mental health

The 'Sorry' singer was revealed to have sought help for depression earlier this year, and although the treatment has seen the couple push back their official wedding ceremony - which will see them say their vows in front of their family and friends, after getting married in secret in September - Hailey, 22, is being nothing but supportive of her spouse. An insider told Us Weekly magazine: "They are in a great place and they are super close. She's very supportive. They will wait [to hold their wedding ceremony] until he's more stabilized. He's trying to work on his issues and rebuild." The comments come after it was recently claimed the 25-year-old singer is "very focused on getting better." A source shared: "Justin is still receiving treatment on both coasts, but is doing okay. He is very, very focused on getting better. He wants to be in a great place for his own and Hailey's sake. He is still confi-

dent that he will get there. Justin is still receiving treatment on both coasts, but is doing okay. He is very, very focused on getting better. "He wants to be in a great place for his own and Hailey's sake. He is still confident that he will get there. They seem happy about spending a few days in L.A. Hailey isn't putting any pressure on him at all. She only wants him to focus on his mental health." Whilst another source said the couple aren't "focused" on their wedding right now, as Justin's health is more important. They said: "They will still have a wedding eventually, but this is not their focus right now. They haven't sent out any new save the dates. They will wait until Justin feels better and is excited about planning their wedding again."

Kit Harington sought therapy at height of his GOT fame

The 32-year-old actor was under intense scrutiny at the end of the fifth season of the fantasy drama series, when his character Jon Snow was killed off - only to be resurrected early in the following series - and he was struggling with his confidence and questioning his acting ability. He told Variety: "When you become the cliffhanger of a TV show, and a TV show probably at the height of its power, the focus on you is terrifying. "You get people shouting at you on the street. 'Are you dead?' At the same time you have to have this appearance. All of your neuroses-and I'm as neurotic as any actor-get heightened with that level of focus..." "It wasn't a very good time in my life. I felt I had to feel that I was the most fortunate person in the world, when actually, I felt very vulnerable. I had a shaky time in my life around there-like I think a

lot of people do in their 20s. "That was a time when I started therapy, and started talking to people. I had felt very unsafe, and I wasn't talking to anyone. I had to feel very grateful for what I have, but I felt incredibly concerned about whether I could even act..." "It's like when you're at a party, and the party's getting better and better. Then you reach this point of the party where you're like, it's peaked. I don't know what I could find more from this. You realize, well, there isn't more. This is it. And the 'more' that you can find is actually in the work rather than the enjoyment surrounding it." The show is due to end after the upcoming final season and Kit admitted that, for the first time, relations between the cast grew "strained" but he insisted they are all fine again now.—Bang Showbiz



Lifestyle | Features



Kylie Jenner finds bigger circle of friends

The 21-year-old reality star was left stuck in the middle when Jordyn - whom she has been friends with for several years - admitted to kissing Tristan, the then-boyfriend of Kylie's half-sister Khloe Kardashian, at a party last month, and sources have now said Kylie is trying to branch out and find new friends. An insider told People magazine: "Kylie has had a rough few weeks. She is still upset about the Jordyn situation, although she seems to be doing much better. "She has been socializing more and trying to find a bigger circle of friends that she can be close with. After the Jordyn drama, she realized that relying on just one friend is not the best idea." Meanwhile, it was recently claimed the 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star wasn't under any "pressure" from her family to cut Jordyn off, as they are letting her make her own decisions. Another source said: "It's still a tricky situation for Kylie. And no one is actually putting too much pressure on her. Her family is aware that she is in contact with Jordyn. They are letting Kylie figure things out for herself." Following news of Jordyn's lip lock with Tristan - who has 11-month-old daughter True with Khloe - the model, also 21, moved out of Kylie's home, and while it was reported they were "barely communicating", they were spotted grabbing breakfast together earlier this month at Pedalers Fork restaurant in Calabasas, California. A source said of their reconciliation meeting: "It seemed very casual and they both were having a discussion together while eating."



PRIYANKA CHOPRA CALLS HERSELF TERRIBLE WIFE BECAUSE SHE 'CAN'T COOK'

The 36-year-old actress married singer Nick Jonas last year, and has now revealed she warned him when he proposed to her that whilst he was used to have amazing home cooked meals from his mother, he wouldn't be getting the same treatment when he married her, because she's awful in the kitchen. She said: "I can't cook. And I told him that when he proposed. I was like, 'Listen, you're from a good southern home, you're used to your mom making you amazing food. You're not marrying that girl.' I cannot cook. I can make eggs, also sporadically, maybe at night." Luckily for the 'Quantico' actress, the 26-year-old Jonas Brothers star didn't mind her lack of culinary expertise, as he admitted he too struggles when it comes to meal times. Priyanka added during an appearance on 'The View' on Tuesday: "I'm a

terrible, terrible wife in that sense, but the most amazing thing when I told him that, 'Babe, I can't cook and I hope you know that,' he said, 'It's alright babe, neither can I.' But you don't hear that from guys! They're usually like, 'It's OK, baby.' And he was like, 'I can't either!' And although they won't be collaborating in the kitchen any time soon, Nick recently claimed he'd be "open" to teaming up with his wife on a song, because he says she has an "amazing voice". He said: "I'd be open to it, I mean, she's got an incredible voice and there's a lot of music in our house and a lot of dancing. "So, I don't know. Right now we're just enjoying the first couple months of married life, and we'll see where it takes us."

Jesy Nelson fronts documentary on mental health

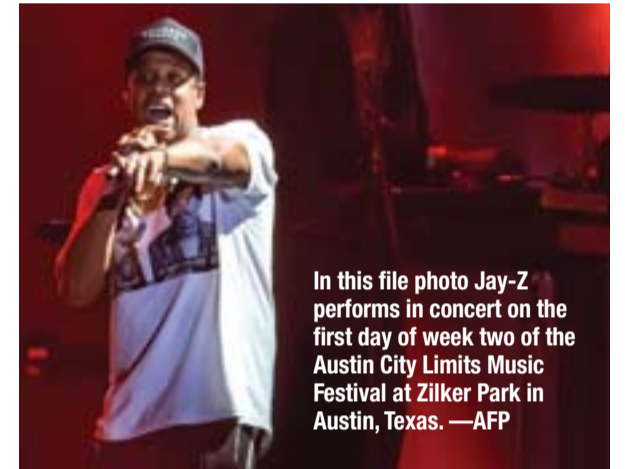
The Little Mix star is working with the BBC to raise awareness of mental health and the effects it can have on young people in particular. She announced: "This is a project really close to my heart, and I'm delighted to be working with the BBC on a documentary that will both challenge me personally and also highlight a hugely important issue affecting young people today. One in four men and women suffer with mental health and it's a subject that I think we don't speak about enough. I'm making this film because I really, really want to make a change and a difference to other people's lives." Jesy had previously admitted she "struggled" with the pressures of fame at the start of Little Mix's career. She said: "When I first started out, I struggled. I never thought I would get over thinking people thought certain things



about me. I still get upset when I talk about it. I'll never get those years back. I was so miserable, I should have been enjoying my life." And Jesy is grateful to have her bandmates - Perrie Edwards, Leigh Anne Pinnoch and Jade Thirlwall - by her side throughout it all as she understands why fame can cause people to struggle.

Jay-Z among lineup for Woodstock 50 festival

Contemporary heavyweights including Jay-Z and Chance the Rapper will headline this year's Woodstock festival marking the 50th anniversary of the legendary concert weekend, organizers announced Tuesday. Veteran acts that played the 1969 festival in upstate New York-considered a definitive moment in pop culture history-are also on the lineup set for August 16-18, including Santana, John Fogerty, Country Joe McDonald and Canned Heat. The 2019 edition of peace, love and music will span the genres, in a bid to appeal to fans of the original weekend-where icons including Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin jammed in the pouring rain-as well as today's young concert-goers. Michael Lang-a promoter who co-created the 1969 show-had promised an "eclectic bill," telling Rolling Stone that Woodstock 50 aimed to be "multi-generational." This three-day event to be held in Watkins Glen, New York is separate from one slated for the same weekend at the first festival's site, about 115 miles (185 kilometers) away. With a lineup that includes everything from hip hop to country with more than 80 artists, Woodstock 50 lives up to vows of widespread appeal,



In this file photo Jay-Z performs in concert on the first day of week two of the Austin City Limits Music Festival at Zilker Park in Austin, Texas. —AFP

featuring a diverse billing of artists including rapper Common, rockers The Black Keys, pop futurist Janelle Monae and folk-rock troubadour Brandi Carlile. "See ya in Aug! Performing on Friday, so I have all weekend to party!" tweeted pop star Miley Cyrus. The 73-year-old Fogerty, frontman of the legendary rock band Creedence Clearwater Revival, also tweeted his delight: "Come join me on my 50 Year Trip at Woodstock 50!" "I was there 50 years ago in 1969 and I'm back to celebrate 3 days of Peace, Love, & Music."—AFP

Baby Diana? Or little Arthur? Bets on for royal baby name

What will Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan name their child? With the former actress in the last stage of her pregnancy, punters are having a flutter on the baby's gender, weight, date and birthplace. One of the most popular wagers is for the name. For a boy, Arthur is leading the pack at bookmakers William Hill but if it's a girl, many expect the Duke and Duchess of Sussex could pay tribute to Harry's late mother.

"Diana (is) 10/1 red hot favorite, no great surprises there," William Hill spokesman Rupert Adams said. "But the recent move is for Victoria also 10/1, (people) really like it." Queen Elizabeth's grandson and his American wife, who married last May, announced in October they were expecting their first child this spring. In January, Meghan told well-wishers she was six months pregnant, adding the couple did not know the baby's gender.

William Hill odds were 8/11 for a girl and evens for a boy earlier this week. At Betfair, the odds have shortened on a girl, and the favorite name is Diana at 5/1, Betfair Media Relations Manager Katie Baylis said. Baylis said another possibility was Alice, a name that was among those speculated when Prince William and his wife Kate were expecting their third child last year. Kate eventually gave birth to a boy, Prince Louis.

"Punters feel that there will at some point be an Alice in the royal family and so we've seen plenty of interest in that name as well," she said. The mother of Harry's grandfather Prince Philip was called Alice. Betfair has odds of 8/1 for Arthur. Alice, Victoria, Grace, James and Edward each stand at 14/1. Diana and Arthur are also among favourites at other bookmakers. Other wagers have included who will be godparents to the baby, the date and time of birth, and if Meghan will have twins.

"Comparative to (Prince William and Kate) the Harry betting is significantly more at this stage, so 30 odd percent (more) ... in real terms that's huge," Adams said. Outside Buckingham Palace, sightseers shared their name preferences. "I would put money on a girl and Victoria (as a name) because we could call her Tori," tourist Sarah Owens said. Fellow sightseer Danni Ma picked Mary: "(It) sounds very old fashioned but it is Meghan and Harry (combined)." —Reuters

Al Hamra Real Estate Co. celebrates Launch of 'Marzook X Sofia Richie'

Taking the fashion scene in Kuwait by storm, Al Hamra Real Estate Co. recently hosted an event to celebrate the launch of a one-of-a-kind collaboration showcasing a new line of hand bags. The event witnessed the special fusion between renowned Kuwaiti luxury brand owners of 'Marzook', Fahad and Shouq and American celebrity Sofia Richie take shape for the first time in Kuwait. Aimed at accommodating new age Generation-Z fashion lovers, Kuwaiti Al Marzook siblings along with Sofia Richie came together to weave a designer label that incorporated both vitality and ambition into futuristic "Neon" designs.

