

Friday Times

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Local

Deportation



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Kuwait has deported more than 18,000 expatriates from the beginning of this year until the end of September. The 12,000 men and 6,000 women sent back to their countries were deported for various reasons, including violating residency and work laws, infectious diseases that made them unfit for work, criminal cases and other violations of state law.

The interior ministry had previously indicated that almost 148,000 expatriates of various nationalities were deported from 2013 until this year. The population of Kuwait is approximately 4.5 million, of which 1.5 million are citizens and the rest non-citizens. One third of expatriates in Kuwait are domestic workers, according to figures from the first quarter of 2019, or 715,000 workers. I think the number of deported people is not large, but it is interesting to note that men exceed the number of women deportees.

There are two types of deportation - administrative and judicial. The former is under the authority of the interior ministry, while the latter is judicial deportation, which occurs when a court convicts a person. In recent years, deportation authorities have been trying to speed up the process of deporting expats to their homelands, which is important and required since there is no point in keeping undesirable persons in Kuwait and away from their homelands, and perhaps from finding new means of livelihood.

I believe that the worst thing that can happen to an expatriate worker is an absconding report or the expiry of their residence, even if they are in Kuwait. So, they need to check with the department of labor within 60 days, because if they don't correct their status or decide to ignore the law and not leave, they will be fined KD 2 per day from the date of the expiry of the residency. If caught by police, they will be deported and will not be able to return again.

In fact, a worker can inquire about any absconding report on the website of the Public Authority for Manpower. As for false absconding reports, if a worker has proof, they can submit a letter addressed to the Central Administration for Residency Affairs to complete the complaint procedures and amend their legal status.

Certainly, deportation inflicts psychological and social damage on any person. The expatriate must know the laws of the country. So, when they go to the Kuwaiti embassy in their country, they need to fully understand the laws of Kuwait, so they know what they are up to.

I think ignorance of the law may be the main cause of problems leading to deportation, for example, especially in the case of immediate termination of service and the submission of an absconding report against the worker. So they cannot follow up their claims and financial dues because they may have financial benefits such as end of service indemnity.

I know that an expatriate can hire a local lawyer, but the presence of the person outside the country makes it difficult for them to follow up with foreign law firms continuously, and they may not even have the money. I hope that the lawyer of the embassy of the country to whom the expat belongs is the one who represents them, so the embassy is the right place to go to in the event of a judicial ruling. Of course the reality is that many low income workers have little to no protections. They may be exploited or mistreated by their employers and their embassies usually do little to nothing to help them. (some embassies are, of course, more proactive than others).

The deportation of expatriates is something that happens in many countries around the world. The question is more with how transparent and fair the process is.

Sadu weaving in Kuwait, genuine reflection of desert life



KUWAIT: A Bedouin woman spinning the wool. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: Sadu weaving is one of the traditional handicrafts that were popular among women who used to live in the desert in the past, a genuine reflection of their surrounding environment. "Sadu weaving is an ancient handicraft in which Bedouin women excelled, and it is a handicraft that requires physical effort and high concentration," said Faisal Al-Zaabout, a specialist in heritage. Sadu weaving, he said, was a long process that started with shearing sheep wool at the end of the spring season. "Shearing is preferably done while sheep is alive," he added. The second step, he explained, was cleaning the wool. "The wool is then transformed into ball-like threads and then dyed with natural colors and placed in a big bowl of hot water. The last phase is weaving, during which the threads are connected with each other to have a final product," he said. Zaabout said Bedouin women decorated the sadu



The Sadu House's interior.

with shapes from their environment, like camels, horses and trees, and used vivid colors like red and orange. Some of the most important sadu products were tents made from wool, he said, and they protected

Bedouins from the scorching summer heat and harsh winters. Other products, he added, included bags made to store rice, decorations for the camels or ropes to tie the camels' legs. — KUNA



The spindle.



Some handicrafts of sadu weaving.



A Bedouin woman spinning the wool.

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Celebrating the artistic expression of Islamic Civilizations



Bronze perfume sprinkler cast in the form of a pomegranate, a fruit ascribed to many symbolic meanings since antiquity. East Iranian wood. 3rd-4th century AH.



Folios from the astrological birth chart of a newborn giving the coordinates of planets and lunar nodes at time of birth. Eastern Iranian wood. late 6th-early 7th century AH.



Marble tombstone with Kufic inscription. Egypt, dated Sha'ban 547 AH.

By Ben Garcia

Curator of the Al-Sabah Collection Salam Kaoukji and Head of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters Kamel Al-Abduljalil jointly inaugurated an exhibition of the renowned Al-Sabah Collection at Amricani Cultural Centre on Tuesday. "This will be the temporary home of the collection until the National Museum is ready," said Kaoukji. "The venue is open to the public and can be viewed free of charge," she added.

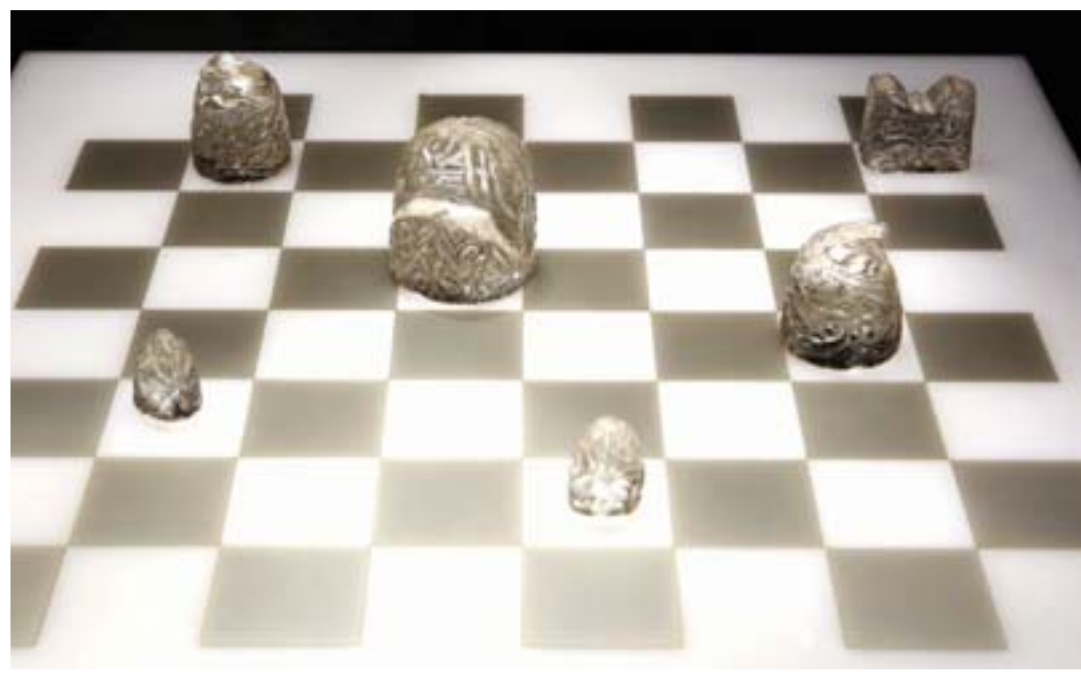
Kaoukji said the artifacts are owned by Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and his wife Sheikha Hussa Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, but is loaned to Kuwait on a long-term basis. "The collection was previously displayed in Milan, Rome, Vienna, Manama and Seoul. Every display has a story, and it's written in Arabic and English. Our objective is to educate, enlighten and entertain people," she said.

The exhibition, titled "Al-Fann: Art from the Islamic

Civilization", is an opportunity to see the most remarkable, historic and expensive collection of Islamic artifacts. The expo is part of Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah's 25th cultural season held under the auspices of Minister of Information Mohammad Al-Jabri.

The Al-Sabah Collection is presented in two primary themes. The first section displays objects in chronological order - from the 7th century "Origins of Islamic Art" through the 16th century "Apogee of the Great Empires", including the Ottomans, Safavids of Iran and Mughals of the Indian subcontinent. The second theme shifts the focus to the four dominant motifs in art from the Islamic world: Calligraphy, Arabesque, Figurative and Repeating Geometric Patterns.

Sheikh Nasser's passion for collecting artifacts started in the 1970s, when he purchased a mid-14th century enameled glass bottle from Syria. He now has around 30,000 objects, and those that are displayed at the exhibition are a mere portion of his collection - in fact only 200 of the most important pieces.



Chess pieces made from eastern Iranian wood, ca 3rd century AH.



Glass beaker, blown colorless body with cameo-cut design. Iranian wood. 2nd half of 3rd century AH.



Jade hookah (shisha) reservoir set in ruby and emerald floral motifs. India, probably Deccan. Late 11th-early 12th century AH



Cotton talismanic shirt in ink with the complete text of the Holy Quran and the 99 'beautiful names' of God. India. Probably late 9th century AH.



Large and sumptuous manuscript of Holy Quran rendered in ink, colors and gold calligraphed by famous master Abd Al-Qadir Al-Hasani Al-Husaini from Shiraz, Iran. Late 10th century AH.
—Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwaiti artist creatively paints on egg shells



Kuwaiti artist Sabah Asad has been creative in painting on egg shells since he was still 15 years of age. He is one of the few people who engage in this hobby in Kuwait. His artworks include pieces made using guineafowl and ostrich eggs, using wood and dentist drills, as well as soft feathers. Asad also created a special substance to 'cover' the egg shell and protect it against damage or breaking. — KUNA

Kuwait Times

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Local

Kuwait's FM receives outgoing Omani, Japanese ambassadors

Gulf economic integration shouldn't be affected by differences: Kuwait



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Oman's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Adnan bin Ahmad Al-Ansari. — KUNA photos



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Japan's Ambassador to Kuwait Takashi Ashiki.

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met yesterday with Oman's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Adnan bin Ahmad Al-Ansari, on the occasion of ending his tenure as ambassador to the country. During the meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled praised efforts of Ambassador Ansari and his contributions

to supporting and strengthening the bilateral relations between Kuwait and the Sultanate of Oman.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled met with Japan's Ambassador to Kuwait Takashi Ashiki, on the occasion of ending his tenure as ambassador to Kuwait. During the meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled praised efforts of Amba-

sador Ashiki and his contributions to supporting and strengthening the bilateral relations between Kuwait and Japan. The meetings were attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for the Office of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Zain platinum sponsor of 'Supporting Local Product' forum



KUWAIT: Zain is honored during the forum.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its platinum sponsorship of the "Supporting Local Product" forum entitled "Our Industry, Our Pride." The event was organized by the Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) and the Kuwait Association for the Protection of Industrial Properties (KAPIP) in the Sheraton Kuwait Hotel under the patronage of Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Service Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan.

Zain took part in the forum's opening ceremony, which witnessed the presence of the representative of the event's patron Deputy Director-General of the Public Authority for Industry (PAI) Mohammed Al-Adwani, Kuwait Journalists Association Secretary and Head of the Organizing Committee Adnan Al-Rashed, Zain Kuwait's External and Internal Relations Department Manager Hamad Al-Matar, as well as a number of officials from both the private and public sectors.

Zain's support to the forum came to affirm its commitment in being present at the various projects and activities that contribute to pushing the national economy wheel and achieving the various developmental objectives of the country, further reflecting its role as a leading national company that engages with planning initiatives

that achieve Kuwait's prosperity on all levels. This is especially true as the company represents the private sector, which is considered a strategic partner of the country's developmental plans and one of its main pillars.

The forum was jointly organized by the Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA), the Kuwait Association for the Protection of Industrial Properties (KAPIP), and Nouf Expo, in collaboration with the Kuwait Industries Union (KIU), Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), Public Authority for Industry (PAI), Competition Protection Authority (CPA), and the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development. The forum aimed at enriching the role of the private sector and highlight its contributions to the National Development Plan (New Kuwait) that stems from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's conceptualized vision of a 'New Kuwait' by 2035.

Zain is keen on actively participating in the various local and regional projects that aim at contributing to further pushing the national economy wheel. The company will spare no efforts to support any entity that serves the country's developmental goals and contributes to the progress and prosperity of Kuwait.

Kuwait, Switzerland sign double taxation prevention protocol

GENEVA: Kuwait and Switzerland signed a protocol to amend an agreement on prevention of double taxation. The protocol is important for Kuwait, which considers Switzerland a major economic and investment destination, Aseel Al-Muneefi, Finance Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Finance and Taxation, said yesterday. Muneefi, who signed the protocol on behalf of Kuwait, said the double taxation prevention agreement was signed in 1999 in Kuwait. "But the 20-year-old agreement needed to be revised to cope

with international standards on prevention of double taxations," she added. She said Kuwait aimed at gaining highest tax exemption on Kuwaiti investments in Switzerland. Muneefi said the agreement would now offer many exemptions on long-term government and private investments, but with a 10-percent ownership of corporates. The protocol, she explained, includes new articles dealing with prevention of financial evasion, settlement of disputes, profits on capitals and exchange of tax information. — KUNA

Kuwait signs crude oil supply deals with Chinese firms

SHANGHAI: Kuwait is very much interested in doing business in China which is one of the world's strategic markets, a Kuwaiti official said yesterday, adding that the two countries signed crude oil supply agreements. "This interest is in compliance with the vision of Kuwait and guidance of its leadership, which stipulate the importance of boosting strategic cooperation with

China," said Mohammad Buftain, head of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's (KPC) office in China. He was speaking on the sidelines of the second China International Import Expo. KPC's Managing Director for International Marketing Abdunnasser Al-Fulajj is leading Kuwait's delegation.

Buftain said that Fulajj signed cooperation agreements on fringes of the expo to supply Kuwaiti crude oil to Chinese oil companies. Buftain said Sheikh Khaled Al-Sabah, Fulajj's Deputy, would address a session of the expo today about KPC's future projects and volume of Kuwait's oil exports to the Chinese market. More than 3,800 companies from 155 countries, as well as 26 international organizations, are taking part in the expo, which is due until November 10, 2019. — KUNA

Local

Five expat doctors among up to 4,000 to be granted Kuwaiti citizenship before year's end

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti government is currently preparing a list of names of up to 4,000 non-Kuwaitis to be granted Kuwaiti citizenship, well-informed sources said, noting that the list would be announced sometime before the end of the year.

The naturalization process will be made according to a law passed in parliament and stipulates that the government cannot give citizenship to more than 4,000 a year. However, the law does not stipulate that Kuwait must naturalize 4,000 people each year, explained the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Arab nationals

Furthermore, the law does not mandate the government to grant citizenship exclusively to bedoons (stateless). "The list may include Arabs holding other nationalities," the sources stressed, noting that candidates in that case include children of Kuwaiti widows or divorced women who meet the conditions required

for naturalization, such as that the child must be born, raised and educated in Kuwait.

Further, the sources revealed that the list would also include the names of five expatriate doctors "who have spent their lives serving Kuwait," in addition to bedoons who have worked for Kuwait Oil Company and bedoon military personnel who took part in the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars, as well as the Kuwait liberation war.

Detainee in US back home

In other news, Kuwaiti citizen Yasser Al-Bahri, who is currently detained at the United States' immigration detention, is set to return to Kuwait on November 20, 2019, his brother Abdullah Al-Bahri said. Speaking on behalf of the family, Abdullah Al-Bahri thanked MP Abdulkareem Al-Kandari for "his sincere efforts to help Yasser return to Kuwait after doing his time in the US." Abdullah also thanked Kuwaiti officials' efforts in this regard.



Six hours to free child's hand from meat mincer



KUWAIT: Rescue team members help free the child's hand from the meat mincer.

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Firemen spent six hours before successfully freeing a child's hand that became stuck in a meat mincer yesterday. The child was medevaced from Wafra to Adan hospital shortly after the incident was reported. A Kuwait Fire Service Directorate rescue team then worked to free the child's hand without causing him



Counterfeit goods confiscated at Doha Port.

harm. They were able to do so after six hours, after which the child was seen by a specialized doctor.

1,058 counterfeit items

Customs officers confiscated nearly 1,058 counterfeit pieces of various garments carrying trademarks of famous brands in a shipment that arrived at Doha Port yesterday, coming from Iran.

the 28-member Union. She noted that over the past month, the people of Iraq have exercised their fundamental rights to assemble and express their concerns and stressed that "these rights need to be respected, in line with the Iraqi constitution." Mogherini regretted that despite repeated calls for restraint, there has been further loss of lives, a great number of injured and destruction of public and private property. "The excessive use of force against protestors is deplorable. The reported attacks by armed entities against demonstrators undermine the right to peaceful assembly and the expression of legitimate demands," she stated. "The European Union expects perpetrators of all violations to be held accountable. Dissatisfaction as a result of earlier investigations regarding the violence used during the protests should be addressed," said the EU foreign policy chief. She underlined EU's support for Iraq's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and inclusive dialogue as the way forward. — KUNA

Kuwait minister's resignation accepted

KUWAIT: A decree was issued yesterday accepting the resignation of Kuwaiti Minister of Finance Nayef Al-Hajraf. Another decree appointed Mariam Al-Aqeel as the Acting Minister of Finance, in addition to her post as Minister of State for Economic Affairs. The decree indicated that the prime minister would inform the National Assembly of the decision, effective as of issuance. Moreover, it will be published in the official gazette. Furthermore, the premier will inform the parliament about appointing Aqeel as the acting minister of finance. — KUNA



Nayef Al-Hajraf

EU to help reforms in Iraq as pledged at Kuwait conference

BRUSSELS: The European Union yesterday called for the rights of the Iraqi people to be respected and reiterated its support to Iraq to deliver on its reform commitments. "The EU reiterates its willingness to accompany the Government of Iraq in delivering on its reform commitments in line with the pledges made at the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq in February 2018," said EU High Representative Federica Mogherini in a Declaration on behalf of

Cleaning contracts on council meeting's agenda

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Municipal Council is due to discuss during its weekly meeting on Monday a letter sent by Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Fahad Al-Shoula concerning the articles in the municipality law number 33/2016 pertaining with cleaning contracts in various governorates. The meeting is also scheduled to discuss an inquiry made by councilmember Abdul Salam Al-Randi about allegations that cleaners steal manhole covers.



Congolese 'Terminator' warlord gets harshest ever ICC sentence

Mass surveillance fears as India readies facial recognition system

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TEHRAN: An Iranian woman speaks on her mobile phone as she walks past a fruit shop yesterday. — AFP

Iran resumes enrichment at Fordow

TEHRAN: Iran resumed uranium enrichment at its underground Fordow plant south of Tehran yesterday in a new step back from its commitments under a landmark 2015 nuclear deal, raising alarm from Western powers. Engineers began feeding uranium hexafluoride gas into the plant's mothballed enrichment centrifuges in "the first minutes of Thursday", the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization said. The suspension of uranium enrichment at the long-secret plant was one of the restrictions on its nuclear program Iran had agreed to in return for the lifting of sanctions.

Iran's announcement that it would resume enrichment at the Fordow plant from midnight (2030 GMT Wednesday) had drawn a chorus of concern from the remaining parties to the troubled agreement. Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia have been trying to salvage the hard-won deal since Washington abandoned it in May last year and reimposed crippling unilateral sanctions. They say Iran's phased suspension of its obligations under the deal since May makes that more difficult.

The resumption of enrichment at Fordow is Iran's fourth step away from the agreement. The United States called for "serious steps" to be taken in response to the move. "Iran's expansion of proliferation-sensitive activities raises concerns that Iran is posi-

tioning itself to have the option of a rapid nuclear breakout," US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement. "It is now time for all nations to reject this regime's nuclear extortion and take serious steps to increase pressure."

Uranium enrichment is the sensitive process that produces fuel for nuclear power plants but also, in highly extended form, the fissile core for a warhead. Iran is now enriching uranium to 4.5 percent, exceeding the 3.67 percent limit set by the 2015 deal but less than the 20 percent level it had previously operated to and far less than the 90 percent level required for a warhead.

Iran has always denied any military dimension to its nuclear program. It has been at pains to emphasise that all of the steps it has taken are transparent and swiftly reversible if the remaining parties to the agreement find a way to get round US sanctions. "All these activities have been carried out under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency," the Iranian nuclear organization said.

UN inspector told to leave

A source close to the United Nations watchdog told AFP that it has inspectors on the ground in Fordow and would report "very rapidly" on the steps taken by Iran.

Iran revealed on Thursday that it had withdrawn the credentials of one IAEA inspector last week after she triggered an alarm at the gate to Iran's other enrichment plant at Natanz, raising suspicion she was carrying a "suspect product". It did not specify what the product was or whether it had actually been found in the inspector's possession.

But it promised that its representative to the IAEA would deliver a detailed report on the incident at a special meeting on Iran held at the agency's headquarters in Vienna. At the meeting, the EU said in a statement that it was "deeply concerned" by what took place, but understood "that the incident was resolved". Reiterating the EU's "full confidence in the inspectorate's professionalism and impartiality", the statement called "upon Iran to ensure that IAEA inspectors can perform their duties in line with its legally binding safeguards agreement".

The resumption of enrichment at Fordow comes after the passing of a deadline it set for the remaining parties to the nuclear agreement to come up with a mechanism that would allow foreign firms to continue doing business with Iran without incurring US penalties. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed concern about Tehran's announcements but said European powers should do their part. — AFP

Indian couple stoned to death

NEW DELHI: Relatives of an Indian woman who married outside her caste and fled her home to escape punishment stoned her and her husband to death after the couple returned to their village to visit family, police said yesterday. The 29-year-old couple, from the same village in the southern state of Karnataka, had married three years ago against the wishes of their families and moved to Bangalore and other cities in the region, and had two children.

But they returned to the village last month to meet family members. "They were spotted by villagers on Wednesday, who informed the brother of the woman after which he gathered a mob that attacked the couple and killed them with stones," local police officer Guru Shanth told AFP. "Three of the main accused have been identified, including the brother and uncle of the woman."

The incident is the latest in a string of so-called "honor killings" which are rampant in rural pockets of the country. They are typically carried out by close relatives or village elders to protect what is seen as the family's reputation in a rigid caste system. United Nations statistics suggest 1,000 of the 5,000 such murders globally every year occur in India. India's Supreme Court ruled in 2011 that those found guilty of such killings should face the death penalty. — AFP

US-led coalition launches operation to protect Gulf

Vessels will be escorted through Strait of Hormuz

MANAMA: A US-led naval coalition officially launched operations in Bahrain yesterday to protect shipping in the troubled waters of the Gulf, after a string of attacks that Washington and its allies blamed on Iran. The coalition, aimed at warding off the perceived threat to the world's oil supply, has been in the making since June. Iran, which has denied any responsibility for the mystery attacks, has put forward its own proposals for boosting Gulf security that pointedly exclude outside powers.

Bahrain, which hosts the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, joined the International Maritime Security Construct (IMSC) in August. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates followed suit in September. Australia and Britain are the main Western countries to have agreed to send warships to escort Gulf shipping. The newest member, Albania, joined on Friday. Vessels will be escorted through the Strait of Hormuz, the strategic chokepoint at the head of the Gulf and the main artery for the transport of Middle East oil.

Vice Admiral Jim Malloy, commander of US Naval Forces in the Middle East, said Operation Sentinel is a defensive measure aimed at protecting Gulf waters. "While Sentinel's operational design is threat-based, it does not threaten," he said during a ceremony at the IMSC's command centre. "We employ capable warships on patrol, but there is no offensive

line of effort in this construct, other than a commitment to defend each other if attacked. "Our commitment to the region isn't short-lived, it is enduring, and we will operate as part of Sentinel for as long as it's needed - as long as the threat looms."

Most European governments have declined to participate in the naval coalition, fearful of undermining their efforts to save a landmark 2015 nuclear accord with Iran, which was badly weakened by Washington's withdrawal last year. Animosity between Tehran and Washington has soared since President Donald Trump unilaterally abandoned the deal and reimposed crippling US sanctions.

On May 12, the UAE said four commercial oil tankers - two Saudi, one Emirati and one Norwegian-had been targeted by "acts of sabotage" in waters off its coast. Washington and Riyadh blamed Tehran, which denied involvement. A month later, the *Kokuka Courageous* was hit and around the same time another tanker in the area, the Norwegian-owned *Front Altair*, was damaged by three explosions, according to the Norwegian Maritime Authority. They were transiting through the Strait of Hormuz towards the Indian Ocean.

Then on Sept 14, drone strikes targeted two key Saudi oil facilities onshore, causing catastrophic damage and temporarily knocking



MANAMA: Newly appointed commander of Operation SENTINEL, US Navy Rear Admiral Alvin Holsey (unseen, holding scissors), Bahrain Defense Force Commander-in-Chief Field Marshal Sheikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa (center) and US Navy Vice Admiral James J Malloy, Commander of US Naval Forces Central Command and the US 5th Fleet, inaugurate the operations center of the International Maritime Security Construct yesterday. — AFP

out half of the kingdom's oil production. The attacks were claimed by Yemen's Houthi rebels who are battling a Saudi-led coalition, but

Washington and Riyadh blamed Iran, saying the strikes were carried out with advanced missiles and drones. — AFP

Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan set January goal on Nile dam

WASHINGTON: Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan on Wednesday set a Jan 15 target for resolving an intensifying feud over a massive dam being constructed on Africa's Nile River, which has raised fears of conflict over scarce water. US President Donald Trump agreed to mediate among the three nations in Washington at the request of Egypt, which fears that the Ethiopian-built dam would disrupt the river that provides 90 percent of its drinking water.

After a day of talks mediated by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and World Bank President David Malpass, foreign ministers from the three countries said they would hold four technical meetings on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The ministers "agreed to work toward completion of an agreement by January 15, 2020," a joint statement said.

"The foreign ministers reaffirmed the significance of the Nile to the development of the people of Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan, the importance of transboundary cooperation, and their shared interest in concluding an agreement," it said. Water ministers will take part in the technical meetings, although the statement

did not spell out any potential solutions.

If the countries cannot reach an agreement by Jan 15, they said they would refer the issue to their heads of state or government or seek further outside mediation, under the terms of a 2015 declaration issued at a summit by their leaders. Ethiopia says the \$4 billion hydro-electric barrage would double its electricity and be indispensable for a growing economy. Trump earlier Tuesday sounded upbeat about the talks.

"Just had a meeting with top representatives from Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan to help solve their long running dispute on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, one of the largest in the world," Trump tweeted. "The meeting went well and discussions will continue during the day!" he added. A US official said in October that President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi had asked Trump to get involved in the dispute when they met in September on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. The Nile is a lifeline supplying both water and electricity to the 10 countries it traverses. Its main tributaries, the White and Blue Niles, converge in Sudanese capital Khartoum before flowing north through Egypt to drain into the Mediterranean Sea.

Analysts fear the three Nile basin countries could be drawn into a conflict if the dispute is not resolved before the dam begins operating. It is scheduled to go online by 2022. Discussions between the three countries broke down this year, prompting Egypt to call for international mediation. Sisi on Monday described Trump as being of "unique standing with the power in dealing with conflicts... and finding crucial solutions for them." — AFP

Erdogan vows to 'open the gates' to Europe

BUDAPEST: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday repeated his threat to "open the gates" for migrants to enter Europe unless more international support was provided, during a visit to Hungary yesterday. "Whether or not support comes, we will continue to host our guests, but only up to a point," Erdogan said at a news conference alongside Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. "If we see that this does not work, just like I said before, we will have no option left but to open the gates. If we open the gates,

it is obvious where they will go," Erdogan added.

Erdogan has called on EU countries to provide more financial support for his plan to create a "safe zone" in Syria where refugees can be repatriated. Orban has been one of Europe's most outspoken opponents of accepting refugees and migrants, particularly from Muslim countries, and has backed Erdogan's efforts to repatriate them. "There are four million migrants in our country," Erdogan said. "It is possible that a serious number of those migrants will migrate to Europe. "The safe zone we want to create aims to ensure the migrants that are in our country go back to their homes, their lands." The EU strongly criticized Turkey's offensive last month in northern Syria, which was designed to create the "safe zone". Erdogan said the EU's approach was "far from being constructive lately... With that attitude, they only harm their own interests." — AFP



BUDAPEST: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (left) and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban smile after addressing a press conference at Varkert Bazar cultural center yesterday. — AFP

International

Students take to Lebanon streets as protests grow

Protesters prevent access to institutions

BEIRUT: Thousands of students took to the streets across Lebanon yesterday to demand a better future as anti-government protests now entering their fourth week continued to spread. Pupils carrying their schoolbags picked up the baton from thousands of women who ignited the main protest site in Beirut on Wednesday evening by banging pots and pans to demand their rights. In Tripoli, where mobilization has been relentless since the protests erupted on Oct 17, demonstrators planned to take down the giant portraits of politicians plastered all over the city's buildings.

