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## MPs call for end to govt infighting after grillings

### 10 opposition MPs file no-confidence motion against interior minister



KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and MP Riyadh Al-Adasani, who grilled him in parliament, walk hand-in-hand after the session at the National Assembly late Tuesday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Lawmakers and activists yesterday demanded an immediate halt to what they claim is infighting within groups in the Cabinet exposed by the outcome of grillings on Tuesday that forced a minister to resign. The grillings exposed what MPs and activists say is a clear struggle among factions within the Cabinet, while some MPs accused their colleagues of corruption.

Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Jenan Bushehri reiterated her defense over her decision to resign after she was grilled by MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei over alleged financial and administrative irregularities. The minister said on Twitter that she confronted the "MPs of companies and interests" in the ministries of public works and housing. "Yesterday I confronted them in the National Assembly and to me they looked like tools who sold the nation," the minister said.

Following the grilling on Tuesday, Bushehri said she refuted all the allegations but the "lawmakers of contracting companies" were more powerful in the Assembly, adding that she was happy to pay the price for defending the nation and Kuwaiti citizens. The minister announced her resignation after she completed her arguments and sent it to the prime minister, apparently after two groups of lawmakers, each consisting of 10 MPs, filed no-confidence motions against her. But according to the law, only one motion can be

filed at a time. MPs needed 25 votes to dismiss the minister out of office and parliamentary sources said the number was ready.

Later in the same session, 10 opposition MPs filed a no-confidence motion against Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah following a grilling over violations. The voting is scheduled to take place on Nov 20. MP Yousef Al-Fadhlah said what happened in the session clearly shows that there is infighting in the government, adding that the resignation of Bushehri was more to do with issues related to the grilling of the interior minister than her own grilling. He called for infighting among government factions to stop immediately.

MP Khaled Al-Shatti charged that the session exposed a number of MPs who work for contractors and companies to boost their bank accounts. He said the minister paid the price for reforms, adding that "we should be cautious of corrupt MPs who pretend to be reformists".

Opposition MP Mohammad Al-Mutair said that after last week's protest and what happened in the Assembly session, the government must revise its calculations and should wisely read what is happening. He said the first step the government should take is to reconcile with the people by excluding those who sow divisions and only serve their interests. He said the government should work to pardon former MPs and activists who were jailed for fighting corruption.

## Saudi, Bahrain, UAE to play in Qatar Gulf Cup

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain will participate in this month's Gulf Cup football tournament in Qatar, organizers said yesterday, signaling a thaw in their bitter two-year feud with Doha. The three Gulf states as well as Egypt cut relations with Qatar in June 2017, accusing it of bankrolling Islamist extremist groups and of being too close to regional rival Iran. Doha denied the accusations.

In a U-turn, Saudi, Bahrain and the UAE announced they would accept their invitations to travel to Qatar to take part in the tournament. It will now be held from Nov 26 until Dec 8, the Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF) said at a briefing in Doha, having been delayed by two days to accommodate Saudi players. The trio will join hosts Qatar and visitors Iraq, Kuwait, Oman and Yemen for the tournament which will be redrawn Thursday to cover the extended line-up.

The announcements signal a possible easing of the bitter rift between Doha and the Riyadh-led group, which in 2017 imposed bans on shipping, trade, direct flights, overflights and land crossings with Qatar. "Gulf soccer may be giving Bob Dylan's 1964 hit, 'The Times They Are a-Changin', a new lease on life," said Gulf analyst James Dorsey. "The decision not to boycott is the latest indication that

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## Gaza death toll hits 23 as violence rages

GAZA CITY: Exchanges of fire triggered by Israel's targeted killing of a top militant in Gaza raged for a second day yesterday and showed little sign of easing as the Palestinian death toll shot up to 23. Fresh rocket barrages were fired at Israel, which responded with strikes on what it said were Islamic Jihad militant sites and rocket-launching squads in the Gaza Strip. Yesterday afternoon, it said it targeted two Islamic Jihad militants preparing to fire anti-tank missiles.

Air raid sirens wailed and fireballs exploded as air defense missiles intercepted rockets, sending Israelis rushing to bomb shelters. In Gaza, residents sur-

veyed damage and mourned the dead outside a mortuary and at funerals. UN envoy Nickolay Mladenov was to hold talks in Cairo on halting the fighting, a diplomatic source said, but a source close to the discussions aimed at mediating a truce warned that the risk of further escalation remained high.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Islamic Jihad must stop its stop rocket attacks or "absorb more and more blows". He reiterated his warning that "this could take time" and said Israel would respond to attacks "without mercy". Islamic Jihad spokesman Musab Al-Barayem said the group was not interested in mediation for now as it retaliated to the killing of one of its commanders.

Israel killed senior Islamic Jihad commander Baha Abu Al-Ata and his wife Asma in a targeted strike early Tuesday, prompting barrages of tit-for-tat rocket fire and air strikes.

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GAZA CITY: A man carries the body of Amir Ayad, a Palestinian boy who was killed in an Israeli strike yesterday, at the mortuary of Al-Shifa Hospital. — AFP

## Trump meets Erdogan, hails long friendship

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump greeted his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the White House for a high-stakes meeting yesterday that underlined his claim to be ignoring the impeachment drama unfolding simultaneously in Congress. The two leaders were to hold several hours of meetings, including lunch, before giving a joint news conference. While Congress listened to evidence against Trump from two diplomats in the

impeachment inquiry, the US president met Erdogan on the White House's South Lawn, together with a military honor guard, before heading straight to the Oval Office.

In the run-up to Erdogan's arrival, Trump did not tune into the nationally televised impeachment hearings, because he was "too busy", he told reporters. If Trump was ignoring the drama in Capitol Hill, he was also turning a deaf ear to opposition from many in Congress, including in his own Republican party, to rolling out the red carpet for Erdogan. The US-Turkish relationship has been under severe strain following Erdogan's ordering of an October offensive against US-allied Kurdish forces in northern Syria.

Continued on Page 24



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump meet Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and First Lady Emine Erdogan in the Oval Office of the White House yesterday. — AFP

## Impeachment hearings open on live TV

WASHINGTON: The US House of Representatives launched momentous televised impeachment hearings yesterday as Democrats seek to make the case to the American public that President Donald Trump abused the powers of his office. "There are few actions as consequential as the impeachment of a president," said House Intelligence Committee chairman Adam Schiff, the California congressman overseeing the historic inquiry in the Democratic-controlled House.

"The questions presented by this impeachment inquiry are whether President Trump sought to exploit (Ukraine's) vulnerability and invite Ukraine's interference in our elections," Schiff said. "If this is not impeachable conduct, what is?" The 73-year-old Trump faces the most perilous challenge of his tumultuous three-year tenure in the White House as the public impeachment hearings began under the glare of live television cameras.

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## Venetian anger after historic flood hits city

VENICE: Venetians woke yesterday to devastating scenes after the highest tide in 50 years washed through the historic Italian city, beaching gondolas, trashing hotels and sending tourists fleeing through rapidly rising waters. Shopkeepers on the Grand Canal raged against those who have failed to protect the UNESCO city from the high tide, blaming corruption for the much-

delayed barrier protection system which could have prevented the disaster.

"The city is on its knees," Venice's mayor Luigi Brugnaro said in an interview with national broadcaster RAI. "There's widespread devastation," he said in the famed St Mark's Square, which bore the brunt of the flooding. Tourists lugging heavy suitcases waded in high-high galoshes or barefoot through the submerged alleys, as water taxi and gondola drivers baled sewage-tainted water out of their trashed vessels.

The exceptionally intense "acqua alta," or high waters, peaked at 1.87 m. Only once since records began in 1923 has the water crept even

Continued on Page 24



VENICE: A woman crosses the flooded St Mark's Square near St Mark's Basilica after an exceptional overnight "Alta Acqua" high tide water level early yesterday. — AFP

## Local

# Kuwait keen on digital transformation to build society based on smart e-services

## Seventh e-Government Forum underway, under the Prime Minister's patronage



KUWAIT: Chairman and CEO of Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) Salem Al-Othaina. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Director-General of the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) Haya Al-Wadani



Yousef Al-Marzouq, General Manager of Nouf EXPO.

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: NoufEXPO launched the seventh e-Government Forum and its accompanying technology exhibition under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah on Tuesday under the slogan 'Modern trends of smart government' in the Al-Baraka Ballroom of Crowne Plaza hotel. Representing the Premier, Chairman and CEO of the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) Salem Al-Othaina said the e-government forum's motto shows a world characterized by accelerated change, especially in the technology field, that in turn affects lifestyle in all its

aspects such as economic, social and many more. He said the government is keen to keep pace with digital transformation in order to build a society based on smart e-services.

"The society must keep up with the digital transformation and exploitation of modern technological solutions. On July 8, 2019, the Council of Ministers issued resolution no. 911 in its meeting no. 2019/28 to form a committee to prepare the national plan and information technology policy," Othaina noted.

He added that to organize efforts exerted to contribute to the realization of the aspirations of Kuwait in light of the general framework of the state's strategy, the committee is responsible for the preparation of IT

plans and policies at the national level. It also adopts proposals of plans and programs to update them.

Director-General of the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) Haya Al-Wadani said we live in a world of development and rapid challenges in the field of technology, which requires us to keep pace with change and overcome those challenges. "Those challenges require us to develop our capabilities and our work procedures to enable us to attain better government services comparable to developed countries in this area."

Yousef Al-Marzouq, General Manager of Nouf EXPO, said: "The slogan of the E-Government Forum this year reflects our hopes and aspirations in the trans-

sition of e-government programs in Kuwait to more advanced stages with the implementation of smart government services. However, the main highlight of the forum this year is the holding two specialized workshops on important topics in the delivery and development of government services and other projects, which are 'Follow-up Strategies and Performance Vulnerability' and 'Practical Applications for the Use of Artificial Intelligence Technologies.'

He added these workshops help organizations monitor their execution and link it to objectives and strategy. Management will have an accurate online view of their performance that helps them face any challenges as they come.



KUWAIT: Chief Executive Officer of Zain Kuwait Eaman Al-Roudhan with Zain's team at the company's booth in the forum.

## Zain Platinum Sponsor of 7th eGov Forum

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its platinum sponsorship of the seventh eGovernment Forum (EGOV7) for the third consecutive year, organized by NoufEXPO and the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) entitled 'Smart Government Trends.' The event, held at Crowne Plaza Hotel from 12 - 14 November, comes under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

The forum's inauguration ceremony witnessed the attendance of several prominent figures, led by the representative of Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, and Chairman of the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) Anas Al-Saleh; Chairman and CEO of Kuwait's Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) Salem Al-Othaina, General Manager of NoufEXPO Yousef Al-Marzouq, Chief Executive Officer of Zain Kuwait Eaman Al-Roudhan, Director General of the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) Haya Al-Wadani, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti, as well as a number of experts, professionals, and leaders from both



Chairman and CEO of CITRA Salem Al-Othaina recognizes Waleed Al-Khashti for Zain's support with the presence of Yousef Al-Marzouq and Haya Al-Wadani.

the public and private sectors.

Zain's platinum sponsorship of the forum for the third consecutive year highlights the company's keenness on being an active participant in shouldering the various local and regional initiatives that contribute to advancing the community and the further progress of national economy. Being a leading national player in the Kuwaiti private sector, Zain believes in the importance of the active collaboration between the public and private sectors to enrich Kuwait's future.

This year's forum features two specialized workshops, the first entitled: "Introduction and Practical Use Cases for Artificial Intelligence," which is presented by Microsoft and offers insights about Artificial

Intelligence for government officials responsible for planning and developing smart government services. The second workshop, entitled: "Strategies Follow-Up and Performance Management," is targeted at entities and organizations from both the public and private sectors.

The 7th eGovernment Forum (EGOV7), entitled 'Smart Government Trends,' comes to reflect the government's official keenness in the role played by e-government programs in transforming Kuwait's government services into international standards. This year's forum features many seminars discussing e-government areas, including artificial intelligence, smart cities, internet of things, digital transformation strategies, and more.

## Xerox presents 'roadmap to efficient workplace'

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: On the sidelines of the seventh e-Government Forum, Helmi Abudheir, Solutions Business Manager at Xerox Middle East Operations, told Kuwait Times about Xerox's participation in the forum during the session of smart government supporting technologies.

Abudheir spoke at the forum about Xerox intelligent workplace services, the roadmap to an efficient workplace and a secure environment. "Today Xerox talks about intelligent work environment and how we can transform that environment from using a traditional system to be smarter. I also spoke about how we can drive this change and help the government sector move forward from this type of service to more modern ones," he said.

Regarding essential security, he said Xerox as a document company deals with digital documents as physical documents. A document has a life cycle and steps to be digitalized, adding that workflow assessment is the first step in identifying business processes that would benefit from automation.

"Document security is an important part of any business. The physical document traditionally goes through the printer inside the office and if I print it, it will directly be printed and may expose information. With our service, you can secure your document in the printer so the document will only be released upon the person's request or fingerprint. Xerox identifies, measures and documents current processes and provides a roadmap for implementing an efficient and effective process," Abudheir explained.

He added that the document can be delivered digitally and signed electronically, and the in-charge person doesn't even have to present in the country. In that case there will be no failure in recognizing who signed this document. Subsequently,



KUWAIT: Helmi Abudheir, Solutions Business Manager at Xerox Middle East Operations. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

you can trust a document, and this digital solution can also save more time. "We have customizable equipment - big government entities can customize it with a biometric (fingerprint) if the information is very sensitive," Abudheir pointed out Xerox will help streamline and automate government processes to drive growth, reduce costs and transform papers into digital ones.

Ayman Mattar, General Manager, Technology Group at Yusuf A Alghanim and Sons, said Alghanim has been representing Xerox in Kuwait exclusively since 1991. "We are operating in the Kuwaiti market since then with the full fleet of technical expertise and credited resources, from sales, pre-sales and delivery services to cover the Kuwaiti market directly," he said.

"We directly cooperate with the Kuwaiti government, where we are working with Xerox and government sectors to provide the services needed. When we see the New Kuwait 2035 vision, and how great the government is in leading innovation, it is great to be a part of such a plan to play a mega role helping the government reach their goal of digitalization that they are looking for. We are hoping to be seen as a strategic government partner to offer Xerox solutions and turn it into the reality of tomorrow," Mattar said.

## Kuwait outlines major digital tech goals

MANAMA: Kuwait has drawn up "significant" plans to bring its digital technology goals to fruition, said the country's commerce minister, highlighting such efforts as crucial to push a long-term development strategy. "We have a goal to achieve that entails working alongside reputable tech firms," Khaled Al-Roudhan said after talks bringing together Arab investors and entrepreneurs in

the Bahraini capital. He spoke of how Kuwait was among the first countries to embrace 5G wireless technology, touted as the "next generation" of mobile communication, besides having taken concrete measures to provide investors with an alluring business environment. Kuwaiti government bodies have made the switch to digital document management with much success, the minister explained, cit-

ing a raft of "amended legislations" that allow investors to pursue major projects. He urged foreign investors and entrepreneurs to explore Kuwait's bountiful business opportunities, with customs procedures now being more simplified, added the minister. "We have reached a juncture where immediate access to information is needed through effective technology implementation," he said. — KUNA



MANAMA: Kuwait's Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan speaks at a forum bringing together Arab investors and entrepreneurs in Bahrain. — KUNA

Local

# Kuwait's Crown Prince receives Commander of US Central Command

## Sheikh Nawaf hosts premier, ministers at Bayan Palace

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army Lieutenant General Mohammad Khaled Al-Khadher and Commander of the US Central Command, Marine Corps General Kenneth McKenzie, along with an accompanying delegation, at Bayan Palace yesterday. Head of protocol at His Highness the Crown Prince Diwan, Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, attended the meeting. Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf also received Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met with General McKenzie, and the two sides discussed their close ties and joint cooperation in various fields and on all levels, particularly military affairs. Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah also held talks yesterday with China's Vice Minister of Commerce Qian Keming. The two sides discussed their joint trade cooperation and exchanged views on topics of joint interest, and ways to enhance them, the defense ministry said in a press statement. They also reviewed the possibilities to benefit from Chinese ideas and expertise in growth and development fields for various projects, of which Kuwait aspires to implement as part of its 2035 vision, added the statement. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Commander of the US Central Command, Marine Corps General Kenneth McKenzie. — KUNA photos



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



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



First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with Commander of the US Central Command, Marine Corps General Kenneth McKenzie.