The American model and influencer, daughter of the legendary singer Lionel Richie and the sibling duo's collection features Marzook's signature design - the spherical Lucid Classic bag, in a grand theme of neon hues, Powerful Pink, Neon-Z Green, and Traffic Cone Orange. Held at Al Hamra Luxury Center, the successful event saw a large number of eager visitors and

VIP guests attend the much-awaited appearance by Sofia Richie herself and the homegrown creative minds.

Al Hamra Real Estate Co. Marketing and Public Relations Manager, Abdullah Al Mansour said: "We are proud that Al Hamra Luxury Center continues to be home to unique fashion labels that speak to the ever-so-demanding generations of today that crave both sophistication and differentiation. With the growing number of international stores and rise of Kuwaiti designers making their mark on global ramps, it is evident that Kuwait has in many ways transformed the region and taken the lead on adopting the latest fashion trends."

"Al Hamra, we believe in bringing our customers the very best of local talents, popular styles and refined shopping experiences. This remarkable latest launch demonstrates not only Al Hamra's appeal to world-class designers, but also our commitment to the Kuwaiti fashion community," he added.



Lifestyle | Features

Dragons, politicians go up in flames in Spain's fiery festival

Valencia's Las Fallas festival lit up on the early hours of yesterday the Mediterranean sky with fireworks and flames from blazing sculptures of all shapes and sizes - beautiful amazons, fairytale dragons and cartoonish effigies of politicians such as US President Donald Trump. The festival, during which hundreds of intricate 'ninots', the Valencian name for papier-mache dolls, are brought into the streets and then burned on the last day, is a centuries-old tradition honoring St Joseph, the patron saint of carpenters.

The themed dolls and doll sets, some as big as a four-story building, are made by groups of artisans and cost hundreds of thousands of euros to produce. In 2016 UNESCO, recognized Las Fallas as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The themes vary from musicals and magic to hot social and political issues, with the current edition featuring women's rights, the global rise of populism and the far right or Catalonia's bid to gain independence from Spain.

In one ensemble, a sculpture of Trump wearing nothing but a cowboy hat appeared alongside equally naked Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin and Spain's former dictator, Francisco Franco. The divisive planned removal of Franco's body from a state mausoleum also merited comic references. Spain's Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez was pictured as a prince waking "Sleeping Beauty" Franco from his tomb.

In another, a grinning Sanchez flies a government jet in an allusion to allegations that he used one for private trips. Each year, members of the public vote on their favorite sculptures to save the best two from the final bonfire called "Crema". The festival is believed to have originated from pagan rituals marking the end of winter.—Reuters

Figures that are part of a Fallas monument burn during the finale of the Fallas festival, which welcomes Spring and commemorates Saint Joseph's Day in Valencia. — Reuters



Exhibition turns up trove of looted Nazi art in Louvre

A new exhibition has uncovered a hoard of art looted from a Jewish family almost wiped out by the Nazis in the Louvre and other leading French museums. The show about the booming art market in occupied Paris, when more than two million objects went under the hammer in a frenzy of forced sales and looting, has turned up works by Delacroix and Forain taken from the family by the collaborationist French Vichy authorities.

French national collection during the war.

"We need to look at their provenance very calmly and scientifically to lift all suspicion over them. It is hugely important that this is done," she said. France's Prime Minister Edouard Philippe — who visited the museum Monday-boosted the investigative powers of a commission which awards compensation to victims of Nazi looting last year after criticism of the slow pace of restitution more than 70 years since the end of World War II.

Amnesia

In January, Polack helped return a painting plundered from the home of France's heroic pre-war interior minister Georges Mandel, a man Winston Churchill hailed as "the first resister". Mandel, who refused to flee to London with Charles De Gaulle after France fell in 1940, was murdered by members of the French collaborationist "Milice" militia a month before Paris was liberated by the allies in 1944. The portrait of a young woman by Thomas Couture was returned by the German government from the Gurlitt trove.

Polack told AFP that the free-for-all auctions during the war "utterly changed" the Paris art market, then the biggest in the world, and has been cloaked for decades behind "a kind of amnesia". "Major players whose suspect practices helped them flourish during these dark years were rarely investigated," she said. Some art world dynasties rose during the war while others never recovered.

The exhibition shows how the pillage was pre-planned, with galleries sealed off by German troops after the French capital fell in 1940, and the premises of its most famous modern art dealer, Paul Rosenberg, seized and turned into the Institute for Jewish Affairs, which pumped out anti-Semitic propaganda. More than a third of Rosenberg's 162 seized paintings are still missing, including works by Picasso, Degas and Matisse.

Greed and treachery

Another legendary gallerist Rene Gimpel, who joined the resistance, was denounced by a rival dealer Jean-Francois Lefranc and died in a German concentration camp. Others were forced to "aryanise" their businesses, like Pierre Loeb, who had to hand over his gallery to his colleague Georges Aubry. But as the exhibition shows, when the war was over Aubry refused to give it back until Picasso—a communist who had remained in France throughout the war—forced him.

Polack said she was now working to help the family of collector Armand Dorville, who had given works to French museums before the war and had intended to leave more in his will. "It is not just about getting paintings back, it is about grief and acknowledging the terrible injustices of the past," she said. "Confiscating art works was part of a process which started with people being demonized, excluded from professional life, then pauperized when their bank accounts were seized before finally being deported for extermination in the camps," Polack insisted.

The paintings they were deprived of could have helped buy their escape, so "they were caught in a trap", she said. Prime Minister Philippe did not refer to the often drawn-out legal process of restitution during his speech at the museum, but promised to double state funding for the memorial from next year. Polack said she was encouraged by the attitude of the Louvre.

"I think lending the three works to us (for the show) is a very big step and there is a good dynamic. They know the context and they know we need to work together to do everything properly to solve this problem," she added.—AFP



In this file photo the Federal Government's Commissioner for Culture and the Media Monika Gruetters, right, talks with heirs Maria de las Mercedes Estrada, left, and Wolfgang Kleinertz, center, during the restitution of a painting titled 'Portrait of a seated woman' by artist Thomas Couture in Berlin. — AFP

Curator Emmanuelle Polack discovered that the Louvre bought a dozen works seized from the Dorvilles while researching a new book on how Jewish families and some of the most important dealers in modern art were plundered. The paintings are still in the French national collection, with three loaned to the Shoah Memorial museum in Paris for the show.

Three more works taken from the family—most of whom perished in Auschwitz—have turned up in the Gurlitt hoard of 1,500 Old Masters, Impressionist and Cubist works found in a Munich apartment in 2011. Despite decades of pressure to restore works to their rightful owners, Polack told AFP that there had yet to be a proper audit of the works acquired by the

Netflix dramatizes notorious India gang-rape murder case

Filmmaker Richie Mehta was at first reluctant to make Netflix's latest Indian series, documenting the aftermath of the notorious gang-rape and murder of an Indian student that made global headlines. Jyoti Singh, a 23-year-old physiotherapy student, was violently raped and assaulted and left for dead by five men and a teenager on a bus in New Delhi in December 2012. The horrific crime shone an international spotlight on India's high levels of sexual violence, and sparked weeks of protests and eventually a change in the law to introduce the death penalty for rape.

"Initially I was against the idea. I thought it was inappropriate for anyone to do it," the Indian-Canadian director said during an interview in Mumbai. "But after I read the verdict and met some of the officers involved, I was amazed. The verdict detailed the manhunt and who these people were and how they were found. I realized that this analysis of hunting these guys is also a way of understanding why these things happen," he added.

"Delhi Crime", a seven-part series written and directed by Mehta, will be released on Netflix worldwide on Friday. The thriller recreates the police investigation, tracing the pursuit of the six men behind the shocking crime. Four of the adults accused received death sentences, while one died in prison by a suspected suicide. The teenager was released after three years in a youth detention home.

Mehta said Delhi's police commissioner at the time of the atrocity, Neeraj Kumar, had first suggested to him that the investigation would make a powerful film. The filmmaker disagreed at the outset.

But gradually he changed his mind and went on to spend four years interviewing police officials involved in the case.

Too painful

It is their perspective on the case that he tells. "When the crime happened, there was a lot of anger pointed toward this institution. But when I got to know their point of view I realized the police were trying their best, especially given the statistics. "As we say at the start of the show: "11,000 heinous crimes are reported every year (in Delhi). Prevention is nearly impossible with half the police force stuck on traffic duty and VIP protection", he added.

The series, filmed in English and Hindi, was well received at its premier at the Sundance Film Festival this year. It stars Shefali Shah ("Monsoon Wedding") as the lead investigating officer, and also features actors Adil Hussain ("Life of Pi") and Denzil Smith ("The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel"). Nearly 40,000 rape cases were reported in India in 2016. But activists say that is just the tip of the iceberg, with many victims too scared to come forward. Politicians and religious leaders initially blamed Singh for inciting her own murder, echoing prevailing attitudes in India where rape victims face overwhelming prejudice.

Even one of the perpetrators blamed her, saying women who went out late at night attracted men. Indian authorities banned the broadcast of a BBC documentary by British film-maker Leslee Udwin about Singh in 2015, saying they would not allow anyone to use the incident for commercial purposes. Mehta said he spoke to Singh's family to assure them their daughter's horrific murder would not be depicted in the drama.

But her father, Badrinath Singh, said the series would still open too many old wounds. "We will not watch it because it will be too painful," Singh told AFP. "Of course we can't ever forget what happened to our daughter but we don't want to be taken through the horror all over again. The pain will be too much to bear for my family."—AFP



In this file photo Indian protesters hold candles during a rally in New Delhi, following the gang rape of student Jyoti Singh on December 16, 2012.—AFP photos



In this file photo demonstrators react as police use water cannon during a protest calling for better safety for women.

Growing pains in Ethiopia: Film spotlights hidden cost of urban growth

Living in a tool shed on the outskirts of Ethiopia's capital, 10-year-old Asalif Tewold straddles a unique space between modernity and tradition. In his short life, he has lived on a rural farm and in the shadows of a towering condominium complex - learning how to dodge dangerous hyenas and land developers - as he and his dispossessed family try to find a place to call home.

The young boy and his mother are the subject of the film "Anbessa", meaning "lion" in Amharic, one of Ethiopia's main languages, that tracks their displacement off farmland to make way for a block of flats on the fringes of Addis Ababa. The playful protagonist, Asalif, takes centre stage of the documentary by US filmmaker Mo Scarpelli, premiering in London on Wednesday at the Human Rights Watch Film Festival - as he lives and plays in the looming shadow of the buildings.

"Asalif is the perfect person... he lives literally on the rift of old and new," Scarpelli told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "Anbessa" follows Asalif over two years as he seeks to ward off roaming hyenas both literally in the forest and in the form of lurking land developers.

As he carves out a space to call home, he and millions of others globally are learning that "progress" is not for them, said Scarpelli, as the film analyses universal themes of gentrification and urbanisation.

Ethiopia, a nation of 105 million and an economic power in East Africa, is grappling with a housing crisis and new developments are leaving millions like Asalif out of the picture, Scarpelli said. About 40 percent of Africa's 1 billion people live in towns and cities and the urban population is expected to double over the next 25 years, the World Bank predicts. "I do feel like there's this kind of sweeping narrative about the future and about a better way of life that for sure has been exported from Europe and North America to the rest of the world," said Scarpelli.