Grievances initially focused on poor infrastructure and abysmal public services quickly grew into an unprecedented nationwide push to drive out an elite protesters say has ruled the country like a cartel for decades. Thousands of university and high school students streamed into the streets of Beirut and other towns to boost the protests. "All of them, all of them are thieves," chanted one pupil, perched on the shoulders of a schoolmate outside the education ministry.

Setting off colored flares and waving Lebanese flags, students blocked off traffic to demand the wholesale removal of the current political class and its sectarian-based power-sharing system. "What if we had a young, educated, ethical and competent political leadership?" was the question asked on one placard.

Political posters

"We go to school, we work hard and in the end we pick up diplomas so we can just hang around and stay at home doing nothing," said Marwa Abdel Rahman, 16. Youth unemployment stands at more than 30 percent in Lebanon, from which many young people were seeking to emi-

grate until last month's rallies created a rare moment of national hope and unity in a country often characterized by its divisions. What started as a spontaneous, apolitical and leaderless popular movement, is becoming increasingly organized, with activists coming together to synchronize marches and stunts across the country. After blocking off roads for days, protesters have switched to preventing access to institutions seen as the most egregious examples of mismanagement and corruption. Students in Tripoli blocked employees from clocking in for work at the telecommunications ministry building. "We want to keep up the pressure on our corrupt political leaders, who are not addressing our demands," said Samir Mustafa, an unemployed 29-year-old.

Prime Minister Saad Hariri tendered his government's resignation on October 29 in response to pressure from the street. The cabinet has stayed on in a caretaker capacity but efforts to form a new line-up seem to be stalling, with each faction in the outgoing coalition arrangement seeking to salvage some influence. "They want to name a prime minister from the old guard, from the corrupt class," Mustafa ranted. "We will continue to block banks and key administrations until the president and the parliament fall," he said.

Women lead

The World Bank on Wednesday warned that the failure to quickly form a government that meets protesters' demands could lead to an even sharper economic downturn. President Michel Aoun is reported to remain bent on keeping Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil, his son-in-law and



BEIRUT: Lebanese students from various schools wave national flags and shout slogans as they gather in front of the ministry of education during ongoing anti-government protests yesterday. — AFP

arguably the most reviled politician among the protesters, in a key position. For his part parliament speaker N'abih Berri, a veteran player whose supporters tried to disrupt the protests last month, has not publicly commented at all on the protests sweeping the country.

In a country where weapons are widespread and leading political parties routinely resort to hired thugs, the protests - and attempts by the security forces to quell them - have been remarkably bloodless. On Wednesday night, thou-

sands of women staged a candle-lit rally on Martyrs Square, banging pots and pans with wooden spoons to set downtown Beirut abuzz.

The commotion, broadcast live on several television channels, turned contagious and for several minutes residents could be heard across the city chiming in from home with their own utensils. "Revolution is a woman," read one of the banners in the crowd, which launched into a rousing rendition of the national anthem, adapting the lyrics to include women. — AFP

Iraq crude stuck at field for third day amid protests

KIRKUK, Iraq: About 90,000 barrels of crude oil meant for export were trapped at a northern Iraq field yesterday because transport routes were cut by protests, an industry source told AFP. Anti-government demonstrations have rocked Iraq's capital and its south, with sit-ins increasingly targeting main roads and state infrastructure - including oil fields - in OPEC's second-biggest producer. The Qayyarah field in northern Iraq produces 30,000 barrels per day of crude oil that is trucked to the southern port of Basra to be exported, but sit-ins have sealed off some of those roads.

A senior source at the North Oil Company, which manages the Qayyarah field, told AFP yesterday that trucks were unable to carry out that journey for a third consecutive day. "These trucks usually transport the oil daily, but have been unable to do so since Tuesday because of what's happening in Basra," the source said. "I don't know when it will resume as it depends on the situation stabilising and the roads being re-



UMM QASR, Iraq: An Iraqi protester walks past burning tyres as others block the road to Umm Qasr port during ongoing anti-government demonstrations yesterday. — AFP

opened." Iraq is the fifth-largest oil exporter worldwide, sending around 3.4 million bpd out from its Basra port.

A vast majority of that oil is transported across the country via pipeline, and Qayyarah is one of the rare fields that sends its crude by truck. The government's budget is funded almost exclusively by oil revenues and analysts have said a hit to exports could be "disastrous" for the country. Despite Iraq's vast oil wealth, one in five people lives in poverty and youth unemployment stands at 25 percent, according to the World Bank. — AFP

Ex-head of UNRWA denies wrongdoing

ZURICH/JERUSALEM: The former head of the United Nations' Palestinians aid agency who resigned in the face of an inquiry into misconduct allegations has denied wrongdoing and said his agency was the victim of a political campaign designed to undermine it. The agency has faced budgetary difficulties since last year, when the United States, its biggest donor, halted its aid of \$360 million per year. The United States and Israel have both accused UNRWA of mismanagement and anti-Israeli incitement.

Commissioner-General Pierre Krahenbuhl, a Swiss diplomat, was replaced on Wednesday pending completion of a review of "management-related matters" at the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) said. "I have rejected these allegations from the start and will continue to do so," Krahenbuhl said in an interview with Swiss



Pierre Krahenbuhl

broadcaster RTS on Wednesday evening. "There is no corruption, fraud or misappropriation of aid."

In a resignation letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, obtained by Reuters, Krahenbuhl complained the inquiry "has been fraught with leaks...despite your personal commitment to confidentiality". He denied what he called "the unfounded allegation that I entertained a romantic relationship with a staff member".

Krahenbuhl said he was "above the politics that have governed this entire process" and was resigning "in the firm belief that this is in the best interest of Palestine refugees, of my family and myself". He added: "A further delay would only benefit those who have so actively engaged in political, financial and personal attacks over the past two years with the declared objective to undermine UNRWA and the integrity of Palestine refugees." — AFP

International

Congolese 'Terminator' warlord gets harshest-ever ICC sentence

'Murder was committed on a large scale': Judge

THE HAGUE: The International Criminal Court sentenced Congolese rebel chief Bosco "Terminator" Ntaganda to 30 years in jail for war crimes and crimes against humanity yesterday, the highest ever penalty issued by the tribunal. Ntaganda was convicted in July of offences including murder, sexual slavery and using child soldiers in a mineral-rich region of the Democratic Republic of Congo in the early 2000s.

Most of the charges against Rwandan-born Ntaganda, 46, related to a series of gruesome massacres of villagers carried out by his fighters. "Murder was committed on a large scale," presiding judge Robert Flemer said, adding that the Hague-based court had taken the "particular cruelty" of some of Ntaganda's actions into account. "The overall sentence imposed on you shall therefore be 30 years of imprisonment."

But while the judges gave him the maximum sentence allowed by the ICC in terms of the number of years, they said that "despite their gravity" his crimes did not warrant a full-life prison term. Ntaganda, dressed in a blue suit and shirt and wearing a red tie, showed no emotion as the sentence was passed in the high-security courtroom. An ICC spokesman confirmed it was the heaviest ever sentence handed down to date

by the court, which was set up in 2002 to try the world's worst crimes. Ntaganda has appealed against his conviction earlier this year on 13 counts of war crimes and five of crimes against humanity - which saw him become the first to be convicted by the ICC of sexual enslavement.

'Held to account'

Human Rights Watch welcomed the prison term. "Bosco Ntaganda's 30-year sentence sends a strong message that even people considered untouchable may one day be held to account," said Ida Sawyer, deputy director of Human Rights Watch's Africa division. "While his victims' pain cannot be erased, they can take some comfort in seeing justice prevail."

A refugee from the 1994 genocide of Tutsis in Rwanda, Ntaganda emerged as a ruthless driver of ethnic Tutsi revolts that subsequently convulsed neighboring DRC. Judges said Ntaganda was a "key leader" of the Union of Congolese Patriots rebel group and its military wing, the Patriotic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (FPLC), in the DRC's volatile Ituri region in 2002 and 2003.

More than 60,000 people have been killed since the violence erupted in Ituri, according



THE HAGUE: Former Congolese militia leader Bosco "Terminator" Ntaganda looks on in the courtroom of the International Criminal Court prior to the verdict yesterday. — AFP

to rights groups, as militias battle each other for control of mineral resources. The court heard fearful villagers dubbed him "Terminator", after the Arnold Schwarzenegger film about a merciless robotic killer, during two bloody operations by Ntaganda's soldiers

against civilians in rival villages in 2002 and 2003. Fighters loyal to him carried out atrocities such as a massacre in a banana field behind a village in which at least 49 people including children and babies were disembowelled or had their heads smashed in.—AFP

French police clear hundreds of migrants from Paris camps

PARIS: French police evacuated over 1,600 migrants from two camps in northern Paris yesterday, one of the biggest such operations in the city in years, a day after the government unveiled tough new measures to a "take back control" of immigration. Around 600 police officers escorted the migrants from tents where coaches transported them to reception centres, in an operation that began under steady rain at around 6:00 am (0500 GMT), an AFP reporter said.

Police said they evacuated a total of 1,606 migrants from two camps near the Porte de la Chapelle, sheltered under part of the ring road round that surrounds the capital. Many of the occupants, which included families with children, said they were from Afghanistan or sub-Saharan Africa. "I cannot allow a dangerous situation like this... all this cannot remain," Paris police chief Didier Lallement told reporters at the scene. He said the operation, one of the largest in Paris since camps regularly began springing up in 2015, "was decided in the framework of the implementation of the (government) plan, it did not happen by chance."

The government of President Emmanuel Macron has vowed to crack down on immigration, a move widely seen as an attempt to keep rightwing parties from siphoning off voters ahead of municipal elections next year. "We want to take back control of our migration policy," Prime Minister Edouard Philippe told a press conference Wednesday, unveiling a series of measures which he said aimed to strengthen France's "sovereignty".

Interior Minister Christophe Castaner had warned Wednesday



PARIS: A policeman takes away a baby stroller as migrants are evacuated by the police and gendarmerie yesterday. — AFP

day that the several camps housing up to 3,000 migrants in northeastern Paris would be evacuated "before the end of the year". Castaner also said that 16,000 places would be made available in three new migrant centres, an effort to keep migrants from setting up new settlements.

Awa, a 32-year-old woman from the Ivory Coast, said yesterday that she had been sleeping in a tent at the Porte de la Chapelle since she arrived in France a year ago. "It's raining, it's cold. I don't know where I will go, but I'm glad to go because I will have a roof over my head tonight," she said, as she waited in line for a coach, carrying just a backpack.

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo said it was the 59th operation to clear migrant camps since 2015, when hundreds of thousands of people fleeing war and misery in Asia, the Middle East and Africa headed for Europe. "Each time we're told they won't come back," Hidalgo, who has clashed with the government over who is responsible for finding a solution to the migrant camps, told journalists yesterday.—AFP

Catalan radicals to vote 'Trojan horse' MPs into parliament

GIRONA, Spain: After numerous protests in the Catalan separatist stronghold of Girona, Carla Costa is mulling other ways of attacking Spain, including the idea of voting radical pro-independence MPs into parliament to act as a Trojan Horse. "We have to attack on all fronts," explains the 22-year-old student who has multiple piercings and lives in this northeastern town about 100 km north-east of Barcelona. "We must get to the heart of the beast and destroy it from within."

And that is why, during Sunday's general election, she will vote for the radical anti-capitalist CUP (Popular Unity Candidacy), the most extreme faction within the Catalan separatist movement. When Spaniards return to the ballot box on November 10, it will be their fourth general election in as many years and the latest bid to put an end to the deadlock ensnaring Spanish politics.

The CUP is contesting a national election for the first time, with the tiny regional party hoping to capitalize on unrest unleashed last month when Spain jailed nine Catalan separatist leaders over a failed 2017 independence bid. Like Barcelona and other cities in Catalonia, Girona was caught up in a wave of mass protests, which saw thousands peacefully demonstrate by day before chaos would erupt at night, with masked youths fighting running battles with police.

Best known for its Gothic cathedral and medieval streets featured in the global TV phenomenon "Game of Thrones", Girona was where veteran independence advocate Carles Puigdemont served as mayor before going on to become the Catalan regional president. Two years ago, Puigdemont staged an ill-fated referendum and issued a short-lived independence declaration in defiance of Madrid, triggering Spain's worst political crisis in decades.—AFP

International

France's Macron says NATO experiencing 'brain death'

Explosive comments appear to question very future of alliance

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron said he believed NATO was undergoing "brain death", lamenting a lack of coordination between Europe and the United States and unilateral action in Syria by key member Turkey, in an interview published yesterday. "What we are currently experiencing is the brain death of NATO," Macron told *The Economist* magazine.

The president's explosive comments, appearing to question the very future of NATO, threatened to send shock waves through the alliance ahead of a summit in Britain next month. "You have no coordination whatsoever of strategic decision-making between the United States and its NATO allies. None," said Macron. "You have an uncoordinated aggressive action by another NATO ally, Turkey, in an area where our interests are at stake," he added, according to an English transcript released by *The Economist*.

Turkey's latest military operation against Kurdish forces in northern Syria was staunchly opposed by fellow members like France, but made possible by a withdrawal of US forces ordered by President Donald Trump. "There has been no NATO planning, nor any coordination," Macron said. And while NATO works well in communicating between armies and commanding operations, "strategically and politically, we need to recognize that we have a problem," he said.

"We should reassess the reality of what NATO is in light of the commitment of the United States," he warned, adding that "In my

opinion, Europe has the capacity to defend itself." Macron said that while "it's not in our interest" to expel Turkey from NATO - as has been urged by some politicians - members states should "reconsider what NATO is".

'Strategic dialogue with Russia'

And he emphasized it was crucial to seek a rapprochement with Moscow, which regards NATO and its expansion into ex-Communist bloc states with huge suspicion since the alliance was set up to counter the USSR. "We need to reopen a strategic dialogue, without being naive and which will take time, with Russia," said Macron, who is seeking to broker an end to the conflict in Ukraine and has courted President Vladimir Putin as a partner.

He said NATO did not reexamine its future in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union and "the unarticulated assumption is that the enemy is still Russia". "So, the question about the present purpose of NATO is a real question that needs to be asked", especially by the United States where Trump sees the alliance as a "commercial project", he said.

And Macron said he believed that Putin, for all the anti-Western bombast from the Kremlin, would find his strategic options limited, in the long term, to "a partnership project with Europe". "If we want to build peace in Europe, to rebuild European strategic autonomy, we need to reconsider our position with Russia," said Macron. He praised the stance on the issue of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor

Orban - criticized by many in Europe for being authoritarian and close to the Kremlin. "He's quite close to our views and has a key intellectual and political role" in central Europe, said Macron.

'Edge of a precipice'

The French president, seen by analysts as Europe's most prominent leader amid Brexit and the looming exit of German Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2021, has sought to stand tall on the foreign policy stage and implement a vision of reforming Europe. But he said the European Union had been brought "to the edge of a precipice" by a dwindling focus since the mid-1990s on the bloc's political integration.

"Europe has forgotten that it is a community, by increasingly thinking of itself as a market, with expansion as its end purpose," said Macron, who recently blocked expanding the EU to include North Macedonia and Albania. He also said he wanted European nations to break the "taboo" against using deficits to stimulate growth and investment, and scrap a strict limit on eurozone deficits. Macron said it was a time of turmoil with Europe losing track of history, a risk of the US and China becoming the sole global powers, and authoritarian regimes emerging in its neighborhood. "All this has led to the exceptional fragility of Europe which, if it can't think of itself as a global power, will disappear, because it will take a hard knock," he said. — AFP

Airbnb to verify listings after deadly incident

WASHINGTON: Airbnb said Wednesday it would verify all seven million of its listings worldwide after a deadly shooting at one of its California homes fueled fresh safety concerns about the lodging platform. Chief executive and co-founder Brian Chesky said the home-sharing service decided on new steps as part of an effort to instill more trust in Airbnb. "By December 15, 2020, every home and every host on Airbnb will be reviewed with the objective of 100 percent verification," he said in an email to employees.

"We believe that trust on the Internet begins with verifying the accuracy of the information on Internet platforms, and we believe that this is an important step for our industry." He said that addresses, photos and other details on Airbnb listings will be verified for accuracy and that "those that meet our high expectations will be clearly labeled." The move is aimed at weeding out what Chesky called "bad actors," and referenced the case of a so-called "party house" in Orinda, California.

Five people were killed and others wounded in a Thursday night shooting at the residence, which had been rented on the platform. More than 100 people were present at the event, which was announced on social media.

'Innovating on trust'

"We are not infallible," Chesky said in a Twitter message. "We are a platform built on a foundation of trust. We need to continue innovating on trust to make it harder for the bad actors. The trust of our community is our top priority." He said the platform would set up a staffed 24/7 "neighbor hotline" where anyone could call for safety concerns, and had asked for consulting from two former police chiefs—Charles Ramsey, who headed departments in Philadelphia and Washington DC, and Ronald Davis, who was head of the police in East Palo Alto.

He said that starting next month, Airbnb would rebook customers or issue refunds "if upon checking into a listing it does not meet our accuracy standards". He added: "Most hosts do a great job, but guests need to feel like Airbnb has their back, and we believe this commitment is a necessary step in giving guests peace of mind." To address unauthorized house parties, Chesky said Airbnb would expand "manual screening of high-risk reservations flagged by our risk detection models" to North America and globally. — AFP

Facebook controlling competitors with user data: Report

SAN FRANCISCO: Leaked documents from a civil suit against Facebook show how the social network aimed to employ user data as a tool for bargaining and to manipulate competitors, NBC News reported on Wednesday. Some 7,000 pages of documents reveal how Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg and his team harnessed users' personal information to reward partners by giving them preferential data, while depriving rivals of the same sort of information, it reported.

NBC said the emails, notes and other documents dated as far back as 2011 and were supposed to be kept out of the public eye pending the civil case in California. They show, for example, how Amazon received special data access after purchasing advertising on Facebook, while an app called MessageMe was denied data after growing so large it became a competitor, NBC reported.

While acting out of self-motivation, Facebook planned to portray the moves as protective of user privacy, the documents showed. The lawsuit was filed by a now defunct startup called Six4Three, which created a failed app called Pikinis. Through the app users could find Facebook pictures of people in bathing suits, but in order to work, the app's software had to be able to access the data of Facebook users and their friends.

The suit accuses Facebook of abusing its power over user data, although most of the documents filed in the case have been sealed by a judge at Facebook's request. Facebook has been adamant that "documents Six4Three gathered for this baseless case are only



MENLO PARK, California: In this file photo taken on Oct 23, 2019, a Facebook employee walks by a sign displaying the "like" sign at Facebook's corporate headquarters campus. —AFP

part of the story and are presented in a way that is very misleading without additional context."

The social network contends that the suit by Six4Three is aimed at compelling it to provide the kind of data access that was taken advantage of in the Cambridge Analytica privacy scandal. Up to 87 million users potentially had their data hijacked by political consulting group Cambridge Analytica, which was working for Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. Facebook has modified its data sharing app policies since then.

Meanwhile a British parliamentary committee investigating whether Facebook was being used to manipulate election results published 250 pages of internal Facebook documents from the Six4Three civil suit late last year. The committee said emails showed the social media giant offered Netflix and other popular apps preferential access to people's data even after it had tightened its privacy rules. — AFP

International

Friday, November 8, 2019

Three charged in US with spying on Twitter users

Two suspects remain at large, one arrested

SAN FRANCISCO: Two former Twitter employees and a third man were charged in San Francisco Federal Court Wednesday with spying on Twitter users, the US Justice Department announced. The two Saudis and one US citizen allegedly worked together to unmask the ownership details behind dissident Twitter accounts on behalf of the government in Riyadh, the department said.

According to a court filing, they were guided by an unnamed Saudi official who worked for someone prosecutors designated "Royal Family Member-1". Those charged were former Twitter employees Ali Alzabarah and Ahmad Abouammo, along with Ahmed Almutairi, a marketing official.

"The criminal complaint unsealed today alleges that Saudi agents mined Twitter's internal systems for personal information about known Saudi critics and thousands of other Twitter users," said US Attorney David Anderson. "US law protects US companies from such an unlawful foreign intrusion. We will not allow US companies or US technology to become tools of foreign repression in violation of US law," he said in a statement.

The indictment points an unusually public finger at Saudi Arabia, a US ally that maintains warm ties with President Donald Trump. Saudi Arabia has not yet publicly remarked on the complaint. King Salman met with the director of the US Central Intelligence Agency, Gina Haspel, in the capital Riyadh, the state news

agency said yesterday. It gave no details on the topics discussed at the meeting, which was also attended by the Saudi foreign and interior ministers and the US ambassador.

Targeting regime critics

Abouammo, 41, an American, and Saudi national Alzabarah, 35, were recruited in 2014-2015 to use their positions in Twitter to gain access to private information related to the accounts of critics of Riyadh, the indictment says. Saudi citizen Almutairi, 30, was a critical go-between who arranged contacts between the two others and the unnamed Saudi official. They appeared to have been cultivated by a senior Saudi official, identified by the Washington Post as Bader Al-Asaker. The indictment said Almutairi controlled a social media marketing company that did work for a royal charity and members of the royal family, "including Royal Family Member-1".

Abouammo was paid over \$300,000 and received a Hublot watch worth more than \$20,000 for his work. Abouammo later claimed the watch was worth \$35,000 in communications with prospective buyers on Craigslist.org. Alzabarah's payment was not detailed, but the filing said he quickly fled the US with his family in Dec 2015 after Twitter management confronted him about his unauthorized accessing of user information for some 6,000 Twitter accounts, including accounts of known prominent dissidents and



WASHINGTON: In this photo taken on July 10, 2019, the Twitter logo is seen on a phone. — AFP

royal family critics.

All three are charged with acting as illegal agents of a foreign government, a charge that can indicate both illegal lobbying and espionage. Abouammo was also charged with destroying, altering, or falsifying records related to a federal investigation. "These individuals are charged with targeting and obtaining private data from dissidents and known critics, under the direction and control of the govern-

ment of Saudi Arabia," said FBI Special Agent John Bennett. "The FBI will not stand by and allow foreign governments to illegally exploit private user information from US companies."

The Justice Department said Abouammo was arrested on Tuesday in Seattle, Washington, but that both Alzabarah and Almutairi remain at large and are believed to be in Saudi Arabia. Federal warrants have been issued for the arrest of — Agencies

Pompeo retraces army service past at 'Little Berlin'

MOEDLAREUTH, Germany: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo retraced his steps yesterday in the eastern German village of Moedlareuth, once a divided "Little Berlin" where he served as a young army officer. America's top diplomat is on a two-day tour of Germany ahead of the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. He is to meet with demonstrators from the 1989 peaceful revolution that brought the communist regime down, and give a speech in the German capital.

On the ground in Moedlareuth, Pompeo was greeted by Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, with whom he visited the remains of a 3.3-m tall concrete wall that had slashed a 700-metre scar through the town from 1966 to 1989. From 1986, Pompeo was one of 300,000 US soldiers stationed in Europe at the height of the Cold War, compared with around 30,000 today. The young US Army lieutenant stood opposite watchtowers and barbed wire that had blocked entry into the communist German Democratic Republic (GDR). "Nowhere else was the tragedy of Germany's division as visible as here," local museum director Robert Lebegern told AFP.

Tightly controlled

Moedlareuth lies on a small brook that divides modern-day Bavaria and Thuringia states, but which became an international border when the two Germans - the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany - were founded in 1949. As



HOF, Germany: German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (left) and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pose next to a memorial stone during a visit at the German village of Moedlareuth yesterday. — AFP

around western exclave Berlin, the GDR placed barbed wire, minefields and guns triggered by tripwires along its hundreds of kilometres of border with the West, which were also intensively patrolled.

In the village, the GDR first erected a fence in 1952, followed more than a decade later by the wall. Recalling the brutal overnight partition of the capital, the oppressive border infrastructure earned the village the nickname of "Little Berlin". Since reunification in 1990, the fortifications have become a tourist attraction that draw 70,000 visitors per year. Still today, the village has two mayors, two telephone and postal codes, and distinct German dialects. — AFP

Texas executes ex-leader of white supremacist gang

WASHINGTON: Texas on Wednesday executed a former leader of a white supremacist gang for the 2002 murder of a woman near El Paso. Justen Hall, 38, was pronounced dead at 6:32 pm (0032 GMT) at Texas's Huntsville penitentiary. Hall was sentenced to death in 2005 for strangling to death a 29 year-old woman outside El Paso, then burying the body in the desert in nearby New Mexico. According to the prosecution, Hall killed the woman because she had threatened to reveal the existence of an illegal drug manufacturing laboratory run by Hall's gang, the "Aryan Circle."

Hall's attorneys lodged several appeals in an attempt to save his life, arguing that their client suffered mental problems and demanding additional DNA tests. In 2017, Hall himself asked them to abandon this effort, saying that he was "ready" to accept his fate. According to local media, in 2016 Hall described himself as a "rabid dog" who deserved to be shot. Nevertheless, his lawyers recently tried to plead his case, saying that Hall's refusal to defend himself proved a deterioration of his mental health. — AFP



Justen Hall

International

In Venezuela, special police force wreaks havoc in slums

FAES used to 'instill fear, maintain social control'

CARACAS: Miriam Gamarra, a 39-year-old bank employee living in a tough part of Caracas, remembers feeling an ache in her chest when she heard the gunshots in the distance as she was heading to work. "Lord, please take care of my son," she murmured to herself. But her prayers were in vain. Her 21-year-old son Luis Ariza was killed that May night by a special Venezuelan police force that has sown fear in the capital's slums. Gamarra is not alone in her heartache. Ariza is one of hundreds of residents who have been killed by the Special Action Forces (FAES) in what their loved ones and advocacy groups have told AFP were "executions". These accusations have made it all the way to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet.

After meeting with relatives of victims in June in Caracas, Bachelet called for the disbanding of the FAES, an elite unit created in 2017 by Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro to "fight crime". Since 2018, the non-governmental human rights group Cofavic has recorded 831 "executions" carried out by FAES members, based on information from relatives and its own observations on the ground.

On May 13, the FAES entered the home that Ariza shared with his wife and two children, his

family says. As his wife and children were blockaded in the house, agents took him away. He was unarmed, relatives say. Ariza's wife says when she was finally able to leave her home, she found his dead body in the street.

But the FAES tells an entirely different story. In an internal report obtained by AFP, the special forces say the young man was in the street carrying a weapon when an agent ordered him to stop and he failed to comply. Ariza then fired shots at a police station, which triggered a furious gun battle with officers in which he was fatally wounded. The FAES says Ariza was suspected of involvement in a homicide, but the internal report also says he was not the subject of an arrest warrant, nor was his weapon flagged in any way.

Two years earlier, he had spent three months in preventive detention in connection with anti-Maduro protests. It was roughly the same time that Maduro decided to create the FAES. The special forces were tasked with "protecting the people from crime and terrorist gangs" that Maduro said were linked to the opposition. It was not long before complaints and accusations of FAES wrongdoing began to pour in.

Bachelet, non-governmental organizations and relatives of the dead say the special forces



CARACAS: A member of the Special Actions Forces (FAES) stands guard on the heights of the 70's neighborhood during a police operation on April 1, 2019. — AFP

are acting beyond the law, primarily in poor urban areas. They stand accused of shooting young men at point-blank range, inventing gun battles to cover their tracks, hiding autopsy reports and preventing relatives from seeing any official files. In a report published in July, Bachelet said she suspected that the Venezuelan authorities were using the FAES and other se-

curity forces "as an instrument to instill fear in the population and to maintain social control".

Carmen Arroyo's only son Cristian Charris was slain in Sept 2018. "Given that the government knows it's not popular in poor areas, it's sending these assassins to intimidate people and make sure no one rises up to contest the violations of our rights," she says. —AFP

Santiago protests spread to wealthy neighborhoods

SANTIAGO: Demonstrations in Chile against the government of President Sebastian Pinera spread into Santiago's wealthiest neighborhoods Wednesday, tainting previously untouched enclaves with violence amid the country's deadly protests. Hundreds of demonstrators marched towards the Costanera Center, South America's largest shopping mall and a complex that includes the region's tallest building - a symbol of the economic expansion that has made Chile one of the region's most stable countries.

A phalanx of riot police stopped the demonstrators, firing water cannons and launching tear gas to disperse the crowds that gathered at the mall. The demonstrations then spilled into the wealthy Providencia neighborhood, the hub of Chile's financial sector, where protesters lit fires, battled with police, looted a pharmacy and at least two banks, and damaged government buildings. "We are living a level of violence and destruction never seen before," said Providencia mayor Evelyn Matthei.