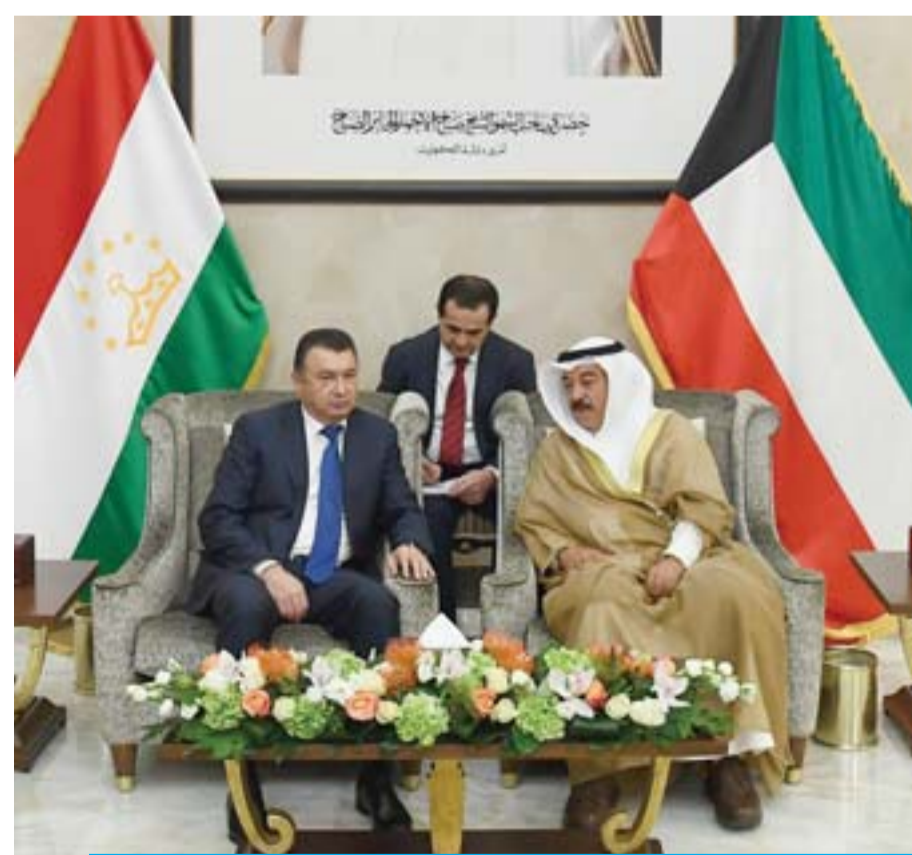
## Amir receives cable on recovery from Canadian Governor

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday a cable from Governor General of Canada Julie Payette commending recuperation from his recent health trouble, wishing His Highness good health and wellness. In turn, His Highness the Amir sent a cable to the Canadian Governor thanking her for her kind words and sentiments, wishing progress and prosperity to Canada and its people.

Separately, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday addressed a cable to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani expressing heartfelt condolences on victims of the terrorist blast that occurred close to the Interior Ministry headquarters in the capital Kabul. His Highness the Amir expressed the State of Kuwait strong denunciation of this blatant act that targeted the innocent, affirming the State rejection of all forms of terrorism, pray-

ing for souls of the deceased and wishing the injured quick recovery. Their Highnesses the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, respectively Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, addressed cables of identical content to President Ghani.

Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem sent cables of condolences to Afghanistan National Assembly's top lawmakers: House of Elders Speaker Fazel Hadi Muslimyaa, and House of the People Speaker Mir Rahman Rahmani. Ghanim expressed deep condolences and sincere sorrow on victims of the "terrorist blast," which took place earlier near the interior ministry headquarters in Kabul and resulted in death and injury of several people. He affirmed his strong denunciation of such blatant acts that target the innocents, and reiterated full solidarity with the Afghan people. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Tajikistan's Prime Minister Kokhir Rasulzoda is seen off upon his departure from Kuwait yesterday. — KUNA

## Tajik PM wraps up 3-day official visit to Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Tajikistan's Prime Minister Kokhir Rasulzoda and his accompanying delegation left Kuwait yesterday, wrapping up a three-day official visit. The prime minister and his entourage were seen off at Kuwait International Airport by Advisor at Kuwaiti Prime Minister's bureau, head of the accompanying mis-

sion of honor, Sheikh Dr Salem Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Pakistan, the non-resident envoy to Tajikistan, Nassar Al-Mutairi. On Tuesday, Rasulzoda visited Kuwait's Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center and witnessed first-hand its programs and activities. —KUNA

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## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Fishing boats are docked at Al-Shamian Harbor as Kuwait City skyscrapers are seen in the background. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shalikh

## Poison prevention campaign witnessed 'unrivalled success'

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Doctors give training.

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Medicines Information Center at the Faculty of Pharmacy, Kuwait University, organized an awareness campaign with an intent to prevent medication poisoning. The campaign took place from October 31 to November 2, 2019; from 10 am to 10 pm at 360 Mall - Main Atrium.

In this regard, Dr Bedoor Qabazard, The Head of the Campaign at the Faculty of Pharmacy, Kuwait University, stated: "We are very pleased with the turnout that this campaign has witnessed. We believe in the importance of continuing to raise awareness in the community about how to keep medicines stored safely at home and how to properly handle cases of unintentional medication poisoning and ways to prevent them. This campaign is intended to protect our beloved children first and foremost. In addition, it is aimed to reduce the burden that falls on ER departments in government hospitals, which have recently witnessed an increasing number of cases with unintentional poisonings among children."

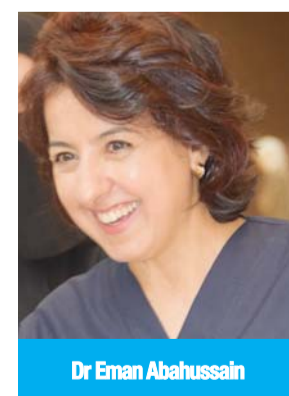
In this context, Dr Bedoor Qabazard, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics and the Head of the Campaign at the Faculty of Pharmacy, Kuwait University Kuwait Medicines Information Center - (KU- MIC) and the Kuwaiti Board of Pediatricians have joined forces to implement this campaign, which aims to educate the community about the hazardous of unintentional medication poisoning among children in Kuwait. Also, it aims to detect the common mistakes that cause poisoning. As well as, it highlights the symptoms of medication poisoning and the steps that must be followed to prevent such critical situations from happening.

In this regard, the campaign coordinator and volun-

teer Dr Eman Abahussain said: "The campaign was a great success as more than 1,000 parents visited the site during the three days with their children, in which there was great interaction among the visitors with the pharmacists and doctors, where they were able to ask questions and shared life stories of medication poisoning incidents. Also, it is noteworthy that the number of volunteers participating in the provision of the awareness campaign and training during the three days reached 109 volunteers from students of the Faculty of Pharmacy, pharmacists, and Kuwaiti Board of Pediatricians from the Ministry of Health."

Abahussain then added: "It is necessary to continue these awareness campaigns for the parents, in order not to shed the light on the hazards of leaving medicines and chemicals at the disposal of children and to avoid stacking medicines at the home. However, these awareness campaigns are inadequate unless civil society organizations have an active role in addressing childcare issues from the neglect that causes medication poisoning incidents. Furthermore, mechanisms of dispensing medicines must be adjusted, especially hazardous ones that must be provided in containers that are difficult for the child to open rather than plastic bags, as it is already implemented in many countries."

Kuwait Medicines Information Center (KU - MIC) expressed its gratitude to the volunteer: students of the Faculty of Pharmacy, pharmacists and doctors for participating in the campaign and raising awareness. The center also extends its gratitude to Advanced Technology Company, Al-Mojil Drug Company, and Tamdeen Company for their generous sponsorship in hosting the event.



Dr Eman Abahussain

## Local

# Unemployment, 'Kuwaitization' on top of Assembly panel's agenda

## Health ministry launches electronic prescriptions system

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Head of the National Assembly's human resources committee MP Khalil Al-Saleh said the committee members will be reelected to resume its duties in the new term. "The committee plays a major role in resolving the problem of unemployment and replacing expatriates with citizens," he said. Furthermore, the lawmaker noted that much more work is still needed to be done and that the committee will contact concerned bodies to get the latest statistics about the total numbers of unemployed citizens, their qualifications, age and gender categories, the total number graduates and new recruits over the past five years.

### Electronic prescriptions

Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah said the experimental use of elec-

tronic prescriptions at Sabah Al-Ahmad cardiac disease and Al-Rashed allergy centers was successful. Speaking to reporters, he explained that the e-prescription system will help achieve safety for patients, save public funds, avoid medicine repetition, medical errors, regulate prescriptions, track medicine consumption rates and reserves in various pharmacies and warehouses.

Sheikh Basel added that the system will also facilitate the prescribing process, dose calculation, prepare statistics and limit the use of smuggled and fake medications. "The new system will use the health ministry's iCloud app and tablets to read patients' smart civil IDs and prescribe the right medicine," he explained, noting that the system will also send dashboard warnings to all platforms and emails to both doctors and patients. Sheikh Basel added that the new system will enable doctors to

get lists of medicines prescribed for patients with chronic diseases every two months and up to every six months before reexamining them.

### Sanitary Drainage Company

The Ministry of Public Works and the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects are scheduled to sign a contract by the end of this month for the Um Al-Haiman Sanitary Drainage Company, which was established by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and deposited 25 percent of its KD 45 million capital in a local bank. Notably, the project will serve areas to the south of the Sixth Ring Road - Sabah Al-Ahmad, Riqqa, Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Um Al-Haiman, said informed sources.

### LED lamps

In a statement it issued yesterday, the

Ministry of Electricity and Water announced starting to replace sodium lamps on various Kuwait streets with LED lamps. The ministry added the total power currently needed to illuminate various streets is 106.3 megawatts, and that using LED lamps will save around 71 percent of the power consumed, with an estimated annual cut in cost of KD 10 million. The ministry also noted that coordination is in progress with various government bodies to use LED lamps in their projects.

### Policeman chased

A policeman reported that someone in an SUV chased him from Fintas to Salwa waving a gun at him, said security sources. The policeman added the motorist chasing him deliberately hit his vehicle several times, shouting orders to pull over before he disappeared when the policeman



MP Khalil Al-Saleh

refused to stop his vehicle. The policeman provided the suspect's license plate number pending further investigations.

## Ozone treatment suitable for nearly 90% cases in Kuwait

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Intervention radiology, spinal column and chronic diseases consultant Dr Waleed Al-Hajji said treatment with ozone is considered among the successful treatments for herniated disc and many diseases, because ozone is an inhibitor of viruses and kills bacteria, fungi, parasites and others, adding that this treatment is compatible with 90 percent of cases in Kuwait.

Hajji said ozone refreshes the immune system and boosts its efficiency, and contributes to the vitality of the body's organs and cells. This is because it increases the amount of oxygen available for the cells. It also reduces pain and calms nerves, besides improving metabolism and

increasing the concentration of antioxidants.

Hajji said ozone is also used in the treatment of back pain, sciatica and herniated disc. It is known that the herniated disc presses on the nerves, which causes symptoms in the upper or lower limbs. This pressure against the nerves is responsible for pain in the limbs, while pressure on nerve roots is responsible for numbness. This pressure or nerves responsible for movement causes a feeling of heaviness and sometimes muscle contractions.

Dr Hajji stressed that treatment with ozone sometimes is the solution for many diseases such as rheumatism, disc, ulcerative colon, diabetic foot, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, asthma and many others. He said treatment with ozone improves blood circulation locally, which reduces swelling, so pain subsides. It also releases the body's natural painkillers endorphins, so muscle contraction disappears and the patient becomes comfortable.

He added medical ozone reacts with the herniated disc, which leads to the reduction of the disc size. Pressure against nerve roots will be reduced, leading to recovery. Hajji said treatment with ozone is safe and does not have side effects. It has been in use in Kuwait



Dr Waleed Al-Hajji

for a while and was proven successful, because it is not like cortisone and chemical painkillers that are not devoid of side effects, but doses must be accurate and administered by specialists. He said there are three ways to use ozone - through the bloodstream, local injection or enema.

## EPA, UNEP sign cooperation agreement

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Environment Public Authority (EPA) and United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) signed yesterday a memorandum of cooperation. The agreement addresses a number of environmental issues including climate change, desertification, sandstorms, chemicals and waste management. The memorandum aims to improve the environmental situation in the country through cooperation with relevant UN organizations, said EPA's Director General and Chairman Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. In a speech he delivered after the signing ceremony, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah noted that the memorandum includes holding intensive meetings that enhance technical and human capabilities, environmental awareness and management.

It also covers organizing courses, projects and joint activities to benefit from global experiences. The memorandum includes the establishment of a

regional climate center and a support body for environmental work in Kuwait, which contributes positively to the development of environmental work, he added. The memorandum, which lasts for two years and can be renewed, will result in projects related to climate change, combating desertification, dealing with waste, increasing green cover and increasing environmental awareness in society, he affirmed. This cooperation will help to develop the work of the Commission in order to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, cooperate with the Supreme Council for Planning, and continue working with the UN, EPA Director noted.

In a similar speech, Director and Regional Representative of UNEP for West Asia Sami Dimassi, said that this memorandum is the first step to improve the environmental situation in Kuwait, and the EPA is keen and serious in dealing with various environmental issues. He pointed out that the meetings



KUWAIT: EPA and UNEP sign the memorandum of cooperation. — KUNA

held in this regard will help to consult on the establishment of a specialized environmental center in the country. He stressed the importance of cooperation in light of the enormous environmental challenges faced by the region since the last decade, and this cooperation confirms the commitment of both parties to

protect the environment. Dimassi praised Kuwait's leading role in international forums through its commitment to more than 20 multilateral environmental agreements, noting that this memorandum will achieve the objectives set within the framework of the New Kuwait 2035 vision. —KUNA

## Kuwaiti official sheds light on cyber hazards

**KUWAIT:** Cybercrimes and hazards have turned into a major concern for many States across the globe, a senior Kuwaiti official affirmed yesterday. New and advanced modes of hacking emerge every day, thus they must be dealt with utmost seriousness, said Minister of Oil, Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel, addressing inauguration of the Second Gulf Cyber Security Conference, patronized by His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

The Kuwaiti Government has dedicated maximum attention to this issue due to its grave hazards to security of the homeland and the citizens, he said, citing as a tangible step the full-scale national scheme for cyber security, coupled with an "integrated executive road map that warrants continuous, serious and intensive effort in the coming three years." The Government has set up the Kuwait National Cyber Security Center, tasked with beefing up the infrastructure and presenting diverse services to the State institutions to defend them against electronic hazards, he said.

Minister Fadhel affirmed that Kuwait made progress in the Global

Cybersecurity Index (GCI), ranking 72nd, expressing confidence that its status would improve at this level in the coming years. The GCI is a composite index produced, analyzed and published by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to measure commitment of countries to cybersecurity in order to raise cybersecurity awareness. Noting that there has been mounting dependence on the internet, information technology and communications, the minister has affirmed that this technology is associated with plentiful hazards and provides means for offenders to perpetrate crimes against users: individuals and institutions.

Such offenses also target States' security, installations and economies, thus all possible potentials and resources must be put at disposal of limiting these electronic dangers, he called. Meanwhile, Dr Safaa Zaman, Chairperson of the Kuwaiti Society for Information Security, called for new education on using technological means and social media. The two-day convention comprises associations, companies and experts from 10 states. — KUNA

## Homeowners warned for housing 'bachelors'

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** As part of its continuous campaigns in private residential areas to evict "bachelors", Capital municipality inspection teams warned 15 homeowners letting houses to bachelors. Acting head of the violations follow-up department Abdullah Al-Qallaf said 15 owners had been warned to evict bachelors, power was disconnected in four houses inhabited by bachelors and others were evicted from three houses.

### Camping insurance

Head of the Jahra committee at the Municipal Council Ahmed Hadayyan demanded amending article 12 of the resolution made by the committee supervising camping procedures and reduce the insurance deposit from KD 300 to only KD 100 per 1,000 meters or less, to be refunded after removing the camp and cleaning the site. Speaking at a workshop held to discuss camping locations in Jahra, Hadayyan said EPA did not attend the workshop despite its vital role in protecting the environment at campsites. He added the workshop also discussed allocating locations for entrepreneurs at these sites.

## KD 130 health insurance for expats in 2020

**KUWAIT:** Informed sources said there is coordination between the Dhaman hospitals company and health ministry to implement health insurance on certain expats who will receive services at Dhaman hospitals in 2020 to coincide with their opening. It said the insurance premium will be KD 130 for each individual and will include expats who work in the private sector and their children.