"That this is the way we should live - bigger is better." But the film is concerned with what gets lost along the way, from storytelling to family structures, steam-rolled by modernity, she said. In Ethiopia, all land is formally owned by the state, making security of tenure rare and dispossession easier, said Felix Horne, senior Ethiopia researcher for Human Rights Watch. Recourse to courts is often difficult, making forced displacement a major social issue, he said.

Lions and hyenas

The contested edges of Asalif's home also shed light on wider issues in Africa's second-most populous nation, and a country in the midst of social and economic change. Unrest spread in Ethiopia in 2015 and 2016, sparked initially by an urban development plan for the capital. Anger over land expropriations and unfair compensation, in particular, drove protests, leading eventually to a new reformist Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in 2018.

"Most residents of the city do feel stretched because there isn't enough supply of decent housing for many of them," said Mekonnen Firew Ayano, an Ethiopian legal expert at Harvard University in the United States. "Rural dwellers have been pushed away from their land without any meaningful alternative." Ayano said the government's housing policy targeted the middle and upper social classes and that the pace of growth was leaving many behind, which could stoke ethnic and social tensions.

Asalif's story does not, however, present a clear division between good and evil, as the new tower blocks offer treasures and adventures for the child. "Everybody living on either side is connected to each other, they can't not be, and that's the way that the world is," said Scarpelli. The film ends with Asalif, the metaphorical lion, besting the hyenas, and his future remains promising, said Scarpelli. "I don't know how things will unfold, but I do have a hope that the average Ethiopian will have more of a say on what happens to their land and their family moving forward."—Reuters

Classifieds

Thursday, March 21, 2019

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Warm and Partly cloudy with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 20 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain.

BY NIGHT: Cool with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 20 km/h with a chance for mist forming.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 20/03/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	25 °C	16 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	26 °C	09 °C			
ABDALY	26 °C	10 °C			
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C			
JAHRA	27 °C	12 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	26 °C	13 °C			
SALMIYAH	24 °C	17 °C			
AHMADI	24 °C	16 °C			
NUWASIB	25 °C	11 °C			
WAFRA	26 °C	09 °C			
SALMY	26 °C	11 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	MAX. TEMP.	MIN. TEMP.	WIND DIRECTION	WIND SPEED
Thursday	03/21	Warm and	27 °C	12 °C	VRB-NE	06 - 28 km/h
Friday	03/22	Warm and Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for mist forming at night	28 °C	12 °C	VRB-S	06 - 28 km/h
Saturday	03/23	Warm and Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered rain later on	28 °C	13 °C	SE-VRB	06 - 30 km/h
Sunday	03/24	Warm and Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	27 °C	12 °C	NW-NE	15 - 38 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:34
Sunrise	05:50
Zuhr	11:56
Asr	15:23
Sunset	17:59
Isha	19:16

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	25 °C
MIN. Temp.	07 °C
MAX. RH	58 %
MIN. RH	15 %
MAX. Wind	N 46 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, VISHNU MANOJ (given name) holder of Indian Passport N7014140 do hereby change my name to VISHNU (given name) MANOJ (surname) for all purposes. I also undertake to effect the change in all my other public documents. (C 5504) 20-3-2019

FOR SALE

Mitsubishi Lancer Fortis - 2015, white color, excellent condition, KD 1650. Mob 50994848. (C 5505) 21-3-2019

MATRIMONIAL

I, Huzefa Lukmani, holder of Indian Passport No. M5452033 and Civil ID No. 288112902143 has changed my name from Hujefa to Huzefa Lukmani hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Huzefa Lukmani. (C 5502) 19-3-2019

Christian, Marthomate Boy, 28/177cm, Engineer working in Kuwait, seeks suitable proposal from Marthoma, Orthodox or Jacobite, B-Tech, M-Tech or paramedical working in Kuwait or abroad. Interested may contact josevmathew23@gmail.com (C 5503) 20-3-2019

EMERGENCY

112

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
Jet Airways	2207426
FlyDubai	22924455
Qatar Airways	22414400
KLM	22423888
Royal Jordanian	22425747
22418064/5/6	
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073

Flight Schedule

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

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 21/3/2019					Departure Flights on Thursday 21/3/2019				
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time		Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	
JZR	254	Amman	00:05	KNE	531	Jeddah	13:20		
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	QTR	1078	Doha	13:35		
THY	766	ISL	00:30	IAW	1578	AI Najaf	13:55		
KAC	504	Beirut	00:45	IAW	157A	AI Najaf	13:55		
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KAC	774	Riyadh	14:00		
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	KAC	792	Madinah	14:05		
SAI	441	Lahore	00:50	IRA	667	Esfahan	14:10		
KAC	102	London	00:50	KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10		
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	JZR	602	Baku	14:10		
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	SVA	500	Jeddah	14:15		
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	FDB	059	Dubai	14:20		
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	KAC	672	Dubai	14:25		
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40		
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	KAC	618	Doha	14:40		
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:05	FDB	8065	Dubai	14:40		
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KNE	529	Bangkok	15:00		
JZR	722	Alexandria	02:15	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:05		
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15		
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	JZR	222	Riyadh	15:30		
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	OMA	645	Muscat	15:35		
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	562	Amman	15:35		
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45		
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	JZR	732	Cairo	15:50		
MSR	606	Luxor	03:10	SAW	705	Damascus	16:00		
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	ABY	127	Sharjah	16:05		
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KAC	118	New York	16:05		
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	JZR	212	Jeddah	16:25		
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	502	Beirut	16:30		
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC	542	Cairo	16:30		
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	QTR	1072	Doha	16:35		
JZR	406	Kochi	04:45	FDB	051	Dubai	16:40		
UAE	873	Dubai	04:55	FEJ	341	Sohag	16:55		
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	JZR	114	Doha	17:10		
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15		
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30		
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	JZR	214	Jeddah	17:45		
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	JZR	104	Bahrain	17:45		
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	UAE	875	Dubai	18:00		
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	FDB	063	Dubai	18:15		
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	QTR	1080	Doha	18:30		
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	MSR	620	Cairo	18:30		
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	RJA	640	Amman	19:00		
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25		
KAC	362	Colombo	06:10	RBG	555	Alexandria	19:25		
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:10	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30		
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	NIA	161	Cairo	19:30		
BAW	157	London	07:05	KAC	616	Bahrain	19:30		
JZR	708	Luxor	07:15	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:30		
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	19:35		
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:35	FDB	057	Dubai	19:50		
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	776	Riyadh	19:50		
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	JZR	126	Dubai	19:55		
IGO	1755	CNN	08:00	KNE	381	Taif	20:00		
QTR	8511	Doha	08:00	OMA	647	Muscat	20:20		
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	QTR	1088	Doha	20:35		
KAC	304	Mumbai	08:20	KAC	674	Dubai	20:35		
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:45		
MSC	411	Asyut	09:00	KAC	174	Munich	21:15		
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20		
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20		
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	ALK	229	Colombo	21:20		
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	MEA	402	Beirut	21:20		
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	620	Doha	21:20		
IAW	157	AI Najaf	09:55	KAC	164	MXP	21:25		
SYR	341	Damascus	10:00	KAC	168	Paris	21:30		
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	KAC	859	Dubai	21:35		
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	UAE	551	Alexandria	21:40		
SAW	703	Damascus	10:30	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45		
IRA	675	Lar	10:50	KAC	676	Dubai	21:45		
JZR	116	Doha	11:10	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:50		
JZR	122	Dubai	11:10	KAC	564	Amman	21:55		
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	MSC	405	Sohag	22:00		
JZR	216	Jeddah	11:45	QTR	1082	Doha	22:05		
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15		
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:25	AIC	981	Ahmedabad	22:25		
JZR	252	Amman	12:30	RBG	213	Sohag	22:30		
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35	KAC	786	Jeddah	22:45		
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	692	Muscat	22:55		
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50	BBC	043	Dhaka	23:00		
ABY	121	Sharjah	12:55	ETH	3717	LGg	23:00		
MSR	610	Cairo	13:10	MSC	501	Alexandria	23:05		
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	GEC	8456	Frankfurt	23:10		
				JZR	128	Dubai	23:15		
				MSR	2614	Cairo	23:30		
				FDB	071	Dubai	23:45		

Kazakhstan renames capital as new president takes office

ALMATY: Kazakhstan's new president was sworn yesterday following the shock resignation of the country's long-time ruler and in his first official act renamed the capital after his predecessor. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev took office in a pomp-filled ceremony less than 24 hours after Nursultan Nazarbayev, the only leader an independent Kazakhstan had ever known, suddenly announced he was stepping down. Tokayev immediately proposed changing the name of the Central Asian nation's capital from Astana to Nursultan, or "Sultan of Light" in Kazakh, and parliament approved the change within hours.

The senate also appointed Nazarbayev's eldest daughter Dariga Nazarbayeva as speaker, setting her up as a potential contender to succeed her father. Tokayev, 65, will serve out the rest of Nazarbayev's mandate until elections due in April next year, though the former president retains significant powers in the country he ruled for nearly three decades. Tokayev told lawmakers that Nazarbayev had "shown wisdom" by deciding to step down, a rare move in ex-Soviet Central Asia where other leaders have hung on to power until death. "Yesterday the world witnessed a historic event," Tokayev said, hailing Nazarbayev as a visionary reformer. "The results of an independent Kazakhstan are there for all to see," he added.

Nazarbayev changed the capital from Kazakhstan's largest city Almaty to Astana in 1997, transforming it from a minor provincial town into a futuristic city of skyscrapers rising from the steppes. Its name meant "capital" in Kazakh and there had long been speculation of a renaming after the leader who shaped it. The city is central to government propaganda highlighting the achievements of Nazarbayev's reign and his journey to build it was recently the subject of a state-funded film, "Leader's Path: Astana".

Nazarbayev, 78, ruled Kazakhstan since before it gained independence with the 1991 collapse of the Soviet

Union. He steered the country through a major transformation, developing huge energy reserves and boosting its international influence, but was accused of cracking down on dissent and tolerating little opposition. Nazarbayev will continue to enjoy significant powers thanks to his constitutional status as "Leader of the Nation", life-time position as chief of the security council and head of the ruling Nur Otan party.

Tokayev appeared to be in pole position to take over in the long term until senators voted shortly after his swearing-in to name Dariga Nazarbayeva, 55, as their new chief. She is the most politically prominent of Nazarbayev's three children and has long been mooted as a potential successor. Kazakhstan's deputy prime minister from 2015 to 2016, Nazarbayeva has significant influence over the media. Analysts said it was too early to declare a clear frontrunner to become the next elected president, with the recently named prime minister, 53-year-old Askar Mamin, another possible contender.

Tokayev, the interim president, has a strong diplomatic record dating back to the Soviet period and has twice been foreign minister. This should go some way to reassuring Kazakhstan's major partners including China, the European Union, Russia and the United States that the move will not threaten key relationships. Tokayev "is a safe pair of hands, he is a loyal presidential lieutenant," said Kate Mallinson, a Russia and Eurasia expert at the London-based Chatham House think-tank.

Kazakhstan-based analyst Dosym Satpayev described Tokayev as a "heavyweight" but said he lacked popular appeal. As for Kazakh society's reaction to Dariga Nazarbayeva, it "would be mixed to say the least," Satpayev said. "A candidate from the family would be controversial and Dariga does not speak the state language, Kazakh, as well as her father," he said.