Social media messages also called for a rally at the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, located in the upmarket Vitacura district. "The time has come to get to the east," said one message, indicating the upscale areas of the capital. "People are



SANTIAGO: Demonstrators clash with riot police during a protest against the government's economic policies in the surroundings of La Moneda presidential palace on Thursday. — AFP

rather sad and scared about how the country can return to normalcy," said Andrea Ortega, a 43-year-old lawyer who left her office early to look after her children, fearing rioting in an area hitherto unscathed by the violence.

Separately in Renca, a working-class neighborhood in northern Santiago, a small crowd attacked a police station leaving five officers injured. And truckers and car drivers blocked highways protesting the increase in road tolls.

Demonstrations in Chile, which have already left 20 people dead, have been growing smaller but more violent in recent days. At the same time, complaints about excessive force by police and soldiers have also been on the rise and include charges that police killed, tortured and sexually assaulted civilians during the weeks of protests. Prosecutors say five of the 20 deaths recorded in the protests against high living costs were suspected to have been at the hands of security forces. —AFP

Remains exhumed of victims of El Salvador civil war

SAN SALVADOR: An international team of forensic experts on Wednesday exhumed the remains of 11 people killed by soldiers during the infamous El Mozote massacre in El Salvador's 1980-1992 civil war. The new find will be part of a case against soldiers of the Atlacatl Battalion who carried out the December 1981 massacre that killed - according to official figures - 986 people, including 558 children, on suspicion of aiding leftist guerillas.

The bones are being dug up in a remote cemetery in the rural village of Yancolo, some 170 km northeast of the capital San Salvador. The national prosecutor's office confirmed on Twitter that "crimes that took place during the armed conflict" were being investigated. The forensic team believes the find includes the remains of five children, one of them a three day-old infant, killed when soldiers tossed a hand grenade inside a nearby cave where people were hiding.

"Twenty people were inside the cave, 12 died instantly in the explosion and eight managed to survive," said an attorney for Wilfredo Medrano, one of the survivors. The blast survivors returned to the cave in February 1994 to retrieve the bones and bury them in a mass grave in Yancolo, a representative of the prosecutor's office



CACAOPERA, El Salvador: Human remains are seen as a team of international forensic experts work on their exhumation at Yancolo hamlet on Tuesday. — AFP

on site told AFP. Since the bones are mixed up in the mass grave, experts need take them to a laboratory to determine "the cause and manner of death," said Silvana Turner, an Argentine forensic anthropologist working with the team.

In 2012, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights blamed the Salvadoran government for the Mozote massacre and ordered reparations. Four years later, El Salvador's Supreme Court ruled that a blanket amnesty for people accused of war crimes during the conflict was unconstitutional. Two of the battalion's senior officers died during the war, but charges were brought against 18 soldiers accused of being involved in the massacre. Since then, two have died, but another was added to the case. More than 75,000 people were killed or went missing during El Salvador's civil war, which ended in Jan 1992. —AFP

International

Mass surveillance fears as India readies facial recognition system

Use in a criminal justice system risks greater abuse

NEW DELHI: As India prepares to install a nationwide facial recognition system in an effort to catch criminals and find missing children, human rights and technology experts yesterday warned of the risks to privacy from increased surveillance. Use of the camera technology is an effort in “modernizing the police force, information gathering, criminal identification, verification”, according to India’s national crime bureau. Likely to be among the world’s biggest facial recognition systems, the government contract is due to be awarded today.

But there is little information on where it will be deployed, what the data will be used for and how data storage will be regulated, said Apar Gupta, executive director of non-profit Internet Freedom Foundation. “It is a mass surveillance system that gathers data in public places without there being an underlying cause to do so,” he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. “Without a data protection law and an elec-

tronic surveillance framework, it can lead to social policing and control,” he said. A spokesman for India’s home ministry did not return calls seeking comment.

Worldwide, the rise of cloud computing and artificial intelligence technologies have popularized the use of facial recognition for a range of applications from tracking criminals to catching truant students. There is a growing backlash however, and in San Francisco authorities banned the use of facial recognition technology by city personnel, and “anti-surveillance fashion” is becoming popular.

Facial recognition technology was launched in a few Indian airports in July, and Delhi police last year said they had identified nearly 3,000 missing children in just days during a trial. But technology site Comparitech, which ranked the Indian cities of Delhi and Chennai among the world’s most surveilled cities in a recent report,

said it had found “little correlation between the number of public CCTV cameras and crime or safety”.

Indian authorities have said facial recognition technology is needed to bolster a severely under-policed country. There are 144 police officers for every 100,000 citizens, among the lowest ratios in the world, according to the United Nations. The technology has been shown to be inaccurate in identifying darker-skinned women, those from ethnic minorities, and transgender people.

So its use in a criminal justice system where vulnerable groups such as indigenous people and minorities are over-represented risks greater abuse, said Vidushi Marda, a lawyer and artificial intelligence researcher at Article 19, a Britain-based human rights organization. “The use of facial recognition provides a veneer of technological objectivity without delivering on its promise, and institutionalizes

systemic discrimination,” she said. “Being watched will become synonymous with being safe, only because of a constant, perpetual curfew on individual autonomy. This risks further entrenching marginalization and discrimination of vulnerable sections.”

India’s Supreme Court, in a landmark ruling in 2017 on the national biometric identity card program Aadhaar, said individual privacy is a fundamental right, amid concerns over data breaches and the card’s mandated use for services. Yet the ruling has not checked the rollout of facial recognition technology, or a proposal to link Aadhaar with social media accounts, said Gupta. “There is a perceptible rise in national security being a central premise for policy design. But national security cannot be the reason to restrict rights,” he said. “It is very worrying that technology is being used as an instrument of power by the state rather than as an instrument to empower citizens.” — Reuters

Lanka PM set to lose job after presidential vote

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka’s Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe looks set to lose his job after next week’s presidential election, with the two leading candidates declaring yesterday they will dump him. Main opposition candidate Gotabhaya Rajapakse and Sajith Premadasa from Wickremesinghe’s ruling United National Party (UNP) are in a close race ahead of the November 16 polls and both said they would appoint their own PMs if they win. “I will appoint a new prime minister who can command the majority of parliament,” Premadasa, 52, said in a televised address yesterday.

His remarks appeared to seal the fate of Wickremesinghe, 70, who is nominally the leader of the UNP but faces a revolt within the ranks of the party hierarchy. Rajapakse earlier also vowed to replace Wickremesinghe - who has been plagued by accusations of cronyism and incompetence amid his failure to prosecute politicians accused of corruption - with his brother Mahinda. Rajapakse is a former secretary to the defense ministry between 2005 and 2015 when his brother was president.

Under a recent constitutional amendment, the office of prime minister was given extensive powers to decide on cabinet appointments and to run the day-to-day affairs of the government. Mahinda Rajapakse failed to win office for the third term in 2015 and a new constitutional provision on term limits bars him from running for the presidency again. Premadasa, the son of president Ranasinghe Premadasa who was assassinated by suspected Tamil Tiger rebels in 1993, has called for a cleanup of his own party and vowed to purge key ministers of Wickremesinghe’s government. Some 15.9 million people are eligible to vote in next week’s election. — AFP

Scores of Indian farmers arrested over polluting fires

NEW DELHI: More than 80 farmers have been arrested in northern India for starting fires that contributed to the recent pollution crisis in New Delhi and other cities, officials said yesterday. Each winter the post-harvest burning of crop stubble covers swaths of the region in toxic smog, which combines with car and factory emissions to turn Delhi into the world’s most polluted capital. India’s top court this week ordered a crackdown on illegal stubble-burning, but the fires continued across Punjab and Haryana states - with many started at night to try and avoid detection.

A senior Punjab police officer said more than 17,000 farm fires had been reported in the state in the past three days, with 4,741 on Wednesday alone. “More than 84 people have been arrested for violating the law. Cases have been filed against 174 farmers,” the officer told AFP. Punjab and Haryana make up a key agricultural region that produces nearly 18 million tons of rice each year. This, in turn, creates nearly 20 million tons of crop stubble - most of which is burnt.

Authorities said more than 48,000 farm fires had been reported in the two states since late September - a dramatic increase from 30,000 cases in 2018. The Supreme Court ordered a complete stop to the fires on Monday and on Wednesday slammed local governments for not taking action, instructing them to pay hard-up farmers to stop burning the stubble. “You just want to sit in your ivory towers and rule. You are not bothered and are letting the people die,” said Justice Arun Mishra.

Pollution levels in the Indian capital remained bad yesterday, four days after one of its worst pollution attacks in several years during which schools were closed and a public health emergency declared. Dirty air causes hundreds of thousands of premature deaths in Indian cities each year, according to medical studies. Tiny particles from the fires, which can enter the bloodstream and penetrate the lungs and heart, get blown over New Delhi. In the winter, cooler temperatures prevent pollutants from dispersing, while smoke from millions of Diwali firecrackers also help turn the capital’s skies a putrid yellow.



NEW DELHI: The Indian national flag is seen covered in thick smog yesterday. — AFP

Meanwhile, in Pakistan, air pollution forced the closure of thousands of schools in Lahore, with a local environment agency spokesman blaming the poisonous haze on crop-burning in India. Lahore, home to at least six million people, is Pakistan’s second-largest city, and is less than an hour from the Indian border.

However Usman Buzdar, chief minister for Pakistan’s central Punjab province, said similar burning takes place in Pakistan, and his administration is tackling the problem. “Administration is already on high alert and have tasked them to escalate actions against crop burning and other factors that contribute to smog,” he said. Twitter user Ammar Ali Jan wrote that the city was unbearable. “The smog is impossible to escape. We destroyed our water resources. Now our air is hazardous. We have turned elements of life into vehicles of death,” said Jan. — AFP

International

All 39 victims found dead in UK truck confirmed as Vietnamese

Vietnam PM says tragedy has caused 'endless pain'

LONDON: All 39 bodies found in a refrigerated truck outside London last month have now been identified as citizens of Vietnam, officials said yesterday. Vietnam's Ministry of Public Security said it was now working to repatriate the 31 men and eight women discovered dead in the back of the truck on Oct 23. The tragic case has exposed the deadly risks of migration to Europe, with Vietnamese nationals among the many who try to reach the continent illicitly on dangerous journeys.

Nguyen Dinh Gia, the father of Nguyen Dinh Luong, told AFP yesterday that officials had called him the previous day to confirm his son was among the victims. "Our hope now is the body of my son will be brought home soon," he said. In a letter to the victims' families obtained by AFP, Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc said the tragedy had caused them and Vietnamese people around the world

"endless pain".

He vowed his government would work with British officials "to soon bring the victims back to the homeland, their families and their loved ones".

Essex Police, the local force investigating the gruesome discovery, confirmed a coroner had now formally identified all the victims and their families had been informed. "This is an important step in the investigation and enables us to work with our Vietnamese police colleagues to support the families of those victims," Assistant Chief Constable Tim Smith said.

The bodies were found in the early hours of Oct 23 on a truck that had just entered Britain on a ferry from Belgium. Essex Police had initially said the victims were believed to be Chinese nationals, until several Vietnamese families came forward to say they feared their relatives were on board.

Vietnam's Ministry of Public Security

said they hailed from six provinces - Hai Phong, Hai Duong, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh and Thua Thien Hue - which are common feeders for illegal emigration. Several families of the suspected victims told AFP their relatives were seeking better lives abroad, and they were now worried about how to repay thousands of dollars of debt their children took on for the ill-fated trip.

Vietnamese authorities have detained 11 people in connection with the deaths for helping people travel abroad with the intention of staying overseas illegally. None have been formally charged. Meanwhile police in Britain have charged the 25-year-old driver of the refrigerated lorry, who comes from Northern Ireland, with manslaughter, money laundering and conspiracy to assist unlawful immigration. They are also in the process of extraditing another suspect from Ireland and searching for others potentially involved. — AFP

News in brief

Philippine ferry capsizes

MANILA: Philippine authorities rescued dozens of people yesterday after a ferry sank in rough seas, but search teams were still working to confirm all aboard were accounted for, the coast guard said. Rescuers plucked 59 people from waters off the central island of Cebu, while another three swam to shore after the vessel took on water and capsized. The manifest showed 60 crew and passengers aboard, the coast guard said, however it is not clear if the list was complete. Manifests in the Philippines are often not a full accounting because passengers may stow away or captains can exceed the official capacity of their vessel. The vessel, Siargao Princess, was plying a route near Cebu when its crew radioed for help, saying the boat was in trouble. — AFP

S'pore hotels use face recognition

SINGAPORE: Tourists visiting Singapore can now check in at some hotels using facial recognition technology under a pilot program that could cut waiting times and help tackle a labor crunch. Under the pilot launched Wednesday, visitors will not need to wait to be checked in by hotel staff but can instead use a phone app fitted with facial recognition technology or machines which scan their passports. The data from the scan is sent to immigration authorities for checks after which the visitor is issued a room key, said the Singapore Tourism Board and Hotel Association, which announced the initiative this week. — AFP

Seoul deports N Korean killers

SEOUL: South Korea said yesterday it expelled two North Korean men after learning they murdered 16 crew members on their fishing boat before fleeing to the South. The pair, both in their 20s, were questioned by South Korean authorities after being found on Saturday near the maritime border in the East Sea, also known as the Sea of Japan. But the investigation concluded that the men had killed 16 fellow fishermen on their boat and then fled to South Korea, Seoul's unification ministry said. — AFP

N Korea slams Japan's Abe

SEOUL: North Korea slammed Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe yesterday and warned he will never set foot in Pyongyang after he condemned the North's latest weapons test. Pyongyang last week tested what it called "super-large multiple rocket launchers" but Japan said they were likely ballistic missiles that violated UN sanctions, sparking a colorful personal diatribe against Abe. "Abe, prime minister of Japan, is an idiot and villain," said Song Il Ho, ambassador of the North's foreign ministry, in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency. The Japanese prime minister was "a deformed child" and "an underwit", Song said, accusing Abe of being unable to tell the difference between multiple rocket launchers and missiles. — AFP

Malaysia detains Cambodian opposition figure

KUALA LUMPUR: A senior Cambodian opposition figure was detained in Malaysia as she tried to fly home for the planned return of her exiled party leader, authorities said yesterday, in another win for strongman Hun Sen. Members of the opposition are trying to get back to Cambodia to support their leader, Sam Rainsy, who wants to make a dramatic end to his exile this weekend to mark Cambodian Independence Day.

But Hun Sen, an authoritarian leader who has ruled Cambodia since 1985, has vowed not to allow Rainsy to return, and sought support from regional neighbors to thwart the opposition's plans. Mu Sochua, deputy leader of Rainsy's Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), was held at Kuala Lumpur airport late Wednesday, Malaysia's government said.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, however, indicated that she would not be deported to Cambodia but sent to another country, without saying where. The former women's minister had flown in from neighboring Indonesia, where the Cambodian ambassador had stormed a press conference she was giving and attempted to get the event cancelled.

Phil Robertson, Human Rights Watch deputy director for Asia, told AFP that the 65-year-old's detention was "absolutely ludicrous and unacceptable". "She's done nothing wrong and should be immediately released, and allowed to undertake the consultations she planned with the Malaysia government and civil society groups," he said. "Malaysia should stand up to Cambodia's bullying of its regional neighbors to do Phnom Penh's dirty work in cracking down against the opposition CNRP exiles."

In Cambodia, Hun Sen said Sochua had been stopped in Malaysia because authorities were upholding a tenet of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations not to interfere in each other's affairs. "They cooperate with Cambodia because we are members of ASEAN who don't interfere in each other's internal affairs." Malaysian officials said they had received a request from Cambodia to send back some people, but Mahathir suggested Sochua would not be returned to her home nation, adding that authorities were "trying to find any



PARIS: Cambodian opponent in exile Sam Rainsy holds a Cambodian flag surrounded by supporters at Roissy-Charles de Gaulle airport yesterday during his failed attempt to board a plane for Bangkok. — AFP

country that can take her".

Asked earlier about the matter, Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah also suggested Malaysia would not bend to Cambodia's request: "We make our own decisions, not because of any requests or any kind of interference from foreign countries." Earlier this week two other Cambodian opposition activists were arrested in Malaysia as they sought to fly to Thailand, but the country's human rights commission says they will be processed by the UN refugee agency and then resettled in another country.

Rainsy has lived in France since 2015 to avoid jail in Cambodia for convictions he says are politically motivated. He promised to return for Saturday's Independence Day, and posted images of his ticket from Paris to Thailand, which neighbors Cambodia and would be a transit stop. Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha said this week, however, that Rainsy would not be allowed to transit through the kingdom. — AFP



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French film icon Catherine Deneuve suffers stroke

Let it go? Disney thaws 'Frozen' for blockbuster sequel

Six years ago, "Frozen" shattered box office records, melted the hearts of youngsters and spawned a franchise so popular Disney was never likely to let it go. And so Queen Elsa and Princess Anna return this month in "Frozen II"—a sequel its creators promise will be "even bigger and more epic," with its world premiere taking place in Los Angeles Thursday night.

Inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's "The Snow Queen," the original followed Anna on her journey to find sister Elsa, whose hard-to-control icy powers had trapped their kingdom in eternal winter. The sequel, out November 22, explores the royal family's backstory and promises to answer fans' questions, including the source of Elsa's formidable magic. "That one question was just the beginning though," returning director Jennifer Lee told Disney's recent D23 fan convention.

"Why was Anna born the way she was? Where were their parents really going when that ship went down? Is there really such a thing as happily ever after?" After a prologue set in the past, "Frozen II" sees a mysterious voice return to haunt grown-up Elsa. It urges her to leave her happy castle and embark upon a new, perilous quest to a far-away enchanted forest. The first "Frozen" (2013) reigned as the top-grossing animated film of all time, taking nearly \$1.3 bn worldwide, until this year's "Lion King" remake came along to steal its crown. "It became an absolute phenomenon—the music, the characters, the stories really resonated," said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst with Comscore.

At least \$1 billion

The movie's success was all the more remarkable as, unlike Disney's highly lucrative series of "live-action" remakes of classic animations, "Frozen" was an entirely new brand. "It is a big deal—it's great to have your archive, to reboot your beloved Disney" stories, said Dergarabedian. "But it's another thing to create something out of whole cloth, and have it now become a film that's canonized within Disney as one of their greatest franchises of all time."

"Frozen" has since spawned a Broadway musical, theme park rides and merchandise from toy figures to books and video games. In a show of the franchise's importance to Disney, "Frozen" creator Lee was promoted to chief creative officer of Walt Disney Animation Studios following John Lasseter's 2018 exit amid allegations of sexual misconduct. The sequel sees stars Kristen Bell and Idina Menzel—who sang Oscar-winning showstopper "Let It Go"—return, as do the original songwriters.

Joining the starry voice cast are Sterling K Brown ("This Is Us") as a soldier trapped in the forest, and Evan Rachel Wood ("Westworld") as the princesses' mother, shown in flashbacks. The excitement surrounding the sequel "will catapult it to a potentially \$100m-plus opening weekend" in North American theaters, predicted Dergarabedian. "At this point, it would be almost unthinkable that it wouldn't earn at least \$1 billion worldwide." — AFP



In this file photo French actress and President of the Jury Catherine Deneuve poses on the red carpet as she arrives to take part in the opening ceremony of the 45th Deauville US Film Festival, in Deauville. — AFP

golden age for French film, cinema greats from Bunuel to Truffaut, Demy and Polanski queued up to work with her. She caused a scandal in 1966 by playing a bored middle-class housewife who becomes a prostitute in her spare time in "Belle de Jour". Five years later she made global headlines again by signing a petition with 342 other French women artists and intellectuals

The movie premiered at Cannes in France in May and has since bagged awards at film festivals around the world, including Chicago, Sarajevo and Odessa, with Sweden selecting it as its official entry for the Oscars next year. But reception has been mixed in the ex-Soviet state of Georgia, where same sex relationships remain largely taboo and where dance is revered as part of the nation's heritage.

While tickets for the scheduled three days of screenings at a handful of cinemas in Tbilisi and the port city of Batumi sold out quickly, the influential Orthodox Church denounced the film as an attempt to undermine Christian values and legalize "sin". "We find it unacceptable to see such a movie in movie theatres," the Georgian Orthodox church said in a statement.

Earlier this week, ultra-nationalist groups and anti-LGBT+ campaigners threatened to disrupt showings and block filmgoers from watching what they described as "gay propaganda". Georgia has witnessed a cultural clash between liberal forces and religious conservatives over the past decade, as it has modernized and introduced radical reforms.

It has passed anti-discrimination laws in an effort to move closer to the European Union, but homophobia remains widespread, LGBT+ rights groups have said. In July, a small group of LGBT+ campaigners held a short Pride march in Tbilisi - a first for Georgia - despite threats by homophobic groups to attack the gathering. In 2013, a rally against homophobia

who admitted they had undergone illegal abortions.

Deneuve, who is a fixture of Paris fashion week front rows, was also a muse for her friend the legendary fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent, who saw her as the model of the liberated modern woman. Despite her trailblazing support of abortion rights, Deneuve has frequently clashed with feminists, attacking the #MeToo movement last year as a "puritanical witch-hunt".

An open letter she signed with 100 other prominent French women defending men's right to "hit on" women caused uproar, although she later attempted to distance herself from some of its signatories. She has also been a staunch defender of her friend Polanski, who is wanted in the US after being convicted of raping a 13-year-old girl in the 1970s.

While her extraordinary good looks undoubtedly helped to propel her to fame, Deneuve widened her range as she grew older, turning out a line of memorable roles, including in Lars von Trier's "Dancer in the Dark". She also picked up rave reviews for her portrayal of a recovering alcoholic in "Place Vendome" (1998) and her role as a runaway grandmother in the 2013 road movie "On My Way". Her biographer Alexandre Fache said that over the years Deneuve has come to personify France, "its classical elegance, haughty charm and its innumerable paradoxes". — AFP

was broken up by a crowd of priests and thousands of protesters, forcing participants to flee - a confrontation that Akin said had inspired his movie.

Gvantsa Garmelia, marketing director at Tbilisi cinema chain Cavea, said the company, along with authorities, was taking extra security measures. "We knew this would be (a) polarizing topic, especially for radical parts of (the) Tbilisi population," she said. "We were hoping that our society had grown more tolerant and open to diversity." On Tuesday, a coalition of Georgian civil society groups called on the government to condemn the threats and deploy security forces outside movie theatres.

The interior minister urged everyone to abide by the law. "The Ministry of the Interior ensures the protection of public safety and law, as well as the freedom of expression," it said in a statement. "The police will act within their mandate and any violations will be immediately prevented." But activists said protests were only going to increase public interest in a movie that could help change perceptions.

"We are living in the 21st century, you cannot block movie screenings. Even if you block the cinema, there is internet," said Tbilisi Pride organizer Giorgi Tabagari. "The whole country is going to watch this". — Reuters

The veteran French actress Catherine Deneuve is in a Paris hospital after suffering a small stroke, her family told AFP Wednesday. The 76-year-old screen icon who made her name in such classic films as Luis Bunuel's "Belle de Jour", Roman Polanski's "Repulsion" and Jacques Demy's "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg", had a "very limited stroke which is reversible", her family said in a statement.

"Happily she has no loss of motor function, although she will of course have to rest for a while," said the statement, issued on behalf of her family by her agent Claire Blondel. Deneuve is arguably the most famous French actress of all time, having starred in more than 100 films, most recently alongside Juliette Binoche in Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda's "The Truth". The actress had been shooting her latest film, "De son vivant" ("In her/his Lifetime") when she was taken ill.

A source had earlier told the French television news channel BFMTV that Deneuve was suffering from "exhaustion after doing too much". As the news of her stroke broke, fans took to social media to post get-well-soon messages and photographs of the star in her prime. Known in her youth as the "ice queen" for her cool, perfect blonde looks, the director Francois Truffaut said Deneuve was so beautiful "that a cinema-goer finds his happiness simply by looking at her".

#MeToo controversy

Rising to stardom in the 1960s during a

Georgian far right threatens home premiere of hit gay movie

After winning accolades abroad, a Georgian movie about gay love is drawing threats at home, with far-right groups threatening to block Friday's premiere in the conservative Caucasian nation. "And Then We Danced", a joint Swedish, Georgian and French production, tells the story of Merab, a young dancer with a traditional Georgian ballet company who falls in love with fellow dancer and rival Irakli.

"The film is about finding your own place in a culture that doesn't want to accept you," director Levan Akin told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone, describing the picture as a "love letter" to Georgia and its traditions. "It is absurd that people who bought tickets need to be brave and risk getting harassed or even assaulted just for going to see a film," the 39-year-old who was born in Sweden to parents of Georgian descent added in a social media post.

Lifestyle | Movies

Superheroes vs cinema? Scorsese 'art' row splits Hollywood

Martin Scorsese's dismissal of Marvel films as "not cinema" has split Hollywood and moviegoers, sparking reactions from full-blooded support to accusations of hypocrisy and elitism. The Oscar-winning director penned a New York Times op-ed this week in which he argued superhero blockbusters lack the sense of risk, mystery and complex characters vital to the "art" of filmmaking. Marvel films are "market-researched, audience-tested, vetted, modified, revetted and remodified until they're ready for consumption," wrote the "Goodfellas" director.

"They lack something essential to cinema: the unifying vision of an individual artist," Scorsese added, fueling a controversy he initiated in a magazine interview last month. Fellow luminaries such as Francis Ford Coppola, Ken Loach and Fernando Meirelles have backed Scorsese, with Coppola even calling the record-breaking Marvel franchise "despicable." Top Hollywood film critics have also endorsed the auteur's position.

"Scorsese is basically a film climatologist, pointing out a sinister change we can all see with our own eyes," tweeted David Ehrlich, senior film critic of Indiewire. "Glad he said this, sad he had to," he added. But the rejection of film's highest-grossing franchise has provoked debate in Hollywood about what constitutes "art," and who gets to define it—not least because of Scorsese's admission that he has only "tried to watch a few of them."

"That's just not good enough—you can't dismiss an entire genre as uncinematic without watching them," said Tom Nunan, an Oscar-winning producer and professor at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) School of Theater, Film and Television. "People have always been vocal when they see change going on and it makes them uncomfortable," Nunan ("Crash," 2006) told AFP, pointing to the arrival of 1970s smash hits like "Jaws" and "Star Wars." "No-one has ever had the nerve to just dismiss the arena-blockbuster-worthy films-as uncinematic."

Knee-jerk reaction

Bob Iger, CEO of Marvel parent company Disney, last month described Scorsese's original comments as "so disrespectful to all the people that work on those films." "Anyone who has seen a Marvel film could not in all truth make that statement," Iger later told the BBC. Natalie Portman, who has appeared in several Marvel films and will star in the next "Thor" movie, told The Hollywood Reporter there was "not one way to make art."

But those rebuttals were nothing compared to the fury from Marvel's army of obsessive fans, who have taken to social media to vent their rage. Countless tweets have painted Scorsese as elitist, with many pointing to box office figures showing nine Marvel films in the 25 top-grossing movies of all time. Marvel lovers say that to fully enjoy all-time record holder "Avengers:



Martin Scorsese attends the SFFILM premiere of 'The Irishman' at the Castro Theatre in San Francisco, California. — AFP

Endgame," you need to have seen the preceding 21 movies, due to their interconnected storylines and characters.

"What's happened over time is there's a knee-jerk reaction of the old guard in Hollywood," said University of Southern California adjunct professor Gene Del Vecchio. "Filmmakers today have changed the artistry—they've expanded the artistry." Del Vecchio believes audience tastes have broadened to accept gen-

res like sci-fi and fantasy, while the establishment's have shrunk. "The artists of old aren't accepting that because they are used to a much more narrow definition of art," he told AFP. "They have been left behind as audiences and new filmmakers have gone forward."

Fueling the controversy is the release of "The Irishman," Scorsese's \$160 million-budget crime epic, by streaming giant Netflix. In his op-ed, Scorsese said the distinction between Marvel and "cinema" matters because superhero sequels are crowding auteurs out of movie theaters—the place "where the filmmaker intended her or his picture to be seen." "The Irishman" is currently in theaters, but only for a relatively miniscule 26-day window before it shifts to Netflix's small-screen streaming platform. "Endgame," by comparison, was still showing in picture houses four months after its release.

Netflix "allowed us to make 'The Irishman' the way we needed to," wrote Scorsese. "Would I like the picture to play on more big screens for longer periods of time? Of course I would," he added. But Nunan described Scorsese's position as "hypocritical at minimum." "When did he become the god of cinema? He's in business with the very company that many people accuse of destroying cinema." — AFP

James Dean 'cast' in new movie, 64 years after death

More than 60 years after his death, movie legend James Dean is set to return to the screen thanks to special effects that recreate his image from old footage

and photographs. Dean, who died aged 24 in a car crash in 1955, has been "posthumously cast" in Vietnam War action-drama "Finding Jack," the Hollywood Reporter said Wednesday. Production house Magic City Films obtained the rights to use Dean's image from his family for the screen adaption of Gareth Crocker's 2008 novel.