The insurance will cover examinations, x-ray and medicine, the source said, adding that the law does not indicate the party that will present health care for expatriates on visit visas after activating the Dhaman system. As for dependents, the sources explained that it depends on the stand of the company the person who has family members on dependent visas works for. Meanwhile, the sources said a media campaign will be announced to inform people about the mechanism of health insurance and treatment, adding that the current pricing at Dhaman clinics is similar to that in the private health sector. — Al-Anbaa

## Extremist convicts need rehab programs: Kuwait

**NEW YORK:** Kuwait affirmed the need to establish rehabilitation centers for extremists to allow them to re-engage in society. This came in a speech delivered by Kuwait's second secretary Bashar Al-Muweizri during the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) session on facing extremism in prisons late Tuesday. Violent extremism is more common among prisoners, especially in prisons where convicts of terrorism are jailed, said Muwezri. It is the government's responsibility to establish rehabilitation centers to change the thinking of these people and prevent them from recruiting new members in their groups, he noted. The secretary added that the centers must monitor the extremists' behavior even after they finish their sentence. Meanwhile, Muwezri noted the UNSC article 2396/2017 which states that prisons are required to rehabilitate extremist prisoners and called on countries to maintain a



Bashar Al-Muweizri

safe and humane environment inside prisons. He said that Kuwait had established al-Salam rehabilitation center, providing specialized programs for extremists. The center continues to monitor the behavior of extremists after getting out of jail to prevent them from going back to that path. — KUNA



'Pad Man' faces 'Terminator' in Sri Lanka election showdown

## Flooding drowns St Mark's priceless mosaics in sewage

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TEHRAN: A general view taken from Western Tehran shows a blanket of brown-white smog covering the city as heavy pollution hit the Iranian capital. — AFP

# Delhi, Iran smog hit 'emergency' levels

## Air pollution was the cause of nearly 30,000 deaths per year in Iranian cities

**NEW DELHI/TEHRAN:** The Indian capital's notorious air pollution hit "emergency" levels again yesterday, coinciding with a visit by Britain's Prince Charles. New Delhi has been choked on and off for weeks, as industrial and traffic pollution — combined with smoke from crop stubble burning — cast a toxic pall over the metropolis.

For the second time in 10 days, the amount of 2.5PM — the deadly tiny particles that get into the bloodstream and lungs — hit "emergency" levels, nearly 20 times the safe limit set by the World Health Organization. With the government facing new criticism over steps taken to counter the pollution, Prince Charles visited the Indian Meteorology Department as part of his two-day visit to India.

Charles, frequently outspoken on green issues, was briefed on the crisis by Sunita Narain, a leading environmental activist. She did not reveal details of her royal talks, but in a commentary last week said: "Every

breath we take is poison." Narain has called for faster moves away from coal and other "dirty fuels" as energy sources and said authorities are doing "too little too late".

India's Supreme Court joined criticism of the government yesterday saying authorities had made "little constructive efforts" to curb pollution. The court has ordered a new clampdown on stubble burning — in theory already banned — on farms in states surrounding the capital. It was acting because the problem "affects the vast majority of Indians."

Research released this year said the toxic smog across northern India cuts short the lives of around one million people each year. The Delhi state government has taken measures including banning construction and only allowing cars on the road depending on whether the registration is an odd or even number. The road rationing is meant to end on Friday, but Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said it could be extended. India

has 14 of the world's 15 most polluted cities, according to the WHO.

### Schools close in Iran's capital

In related news, schools in Tehran were ordered to be closed yesterday after the Iranian capital was cloaked in dangerously high levels of air pollution, authorities said. Governor Anoushiravan Mohseni-Bandpey said kindergartens, preschools and primary schools would be shut in the city and the counties of Gharachak, Pishva and Varamin.

"The air quality index for the city of Tehran still has not passed the unhealthy status for sensitive groups," he was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA. Average concentrations of hazardous airborne particles hit 133 micrograms per cubic metre in the city and were as high as 150 for 10 districts, he said.

That is far above the World Health Organization's recommended maximum of 25 micrograms per cubic

metre on average over a 24-hour period. Warnings were issued for children, pregnant women, the elderly and people suffering from cardio-vascular or respiratory diseases to stay indoors. Many people were seen wearing face masks to avoid fumes as they waited for buses on the sides of traffic-choked streets of southern Tehran during morning rush-hour.

A layer of thick smog covered Tehran on Tuesday, but it appeared to dissipate in northern areas yesterday morning with fewer school buses on the roads. Air pollution was the cause of nearly 30,000 deaths per year in Iranian cities, IRNA reported earlier this year, citing a health ministry official. Each winter, Iran's sprawling capital suffers some of the worst pollution in the world through thermal inversion — a phenomenon that traps hazardous air over the city. According to a World Bank report last year, most of the pollution in the city of eight million inhabitants is caused by heavy duty vehicles, motorbikes, refineries and power plants. —AFP

## Rogue 'Laden' elephant gets a job, renamed to 'Krishna'

**GUWAHATI:** An elephant that killed five Indian villagers, earning it the moniker of the late Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, has been renamed after the Hindu god Krishna and will be trained to patrol parks, officials said Tuesday. The male elephant, dubbed "Laden" by frightened villagers in the northeastern state of Assam, was tracked for days by forestry officials and tranquilized on Monday after its deadly rampage through Goalpara district in late October.

Officials planned to released "Laden" back into the wild, but now hope to teach it to patrol wildlife parks and sanctuaries in the state. "The elephant is doing fine. If possible we would try to turn it into a captive elephant by training it," Assam's Forest Minister Parimal

Shuklabaidya said. An official said that because the elephant was caught on Monday, an auspicious day when Krishna performed a "dance of divine love", he should be named after the deity.

"Since it is tranquilized and is likely to be captive, it deserves a better name for everyone to know it," the official added. The pachyderm is set to be kept at the state zoo in Guwahati as it recovers from being tranquilized, before being shifted to a national park "for training" with two other captive elephants. "However, if we fail in taming it and training it, we would have to release it in a safe zone where it cannot harm civilians," Shuklabaidya said.

Nearly 2,300 people have been killed by elephants in India over the last five years, according to official figures released in June, while 700 elephants have been killed since 2011 — figures resulting in part from shrinking natural habitats. Elephants frequently migrate into Goalpara, resulting in high numbers of fatal encounters with humans amid rampant deforestation. Some elephants there have been poisoned or shot by locals, while others have died on electric fences or on railways cutting through migration routes. —AFP

## 12 killed in Kabul car bomb blast

**KABUL:** At least 12 people, including three children, were killed when a minivan packed with explosives rammied into a vehicle carrying foreigners during Kabul's morning rush hour yesterday, officials said. Four foreign nationals were among those wounded in the attack that targeted an SUV belonging to a private Canadian security company, GardaWorld — in a crowded neighborhood which is near the interior ministry and north of Kabul airport.

"As a result of today's attack in Kabul, 12 people, including three children, were killed and 20 were wounded including four members of GardaWorld," Marwa Amini, an interior ministry spokeswoman, said. All those killed in the suicide attack were Afghan civilians, and the nationalities of the foreigners wounded were not confirmed. Interior Minister Massoud Andarabi said that one of those killed was a 13-year-old child heading to school.

"The enemies of our people should know that our people are determined for peace, nothing can stop them from achieving peace," he said. A source at the interior ministry said the blast was detonated by a suicide bomber in the vehicle. There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Both the Taliban and the Islamic State group are active in the city, which is one of the deadliest places in the war-torn country for civilians.

The blast came one day after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announced that Kabul would release three high-ranking Taliban prisoners in an apparent prisoner swap with Western hostages who were kidnapped by the insurgents in 2016. The three Taliban prisoners include Anas Haqqani, who was seized in 2014 and whose older brother is the deputy Taliban leader and head of the Haqqani network, a notorious Taliban affiliate.

Ghani did not specify the fate of the Western hostages — an Australian and an American, both pro-

fessors at the American University in Kabul — and it was not clear when or where they would be freed. The two, American Kevin King and Australian Timothy Weeks, were kidnapped in August 2016 from the heart of Kabul. They later appeared looking haggard in a Taliban hostage video, with the insurgents going on to say that King was in poor health.

Ghani noted in his speech that "their health has been deteriorating while in the custody of the terrorists". He also did not state when or where the Taliban prisoners would be freed. The Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told AFP yesterday that he could not confirm anything about the swap yet.

"When our captives reach their destination, the American University professors will be released," he said. Ghani said that he hoped the decision would help "pave the way" for the start of unofficial direct talks between his government and the Taliban, who have long refused to negotiate with the administration in Kabul.

### Direct talks

Over the past year the US and the Taliban had been holding direct talks seeking a deal that would bring the insurgents to the table for peace talks with Kabul, and allow the US to begin withdrawing troops. But President Donald Trump abruptly ended the negotiations in September, citing continued Taliban violence.

Most experts agree that there is no military solution in Afghanistan, and that talks will have to restart again eventually. Until then, however, civilians continue to pay a disproportionate price in the long-running and brutal war. Last month, the United Nations released a report saying an "unprecedented" number of civilians were killed or wounded in Afghanistan from July to September this year.

The figures — 1,174 deaths and 3,139 injured from July 1 until September 30 — represent a 42 percent increase over the same period last year. The UN laid most of the blame at the feet of "anti-government elements" such as the Taliban, who have been carrying out an insurgency in Afghanistan for more than 18 years. —AFP



GOALPARA: A tranquilized wild Indian elephant named 'Laden' is lifted up with a crane as it is transported in Rongjuili forest division in western Assam's Goalpara district. —AFP

## International

# Protests heat up as Baghdad faces renewed pressure

## Striking students and teachers hold demonstrations

**BAGHDAD:** Anti-government rallies swelled in Iraq's capital and south yesterday as Baghdad faced new pressure from the street, Washington and the United Nations to respond seriously to weeks of demonstrations. Protests demanding a new leadership have rocked the capital and Shiite-majority south for weeks — the crowds unmoved by government pledges of reform and undeterred by the deaths of more than 300 people.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he told Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi that he “deplored the death toll” and to address the popular movement’s “legitimate grievances”. The protests had slowed for a few days following a deadly crackdown by security forces in Baghdad and major southern cities but flared again yesterday with demonstrations by striking students and teachers.

“We’re here to back the protesters and their legitimate demands, which include teachers’ rights,” said Aqeel Atshan, a professor on strike, in Baghdad’s Tahrir (Liberation) Square, the epicentre of the protest movement. In the southern port city of Basra, around 800 students returned to camp outside the provincial government headquarters days after they had been pushed out by riot police. Schools were also shut in the protest hotspots of Diwaniyah and Nasiriyah.

Protesters have felt newly emboldened since the country’s top Shiite religious authority Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani said they “cannot go home without sufficient reforms”. “Students, boys and girls alike, are all here for a sit-in,” another demonstrator in Tahrir told AFP. “If Sistani gave the orders for mass civil disobedience, everything would close — the government, the oil companies, everything. That’s how we’ll have a solution.”

### Sadr changes tune?

Iraq’s parliament met yesterday afternoon and set dates to interrogate two ministers, which could indicate the first steps of a planned cabinet reshuffle announced by Abdel Mahdi. At the session’s opening, speaker of parliament Mohammed Al-Halbussi pledged to work on laws to respond to protesters’ demands including electoral reform. Parliament has received a draft law for electoral reform but has yet to discuss it. On the session’s sidelines, Halbussi met with the head of the United Nations’ mission in Iraq (UNAMI), Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert. Hennis-Plasschaert has put out a phased roadmap of reforms which earlier this week earned the key endorsement of Sistani. The plan calls for an immediate end to violence, electoral reform and anti-graft measures within two weeks followed by constitutional amendments and infrastructure legislation within three months.

Oil-rich Iraq is ranked the 12th most corrupt country in the world by Transparency International, and youth unemployment stands at 25 percent. Demonstrations erupted on October 1 in fury over a lack of jobs and corruption, initially fracturing the ruling class. Populist cleric Moqtada Sadr then called on the government to resign and President Barham Saleh suggested early elections, while other factions stood by Abdel Mahdi.

But after a series of meetings led by Iran’s influential Major General Qasem Soleimani, a consensus emerged at the weekend over the government remaining intact and both Saleh and Sadr appear to have changed their tunes. Sadr, who is reported to be in Iran, took to Twitter yesterday to call on parliament to enact reforms and for “a general strike, even for one day”, but did not demand the premier step down. Saleh, too, appears to have dropped the idea of early elections.



**BASRA:** Iraqi protesters wave a flag during a demonstration during ongoing anti-government demonstrations in this southern city yesterday. — AFP

### ‘Deplored death toll’

The agreement brokered by Soleimani appeared to have paved the way for a crackdown on demonstrations last weekend that sent the death toll amid the unrest to well over 300. Iraq has faced growing

criticism over its response to rallies, with rights defenders accusing authorities of shooting live rounds at protesters and curtailing freedom of expression with an internet blackout and mass arrests. — AFP

## Greta Thunberg sails to UN climate summit

**HAMPTON:** Swedish teen activist Greta Thunberg departed the United States yesterday, hitching a ride to Europe aboard a catamaran to attend a UN climate summit in Madrid. Carrying a large backpack, the 16-year-old and her father Svante boarded “La Vagabonde,” a 14-meter catamaran belonging to an Australian couple that will be her home for the next two to three weeks.

The Swedish activist, who became world famous for founding the “school strikes for the climate,” is ending a hectic 11-week North American sojourn that made headlines at every turn as she criss-crossed the United States and Canada. During her trip, she excoriated world leaders at the United Nations, met former US president Barack Obama, received the keys to the city of Montreal and road tripped across the continent in a Tesla electric car lent to her by actor and ex-governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger.

In a parting shot, the young activist said US President Donald Trump was “so extreme” a climate skeptic he unintentionally may be waking people up to the dangers facing the globe. “I thought when he got elected, now people will finally, now people must finally wake up,” she told AFP in an interview Tuesday. Six people will be aboard “La Vagabonde” for the trip: Elayna Carausu, 26, and her partner Riley Whitelum, 35, together with their 11-month-old boy Lenny; 26-year-old professional British sailor Nikki



**HAMPTON:** Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg walks aboard the catamaran La Vagabonde as she sets sail to Europe in Hampton, Virginia. — AFP

Henderson, Greta, and her father Svante.

“We were kind of the only boat around the area that was willing to cross the Atlantic this time of year,” said Carausu. The seas are expected to be rougher on her return journey, given the season, but Greta says the prospect of harsh weather doesn’t perturb her. “She’s a very brave, independent, strong young lady. It’s inspiring and I’m honestly amazed at what she’s

doing,” Carausu said.

She added that the crew has “decided to have a vegan boat for Greta, mostly.” Greta plans to attend the COP 25 climate summit in Madrid, which starts in just under three weeks, before heading home to Sweden. The boat sailed from Hampton, in the US state of Virginia, aiming to reach Portugal, more than 5,500 kilometers away. — AFP

## Tunisian MP accused of indecency sworn in

**TUNIS:** Tunisian women protested outside parliament yesterday against the swearing in of a newly elected lawmaker who was caught in a video that purported to show him masturbating outside a school. The protesters fear that Zouheir Makhlof, who walked free after being investigated for alleged sexual harassment and public indecency, will enjoy immunity from prosecution over any future allegations leveled against him by women.

“Stalkers shouldn’t make laws,” they chanted outside the inaugural session of the new parliament. A video showing the mustachioed politician sitting in a car with his trousers dropped to his knees was shot last month by a pupil who shared it online alongside accusations of harassment. Makhlof, who was elected for the Qalb Tounes party of controversial media magnate Nabil Karoui, denies inappropriate conduct and has said he was urinating due to a medical condition.

But the video went viral sparking Tunisia’s own #MeToo movement, with sex abuse victims breaking taboos under the hashtag #EnaZeda. It was inspired by the huge global movement that bloomed in 2017 in the wake of sexual assault allegations by multiple women against Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein. “Immunity is for your parliamentary duties not your sexual desires,” read one placard waved by the demonstrators.

Article 68 of the Tunisian constitution provides that no sitting MP can be “arrested or tried for their opinions... or for actions taken in connection with their parliamentary duties,” a formulation that in theory excludes allegations of sexual impropriety. — AFP

## Poverty fuels protests in Lebanon’s Tripoli

**TRIPOLI:** In a dusty alley streaked with sewage in Lebanon’s northern port city of Tripoli, Fatima, her husband and 11 children live crippled by debt and wondering where their next meal is coming from. “We’re a poor people here in Tripoli,” said the 38-year-old mother, in the city that has taken centre stage in Lebanon’s ongoing protests denouncing official corruption and inequality.