Satpayev also pointed to another Nazarbayev relative - nephew Samat Abish, a high-ranking security official



ASTANA: Kazakhstan's Senate chairman Kassym-Jomart Tokayev takes the oath as Kazakh interim president during a ceremony yesterday. — AFP

who rarely appears in public - as a potential contender from inside the family circle. "This would be something like a Putin scenario, wherein a connected figure appears from the shadows at the last moment," Satpayev said, referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin's sudden

emergence following Boris Yeltsin's sudden retirement in 1999. The new leader will need to tackle growing discontent over falling living standards after Kazakhstan's economy was hit by the 2014 drop in oil prices and western sanctions against Russia, a key trading partner. — AFP

Father and son laid to rest as...

Continued from Page 1

He was embraced by many mourners. A total of six burials took place yesterday and more were expected in the days ahead after police on Tuesday began releasing victims' remains for burial. The scale of the attack has caused global revulsion, including alleged gunman Brenton Tarrant's use of social media to livestream the carnage in real-time.

Ardern, who has vowed to tighten New Zealand's lax gun ownership laws, said yesterday the horrific events in Christchurch showed the need for a global approach to confront the dangers posed by extremists' use of social media. "There is an argument there to be made for us to take a united front on what is a global issue," she said. "This is not just an issue for New Zealand, the fact that social media platforms have been used to spread violence (and) material that incites violence."

New Zealand yesterday charged a second person with sharing the gruesome livestream video of the deadly attack. Philip Arps, 44, who was arrested the day before, was charged with two counts of distributing objectionable material under the Films Act and was remanded in custody after appearing in Christchurch District Court. A teenager appeared in court earlier this week on the same charge.

The 28-year-old gunman was arrested after the shootings and is expected to spend his life in prison as New Zealand has no death penalty. In a rambling "manifesto", Tarrant had said he was motivated partly by a desire to stoke religious conflict between Islam and the West. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Wednesday condemned what he called "highly offensive" comments by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, warning that he would consider "all options" in reviewing bilateral relations. Erdogan had said the

attack was part of an assault on Turkey and Islam and warned anti-Muslim Australians would be "sent back in coffins" like their grandfathers at Gallipoli, a blood-drenched World War I battle.

In the latest display of cross cultural solidarity in New Zealand, as Muslims prayed and prostrated before Al Noor mosque dozens of locals silently stood behind them, their arms interlinked. Moments earlier hundreds of people thumped their chests, stomped their feet and stuck out their tongues for a haka performance, their cries echoing across the park. Nuha Asad, who lost her husband Ali Elmadani in the massacre, watched from the sidelines, visibly moved.

"The New Zealand community really cares for us and we're really together in this," she told AFP. "It made us a little happier in the grief". The traditional haka is used in Maori culture in a variety of ways - to intimidate rivals, to celebrate weddings but also to mourn, melding both hostility and beauty into a powerful outpouring of emotion.

The start of funerals should ease pressure from Muslim families, many of whom have travelled long distances to claim loved ones' remains and complained that police investigations have delayed the return of bodies and prevented the speedy burials prescribed under Islam. New Zealand authorities are yet to release an official list of the dead, making it difficult to assess the full histories of victims.

But few are likely to present a narrative as poignant and tragic as the Mustafa family. The New Zealand website Stuff.co.nz this week ran a picture of Hamza smiling on a boat as he showed off a freshly caught fish. His mother said that after their phone connection was cut during the shootings, she tried repeatedly to reach him again. "After that someone picked up the phone and told me your son can't breathe, I think he's dead," the website said quoted her saying. Salwa described her son and husband as both "very caring" people, adding that "our lives have completely changed". "God will punish him (the gunman), my son and my husband are in heaven now and we're going after them, we're going to follow them to the heavens." —AFP

pending issues.

"We trust our (American) friends in contributing ideas for the long-awaited peace plan for the Middle East, while putting into consideration the region's state of affairs and concerned parties," he said in response to a question about an anticipated US plan for the stalled Middle East peace process. Kuwait currently holds a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council, where it has championed the Palestinian cause.

Pompeo reiterated that Kuwait is a "strategic partner", especially when it comes to counterterrorism efforts, reaffirming the United States' commitment to Kuwait's safety and sovereignty. "Kuwait hosts thousands of US soldiers on its grounds, which reflects the unique, fruitful and strong military cooperation between the two countries," he pointed out. Pompeo lauded Kuwait's "powerful" initiatives in Yemen, Syria and Iraq, as well as its "leadership" quality, especially in terms of humanitarian causes, valuing HHI the Amir's role in this regard.

As for the Kuwait version of the Strategic Dialogue, Pompeo said that a significant number of agreements and MoUs were signed, including on cyber security, fighting terrorism, trade and education. Pompeo referred to the historic visit of HHI the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the US, which he described as "influential" in the history of bilateral relations.

On his recent visit to Qatar, Pompeo noted that extensive and detailed talks took place there to address the Gulf crisis. "We all have the same set of threats, the threats from Al-Qaeda and from ISIS, the threat from the Islamic Republic of Iran. We all are working diligently to find a path forward so that the rift between those countries can be resolved".

Erdogan crooning on campaign trail

ISTANBUL: In a decade and a half in power, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has often turned to oratory skills that are the envy of his foes to rouse supporters with speeches, poems and stories. Now the Turkish leader is picking up the microphone to sing, complete with hand gestures, to rally supporters of his ruling AKP party for March 31 local elections. Music has always been a powerful tool in Turkish politics, but with Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP), it has now become one more way to galvanize his support base before a potentially tricky vote.

With Turkey in recession and inflation in double digits, the AKP is turning up the nationalist rhetoric to try to win over voters hurt by high living costs. "I get goose bumps when I listen to the songs every day," said Ilknur Can, at an Erdogan rally in Istanbul's Kasimpasa district, where the president grew up. "I really understand, through this music, what patriotism is," she added. Erdogan's critics say he has eroded rights by cracking down on dissent at home. But for supporters, his electoral style taps into their image of Erdogan as the strong leader Turkey needs who speaks for them. In this month's municipal elections, the AKP will likely remain the largest party even if some experts say it could win by a smaller percentage of the vote.

Music is everywhere in Turkey, blaring out in taxis, shops and restaurants. Political events also have regular, and often extremely loud music. The Turkish leader has deployed theme songs played on speakers at rallies in past elections, which have kept him in power since 2003. But in the upcoming polls, it is Erdogan himself who is singing at almost every rally. "Nereden nereye geldi Turkiye" ("From where Turkey came to where we are now") Erdogan crooned from the stage at a recent event. The song repeats a line from his election campaign tune about how far Turkey has developed under his rule.

"He already has an organic connection with his grassroots, but these songs are a new strategy to widen support," associate professor Dogan Gurpinar, of Istanbul Technical University, said. Political events have also been the subject of songs. After a failed 2016 coup against Erdogan, one song had the lyrics: "Democracy took a blow and the nation was puzzled... the commander-in-chief gave the order: Take to the squares." That was a reference to Erdogan's

call during the coup attempt for loyalists to take to the streets.

Another song entitled "Dombra" chants the president's name, drawing cheers from party faithful. "I am over the moon whenever I listen to Nereden Nereye," said supporter Ayse Duru, as she sang along to Erdogan's recent campaign song. The composer of Erdogan's latest campaign tune and performer of it when the president himself isn't singing it is Turkish pop singer Altan Cetin. "It was not hard for me to write (the AKP song) and put it into a project. Believe me, it can sometimes be even more difficult to do a pop song," he told AFP in his studio in Istanbul. Cetin said that it took almost a month to finish. "Our president uses every instrument of politics very successfully and very professionally," he said.

In Europe, it is rare for a candidate to sing at election rallies. But in the United States, former president Barack Obama sometimes sang on the campaign trail, and in 1992, Bill Clinton famously played the saxophone before an audience - helping to cement his popularity with young voters. The late Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez also often broke into song at rallies and speeches, rousing supporters with the national anthem or folksongs. Cetin said that music was "like a glue" for people that "brings them closer". "Music is about synchronization. It creates a sincerity, a unity and a power with everyone who feels it."

Cetin said that he wrote what he had "lived through" in Turkey, saying he was happy to see the country's leader singing his music. "A president accompanying a song with a microphone in his hand in a rally is a source of pride for the song's composer," he said. Gurpinar, of the Istanbul Technical University, said that music was the most direct way to reach people. "Turkey is a country that looks for tools to reach out to the masses more easily compared to other Western states," he said.

Compared to the AKP, the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) often struggles to establish similar bonds with its old school, left-leaning, protest song repertoire, Gurpinar said. However the CHP is now also trying to attract more voters with modern songs - one is a rap tune by two young amateur musicians. "It can have power only when the music and candidate merge." CHP's Istanbul candidate Ekrem Imamoglu told AFP when asked about music's role. But he said that positive expressions like music should replace heated rhetoric. "I wish we would see and feel such nice things in politics," he said. "We are happy with our songs. Honestly, I didn't listen to the others." — AFP

Amir holds talks with Pompeo...

Continued from Page 1

"It will always be engraved in the minds and hearts of Kuwaitis." Describing the dialogue's agenda as "ample" with important issues, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled noted that 23 government bodies with 70 high-level officials from both sides took part in the sessions.

He also appreciated the United States' efforts in helping to mend the rift among the Gulf countries, which in turn is contributing to mediation efforts led by HHI the Amir in this regard. The US and Kuwait have been trying to mediate in the bitter row that has seen Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and non-Gulf state Egypt impose a political and economic boycott on Qatar since June 2017 over allegations it supports terrorism. Doha denies the charges. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said "there is no option" other than for the dispute to be resolved.

As for the situation in Yemen, he told the press conference that the crisis was discussed during the dialogue, where both sides shared visions of the necessity of a peaceful solution in the Arab country according to the Gulf initiative, national dialogue outcomes and UN Security Council resolution 2216. Regarding the Syrian crisis, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled noted that in order for peace to prevail in the conflict-ridden country, relevant international references must be implemented, along with joint efforts and coordination between the two countries at the Security Council in a bid to solve

Assembly delays 35-day annual...

Continued from Page 1

MPs lashed out at the government for taking so long to carry out the repairs and demanded tough penalties for those found responsible for the damage. Some MPs insisted that Kuwaiti roads were damaged by rains more than tanks could. MP Mohammad Al-Mutair claimed that roads were fine before the 1990 Iraqi invasion and deteriorated after the liberation because of rife corruption. MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said the prime minister should be held to account for the damage to the roads.

The assembly also passed in the second and final reading a draft law to toughen penalties on merchants selling expired or rotten foodstuff, raising the fines to as high as KD 100,000. MP Osama Al-Shaheen said the law stipulates that violating establishments will be shut while waiting for a final court ruling. MPs also passed a draft law estimating capital spending in the 2019/2020 budget at KD 3.2 billion, as head of the budgets committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad said the

government now has no excuse not to implement development projects.

The Assembly also passed a draft law stipulating about KD 1.4 billion in supplementary spending of which KD 900 million will go to the oil ministry, KD 320 million to the health ministry and KD 54 million to the education ministry. MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said the health ministry's new budget includes KD 200 million for medical treatment abroad, as some MPs said Kuwaiti patients sent by the government to some US hospitals were asked to leave due to the lack of sufficient funds from the government.

Adasani warned the government against imposing any kind of taxes on citizens or taking any measures that may increase the financial burden on them. Health Minister Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah said the ministry will build more public clinics in crowded areas, especially where expatriates outnumber citizens.

MP Ahmad Al-Fadhl said a report stated that funds raised by Kuwaiti charity societies between 2012 and 2016 amounted to over KD 716 million, more than 90 percent of which were sent abroad. He inquired if the government has any control over the outflow of charity funds. Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Saad Al-Kharraz said that the process of sending charity funds abroad is done in coordination and under the full control of the foreign ministry.