The book tells the story of US military dogs that were deployed and later abandoned in Vietnam. Dean became a global star in the 1950s, acting in "Rebel Without a Cause" and "East of Eden" before his life was cut short, though he has remained a celebrated youth

icon and an enduring heartthrob. His part in the new film is as Rogan, described as a secondary lead role.

"We searched high and low for the perfect character to portray the role of Rogan, which has some extreme complex character arcs, and after months of research, we decided on James Dean," said co-director Anton Ernst. "We feel very honored that his family supports us and will take every precaution to ensure that his legacy as one of the most epic film stars to date is kept firmly intact."

Dean's image will be created through computer-generated imagery (CGI) using archive footage and photos, while another actor will provide his voice. But the concept was not greeted with universal acclaim, with "Captain America" star Chris Evans tweeting: "This is awful. Maybe we can get a computer to paint us a new Picasso." "The complete lack of understanding here is shameful." The film, which is to go into production shortly, is due for release next November. Its makers hope the technology will be used to bring other deceased stars back on screen in new roles. — AFP

In this file photo Warner Brothers studio and US Postal Service officials watch as the James Dean stamp is unveiled on the Warner Brother's Midwestern Street studio lot 24 June in Burbank, California. — AFP

US rapper draws outrage with daughter 'virginity test'

US rapper T.I. has provoked outrage by revealing that he forces his 18-year-old daughter to undergo an annual "virginity test" at the gynecologist. The Grammy-winning musician told a podcast how he escorts Deyjah Harris to the doctor's office after each birthday to "check her hymen." "Usually like the day after the (birthday) party, she's enjoying her gifts, I put a sticky note on the door: 'Gyno. Tomorrow. 9:30,'" T.I., whose real name is Clifford Harris, told the presenters.

The trips began after Deyjah's sixteenth birthday, Harris said, and his daughter is required to sign a waiver allowing the doctor to share the "results" with him. The episode of the "Ladies Like Us" podcast was released Tuesday, but appeared to have been removed Wednesday afternoon after it went viral on social media. Social media users were quick to condemn Harris's behavior, and express concern for Deyjah. — AFP



Lifestyle | Music

Blind singer goes from streets to stardom in north Nigeria

Yahaya Makaho feels his way to the microphone before launching into a song for his new album at a recording studio in the northern Nigerian city of Kaduna. Blind since early childhood, the singer has overcome obstacles that often crush the dreams of disabled people in this region and risen from street beggar to star. In the last four years his songs and music videos have become hits among the roughly 80 million Hausa-speaking Nigerians and broader West Africa.

"I see myself as a superstar who has broken the jinx associated with physical disabilities," Makaho, 37, told AFP, wearing his trademark sunglasses. "I have punctured the stereotype people have that once you are blind all you can do is take a bowl and go begging for alms on the streets." Life can be tough in northern Nigeria, where poverty rates and unemployment are high—and for blind people the options are usually severely limited.

Makaho—a nickname meaning "blind man" in Hausa under which the singer is widely known—has had to come a long way to record his 370 singles and three albums. He lost his sight to measles at the age of three and was eventually sent away from



Yahaya Usman, popularly called Yahaya Makaho, a blind singer who rose from being a street beggar to a famously known singer in northern Nigeria, sings while wearing his trademark sunglasses in Kaduna, Nigeria.

his rural village to an Islamic school after doctors failed to heal him. There he was told that begging was his best chance to make ends meet after he tried his hand at small odd-jobs and petty trading.

"It hurt me to be always asking people for money. Begging kills the spirit and I decided to become a singer," he said. "I didn't know I had singing talent, I just wanted to do something meaningful with my life and the idea of being a singer just popped up."

Singer with a difference

It has not been a smooth rise since

that decision. Makaho faced years of discrimination and discouragement before a wealthy fan decided to fund a recording session in 2016. The singer has carved out a niche by focusing on the pressing problems that confront his fans in their daily lives. With his soft voice he croons his way through lyrics that tackle ills such as begging, drug abuse and corruption.

"Yahaya Makaho is a singer with a difference," said Ahmad Bello, a music critic and linguist at Bayero University in the city of Kano. "People love his songs not just for the beats but primarily for the messages embedded in them which touch on burning social issues." Dwelling on sensitive subjects has proved problematic on occasion. Makaho upset some in northern Nigeria's blind community after he wrote two singles that criticized the widespread practice of street begging—often the only means of earning an income for the visually impaired.

"They ostracized me for exposing the ills of begging in my two tracks and dubbed me an enemy," he said. Makaho managed to resolve the conflict and has now established a foundation that provides school tuition, uniforms and brail books to help disabled youths get an education. The



Yahaya Usman spends time with some of his fans while wearing his trademark sunglasses in Kaduna, Nigeria.— AFP photos

singer's fortune has soared and he now provides a comfortable life for his family. He has made the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia and hopes to be able to build a recording studio of his own.

And as he racks up hit after hit, his success is providing an inspiration for blind people in his home region struggling to fulfill their potential.

"I'm fascinated by his songs which I find very pleasing," said Hamisu Mohammed, who lives at a colony for blind people in Kaduna. "Whenever I listen to Yahaya's song being played on the radio I feel a sense of pride that he is one of us, the blind." — AFP

French musicals strike a chord in China

French musicals that were hits in their country have struck a chord and found a second life far from home—in China, where fans sing along with the foreign cast.

Western musicals have grown in popularity in China in recent years, with fans flocking to classic Broadway shows such as "Cats" and "The Phantom of the Opera". But French shows have given American musicals a run for their money, with "Notre-Dame de Paris", "Mozart, L'Opera Rock" and "The Red and the Black" filling theatres.

French musicals have gained fans in a Communist-ruled country that sees itself as the heir of the Paris Commune, a revolutionary government that briefly ruled the French capital in 1871. "Notre-Dame", which is based on Victor Hugo's classic novel, was one of the first French musicals to break into the Chinese market in 2002. The show sold out this summer after the iconic Parisian Cathedral's roof burned down.

Hugo and his social stance have found enduring popularity in China, and the French author was once included on a list of 100 foreign cultural figures President Xi Jinping found inspiring. "Les Miserables", Hugo's revolutionary-themed musical, was rewarded with a 20-minute standing ovation from the audience when it was performed in Shanghai last year, according to state media. "French shows are generally



Music director and composer William Rousseau

adaptations of masterpieces or historic events and they reflect the intensity of social struggle," said Wang Ruiqi, a student enthralled by "The Red and the Black".

The rock opera—adapted from French author Stendhal's classic novel about a young man's ambitions to climb the social ladder from modest beginnings in 19th century France—began its 50-show tour of China in October. Most theatres quickly sold out, with tickets going for 1,180 yuan (\$167) — higher than the minimum wage in some regions.

"There's a real musical culture in China, strangely more than in France," said Laurent Ban, who plays the bad guy, Monsieur Valenod, in the musical. Su Dewei, 45, and

his wife attended a show in Beijing. "I often watch musicals online," Su said, adding: "French musicals." In "The Red and the Black", he said, "there's humor and the stage decoration is beautiful."

Box office hits

China has a rich history of various forms of elaborate operas—though it went through a dark period when Chairman Mao Zedong's powerful wife, Jiang Qing, cracked down on the arts during the 1966–1976 Cultural Revolution. But music made a comeback as China opened up to the world following Mao's death. In total, 1.6 million people watched 2,460 musicals in China in 2018, bringing 428 million yuan in box office receipts—almost double the previous year, according to industry figures.

More than half of the shows that made their China debut last year were English-language musicals, while 35 percent were French, German and Austrian. "Cats" was the top seller, taking almost a quarter of the box office, followed by "Chicago". The best-selling French musical was "Mozart, L'Opera Rock" which came in fifth followed by "Romeo et Juliette". Yu Xinyue, who produces "The Red and the Black" in China, said the distinctive French touch is the ability to express emotions through musicals.—AFP



This photo shows fans cheering the actors at the end of the French Musical 'Le Rouge et le Noir - L'Opera Rock', at the Beijing Century Theatre in Beijing.



This photo shows a fan having her picture taken on life size pictures of actors from the French Musical 'Le Rouge et le Noir - L'Opera Rock', at the Beijing Century Theatre in Beijing. — AFP photos

Rebellious musical **'Les Miserables'** resonates in Venezuela

The angry, oppressed citizens are actors and their caps and overcoats evoke 19th-century France rather than modern-day Venezuela. But local people going to the theater to see a new performance of "Les Miserables" in Caracas could be forgiven for thinking this show was about them. In a country deep in economic crisis, getting the show on the stage was a heroic feat almost on the scale of the epic novel it is based on. "It was an act of rebellion," said producer Claudia Salazar.

The social injustice in Victor Hugo's 1862 novel and songs such as "Do You Hear the People Sing?" and "I Dreamed a Dream"—resonate with Venezuelans. "It's a real classic, so it could be adapted to any period," said one woman who came to see the show, Gabriela Oropeza, 43, a filmmaker. "But for us right now, it is marvelous to see a show like this," she said. "This is a momentous event for our country, with a magnificent message, very much suited to the social reality of the moment."

I Dreamed a Dream

Salazar said she fell in love with "Les Miserables" when she first saw it two decades ago on stage in New York. Many people said she was "crazy" when she applied for the rights to stage it in her native country. She spent three years securing sponsorship from private companies to finance the show. Then her team had to cast it, rehearse it and build giant sets—all in a country suffering shortages of cash, food and basic supplies.

After seeing the audience jump to their feet to applaud the cast, she observed: "The craziness is contagious." "We are resisting and trying to be rebels, faced with a situation that threatens to knock us down."

Castle on a Cloud

Founded in 1983, the Teresa Carreno state theater used to be considered one of the top theaters in Latin America. But artistic life there had all but ground to a halt in the crisis. Its seats are stained and maintaining the building is tricky. It has lately been more often used to host pro-government political gatherings than plays, dance or music. The state allowed the producers to use the theater for their "rebellious" show, however.

The producers fixed the air conditioning, but still had to reduce the capacity of the auditorium from 2,500 to 1,400 for it to function properly. "Les Miserables" has reminded the public what the theater used to be like before the country was stricken by poverty and high levels of violent crime. "This is like living in a normal country," said one audience member, Ricardo Skenazi, a 21-year-old student. "Just for a moment."

Hear the People Sing

Venezuelan audiences "identify deeply" with the show, said one of the members of the all-Venezuelan cast, baritone Gaspar Colon. He plays the part of Javert, a policeman chasing the tale's working-class hero, released convict Jean Valjean. At \$30 to \$65, tickets cost at least double the minimum salary in a country crippled by inflation. But for those who can afford it, a few hours in the theater offer a respite from their own economic and political crisis. "Horrendous things may be happening" in the country, said Colon. "But marvelous things are happening too."

At the Barricade

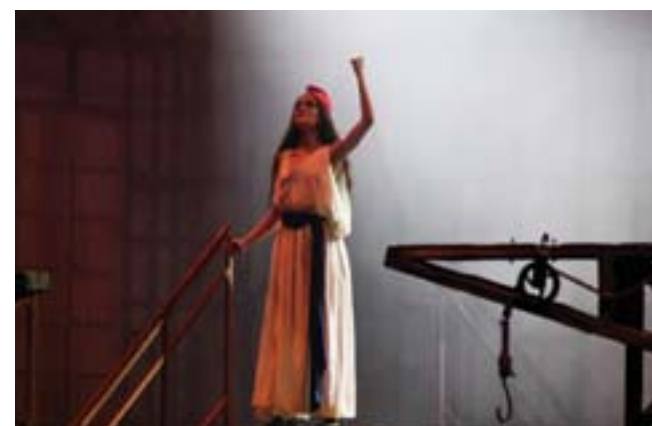
When angry students set up barricades on stage,



it is more than a historical curiosity as it might be for an audience in London or New York. It is a sight Venezuelans are used to from the recent years of street protests against President Nicolas Maduro. "The first rehearsals were enormously emotional. We were crying," said performer Mariana Gomez. She plays the part of Madame Thenardier, one of the hapless citizens caught up in the drama.

For her, the barricade scene, when the rebels of Paris are massacred, was the most painful of all. That was close to the bone in a country where some 200 people have been killed in protests since 2014. "That really moved us," Gomez said. "A lot of people are suffering." Yet the story of Valjean's redemption signals hope for a happy ending. In Victor Hugo's vision, Gomez said, "there is always hope." — AFP

Actors from the theater company CLAS Producciones perform during the presentation of a play based on Victor Hugo's 'Les Miserables' at the Teresa Carreno Theater in Caracas, Venezuela. — AFP photos





In bear country Romania, cohabitation grows strenuous

A bear is pictured next to her cubs at a bear observatory next to Tusnad touristic resort in central Romania. — AFP photos

When Maria Lacatus' son opened the barn door, it was already too late. "The bear had one of the pigs in its claws," the sobbing 86-year-old says. After losing a horse too a few days later, Lacatus now agrees with many of her neighbors in the northern Romanian village of Cusma that hunting the protected species is the only answer. The bear had fled through an opening it had made in some wooden planks, Lacatus says, unable to shake the vision of the animal she "almost bumped into".

She lives with her son, daughter-in-law—both take whatever daily work they can find—and their seven children in a house protected by a wooden fence opening onto a muddy yard. The pigs are a vital source of income. Romania has Europe's highest number of brown bears which have always been a common sight in Cusma, population about 600 and lying eight hours by road from the capital Bucharest. But residents say that the bears didn't use to venture into farms to take animals—around 15 cows and pigs have been killed by bears in the last two years, says deputy mayor Florin Griga.

In other parts of the country, humans have been attacked. In October alone, a bear killed a 47-year-old who was picking mushrooms and a 61-year-old died due to an attack while fishing. Thirty-two people were attacked, two of them fatally, in 2017 and 2018, according to government data. Authorities have suggested that communities erect electric fences and use specialized dogs to keep bears away.

But with very few exceptions, such as the central town of Baile Tusnad, the measures have not been carried out. In response to calls from some in rural areas, senators voted in September to allow brown bears to be hunted over the next five years, citing a problem of overpopulation. The controversial bill, which still needs approval by deputies, has mobilized several associations into trying to get it blocked.

Some 100,000 people have signed an online petition by the

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) asking MPs to reject the bill. EU member Romania also risks sanctions as the brown bear is among 1,200 species protected by the bloc's habitats directive.

Maintain a balance

"Man has always intervened to maintain a balance. Stopping this

intervention results in the bear population getting out of hand," says senator Tanczos Barna, a supporter of the draft law. Hunting bears in the nation of 20 million people, known for its large swaths of rural countryside with poor infrastructure, as well as forested mountains and hills, has periodically been permitted, including in the 1970s and again in the 1990s.



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Despite Romania joining the EU in 2007, hundreds of bears were killed for almost a decade under a system of waivers that stopped in 2016 due to a public outcry. Since then, the environment ministry has allowed so-called nuisance bears to be killed—those that bother villagers—and recommends culling only as a last resort. Some 140 bears were killed in 2017 but the tool is deemed inefficient and bureaucratic by hunters.

Romania is thought to have more than 6,000 brown bears spread across about 30 percent of the country and especially in the Carpathian mountains. But environmentalists say the government doesn't even come close to knowing the actual number. "The methodology used by the authorities has not changed over the last few decades," said Viorel Popescu, assistant professor at Ohio University in the United States who wrote a study on the overestimation of Romania's bear population.

"It consists of counting tracks on snow or mud." Csaba Domokos, a bear expert and researcher for nature preservation group Milvus, believes any hunting quota should be based on scientific studies. "You can't do population control through hunting when you don't know the population," he said.

Trophy hunting

The encounters with bears in villages are not proof that the population is getting out of hand, insists Silviu Chiriac, of Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe, who has been studying Romania's wildlife for 20 years. "What has changed is that now everybody has a mobile phone with a camera and internet. Anyone can take a picture of a bear track or of a specimen and post it on Facebook, giving the impression that Romania is besieged by animals," Chiriac told AFP.

Tourists feeding them, inappropriate refuse management, fields of crops extending near their habitat also affect the bears' behavior, according to environmentalists. Until 2016, hunting as a sport flourished, and bears were given "tons of apples, corn, concentrate (a mix of nutrients) and dead cows brought into the forest to habituate them for trophy hunting mostly," Popescu said, a claim disputed by hunters. "Their space and ecology changed; the whole system changed (in 2016) when we stopped feeding them," he added.

Scared

Cusma village is close to Dealu Negru, a fairy-tale-like hill which used to be the hunting ground of former communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. With their backyards going up into the forest, locals fear they are easy prey. Some say they are afraid to go out at night or let their children go to school in the daytime. Twice in the last few months authorities used the national alert system to warn residents directly on their phones about a bear's presence near Cusma. Domokos warns that villagers will ultimately take matters into their own hands and start poisoning the bears if the authorities do nothing. "Either way, this won't end well for the bears," Domokos said. — AFP

Maria Lacatusu, center, 86, recalls the bear attack inside the pigs shelter at her place in Cusma village.



A goat herder walks along with his big dog out of the fear of bear attack on the flock, in Cusma village.



Fisherman Ilir Neziri stands on his boat close to the shore of the Shkodra's lake, near the village of Zogaj.—AFP photos

Fishy tacks: poaching threatens Balkans' biggest lake

Weary after a day's work on the water, Albanian fisherman Ilir Neziri peers down with disappointment at his small haul of carp from Shkodra, the largest lake in southern Europe. "Big ones are becoming rarer and rarer," sighs the 47-year-old as his small dinghy powered by an old engine glides across Shkodra. Overfishing and poaching are to blame, according to Albanian fishermen and experts who have sounded the alarm over threats to the glistening body of water that straddles Albania and Montenegro.

A jewel of the Balkan region, the lake spans up to 530 square kilometers, two thirds of which lie in Montenegrin territory, where it is called Lake Skadar. The waters are renowned for their rich biodiversity but fish stocks have been shrinking, Albanians say, threatening the ecosystem and the livelihood of hundreds of fishermen. Neziri, who uses fishing rods, blames "illegal" electrofishing for his small catch of 10 kilograms, which earns him around 28 euros (\$30) at the market.

Poachers are using electrofishing in "both Albania and Montenegro to the detriment of honest fishermen," he says. In Albania, the outlawed method is punishable by up to 500,000 leke in fines and two years in prison. Montenegro also bans fishing with explosives and electricity with a fine of 20,000 euros and a prison sentence of up to three years.

Bleak picture

But poachers remain undeterred, according to locals. "All you have to do is come at night to see that the electric fishing continues," said Rasim Taraboshi, a 75-year-old Albanian fisherman who returned empty-handed after an entire night out on the lake. He explains how poachers stun the fish to death using electric currents that flow underwater through electrodes that are connected to generators or batteries. The fish are then scooped up after they float to the surface.

There are no reliable statistics on fish stocks but scientists paint a bleak picture. "Today, we are confronted with the fact that the quantities of fish in Shkodra Lake are considerably reduced," says Djana Bejko, an Albanian professor of biology. The sturgeon disappeared from Shkodra 30 years ago and the

European eel and the bleak are facing a similar fate. Eel stocks have dropped from 30 tons in the early 1990s down to nine tons today, official Albanian figures show. Only the carp is faring well. "The reason for this decline is overfishing by both legal and illegal means," says Danilo Mrdak, a biology professor in Podgorica.

Wastewater discharge

Experts also warn pollution could soon pose a new threat to the lake's ecosystem, with contamination spilling in from chaotic urbanization and wastewater discharge near the lake's shores. On the Montenegrin side, the lake is fed by the Moraca River and its tributaries, which carry the wastewater of some 300,000 inhabitants—half the population of the small Balkan country. Currently, the lake is able to "successfully combat pollution thanks to lush vegetation," said Montenegrin environmental specialist Darko Saveljic. "The question is, until when?"

Albanians say they have also seen heavy rain sweep pollutants into the lake from their side. "Bad weather makes the lake overflow and carries in garbage and debris such as plastics," says Idriz Kurtelaj, a former fisherman and environmental expert in Albania. Specialists on both sides of the border agree on the need for the two countries to coordinate.

However, one point of contention is the use of wooden and metal traps known as "daljani"—fish weirs set up at the mouth of the lake. They allowed in Albania but banned in Montenegro, which says they deplete stocks. A "joint committee for better management of the lake" is needed, says Zamir Dedej, Director of the National Agency for Protected Areas in Albania. The problems "are the same on both sides."—AFP



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Old McDonald's: Aussie mates show off burger bought in 1995

A McDonald's burger bought in 1995 and kept in an Australian shed for years has never decomposed, according to two men who now refer to the quarter-century Quarter Pounder as their "mate". Casey Dean, 39, and Eduards Nits, 38, claim they ordered the Quarter Pounder with cheese from a McDonald's outlet in Adelaide as teenagers—and have hung onto it ever since. "Being teenagers we ordered a truckload of food, and it was just way too much," Dean told AFP. "It started a chain of events where we were joking 'imagine if we kept this forever', and here we are."

Though the burger has shrunk a little from its original size, its shape remains intact, there are no signs of mould, and it doesn't smell. "Even the sesame seeds are still on there, just a few have been knocked off," Dean said. The men say their relationship with the Quarter Pounder will span 25 years by November 2020, a milestone even many marriages fail to reach. "We have been talking about taking him back to his birthplace, just go see the staff there and see if he recognizes anyone," Dean said.

Dubbing it the "Senior Burger" and referring to it repeatedly as their "mate", the men have created social media profiles for the burger and even wrote a song about it. They believe it is the oldest known McDonald's burger in the world,

outranking a prominent decade-old cheeseburger displayed in a glass case in Iceland and live-streamed online to thousands of viewers. Storage for the ancient Aussie burger has been rather less considered, though it has mostly been kept under lock and key in a box made of timber and cardboard.

That box spent about a decade jumbled up with clothing inside a shed in Adelaide, where temperatures regularly top 30 degrees Celsius in summer. When they eventually went to check on it, Dean said even rats had turned their noses up at the morsel. "The rats had actually eaten through the plastic bag, heaps of clothes, got into the box and they'd left the burger," he said. "Our mate was safe."

Dean said he understood why some might be skeptical about their claim, but argues the old-school packaging—waxy paper and a cardboard ring—accurately date the burger to the mid-1990s. He is steadfast that the pair would never part with it despite fielding offers from around the world when it first came to public attention in 2015. A McDonald's spokeswoman did not dispute the assertion, saying the question of why some of its burgers did not decay came up "from time to time" but there was a "simple explanation".

"The reason why our burgers sometimes don't go moldy when left out at room temperature, in a dry environment, is



Casey Dean inspects a McDonald's burger bought in 1995 and kept in an Australian shed for years which has never decomposed, according to two men who now refer to the quarter-century Quarter Pounder as their "mate", in Melbourne.—AFP

that once the food is cooked there isn't enough moisture to support bacterial growth to break it down," she said. "Instead, it simply dries out." She advised the best way to enjoy the firm's food was "when it's hot and tasty".—AFP



This handout photograph shows a Ryukyu leaf turtle at Okinawa Zoo.



A yellow-margined box turtle.

Dozens of endangered turtles disappear from Japan zoo

More than 60 endangered turtles have disappeared from a zoo in Japan's southernmost province in a suspected theft, officials said yesterday. "We feed them twice a week and a keeper noticed their number was clearly low," said Kozue Ohgimi, zoo section chief at Okinawa Zoo and Museum, told AFP. Officials later found cable ties used to secure netting over the enclosure housing the turtles had been removed at several spots. "The nets were loose enough to enable an adult to

sneak into the area," Ohgimi told AFP on the phone.

Officials fear the turtles may have been stolen for sale on the black market, where they are valued as exotic pets. "They are traded for high prices," Ohgimi said. The disappearances have been reported to local police, who are investigating, zoo officials said. The turtles are small, measuring about a maximum 20 centimeters long.

In all, the zoo said 64 turtles have disap-

peared — 15 Ryukyu leaf turtles and 49 yellow-margined box turtles.

Both types are on the red list of threatened species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. Both species are also designated as "natural treasures" by Japan's cultural affairs agency—meaning commercial trade in them is banned.—AFP



Ndaheni Mashele, 66, oversees salt-rich water boiling on the bank of the Klein Letaba River near Baleni, in the South African province of Limpopo.—AFP photos

South Africa's sacred salt spices up top cuisines

With a sleek swish of his knife, Germaine Esau, the head chef at Cape Town's award-winning Myoga restaurant, slices open a freshly caught tuna, tops it with seaweed and delivers his masterstroke: a sprinkling of sacred Baleni salt. "It's like nothing you've tasted before," he says. "It brings all the flavors out and just lifts everything." Hand-harvested from the banks of a remote river in northwestern South Africa, Baleni salt is developing a growing culinary following, as much for its unique taste as its back story.

The salt, say locals, is sanctified by the spirits of their ancestors, for the crystals come from the water of a holy spring said to have healing powers. Top chefs prize it for crystals that are tiny, evenly-sized and chunky and with an inimitable savor. "It gives quite a mineral taste to anything you do and it's very salty, so a little goes a long way," Esau said.

Baleni salt is used in numerous luxury restaurants across Cape Town and Johannesburg, where it retails for 125 rand per kilo. At the Myoga, Baleni salt became the salt of choice after the restaurant decided to phase out imported products and go for local sources. Replacing Maldon salt from England, Baleni salt is served in dainty ceramic bowls on every table inside the old English-style building built in 1800. "Everyone likes a story and there's a great story behind the salt," Esau said.

Sacred salt

That tale begins in Giyani, 2,000 kilometers from the coast, at a site on the banks of the Klein Letaba River in South Africa's northern-most province of Limpopo. A trek through thick forest

brings the visitor to a sort of oasis, fed by a river, amid tropical grasslands where, even in mid-winter, the temperature can reach 30 degrees Celsius. There, on winter mornings, elderly women from the local Tsonga community reach down to the earth, scraping up soil blanketed by a shiny white, thin crystallized deposit.

"This is a sacred place, given to us by our ancestors," said 73-year-old harvester Emelin Mathebula, teasing salty soil onto a metal plate with a steel rod. Before they begin their work, the women make offerings of tobacco, coins and mqombothi—a traditional sorghum malt beer—at the base of a nearby leadwood tree, to solicit the help of the spirits. "If you don't start by asking, you stand a chance of not even getting any salt," warned Ndaheni Mashele, 66, another harvester.

"The sulphate water from the hot spring flows... the heat from the sun dries it, then we have this sort of salt there," local guide Thinashaka Tshivhase told AFP. The harvesting is done only by women, who often camp in the dry river bed for weeks to make the most of the dry season before the spring rains fall.

Healing power

The spring is dubbed "kamkhulu" meaning "the place of the great one." According to legend, the spirit of ancestors who first settled there give it its power. High in magnesium, chloride and other minerals, the water can treat high blood pressure and aching muscles, according to locals. The sick come and bathe in the spring for healing, while the healthy dip into the spring for good luck and prosperity. But the bathing is done under strict rules—one of which is a ban on sex for at least three days prior to going into the spring.—AFP



Josephine Macete, 48, cleans the mud-made filter used to extract the salt on the bank of the Klein Letaba River near Baleni, in the South African province of Limpopo, in the early morning.



Germaine Esau, Chef de cuisine at the Myoga fine-dining restaurant, prepares a side of beef for smoking, often using Baleni salt in his culinary creations in Cape Town.



Rob Greenfield, a US environmentalist with a passion for inspiring people to live more sustainably, poses with crops he is growing in one of two home gardens in Orlando, Florida.—AFP photos

How to live off the land... in a major US city

Rob Greenfield needs a lift. He often does, as he doesn't own a car. Ride sharing is one of the many ways in which he tries to reduce his carbon footprint—but the other is more extreme. For the past year, he hasn't spent a cent on food. He only eats what he can grow in his own garden or nearby gardens, what he can fish for—or what he can peel off the highway. Yes, roadkill is an option for the 33-year-old Greenfield. He's an urban forager.

"Nature has been my garden, has been my pantry and it's been my pharmacy," explains the environmental activist, whose one-year challenge to eat only what he can find himself ends on November 10. Greenfield launched the project in Orlando, the theme park capital of the world in central Florida. The greater metropolitan area is home to about 2.5 million. It seems like an unusual place to hunt and gather, but the subtropical climate has helped him offset the urban setting.

"For the last year, I've been growing and foraging 100 percent of my food—no grocery stores, no restaurants, no beer at a bar," Greenfield tells AFP. "I want to inspire people to question their food and then to change their diets, to start to grow their own food, to support local farmers and eat in a way that is better for the Earth, our communities and ourselves."