Fresh laundry hangs outside her two-room breeze-block dwelling, its corrugated iron roof held in place by the weight of a few old car tyres. “There have been days in the past week when my children haven’t had breakfast — and my little ones milk — before five o’clock in the evening,” said Fatima, whose youngest is just two and a half years old. Her husband sells fish from a cart for a living, and Fatima sometimes helps out with special orders to cook up the fresh catch.

But sales have been few and far between since the unprecedented demonstrations erupted nationwide last month, demanding a complete overhaul of the political system. Tripoli has been a hotspot of the anti-government protests and



**TRIPOLI:** A Lebanese child smokes a cigarette at an impoverished neighborhood in the port city of Tripoli. — AFP

become known as “the bride of the revolution” for its festive night-time rallies. In the beginning Fatima took part, but soon the bus fare to the city’s main square became too much. “I stopped going, to spend the money instead on bread and milk for my children,” she said.

More than half of Tripoli’s population is living at or below the poverty line, the United Nations says, and more than a quarter live in extreme poverty. Fatima’s family is struggling to pay the bills and already up to \$5,000 in debt. Her 17-year-old son has left school so he can help provide for the family, and so has her 15-year-old daughter, who must now look after her siblings. The mother fears her other children may soon have to drop out too, because she can’t afford the \$100 a month for the school bus.

### Life ‘sweeping stairs’

In a city whose political leaders are among the richest in the nation, Fatima is terrified her children will grow up to a life “sweeping stairs and peddling chewing gum”. Forbes magazine this year listed former Prime Minister Najib Mikati and his brother, who both hail from the city, as being worth \$2.5 billion. But in Fatima’s neighborhood, dozens of families live in tiny homes without even a connection to the main sewage system. Instead, they have dug small cesspits they cannot afford to empty, and whose foul-smelling contents often leak out into the alleyways or even inside their homes. One woman, aged in her 50s, has placed cement blocks outside her front door to try to protect her 10-year-old autistic son from the wastewater and rats outside. — AFP

## Venezuela ex-intel chief missing ahead of US extradition

**MADRID:** Venezuela’s former military intelligence chief has gone missing in Spain just days after a court approved a request for his extradition to the United States on drug trafficking charges, police said yesterday. “They are currently looking for him,” said a spokeswoman for Spain’s national police, referring to General Hugo Armando Carvajal who served as intelligence chief under the late Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez.

Judicial sources said police had gone to Carvajal’s house in Madrid to arrest him after Friday’s court decision but could not find him. Carvajal’s lawyer Marla Dolores de Arguelles told AFP she had “not been informed” they were going to rearrest him, adding that she did not know his whereabouts. In September, Spain’s National Court rejected a US extradition request on the grounds it was “vague” and “politically-motivated”, and instead ordered Carvajal’s release from provisional detention where he had been held since his April 12 arrest in Madrid.

The ruling drew a protest from the US State Department, which said it hoped the judges would “reconsider” their decision. The court reversed that decision on Friday after accepting an appeal from the public prosecutor’s office, although full details of the ruling have not yet been made public. “The judges found that the facts provided were sufficiently precise,” a court source told AFP on Friday.

### ‘The Chicken’ flees the coop?

On Monday, Carvajal himself tweeted: “Neither my lawyers nor I have been formally notified of any judicial decision regarding my case.” And yesterday, his lawyer said she had still not received the full transcript of Friday’s decision, which court sources said would be released in the coming days. Known as “El Pollo” (the Chicken), Carvajal was stripped of his rank by the administration of President Nicolas Maduro after coming out in support of Juan Guaido as Venezuela’s acting president in February.

He then fled by boat to the Dominican Republic before relocating to Spain. Carvajal has long been sought by US Treasury officials who suspect him of providing support to drug trafficking by the FARC guerrilla group in Colombia. In an indictment filed in New York in 2011, Carvajal was accused of coordinating the transport of more than 5.6 tonnes of cocaine from Venezuela to Mexico in 2006 that was ultimately destined for the United States.

### ‘Cartel of the Suns’

One of the evidentiary documents submitted in the US extradition request, which emerged during the September hearing, was a sworn statement by a US drug enforcement agent who accused Carvajal and Chavez himself of cooperating with FARC. In it, the agent refers to Carvajal as a member of the so-called “Cartel of the Suns”, an umbrella term for alleged networks within the Venezuelan military and government that aid and abet drug trafficking.

He said the cartel “worked with the heads of the FARC to coordinate drug trafficking activities in Venezuela and Colombia, as a ‘weapon against the United States’.” The documents also referred to allegations by a New York grand jury which said the Cartel de los Soles had been operational since 1999 and one of its stated aims “was to ‘flood’ the United States with cocaine”. — AFP

## International

# Flooding drowns St Mark's priceless mosaics in sewage

## Historic monument's custodians saddened and angry

VENICE: Dirty water swirls around marble tombs inside the 12th century crypt of St Mark's Basilica in Venice, which suffered untold damage when an unprecedented high tide swept through the city. Pumps work overtime to clear the seawater from around the altar and under the pink and white stone arches, as the historic monument's custodians look on in sadness and anger. "We're talking about millions of euros worth of damage," said Carlo Alberto Tesserin, First Procurator of the Basilica, who is the president of a team responsible for managing the historic site.

"We said last year that the Basilica had aged 20 years in a high tide. It risks having aged much more than that in this one," he told AFP. The exceptionally intense "acqua alta," or high water, peaked at 1.87 metres (six feet) late Tuesday, forcing stranded tourists to wade through rapidly rising waters in the dark in search of safety as the flood alarm rang out. Only once since records began in 1923 has the water crept even higher, reaching 1.94 metres in 1966.

As winds whipped the waves on the famous square, transformed into a lake, the waters surged into the Basilica with a force "never seen before, not even in the 1966 flood," Tesserin said. Sewage and drowned rats could be seen floating in the city's pungent alleyways. Warnings a year ago about potential damage from increasingly high tides "went unheeded," he said.

Thousands of tourists flock to the Italo-Byzantine monument every day, gazing up at the shimmering gold ground mosaics that decorate its majestic domes or gazing in front of the venerated tomb of St Mark. It is

particularly at risk, sitting as it does in one of the lowest parts of the city. "The damage we see now is nothing compared to that within the walls. The salt enters the marble, the bricks, everywhere," Tesserin said.

### 'Warnings ignored'

Italy's culture minister Dario Franceschini said Tuesday the government would cough up an as-yet unspecified amount of funding to help preserve the site in the UNESCO city. "The experts gave us ample warning. They weren't listened to," the procurator said. The city stands on wooden piles driven by their thousands into the mud, but rising sea levels and heavy cruise ship traffic have eaten away at the surrounding marshes and mudbanks. That leaves the gradually sinking Serenissima more vulnerable to the whims of the Adriatic sea.

A massive infrastructure project called MOSE has been underway since 2003 to protect it, but has been plagued by cost overruns, corruption scandals and delays. The plan involves 78 gates that can be raised to protect Venice's lagoon during high tides - but a recent attempt to test part of the barrier caused worrying vibrations and engineers discovered parts had rusted. Tesserin said climate change and the city's subsidence problems meant "we need to act now".

"We either need the MOSE to work - but we need to know immediately if it will - or we need another plan," Tesserin said, as civil protection workers checked the crypt for structural damage. "We're thinking of a plan whereby we turn St Mark's Basilica into an island that can be protected. "It's a religious, cultural and artistic



VENICE: The artwork by street artist Banksy, that portrays a migrant child wearing a lifejacket and holding a neon pink flare, is pictured after an exceptional overnight "Alta Acqua" high tide water level. —AFP

symbol, and it's unique," he added. As volunteers struggled to sweep waters off the Basilica's mosaic floor, the procurator said he was "very worried", as "every day

there's a risk of a big flood". "There's another high tide tonight, and more forecast for the coming days," Tesserin said. "For Venice to survive we need to act now". —AFP

## Uproar in France after student sets himself on fire

LYON: The French government yesterday attempted to defuse the anger caused by the attempted suicide of a student who set himself alight to protest the hardship he faced. The 22-year-old student suffered burns on 90 percent of his body after attempting to take his life outside a university building in central Lyon on November 8.

The man, who had recently lost his student grant, remains in critical condition in hospital. On Tuesday, hundreds of students demonstrated in Lyon, Paris and Lille over the desperate act which the student blamed in a Facebook post on successive French presidents and the European Union. In Paris, protesters tore down the gate of the higher education ministry and scrawled "financial insecurity kills" on the wall. At Lille university a conference by ex-president Francois Hollande had to be called off. In Lyon, classes were disrupted.

Junior interior minister Laurent Nunez yesterday condemned the incidents. "The real emotion" triggered by the man's suicide bid was "understandable", he told France Inter radio. But the damage caused to buildings, the death threats received by managers of student bursaries and the blocking of Hollande's conference were "totally unacceptable, the minister said. The political sciences

student, who lost his grant after twice failing his second year, accused President Emmanuel Macron, his two predecessors, Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy, and the European Union of having "killed me".

Even when he had his grant of 450 euros (\$495) a month, he said he struggled to get by, adding that he had decided to "commit the irreparable" outside the student loan authority building because he saw it as a "political place". In Lyon, several hundred people demonstrated outside the regional headquarters of the loan authority on Tuesday.

"It's not normal that students should have to go to such extremes to draw attention to a Kafkaesque system which crushes students and puts them in financial difficulty," Bastien Pereira Besteiro, a union activist and teacher argued. In the student's home town of Saint-Etienne in central France, one of his cousins told a rally he had committed an "heroic act" and urged fellow students to "continue fighting".

In France, where basic higher education is free, students often repeat a year or more of their program. Government statistics from 2016 showed that 28.3 percent of students repeated their first year. Only 28.4 percent of students obtained their three-year degree in three years. Many students work to support themselves, a factor often cited for the high rates of exam failure. A 2018 survey by the UNEF student union showed that 46 percent of students planned to work. As part of his bid to cut the budget deficit, Macron last year trimmed a housing subsidy available to students. While the cut — five euros (\$5.50) a month was limited — the move caused controversy, coming as the government cut taxes on the wealthy. — AFP

## 'Don't move!' Coastguards rescue migrants in Aegean

SAMOS: "Sit down! Don't move! Be quiet!" The crew of the Greek coastguard patrol boat jumps to life as they pull nearly 50 migrants from a rubber dinghy close to the island of Samos. They spotted the migrant dinghy about 90 minutes into their run from the island of Samos, their 18-metre patrol boat aided by the radar of a larger Greek coastguard vessel nearby. For about an hour, the Greeks repeatedly hailed the Turkish coastguard to intercept the dinghy: "Please react!"

There is no response, so the Greeks move in. From a distance, just a handful of people can be seen sitting on the sides of the dinghy, but it soon becomes clear that it is packed with dozens of people huddled back-to-back. By the time the patrol reaches the migrants — just inside Greek territorial waters — armed coastguards from the larger vessel are already there, barking instructions: "Stay calm!"

There are men, women and nearly a dozen children, some of them toddlers, among the 48 on board. Though the sea is calm and a full moon affords good visibility, the crew know to be wary. "The wind somehow always picks up when we are about to make a rescue," says the boat's veteran engineer Evangelos, who goes through about 10 cigarettes during the mission.



SAMOS: Refugees and migrant women and children rest on a Greek Coast Guard ship after they were rescued by the Hellenic Coast Guard near the Greek island from Samos. — AFP

The patrol boat's crew of four quickly gets the migrants on board, urging them sit on deck to avoid falling over. None of them speak English well enough to explain where they are from, but most appear Syrian or Iraqi. The dinghy is already swaying in the waves. If too many try to get off at once, it will capsize. But some of the younger men are practically jumping with joy, not realising they are still in danger.

### Weak and seasick

Most of the migrants look giddy with relief that they have survived the crossing, an undertaking that claims the lives of hundreds every year. They do not yet know that they

will probably spend months waiting for their asylum applications to be processed in overcrowded camps on the Greek islands, all the while facing possible deportation back to Turkey. Others are weak or seasick. Some women can barely stand. One young boy vomits and promptly falls asleep from exhaustion.

"We've had situations where the migrants start taking selfies as they're being rescued, or eating and drinking. We cannot have that here," says patrol boat captain Despina, one of the coastguard's few women skippers. An additional complication is that many of the women do not feel comfortable being pulled on to the boat by unfamiliar Greek men. — AFP

## Velvet Revolution: A peaceful switch to democracy

PRAGUE: The peaceful Velvet Revolution toppled the Communist regime in former Czechoslovakia 30 years ago, paving the way for democratic and economic reforms in the former Soviet satellite. Here is an account of how it unfolded:

### Truncheons and armor

On Friday, November 17, 1989, the Czechoslovak police brutally disperse a student march held in the capital Prague under the auspices of the Communist Party's Youth Union. The event marks the 50th anniversary of student protests held in Prague at the outbreak of World War II. Riot police stop the march a few hundred meters from the central Wenceslas Square, declared a no-go area for the rallying students by authorities. Nearly 600 mostly young people are injured as 1,600 police officers wielding truncheons and supported by armored vehicles attack the crowd of some 10,000.

### Prisoners released

Students and actors across the country declare a strike the next day, while prominent opposition figures around dissident playwright Vaclav Havel create the Civic Forum in Prague, the country's first oppo-

sition party. In the eastern Slovak part of the country, the opposition sets up the Public Against Violence movement. Its leader Peter Zajac meets Havel in Prague on November 21 in the first encounter bringing together the opposition in both parts of the federation. The first political prisoners are released and the Civic Forum leads talks with the Communist Party, but no consensus is reached as hundreds of thousands of people continue to rally across Czechoslovakia.

The deadlock breaks only after a two-hour nationwide general strike on November 27. Following heated talks, a government in which the Communists have a minority emerges on December 10. On December 28, the Czechoslovak parliament undergoes a revamp. Alexander Dubcek, the Communist leader of the 1968 'Prague Spring' political thaw that was crushed by Soviet-led forces, is named speaker of parliament. The next day, Vaclav Havel becomes the president of Czechoslovakia.

### Coup wave

The country is one in a series of former Soviet satellites switching from Communism to democracy owing in part to "Perestroika", a softer policy pursued by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and pressure from the United States under President Ronald Reagan. Poland leads the way with a free election held in June, followed by Hungary in July as the Warsaw Pact crumbles. East Germany is next with a wave of protests and an exodus from the country via Hungary and the West German embassy in Czechoslovakia. — AFP

## Will S Sudan finally be able to clinch peace in 100 days?

NAIROBI: South Sudan's president and its armed opposition leader have missed another 100-day deadline to form a power-sharing government, threatening a tenuous ceasefire that has paused years of bloodshed in the world's youngest country. The warring camps were given another extension to join forces after a meeting brokered by regional leaders but whether another delay will bring peace remains to be seen.

### History on repeat

It's not the first time President Salva Kiir and Riek Machar, his former deputy, have faltered on a peace agreement since a power struggle between the two threw the country into war in 2013. Ceasefires failed, truces collapsed and the war raged on, killing hundreds of thousands and displacing millions more.

The latest pact, signed in September 2018, brought a rare lull to fighting in parts of the country. But progress toward a more permanent peace has been glacial. Kiir and Machar agreed to share power in a new unity government by May 2019 but could not break a deadlock over security arrangements and state boundaries. The deadline was extended until November 12 but

that also proved fruitless: six months later, the rivals were no closer to breaking the impasse, and another 100 days were granted.

### Army revamp

A cornerstone of the September 2018 peace accord was that fighters would be gathered in military camps, retrained and deployed as a new national army. But a lack of funding and distrust hobbled efforts to build an 83,000-strong unified force. Suspicions abound over the make-up and command structure of this new army, and who would control it.

Kiir promised \$100 million to bankroll the process but just a fraction had trickled out so far, said Alan Boswell, senior analyst at the International Crisis Group think tank. "It's a bit unclear what's happened to the money that was released," Boswell told AFP. Opposition fighters who did report to cantonment sites soon left, complaining of a lack of food and shelter.

### Drawing red lines

The drawing of state boundaries in South Sudan is possibly an even bigger stumbling block. Both sides have long disagreed over the number of states, who



JUBA: South Sudan's President Salva Kiir addresses the nation about the extension of the pre-transitional period for 100 days after meeting with the opposition leader Riak Machar in Kampala yesterday for talks on South Sudan's proposed unity government at Juba international airport. — AFP

should control them, and where boundaries should lie. At independence in 2011, South Sudan had 10 states. But it has since been carved into 32 in what critics saw as gerrymandering of traditional boundaries by Kiir to reward loyalists, a move that angered his opponents.