Sports

Wales kick off 2020 Six Nations at home to Italy

Japan's Sunwolves set for Super Rugby axe

PARIS: Grand Slam champions Wales will kick off the defence of their Six Nations title next year at home against Italy on February 1, organisers announced yesterday. The Welsh, who will by then be coached by Wayne Pivac as Warren Gatland steps down after this year's Rugby World Cup, then travel to Ireland a week later before hosting France on February 22, taking on England at Twickenham on March 7 and rounding off their campaign against Scotland at Cardiff's Principality Stadium.

France wrap up the 2020 Six Nations when they host Ireland in the final fixture on March 14, in the sole evening kick-off (2000 GMT) of the tournament, which also does not feature any games on Fridays.

"The 2019 Championship gave us a stunning finale with three teams competing for the title on the final weekend, a brilliant Grand Slam winner, and a unique Calcutta Cup match to finish the Championship off," Six Nations CEO Ben Morel said in reference to Wales beating Ireland for the clean sweep and Scotland battling back to claim a thrilling 38-all draw with England.

"We look forward to developing the Championship in partnership with our Unions, sponsors and most importantly of all our fans over the coming years, and to the next two years of the Guinness Six Nations Championship generating even more excitement than the 2019 edition."

2020 Six Nations fixtures (all times GMT)

Round 1
Feb 1: Wales v Italy (1415), Ireland v Scotland (1645); Feb 2: France v England (1500)

Round 2
Feb 8: Ireland v Wales (1415), Scotland v England (1645); Feb 9: France v Italy (1500)

Round 3
Feb 22: Italy v Scotland (1415), Wales v France (1645); Feb 23: England v Ireland (1500)

Round 4
Mar 7: Ireland v Italy (1415), England v Wales (1645); Mar 8: Scotland v France (1500)

Round 5
Mar 14: Wales v Scotland (1415), Italy v England (1645), France v Ireland (2000).

2021 Six Nations fixtures (all times GMT)

Round 1
Feb 6: Italy v France (1415), England v Scotland (1645); Feb 7: Wales v Ireland (1500)

Round 2
Feb 13: England v Italy (1415), Scotland v Wales (1645); Feb 14: Ireland v France (1500)

Round 3
Feb 27: Italy v Ireland (1415), Wales v England (1645); Feb 28: France v Scotland (1500)

Round 4
Mar 13: Italy v Wales (1415), England v France (1645); Mar 14: Scotland v Ireland (1500)

Round 5
Mar 20: Scotland v Italy (1415), Ireland v England (1645), France v Wales (2000).

Meanwhile, Japan's ground-breaking Sunwolves team are set to be axed from Super Rugby, a report said yesterday, as the governing body prepared to make an announcement about the competition's future.

Sydney's Daily Telegraph said the Sunwolves would be sacrificed as the 15-team, globe-crossing tournament reverts to 14 sides and a round-robin format, ditching its unpopular conference system.

The unsourced report came as governing body SANZAAR (South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and Argentina Rugby) said it would make a statement on the "future of Super Rugby" on Friday. The Telegraph said Sunwolves officials and players were told about the decision on Tuesday, leaving them "devastated".

A spokeswoman for the Tokyo-based team told AFP: "We are still waiting for Friday's official announcement and at this stage have no comment to make." The Sunwolves' introduction in 2016 was part of attempts to expand the game in Asia, which will host its first Rugby World Cup in Japan later this year.



CARDIFF: File photo shows Wales' centre Jonathan Davies and Wales' full-back Liam Williams celebrate after winning the Six Nations international rugby union match between Wales and Ireland at the Principality Stadium in Cardiff, south Wales, on March 16, 2019. — AFP

Much of the opposition to Asia's first Super Rugby outfit came from South Africa, the Telegraph said, adding that its teams were opposed to travelling to Tokyo and Singapore for the Sunwolves' home games.

"All of the participating nations in Super Rugby have been financially propping up the Sunwolves in the hopes of luring more revenue from the untapped Asian market," the report said. "It had been hoped that after two or three seasons, cashed up Japanese companies would back the Sunwolves and make them independently sus-

tainable, but that has not materialised." While the Sunwolves' record on the pitch is poor, they have gradually improved and enjoyed their first away win when they shocked the Waikato Chiefs 30-15 earlier this month.

Super Rugby shrank from 18 teams to 15 in 2018, dropping two teams from South Africa and one from Australia in an attempt to streamline. But it retained the country-based conference system which has been criticised for its complexity and for giving an easier ride to teams from weaker regions. — AFP

Kuwait Club Handball team to meet India's T-Sport Club

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Club Handball team will meet India's T-Sport Club in its second match of the third group in the 21st Asian Clubs Handball tournament being hosted by Kuwait.

Kuwait's second team Kazima will meet UAE's Shariqa team from the fourth group of the tournament.

These two matches will be preceded by three matches: Lebanon's Sadaqa team with Saudi Arabia's Mudhar, Qatar's Wakra with Oman's Muscat and Bahrain's Barbar with Iraq's Karkh.

Meanwhile, the opening day matches saw Iraq's Karkh defeat India's T-Sport by the score of 50-17, while Lebanon's Sadaqa defeated China's Dragon with the score of 28-21.

Technical Director of the Asian Handball Federation Jassim Al-Theyab congratulated Kuwait's leadership and people for the return of sports to international events. He said "we congratulate ourselves for holding the Asian championship in Kuwait. He thanked Kuwait Sports Club board of directors for their cooperation with the Asian federation in providing all requirements of the tournament.

He said the championship provides an opportunity to have Kuwaiti fans return because they give special flavor for matches and urges players to give it all



Sport looking to ban corticosteroids in 2020: UCI boss

PARIS: After becoming the first sport to ban Tramadol, cycling is looking to use the same "health reasons" justification to prohibit the use of corticosteroids by 2020, International Cycling Union (UCI) president David Lappartient told Reuters.

The UCI banned Tramadol, an opiate painkiller, at the beginning of this month, conducting 43 tests on the Paris-Nice stage race that ended last Sunday. In 2017, 68 percent of urine samples across 35 Olympic sports containing Tramadol were from cyclists.

While being monitored by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), Tramadol is not on the list of banned substances and having it outlawed could have raised legal challenges. However, Lappartient insisted that the exclusion was to protect riders' health and safety rather than any performance enhancing benefits.

"So we banned it on health grounds," said Lappartient, adding that the Paris-Nice test results were not known yet. "If you need Tramadol, OK, but when you take this medicine you cannot drive so you do not race your bike."

The UCI now wishes to take the same approach on corticosteroids, a

drug used to treat a wide range of medical conditions, including asthma. Some, like nasal sprays, are allowed in competition while others - pills, intra-muscular injections-are banned in competition and require a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE).

"We are working on this. We named a group of experts to show it is dangerous for your health," said Lappartient. "We are hopeful to be ready to ban it for the beginning of 2020. The idea is to not have corticosteroids in our sport in 2020.

"It is not easy though, because with Tramadol, a test is either positive or negative. With corticosteroids, there are thresholds. We are also calling for WADA to ban it." Several cycling teams, gathered in the Mouvement Pour un Cyclisme Credible (Movement for credible cycling, MPCC), follow stricter anti-doping rules.

Under those rules, a rider is imposed an eight-day rest after taking corticosteroids. "Intra-articular corticosteroid injections have to be validated by the team doctor, who will prescribe eight days off-race," the rules say.

Seven of the 18 World Tour (elite) teams have adhered to the MPCC. Cycling, a sport long rocked by doping scandals, is again under the



David Lappartient

microscope after Austrian cyclist Georg Preidler admitted to cheating amid an investigation into blood doping that brought down five skiers at the Nordic skiing world championships.

"He has been provisionally banned," said Lappartient. "We are in contact with the national Anti-Doping Agencies and the public authorities, who have not said anything yet." Asked if the biological passport, a record of a riders' doping test results, could be bypassed by cheats as several former professionals implied, Lappartient said: "I don't know, I don't have all the elements on this investigation."

SPONSORS FAITHFUL

Sponsors, however, remain faithful to the sport, with chemical giant

Ineos taking over from Team Sky in May and oil and gas company Total rumoured to take over French outfit Direct Energie next season.

"I am pleased that Ineos is taking over the team because it is important that teams find investors. It is healthy that the best team in the world finds a buyer," said Lappartient. The Frenchman was wary though of one outfit having too much advantage as Ineos chairman Jim Ratcliffe is expected to increase the team's budget.

"I understand there can be concerns that the team with the biggest budget can have all the best riders and it affects the uncertainty of sport," he explained. "The more uncertainty we have in our sport, the better for the interest of cycling. It boosts its attractiveness." —Reuters

Welsh rugby chiefs rule out merger for regions in 2019/20

LONDON: The four existing Welsh regions will continue to play separately for the 2019/20 season after the Professional Rugby Board (PRB) ruled out a merger that threatened to plunge the sport into turmoil.

The Scarlets and Ospreys ultimately opposed the unpopular plan as part of the controversial 'Project Reset', which aimed to change the face of rugby union in Wales.

Under that blueprint a combined Scarlets and Ospreys region in the west of the country, along with Cardiff Blues, the Dragons and a side in north Wales would have made up the four professional teams. It was set to be Welsh rugby's biggest domestic shake-up since the inception of regional sides 16 years ago but it faced immediate hostility.

The PRB, made up of representatives of the four regions and the Welsh Rugby Union, said in a statement on Wednesday that it was "united in its pursuit of what is best" without outlining plans beyond next season.

"The Cardiff Blues, Dragons, Ospreys and Scarlets will continue to represent Welsh professional rugby in domestic and European competition for season 2019/20," the PRB statement read. "Although the PRB has previously supported the principle for a proposed merger of two teams, it has since been noted that this merger has been deemed 'off the table' by both interested parties.

"This means that budgets have subsequently been approved and player contracting can be concluded, with an emphasis on securing Welsh talent. "It is hoped that the emotion generated by the exploration of merger options can now be translated into support for the professional Welsh teams, helping create a sustainable future for the game in Wales."

Project Reset was launched to deal with the problems Welsh domestic rugby has had competing with wealthy clubs in England and France. — AFP

Tokyo unveils 'cherry blossom' Olympic torch

TOKYO: Organisers of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics yesterday unveiled a cherry-blossom shaped torch for the Games as the city prepares for the famed flower season to begin in coming days. The top part of the torch is shaped in the traditional emblem of the sakura, or cherry blossom using the same cutting-edge technology as in production of Japan's bullet trains, the organisers said.

The shiny rose-gold torch, which is 71 centimetres (28 inches) long and weighs 1.2 kilograms (2 pounds 10 ounces), uses aluminium construction waste from temporary housing built for victims of the 2011 quake and tsunami. "Cherry blossoms drawn by kids in the disaster-hit area (in Fukushima)... inspired me," designer Tokujin Yoshioka, whose works are known internationally, told reporters.

Fukushima was chosen as the starting point for the Olympic torch relay. The passing of the flame is scheduled to start on March 26, 2020, and the torch will head south to the sub-tropical island of Okinawa—the starting point for the 1964 Tokyo Games relay—before returning north and arriving in the Japanese capital on July 10.