Backyard cuisine

He's been living in a tiny home in someone else's backyard—the owners said he could squat there for the purposes of the project. He's usually barefoot and wears the clothes he's often seen in on YouTube, where he documented his year of foraging. "I think that the human body developed really well over tens of thousands of years and I don't believe that Nike has got it all figured out in the last blink of the eye of the human experience," he says.

Greenfield has transformed the yard into an urban farm—papayas, bananas, sweet potatoes, eggplant, cucumbers and peppers are all thriving. He put together an open-air kitchen of sorts, where he keeps his provisions and the honey he produces himself from four hives. He's also built a toilet al fresco—and uses leaves for toilet paper, explaining: "This is softer than anything you can buy at the store."

During the interview, he feasts on a bowl of venison, sauer-

kraut, green papaya, turmeric, red pepper, coriander, garlic, dill and sea salt, cooked in coconut milk. His breakfast is capped with some moringa leaves, which had numerous medicinal uses. Greenfield found the dead deer on a road in his native Wisconsin, where he spent his summer vacation. And the salt? "I go to the ocean and I collect the saltwater from the ocean. I just fill up a jar or a jug and then I put that onto a stove to boil it down. That makes good sea salt."

The simple life

Greenfield says that he first made the decision to live more "simply" in 2011. Up until then, he was living what he called a "pretty typical American life." His goal: "To be a millionaire by the time I was 30." In 2014, he dissolved his marketing company. He first earned public attention in 2016, when he walked through New York wearing all of the garbage he produced—an effort to call attention to the huge amount of waste generated by Americans.

After that, he decided to start his experiment in urban foraging, to cast a spotlight on the possibilities of sustainable living. He lives off public speaking fees and proceeds from his books, though he usually offers talks for free. This year so far, he has earned just \$9,760. In 2018, the total was \$8,000. Both are well below the poverty level of about \$13,000 for an individual living alone. "For me, this is about deeply exploring my food and understanding it and at the same time taking people along on this journey," Greenfield says.

He says he donates most of what he earns to non-profit organizations—despite a fair bit of media coverage of his story, he says he wants to avoid getting rich from his projects. "It's about the message, and I don't think I should get wealthy off of the message of helping others," he says. "I've created a system to help myself not ever lose those good intentions. I believe in living humbly and I don't think it would be easy to live humbly with a lot of money." Once he's finished on Sunday, Greenfield is not sure what comes next—for now, he's planning on traveling around the world.—AFP



Rob Greenfield samples katuk, a leaf vegetable.



Rob Greenfield poses with banana crops.

Video game 'Death Stranding' bids to rekindle hope

In a world fractured by political populism and divisive voices on social media, can a video game build bridges to harmony? The Japanese auteur behind "Death Stranding" hopes so. The much-hyped title comes out for Sony's PlayStation 4 on Friday and is the first creation of Hideo Kojima, the acclaimed designer of the Konami studio's mega-selling "Metal Gear" series, since he went independent in 2015. Set in a post-apocalyptic future where the United States of America has broken up and a curious form of rainfall accelerates ageing, "Death Stranding" centers on a mission to deliver packages and help rebuild a communications network in what is now known as the United Cities of America.

Enemies abound, intent on keeping communities isolated, including the undead. The protagonist, Sam Porter Bridges, is voiced by Norman Reedus from zombie TV drama "The Walking Dead". Other members of the A-list cast include James Bond stars Lea Seydoux and Mads Mikkelsen. Kojima is explicit about the contemporary parallels to his storyline. "President (Donald) Trump right now is building a wall," he told the BBC in an interview.

"Then you have Brexit, where the UK is trying to leave the EU, and it feels like there are lots of walls and people thinking only about themselves in the world." In "Death Stranding" we're using bridges to represent connection—there are options to use them or break them. It's about making people think about the meaning of connection."

The concept goes as far as blocking any option to interact negatively with other players, according to Kojima. Instead, you can give them positive feedback and leave items for others to use. It is a far cry from the all-against-one, fight-to-the-death option on the hugely popular game "Fortnite", or the hate-filled commentary of so much social media. Titles like "Fortnite" and "Call of Duty" rely on bursts of furious action, and are lucrative propositions on the e-sports circuit.

Hideo Kojima: Enigmatic games creator inspired by movies

Hideo Kojima, creator of the hugely anticipated Death Stranding game released this week, turned a family obsession with film into a talent for making highly cinematic video games. Best known for his acclaimed Metal Gear series, Kojima spent nearly 30 years at Konami, a major firm that he has said he joined because they were the only games company listed on the stock market at the time. He was born in 1963, to a family obsessed with movies. When he was young, his parents began a tradition of watching a film every night.

"I wasn't allowed to go to bed till the film had finished: the opposite of how it is for most children," he told The Guardian in an

Mad Max meets Postman Pat

But Marc Alonso, a gaming expert at the market research provider Euromonitor International in London, noted that the most-bought title so far this year was the more immersive "Red Dead: Redemption II". "So there's definitely room for that alongside the e-sports side of it," he told AFP, predicting "Death Stranding" will prove "one of the most influential and popular games of the year".

"It pushes the frontiers of gaming and cinematography. It's essentially an interactive movie and that's something we're seeing more of, like in Redemption, with clear storylines that are well crafted and well acted," Alonso said. "Death Stranding" is taking that to the next level, and Kojima's many Metal Gear fans will help it boom." Still, the slow pace of the game-play and the surreal nature of some of the narrative have attracted adverse comment from a few reviewers.

One otherwise laudatory review at thesixthaxis.com said "Death Stranding" mixed various storylines including "Mad Max" and "Postman Pat", adding its own "very odd focus on bodily excretions". Other reviewers have criticized Kojima for pretentiousness. But most have reveled in the cinematic and immersive qualities of his game, and the scale of his ambition. On metacritic.com, "Death Stranding" scores a favorable aggregate score of 84 percent. The word "masterpiece" crops up in several appraisals of the game.

Its backers at Sony are banking on that translating into Christmas season sales to sustain the PS4 console business in the face of competition from mobile and streaming platforms. A PC version is due out next year, as is a next-generation PlayStation 5 console. But there is no word yet on a version of the game for Microsoft's Xbox, after Kojima went into partnership with Sony following his departure four years ago from Konami.—AFP

interview. The tradition had a huge influence, and as he got older he was encouraged by his parents to see movies by himself at the cinema. They would give him money for the ticket, but on the condition he came back and discussed the film's themes and its impact on him. He lost his father when he was just 13, and at university he initially studied economics, before switching gears in his final year and deciding to enter gaming. His mother supported the move, but his friends were strongly opposed, and the social pressure had an effect: he chose to work at Konami because it was listed on the stock exchange, giving it a prestige he thought might justify his decision.

'Continue as long as I live'

A year after he joined in 1986, the first iteration of Metal Gear was released, which saw gamers controlling special forces operative "Solid Snake", and encouraged to avoid and outsmart enemies over engaging in direct combat. Several sequels followed, developing the stealth ability of characters and featuring the cinematic cut-scenes that would become a signature of Kojima's work. He achieved cult status however with the 1998 release of Metal Gear

Solid, a game that one review declared "comes closer to perfection than any other game in PlayStation's action genre."

Further sequels followed, and as his star rose he created his own production unit inside Konami. In 2005 he won an MTV lifetime achievement award for the Metal Gear series. "I have to say, even though I have received this award, let me state that I will not retire," he told a cheering audience. "I will continue to create games as long as I live." In 2015, he shocked the gaming world by announcing he was parting ways with Konami and would run his studio as an independent firm. Speculation raged over the reasons for the split, with some citing Kojima's near-obsessive desire to control all aspects of production on his games, or Konami's alleged strict controls on employees. Others pointed to the industry-wide shift from console games toward mobile devices.

Prone to loneliness

Kojima has said the decision was not an easy one, with his family deeply opposed and banks reluctant to lend to him despite his international fame.—AFP



In this file photo Japanese video game designer, writer, director and producer Hideo Kojima speaks on stage to present his new video game 'Death Stranding' during the Tokyo Game Show in Makuhari, Chiba Prefecture.—AFP

Comic

Word Search

Movies: Science Fiction

Find and circle all of the Science Fiction movies that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the title of an additional Science Fiction movie.

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

- | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| ALIEN | FANTASTIC VOYAGE | ROBOCOP | TERMINATOR |
| BLADE RUNNER | FLASH GORDON | SCANNERS | THE ABYSS |
| BODY SNATCHERS | FLATLINERS | SHIVERS | THE FLY |
| BRAZIL | FORBIDDEN PLANET | SILENT RUNNING | THE MATRIX |
| COCON | FRANKENSTEIN | SOLARIS | THEY LIVE |
| CONTACT | GATTACA | SOYLENT GREEN | TOTAL RECALL |
| CUBE | INDEPENDENCE DAY | SPIDER-MAN | TRANCERS |
| DARK CITY | JURASSIC PARK | STAR WARS | TRON |
| DEEP IMPACT | LOGAN'S RUN | STARGATE | VIDEOPHONE |
| DUNE | MAD MAX | STARMAN | WESTWORLD |
| EQUILIBRIUM | METROPOLIS | STARSHIP TROOPERS | |

Yesterday's Solution

Movies: Musicals

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

- | | | | |
|---------------|------------|----------------|-----------------|
| A CHORUS LINE | CHICAGO | HELLO, DOLLY! | FAL JOEY |
| ALL THAT JAZZ | EVITA | HIGH SOCIETY | SHOW BOAT |
| ANNIE | FAME | HOLIDAY INN | SILK STOCKINGS |
| BLUE HAWAII | FANTASSIA | JAILHOUSE ROCK | SOUTH PACIFIC |
| BRIGADOON | FUNNY FACE | LA TRAVATA | STATE FAIR |
| BUGSY MALONE | FUNNY GIRL | MARY POPPINS | SWEET CHARITY |
| CABARET | GIGI | MOULIN ROUGE | SWING TIME |
| CALAMITY JANE | GOOSEPELL | MY FAIR LADY | THE MUSIC MAN |
| CAMELOT | GREASE | NEWSIES | TOMMY |
| CARMEN | GYPSY | OKLAHOMA! | TOP HAT |
| CAROUSEL | HAIR | OLIVER! | WEST SIDE STORY |

The hidden movie is: A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM

Crossword 2354



ACROSS

- Worthless or oversimplified ideas.
- Asiatic plant grown for its cluster of edible white stalks with dark green leaves.
- A rounded thickly curled hairdo.
- The compass point midway between northeast and east.
- Taking the bull by the horns.
- A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
- Cotton trousers made of corduroy cloth.
- (British) An open river valley (in a hilly area).
- An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
- Free from risk or danger.
- A kiln used to reduce naturally occurring forms of calcium carbonate to lime.
- Oblong cream puff.
- Indigo bush.
- Having removed clothing.
- The basic unit of money in Macao.
- A Mid-Atlantic state.
- An exceedingly good witticism that surpasses all that have gone before.
- A long-playing phonograph record.
- English writer and a central member of the Fabian Society (1858-1943).
- King of the Vandals who seized Roman lands and invaded North Africa and sacked Rome (428-477).
- An associate degree in applied science.
- The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
- Double-walled stage of the embryo succeeding the blastula.
- A condition requiring relief.
- (old-fashioned) At or from or to a great distance.
- A doctor's degree in education.
- (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
- A drug (trade names Calan and Isoptin) used as an oral or parenteral calcium blocker in cases of hypertension or congestive heart failure or angina or migraine.
- Having the leading position or higher score in a contest.
- An intuitive awareness.
- Toward the mouth or oral region.
- A dicotyledonous genus of trees of the family Anacardiaceae having drupaceous fruit.
- State capital of New York.
- A rapid bustling commotion.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- An inflammatory disease involving the sebaceous glands of the skin.
- Informal abbreviation of 'representative'.
- Brazilian tree with handsomely marked wood.
- A small ball with a hole through the middle.

DOWN

- Either of two large muscles of the chest.
- Small buffalo of the Celebes having small straight horns.
- Being complete of its kind and without defect or blemish.
- A solution containing a phosphate buffer.
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- A family of Sino-Tibetan languages spoken in southeastern Asia.
- A sudden loss of consciousness resulting when the rupture or occlusion of a blood vessel leads to oxygen lack in the brain.
- A local and well-defined elevation of the land.
- A member of the Iroquoian people formerly living east of Lake Ontario.
- A class of proteins produced in lymph tissue in vertebrates and that function as antibodies in the immune response.
- Before noon.
- A sheet or band of fibrous connective tissue separating or binding together muscles and organs etc.
- A barrier consisting of a horizontal bar and supports.
- A port city in northwestern Algeria and the country's 2nd largest city.
- Remove the claws from (a cat).
- A bony fish of the subclass Teleostei.
- A member of an agricultural people in southeastern India.
- Predacious long-bodied large-eyed insect of warm regions.
- Someone in charge of other people.
- Closed with a lace.
- 1 species.
- Popular music originating in the West Indies.
- Having or as if having a veil or concealing cover.
- A covered passageway.
- A person excessively concerned about propriety and decorum.
- God of wealth and love.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- A fractional monetary unit of Japan and Indonesia and Cambodia.
- Formerly a gold coin of various European countries.
- A commercially operated park with stalls and shows for amusement.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- West Indian tree having racemes of fragrant white flowers and yielding a durable timber and resinous juice.
- African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
- (Babylonian) A demigod or first man.
- A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
- The dressed skin of an animal (especially a large animal).
- A program under which employees regularly accumulate shares and may ultimately assume control of the company.
- Any competition.
- A former copper coin of Pakistan.
- Colored or impregnated with dye.
- An emotional response that has been acquired by conditioning.
- An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
- Being one more than one hundred.
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings



00:05 Crank
01:40 Leatherface
03:15 Painted Skin: The Resurrection
05:35 Kung Fu Yoga
07:35 The Monkey King
09:40 The Taking Of Pelham 123
11:40 Stargate
13:45 Tai Chi 2: The Hero Rises
15:40 American Ninja III
17:25 Transformers: The Last Knight
20:00 The Recruit
22:00 Commando
23:40 Waist Deep



00:45 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
01:40 Intruders
02:35 Saba And The Rhino's Secret
03:25 Wolves And Warriors
04:15 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
05:02 Wildest Indochina
05:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
06:36 Vet On The Loose
07:00 Vet On The Loose
07:25 Untamed China With Nigel Marven
08:15 Untamed China With Nigel Marven
09:10 Untamed China With Nigel Marven
10:05 Untamed China With Nigel Marven
11:00 Untamed China With Nigel Marven
11:55 Wild Dubai
12:50 Crikey! It's The Irwins
13:45 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
14:40 Animal Cribbs
15:35 Intruders
16:30 Everest: Beyond The Limit
17:25 Animal Cops Philadelphia
18:20 Saving A Species: Gorillas On The Brink With...
19:15 The Vet Life
20:10 Vet Gone Wild
21:05 Wildest Indochina
22:00 Intruders
22:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
23:50 The Vet Life



00:10 EastEnders
00:40 The Woman In White
01:35 Holby City
02:30 Hold The Sunset
02:55 Bad Move
03:20 Death In Paradise
04:15 Father Brown
05:00 Doctors
05:30 Doctors
06:00 Doctors
06:30 EastEnders
07:00 Holby City
07:55 Father Brown
08:40 Death In Paradise
09:35 Casualty
10:25 Hold The Sunset
10:50 Bad Move
11:15 Holby City
12:10 Father Brown
12:55 Death In Paradise
13:50 Hold The Sunset
14:15 Bad Move
14:40 Casualty
15:30 Doctors
18:30 The Coroner
19:20 The Coroner
20:10 The Woman In White
21:05 Line Of Duty
21:50 The Good Karma Hospital
22:40 Blood
23:30 Doctors



00:00 Homicide Hunter
01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
01:55 Psychic Kids
02:50 It Takes A Killer
03:20 It Takes A Killer

03:45 Live PD: Police Patrol
04:10 Live PD: Police Patrol
04:30 The First 48
05:15 Homicide Hunter
06:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
07:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
07:20 The First 48
08:05 The First 48
08:50 Homicide Hunter
09:35 Homicide Hunter
10:30 Homicide: Hours To Kill
11:25 What The Killer Did Next
12:20 Crimes That Shook Britain
13:15 Live PD: Police Patrol
13:45 Live PD: Police Patrol
14:10 It Takes A Killer
14:40 It Takes A Killer
15:05 Homicide Hunter
16:00 The First 48
17:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
18:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
19:00 It Takes A Killer
19:30 It Takes A Killer
20:00 The First 48
21:00 Homicide Hunter
22:00 60 Days In: Narcoland
23:00 Hero Ink
23:30 Hero Ink



00:25 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
00:50 Impractical Jokers
01:15 Broad City
01:40 Friends
02:02 Friends
02:27 South Park (Repeats)
02:52 Takeshis Castle Thailand
03:17 Broad City
03:42 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
04:10 South Park (Repeats)
04:35 Impractical Jokers
05:00 Friends
07:10 Punk'd (Bet)
07:35 Punk'd (Bet)
08:00 Takeshis Castle Thailand
10:10 Friends
10:35 Friends
11:00 Friends
11:25 Friends
11:50 Friends
12:20 Ridiculousness
14:30 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team
15:25 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team
16:15 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team
17:10 Friends
19:30 Ridiculousness
21:30 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA
22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
22:27 Comedy Central Roast Of Charlie Sheen
23:30 Most Ridiculous



00:30 Bizarre Foods With Andrew Zimmern
01:20 Must Love Cats
02:10 My Cat From Hell
03:00 Dirty Jobs
03:50 Cliptastic
04:15 Cliptastic
04:40 Tanked
05:30 Must Love Cats
06:15 My Cat From Hell
07:00 Dirty Jobs
07:50 Dirty Jobs
08:15 Cliptastic
08:40 Weather Gone Viral
09:30 Secret Space Escapes
10:20 You Have Been Warned
11:10 Tanked
12:00 Salvage Hunters
12:50 Storm Chasers
13:40 Invent It Rich
14:30 UFOs: The Lost Evidence
15:20 Dirty Jobs
16:10 Tanked
17:00 Must Love Cats
17:50 My Cat From Hell
18:40 Dirty Jobs
19:30 The Carbonaro Effect
19:55 The Carbonaro Effect
20:20 Dirty Tricks
21:10 Breaking Magic

21:35 Breaking Magic
22:00 Tricks On The Streets
22:25 Tricks On The Streets
22:50 Keeping Up With The Kruger
23:40 Tanked



00:00 True Nightmares
01:00 The Real Story With Maria Elena Salinas
02:00 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
03:00 Dead Of Night
03:45 True Nightmares
04:30 Murder Chose Me
05:20 Southern Fried Homicide
06:10 Swamp Murders
07:00 Evil Online
07:55 Evil Online
08:50 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
09:45 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
10:40 Southern Fried Homicide
11:35 Murder Chose Me
12:30 Murder Chose Me
13:25 Swamp Murders
14:20 Nightmare Next Door
15:15 Nightmare Next Door
16:10 Southern Fried Homicide
17:05 The Perfect Murder
18:00 The Perfect Murder
19:00 Disappeared
20:00 Disappeared
21:00 Love Kills
22:00 Til Death Do Us Part
23:00 Heart Of Darkness



00:00 Alex & Co.
00:50 Evermoor Chronicles
01:40 Alex & Co.
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:55 Evermoor Chronicles
03:45 Alex & Co.
04:10 Alex & Co.
04:35 Violetta
05:25 Binny And The Ghost
05:45 Rolling With The Ronks
05:50 Rolling With The Ronks
06:00 Shake It Up
06:25 Raven's Home S3
06:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
06:55 Sydney To The Max
07:20 Penny On M.A.R.S
07:45 K.C. Undercover
08:10 Bizaardvark
08:35 Jessie
09:00 Jessie
09:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
09:50 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
10:15 Bizaardvark
10:40 Bizaardvark
11:05 Liv And Maddie
11:30 Liv And Maddie
11:55 K.C. Undercover
12:20 K.C. Undercover
12:45 Bunk'd
13:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
13:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
14:00 Disney Cookabout
14:25 Shake It Up
14:50 A.N.T. Farm
15:15 A.N.T. Farm
15:40 Penny On M.A.R.S
16:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
16:10 Amphibia S1
16:35 Zapped
18:15 Stuck In The Middle
18:40 Stuck In The Middle
19:05 K.C. Undercover
19:30 Shake It Up
19:55 Shake It Up
20:20 Liv And Maddie
20:45 Liv And Maddie
21:10 Jessie
21:35 Jessie
22:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
22:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
22:50 Lolirock
23:10 Evermoor Chronicles
23:35 Binny And The Ghost



00:00 Sofia The First
00:25 Disney Junior Music Nursery Rhymes
00:30 Gigantosaurus
01:00 PJ Masks
01:25 PJ Masks
01:50 Paprika
02:00 Zou
02:15 Zou
02:30 Henry Hugglemonster
02:55 Henry Hugglemonster
03:20 Paprika
03:30 Paprika
03:40 Zou
04:25 Paprika
04:35 Paprika
04:45 Henry Hugglemonster
05:10 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 The Hive
05:45 PJ Masks
06:30 Gigantosaurus
06:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons
07:00 The Lion Guard
07:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
08:00 PJ Masks
08:20 Bluey
08:30 Vampirina
08:45 Vampirina
09:00 Sofia The First
09:30 Elena Of Avalor
10:00 Fancy Nancy Clancy
10:30 PJ Masks
11:00 Vampirina
11:30 Vampirina
12:00 Doc McStuffins
12:30 Gigantosaurus
13:00 Puppy Dog Pals
13:30 Puppy Dog Pals
14:00 PJ Masks
14:30 T.O.T.S.
15:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
15:30 Vampirina
16:00 Bluey
16:10 Vampirina
16:30 Sofia The First
16:55 PJ Masks Music Videos
17:00 PJ Masks
17:30 T.O.T.S.
18:00 Vampirina
18:15 Muppet Babies
18:30 Vampirina
18:45 Vampirina
19:00 PJ Masks
19:30 The Lion Guard
20:00 Sofia The First
20:25 PJ Masks Music Videos
20:30 Elena Of Avalor
21:00 Fancy Nancy Clancy
21:30 T.O.T.S.
22:00 Vampirina
22:15 Muppet Babies
22:30 Vampirina
22:45 Vampirina
23:00 PJ Masks
23:30 The Lion Guard



01:05 Masters Of Disaster
01:50 Mythbusters
02:35 Salvage Hunters: The Restorers
03:20 Wheeler Dealers
04:05 Wheeler Dealers
04:50 How Do They Do It?
05:15 How Do They Do It?
05:35 Garage Gold
06:00 Storage Wars Canada
06:20 Garage Gold
06:45 Dual Survival
07:35 Deadliest Catch
09:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier
09:55 Salvage Hunters
10:45 How Do They Do It?
11:10 How Do They Do It?
11:30 Wheeler Dealers
12:20 Wheeler Dealers
13:05 Storage Wars Canada
13:30 Garage Gold
13:55 Salvage Hunters
14:40 Alaska: The Last Frontier
15:30 Dual Survival
16:15 Aaron Needs A Job
17:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier
17:50 Gold Rush
18:40 How Do They Do It?
19:05 How Do They Do It?
19:25 Wheeler Dealers

20:15 Wheeler Dealers
21:00 Salvage Hunters: Classic Cars
21:50 Aaron Needs A Job
22:40 Dirty Mudder Truckers
23:30 Deadliest Catch



00:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
01:00 Booster
01:45 Counterfeit Cat
02:30 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
02:55 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:20 Booster
03:40 Booster
04:05 Counterfeit Cat
04:50 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
05:15 Supa Strikas
05:35 Supa Strikas
06:00 Lab Rats Elite Force
06:50 Phineas And Ferb
07:40 Gravity Falls
08:05 Gravity Falls
08:30 Phineas And Ferb
09:20 Big City Greens
10:05 Phineas And Ferb
10:50 Lab Rats Elite Force
11:35 Phineas And Ferb
12:20 Gravity Falls
13:10 DuckTales Shorts
13:15 Phineas And Ferb
14:05 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
14:30 Phineas And Ferb
15:20 Big City Greens
16:10 Supa Strikas
17:00 Marvel Spider-Man: Vexed By Venom
17:25 Marvel's Spider-Man
17:50 Phineas And Ferb
18:40 Supa Strikas
19:05 Lab Rats
19:30 Lab Rats
19:55 Disney 11 Recap
20:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
20:25 Marvel's Spider-Man
20:50 Phineas And Ferb
21:15 Phineas And Ferb
21:40 DuckTales
22:05 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
22:55 DuckTales Shorts
23:00 Furki Wheels
23:25 Dude That's My Ghost
23:50 Dude That's My Ghost



00:00 Very Cavallari
01:00 Very Cavallari
02:00 E! News
03:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
04:00 Botched
08:00 E! News: Daily Pop
08:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
09:50 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
10:45 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
11:40 E! News
12:35 Very Cavallari
15:20 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Botched
19:00 E! News
20:00 Very Cavallari
23:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians



00:15 Clash Of Warriors
01:00 America's Book Of Secrets
01:45 Modern Marvels
02:30 Serial Killer Earth
03:15 Clash Of The Gods
04:00 Ancient Aliens
04:45 Deep Sea Salvage
05:30 UFO Hunters
06:15 Battles BC
07:00 America's Book Of Secrets
07:45 Modern Marvels
08:30 Serial Killer Earth
09:15 Clash Of The Gods
10:00 Ancient Aliens
10:45 Deep Sea Salvage

11:30 UFO Hunters
12:15 Battles BC
13:00 Modern Marvels
13:45 Serial Killer Earth
14:30 Clash Of The Gods
15:15 Ancient Aliens
16:00 Deep Sea Salvage
16:45 UFO Hunters
17:30 Battles BC
18:15 America's Book Of Secrets
19:00 Search For The Lost Giants
19:45 Serial Killer Earth
20:30 Clash Of The Gods
21:15 Ancient Aliens
22:00 MysteryQuest
22:45 UFO Hunters
23:30 Battles BC



00:20 The Curse Of Oak Island
01:05 Storage Wars
01:25 Storage Wars
01:50 American Pickers
02:35 Pawn Stars
03:00 Pawn Stars
03:25 The Lost Evidence
04:15 The Zodiac Killer: Case Closed?
05:05 Forged In Fire
06:00 Fifth Gear
06:45 The Curse Of Oak Island
07:30 Storage Wars
07:50 Storage Wars
08:15 American Pickers
09:00 Pawn Stars
09:20 Pawn Stars
09:45 The Lost Evidence
10:30 Forged In Fire
11:15 WW2 Treasure Hunters
12:00 American Pickers
15:00 Fifth Gear
18:45 Mountain Men
21:00 Lost Gold Of World War II
21:50 Lost Gold Of World War II
22:40 American Pickers
23:30 American Pickers



00:00 Fish Tank Kings
01:00 48 Hrs Destination
02:00 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
02:55 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
03:50 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
04:45 Confucius Was A Foodie
05:40 Access 360 World Heritage
06:35 Chef On The Road
07:30 Confucius Was A Foodie
08:25 Sara's Australia Unveiled
09:20 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
09:45 Fish Of The Day
10:15 Late Nite Eats
10:40 United Plates Of America
11:10 Access 360 World Heritage
12:05 Chef On The Road
13:00 Confucius Was A Foodie
13:55 Sara's Australia Unveiled
14:50 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
15:15 Fish Of The Day
15:45 Late Nite Eats
16:10 United Plates Of America
16:40 Access 360 World Heritage
17:35 David Rocco's Dolce Italia
18:30 Confucius Was A Foodie
19:25 Sara's Australia Unveiled
20:20 Around The World In 80 Dishes
21:15 Late Nite Eats
21:40 United Plates Of America
22:10 Walking Home From Mongolia
23:05 Access 360 World Heritage



00:00 Nazi Megastructures: Battle Ready
00:50 Primal Survivor
01:40 Border Wars
02:30 The Big Picture With Kal Penn
03:20 Route Awakening
04:10 Nazi Megastructures: Battle Ready
05:00 Primal Survivor
06:00 Border Wars
07:00 The Big Picture With Kal Penn