"He sees this as a part of a strategy to maintain his power in the country. It's not a concession he has any interest in making," Klem Ryan, former coordinator of the UN Security Council's expert panel for South Sudan, told AFP. Boswell said a deal on states, even a temporary compromise, is "very possible if the two leaders actually want to move this forward". "The peace deal is stalled, but it's not yet dead," he said.

### Security fears

Machar holds major reservations over his security in Juba and had been demanding a personal protection force to oversee his safety if he returns to the capital. But Kiir is reluctant to order government forces from the city, keen to keep loyal fighters on hand to shore up his power at the risk of Juba becoming a tinderbox primed to explode. It has happened before — in 2016, Machar arrived in Juba flanked by his best fighters for talks with Kiir. Three months later his bodyguards and Kiir's men open fire on each other, and South Sudan returned to war. "It's just a redux of what we've seen before," Ryan said. — AFP



## International

# 'Pad Man' faces the 'Terminator' in tense Sri Lanka election showdown

## Two politicians battle it out in a clash of principles

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka's presidential election on Saturday is turning out to be a showdown between a man offering free sanitary pads and a former soldier dubbed the "Terminator" by his own family. Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, 70, a retired army lieutenant colonel, was the de facto military chief who crushed Tamil guerrillas and ended a 37-year separatist war, but Saturday's vote is his battle of ballots.

His family calls him Sri Lanka's "Terminator" because he promises to fight corruption and Islamic extremism, a key issue since the Easter Sunday suicide bombings this year that killed 269 people. In contrast to the tough-talking Rajapaksa, his main challenger, Sajith Premadasa, a low-key politician, is hoping to appeal to women voters with promises to improve menstrual hygiene.

Menstruation remains a taboo subject in the conservative Buddhist society and "period poverty" is a global issue. Premadasa, 52, was ridiculed by the Rajapaksa campaign for openly discussing the subject and ridiculed him as the "Pad Man". "I remain committed to women's rights," Premadasa shot back on Twitter. "I will wear the #padman label proudly. In my view, it is certainly preferable to being the #manwiththevan."

### Big brother boost

Premadasa was referring to accusations that Gotabhaya led death squads during his brother Mahinda's decade in power up to 2015. He denies that he was the architect of what is known as "white van abductions", when dozens of opponents were abducted never to be found again. While Rajapaksa has no experience in politics, he makes up for it by campaigning with his charismatic older brother Mahinda.

Facing allegations of corruption and nepotism, Mahinda lost his attempt for a third term in January 2015. His attempt to become prime minister in legislative elections later that year also failed. A new constitutional amendment

barred him from contesting the presidency again, leaving his brother to take up the family mantle. But, Gotabhaya's attempt to piggyback on his elder brother has faltered. When asked tough questions at his only public press conference during the three-month long campaign, he turned to Mahinda for answers and was ridiculed by opponents.

He also brushed aside questions about war crimes during the final offensive of the Tamil war during which some 40,000 Tamil civilians are said to have been killed. "Why are you talking all the time on the past? Ask (about) the future," he asked. "I am trying to become the president of the future Sri Lanka. So if you concentrate on the future, it is better." He is on bail facing prosecution for allegedly siphoning off hundreds of thousands of state cash to build a monument for his parents when his brother was president. Gotabhaya has denied allegations that he received millions of dollars by way of kickbacks from a second-hand aircraft purchase from Ukraine in 2007. He has not been indicted but police are investigating the purchase. He also faces a civil suit in the United States for allegedly ordering the torture of a Tamil man and several others when he was in power. Another civil action against him in a US court was rejected on the basis that Gotabhaya had "foreign official immunity" for allegedly causing the death of an anti-establishment newspaper editor in Sri Lanka in 2009.

### Passport probe

Rajapaksa reportedly had dual US-Sri Lanka citizenship which would preclude him from running for election, but he says he renounced US nationality this year so he could enter the presidential race. However, Rajapaksa's nationality is still being investigated by a local magistrate. Should he win, the case will be frozen until the five-year term ends.

Candidate Premadasa is also from a politically connected family. His father was assassinated during a May Day



**BANDARAGAMA:** Supporters of Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party and of former secretary to the Ministry of Defence and presidential candidate Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, gather for the presidential election rally in Bandaragama on the outskirts of Colombo. — AFP

rally in the capital in 1993. Tamil rebels were blamed for killing Premadasa who was regarded by many as an autocratic leader. However, the younger Premadasa, the only son in a family of two children, has remained relatively low

profile until he was given the party ticket to contest the elections. His claim to fame has been the construction of government housing for lower income families, a cause championed by his late father. — AFP

## Bushfire threat still high as Australia clean up begins

**GLENREAGH:** Australians yesterday began sifting through the ashes of hundreds of bushfires that have ravaged the country, relieved that their worst fears were unrealized — but wary of a long and brutal summer ahead. Firefighters were still battling around 140 blazes across the country's eastern seaboard, but a respite from "catastrophic" weather conditions meant the danger from many fires was downgraded.

The northern state of Queensland remained on high alert, with residents on the north shore of popular holiday town Noosa told to "leave immediately" to avoid an "unpredictable" fire burning nearby. Underscoring the risks to residents and emergency responders, a firefighting helicopter crashed during waterbombing operations in the state. The pilot survived with "non-life-threatening injuries", a Queensland Ambulance Service spokesman said.

In the worst-hit areas of New South Wales, cooler southerly winds eased conditions — a stark contrast with the gale-force gusts and high temperatures that plagued firefighters for much of Tuesday. In all, 50 homes were damaged or destroyed, and around 20 people were injured, but most populated areas were spared.



**TAREE:** Residents defend a property from a bushfire at Hillsville near Taree, 350km north of Sydney on November 12, 2019. — AFP

Residents of the small towns of Glenreagh and Nana Glen returned to find houses intact, a nearby 150,000-hectare (370,000-acre) inferno having stopped just short of their doors.

But on nearby farmland, unlucky families faced homes destroyed and cars transformed into blackened husks. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services acting commissioner Michael Wassing said another wind change on Wednesday afternoon could worsen several large fires in difficult-to-access areas of the state. "We've got another tough day today and there's an extended forecast that we're not out of the woods by any means," he said. Tough

conditions were expected to flare again in Queensland and New South Wales at the weekend as the temperature rises and winds pick up. "We will not have all these fires contained before then," New South Wales Rural Fire Service commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said, adding that it could be "many, many weeks" before the situation is fully under control. "Unfortunately, what we need is rain... and there is certainly nothing in the forecast for the foreseeable future that's going to make any discernible difference."

More than 300 new fires began in the state Tuesday, with 19 classified as emergencies. They spanned a distance of almost 1,000 kilometers — from the outskirts of Sydney north toward Brisbane. "The losses, the damage, the consequences could have been simply enormous across such a broad geographic area," Fitzsimmons said.

New South Wales Police said they had begun investigating whether a small number of the blazes had been deliberately lit, as they made handful of arrests for suspected looting of fire-stricken properties. The hot, dry continent of Australia has long experienced bushfires, but scientists say climate change is exacerbating extreme weather conditions, including a prolonged drought in the country's east that has created tinderbox-like conditions.

The Bureau of Meteorology says human-caused climate change is also "influencing the frequency and severity of dangerous bushfire conditions" by increasing temperatures, sapping moisture from the environment and causing an earlier and more extreme fire season. The unprecedented wave of bushfires has brought renewed calls for the conservative government to curb fossil fuels and cut greenhouse gas emissions. — AFP

## Two treated for pneumonic plague in Beijing

**BEIJING:** Two people in Beijing have been diagnosed with the pneumonic plague — a rare instance of the highly-contagious disease that is fatal if left untreated. The two individuals were being treated at a central hospital in China's capital city — home to over 21 million inhabitants — on Tuesday, local authorities said.

Pneumonic plague can prove fatal in 24 to 72 hours and is the "most virulent form of plague," according to the World Health Organization (WHO), while the bubonic form is less dangerous. The patients are from the northwestern Inner Mongolia province, district officials said in an online statement, adding that the "relevant prevention and control measures have been implemented." The Beijing government did not respond to AFP's calls for comment, but the WHO confirmed that Chinese authorities had notified them about the plague cases.

"The (Chinese) National Health Commission are implementing efforts to contain and treat the identified cases, and increasing surveillance," said Fabio Scano, coordinator at WHO China. Scano told AFP that "the risk of transmission of the pulmonary plague is for close contacts and we understand that these are being screened and managed." According to the WHO website, the lung-based pneumonic plague is very contagious and "can trigger severe epidemics through person-to-person contact via droplets in the air."

Symptoms include fever, chills, vomiting and nausea. On Weibo, a Twitter-like social media platform, Chinese censors scrubbed the hashtag "Beijing confirms it is treating plague cases" as they tried to control discussions — and panic — around the disease. "I just want to know how these two came to Beijing???" posted one user. "By train, airplane, or did they drive themselves?" "Bird flu in the year of the rooster...swine fever in the year of the pig," wrote another. "Next year is the year of the rat...the plague is coming." — AFP

## Singapore court hears challenges to LGBT ban

**SINGAPORE:** New challenges to a law banning gay intercourse were put before a Singapore court yesterday, the latest bid to overturn the statute and score another victory for LGBT rights in Asia. Inherited from the British colonial era, the law is rarely enforced but campaigners say it nevertheless jars with the affluent city-state's increasingly modern and vibrant culture.

Still, opponents argue that Singapore remains at heart conservative and is not ready for change while officials also believe most would not be in favor of repealing the legislation. A first attempt to overturn it was rejected in 2014 but now three people — a retired doctor, a DJ and an LGBT rights advocate — have lodged fresh challenges aiming to prove the law is unconstitutional. Lawyers representing the plaintiffs confirmed the civil suits had started behind closed doors at the High Court yesterday.

The three challenges will be heard one after another until November 22, and the judge will make a ruling at a later date. "I think we have strong points and we are hopeful," Eugene Thuraisingam, a lawyer for DJ Johnson Ong, told AFP. The retired doctor challenging the statute, 61-year-old Roy Tan, has criticized the "anachronistic law" — Section 377A of the penal code — for adversely affecting the lives of gay men. "By institutionalizing discrimination, it alienates them from having a sense of belonging and purposeful place in our society, and prevents them from taking pride in Singapore's achievements," he said in a statement when he announced his intention to challenge the law. If the legislation is overturned, it will mark another step forward for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights in the region. Last year, India's Supreme Court decriminalized gay sex by overturning legislation from its own period under British rule — a decision that spurred campaigners in Singapore to renew their efforts to challenge Section 377A. — AFP

## One dead, six injured in suicide bombing at Indonesia police station

**MEDAN:** A suicide bomber blew himself up at a police station in Indonesia yesterday, killing himself and wounding six others, according to authorities who described the 24-year-old attacker as a "lone wolf". The motive for the attack was not immediately known, but police stations have been frequent targets for radicals in the world's biggest Muslim majority nation, which has long struggled with Islamist militancy.

The blast happened around 8:45 am (0145 GMT) at the police compound in Medan on Sumatra island during morning roll call. "For now, we believe he was a lone wolf," national police spokesman Dedi Prasetyo told reporters in Jakarta. "The anti-terror squad and forensics unit are still examining the crime scene," he added. At least six people were wounded in the blast, including four officers and two civilians, but their injuries were not severe, he added.

The attacker — whose identification listed him as a student — wore an explosive device on his body, with authorities recovering nails, an on-off switch button, cables and body parts, Prasetyo said. A bloody corpse lying in the compound's parking lot appeared to have been blown apart. Police said the attacker was active on social media, while CCTV footage showed him entering the compound wearing a uniform worn by drivers of a popular ride-hailing service.

The attack came a day after Indonesia launched a website that lets the public report "radical" content posted by government workers, including material that promotes hate or intolerance. The Southeast Asian nation of some 260 million has significant numbers of religious minorities — including Christians, Hindus and Buddhists — who have been targeted by radical Islamist groups amid concerns about rising intolerance.

Police stations have also been a frequent target of militants, some of whom have called for the pluralist country to become a strict Islamic state. In August, authorities shot and arrested a militant who attacked officers at a station in Indonesia's second-biggest city, Surabaya, while in June another was seriously wounded when he tried to blow himself up outside a police building on Java island. Last month, Indonesian President Joko Widodo ordered beefed-up security after two militants from an Islamic State-linked terror group stabbed his chief minister.

He survived the attack, which led to the arrests of dozens of terror suspects. — AFP



**TOKYO:** This file photo taken on April 15, 2017 shows Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (centre L) and his wife Akie (centre R) posing with entertainers and athletes during the cherry blossom viewing party hosted by the prime minister. — AFP

## Abe still pushing to revise Japan's pacifist charter

**TOKYO:** Prime Minister Shinzo Abe surged back to power seven years ago, pledging to bolster Japan's defenses in response to a growing threat from China and aiming to amend the pacifist constitution. Now on track to become Japan's longest serving premier, Abe has kept his first promise. The second remains elusive. That means Japan, which US President Donald Trump has criticized over what he called an "unfair" security alliance, still faces limits on acting as a full-fledged American ally.

Trump has even suggested changing the two-way security pact that underpins the alliance, at a time when China is flexing its military muscle in the region and North Korea is pursuing nuclear and missile programs. During Abe's watch, Japan has boosted defense spending by 10% after years of decline, expanding the military's ability to project power abroad. In a historic shift in 2014, his government reinterpreted the constitution to allow Japanese troops to fight overseas for the first time since World War Two.

But the conservative leader's inability to cement his legacy by revising the charter's pacifist Article 9 symbolizes persistent public wariness about putting troops in harm's way far from home and a fear of entanglement in US-led wars. "For the Japanese people, Article 9 is a kind

of Bible," Hajime Funada, a ruling Liberal Democratic Party lawmaker and former head of a panel on revising the charter, told Reuters.

Japan's US-drafted constitution is seen by conservatives as a humiliating symbol of defeat but by others as a brake on entanglement in foreign conflicts. For both sides, a revision would be hugely symbolic. According to a survey by NHK TV this week, voters gave the highest marks to Abe's security and diplomacy policies. But an Asahi newspaper survey earlier this year showed 64% opposed revising Article 9 while 28% favored amendment.

Any constitutional amendment requires approval by two-thirds of both houses of parliament and a majority in a national referendum. Abe, who quit in 2007 after a troubled one-year term, returned to office in December 2012. On Nov. 20, he will exceed the record 2,886 days in office set by Taro Katsura in the early 20th century. Abe's term as LDP leader ends in September 2021 and unless party rules are revised, that would spell the end of his tenure.

A five-year defense program unveiled last year allocates 25.5 trillion yen (\$233.7 billion) in spending, a 6.4% rise over the previous five years, and includes refitting two warships as Japan's first aircraft carriers since World War Two, a step toward a full-fledged blue-water navy. A year after the cabinet reinterpreted the constitution, parliament enacted laws that ended a ban on exercising the right of collective self-defense, or defending a friendly country under attack, if Japan's survival is threatened.

Such steps have further pushed the limits of Article 9, which, if taken literally, bans the maintenance of a standing military but has been stretched by previous administrations to allow armed forces for self-defense. — Reuters

Analysis

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## Donald Trump's Ukrainian path to impeachment attempt

It started with a shadowy diplomatic campaign as Donald Trump bypassed official channels on Ukraine, and the unusual foreign policy bid has now triggered public hearings on impeachment - the ultimate indignity for a US president. The spark that lit the Ukraine affair, according to officials who have already appeared behind closed doors before Congress, was Rudy Giuliani, the voluble former mayor of New York who signed up as Trump's personal lawyer.

Determined to rebut the narrative that Russian electoral interference, which was documented by US intelligence, brought Trump to power, Giuliani pitched an alternative theory - that not Russia but Ukraine, which has been battling Moscow-backed separatists, intervened in the 2016 vote, and in favor not of Trump but his Democratic rival Hillary Clinton.

Despite the lack of evidence, the Ukraine theory gained currency among Trump supporters, who zeroed in on the role of Hunter Biden, the son of former vice president Joe Biden - who is seeking the Democratic nomination to challenge Trump next year. Hunter Biden, whose troubled life has included struggles with alcohol, served on the board of Burisma, a Ukrainian energy company, but insisted he did not lobby his father.