The designer added the torch is designed to ensure the flame will not go out even during the typhoon season. The March 2011 tsunami, triggered by a massive undersea quake, killed around 18,000 people and swamped the Fukushima nuclear plant, sending its reactors into meltdown and leading to the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl. More than 50,000 people have not returned to their home towns. Japan has dubbed the 2020 Games the "Reconstruction Olympics" and wants to showcase recovery in regions devastated by the disaster. — AFP

Sports

Capitals alone atop Metro, Kuraly scores twice as Bruins blank Isles

Schwartz nets hat trick, Blues throttle Oilers

NEWARK: Brett Connolly had a goal and an assist, and the Washington Capitals defeated the New Jersey Devils 4-1 on Tuesday night in Newark, N.J., to move into sole possession of first place in the Metropolitan Division. Andre Burakovsky, Evgeny Kuznetsov and Tom Wilson also scored for Washington. Nicklas Backstrom collected his 50th assist of the season, and Pheonix Copley made 20 saves. Kenny Agostino scored, and Mackenzie Blackwood made 18 saves for the Devils, who have lost two straight.

BLUES 7, OILERS 2

Jaden Schwartz capped his hat trick with a power-play goal at 18:48 of the third period as St. Louis defeated visiting Edmonton. David Perron added two goals and an assist, and Alex Pietrangolo and Pat Maroon also scored for the Blues. Jordan Binnington made 15 saves to improve to 14-3-0 in his past 17 starts. Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and Zack Kassian scored for the Oilers. Mikko Koskinen stopped 17 of 20 shots before being pulled 5:42 into the second period after the Blues took a three-goal lead. Connor McDavid failed to tally a point, ending his 12-game scoring streak.

FLAMES 4, BLUE JACKETS 2

Michael Frolik scored the winning goal in a two-point night, and David Rittich was sensational while making 31 saves as host Calgary defeated Columbus. The Flames moved three points ahead of the San Jose Sharks for top spot in the Pacific Division and the Western Conference. While Rittich had incredible fortune on his side with the Blue Jackets ringing four pucks off iron, he was outstanding all game, including a one-sided third period in which he stopped 11 shots. Andrew Mangiapane, Johnny Gaudreau and Matthew Tkachuk added goals for Calgary, which has won four of its past five games. Zach Werenski and Oliver Bjorkstrand scored for the Blue Jackets.

STARS 4, PANTHERS 2

Alexander Radulov scored two goals, including the winner with 9:28 to play in the third period, and Tyler Seguin had four assists to lift host Dallas to a victory over Florida. Dallas is now four points ahead of idle Arizona for the first wild-card spot in the Western Conference. Florida lost its second straight and is now 4-2-0 in its past six games. Jamie Benn and John Klingberg collected the Stars' other goals. Aleksander Barkov tallied twice for the Panthers.

AVALANCHE 3, WILD 1

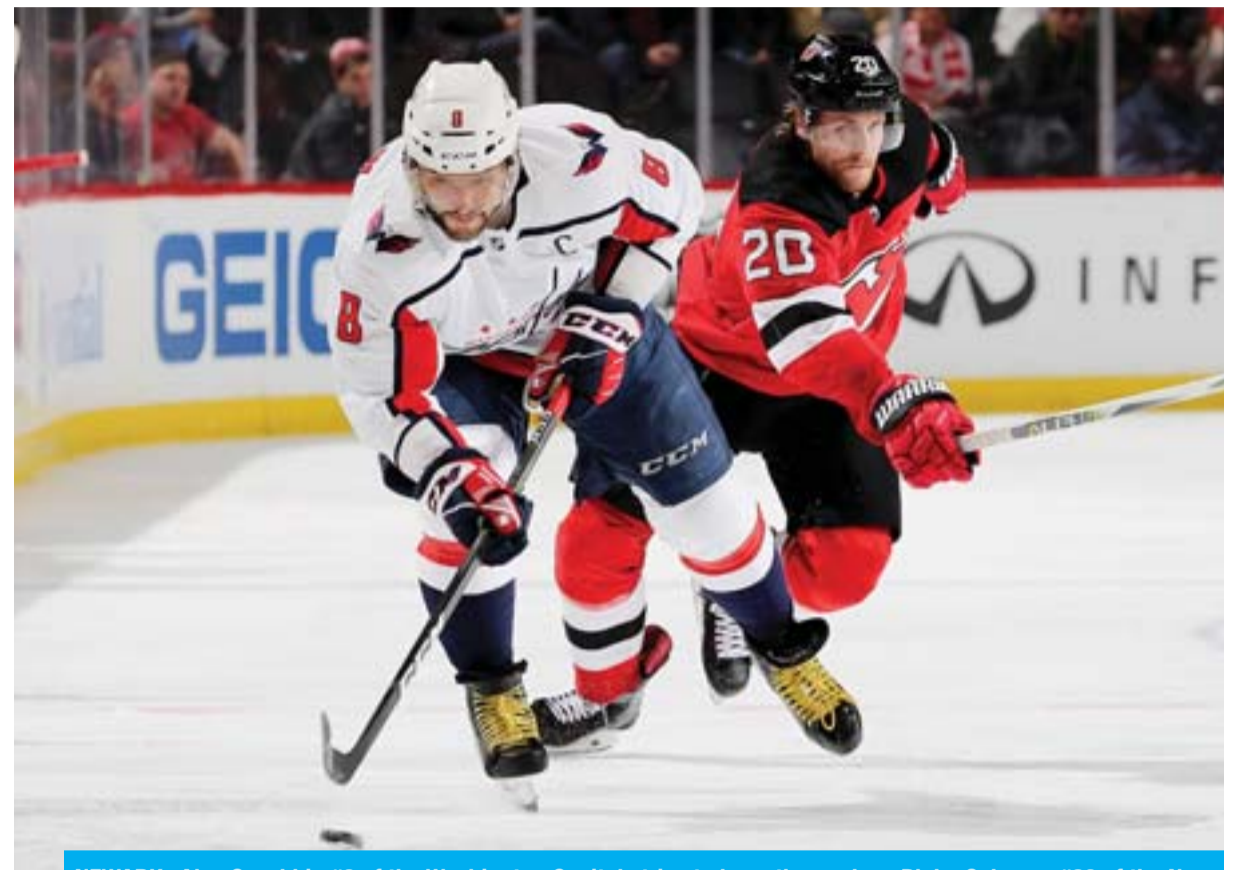
Philipp Grubauer made 36 saves, Tyson Barrie, Tyson Jost and Ian Cole scored, and Colorado won at Saint Paul, Minn. The Avalanche won their second in a row to tighten the Western Conference wild-card race. Colorado moved within a point of the Wild and within two points of Arizona. The Coyotes currently hold the second wild-card spot. Zach Parise had a goal, and Devan Dubnyk stopped 35 shots for Minnesota. The Wild have lost two in a row, and they fell to 2-7-3 in their past 12 home games.

PREDATORS 3, MAPLE LEAFS 0

Brian Boyle, Wayne Simmonds and Filip Forsberg scored goals, Pekka Rinne stopped 22 shots, and Nashville defeated visiting Toronto. Rinne has four shutouts this season, and the past two have been against the Maple Leafs. He has 55 career shutouts. Ryan Johansen had two assists for the Predators, who managed only 20 shots on goal but won their third in a row. Frederik Andersen finished with 17 saves for the Maple Leafs.

BRUINS 5, ISLANDERS 0

Sean Kuraly scored two goals in a regular-season game for the first time in his career, and Tuukka Rask stopped all 13 shots he faced as Boston cruised to a win at Uniondale,



NEWARK: Alex Ovechkin #8 of the Washington Capitals tries to keep the puck as Blake Coleman #20 of the New Jersey Devils defends in the third period at Prudential Center on Tuesday in Newark, New Jersey. —AFP

NY. The Bruins have won two straight following a three-game losing streak. Boston allowed 15 goals in the skid but has given up just one goal in its last two games. Jake DeBrusk, Patrice Bergeron and Noel Acciari also scored

for the Bruins. The Islanders lost for the second time in three games (1-2-0). New York goalie Robin Lehner, who played for the first time since sustaining what was believed to be a concussion on March 5, made 34 saves. — Reuters

New F1 grand prix can tap into Vietnam 'passion' for racing

HANOI: Formula One chief Jean Todt yesterday hailed next year's inaugural Vietnamese Grand Prix in Hanoi as a great opportunity to open doors for people with "a passion" for motorsport in Southeast Asia.

The communist Vietnamese capital will get its first taste of the high-octane glitz and glamour of Formula One when it hosts its first grand prix from April next year as the sport bids to tap into new markets in the region.

Todt said he hoped Vietnamese fans seeing the likes of five-time world champion Lewis Hamilton and Sebastian Vettel battling wheel-to-wheel on the streets of Hanoi would lead to an explosion of interest in racing of all kinds in football-mad Vietnam.

"It's... fantastic for the development of the motorsport in Vietnam and in the region," Todt, who president of motorsport's world governing body the FIA, told reporters Wednesday at a groundbreaking ceremony for the new street circuit in Hanoi.

"I really hope that soon here will also be facilities to host cart racing, drifting racing," he added. Todt hopes the event will breed a new generation of Vietnamese drivers. "You have young people, talented with a passion for motorsports, that's why I think it's very important to involve very quickly a new category of motorsport," he said.

The 5.6 kilometre (3.5 mile) street track will incorporate existing and yet-to-be-built roads in the My Dinh area of Hanoi near the national sports stadium, about 13 kilometres from the city centre.

Organisers said they decided against holding the race in Hanoi's historical Old Quarter because of logistical challenges and steep costs. Hanoi has bet big on the event's popularity, signing a 10-year multi-million-dollar deal with Formula One last year reported in state media to be costing Vietnam \$60 million per year.

Vietnam said it will not dip into government coffers to pay for the event but instead has secured full financial backing from the country's largest private conglomerate VinGroup.

"F1 is always considered the king of all races... we have designed a challenging street circuit imprinted with Vietnamese identity and architecture," VinGroup deputy chairman Nguyen Viet Quang said at the ceremony.

Vietnam is hoping to emulate the popularity of Singapore's glittering night race and fill a void in the region left after Malaysia pulled the plug on its long-standing race in 2017 for cost reasons.

Malaysia's government, who had bankrolled the event since its inception at Sepang in 1999, said they were no longer prepared to shell out \$67 million a year. Hanoi will hope avoid the problems that dogged Formula One's ventures into South Korea in 2010 and India in 2011.

The first Korean Grand Prix was staged at the southern town of Yeongnam in 2010 under a deal supposed to last until 2016. But the annual event haemorrhaged money from the outset, with collated losses of around \$170 million and the plug was pulled in 2013. — AFP

Gulf Bank sponsors BeInspired 2019 Mud Run for third edition

KUWAIT: Kuwait's muddiest and sandiest race returns for its third edition, as part of the 2019 BeInspired Series. Held at Murooj Phase 3, participants have the choice of either a 5km mud run, or a 5km obstacle course. With 2 days to go before the event, registration is filling up quickly. Secure your spot and register now through the website: <https://www.events.pro-vision.com/>

Kicking off at 8.00am, this year's race will be held at Al Murooj Phase 3 on the 23rd of March 2019. Spectators of the second event of the BeInspired Mud run will enjoy a larger viewing area, with fantastic views of the race, allowing them to come down and support the runners while relaxing at one of Al Murooj's numerous restaurants and cafes.

Ahmad Al Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communications, Gulf Bank, said of the series: "Last year's edition of the Mud Run was a resounding success, attracting over 450 participants.

Australia's Zampa not counting on World Cup spot

MELBOURNE: The clamour in Australia to include Adam Zampa in the Cricket World Cup squad has reached fever pitch after his strong series in India but the legspinner feels his place is far from assured.