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

In the workplace today, you perform successfully, as you exhibit your ability to get past the surface of things and separate the thing that has real worth. Your presence in a group situation has a decided effect. Others may feel that nothing is a secret from you. You do not have to leave home to escape from the rat race. Family, home and security seem just about ideal to you. You may be very imaginative with your home and domestic setup. A sense of community and unity permeates your family life. Your ideal dream is a private one and heaven is as close as work and family. You are creative when it comes to partnerships or lovers; you seem to establish unusual and different relationships. You may find that a love relationship will deepen during this time.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This day is one of those amazing days when everything works together. Situations are almost tailor-made and it is easy to see which path is the one to take. Opportunities prevail and you may find yourself deciding that it is time to write a book. You certainly have enough material to write on any one of your favorite subjects. There may be some question in your mind about needing a change in your position at work. Check out the inner-office openings and you will be able to move into a place that gives you some challenges. You may decide to do some special cooking this evening, and if you have your windows open, you may find some uninvited guests are willing to taste your experimental recipe. Everybody has fun!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You are always interested in being of help to others. You enjoy teaching or helping young people use their creative mind with their use of words. Your sense of humor is not missing from your communications today. There are many practical ideas available to you, especially related to your job or skills. Careful, a customer may tell you a sad story to get a special deal. You appreciate, care and are concerned but not much can fool you. This afternoon you may enjoy a community project. Perhaps you and your family will help to contribute towards the beautification of your neighborhood. If everyone participates, the value of property could increase. You are constantly on the side of humanism at every turn.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You could be most persuasive with others and expressive in speech and communication. You are a natural for self-expression and others enjoy listening to your particular ideas and thoughts. The initiative is yours and you will find positive end results develop from your enthusiasm to achieve. This is a day to dare to be a little unconventional. You will prosper through new insights, inventions and an independent point of view. Your career could open up by taking the road less traveled or by daring to be more involved in the development of business; new approaches. You are inspired to motivate others with your creative and inventive ways. What-if types of questions seem to be the keys that turn you into the wizard all enjoy having on their side.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may find yourself having a difference of opinion with others today. This, however, is the only way to introduce new ways of thinking among your particular business comrades. Make it a point to remove the emotions, and if you find others getting emotional, excuse yourself from the conversation. There will be other opportunities to expand upon some new idea. Given time, your ideas will gain recognition. Real insight into your own inner workings could surface now and in a manageable form. You may be in the mood for penetrating conversation this evening. Perhaps a book or magazine on the latest electronic techniques would be mesmerizing. A friend you have not heard from in some time may give you a call. Old times are fun to review.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Throwing caution to the wind, you could ignore whatever responsibilities you have and pursue a particular objective today. You have animal-like instincts when it comes to big business and this is a good time to use those instincts. You are where the action is most intense. Your mind will get through the unimportant and straight to the bottom line. Some may even respect your tenacity and it is exciting to be near you. You may tend to take paths at right angles to your real ambitions if you let yourself become distracted. If you have a co-worker friend that will join you in a project, you can keep each other focused; talk about staying focused before you begin. This afternoon you may enjoy some creative activity with some form of art, theater, sports, etc.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This is a very lucky day for making plans or decisions and finding your way through just about any problem you may uncover. You will be feeling successful and able to cope with whatever comes across your path. Good advice from a guide may be forthcoming. You are very fortunate in being able to grow and progress throughout your life without major difficulties. You can always find the resources you require at hand plus the necessary instruction in how to use them. Your love of job and practical skills makes you a fine manager and businessperson. You bring passion to your work. Your mind is full of practical ideas, especially related to your job or skills. You are always coming up with new ideas; this is a productive day.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

A rebellious streak could affect your career now-careful. Your sense of independence may tend to kick over the apple cart and upset everything. Your progress and success may be at the expense of your more unconventional tendencies—a source of struggle. You prefer a career that accents your own devotion to the dreams and ideals you stand for these days. Working with groups in a spirit of cooperation is a natural. Everything conspires to value and to bring out your unique and unusual qualities. You may find that someone close to you understands and is supportive of your eccentricities. You could come up with new solutions. There is an opportunity this evening to understand a difficult person; you listen and love.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You would like to tell someone off at work today but you will benefit from just moving your thoughts to another place... Perhaps the next adventure you will take with the money you earn. You are at your most practical when it comes to working with others and your efforts today do not go unnoticed. You usually know just what to do. You may be moved to appreciate the beauty in your life and those around you. A sense of humor is one of the necessary ingredients to make a tough situation easier to handle. Be careful that you do not overspend or indulge too much just now. You may feel like involving yourself in some sort of celebration this evening—a celebration of life. There are new insights regarding home life.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

A rebellious streak could affect your career now-careful. Your sense of independence may tend to kick over the apple cart and upset everything. Your progress and success may be at the expense of your more unconventional tendencies—a source of struggle. You prefer a career that accents your own devotion to the dreams and ideals you stand for these days. Working with groups in a spirit of cooperation is a natural. Everything conspires to value and to bring out your unique and unusual qualities. You may find that someone close to you understands and is supportive of your eccentricities. You could come up with new solutions. There is an opportunity this evening to understand a difficult person; you listen and love.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

There is an emphasis on communication, expression of ideas and the connections between things, places and people. What goes on in your mind is the all-important motivation in your life. You tend towards mental pursuits and admire intelligence. You are very flexible and other-oriented today. Perhaps you can be all things to all people, giving them what they require. You are probably a smooth talker with a quick wit and ready tongue. You know and understand more than you let on and life changes seldom take you by surprise. You have a great deal of control over your actions. Communicating and getting your message across to others is at a high just now. You know just how to maneuver yourself into the right places; now is the time to get ahead.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Someone may criticize you today and find you somewhat preoccupied and lacking in the social graces. This is only a temporary glitch in your day. You have an innate love of the law and working things through, and you are not put off by any difficulties. On the contrary, you may look forward to hunting problems down so that you can solve them. You have the ability to work with others, particularly regarding vocation or career guidance. You can advise and guide others in all sorts of subjects, and you may find yourself doing so today. This could be a particularly lucky day. Study the options carefully before making any investment decisions. Tonight is a good night for you to take your turn at cooking.

Country Codes

Afghanistan	0093	Jordan	00962
Albania	00355	Kazakhstan	007
Algeria	00213	Kenya	00254
Andorra	00376	Kiribati	00686
Angola	00244	Kuwait	00965
Anguilla	001264	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Antigua	001268	Laos	00856
Argentina	0054	Latvia	00371
Armenia	00374	Lebanon	00961
Australia	0061	Liberia	00231
Austria	0043	Libya	00218
Bahamas	001242	Lithuania	00370
Bahrain	00973	Luxembourg	00352
Bangladesh	00880	Macau	00853
Barbados	001246	Macedonia	00389
Belarus	00375	Madagascar	00261
Belgium	0032	Majorca	0034
Belize	00501	Malawi	00265
Benin	00229	Malaysia	0060
Bermuda	001441	Maldives	00960
Bhutan	00975	Mali	00223
Bolivia	00591	Malta	00356
Bosnia	00387	Marshall Islands	00692
Botswana	00267	Martinique	00596
Brazil	0055	Mauritania	00222
Brunei	00673	Mauritius	00230
Bulgaria	00359	Mayotte	00269
Burkina Faso	00226	Mexico	0052
Burundi	00257	Micronesia	00691
Cambodia	00855	Moldova	00373
Cameroon	00237	Monaco	00377
Canada	001	Mongolia	00976
Cape Verde	00238	Montserrat	001664
Cayman Islands	001345	Morocco	00212
Central African Republic	00236	Mozambique	00258
Chad	00235	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Chile	0056	Namibia	00264
China	0086	Nepal	00977
Colombia	0057	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Comoros	00269	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Congo	00242	New Caledonia	00687
Cook Islands	00682	New Zealand	0064
Costa Rica	00506	Nicaragua	00505
Croatia	00385	Niger	00227
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark	0045	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia	00246	Norway	0047
Djibouti	00253	Oman	00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	0092
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Philippines	0063
Eritrea	00291	Poland	0048
Estonia	00372	Portugal	00351
Ethiopia	00251	Puerto Rico	001787
Falkland Islands	00500	Qatar	00974
Faroe Islands	00298	Romania	0040
Fiji	00679	Russian Federation	007
Finland	00358	Rwanda	00250
France	0033	Saint Helena	00290
French Guiana	00594	Saint Kitts	001869
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Lucia	001758
Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
Georgia	00995	Samoa US	00684
Germany	0049	Samoa West	00685
Ghana	00233	San Marino	00378
Gibraltar	00350	Sao Tome	00239
Greece	0030	Saudi Arabia	00966
Greenland	00299	Scotland (UK)	0044
Grenada	001473	Senegal	00221
Guadeloupe	00590	Seychelles	00284
Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala	00502	Singapore	0065
Guinea	00224	Slovakia	00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
Haiti	00509	Solomon Islands	00677
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Somalia	00252
Honduras	00504	South Africa	0027
Hong Kong	00852	South Korea	0082
Hungary	0036	Spain	0034
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sri Lanka	0094
Iceland	00354	Sudan	00249
India	0091	Suriname	00597
Indian Ocean	00873	Swaziland	00268
Indonesia	0062	Sweden	0046
Iran	0098	Switzerland	0041
Iraq	00964	Syria	00963
Ireland	00353	Taiwan	00886
Italy	0039	Tanzania	00255
Ivory Coast	00225	Thailand	0066
Jamaica	001876	Togo	00228
Japan	0081	Tonga	00676

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Friday, November 8, 2019

DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY
Canadian Board of Otolaryngology
Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.
Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons-Canada
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- Minimally Invasive Microscopic Endoscopic Ear surgery
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- Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
- Diagnosis & treatment of snoring & obstructive sleep apnea in clinic without surgery
- Diagnosis & treatment of voice and swallowing disorders
- Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

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DR. FAHAD S BUHAIMED
Consultant Cosmetic Dermatologist & Hair Transplant, NY

ACADEMIC CERTIFICATES:

- Dermatology board certified.
- Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- Referee reviewer of International journal of Dermatology.

SPECIALIZED IN:

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DR KHALED ALMERRI
Consultant Interventional Cardiology
Department: Heart & Vascular Center

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- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4- Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6- Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring

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Dr Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj
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- Laryngology Fellowship - Canada
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- Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
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- Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- Member of the European Laryngological Society

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- Thyroid surgery.
- Surgery for the deviated nasal septum.
- Endoscopic sinus surgery.
- Treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- Treatment of snoring.
- Treatment of vertigo.

Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad
Surgery Department
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo - Rectal Surgeon

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Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine
Head of Cardiology departmenta
at Dar Al Shifa hospital

- Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
- Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).

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- Breast surgeries
- Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries


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 Dr. Khaled Johnson
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Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American Board in Pediatrics-Canadian Board in Pediatric Emergency



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DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED

Consultant of General Surgery
Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery



Academic Certificates – Training

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

Scope of clinical Practice.

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

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228
Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 15 - Queen Center Mazaya Building

Classifieds

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Victor Pereira Merwyn, holder of Indian Passport No K7037436, having permanent residence at A/9 Kesley, Bldg No 2, Ramnagar, Borivli (W), Mumbai 92, India and residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that from henceforth my name will be read as under: Given name: Merwyn, Middle name: Victor, Family name: Pereira. (C 5684)

I, Subashmon Koovadu Cacko (Koovakadu Puthuparampil House, Mammood PO, Kottayam, Kerala Pin 686553) holder of Indian Passport No. L0036092 issued at Kuwait on 15-04-2013, presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Given name: Subashmon Koovakadu, Surname: Chacko. Objections if and may be forwarded to Embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St. Kuwait City 13015.

I, Subashmon Koovadu Cacko, Father of Abel Martin Subash holder of Indian Passport No. R2311106 issued at Kuwait on 06-03-2017, permanent address of (Koovakadu Puthuparampil House, Mammood PO, Kottayam, Kerala 686553), presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Given name: Abel Martin, Surname: Subash, Father's name: Subashmon Koovakdu Chacko. Objections if and may be forwarded to Embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St. Kuwait City 13015.

I, Sajimol Issac (Koovakadu Puthuparampil House, Mammood PO, Kottayam, Kerala Pin 686553) holder of Indian Passport No. N8636560 issued at Kuwait on 05-04-2016, presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Given name: Sajimol, Surname: Issac, Spouse's name: Subashmon Koovakadu Chacko. Objections if and may be forwarded to Embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat,

Arabian Gulf St. Kuwait City 13015.

I, Subashmon Koovadu Cacko, father of Andrea Anna Subash holder of Indian Passport No. P7119181 issued at Kuwait on 12-01-2017, permanent address of (Koovakadu Puthuparampil House, Mammood PO, Kottayam, Kerala Pin 686553), presently residing at St. Marys Residential Public School, Paliakkara, Thiruvalla do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Given name: Andrea Anna, Surname: Subash, Father's name: Subashmon Koovakadu Chacko. Objections if and may be forwarded to Embassy of India, 4 Square Plaza, MC Road, Opposite Mahadeva Temple, Nagampadam, Kottayam, Kerala 686001. (C 5470)

I, Sajan Joseph Mathew, holder of Indian Passport No. J5619340, having permanent address as Row House No. 25, Royal Park, near Navare Nagar, GUT No. 49, B-Cabin Road, Ambernath E 421501, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given name: Mathew Sajan and Surname Joseph. (C 5687)

MATRIMONIAL

Proposal required for Pakistani boy MSC, working as Software Engineer in Kuwait Oil Company, belonging to Kashmiri family. Interested may contact with family details and photo on WhatsApp: +965-66903574, +92-333-4826247. (C 5471)

32 year old Goan Catholic boy looking for suitable Goan Catholic life partner. He has graduated in industrial engineering from a reputed university in the US. He is currently employed in Kuwait and looking forward to settle down very soon. He is 5'10" tall, fair and good looking. If you think you are the right match please contact at 96765696 ASAP. Email: if8016037@gmail.com (C 5454) 10-10-2019

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Relatively hot and Clouds will increase gradually with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h with a slight chance for scattered light rain later on.

BY NIGHT: Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind to variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 07/11/2019 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	29 °C	23 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	30 °C	17 °C		
ABDALY	30 °C	16 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	30 °C	20 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	28 °C	23 °C		
AHMADI	29 °C	22 °C		
NUWAISIB	32 °C	19 °C		
WAFRA	31 °C	17 °C		
SALMY	31 °C	20 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	11/08	Partly cloudy	31 °C	16 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 28 km/h
Saturday	11/09	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	29 °C	18 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 28 km/h
Sunday	11/10	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	29 °C	19 °C	VRB-NE	10 - 40 km/h
Monday	11/11	Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	28 °C	19 °C	VRB	06 - 22 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	04:45
Sunrise	06:06
Zuhr	11:32
Asr	14:36
Sunset	16:58
Isha	18:18

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	30 °C
MIN. Temp.	19 °C
MAX. RH	49 %
MIN. RH	18 %
MAX. Wind	N 43 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4

Business

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DUBAI: An Emirates Airline A380. Emirates Airline, the largest carrier in the Middle East, yesterday reported a 282-percent rise in half-year net profits, mainly thanks to a drop in operating costs and fuel prices — AFP

Emirates Airline profits nearly triple IndiGo, Qatar Airways sign codeshare agreement

DUBAI: Emirates Airline, the largest carrier in the Middle East, yesterday reported a 282-percent rise in half-year net profits, mainly thanks to a drop in operating costs and fuel prices. The result was a change of fortunes for the Dubai carrier, which for the full-year to the end of March took a heavy hit from high oil prices and currency fluctuations. The carrier said it posted a net profit of \$235 million in the first six months of the current financial year compared to just \$62 million in the same period last year. The airline attributed the soaring profits to a sharp drop in the cost of fuel which accounts for almost a third of company spending.

An eight-percent drop in operating costs and a rise in the number of passengers per flight also contributed to the healthy results. "The lower fuel cost was a welcome respite as we saw our fuel bill drop by AED 2.0 billion (\$545 million) compared to the same period last year," Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum, Chairman and CEO of Emirates Airline and Group, said in a statement.

"However, unfavourable currency movements wiped off approximately AED 1.2 billion (\$327 million) from our profits," Sheikh Ahmed said. On average, fuel costs were 13 percent lower compared to the same period last year, the airline said. In the last full year, Emirates' net profit dived 69 percent to just \$237 million due to high oil prices and currency fluctuations.

"The global outlook is difficult to predict, but we expect the airline and travel industry to continue facing headwinds over the next six months with stiff competition adding downward pressure on margins," Sheikh Ahmed said. The airline said its revenue in the April to September period dropped three percent to \$12.9 billion compared to \$13.3 billion in the same period last year.

Emirates carried 29.6 million passengers in the six-month period, down two percent. The airline serves a global network spanning over 158 destinations in 84 countries. Its fleet stands at 267 large aircraft, including over more than 100 Airbus 380 superjumbos.

Code-share deal

India's IndiGo announced a codeshare agreement with Qatar Airways yesterday, just days after ordering 300 Airbus planes, as the low-cost airline boosts its foreign ambitions and the Gulf carrier taps into the booming domestic market. The agreement will allow Qatar Airways to put its passengers on the Indian carrier's flights between Doha and Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad.

India's aviation industry has seen tremendous growth in recent years, recording an increase of 18 percent in the numbers of flyers in 2018 with nearly 140 million people flying domestically.

IndiGo—which placed orders for 300 A320neo family aircraft worth over \$33.2 billion in late October—is the largest low-cost private airline in the South Asian nation with some 47 percent of local market share. But the airline has been dogged by a corporate governance dispute between co-founders Rakesh Gangwal and Rahul Bhatia that has stoked investor concerns.

Shares in IndiGo's parent company Inter-Globe Aviation were up by almost two percent in Mumbai after the announcement. The codeshare agreement could set "the stage for a possible future alliance," editor of website Bangalore Aviation website, Devesh Agarwal, said.

Qatar Airways has been keen to tap into the fast-growing market, but is not allowed to start a new carrier in India due to local ownership rules. Chief executive Akbar Al Baker told the Press Trust of India that Qatar Airways was "interested in buying stake in IndiGo, but this is not the right time as issues among promoters are yet to be resolved".

Despite the growth in passenger numbers, high operating costs, including rising fuel prices and a decline in the Indian rupee's value against the dollar, have hit the industry hard. IndiGo registered a loss of 10.7 billion rupees (\$150 million) in the last quarter ending September. — AFP

CBK: Money supply rose 1.4% in Sept

KUWAIT: Kuwait's money supply (M2) rose 1.4 percent in September on monthly basis recording KD 38 billion (\$125.5 billion), the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said yesterday. The CBK economic research department reported that deposits in the Kuwaiti dinar by the private sector in the local banks climbed in September to KD 33.7 billion (\$111 billion).

Those of foreign currencies climbed 7.7 percent reaching KD 2.7 billion (\$8.9 billion), where this sector overall deposits amounted to KD 36.4 billion (\$120 billion). Local banks' claims on the CBK in the Kuwaiti dinar, represented by the CBK bonds, also in September, settled at KD 2.9 billion (\$9.5 billion). Total local banks assets increased 1.1 percent, reaching \$6.9 billion (\$22.7 billion).

Net foreign (currencies) assets in the domestic banks climbed 0.5 percent to KD 7.9 billion (\$26 billion), while time deposits with the CBK rose by 24 percent, reaching KD 1.8 billion (\$5.9 billion). Residents' private sector deposits, in September, rose by 0.6 percent, as compared to the August level, posting KD 38 billion (\$125 billion). Meanwhile, average interest rates on treasury bonds of one-year maturity settled at 3.25 percent. Financing of Kuwaiti imports jumped in September 23.8 percent. Average USD rate against the KD steadied at 303.5 fils per USD. — KUNA

Business

Trade truce may not be enough to ignite emerging-market currencies

Trump statement on trade deal sets off a flurry of optimism

JOHANNESBURG: Emerging-market currencies will need a reprieve from global trade tensions to strengthen as they head into a new year filled with uncertainty and a world economy showing signs of a synchronized slowdown, a Reuters poll of strategists showed.

US President Donald Trump's suggestion he may sign a trade deal with Chinese President Xi Jinping set off a flurry of optimism that representatives from the world's two largest economies would sign a preliminary agreement soon. The two countries have agreed to cancel in phases tariffs imposed during their months-long trade war, the Chinese commerce minister said yesterday. But no timetable was laid out. "We retain our skepticism that over the mid-term horizon emerging markets will be able to hold to their gains (as) 2020 is likely to be a challenging year for the global economy," said Piotr Matys, senior emerging markets strategist at Rabobank.

"That said, the prospect of a short-term trade truce could fuel capital inflows to emerging markets over the short-term horizon, leading to further currency gains," he said. But if nothing comes of trade talks or they are postponed once again, the US dollar may remain resilient.

In Asia, the Chinese yuan is predicted to weaken against the dollar over the coming year despite recent gains. The Indian rupee is also unlikely to recoup this year's losses. If current trends hold up, the Russian rouble, up about 8 percent year to date, will end the year as the

best-performing key emerging market currency. The latest Reuters poll predicted it would be relatively steady at 65.00 per dollar in 12 months.

The Turkish lira, down about 8 percent, is set to finish 2019 as the second-weakest performer after Argentina's peso, which has been clobbered by a financial crisis. Problems in Latin America's third-biggest economy have not spread to other currencies in the region, as some feared. But forecasts for Brazil's real and Mexico's peso reflect caution over a weak economic outlook.

Governments in both countries kept public finances in check this year, but officials have failed to deliver on promises of healthier growth as private investment remained muted.

Mexican businesses are reluctant to begin major projects, fearing conflict with an administration they consider too interventionist. Their Brazilian peers are still waiting for opportunities from much-vaunted reforms. A turnaround in hopes for the global economy is a condition under which South Africa's rand usually shines. If it holds on to the 2 percent-plus gains it has made this week, it's likely to top the list of 20 emerging-market currencies tracked by Reuters on Refinitiv data this month.

Medians from the latest Reuters FX poll forecast the rand will be relatively steady at 14.89/percent in 12 months. But domestic challenges lie ahead. Moody's left South Africa's credit rating on the brink of junk status on Friday, when it revised the outlook on the country's last invest-

ment-grade credit rating to "negative". Moody's said it revised its "Baa" rating, the lowest rung of investment grade, because the outlook for economic growth deteriorated and debt rose.

"I think the rand forecast suggests limited upside in the South African economy in the next

year—a weak fundamental outlook has been priced in," said Elize Kruger, senior economist at NKC African Economics. A separate Reuters poll expects South Africa's economy to grow 1.2 percent in 2020, compared with a forecast for just 0.6 percent growth this year. — Reuters

Most other Asian markets made slight gains because of weakness in technology stocks. Istanbul-listed shares rose 1.3 percent and South African shares rose 0.3 percent. Analysts warned of Washington's reaction to China's stance.

"China's desire to roll back more US tariffs is likely to require more time to negotiate terms," Philip Wee, FX strategist at DBS Group, wrote in a client note.

Optimism over the trade talks ebbed after Reuters reported on Wednesday that a meeting between US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping to sign the interim trade deal might be delayed until December.

"The erratic news flow doesn't mean progress isn't being made - far from it. And in that regard some optimism is warranted," Societe Generale's Kit Juckes said in a note. "That doesn't mean the US is certain to escape further slowdown, or even recession next year, but it does mean that a big negative shock is unlikely and maybe that will continue to put a floor under the most trade-sensitive currencies."

The Philippine peso rose 0.3 percent in its eighth day of gains in the past 10 sessions after data showed the economy grew more than expected in the third quarter, fuelled by buoyant government spending and domestic demand. Investors will look for reaction in Brazil markets after the real slumped 2 percent on Wednesday. The country's biggest-ever oil auction disappointed investors when only the state-owned oil company Petrobras and Chinese state companies CNOOC and CNODC submitted bids. — Reuters



RIYADH: A Saudi man monitors an exchange board at the Stock Exchange Market (Tadawul) bourse in Riyadh. — AFP

Austrian Airlines to slash jobs over 'brutal competition'

FRANKFURT: Lufthansa yesterday said it was slashing 700 to 800 jobs at its Austrian Airlines subsidiary, more than a tenth of the workforce there, to cut costs in the face of "brutal competition" from rival carriers. Lufthansa CEO Carsten Spohr said the cull would help Austrian Airlines, which could end the year in the red, achieve "savings of 90 million euros (\$100 million) per year" from the end of 2021.

The small carrier was locked "in the mother of all battles" in Vienna with low-cost rivals Ryanair and Wizz Air, Spohr told reporters in a conference call after announcing a rise in the group's third-quarter revenues. News of the jobs cull sent shares in Lufthansa soaring by 8.8 percent to 17.6 euros by 1140 GMT, putting it at the top of the blue-chip DAX index in Frankfurt.

"We have to reposition ourselves to be able to survive in the brutal competition with budget carriers," Austrian Airlines boss Alexis

von Hoensbroech said in a separate statement. The planned job cuts amount to a loss of 700 to 800 full-time jobs by the end of 2021, out of a total workforce of 7,000 people, the statement added. Most of the job losses will come from not replacing departing workers. The Lufthansa group—which also includes Eurowings, Brussels and Swiss airlines—earlier yesterday said it was on track to meet its full-year outlook despite a "challenging market environment". The carrier booked a net profit of 1.15 billion euros (\$1.27 billion) between July and September, up four percent year-on-year.

But the jump was mainly thanks to accounting effects, with the group's operating profit adjusted for some one-off items, actually falling eight percent to 1.3 billion euros.

Lufthansa said it had faced higher than expected fuel costs that were only partially offset by cost-cutting efforts. And like rival airlines it was grappling with "a general slowdown in the global economy", it said in a statement. Revenues for the period were up two percent to 10.2 billion euros.

Lufthansa's chief financial officer Ulrik Svensson said it was "vital" that the group took action "to further reduce our costs".

Aside from the job losses at Austrian Airlines, the group is hoping that a renewed focus on the Vienna hub and aircraft replacements will further trim costs at the struggling subsidiary. — AFP

Trade-exposed Asia FX gains as China suggests rollback in tariffs

LONDON: Trade-sensitive Asian currencies gained yesterday after China said Beijing and Washington have agreed to remove additional tariffs imposed during their trade dispute. The Korean won jumped 0.6 percent to trade near four-month highs. The Chinese yuan strengthened about 0.4 percent to trade at 6.98 per dollar in offshore trading.

South Africa's rand gained 0.4 percent as data showed net foreign reserves rose in October from September and President Cyril Ramaphosa secured around 360 billion rand (\$24 billion) of investment pledges from businesses.

An official from the Chinese commerce ministry said Washington and Beijing have agreed in the past two weeks to cancel tariffs in different phases. Both sides must simultaneously cancel some tariffs on each other's goods to reach a phase-one trade deal, the official said; the proportion of tariffs cancelled must be the same, and how many tariffs should be cancelled can be negotiated.

The MSCI emerging-market stocks index rose 0.23 percent. Chinese stocks closed flat.

EU sees Germany keeping budget surplus, Italy's debt to shoot up

Eurozone fiscal stance to remain neutral despite slowdown

BRUSSELS: The eurozone will restrain spending under draft budget plans submitted by the bloc's governments, the European Commission forecast yesterday, despite calls to counter a worsening economic slowdown. In its quarterly economic forecasts, Brussels said Germany, the largest economy in the 19-country bloc, would keep a budget surplus at least until 2021, although the surplus would narrow.

High-debt countries would keep spending, despite recommendations for thriftiness. France's deficit would be above the EU ceiling this year and Italy's debt would grow to nearly 140 percent of output, the Commission predicted. Despite a worsening growth outlook, Germany is set to maintain a large budget surplus this year at 1.2 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP). The surplus will narrow to 0.6 percent of GDP next year, and 0.2 percent in 2021, the Commission forecast.

The Netherlands, another euro zone state that could spend more, is set for a surplus of 1.5 percent of output this year, 0.5 percent next and 0.4 percent in 2021.

EU economics commissioner Pierre Moscovici praised the reduction of budget surpluses but said more could be done. With economies weakening, he said it was probably time to change tack in the bloc's fiscal policy, which has so far focused on cutting deficits instead of boosting growth.

"When it starts to get cold, it is perhaps the

moment to turn up the heating," Moscovici told a news conference.

Debts

High-debt countries are expected to run large budget deficits, despite EU recommendations to control their spending. That could step up economic divergence within the euro currency area and increase criticism against EU fiscal rules that have failed to address imbalances and are perceived by many as too strict. Moscovici, a French socialist politician, urged EU states to reconsider fiscal rules that were hastily tightened nearly a decade ago during the bloc's debt crisis. The Commission is reviewing those regulations.

Italy, which has the largest debt in absolute terms in the European Union, is to increase its debt burden to 136.2 percent of GDP this year. It would continue rising to 136.8 percent next year and to 137.4 percent in 2021, the Commission says. The EU executive's forecasts diverge from the Italian government's estimates. Rome expects the debt to go down next year to 135.2 percent of output and to keep falling in 2021. Countries with a debt above 60 percent of GDP are required gradually to reduce it, under EU fiscal rules.

The EU executive also forecast Italy's structural deficit, which excludes one-off expenditures and revenues and is key in the Commission's assessment of compliance with EU



BRUSSELS: European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs Pierre Moscovici poses during a press conference presenting the Autumn 2019 European Economic Forecast in Brussels yesterday. — AFP

fiscal rules, to worsen to 2.2 percent of GDP this year and 2.5 percent in 2020, contrary to rules dictating it should improve.