### Fixation on Ukraine

Giuliani claimed that Joe Biden, then in office, demanded that Ukraine dismiss a prosecutor to save his son from investigations. There is little evidence behind the theory as other Western nations and the IMF also sought to remove the prosecutor, Viktor Shokin, who had been tarnished by corruption allegations. Giuliani, according to numerous officials, was instrumental in securing the early departure in May of the US ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, after a whispering campaign that she supported the Democrats.

She told Congress that the State Department earlier had asked her if she wanted to extend her tenure into 2020. William Taylor, the US diplomat who became acting ambassador in Kiev, said that Yovanovitch was "caught in a web of political machinations". Also in May, Ukraine inaugurated a new president, 41-year-old comedian and political newcomer Volodymyr Zelensky. Returning from his inauguration, the US special envoy on Ukraine, Kurt Volker, and the US ambassador to the European Union, Gordon Sondland, implored Trump to meet Zelensky.

Sondland later said that Trump's response was, "go talk to Rudy". And the former mayor was ready - according to Sondland, Giuliani said Zelensky needed to promise publicly to investigate both Burisma and Ukraine's alleged role in the 2016 election. In a released text message, Taylor told Sondland, a political appointee who donated money to Trump, that Zelensky was concerned that Ukraine was "merely as an instrument" in US electoral politics. Volker, a respected veteran diplomat who resigned in September, was even more blunt, telling lawmakers that in seeking an investigation of Burisma, "Giuliani was interested in Biden."

### Criticism of 'drug deal'

Trump accepted to talk to Zelensky by telephone and ramped up pressure in the run-up. On July 10, Sondland told Ukrainian officials in Washington that a summit with Trump was conditioned on the desired investigations. John Bolton, a Republican stalwart who was then Trump's national security adviser, ended the meeting and ordered that it be reported to a White House lawyer, purportedly saying he did not want to be part of a "drug deal".

But Volker in a text message confirmed to the Ukrainians that the White House would find a date for Zelensky's visit only if the new president convinced Trump in the phone call that he was serious about an investigation. The trio of Volker, Taylor and Sondland, however, apparently did not tell the Ukrainians of a major step - the freezing of a vital chunk of military aid to Kiev needed to fight Russian-backed forces.

Trump and Zelensky spoke by telephone on July 25. The Ukrainian leader thanked the United States for providing anti-tank missiles and Trump replied, "I would like you to do us a favor, though." Trump, according to a release by the White House, asked for Ukraine to launch the investigations. Trump complained of Robert Mueller's probe into Russian interference in the 2016 election, telling Zelensky that "they say a lot of it started with Ukraine" and also mentioning "a lot of talk about Biden's son."

The US leader said that Giuliani would follow up with Zelensky and denounced "that woman" - Yovanovitch, who had been sent back to Washington - as "bad news". The conversation so alarmed Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman, a Ukraine expert on the National Security Council, that he alerted the internal legal chief. — AFP

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In this file photo taken on Dec 10, 1989, Vaclav Havel waves to the crowd of thousands of demonstrators gathered on Prague's Wenceslas Square. — AFP

## Communism haunts Czechs, Slovaks 3 decades on

Three decades after staging mass protests that freed them from communism, Czechs and Slovaks are hitting the streets again, bitter over pervasive corruption and politicians with roots in that era. The Velvet Revolution of 1989 saw unprecedented protests and a general strike end four decades of Soviet-imposed totalitarianism in what was then Czechoslovakia. The country was a member of the Warsaw Pact which crumbled that year as communism collapsed in East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania, so ending the Cold War.

But Communists never quite disappeared from politics and are now joining forces with populists in a bid for power in Czechoslovakia's successor states, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. "The Communist legacy still exists in Slovakia, and corruption is a big problem," says Milan Kuzak, a Slovak actor who is among the Velvet Revolution's most popular leaders. "Lies, corruption, hypocrisy, intimidation, bullying people - these are Communist methods that are commonplace here," he told AFP. "We still haven't come to terms with freedom, order, democracy, human rights." Czech pensioner Kamil Miroslav Cerny, a member of an opposition group in 1989, told AFP.

### Murder, graft

A former communist, populist Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis is tagged as an agent in secret police files from the 1980s, something the billionaire has flatly denied. His minority coalition government can only survive in parliament thanks to the informal support of the Communist Party, which controls 15 seats in the 200-member lower house. Babis also faces a string of graft and conflict-of-interest allegations centered on Agrofert, his sprawling

farming, media and chemicals holding. Huge crowds flooded central Prague in June demanding Babis step down over the allegations in a protest that local media reported drew around 250,000 people, making it the largest since the Velvet Revolution. Its organizers, the Million Moments for Democracy movement, are planning another protest for Nov 16 to mark the Velvet Revolution. "We'll issue an ultimatum to Andrej Babis: Either he resolves his conflict of interest... or steps down as prime minister," chief organizer Mikulas Minar said this week, threatening bigger rallies should Babis fail to respond.

With political roots in the Communist Party, Robert Fico, leader of Slovakia's governing Smer-SD populist social democrats, is widely regarded as calling the political shots despite not being in government. He was forced out as prime minister in early 2018 following the gangland-style murder of investigative journalist Jan Kuciak, whose work unveiled alleged ties between some officials in Fico's administration and the Italian mafia. The murder sparked the largest protests Slovakia has seen since the Velvet Revolution, with tens of thousands rallying in Bratislava alone. Several other officials were forced to quit after their links to shady entrepreneur Marian Kocner, charged with ordering the murder, came to light.

### 'Jeopardize democracy'

On Nov 17, 1989, Communist police brutally crushed a peaceful student march in central Prague, triggering the switch to democracy known as the Velvet Revolution. Slovaks flooded the streets two days later and then tens of thousands of people rallied in both Prague and Bratislava for days. The Communists gradually bowed out and dissident playwright Vaclav Havel became president of

Czechoslovakia, leading the country to democratic elections in 1990. After splitting in 1993, the Czech Republic and Slovakia went on to join NATO and the EU, with Bratislava also joining the eurozone in 2009. New politicians and political parties emerged along the way, but voters gradually lost patience with them, mainly due to widespread corruption, and began turning to politicians with communist roots. "Tolerance for co-operation with the former regime, unacceptable in high-level politics in the past, has increased markedly," says Tomas Lebeda, a political analyst at Palacky University in the eastern Czech city of Olomouc. "Society is too easy-going and too tolerant towards entities that might jeopardise the democratic process," he added.

### 'Strong personalities'

Babis, the fifth wealthiest Czech according to Forbes, shrugged off allegations of murky business dealings and his Communist past to enter government as finance minister in 2013, pledging to fight corruption. His ANO (YES) movement came second in the 2013 election, then won the 2017 vote. It has since topped opinion polls, with 30-percent voter support despite graft allegations that have dogged Babis. A fixture in Slovak politics for over a decade, Fico served as prime minister in 2006-2010 and 2012-2018. The latest polls suggest his Smer-SD, which still heads the coalition government under Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini, will top the general election due in February. "Strong personalities are the winners, regardless of their past," independent Czech political analyst Jan Kubacek told AFP. "The new (anti-communist opposition) faces simply failed after the revolution, and people have started looking for alternatives." he added. — AFP

## From Trotsky to Morales, Mexico's asylum tradition

From Leon Trotsky to Luis Bunuel to Salvador Allende's widow, Mexico has a long tradition of offering asylum to political exiles - right down to newly arrived Bolivian ex-president Evo Morales. Whether Republicans fleeing Francisco Franco after Spain's country's Civil War or Argentines, Chileans and Brazilians fleeing military dictatorships in the 1970s, Mexico has welcomed many thousands of political asylum-seekers over the years.

"I'm very proud to head a government that guarantees the right to asylum," President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said Tuesday, as Morales arrived after resigning amid growing unrest triggered by his controversial re-election to a fourth term. Morales, for his part, said Mexico "saved my life", after exiting the Mexican air force plane sent to fetch him from a Bolivia in flames.

According to retired Mexican diplomat Agustin Gutierrez Canet, the first political figure granted exile in Mexico was Nicaraguan revolutionary Cesar Augusto Sandino, who led an uprising against the US military occupation of Nicaragua in the 1920s. However, Sandino left Mexico in 1930, frustrated at what he called the Mexican government's broken promise to aid his cause.

An even more famous figure arrived seven years later: Trotsky. Exiled from the Soviet Union in 1929 by Joseph Stalin, the Marxist revolutionary drifted from Turkey to Norway to France before finally landing in Mexico in 1937. "It was the muralist Diego Rivera who asked President Lazaro Cardenas to grant (Trotsky) asylum. But we all know the consequences. Mexican protection failed and Ramon Mercader came along," said Gutierrez. Mercader, a Spanish communist and secret agent for the Soviet intelligence services, infiltrated Trotsky's inner circle, then assassinated him with an ice axe at his home in 1940.

Under Cardenas, who was president from 1934 to 1940, Mexico also welcomed more than 20,000 Spanish exiles fleeing Franco's regime after the Republicans' defeat in the Civil War. The Republican government-in-exile was based in Mexico from 1939 to 1946. The exiles included the poet Leon Felipe, a friend of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro - who himself fled to Mexico after waging an aborted rebellion in Cuba, then went on to launch the Cuban Revolution from there - and Bunuel, the legendary filmmaker. Bunuel, a one-time spy and propagandist for the Republicans, moved to Mexico in 1946, becoming a Mexican citizen and filming his classic movie "The Young and the Damned" there.

More exiles arrived during the brutal Latin American dictatorships of the 1970s. They included Hortensia Bussi, widow of Chile's late socialist president Allende, who fled to the Mexican embassy in Santiago and ultimately Mexico itself after her husband died during the coup that ousted him in 1973. Mexico also took in Central Americans during the wars that rocked that region in the 1980s, including Guatemalan indigenous

activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu.

### Politically risky

Taking in Morales could be a politically risky bet for Lopez Obrador, a fellow leftist elected last year. It could strain the "peace and love" relationship he has sought to maintain with US President Donald Trump, who openly detests Morales. At home, Lopez Obrador's opponents were quick to pounce. Morales "is a dictator clinging to power! He's a persona non grata in Mexico," tweeted former president Vicente Fox, of the conservative National Action Party (PAN).

Even celebrated Mexican writer Elena Poniatowska, a Lopez Obrador ally, joined in. "Why do presidents want to stay in power forever? Why does Evo Morales insist on believing there is no one but him?" she tweeted Saturday. However, Gutierrez, the diplomat, said granting Morales asylum was in line with Mexico's commitments under international treaties. "It's important that political asylum not be subject to ideological considerations," he said. "It's for people who are being politically persecuted, endangering their lives, liberty or safety." That was the case for Morales, he said.

Marta de Cea is glad for Mexico's asylum tradition. The 74-year-old Argentine woman fled to Mexico in 1976 after being kidnapped by the military regime. "They helped us very much. I'm still here after more than 40 years. I'm a Mexican citizen. My home is here, my daughters are Mexican," she said, her voice breaking. "I'm very grateful to this country." — AFP

## 'We're not dead': Yellow vests seek second wind

The only traces of the six-month battle waged at the Montabon roundabout in northwest France are the French flag, a luminous yellow vest hoisted on a pole high above the ground, and a few empty food cans rusting in the mud. This windswept junction in the rural Sarthe region was the local rallying point in the nationwide campaign against fuel taxes, which began in November 2018 and quickly ballooned into a full-scale revolt.

In an orchard next to the road, a group of struggling workers, pensioners, job seekers, drifters and dreamers erected a wooden shelter. There, they gathered each day to share a meal and strategize, swapping stories of hardship in an area squeezed by factory closures. They celebrated Christmas, New Year and wedding anniversaries together, creating one of the most enduring of the hundreds of roadside camps set up by the yellow vests to protest policies seen as skewed toward well-off city-dwellers. "It was like Noah's ark," said David Bruzzi, a 49-year-old mechanic who was one of the camp's leaders. "It wasn't just about beating up on (President Emmanuel) Macron," Bruzzi told AFP during a weekly gathering with a handful of other roundabout "veterans" in a shed on the fruit farm that hosted the Montabon camp. "It was about looking after people in the area and filling shopping bags" for hard-up protesters, he said.

### 'We are here'

This weekend, thousands of yellow vests will return to the roadside to mark the first anniversary of a rebellion which badly rattled the government, forcing Macron to revise his ambitious reform agenda. Others will travel to Paris, Bordeaux and other big cities to take part in the 52nd straight week of street protests, several of which ended in scenes of looting and arson that made headlines worldwide.

Whether the anniversary can breathe new life into a movement whose turnout has shrunk from 282,000 protesters on November 17, 2018, to just a few thousand nationwide on recent Saturdays, remains to be seen. For David's wife Vanina, a 44-year-old service station employee who spent six months at the barricades, the anniversary is the chance to say "We are here, we are not dead."

Around the world, participants in leaderless revolts from Hong Kong to Chile have cited the yellow vests as a source of inspiration. But in France, the movement's gains are widely questioned by its own rank-and-file. Most of them dismiss the €10-billion (\$11 billion) package of measures for the working poor and pensioners announced by Macron late last year as "peanuts".

Sitting at a bench in a shed stacked with crates of apples, Vanina ventures that the yellow vests' biggest achievement was to spur other disgruntled groups, such as teachers and hospital workers, to take their grievances to the streets. "We can always say that if we hadn't done it, things would be worse," said Jean-Jacques Brossay, a grizzled 63-year-old pensioner.

### Evolution or revolution?

Not everyone is convinced that history will be kind to

the yellow vests. Marco Beaulaton, a retired technician who took part in a 10-day blockade of a petrol refinery in the city of Le Mans, 45 kilometres north of Montabon, is among the skeptics. Like David Bruzzi and the Montabon roundabout, 61-year-old Beaulaton remembers the blockade as an "unforgettable moment of solidarity and sharing", with birthdays celebrated "around a bonfire of burning pallets".

But as the days passed, the presence of far-left and far-right elements spoiling for a fight with the police grew, alienating many others. Beaulaton, who pleaded for "Mandela and Gandhi-style" pacifism, is convinced that the movement shot itself in the foot by refusing to condemn the violence of a radical minority. "What people want is evolution, not revolution," he argued. "The French already had their revolution and paid the price in blood."

### Making politicians listen

One of those on the receiving end of the protesters' anger was Damien Pichereau, a fresh-faced local man elected to parliament on Macron's centrist ticket in 2017. A year earlier, newcomers like 31-year-old Pichereau, who grew up in a Sarthe village of 250 people, were being hailed as a breath of fresh air in a jaded political landscape. But for the yellow vests, Macron's army of young devotees were objects of contempt. Pichereau recalls one demonstrator telling him "You don't know how much I'd like to put a bullet in you". In February, his constituency office was smashed by hooded demonstrators during a yellow vest protest. And yet like Macron, who told Time magazine in September that the yellow vests had been "good for me", Pichereau said he believed the movement was a force for positive change. — AFP

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## Business

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AMSTERDAM: Cars and a logo are pictured at the showroom and service center for the US automotive and energy company Tesla in Amsterdam. Tesla CEO Elon Musk announced in Berlin the construction of a new 'gigafactory' on the outskirts of the German Capital city. — AFP

# 'Made in Germany': Tesla sets up shop

## Thousands of jobs to be created in Berlin area

**BERLIN:** US electric vehicle pioneer Tesla will build its first European factory and design centre near Berlin to produce cars "Made in Germany" as it seeks to burnish its reputation for reliability and sporting prowess. Tesla Chief Executive Elon Musk made the announcement at a prestigious German car awards ceremony late on Tuesday and said its new plant would make batteries, powertrains and vehicles - starting with its Model Y sports utility vehicle. "Everyone knows German engineering is outstanding for sure. You know that is part of the reason why we are locating Gigafactory Europe in Germany," Musk said at the Golden Steering Wheel awards in Berlin.

Tesla's move into Europe comes at a challenging time for the Silicon Valley trailblazer which is investing heavily in new factories and new products, such as a pickup truck, but has yet to prove it can be consistently profitable. Its plan to start production in another continent also comes as the auto industry struggles with export restrictions in the form of trade tariffs. Besides Europe, Tesla is opening a factory in Shanghai, built with Chinese state support.

While Tesla will be taking on BMW, Mercedes and Volkswagen on their home turf as they start rolling out zero-emission vehicles, the move fits with the German government's plan to transform the country into a centre of excellence for electric mobility. "Tesla's decision to build an ultramodern factory for electric cars in Germany is further proof of the appeal of Germany as an automotive hub," Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said in a statement yesterday.