The 26-year-old from Shellharbour, New South Wales, played a key role in the 3-2 series comeback victory over Virat Kohli's side, taking 11 wickets at an average of 25.81 to outduel India's spinners on their own pitches and claim second on the wicket-taking list behind seamer Pat Cummins.

It was a far cry from Zampa's first tour of India in 2017 when hard-hitting India all-rounder Hardik Pandya took to him with a gusto and declared he could "hit a six off him anytime".

"Throughout my short career I've found it can change really quickly," Zampa told reporters ahead of Australia's first training session in Sharjah ahead of the ODI series against Pakistan.

"I started my career really well, but I've had some ups and downs. "So (I'm) trying to build on the momentum I have would be great-I know what it's like to be in and out of the team and be dropped from the squad altogether.

"(I'm) just trying to make the most of my position at the moment ... I guess taking it one series at a time-it's a bit of a cliché, but that's how it is." Australia won the 2015 World Cup on home soil without a specialist slow bowler but wrist-spinners have become a must-have in 50-over cricket and occupy half of the top-10 bowlers in the ICC world rankings for the format.

Zampa, who relies less on sharp turn and drift and more on attacking the stumps with deliveries that skid off the pitch, bowled well in tandem with offspinner Nathan Lyon in India.

The pair are expected to continue their dual spin assault against Pakistan in the five matches in the United Arab Emirates. The first match starts on Friday in Sharjah. "We can't bury our heads in the



Ahmad Al Amir

We are delighted to be sponsoring the 2019 Mud Run and look forward to cheering on this year's participants. The health and wellness of the country is a cause close to the Bank's heart, and we are committed to supporting and promoting the importance of a healthy lifestyle."

Ghada Hussein, CEO, Inspire Sahara Health

Club added: "The BeInspired Mud Run is a fun and challenging approach to fitness. A crowd favourite, we are looking forward to this year's edition, and thank Gulf Bank for their continued support. We are

committed to spreading awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and look forward to continuing to spread the message. We can't wait to see everyone on Saturday, and good luck to all participants!"

Launched in 2016, the BeInspired Series was created by Inspire Pure Fitness, a truly unique fitness experience, and has seen over 500 runners take place in previous editions. Inspire offers a multitude of outdoor activities, including a triathlon club, swimming, tennis rock climbing, and a tennis club for all ages. Open in two locations, Inspire Gym is spreading awareness of the true definition of a healthy.

Promoting health and fitness is a key pillar of Gulf Bank's corporate social responsibility strategy. For more information about Gulf Bank's corporate social responsibility initiatives and activities, please log on to www.e-gulfbank.com or visit its social media channels.

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Adam Zampa

sand and just say we're going with fast bowlers when spinners in world cricket, and in one-day cricket in particular, are being very, very successful," selector Trevor Hohns said earlier this week.

Batting team mate Shaun Marsh felt Zampa had improved "out of sight" in the leadup to the May 30-July 14 World Cup. "It's just his control now, he's a bit more mature," he said.

"He's got a bit more of an understanding of what he's trying to do out there. "I thought he did a fantastic job in all the games (in India) and he took wickets at key times. He's going to be a big part of this team moving forward." — Reuters

Ponting backs Khawaja to make Australia's World Cup squad

MELBOURNE: In-form batsman Usman Khawaja should be part of Australia's World Cup plans despite the imminent returns of Steve Smith and David Warner, former captain Ricky Ponting has said.

Khawaja struck 383 runs, including two centuries, in Australia's 3-2 series win over India earlier this month and Ponting is of the view that the left-hander opener had earned his place at the World Cup. "I think we all saw over the last few weeks just how skillful a player Usman Khawaja is... and I think when you see him play like that it just makes you wonder why he doesn't do it a bit more regularly," Ponting told reporters on Tuesday.

"I would be surprised if Khawaja wasn't in the (World Cup) squad. Khawaja could probably slot down at three when Warner comes in and Steve Smith might bat at four or five or something just to shore up those middle overs."

Smith and Warner were suspended for their roles in a ball-tampering scandal in South Africa last year and are set to be reintegrated into the team ahead of the May 30-July 14 World Cup in England and Wales. Ponting, who led Australia to World Cup glory in 2003 and 2007, said current skipper Aaron Finch would continue to lead the side at this year's tournament but former captain Smith could still be counted for advice.

"(Smith) is still out on the field, so he can help Aaron Finch out," Ponting added. "I'd imagine that Aaron Finch would be leaning on Steve Smith a lot for a bit of advice, maybe leading into the games, as far as preparation is concerned." —Reuters

Sports

Mariners smash Athletics in season opener in Tokyo

Seattle have named Suzuki to their 28-player roster for Japan

TOKYO: Domingo Santana blasted a grand slam yesterday to lead the Seattle Mariners to a 9-7 opening-game victory over the Oakland Athletics in Tokyo. Tim Beckham, who went three-for-three, fired a two-run shot in the fifth to contribute to the win.

But for Japanese fans who packed Tokyo Dome, it was all about veteran star Ichiro Suzuki, whose sluggish performance was more than offset by his younger Seattle teammates. The Athletics began the offensive early, with Stephen Piscotty hitting the first home run of the season in the bottom of the first from Mariners left-hander Marco Gonzales who marked his career's first opening-day start.

But Santana's homer to right field with all bases loaded in the top of the third inning flipped the game to 5-2, and the Mariners never gave up their lead. "It was a great swing. Glad we got to win today," Santana said.

For the Athletics, Khris Davis fired a two-run homer in the bottom of the third. In the seventh, Athletics' Matt Chapman fired a three-run shot to make it 9-7, but that was the end of scoring. MLB held its season opener in Japan for the first time in seven years, and local fans focused on every move by Suzuki, 45, an aggressive hitter with superb bat control but hardly on his top form.

The opening series is expected to be the last time his compatriots get to see him play in their home town and could mark his swansong after a storied career.

Seattle have named Suzuki to their 28-player roster for Japan, but the former hitmaker could be cut when

they trim the squad to 25 on their return.

In his first at-bat in the top of the third, Suzuki popped a fly to second baseman Jurickson Profar.

Batting ninth, he chose to walk his second at-bat in the top of the fourth.

But it was Suzuki's final batting appearance for the evening. He went to the right field to start the bottom of the fourth inning but was called back to be replaced by Daniel Vogelbach.

Fans gave him a warm standing ovation as a smiling Suzuki jogged back to the dugout where team mates received him with hugs.

Suzuki, who has broken a number of MLB records since sweeping to rookie of the year honours in 2001, remains coy about his future after hitting just .080 in spring training.

He stepped aside to take up a front office job last season and is entering his 19th MLB campaign on a minor league deal with the Mariners.

Japan's most successful baseball export, in 2004 Suzuki broke an 84-year-old milestone for hits in a single season, finishing with 262 — five more than baseball legend George Sisler had in 1920.

He subsequently became the first Major Leaguer to record 200 hits in 10 consecutive seasons, while also helping Japan win the World Baseball Classic in 2006 and 2009.

Santana praised Ichiro's presence on the team. "It feels great. Even being true of his team ... is just awesome. Just a dream come true," he said. — AFP



TOKYO: Seattle Mariners Tim Beckham (C) dives to the home plate past Oakland Athletics catcher Nick Hundley (R) in the top of the third inning during their baseball game at the Major League Baseball Japan Opening Series in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Kane welcomes great expectations on England

BURTON-ON-TRENT: England should embrace their new-found status as one of the favourites for a major tournament, believes captain Harry Kane. The Three Lions open their Euro 2020 qualifying campaign at home to the Czech Republic on Friday fresh from a run to the last four of the World Cup last summer and with another semi-final to come in the Nations League in June. "I think we feel that expectation where people now expect us to do well and I think before the World Cup there was no expectation. It is great that we have turned that around," said Kane on Tuesday.

"I think we've handled it really well since the World

Cup. I think we're the only team who got into the semi-finals at the World Cup to have got through their Nations League groups, and we had probably one of the hardest groups.

"I think that was big for us, to prove to everyone that it wasn't just a one-off. That this team we are really building for something special in the future." England's chances of winning a major tournament for the first time since 1966 next year will also be boosted by having the majority of their games at Wembley.

Both semi-finals and final will be held at the home of English football, as well as at least two of England's group games should they qualify. "We know the chance to play a Euros where most of the games are at home is an amazing opportunity and you don't often get that in your career so we will try and make the most of it," added Kane.

Despite Tottenham's faltering form of late, Kane has scored four times in five games since returning from a five-week injury layoff due to ankle ligament damage. And the World Cup Golden Boot winner thinks he is "in

the zone" in front of goal ahead of a massive three months for club and country with Spurs set to face Manchester City in the Champions League quarter-finals and in a battle for a top-four Premier League finish. "I never want to be injured, but I had that break while I was injured and I've used that to make sure I'm fresh now," he added. "I feel in that zone, where if I get a chance, I'm going to put it away. You go through spells like that during the season.

"Since I came back from injury, I feel like I'm sharp with a lot of energy, and that's when I feel I'm at my best." Kane's latest goal in a 2-1 defeat at Southampton was the 200th of his career, but at just 25, he hopes he can follow the example of Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi by maturing into an even more prolific goalscorer late into his twenties.

"Nowadays with everything, sports science, I feel the prime can be a bit later. "Maybe 28 to 30, that's maybe when you're going to be in your prime. If you keep yourself in shape-Ronaldo and Messi have proven that. I've still got a little bit to go." — AFP

Europe-based budding stars get Olympic call-ups in Africa

JOHANNESBURG: Young Africans on the books of clubs in top European leagues have been called up for Olympic Games qualifying duty with 26 matches scheduled between Wednesday and next Tuesday.

Among them are two goalkeepers, Congolese Will-Cesaire Matimbou from Paris Saint-Germain and Ivorian Nicolas Tie from Chelsea. Defender Hamza Mendyl from Schalke 04 is one of several Moroccans based abroad selected for the home-and-away second-round eliminators.

Congo Brazzaville, the Ivory Coast and Morocco are among the countries seeking overall victories and places in the third qualifying round during June. The seven third-round winners join hosts Egypt in a November tournament where three places at the Tokyo Olympics will be up for grabs.

Olympics qualifiers are restricted to under-23 footballers with three over-age 'wildcards' permitted at the finals. Gelling the likes of Matimbou, Tie and Mendyl with home-based talent is one challenge facing Olympic coaches.

Another is compensating for the lack of preparatory time, with South Africa coach David Notoane probably speaking for all his counterparts when he lamented the short build-up.

"I would have loved more time to prepare because I share with all other Olympic football coaches in Africa the challenge of building a team from scratch. "The harsh reality is that we have very limited time to work on the training field so it is essential to hit the ground running," he told reporters.

Notoane had hoped to include Crystal Palace defender Nikola Tavares, born in Cape Town to Croatian parents. "He is a left-footed centre-back, a rarity in our country at the moment, but his South African passport is out of date so I had to omit him from the squad."

South Africa face a tricky start away to Angola in Luanda Friday with the return match set for Johannesburg four days later. Morocco tackle the Democratic Republic of Congo, a strong football nation at senior level but one that continually fails to make an impact in age-limit competitions.

Congo Brazzaville are up against Burundi, who snatched a second-round place on away goals thanks to Cedric Mavugo netting with one minute left in Tanzania. The Ivory Coast squad that will take on Niger includes Peru-based midfielder Edgar Dakoi and striker Loba Arnaud Ake, who plays his club football in Mexico.

Nigeria, who won the 1996 Atlanta Olympics tournament, meet Libya with the first encounter in Tunisia for security reasons. Cameroon are the other African country who have been Olympic champions, edging Spain on penalties with the help of Samuel Eto'o in the 2000 Sydney Games title decider.