However, Moscovici said the Commission was not considering at this stage opening a disciplinary procedure against Italy over the country's planned budget. The EU executive is expected to publish its assessment of eurozone states' budgets on Nov. 20. Last year, a prolonged row over the budget proposed by the former eurosceptic Italian government rattled markets and

forced Rome to change it.

France, which has a debt close to 100 percent of output, is also spending more this year and is expected to raise its budget deficit to 3.1 percent of GDP, the Commission estimates, above the EU's 3.0 percent ceiling. A one-off cut in employers' social contributions increased last year's deficit by 0.3 percentage point, the Commission estimated. France's deficit is forecast to fall to 2.2 percent next year and remain at that level in 2021, the Commission said. — Reuters

Siemens meets 2019 goals but warns of 'risks'

BERLIN: German industrial behemoth Siemens yesterday reported a drop in annual net profits but said it had met its targets, and warned that geopolitical risks and a cooling economy would weigh on its performance in 2020. The group—which makes products from wind turbines to trains and medical scanners—booked a net profit of 5.6 billion euros (\$6.2 billion) in its 2018/2019 fiscal year, down nearly eight percent on the previous year.

The group mainly blamed accounting effects, noting that it had benefited last year from selling its shares in IT services firm Atos and lightbulb maker Osram. Operating profit climbed slightly to 8.9 billion euros, thanks to a jump in large orders. Revenues added 5.0 percent to hit 86.8 billion euros.

"The weakening of the global economy accelerated clearly during fiscal 2019," CEO Joe Kaeser said in a statement. Nevertheless, "we fully achieved our fiscal-year guidance in all aspects", he added.

The company said it had seen an uptick in orders across most of its divisions, in-



MUNICH: The CEO of German industrial giant Siemens Joe Kaeser (R) and CFO Ralf Thomas leave after the company's annual results press conference in Munich, southern Germany, yesterday. — AFP

cluding an order for a large gas power plant in France and strong demand for its medical imagery machines.

Siemens' factory automation division, however, suffered a drop in demand in the final months of the year, as it felt the pinch from the global slowdown in the car and machine-building industries. Looking ahead to its 2019/2020 fiscal

year, Siemens said it expected "to again achieve moderate growth" in revenues despite a "subdued" global economic outlook. Given the "risks particularly related to geopolitical and geoeconomic uncertainties", Siemens added that it was bracing for "a moderate decline" in market volume in the auto and factory equipment industry. — AFP

German industrial production tumbles in Sept

FRANKFURT: German industrial production slumped in September, official data showed yesterday, dashing hopes of a quick rebound and adding to the gloom over Europe's powerhouse economy.

Industrial output dropped by 0.6 percent month-on-month, federal statistics authority Destatis said, wiping out August's gain of 0.4 percent. Analysts surveyed by Factset had expected a smaller dip of 0.4 percent in September. Manufacturing firms fared worst, seeing a drop of 1.3 percent, in the latest sign of weakness among Germany's export-oriented companies.

The figures come a day after a surprise jump in German industrial orders offered a glimmer of hope in a country that is only narrowly expected to avoid tipping into recession this year.

"Today's industrial production data shows that any optimism on the outlook for German industry is premature," said ING Diba bank analyst Carsten Brzeski. "Even in case of some easing of the current trade conflicts and an end to the Brexit uncertainty, it will probably take until the first quarter of next year to see a significant rebound of German industry." The only bright spot in the data came from a strong rebound in the construction sector where output was up 1.8 percent. — AFP

Business

Ride-hailing market revs up in Egypt

Egypt among Uber's top 10 markets

CAIRO: Competition in Egypt's ride-hailing and tech-enabled transport market is heating up as rivals from global giant Uber to smaller local firms vie for a slice of the Middle East's largest market.

Operators say there is a lot more room for growth. Egypt's population will soon be swelling to 100 million. Taxis, minibuses, tuk-tuks and motorbikes shuttle passengers and deliveries through crowded, chaotic streets. The biggest players are Careem and Uber, which had its IPO in May and posted a wider third-quarter loss on Monday as it tries to outspend competitors.

Uber bought Careem for \$3.1 billion in March and the deal is expected to close in January. When the deal closes, Careem will become a wholly owned subsidiary of Uber but will continue to operate as an independent brand with independent management. Industry experts expect more mergers as start-ups try to gain market share for bus or motorbike services. Egypt is among Uber's top 10 markets globally, and is seen as a regional tech hub - start-ups such as digital payments firm Fawry have set up shop in a tech park outside Cairo.

Uber has 90,000 active drivers in Egypt, operates in about half of Egypt's 27 governorates, and is looking to expand next year to the resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh and southern Egypt, its Egypt General Manager, Ahmad Hammouda, told Reuters. Both Uber and Careem introduced

bus services late last year after the founding of local start-up Swvl, which runs buses along fixed routes via an app. Swvl has already expanded into Kenya and Pakistan.

Fast food

Besides buses and passenger vehicles, Uber and Careem motorbikes also compete with Egyptian start-up Halan, which launched in November 2017 and operates in more than 20 Egyptian cities as well as Sudan's capital, Khartoum. Tech-enabled food delivery is also expanding rapidly, where Uber Eats competes with Halan, local start-up Elmenus, Spanish start-up Glovo and Otlob. Germany's Delivery Hero bought Otlob in 2017 and has a stake in Glovo.

Halan uses motorbikes to deliver food, tuk-tuks for passenger transport and cargo tricycles for goods. It has partnerships with fast food chains including McDonald's, KFC and Pizza Hut in Egypt and is now targeting smaller restaurants. It has around 10,000 active drivers, CEO Mounir Nakhla told Reuters.

Launched in June 2011 as a catalogue of menus from restaurants, Elmenus began delivering food via its platform late last year and is due to start using its own delivery vehicles this month, its founder, Amir Allam, told Reuters. Glovo plans to invest 5 million euros (\$5.54 million) in the country, where it says smartphone



CAIRO: Taxis, minibuses, tuk-tuks and motorbikes shuttle passengers and deliveries through crowded, chaotic streets. — Reuters

use is growing rapidly but just one quarter of deliveries are ordered online. "There will come a time when somebody, or a couple of players,

will dominate," said Elmenus' Allam. "But this is still a long way to go because the market is growing massively." — Reuters

Deutsche Telekom cuts dividend despite profits

BONN: German communications giant Deutsche Telekom reported a jump in quarterly profits yesterday but cut its dividend for 2019, partly blaming "unexpectedly high" costs in the rollout of Germany's 5G network. The Bonn-based network operator said net profit from July to September jumped 23 percent to 1.37 billion euros (\$1.5 billion) compared with a year earlier.

Quarterly revenues were up 4.8 percent, allowing the group to breach to 20-billion-euro mark "for the first time in the company's history". "Earnings increased in all areas of the group in the first nine months of this year—with some of that growth in the double digits," CEO Tim Hoettges said in a statement. Nevertheless, the group announced it would lower its dividend payouts this year to 0.60 euros per share, down from 0.70 euros last year.

The decision came as a result of "unexpectedly high costs for the mobile spectrum auction in Germany", said the company, which is investing billions in super-fast 5G mobile networks. It also cited "greater clarity" over upcoming US spectrum auctions and less uncertainty over the planned mega-merger of its US offshoot T-Mobile with rival Sprint as reasons for the dividend cut. The US telecoms regulator this week approved the tie-up between the country's third and fourth largest carriers, but the deal could still stumble over an anti-trust challenge brought by more than a dozen US states. T-Mobile once again drove growth at Deutsche Telekom in the third quarter, gaining 1.7 million new customers to top 84 million and generating revenues of \$11.1 billion.

Looking ahead, the group raised its 2019 outlook saying it now expected underlying, or operating profits adjusted for special items, of 24.1 billion euros-up from 23.9 billion previously. — AFP

UK supermarket Sainsbury's sinks into red on overhaul

LONDON: Sainsbury's plunged into a net loss in the first half on costly store closures, the British supermarket said yesterday—and after it recently failed to merge with Walmart-owned Asda.

Sainsbury's chalked up a loss after tax of £38 million (\$49 million, 44 million euros) in the 28 weeks to September 21, the retailer said in a trading update. That contrasted with net profit of £123 million a year earlier. Pre-tax profit nosedived 92 percent to £9.0 million.

Sainsbury's, the nation's second biggest supermarket company after retail king Tesco, said yesterday that it took a £203-million charge in the first half, mostly owing to store closures. Sainsbury's recently outlined plans to strip out £500 million in costs over the next five years. In September, the supermarket giant said it would shut some of its Argos branches that sell



household goods and toys. At the same time, however, the supermarket group will open 80 Argos units inside existing Sainsbury's stores. Sainsbury's is also shutting some of its own stores, big and small, while opening branches elsewhere. "We have set out our plan to create one multi brand, multi-channel business," Sainsbury's chief executive Mike Coupe said in yesterday's results statement. "This will make the combined Sainsbury's and Argos offer much more accessible for customers and gives us the opportunity to make our business more efficient." Back in May, regulators blocked a mega-merger of Sainsbury's and UK supermarket rival Asda. —AFP

Greece to offer tax incentives

ATHENS: Greece will offer tax incentives to lure wealthy individuals to move their tax residence to the country as part of draft legislation on tax relief set to be announced yesterday, a senior government official said. Greece's conservative government is keen on attracting investments to boost the recovering economy's growth prospects. Tax relief included in the draft legislation will include a cut in the corporate tax rate to 24 percent from 28 percent and lowering the tax rate on dividends to 5 percent from 10 percent.

The so-called non-dom program will offer qualified wealthy investors who opt to shift their tax residence to the country a flat

tax of 100,000 euros (\$110,710) on global incomes earned outside Greece annually. "The tax incentive will run for a duration of up to 15-years and will include the benefit of no inheritance tax for assets outside Greece," a senior government official told Reuters. One of the requirements to qualify will be residing in the country for at least 183 days per year and making an investment of at least 500,000 euros within three years.

"The investment can be in real estate, stocks or bonds. If the investment reaches 1.5 million euros then the flat tax is cut by half," the official said. Investments of 3 million euros will reduce the flat tax to just 25,000 euros. There will also be a grandfathering clause protecting investors from policy changes by future governments. "Once you're in the program, you're in. A future government cannot get you out," the official said. The government's rationale is that the tax incentive can entice deep-pocketed investors, including shipping magnates, to take up the offer and move to Greece, boosting investments. — Reuters

Aston Martin swings to third quarter loss as volumes drop

Firm says it will meet market's core earnings expectations

LONDON: Luxury British carmaker Aston Martin swung to a third-quarter loss yesterday, saying its full-year wholesale volumes would be lower than previously guided after slumping demand in Europe and Asia. Volumes to dealers fell 16 percent to 1,497 cars in the three months to the end of September as demand in Europe, the Middle East and Africa area dropped 17 percent and Asia was down by a third, hit by weak demand for the company's Vantage model.

The 106-year firm, famed for being fictional agent James Bond's brand of choice, is taking action to cut costs and hopes the launch of its first sport utility vehicle, the DBX, at a new factory in Wales, will boost performance next year. "We're essentially holding the cost of a complete factory right now without the benefit of the revenues coming in... so from that point of view of course it's a really important model," Chief Executive Andy Palmer told Reuters.

Aston, based in Gaydon near Birmingham, posted a 13.5 million-pound loss in the three months to the end of September, but said it still expects to meet market expectations of core earnings at around 203 million pounds (\$261

million). The global automotive industry has undergone a torrid year, hit by declining sales in China, trade war worries between the world's two biggest economies, a slump in diesel sales in Europe and the need to invest heavily in electrification.

But Aston has also suffered since its flotation in October last year when shares launched at 19 pounds (\$24.50) before dropping for months and languishing at between 4 and 5 pounds for the last few weeks. Yesterday, however, shares recovered slightly, up 7 percent to 446 pence at 0903 GMT.

Earlier this year, the company announced it was raising \$150 million in debt at a 12 percent interest rate to bolster its balance sheet ahead of the launch of the DBX.

Yesterday, Aston said its net interest expense guidance for 2019 now stood at around 83 million pounds, also affected by the impact of unhedged expenses in US dollars, with prior guidance at roughly 70 million pounds. Aston, which is primarily owned by Italian and Kuwaiti private equity groups, and not part of a wider automotive group, said it could thrive on its own alongside its work with German



ZURICH: An Aston Martin DBS Superleggera Volante convertible sports car is displayed at the 33th Auto Zuerich Car Show in Zurich, Switzerland. — Reuters

carmaker Daimler, which has a small stake in the firm.

"Our relationship with Daimler is also im-

portant so we're not completely alone. We obviously have their technology to fall back on," said Palmer. — Reuters

ArcelorMittal reports higher losses amid rising costs

PARIS: Steel giant ArcelorMittal said yesterday lower prices and rising costs of raw materials pushed up losses in the third quarter. The world's biggest steel maker reported a net loss of \$539 million (587 million euros) for the three-month period ending September 30, after a loss of 447 million in the second quarter. "As anticipated, we continued to face tough market conditions in the third quarter, characterized by low steel prices coupled with high raw material costs," CEO Lakshmi Mittal was quoted as saying in a statement.

"In these markets, we remain focused on our own initiatives to improve performance and our priority is to reduce costs, adapt production and focus on ensuring the business remains cash flow positive".

He said the group expects a "substantial working capital release" in the fourth quarter which should enable it to further reduce net debt year on year. The Luxembourg-based multinational maintained its forecast for a rise in global steel consumption this year, although in a range of between 0.5 and 1 percent. But the outlook for Europe



TARANTO: A general view shows the ArcelorMittal Italia steel plant (ex Ilva) yesterday in Taranto, southern Italy. — AFP

and the United States was revised downwards as the wider industry endures job cutbacks on fierce competition as well as the effects of US tariffs imposed last year.

Revenues for the third quarter totaled \$19.6 billion, down 10.2 percent year-on-year, and down 13.7 percent from the previous quarter, the group said.

On Wednesday, Italy's prime minister

said ArcelorMittal had pulled out of an agreement to buy struggling Italian firm Ilva because of production concerns, warning the company wants to cut 5,000 jobs at one of its plants.

The group retreated from its plan to buy the steel producer, blaming a decision by Rome to not grant it immunity from prosecution over the heavily polluting Taranto plant. — AFP

S Korea's Aekyung, 2 others make binding bids for Asiana Airlines stake

SEOUL: Three bidders, including a consortium led by South Korean conglomerate Aekyung, submitted formal bids for a controlling stake in Asiana Airlines Inc., the country's No. 2 carrier, company officials said yesterday. Shares of the carrier slid nearly 5.2 percent and those of its low-cost arm, Air Busan Co Ltd, ended nearly flat, as the company attracted no bids from major funds and larger conglomerates like SK Group and GS Group.

South Korean airlines have struggled with losses and debt amid rising competition from budget rivals, falling tourism traffic between South Korea and Japan, higher fuel costs and unfavourable currencies.

The 31.05 percent stake, worth about 365 billion won (\$315.28 million) at current prices, was offered for sale by top shareholder Kumho Industrial Co Ltd as it struggles to reduce debt. The price is expected to grow sharply, as the buyer will also take on new shares issued by the loss-making carrier, plus a premium, analysts say. The other two bidders are a consortium of Hyundai Development, brokerage Mirae Asset Daewoo and activist fund KCGI, which partnered with BankerStreet for the bid.

It will take about a week to choose a preferred bidder, top shareholder Kumho Industrial said, although that schedule could change. "We aim to name the preferred bidder as soon as possible and close the deal accordingly," it said in a statement. Kumho Industrial in April hired Credit Suisse to manage the sale of its stake. — Reuters

Sports

England bowler Barrett shines at Kuwait international tournament

Kuwait's Al-Shaibi grabs the junior title



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: England bowler Dominic Barrett won the 13th Kuwait International Open Tournament, which was the last round of the International League for 2019 - with prizes totaling \$218,000. Meanwhile, America's Danielle McEwan won the women's title, while Kuwait's Suleiman Al-Shaibi won the junior title (for Kuwaitis only).

Barrett defeated Iceland's Arnar Johnson in the final match which marked the end of Kuwait Open at Kuwait Bowling Center with the participation of 112 players. Meanwhile Canada's Mitch Hupe ended in third place. He lost to Barrett in a decisive match while Vanezuella's

Iidemaro Ruiz took fourth. Hong Kong's Michael Mak took fifth place. Barrette received top prize of \$50,000 Johnson won \$25,000 while Hupe \$12000.

The five players reached the decisive round for ending in the top five places during the third round which saw a strong struggle between 16 players in which Kuwait's Mustafa Al-Musawi ended in the 10th place and American woman Danielle McEwan ended in twelfth. McEwan defeated her compatriot Liz Johnson in the final match, leaving Columbia's Maria Rodriguez in third. In the Junior's category, Al-Shuaibi defeated Faisal Saleem in the final match, in which Ali Ashkanani took bronze.



DTM's Berger unveils electric touring car series concept

LONDON: German Touring Car (DTM) boss Gerhard Berger unveiled yesterday a proposed electric series with high-performance cars racing at Formula One speeds and with battery changes carried out by robots. If the concept catches on with manufacturers, he said the series could run alongside the mostly European-focused DTM with cars powered by electricity from battery or hydrogen fuel cell technology.

Large industrial robots would be used to remove and replace the battery pack or hydrogen tank as well as all four wheels at pit stops. Former F1 driver Berger, the chairman of DTM promoter ITR, said the cars would use largely standardised features

and produce more than 1,000 brake horsepower (bhp) and hit more than 300kph (185mph).

"I think it's clear that we have all got much more sensitive to support in a right way and to help improve the situation on our planet," Berger told Reuters in a telephone interview. "I thought for us as a racing platform, what could we really do?" added the Austrian. With regard to a timeframe for the concept, he said that would depend on how fans, sponsors and manufacturers reacted and it would also be a financial and technical challenge.

Berger, a Formula One race winner with Benetton, Ferrari and McLaren, said manufacturers had different ideas about how future technologies and cars should look, and nobody really knew which would prevail. So he had proposed electric and hydrogen, in a similar fashion to Formula One of old when normally aspirated petrol engines competed against turbochargers, to speed up technological advances. Motorsport already has an all-electric series in Formula E, a city-based series whose single-seater cars can reach top speeds of 280kph with maximum power equivalent to 335bhp.

Formula One cars go more than 370kph at Italy's Monza or on Baku's long straight. The latest crop of DTM cars produce some 600bhp. Nico Rosberg, the 2016 Formula One world champion, said this year that the DTM-which features Audi, BMW and Aston Martin after Mercedes withdrew-would have to embrace electric to survive as a manufacturer series. "One day, when all manufacturers sell electric cars, the DTM must also be electric, that's for sure," the German, whose 1982 F1 champion father Keke runs the title-winning Audi Sport Team Rosberg, told motorsport.com in June.

For Berger, such a switch would be contrary to the DTM's 'core DNA.' "Racing for me is 1,000 horsepower, racing for me is cars like a wild horse and showing who is the best driver who can handle it," he said. "When I see Formula E, as an example, it's too slow. Formula E is Formula Three level... this is not what the hardcore of motorsport likes to see. So we came to the idea of this robot change for batteries that would solve our problem. "It finally allows us to run 1,000 horsepower engines and I think fans are going to see spectacular racing as in the combustion engine series." — Reuters

76ers lose game to Jazz and Simmons to injury

Harden scores 36 as Rockets rout Warriors

PHILADELPHIA: Donovan Mitchell recorded 24 points, eight assists and five rebounds to lead the Utah Jazz to a 106-104 victory over visiting Philadelphia on Wednesday night at Salt Lake City on a night the 76ers lost guard Ben Simmons to a shoulder injury. Bojan Bogdanovic added 20 points, six rebounds and five assists, and Joe Ingles scored a season-best 16 points off the bench as Utah halted a two-game slide. Mike Conley scored 15 points and Rudy Gobert contributed 14 points, 16 rebounds and three steals.

Simmons had just two points in 10 minutes before departing with 5:20 left in the second quarter with right shoulder soreness. He appeared to hurt the shoulder initially early in the first quarter when he banged it against the body of Utah defender Royce O'Neale. According to reports, Simmons sustained a sprained AC joint and will be re-evaluated. Joel Embiid registered 27 points and 16 rebounds but was just 5 of 16 from the field as Philadelphia lost its second straight game. Josh Richardson scored 24 points, Tobias Harris added 16 and Raul Neto had 11 for the 76ers.

BUCKS 129, CLIPPERS 124

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 38 points, 16 rebounds and nine assists to lead Milwaukee past host Los Angeles, which played without star forward Kawhi Leonard. Milwaukee's George Hill came off the bench to score 24 points, hitting 6 of 7 3-point attempts, while Eric Bledsoe had 20. Kyle Korver added 14 points for the Bucks, Khris Middleton chipped in 13, and Brook Lopez finished with 11 points and 12 rebounds. Montrezl Harrell, in his first start this season, scored a career-high 34 points to go along with 13 rebounds and five assists. Lou Williams also had 34 points to go with 11 assists, while Patrick Beverley contributed 20 points and 10 rebounds. Leonard sat out his second contest in eight games because of "load management." Los Angeles has lost both contests.

PISTONS 122, KNICKS 102

Andre Drummond had 27 points, 12 rebounds and seven assists, and Tony Snell made all nine of his shot attempts while scoring a season-high 24 points as host Detroit cruised past New York. Markieff Morris supplied 22 points and five assists for the Pistons, who were once again without three of their top players. All-Star forward Blake Griffin remained sidelined due to hamstring and knee injuries. The team's top point guards, Reggie Jackson (back) and Derrick Rose (hamstring), were also in street clothes. Julius Randle led the Knicks with 20 points. Marcus Morris contributed 18 points, while rookie RJ Barrett had 15 points, six rebounds and eight assists for New York, which has lost four straight and seven of eight to start the season.

PACERS 121, WIZARDS 106

TJ Warren scored 21 points, and Indiana downed Washington in Indianapolis. Warren shot 9 of 15 from the field, and Doug McDermott connected on four 3-pointers to finish with 19 points as seven Pacers scored in double figures.

Indiana's Domantas Sabonis collected 13 points and a career-high-tying 17 rebounds before fouling out in his return from a two-game absence caused by a bruised left calf. Aaron Holiday scored 18 points as the Pacers recorded a fourth win in their past five outings. Washington's Bradley Beal scored 30 points despite shooting just 1 of 12 from 3-point range. Thomas Bryant had 20 points and 11 rebounds, and CJ Miles added 15 points for the Wizards, who have lost four of their past five.

ROCKETS 129, WARRIORS 112

James Harden, Clint Capela and PJ Tucker recorded double-doubles as host Houston breezed past short-handed Golden State. Harden paired a game-high 36 points with 13 assists to lead the charge. Tucker posted 22 points and 11 rebounds while Capela had 19 points, 16 boards and six blocks. All five Houston starters scored in double figures. The Warriors, down three starters (Stephen Curry, Draymond Green, D'Angelo Russell) due to injury, mustered an answer to every Rockets run until Harden led a 21-6 surge to close the first half. Alec Burks, instrumental in keeping the Warriors within range in the first half, scored 28 points in 31 minutes off the bench.

BULLS 113, HAWKS 93

Tomas Satoransky scored a career-high 27 points, and Chicago ended a two-game losing streak with an easy win in Atlanta. Satoransky entered the game averaging 6.5 points and had not scored in double figures all season. On Wednesday, he went 10-for-13 from the field, 4-for-5 on 3-pointers, and added seven rebounds and eight assists. Otto Porter Jr. scored 13 points on 5-for-6 shooting but exited in the first half and did not return due to a left foot contusion. The Hawks struggled without forward John Collins, who was serving the second game of a 25-game suspension for violating the NBA's drug policy. Jabari Parker, his replacement in the starting lineup, contributed a team-high 18 points, but Trae Young scored only nine points and was 0-for-8 on 3-point tries.

MAVERICKS 107, MAGIC 106

Dorian Finney-Smith put Dallas ahead for good with a 3-pointer with 3:36 remaining, and the Mavericks drew two charging calls on Orlando's Aaron Gordon in the final seconds to preserve a victory over the visiting Magic. Luka Doncic capped a 27-point effort with a pair of free throws with 2:31 remaining to give the Mavericks a 107-102 lead. Dallas didn't score again, including two missed free throws by Seth Curry with a chance to extend a 107-106 advantage with seven seconds left, but Orlando couldn't take advantage. Gordon scored 23 points, and the Magic got 19 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists from Nikola Vucevic. Jonathan Isaac added 13 points, 10 rebounds, five assists, four steals and six blocks.

RAPTORS 124, KINGS 120

Kyle Lowry scored 24 points, Pascal Siakam added 23 points and 13 rebounds, and



SAN ANTONIO: James Harden #13 of the Houston Rockets shoots the ball against the Golden State Warriors on November 6, 2019 at the Toyota Center in San Antonio, Texas. — AFP

Toronto defeated visiting Sacramento. Serge Ibaka scored 21 points, OG Anunoby contributed a season-best 18 points, and Marc Gasol and Fred VanVleet each had 12 for the Raptors. Harrison Barnes led Sacramento with 26 points. Bogdan Bogdanovic added 22 points off the bench, and Buddy Hield scored 21 for the Kings, who tied a franchise record with 20 made 3-pointers.

GRIZZLIES 137, TIMBERWOLVES 121

Dillon Brooks and Jae Crowder combined to

make nine 3-pointers, and Ja Morant helped put the game away in the fourth as host Memphis topped Minnesota. The Grizzlies snapped a three-game losing skid in a game they led virtually wire to wire. A season-high 37-point first quarter set them on their way. Brooks scored 31 points, Morant had 26, and Crowder and Brandon Clarke contributed 18 apiece. The Timberwolves stayed within striking distance much of the game paced by Andrew Wiggins' 30 points. Karl-Anthony Towns 25 points and 13 rebounds in his return from a two-game suspension. — Reuters

Two Indian players arrested in growing 'spot-fixing' scandal

NEW DELHI: Two former Indian Premier League players have been arrested for spot-fixing in a scandal-ridden regional tournament, police said yesterday. Wicketkeeper-batsman CM Gautam and Abrar Kazi were arrested in Bangalore by a special unit investigating corruption and fixing in the Karnataka Premier League. Gautam, the 33-year-old former captain of Bellary Tuskers, and teammate Kazi allegedly accepted \$28,000 each for "slow batting" in this year's tournament final against Hubli Tigers. The Tuskers lost the game by eight runs.

"The Central Crime Branch has made two important arrests in the KPL spot-fixing scandal," Sandeep Patil, Joint Commissioner of Police, told AFP, naming Gautam and Kazi. "They did spot-fixing in the KPL 2019 finals between Hubli and Bellary. They were paid two million rupees (\$28,000) for slow batting. "Also, they fixed another match against the Bangalore team. Further investigations are on and more arrests will be made."

Cricket has become a key battleground in the fight against spot-fixing-illegal bets on a certain part of the action, such as how many runs are scored in an over. The KPL has been under growing suspicion since Ashfaq Ali Thara, owner of a KPL team and a side in the Dubai T20 League, was arrested for placing bets and a possible role in fixing matches. Two more players were arrested on charges of betting and match-fixing.

The IPL, the world's wealthiest national league, was hit by a spot-fixing scandal in 2013 which resulted in two teams being banned for two years. Gautam was in the squad for Royal Challengers Bangalore, Mumbai Indians and Delhi Daredevils in the IPL. Kazi played one game for Bangalore in 2011. Twenty20 leagues around the world including the Pakistan Super League, Bangladesh Premier League and Dubai league have been hit by fixing scandals. Bangladesh Test captain Shakib Al Hasan was banned for two years last month after failing to report approaches by bookies. — AFP

Sports

High-flying 49ers set the pace off the field with real-time tech

Jets, Giants meet - looking to turn around awful starts

LONDON: The NFL's San Francisco 49ers are blazing a trail for sports clubs and franchises across the globe with their innovative approach to improving the fans' game-day experience at their Levi's Stadium. The 49ers' perfect start to the season is even better news for concession stallholders because, as chief revenue officer Brent Schoeb says, the food and drink taste better when the team are winning. An analytics team at the stadium in Santa Clara, California, monitors real-time data in areas such as ticketing and attendance, parking, food and retail.

All this feedback appears on screens in a suite specially devoted to the award-winning Executive Huddle project, created in partnership with German software company SAP. The statistics flooding in provide information on everything from whether there are queues for the car parks or long lines of fans at the gates of the stadium to whether the toilets are up to standard and the satisfaction levels with the concession stands.