### 'Sets an example'

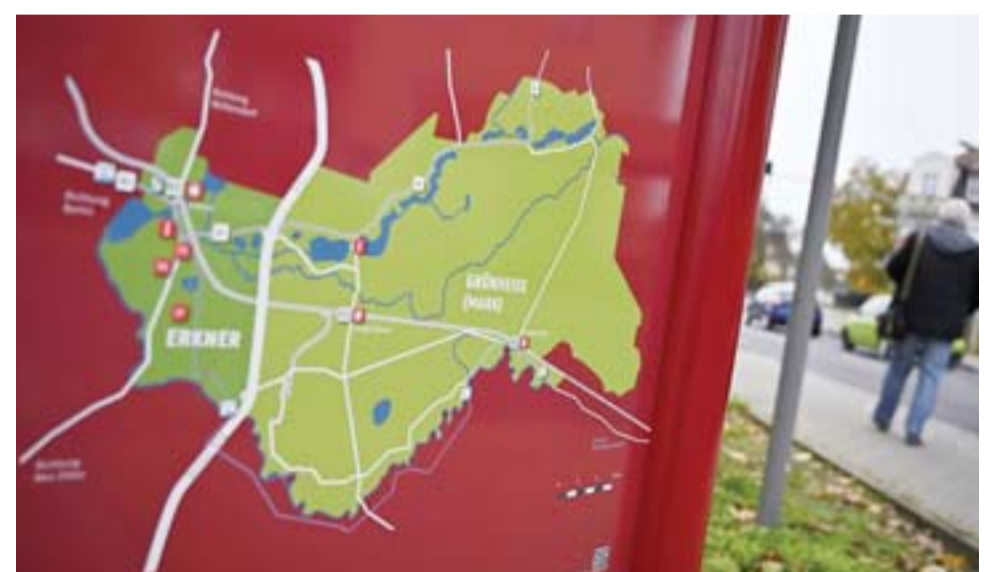
The government in Berlin has already earmarked financial support for manufacturing electric car battery cells in a bid to counter the dominance of Asian firms though it was unclear whether Tesla would receive similar German support. Germany's biggest labor union, the influential IG Metall, welcomed Tesla's plan. "This strengthens Berlin as an industrial location and creates jobs. We hope this sets an example," Birgit Dietze IG Metall's regional head said on Wednesday.

While Germany's renowned car industry is mainly based in the south of Europe's biggest economy, the capital has become a

hub for start-ups and has attracted many creative and technology firms since the fall of the Berlin Wall three decades ago. Musk, who said in June last year that Germany was the frontrunner for Tesla's first plant in Europe, told the awards ceremony on Tuesday that the factory would be near the city's new Brandenburg international airport.

Tesla announced last month that it expected to start production in Europe in 2021. "Tesla is coming to Brandenburg with a big investment," Dietmar Woidtke, premier of Brandenburg state, which surrounds Berlin, said in a statement. "We lobbied for this for a long time in intensive talks and with good arguments." Tesla has started hiring for the German project, according to job postings on its website which showed the automaker was looking to fill four roles from engineering to construction.

Berlin's minister in charge of economic affairs, Ramona Pop, told public broadcaster RBB there had been talks about creating 6,000 to 7,000 jobs in production alone, with hundreds or even thousands more in areas such as design, software or research. Musk's appearance at the awards ceremony



GRUNHEIDE: Photo shows an information board displayed near the town hall of Gruenheide near Berlin. — AFP

is another example of Tesla's efforts to give its cars the German stamp of quality. It already has an engineering firm in Pruem that specializes in automated manufacturing

systems for battery factories and has tested its cars on the Nordschleife, the notorious northern loop of the Nuerburgring racing track. — Reuters

## E-scooters under pressure to prove green credentials

**PARIS:** Pulling on makeshift roped hooks along a sun-drenched bank of the Seine River in Paris, Youva Hadjali and Edison Gompo fish out two electric scooters—not the most ecological fate for devices billed as a carbon-free fix for strained urban transport systems. As city officials vow to rein in the use of wildly popular e-scooters, their short lifespans, along with the energy consumed to build and service them, have many wondering if they are as good for the environment as operators say.

Hadjali and Gompo are part of the "urban patrols" carried out by the US start-up Lime, which says the recovered units are recycled as much as possible—

though the lithium-ion batteries are usually shot. "Overall in Paris, Lime scooters have saved the equivalent of two days without any cars at all" since they arrived 16 months ago, Arthur-Louis Jacquier, head of French operations, told AFP. Critics say such claims fail to take into account the carbon emitted in constructing the scooters and the daily collections for recharging the so-called "dockless" vehicles.

Those emissions are compounded by lifespans of barely a year, due to wear and tear but also vandalism. They were a specific target of activists at the Extinction Rebellion protest in Paris last month, who gathered up a huge pile of the devices to denounce what they labelled "pointless pollution." "Scooters don't replace cars, they motorize walking trips," one sign said. Studies indeed show that most scooter trips are replacing walking or biking, with just a third displacing car use, said Jeremiah Johnson of North Carolina State University.

He and his colleagues analyzed use in North Carolina's capital, Raleigh, and found the electricity for charging was actually a pretty small contributor

to scooters' environmental impact. But in terms of pollution, scooters most often end up causing a net increase in terms of global warming impacts. "Forty percent of the CO2 emissions are from driving around to pick these things up (for charging), and about half of the CO2 emissions are from the materials and the manufacturing of the scooter," Johnson said.

### 'Mass transport'

In the coming weeks, Paris will pick just three operators allowed to keep their scooters on the streets, down from around a dozen which began flooding the city last year. Lime, which says its charging depots run on so-called clean electricity and plans to use only electric vans for pick-ups, hopes to be one of them.

It also vows to get over some embarrassing growing pains: A few months ago videos emerged showing "juicers," as Lime calls the freelance workers who gather scooters for charging the batteries, using gas-powered electric generators. "In just a year and a half, we went from being a firm with innovative ideas

to a mass transport company," Jacquier said of the early decision to outsource charging, something it has since ruled out. Even so, operators must also meet the challenge of keeping scooters rolling longer.

"If you are able to achieve a two-year lifetime, which would be a really rugged scooter and with really good anti-vandalism policies... that makes a big difference," Johnson said. But since September, when Lime launched its Seine searches, some 200 scooters have been pulled out, said Sonthay Detsaboun, who manages the urban patrols. It's a similar story in Lyon, where in September an environment group pulled out 109 scooters on just one 800-metre stretch along the Rhone, one of two rivers that weave through the city.

Building a better machine  
At Lime's depot at Arcueil, just south of Paris, the din of clanking metal and power tools suggests vandalism will remain a challenge to profitability—just as it has been for the city's pioneering Velib bike-sharing system. Some 200 mechanics keep the place running around the clock, seven days a week, so the fleet can keep rolling. —AFP

Business

European shares knocked off 4-year highs on Trump speech

Trump offers no new details on US-China trade pact

LONDON: European shares fell yesterday from four-year highs after US President Donald Trump threatened to "substantially" increase tariffs if China failed to agree a trade deal...

he also said a trade deal was "close", without offering details on when or where it would be signed. He also criticized EU trade policies before a Nov. 14 deadline to decide whether to raise tariffs on European and Japanese carmakers.

However, lack of progress on an agreement has started to increase doubts about whether a trade truce will happen at all. "I'm absolutely concerned. The clock is ticking," said Michael McCarthy, chief market strategist at CMC Markets in Sydney.

Asian markets were also rattled, by Trump's speech and Hong Kong's turmoil. Onshore spot yuan fell to a low of 7.0270 per dollar at one point, the weakest since Nov 5.

MSCI's index of world shares slipped 0.2%, following a 1% fall in Asian shares outside Japan. Japan's Nikkei slipped almost 1%, moving further off last week's 13-month highs.

An index of European auto companies slipped 1.3%. Brent crude oil futures were down 0.5% <LCOc1 as the diminishing prospects for a resolution to the 16-month long trade war suggested less future demand for energy.

The S&P 500 has risen 2% this month and 23% so far in 2019 thanks to interest rate cuts, trade hopes and robust corporate earnings-profits at three-quarters of S&P 500 companies have topped expectations this quarter, according to Refinitiv.

But the New Zealand dollar rose more than 1% to \$0.6402 after the central bank unexpectedly left interest rates on hold at 1%. The US dollar gained 0.10% against a basket of currencies, just off three-week highs.



CBK takes part in International Financial Cooperation Forum

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently took part in the International Financial Cooperation Forum held in Shanghai, China, where Kuwait was the forum's guest of honor.



cial markets. Kuwait was one of the first countries to sign a cooperation agreement with China within the Belt and Road initiative. Al-Rumaih added that the volume of bilateral trade between Kuwait and China reached \$18.7 billion in 2018 with an increase of 55.1 percent compared to 2017.

Under-pressure West African dairy farmers swap ideas in France

SAINT-DIERY: There is little that farmers in the Sahel need to know about the art of survival. They nurture scrawny cows on the edge of the Sahara, scratching a living in the shadow of jihadist threats and of crushing competition from European imports.

Moktar Diallo said that among his Fulani people-an ancient herding community also known as Peuls who traditionally roam the Sahel with their cattle-"a meal isn't complete if there's no milk".

"The vast availability of products at a low import rate encourages decision-makers to take the easy way and to rely on them to meet local demand, rather than developing local supply chains," said a recent report from Coordination SUD.

Cathay Pacific cuts profit guidance for the second time

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd yesterday said the short-term outlook remained "challenging and uncertain" due to anti-government protests in its home market as it lowered its profit guidance for the second time in less than a month.



A farmer cuts boar salami during a demonstration of farmers, some members of the Coldiretti farmers' association, against invasive wild boars in Rome's central Piazza Montecitorio outside Parliament. — AFP

to help address the issue. There are efforts within the Sahel region to boost local dairy production, which meets only 50 percent of regional demand, according to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Despite European dumping, demand for milk is high, said Diallo.

Similarities

Small dairy producers in France have been struggling with problems of their own, including changes to EU support. The abolition of EU milk quotas in April 2015 triggered a collapse in prices to a point that many small farmers were barely able to cover their costs.

second-half profit to be "significantly below" the first half's HK\$1.347 billion (\$172.04 million), in a step up from the wording "below" used last month. Hong Kong anti-government protesters yesterday paralyzed parts of the Asian financial hub for a third consecutive day, with some transport links, schools and many businesses closing after an escalation of violence.

Ouagadougou. "The system of mini-dairies in Burkina Faso is much like that used for producing the Comte cheese of the Jura region, bringing together many farmers to pool their milk production to make the cheese," Chassard observed.

Deadly violence

Chassard has gone into direct sales from the farm, in local markets and on the internet, and joined a cooperative to purchase and bring down the costs of necessary items, such as lactic ferments used to make cheese. "We so often don't have the ferments for our yoghurts, and we depend on a single supplier, which makes them very expensive," Ouedraogo said.

passenger flight capacity by 2-4% versus its original schedule between August and October and made further cuts of 6-7% for November and December, Lam said.

The percentage of seats filled dropped by 4 percentage points to 77.6% in October despite the capacity cuts, airfares were under pressure and premium travel demand was sluggish, he said. The airline is expected to hold an analyst briefing on Thursday, the first under a new management team led by Chief Executive Augustus Tang after the airline's former head, Rupert Hogg, resigned in August after a crackdown by China's aviation regulator.

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

Table containing exchange rates for European & American countries, Asian countries, GCC countries, and Arab countries, listing various currencies like US Dollar, Euro, Japanese Yen, etc.

Table listing exchange rates for Yemen Riyal, Tunisian Dinar, Jordanian Dinar, Lebanese Lira, Syrian Lira, and Morocco Dirham.

Table listing exchange rates for Thai Bhat, Turkish Lira, and Singapore dollars.

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

Table with columns for CURRENCY, BUY, and SELL, listing rates for various currencies including British Pound, Euro, Australian Dollar, Canadian Dollar, etc.

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Table with columns for Rate for Transfr and Selling Rate, listing rates for US Dollar, Canadian Dollar, Sterling Pound, Euro, etc.

Table listing exchange rates for Chinese Yuan, Hong Kong Dollar, Indian Rupee, Indonesian Rupiah, Japanese Yen, Korean Won, etc.

## Business

# Jazeera Airways to launch direct flights between Kuwait and Al Ain

## Kuwaiti airline, Dept of Culture and Tourism ink landmark deal

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** Travelers in Kuwait will soon be able to travel directly to Al Ain, Abu Dhabi thanks to a newly established flight route by Jazeera Airways. Supported by the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi), the independent airline announced the new direct flights to Al Ain during a press conference yesterday.

Abu Dhabi has witnessed tremendous growth in tourism from Kuwait over recent years. Between 2018 and 2019, Abu Dhabi registered a 26.3 percent increase in the number of hotel guests from Kuwait, in addition to hosting over 25,000 Kuwaiti hotel guests between January and September 2019 with an average length of stay of around three days per guest. Through establishing the new direct routes, the Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi hopes to encourage travelers from Kuwait to visit the city of Al Ain in a move to boost tourism to the various regions of the UAE capital.

"This deal marks a new chapter in tourism between Kuwait and Abu Dhabi" said Nabeel M Al Zarouni, Regional Promotions Manager, Middle East and Africa at DCT Abu Dhabi during the conference. "Proximity, volume and strong cultural ties between the UAE and Kuwait make it one of the most important source markets for us in Abu Dhabi. We would like to thank Jazeera Airways for their hard work and collaboration over the past months to bring this pioneering deal to life, and we will be working closely with them in the future to encourage Kuwaiti travellers to discover the UAE gem that is Al Ain, with the help of the new flight routes," he said.



"With its stunning views, rich heritage and breathtaking nature, we see Al Ain as the ideal destination for family-friendly retreats and cultural excursions. Visitors to Al Ain can enjoy nature hikes, sightseeing, visits to some of the world's oldest architectural wonders, and unique Emirati heritage experiences. Whether it is curious explorers, adventurers, families, or culture enthusiasts, we truly believe that various types of travelers would thoroughly enjoy visiting Al Ain" Zarouni added.

Andrew Ward, Jazeera Airways Vice President-Marketing and Product, said: "We are proud to be operating our second destination in the United Arab Emirates and provide our customers with more choices to explore and enjoy the hidden gems of

our region. We are committed at Jazeera Airways to connecting passengers from across our network to new destinations while ensuring we continue to provide them with value fares and a reliable service throughout their journey with our airline. We look forward to flying to Al Ain International Airport with three flights a week starting from December 8."

Asking about the flights schedule, Ward said: "Flights dates are based on our overall network and also targets traffic from other countries in the Middle East and Asia, connecting passengers from these countries to Al Ain through Kuwait. We will start operating three flights a week, and based on demand, we are looking forward to the opportunity to increase our services."



Located approximately 160 km east of Abu Dhabi city, Al Ain - the Oasis City - is the emirate's heritage heartland and one of the world's oldest continually inhabited settlements. It is home to UNESCO-inscribed World Heritage sites, a wealth of forts, oases, historic buildings and archaeological sites, and is a showcase of the country's unique heritage and history. Set among mountain heights, lush oases and towering palm plantations, the city also boasts a range of accommodation and conference options, an adventure water parkland an award-winning zoo and wildlife park.

DCT Abu Dhabi actively supports heritage festivals in Al Ain region, including the annual Traditional Handicrafts Festival. A significant achievement for the protection

of Intangible Heritage has been the successful inscription of eight elements on the UNESCO Lists of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the work and dossiers for six of which were led by the emirate of Abu Dhabi.

The inscribed heritage elements are Falconry, Al Sadu (weaving), Al Ayyala (traditional group performance), Al Taghrooda (poetry), Gahwa (Arabic coffee), Majlis (council gathering), Al Azi and Al Razfa (both traditional performing arts), all of which visitors can experience at the city's cultural attractions. Al Ain's cultural offering will also soon be bolstered by Bait Mohammed Bin Khalifa House, Jebel Hafit Desert Park, Murabba'a Fort and the Al Ain Museum.

## Breakdown of trust in financial system deepens Lebanon crisis

**BEIRUT:** Lebanese student Fatima Jaber's family is struggling to pay off multiple loans with double-digit interest rates. Even before the start of protests that have forced out Lebanon's prime minister, her confidence was fading in a financial system long regarded as a pillar of stability. But now, like many Lebanese, she thinks the system is broken.