The central Africans have a bye to the third round as opponents Sierra Leone were disqualified owing to a FIFA ban imposed last year over government interference. An Owusu Kwabena hat-trick helped Ghana crush Togo in the first round and they confront Gabon next with Accra hosting the first leg.

South Sudan, who caused a stir by eliminating Uganda last November, meet four-time Olympics qualifiers Tunisia and will once again be the underdogs. — AFP



Marco Silva

Silva fined £12,000 for Newcastle outburst

LONDON: Everton manager Marco Silva has been fined £12,000 (\$16,000, 14,000 euros) for confronting match officials on the pitch following his side's 3-2 defeat at Newcastle earlier this month, the Football Association announced Tuesday.

"The Everton manager accepted an improper conduct charge from the FA, which resulted from his behaviour on the field of play at the end of the Premier League fixture against Newcastle United on March 9," the FA said in a statement.

The Portuguese was furious at Newcastle's winning goal being allowed to stand despite what he saw as "five Newcastle players in the same line in offside positions", and confronted referee Lee Mason on the pitch before angrily questioning the linesman who had not raised his flag.

After the match-lost after Everton threw away a 2-0 half-time lead-Silva tore into the officials, saying that for "the third goal it was a big mistake by the assistant, it was a clear offside..."

But it was his move onto the pitch that led to the charge by the FA, English football's governing body, and the fine by an independent regulatory commission. Everton are 11th in the Premier League after responding to the Newcastle defeat by beating Chelsea 2-0 at the weekend. — AFP

Pogba wants 'happy coach' Solskjaer to stay at Man Utd

LONDON: Paul Pogba hopes Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is given the Manchester United manager's job on a permanent basis after the Norwegian turned the club's fortunes around.

The former United striker has transformed the mood and results at Old Trafford, leading the club into the Champions League quarter-finals and lifting them into contention for a top-four finish in the Premier League.

When Solskjaer was given the role following the departure of Jose Mourinho in December it was widely assumed he was merely keeping the seat warm for a bigger managerial name but his success has led to a clamour for the appointment to be made full-time and midfielder Pogba has now added his voice.

"Of course we want him to stay," the France midfielder told Sky Sports. "The results have been great. I have a great relationship with him, he has a great relationship with the players.

"When a player is happy, he wants to keep being happy. Solskjaer deserves it. He knows the club, he knows everything about the club.

"He is a really happy coach that gave confidence back to the players. This gave us the freedom to play and enjoy football again because maybe we lost that with the results that we had before."

It is a striking contrast to the final months of

Tottenham's Trippier looks to regain form with England

LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur defender Kieran Trippier has blamed injuries for his lack of form this season and the right back said he is aware of the competition for spots in England's back line for their Euro qualifiers this month.

England boss Gareth Southgate named three right backs in his squad for matches against the Czech Republic and Montenegro, and Trippier was called up despite being sidelined with injury since a 1-1 Premier League draw with Arsenal this month.

"I could have done a lot better this season. I've picked up a lot of injuries," Trippier told reporters



Ole Gunnar Solskjaer

Mourinho's reign, with Pogba the player who was repeatedly claimed to be at odds with the Portuguese.

He declined to elaborate, saying only: "Maybe we lost confidence, maybe things went wrong. A lot of talking outside that we weren't used to. "I don't like to talk about the past. I like to talk about the future because that's what matters. We are better now and the results have been brilliant."

Despite their good run, United were beaten by Wolves in the FA Cup quarter-finals on Saturday, a week after losing to Arsenal in the Premier League—the only two domestic defeats since Solskjaer replaced Mourinho in December. — AFP

ahead of England's Euro 2020 qualifier against Czech Republic. "There is a lot of competition. Me, Trent (Alexander-Arnold), Kyle (Walker), and you've got (Aaron) Wan-Bissaka playing really well for (Crystal) Palace. "But I'm here now, and I need to impress to try and start for England and do the best I can between now and the end of the season."

Trippier, who was England's first choice wing back at the World Cup in Russia, has struggled to hit the same heights in Tottenham's campaign having had less than a month to rest before the new season got underway last August.

"There have been games when I've looked back and thought, 'I could have done this or that better,'" Trippier added. "People say coming back from the World Cup and going straight back into it again is the reason but I don't think it is. You pick up injuries.

"It would have been nice to have an extra week or something but the season came around early, so you've just got to get on with it." England play the Czech Republic at Wembley Stadium on Friday. — Reuters

25 Wales kick off 2020 Six Nations at home to Italy

26 Capitals alone atop Metro, Kuraly scores twice as Bruins blank Isles

27 Mariners smash Athletics in season opener in Tokyo



Russell rallies Nets past Kings

Capela, Harden fuel Rockets' road win over Hawks



SACRAMENTO: Bogdan Bogdanovic #8 of the Sacramento Kings goes to the basket against the Brooklyn Nets on Tuesday at Golden 1 Center in Sacramento, California. — AFP

SACRAMENTO: Rondae Hollis-Jefferson scored the winning layup with 0.8 seconds remaining as the Brooklyn Nets overcame a 25-point, fourth-quarter deficit to post a stunning 123-121 victory over the host Sacramento Kings on Tuesday night. D'Angelo Russell scored 27 of his career-high 44 points in the fourth quarter as the Nets outscored the Kings 45-18 to improve to 1-3 on a seven-game road trip. Hollis-Jefferson scored 14 points on 6-of-7 shooting and drove through the lane to convert the winning basket. Jarrett Allen scored 13 points, and Spencer Dinwiddie added 10 for Brooklyn. Marvin Bagley III scored 28 points, and De'Aaron Fox had 27 points and nine assists for Sacramento. Harrison Barnes scored 17 points, Nemanja Bjelica had 14 points and 10 rebounds, and Bogdan Bogdanovic added 10 points for the Kings.

ROCKETS 121, HAWKS 105
Clint Capela posted his sixth straight double-double with 26 points and 11 rebounds, and visiting Houston topped Atlanta to extend its winning streak to three games. James Harden added 31 points, sinking 11 of 12 from the line, and had 10 assists and eight rebounds. Danuel House Jr. came off the bench to score 19, including six 3-pointers. Chris Paul scored 13 and had 11 assists. Atlanta got 21 points and 12 assists from Trae Young, plus 20 points and 10 rebounds from John Collins. Taurean Prince added 16 points, and Vince Carter hit five 3-pointers and scored 15.

WARRIORS 117, TIMBERWOLVES 107
Stephen Curry scored 22 of his 36 points in the third quarter, and Klay Thompson added 28 points to lead Golden State past Minnesota at Minneapolis.

Minnesota trailed 59-47 entering the third quarter before going on a 14-2 run, tying the game at 61-all. That's when Curry took over, scoring eight points in a 94-second span as the Warriors wrested control of the game. Karl-Anthony Towns scored 26 points and grabbed 21 rebounds for the Timberwolves, who saw their six-game home win streak end.

BUCKS 115, LAKERS 101
Khris Middleton matched his season high with 30 points and grabbed 10 rebounds, and Milwaukee padded its lead atop the Eastern Conference with a win over visiting Los Angeles. Playing without Giannis Antetokounmpo (ankle) and Malcolm Brogdon (foot), the Bucks extended their lead over the second-place Toronto Raptors to three games with 11 left for both teams. Brook Lopez matched his

season high with 28 points, and Nikola Mirotic scored 23 while starting in place of Brogdon. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope shot 8-for-14 from 3-point range and scored a season-high 35 points off the bench for Los Angeles. The Lakers, who played without leading scorer LeBron James (groin), lost their fourth straight game and ninth in the past 10.

76ERS 118, HORNETS 114
Ben Simmons scored 28 points, and JJ Redick had 27 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists as Philadelphia earned its fifth straight victory, beating host Charlotte. Tobias Harris hit three free throws in the final 8.2 seconds, and the Hornets missed a chance to tie the game when Jeremy Lamb was off target on a drive in the lane with two seconds remaining. Jimmy Butler added 23 points for the Sixers, who com-

pleted a four-game season sweep of the Hornets. Their five-game winning streak is a season high. Charlotte has lost nine of its past 12.

CLIPPERS 115, PACERS 109
Danilo Gallinari scored 24 points, and Montrezl Harrell added 20 as host Los Angeles improved its playoff prospects with a win over Indiana. Rookie Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 17 points as the Clippers moved into a tie with the Utah Jazz for seventh place in the Western Conference. The Clippers and Jazz are just 2 1/2 games out of third place in a crowded Western Conference field. After scoring just two points in the first half, Bojan Bogdanovic finished with 19 as the Pacers lost their third consecutive game, keeping their playoff-clinching celebration on hold. Tyreke Evans also scored 19. — Reuters

21 athletes suspected of blood doping: German prosecutor

BERLIN: At least 21 athletes from eight nations across five sports are suspected of blood-doping linked to a German doctor who was arrested as part of an Austria-Germany doping raid last month. Munich's state prosecutor Kai Graeber said yesterday. Five athletes, including two Austrians, were initially arrested on Feb. 27 at the Nordic skiing world championships in the Austrian resort of Seefeld. The arrests were part of a joint operation with German police targeting a suspected international blood-doping ring believed to have been run out of Germany. A doctor in the German city of Erfurt was

also arrested along with a total of five other suspected accomplices. Graeber said the doping of the 21 athletes from five sports—three winter and two summer—took place from 2011. "The timeframe (of doping) is from the end of 2011 to 2019 in Seefeld," he told a news conference. "There are three-figure cases of blood being taken out and then being reintroduced worldwide. In Germany, Austria, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Croatia, Slovenia and Hawaii." No details on the names of the athletes or their specific sports were made available. The investigation is ongoing. Since the arrests other Austrian athletes have been implicated in blood doping. Earlier this month cyclist Georg Preidler told police he had attempted doping. Cross-country skier Johannes Duerr, whose interview with Germany's ARD television in which he admitted doping triggered the investigation and subsequent raids, was arrested on March 5. — Reuters

Detained Bangladeshi FIFA official released from jail

DHAKA: A FIFA official detained for allegedly defaming the Bangladeshi prime minister has been freed, her lawyer said yesterday, in a case closely watched by football's governing body and rights groups. Mahfuza Akhter, a FIFA council member since 2017 and the national chief of women's soccer, was arrested Saturday after a local football organizer accused her of making derogatory comments about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. She was granted bail this week and released from Dhaka central prison yesterday afternoon "after we completed all legal formalities", said her lawyer Liakat Hossain. Mahfuza in a press conference last month criticised Hasina for neglecting football in the cricket-mad

country. In an email to AFP, a FIFA spokesman this week said the footballing body was "monitoring this matter with concern". The statement came a day after rights group Amnesty International demanded Mahfuza's unconditional release, saying she "was merely exercising her right to freedom of expression". If she is found guilty, Mahfuza could be sentenced to a maximum two years in jail. The arrest of the FIFA official marks the latest attack on freedom of expression in Bangladesh, Amnesty said. Rights groups have accused the Bangladeshi government of using harsh laws to stifle dissent. Scores of people have been arrested under strict internet laws and cases have been filed against at least 200 people for making derogatory comments about Hasina online, according to a cyber crime prosecutor. Mahfuza's arrest came months after Bangladesh detained and charged award-winning photographer Shahidul Alam with making "false" and "provocative" statements in a televised interview in August. He was jailed for 107 days—the photographer said he was badly beaten while in custody—and denied bail four times before being freed in November. — AFP