"We do surveys after every game and we have conducted 300,000 surveys since the new stadium came into play (in 2014)," Schoeb told AFP after picking up the Leaders Sports Award for Innovation at a ceremony in London. "Now we are getting to the point of understanding of a good win and a bad loss. "A hot dog is warmer and tastes better, the car parking is a lot easier, the beer is cooler when you are winning than when you are losing."

'A FEW MORE BEERS'

Schoeb, who is in his second spell with the 49ers having previously worked in the NBA with the Memphis Grizzlies and for Indianapolis Motor Speedway and Indy 500, said the aim was to progress from being proactive to predictive. "With Ticketmaster, the minute a certain amount of scans hits in certain areas we can immediately react," he said. "For instance, if a queue is backing up for a car park we can switch the digital arrow to tell them to go to the next car park."

"We can tell how many people are coming through a gate in a certain time segment and we can switch them to one round the corner which is completely empty with digital signage or

alerts through the stadium app or tap them on the shoulder." Schoeb says once alerted, the analytics teams can direct employees to the relevant area of the stadium to resolve the issue. "The nice thing is with a year-and-a-half of data we can compare week one with this year from last," he said.

He gave the examples of a problem at a concession stand that fans particularly like: "There are a couple of unhappy faces and none last week so we can see that comparison and it sends out a signal to our teams." Schoeb said around two dozen teams globally had declared an interest in implementing the same system and it is thanks to 49ers president Al Guido that they have such an envied system. "We were one of the quicker teams to turn data round post match or event, managing it in three days," he said. "It allowed us to make decisions for next week's match."

"However, Al said it was not quick enough even though it was the NFL best practice at the time. "So one of our executives, Nikki Hawkins, went to meet SAP and visited Bayern Munich and a couple of their other partnerships. "She came back and said 'with their software platform I think we can get real time data on game day and take decisions on game day.'" Schoeb said the system meant both staff and spectators were satisfied. "It gives us peace of mind and getting you through in the quickest possible time is no doubt better for selling a few more beers," he said.

JETS, GIANTS MEET

Meanwhile, the rare regular-season meetings between the New York Jets and New York Giants usually serve as an opportunity for one fan base to determine bragging rights over the other. But on Sunday, when the Jets "host" the Giants in a battle of skidding MetLife Stadium tenants, the New York metropolitan area will be reminded just how bleak its football landscape has become.

The Jets and Giants are each coming off their most recent discouraging defeats. On Sunday, the visiting Jets suffered a 26-18 loss to the previously winless Miami Dolphins. A night later, the host Giants squandered a nine-point second-quarter lead and fell to the Dallas Cowboys, 37-

ability to bounce back and get some wins." Finley was named the starter during the Bengals' bye week, replacing longtime starter Andy Dalton. The objective for the Bengals is to make it as easy as possible on Finley. "Ryan is savvy. He's one-11th of this offense," guard Billy Price said. "We have to make sure we give him time. We have to do our job up front and make sure he stays clean."

Baltimore (6-2) has a four-game winning streak. The stretch includes a 23-17 home victory Oct. 13 against the Bengals. "We've continued to improve," Ravens coach John Harbaugh said. "I feel we've done that, and we have to continue to do that. ... The second half of the season begins in Cincinnati. We have to be better than Cincinnati." With the Bengals having an extra week to prepare, Harbaugh said he expects "we'll see some new things."

Plus, the Bengals could have receiver AJ Green in action for the first time this season as he comes back from an ankle injury, coach Zac Taylor said Wednesday. Taylor initially said he expected Green to play, but the wideout wound up not practicing Wednesday after experiencing discomfort during a morning walk-

through. For Cincinnati (0-8), the NFL's lone winless team, the result of the first meeting with the Ravens marks one of four outcomes decided by six points or less.

The Bengals are looking to Finley to change their fortunes. "Hopefully he can take charge, and he'll lead us," Bengals running back Joe Mixon said. "It's definitely a great test for him to see what he can do. I'm excited for him, and it will be a big week for him." For the Ravens, who are 3-1 on the road, this might look like a feast in facing an inexperienced quarterback. They caused trouble for Brady in Sunday night's 37-20 home victory, delivering the Patriots their first loss of the season. "It's probably more than a good win. It's behind us now," Harbaugh said. "These players have been great with that, and I expect them to be even better. I expect (defeating New England) is going to motivate them and excite them." Still, Harbaugh has identified some potential trouble spots. "(Cincinnati is) a rival game in their stadium," he said. "They're starting a new quarterback, a young quarterback." The Ravens' approach is to take nothing for granted. — Reuters



CALIFORNIA: In this file photo, Jimmie Ward, #20 of the San Francisco 49ers, reacts after making a tackle against the Cleveland Browns at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California. — AFP

18. The Jets (1-7) and Giants (2-7) haven't played each other while being this low at the same time since Sept 22, 1996, when the Giants edged the Jets, 13-6. The Giants finished 6-10 in Dan Reeves' final season as head coach, while the Jets went 1-15 under Rich Kotite, who was also dismissed following the season.

While Giants head coach Pat Shurmur hasn't exactly endeared himself to the Big Blue faithful, he isn't under as much fire as first-year Jets head coach Adam Gase, who is beginning to "inspire" comparisons to Kotite, who went 4-28 in his two years with the Jets. "We're 1-7," Gase told reporters this week. "Everybody feels like crap." The Giants aren't feeling much better. After Monday's loss, safety Mike Thomas told reporters the Giants need a win Sunday, "in the worst way. For everybody in this organization. Faculty, players, coaches, front office. For everybody. We need it, and we're going to find a way to get it."

Both teams will be hoping to see signs of progress from their embattled young quarter-

Winless Bengals unveil Finley vs red-hot Ravens

NORTH CAROLINA: The winless Cincinnati Bengals will introduce a new starting quarterback Sunday afternoon when rookie Ryan Finley steps into that role. That shouldn't faze the visiting Baltimore Ravens, who are coming off a conquering of Tom Brady and the New England Patriots. This sets up as a different kind of meeting between the Bengals and Ravens. "It's a lot different, but I think I'm ready for it," said Finley, who played in college for Boise State and then as a three-year starter for North Carolina State. "I'm confident in my ability to play, and I'm confident in this team's

Sports

Cilic pulls out of Croatia's Davis Cup squad over injury

World No 2 Pliskova parts ways with coach Martinez

ZAGREB: Defending champions Croatia will be without Marin Cilic in the Davis Cup finals later this month after the former US Open winner announced his withdrawal on Thursday because of a knee injury. Croatia, who beat previous winners France in last year's final, play the inaugural match in Madrid against Russia on November 18. "My recurring knee injury has continued to give me problems, and as the season progressed it was becoming more evident that surgery was inevitable," Cilic, world number 39, wrote on Facebook.

The "rehab work was successful enough that surgery is not necessary at this stage," he continued. "However, I will need to undergo a few minor interventions which will keep me off the tennis court for a longer period and unfortunately means I will not be able to compete at the Davis Cup this month." Adding that he was "extremely disappointed", the 31-year-old Croatian said he would dedicate himself to getting back into shape to kick off the 2020 season "healthier, more prepared, and more motivated than ever".

Cilic was supposed to play in a squad of five Croatian players which includes Borna Coric, Mate Pavic, Ivan Dodig and Nikola Pietrangeli. According to the Sportske Novosti daily paper, he

will be replaced by veteran Ivo Karlovic, 40. Davis Cup's new 18-team format has replaced the former World Group. The nations have been split into six three-team groups, with the winners and two best runners-up advancing to the quarter-finals. Russia and Croatia have been drawn alongside Spain in Group B.

WORLD NUMBER TWO

Meanwhile, world number two and recent WTA Finals semi-finalist Karolina Pliskova said yesterday she was parting ways with her Spanish coach Conchita Martinez. "I decided I will no longer work with Conchita," the 27-year-old Czech wrote on her Facebook page. "It was (a) tough decision as the season was great. Thank you for all this year and wish u only the best. Life is a change!!!" added the 2016 US Open finalist. Her manager and husband Michal Hrdlicka told the Czech news agency CTK they were in talks with a new coach, without disclosing the name.

"It has been an incredible year full of great moments and emotions," tweeted Martinez. "I wish Kaja and her team the best for the future," added the 47-year-old Wimbledon champion from 1994. Pliskova hired Martinez during last year's US Open and she immediately won the



Karolina Pliskova of Czech Republic

Pacific Open in Tokyo. She went on to win four WTA tournaments this year and reached the semi-finals at the Australian Open and at last

week's WTA Finals where she bowed out to world number one and later champion Ashleigh Barty. — Agencies

Barty eyes Fed Cup win to close out stellar season

MELBOURNE: World number one Ash Barty will look to crown her annus mirabilis by helping Australia to their first Fed Cup title in 45 years when she leads the host nation in the final against France in Perth this weekend. Barty's 2018 has been a season of individual triumphs, highlighted by her maiden Grand Slam title at the French Open and her WTA Finals win in Shenzhen on Sunday.

Yet she has also proved to be a superb team player throughout the Fed Cup campaign and enters the decider unbeaten in nine singles rubbers dating back to 2017. Barty was the difference when Australia downed Belarus 3-2 in the semi-finals in Brisbane in April, winning all three of her rubbers. That made her the first woman of any nation to win three rubbers in both the opening round and semi-finals of the tournament since the best-of-five format started in 1995.

If carrying the nation has proved a heavy burden, the 23-year-old has hidden it well and enthuses about the thrill of donning the 'green and gold'. "When you are playing for your country and you are playing in a Fed Cup final, it is pretty easy to get up and about and be as ready as you can," said Barty, who will anchor a team that also features Australia No. 2 Ajla Tomljanovic and veteran Sam Stosur. "It's a format that I love, I cherish it. This is going to be a really precious week."

SIMILARITIES

With seven titles, Australia are the third most-successful nation in the event after the United States (18) and the Czech Republic (11), who won five before the 1993 split with Slovakia and six after. But the Australians have barely registered in the last three decades, barring a solitary trip to the final in 1993. They last claimed the title in 1974 during a golden era for Australian tennis when former world number one Evonne Goolagong was in her pomp. Four decades on, local fans see encouraging similarities between the teams. Aboriginal Australian Goolagong led the nation to the 1974 title with victory in the final against the United States after winning a Grand Slam title at the Australian Open and the WTA Finals crown. Barty is Australia's first women's world number one since her mentor Goolagong and also the first indigenous Australian to win a Grand Slam title after the 68-year-old great.

Twice champions France have proved more successful than Australia in the modern era, claiming the 1997 and 2003 titles, while being beaten for the 2016 trophy by the Czech Republic. They boast depth and versatility in Caroline Garcia and Alize Cornet, and a formidable all-round player in the nation's top-ranked Kristina Mladenovic, who won the doubles title at the WTA Finals and beat Barty in singles in Rome early in the year. The Julien Benneteau-captained team are no strangers to Perth Arena, either, with Cornet having won the team-based Hopman Cup event at the venue in 2014 and Mladenovic winning it in 2017. "When you play a Fed Cup final with the number one in the world in the other side, and away, you cannot say that you have an advantage," Benneteau said. "But for sure, I have a lot of options for singles and doubles." — Reuters

Djokovic has world No1 Nadal in sights at London finale

LONDON: If Novak Djokovic is to claim the year-end number ranking for a record-equaling sixth time he will have to do it the hard way at the ATP Finals next week in London. The Serb was knocked off top spot by Rafael Nadal on Monday despite winning the Paris Masters last week and will need a strong finish alongside the River Thames to snatch it back.

Only Pete Sampras has finished a year on top six times and Djokovic's hopes of emulating the American are not in his own hands with Nadal leading by 640 points heading to the climax. Nadal, 33, is bidding to become the ATP's oldest year-end number but with 200 points awarded for round-robin wins, 400 for a semi-final win and 500 for winning the final the door is still ajar for Djokovic to deny him.

Spaniard Nadal has often struggled physically in London and pulled out of his Paris Masters semi-final against Denis Shapovalov last week citing an abdominal issue when victory would have put him virtually out of reach. He intends to play in London having been drawn in a round-robin group alongside 2018 ATP Finals champion

Alexander Zverev and debutants Daniil Medvedev and Stefanos Tsitsipas. If Nadal fails to win a round-robin match, Djokovic would still need to win two group matches and reach the final to dislodge him. Djokovic will also finish the year as number one by winning the title, providing Nadal does not reach the semis. Djokovic faces a tough group though, with six-time champion Roger Federer, French Open runner-up Dominic Thiem and Italian Matteo Berrettini, the third newcomer in this year's event, who he will play in Sunday's opening singles.

"It's an extremely difficult task considering who my opponents are going to be," Australian Open and Wimbledon champion Djokovic said. "As a consequence, if I manage to get the year-end number one, that would be fantastic. It is a motivation and a goal every day." Federer, ranked third, will be a particularly dangerous obstacle for Djokovic even if he has not added to his ATP Finals title haul since winning in 2011. The Swiss, who has a record 57 match wins at the event, bowed out to Zverev in the semi-finals last year but continues to defy the passing years at the age of 38. Last month he claimed the Swiss indoor title without dropping a set. It was his fourth title in 2019, during which he lost an epic Wimbledon final to Djokovic having held match points. The penultimate ATP Finals in London, before it moves to Turin, has a fresh look this year. Russian counter-puncher Medvedev has enjoyed an incredible breakthrough year and of the three debutants he looks the most likely to challenge for the title. — Reuters

Sports

Eto'o: African players 'not respected' in Ballon d'Or

'Western media dominate in Africa'

PARIS: African players still do not get the recognition they deserve, Cameroon legend Samuel Eto'o told AFP in an exclusive interview, as he hopes that this will finally be the year another player from the continent wins the Ballon d'Or. George Weah, the former Paris Saint-Germain and AC Milan striker who is now the president of Liberia, won the Ballon d'Or in 1995 but remains the only African player ever to have claimed the award. "Western media dominate our media in Africa, so they definitely have an influence. People prefer to see a Lionel Messi goal," Eto'o, 38, told AFP during a visit to Paris last month.

The former Barcelona star, once a teammate of Messi, believes that "African players are not respected" and are "not always properly appreciated". He recently hung up his boots after a glorious career in which he won the UEFA Champions League three times and the Africa Cup of Nations twice. He never won the prize for the world's best player, although he insists he has no regrets. "No, because I won so many trophies, I made so many dreams and for me that is the equivalent of winning the Ballon d'Or. However, I do feel for my younger brothers who came along after my generation."

VOTING CLOSES FRIDAY

There are five African players on the 30-man shortlist for this year's Ballon d'Or, with the winner to be announced at a ceremony in Paris on December 2. The 180 journalists who will vote for the successor to Luka Modric as winner have until this today to do so. Among the nominees are Senegal's Sadio Mane and Egypt's Mohamed Salah, both of whom starred in the Liverpool side that won last season's Champions League.

Both finished just outside the top three in FIFA's The Best awards in September, as Messi pipped Liverpool defender Virgil van Dijk and Cristiano Ronaldo to the prize. Eto'o attended that awards ceremony in Milan and, when stopped on the red carpet and asked who he thought would win, he cited the names of Mane and Salah. A video clip of the brief interview went viral. "That was an opportunity for Africa to see a Sadio Mane or a Mohamed Salah on the podium, and why not win it. They both had wonderful seasons and it wouldn't have shocked anyone had they won," Eto'o said.

The captains and coaches of all 54 African national teams voted, but by no means all of them gave their votes to Salah or to Mane,



PARIS: Former Cameroonian forward Samuel Eto'o poses during a photo session in Paris. — AFP

who reached the Africa Cup of Nations final with Senegal. "Why is there this hate between us Africans? Why the misplaced jealousy? If we don't appreciate one another, others are not going to do it for us," Eto'o said. "It's a shame. If all Africans voted for other Africans, we would have had several awards for the best player."

PREMIER LEAGUE STARS

After winning the Cup of Nations with Algeria, Manchester City winger Riyad Mahrez has

also been nominated, as has Napoli and Senegal defender Kalidou Koulibaly, and Arsenal and Gabon striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang. "Africa needs to show how strong it is. We are lucky to have these good players, who scored more than ten goals in the Champions League - we had the top three scorers in the English league (Mane, Salah, Aubameyang) but somehow these young guys don't have our support," Eto'o added.

"I want to accompany them as much as I can, defend them, protect them, because one day it will be their turn to pass on the torch. That is what we Africans have not always understood, at all levels, and that is why we are still trailing behind." Prior to last year, Ronaldo and Messi had won 10 consecutive Ballon d'Or awards between them. Both are nominated again this year, so would Eto'o be pleased to see Messi, his former Barcelona teammate, win it once more? "He is the best player of all time. I was lucky enough to see him come through and to have had a good relationship with him. When I give my opinion on Leo even he tells me I am not objective. Everything Messi does...he is a footballing god. I'd be happy for him to win it again." — AFP

Infantino planning Iran visit for game with female fans

LAUSANNE: FIFA president Gianni Infantino plans to attend a league game in Iran where female fans will be allowed to attend. Infantino recently wrote to the Iranian football federation expressing his intention to travel to Iran and watch a game with women present, according to a source. For the first time in 40 years, several thousand women were able to watch Iran's 2022 World Cup qualifier against Cambodia on October 10 at the Azadi Stadium in Tehran.

Since the Islamic revolution in 1979, the country has barred female spectators from entering football and other sports stadiums, with clerics arguing women must be shielded from the masculine atmosphere and sight of semi-clad men. FIFA, which sent a delegation to that game, said it was looking "more than ever towards a future when ALL girls and women wishing to attend football matches in... Iran will be free to do so, and in a safe environment". Another source said that world football's governing body hopes the process of allowing women into Iranian stadiums will be "prolonged, not stopped and not reversed".

A FIFA delegation will have to go to Tehran in advance to prepare for Infantino's visit. The match on October 10 came only a month after the death of Sahar Khodayari, who set herself ablaze in September outside a court in fear of being jailed for trying to attend a game. Dubbed "Blue Girl" because of the colours of the club she supported - Esteghlal FC - she had reportedly been detained last year when trying to enter a stadium dressed as a boy. Her death sparked an outcry, with many calling for Iran to be banned and matches boycotted. — AFP

Wenger in talks with Bayern; Rangnick 'not interested'

BERLIN: Arsene Wenger is reportedly in talks with Bayern Munich to potentially become their new head coach while Ralf Rangnick, another possible candidate, is said to not be interested. Wenger, 70, gave an evasive answer when broadcaster beIN Sports directly asked him about working at Bayern, who dismissed Niko Kovac on Sunday in the wake of a 5-1 drubbing at Eintracht Frankfurt.

According to German daily Bild, talks have taken place between Wenger and Bayern with club chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge leading the search to find Kovac's replacement. Wenger, who speaks fluent German, coached Arsenal from October 1996 until May 2018 and said that he misses some aspects of coaching. While Wenger has enjoyed his year away from football, the satisfaction of winning matches and preparing players is "something you miss, of course," said the Frenchman.

Meanwhile, Rangnick, currently head of sport and development at Red Bull and the previous sports director at Bundesliga side RB Leipzig, is reportedly the latest big name to turn Bayern down. "Ralf is not available. We don't believe that what Ralf Rangnick is all about is currently being sought by Bayern," Rangnick's manager Marc Kosicke told Bild. "That why it doesn't make sense to hold concrete talks." Rangnick joins Ajax coach Erik ten Hag and Paris Saint-Germain boss Thomas Tuchel by stating they will not leave their current jobs this season.

On Tuesday, club president Uli Hoeness said they expected to be able to name a new coach in time for Bayern's trip to Fortuna Duesseldorf on November 23. Former Real Madrid and Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho and ex-Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri have also been linked to the job by the German media. Former Germany assistant coach Hansi Flick took over as

interim coach for Wednesday's 2-0 Champions League win at home to Olympiakos.

He will also oversee tomorrow's Bundesliga match against second-placed Dortmund at the Allianz Arena. Bayern are currently fourth in the table. Before kick-off on Wednesday, director of sport Hasan Salihamidzic refused to confirm whether Wenger and Rangnick have been approached. "We don't comment on rumors," said Salihamidzic. However, he revealed Flick could stay on longer as caretaker coach should their preferred candidate only be available next season. "We'll see. I am glad Hansi Flick is here. At the moment he is the right coach." — Reuters



MATCHES ON TV LOCAL TIMING

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE	
Norwich City v Watford	23:00
beIN SPORTS	
SPANISH LEAGUE	
Real Sociedad v CD Leganes	23:00
beIN SPORTS	
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE	
US Sassuolo Calcio v Bologna	22:45
beIN SPORTS	
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA	
FC Koln v TSG 1899 Hoffenheim	22:30
beIN SPORTS	
FRENCH LEAGUE	
OGC Nice v FC Girondins de Bordeaux	22:45
beIN SPORTS	

Juventus, Bayern, PSG seal last-16 Berths as City wait

Lewandowski helps fire Bayern into Champions League last 16

PARIS: Douglas Costa scored a dramatic injury-time winner to send Juventus into the Champions League knockout stages after a 2-1 win at Lokomotiv Moscow on Wednesday, while Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich joined the Italian champions in the last 16. Mauro Icardi's first-half goal was enough for PSG to edge past Club Brugge 1-0 at the Parc des Princes, as Bayern laboured to a 2-0 victory over Olympiakos.

Manchester City missed the chance to progress from Group C after a dramatic 1-1 draw at Atalanta which saw right-back Kyle Walker end the game in goal. Juventus knew three points in Russia would be enough to secure their passage to the knockout rounds, and took a fourth-minute lead through Aaron Ramsey. Cristiano Ronaldo's free-kick bounced in front of Lokomotiv goalkeeper Guilherme, who inexplicably allowed the ball to squirm through his legs, with Ramsey prodding in from on the goalline.

Aleksei Miranchuk quickly levelled for the hosts by tapping in the rebound after his own header had struck the post, with Maurizio Sarri's Juve then struggling to break their hosts down. But Brazilian winger Costa came off the bench and netted a magnificent 93rd-minute winner, slipping the ball through the hapless Guilherme's legs after a mazy run. "He (Costa) is returning to top condition after an injury but he has enough quality to play anywhere on the pitch," said Juve coach Sarri.

Icardi fires PSG through

PSG reached the last 16 for the eighth straight season, but a nervy display against Brugge will not have boosted hopes of the French champions making the semis for the first time since 1995. Icardi swept Thomas Tuchel's men into the lead midway through the first half

Rodrygo makes history as Real Madrid put 6 past Galatasaray

MADRID: Rodrygo scored a sensational hat-trick and the fastest two goals in Champions League history on Wednesday as Real Madrid humiliated Galatasaray 6-0. The 18-year-old had his double after just six minutes and 14 seconds at the Santiago Bernabeu before teeing up Karim Benzema to make it four, after Sergio Ramos had chipped in a penalty.

Benzema then added a fifth late in the second half, leaving Rodrygo to complete his incredible treble in injury-time. "He doesn't surprise me," said Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane. "He has a bit of everything. He is intelligent, he learns very fast and wants to learn and improve. Physically he has to get better but technically, he knows how to do everything with the ball."

Madrid's emphatic victory means they are vir-

with his eighth goal since joining on loan from Inter Milan. But Belgian outfit Brugge should have grabbed a late equalizer, only for Mbaye Diagne to see his penalty saved by PSG 'keeper Keylor Navas. "It is logical we are annoyed after a game where I think we deserved something but you still end up empty-handed," said Brugge goalkeeper Simon Mignolet. Managerless Bayern Munich had earlier become the first side to go through, as late goals from Robert Lewandowski and Ivan Perisic ended Olympiakos' resistance at the Allianz Arena.

"I'm very happy with the performance, we're into the last 16 and that's what counts," said Hansi Flick, who took over as interim coach after Niko Kovac was sacked on Sunday. Bayern lead Tottenham at the top of Group B by five points, after last season's runners-up thrashed Red Star Belgrade 4-0 in Serbia. Son Heung-min scored twice just three days after being left devastated by his tackle which caused a horrific injury for Everton's Andre Gomes, with Giovani Lo Celso and Christian Eriksen also finding the net.

Goalkeeper Walker helps City to point: Premier League champions Man City were made to wait after Atalanta's second-half fightback at the San Siro. Raheem Sterling, who scored a hat-trick in City's 5-1 victory in the reverse fixture two weeks ago, put Pep Guardiola's men in front after only six minutes, but Gabriel Jesus dragged a dreadful penalty well wide shortly before half-time.

City goalkeeper Ederson was replaced by Claudio Bravo at the break as a precaution ahead of their crucial Sunday clash at Premier League leaders Liverpool. Chilean Bravo saw Mario Pasalic's header fly past him in the 49th minute, but worse was to come when he was sent off with nine minutes remaining for hacking down Josip Ilicic. Walker was brought on to play

usually qualified from Group A, sitting five points ahead of Club Brugge, even if Paris Saint-Germain who are top look certain to claim first place. It means Zidane's side will likely be at the mercy of the draw when it comes to the last 16 but that is their punishment for a miserable opening defeat in Paris and an equally dispiriting draw at home to Brugge. Yet the knock-out stages are far away and Rodrygo is the man of the moment.

After scoring the fastest ever league goal by a Real debutant in September - a sumptuous control and finish after 94 seconds - he now has his name etched into the European record books too. "Today my dream came true," Rodrygo said. "He's not afraid," said Benzema. "He enjoys the ball and I love a player that plays like that." Benzema made his own piece of history by equalling and then surpassing Alfredo di Stefano's 49 European Cup goals but the way he hoisted Rodrygo to celebrate his first suggested he knew this was the teenager's night. When club president Florentino Perez presented Rodrygo to the fans last summer, he said they had signed one of the world's "great prodigies", a year after Vinicius Junior had also arrived from Flamengo. Determined to avoid a repeat of losing out on Neymar to Barcelona, Madrid flooded Brazil with scouts, each of them instructed to find the next young gems. — AFP



MOSCOW: Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo challenges Lokomotiv Moscow's Russian goalkeeper Guilherme during the UEFA Champions League group D football match between FC Lokomotiv Moscow and Juventus at Moscow's RZD Arena stadium on November 6, 2019. — AFP

as 'keeper, and despite almost fumbling Ruslan Malinovsky's effort from the resulting free-kick into his own net, helped City secure a point. "I say again, thank you Kyle because it is not easy to take this responsibility to go on and be a goalkeeper and save the free-kick," said City full-back Benjamin Mendy. Atletico Madrid also missed out on booking a last-16 place as they slumped to a 2-1 defeat at Bayer Leverkusen.

A bizarre Thomas Partey own goal and Kevin

Volland's second-half strike kept the Germans in contention to finish second behind Juventus in Group D despite Alvaro Morata's late consolation. Shakhtar Donetsk snatched a thrilling 3-3 draw at Dinamo Zagreb thanks to two injury-time goals, including a 98th-minute penalty from Tete. Those two teams remain level on five points in Group C behind Man City, but Shakhtar are second due to having scored more away goals in their head-to-head matches. — AFP

Mane jokes he would 'dive' again to win Liverpool penalty

LONDON: Liverpool forward Sadio Mane says he will not change his style of play despite Pep Guardiola's "diving" accusation. The Manchester City boss made the claim at the weekend, when the Senegal international was booked after going down in the penalty area following a challenge by Aston Villa's Frederic Guilbert. Manager Jurgen Klopp jumped to his defense and Guardiola subsequently rowed back on the comments, saying they were part of a longer speech in which he praised the forward.

Mane, unaware of the subsequent climb-down, was unmoved by Guardiola's initial criticism as he believes if there is contact he has a right to go down. And he offered a sarcastic response to the City boss ahead of the match between the two sides at Anfield on Sunday, saying: "If it could be a penalty for sure I will 'dive' again. 'If the 'dive' will give me a penalty then I will do it. Why not? But what Jurgen

said is correct. I do not dive," said Mane. "There was contact (at Villa) for sure. Maybe it was not a penalty and he didn't give it, and he gave me a yellow card. To be honest I don't have any problem about it. "It's what I want to keep doing. If I get a penalty, yeah it's a penalty. If no penalty, no penalty, but (it) will never change the way I'm playing or the way I'm doing my things." Guardiola's criticism was seen as the start of mind games leading up to Sunday's Anfield encounter and Mane said the City boss had been a "bit clever" to get the attention of the referee.

The defending Premier League champions trail Klopp's side by six points but City are the only team to have beaten Liverpool in their past 50 league matches. "I can say one of the biggest tests, for sure," said Mane. "But if you ask me I would say not only City because against Aston Villa you can see how the game was and Leicester also was really tough. — AFP



SAN ANTONIO: James Harden #13 of the Houston Rockets shoots the ball against the Golden State Warriors at the Toyota Center in San Antonio, Texas. — AFP

76ers lose game to Jazz and Simmons to injury

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