The loss of trust is eroding liquidity in the banking sector, increasing concerns that banks may not be able to help the government fund high budget and current account deficits. One of the world's most indebted countries, Lebanon has a public debt equal to about 150% of its gross domestic product. "We need a change to the system because everyone has at least one loan from the bank and the rates are very high and we can't pay them," said Jaber, 22, as she and a small crowd protested outside the central bank in the capital, Beirut.

Dollar loans have to be repaid in the same currency, which is especially difficult because there is a hard currency squeeze in Lebanon. With big banks' websites showing the annual interest on some loans is about 27%, any people are in dire straits. Central bank governor Riad Salameh sought to ease concerns on Monday, saying the bank had a usable foreign cash reserve of \$30 billion and total assets of \$38 billion. The central bank has taken steps to protest depositors by ensuring no bank would fail and will seek to lower interest rates through liquidity management, he said.

But the imposition by banks of controls on dollar withdrawals and transfers overseas has failed to rebuild confidence. Bankers say customer deposits have continued to dwindle and are estimated to have dipped by at least \$8 billion since August, according to Institute of International Finance's chief MENA economist Garbis Iradian. Giyas Gokkent, at JPMorgan Securities, said reserves were high



**TRIPOLI:** Lebanese people are pictured around open sewage at an impoverished neighborhood in Al-Mani area of the port city of Tripoli, north of Beirut. — AFP

enough to ensure Lebanon could maintain its peg to the US dollar.

But there are still worrying signs. "The net foreign position of banks is declining rapidly," said an international banker who declined to be identified because of the sensitivity of the situation. "This, the ad hoc approach to imposing capital controls and the erosion of their capital buffers means banks will not be able to attract deposits or credit lines and therefore will be less and less able to fund the government's current account deficit, piling pressure on central bank reserves."

### Lifeblood

The protests that have swept Lebanon for weeks are fuelled by anger at the establishment and perceived corruption but lack of faith in the financial system is also an important factor. The confidence of the Lebanese diaspora has also waned, with bankers saying capital inflows, already faltering since their 2014 peak, have fallen further in recent weeks over fears of economic collapse.

"No sensible or normal person will be transferring money to Lebanon in the current circumstances," said Hani Salem, a British-Lebanese financial sector consultant

University, and a former worker at British Steel. "My worry would be that it is only a short-term investment. Are they just buying the knowledge of the high-quality steel production that goes on at Scunthorpe?" So far Jingye has only said it would keep on as many employees as possible, without committing to a figure, and said cost-cutting would be necessary.

### Symbolic £1

It's difficult to say if the Chinese group will succeed where others have failed to ensure a future for British Steel, which is responsible for one-third of the country's production. British Steel has its roots as far back as the Industrial Revolution but took shape in 1967 when the Labor government nationalized the industry, which at the time employed nearly 270,000 people.

The 1980s were painful, as global demand declined and steel plants turned loss-making. A series of strikes saw the Conservative government under the "Iron Lady" Margaret Thatcher privatize the firm in 1988. That signaled the start of a long decline that involved deep cuts in the workforce, the closure of sites and the loss of the company's name before Tata Steel bought it in 2007. In 2016, the investment fund Greybull Capital bought part of its activities for a symbolic one pound.

Greybull Capital brought back the name British Steel for its long steel products business, mainly in rail and construction, hoping to make it a European leader. But the dream did not become a reality and it went bust in May this year. The slump again reflected difficulties in the sector, which now employs no more than about

working in Britain. Capital inflows have in the past acted as lifeblood to banks and the government. But the funneling of dollar liquidity from banks to the central bank to bridge the government's funding gap - a process called "financial engineering" - has also broken.

Salameh said liquidity management was needed, with banks able to borrow dollars at 20% interest to secure depositors' needs on condition that such funds were not sent abroad. Farouk Soussa, senior economist at Goldman Sachs, said the banks' use of extraordinary measures to reduce foreign exchange outflows and "regulatory forbearance" would allow them to continue operating under the current circumstances.

"So long as this is the case, banks will remain solvent," he said. But Moody's Investors Service and Fitch Ratings have downgraded Lebanon's largest banks further into junk territory, and a local banker said some international correspondent banks were now more wary of providing dollar liquidity. Two bankers also doubted the ability of lenders to meet a target set by the regulator of raising their Common Equity Tier 1 capital - an important measure of financial strength - by 10% by the end of the year through cash injections. — Reuters

## British Steel: Chinese takeover marks new chapter in history

**LONDON:** A Chinese buy-out marks a new chapter in the tumultuous history of steelmaking in the United Kingdom, which has been characterized by nationalization, privatizations and recurring crises. Despite having an economy dominated by the services sector, steelmaking retains a special place in British hearts, where it is an enduring symbol of a bygone golden industrial age. That explains the huge interest in Monday's announcement of a buy-out of British Steel by China's Jingye, which made national headlines even with an election campaign in full swing.

The takeover should be a breath of fresh air for some 4,000 British Steel employees, most of whom work at the Scunthorpe site in northern England. Professional body UK Steel called it "positive news for British Steel and its workers", assessing it would go towards "delivering a sustainable future" for the industry. Jingye for its part has promised to invest £1.2 billion (1.4 billion euros, \$1.5 billion) over the next decade, without elaborating on how it will turn around the loss-making firm. "It's not a huge investment," said Jonathan Owens, director of the business and management program at Salford



**SCUNTHORPE:** The sun rises behind the British Steel - Scunthorpe plant in north Lincolnshire, north east England. — AFP

32,000 people and has been hit by fierce competition from China and uncertainty over Brexit cutting demand from European clients.

The relaunch of British Steel, which is the second-biggest steelmaker in the country, will face as much scrutiny as the future of Tata Steel, which currently holds the top spot. The Indian giant has revealed little of its plans for the United Kingdom since the recent failure of a tie-up between its European business and Germany's Thyssenkrupp, prompting fears for the future of Tata's Port Talbot plant in south Wales. — AFP

## Battle for Mediobanca: Italy's richest man takes on seasoned CEO

**MILAN:** One comes from a wealthy family, attended Milan's best schools and has spent all his career engineering mergers at Mediobanca, Italy's most influential investment bank. The other was raised in an orphanage and was too poor to go to high school but at 84 is Italy's richest man, having built the world's biggest eye-wear group from scratch.

Mediobanca's boss Alberto Nagel, 54, and Leonardo Del Vecchio, who in less than two months has become the bank's top investor, are squaring off in a battle for control that is rattling the world of Italian finance. At stake is the future direction of Mediobanca, a venerable institution more than seven decades old. Billionaire tycoon Del Vecchio says Mediobanca should reduce its focus on consumer finance and instead beef up its traditional investment banking business through acquisitions.

Del Vecchio, chairman of Ray-Ban maker EssilorLuxottica, unexpectedly built a stake of 7% in Mediobanca in mid-September - only informing Nagel of his move hours before issuing a statement. Last week he raised his holding to just under 10%, and four sources close to the matter said he was planning to go higher still - which would require approval from the European Central Bank. One of the sources said he was aiming for as much as 20%. Representatives for Del Vecchio were not immediately available to comment for this story.

The tycoon's bold move on Mediobanca has echoes of the corporate intrigue in the so-called "salotto buono", or fine drawing room, the informal club that has pulled the strings in corporate Italy since 1945 and had Mediobanca at its centre. So far, he has kept his cards close to his chest when it comes to motive. But in brief remarks that were widely viewed as a direct challenge to Nagel's strategy, he said last month Mediobanca should rely less on contributions from its consumer credit business and its most prized asset - insurer Generali. He also said Mediobanca was too small, having missed out on a number of possible deals.

The relationship between the pair has deteriorated quickly from 2017 when Mediobanca advised Del Vecchio on the 48 billion euro Luxottica-Essilor merger. A turning point appeared to come last year when Mediobanca, a leading shareholder in a Milanese cancer hospital, blocked a 500-million-euro investment that Del Vecchio wanted to make in the hospital using his own charity firm which would have seen a unit named after him.

Del Vecchio's ultimate goal behind the Mediobanca's stake-building and management's criticism is to have more control over the future of Generali, including through possible cross-border deals, according to three of the sources close to the matter. Del Vecchio blames Nagel, as well as Generali's CEO Philippe Donnet, for what he sees as Generali's poor share price performance compared with rivals like Germany's Allianz or France's Axa, the people said.

While he would favor a tie-up with a foreign group, he wants to ensure Generali's Italian identity is preserved, they added. Mediobanca is the biggest shareholder in Generali with a 13% stake in Europe's third-largest insurer, which accounts for about 30% of the bank's operating profit. Del Vecchio is also a Generali investor, with a 4.8% stake. Nagel has dismissed Del Vecchio's criticism and on Tuesday said he would build on his current strategy to drive growth from Mediobanca's wealth management and consumer credit businesses under a plan through to 2023. — Reuters

## Business

# China retail giant Alibaba given OK for huge Hong Kong listing

## The city's biggest IPO in almost a decade

**HONG KONG:** Chinese online retail titan Alibaba has been given the go-ahead to list shares in Hong Kong, reports said yesterday, in what could be the city's biggest IPO in almost a decade. Approval for the sale will also give the city's financial authorities a huge boost as Hong Kong is battered by months of pro-democracy protests that have tarnished its image for security and hammered the Hang Seng Index.

Asia's biggest company kicked off a weeklong roadshow yesterday as it looks to garner interest from institutional and retail investors, said Hong Kong's South China Morning Post, which is owned by Alibaba. It added, citing

unnamed sources, that the share price will be agreed on November 20, with trading in the firm expected in the week of November 25.

However, Bloomberg News reported speculation on trading floors that the share sale could be affected by protests that are wracking the city, with the Central business district among the areas targeted by demonstrations. Alibaba, which is already listed on New York's Nasdaq, had planned to list in the summer but called it off owing to the city's long-running pro-democracy protests and the China-US trade war. If realized, the \$15 billion IPO would be the biggest since insurance giant AIA garnered \$20.5

billion in 2010. However, it is lower than the \$20 billion it had aimed to raise initially. The listing also comes after the city's exchange tweaked the rules to allow double listings, while Chief Executive Carrie Lam had also been pushing Alibaba's billionaire founder Jack Ma to sell shares in the city. A second listing in Hong Kong will also curry favor with Beijing, which has sought to encourage its current and future big tech firms to list nearer to home after the loss of companies such as Alibaba and Baidu to Wall Street. Mainland authorities have also stepped up moves to attract such firms, including launching a new technology board in Shanghai in July. The Sci-Tech Innovation Board

was launched as a battle with the United States for technological supremacy heated up, with Chinese President Xi Jinping calling on tech leaders to become global champions, while the US has fought back in part by taking steps to clip the wings of Chinese telecom giant Huawei.

Alibaba has capitalized on the Chinese consumer's love of e-commerce to dominate the sector in China and become one of the world's most valuable companies. On Monday it said consumers spent \$38.3 billion on its platforms during "Singles' Day", the world's biggest 24-hour shopping event. That was up a quarter from the previous all-time high mark set last year. — AFP

## Gulf Bank credit cardholders enjoy discount on Emirates

**KUWAIT:** With the addition of Emirates Airline as part of a growing list of over 100 shopping partners in its Easy Pay program, Gulf Bank is proud to announce credit cardholders can now avail an additional discount of up to 12% when booking online with promo code KWGBK17. The Easy Pay program, which is the first of its kind in Kuwait, allows Gulf Bank credit cardholders to shop from a variety of different vendors and pay for their purchases in installments over the course of 12 months, with 0 percent interest.

With the new Emirates Airline offer, customers can now enjoy a more stress-free travel experience, and pay for airline tickets over an extended period of time with no additional processing or interest fees. Emirates is the world's largest international airline, and operates six daily flights to and from Kuwait, connecting travelers to over 150 destinations across 86 countries through Dubai. The

airline operates the world's largest fleet of Airbus 380s and Boeing 777s, offering customers an unmatched travel experience through industry trendsetting products and services onboard.

In June 2019, Emirates began operating its latest Boeing 777-300ER aircraft fitted with the "Game Changer" First Class suites, providing more choices for its customers in Kuwait to experience its latest onboard products. Commenting on the announcement, Ahmad Al Amir, Assistant General Manager of External Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "With our latest offer with Emirates Airline and Easy Pay, traveling just got that much easier and more accessible for our Gulf Bank credit cardholders. With over 150 destinations to choose from, Gulf Bank customers can now enjoy an even more convenient way to plan their annual vacations, without worrying about additional processing or interest fees - and even avail an additional discount of up to 12% off their purchase! At Gulf Bank, we are always on the look-out for new and innovative ways to treat our customers, and are constantly working to launch creative solutions that make our customers' lives that much easier."

With Easy Pay, Gulf Bank credit cardholders can pay for purchases over the course of 12 months and with 0% interest when they shop at more than 100 participating outlets. The process of enrolling any transaction at participating shopping outlets into Easy Pay is seamless. Customers can simply request Easy Pay at the merchant outlet prior to making their purchase, and do not need to submit any additional documents or call the bank.

The cashier at the merchant outlet will then process the credit card transaction on the dedicated Easy Pay terminal, and the transaction will be automatically converted into Easy Pay. Customers can also avail multiple Easy Pay facilities on their credit cards at the same time. To learn more about Gulf Bank's Easy Pay service and to check out the list of participating outlets, customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's 58 branches or log on to [www.e-gulfbank.com](http://www.e-gulfbank.com). Customers can also contact the Customer Contact Center on 1805805 or place queries through the WhatsApp service on 65805805 for assistance and guidance.



Ahmad Al-Amir



## KFH participates in the International Financial Cooperation Forum

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has participated in the International Financial Cooperation Forum 2019 which is holding during the second edition of China International Imports Expo in Shanghai. The Forum has received high attention from Chinese president Xi Jinping and relevant government leaders of the People's Republic of China, relevant dignitaries from around the world, global businesses, Chinese and foreign financial cooperation organizations.

The forum has witnessed the gathering of official delegations, financial industry experts and representatives of the world top 500 enterprises from 155 countries to discuss the future development trends of the global economy, focusing on the topics of "International Financial Innovation Cooperation", "Digital Finance Innovation Development", "Future Banks" and "Breakthrough in Science and Technology Finance".

KFH high-level delegation was headed by the Group Chief Executive Officer Mazin Al Nahedh, Group Chief Treasury Officer Abdulwahab Al Rushood, and Group Chief Strategy Officer Eng Fahad Al Mukhaizeem. KFH's participation comes within the framework of active presence in major economic events, exchange of expertise and knowledge with major international financial institutions, and discussion of issues and topics related to the banking sector.

The KFH delegation met with a number of Chinese officials in the banking and commercial sectors to discuss ways of cooperation and enhance the exchange of knowledge and expertise and reinforce economic and trade relations between the two sides. In his speech, Al Nahedh said that China and Kuwait enjoy close friendship and strong strategic partnership. Such a relationship has flourished over the years in political, economic, investment, commercial, and cultural fields.

He added that the two countries' partnership plays a vital role in integrating Kuwait's "New Kuwait 2035" Vision with China's "Belt and Road" initiative. "In July 2018, His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah paid a state visit to China. The visit played an important role in developing China-Kuwait relations with the two countries agreeing to

the company and also announcements will be made on the future plans for Ooredoo Business. The forum will also feature multiple presentations from leading IoT/ICT companies and will focus on the challenges and changes that have taken place in this sector whether it was technical related or vital issues such as Cyber Security.

The forum will include participations from leading companies such as Huawei, Hewlett Packard, Fortinet, Dell EMC, Cisco, and Ericsson. Challenges will be raised about the future of the corporate sector, and the key objectives of the next phase of digital transformation as well as discussing the benefits of cloud services and data centers.

A special exhibition will be held at the forum in which Ooredoo's main partners will participate to showcase their latest products and services. In the evening, the forum will witness a special event with the launch of the Kuwait App Market in its second year. The market will embrace the creativity of a large number of young Kuwaiti's who have designed unique, successful applications in.

The event will be held from 4:30p.m. to 8:30p.m. This event is in line with the company's strategy to support the youth through the organization of the Kuwait App Market which will include the most prominent local applications. For more information, please contact 131, our team will answer all inquiries around the clock 7 days a week. Or visit our website [www.ooredoo.com.kw/business](http://www.ooredoo.com.kw/business) for updates and more.

## Ooredoo Kuwait to organize 'Business to Digital' Forum

**KUWAIT:** Ooredoo Kuwait, the first to launch innovated digital services in Kuwait, announced that it will be organizing the "Business to Digital Forum" in its second year on Thursday November 21, 2019 under the patronage of the Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State For Service Affairs His Excellency Khalid Al-Roudan.

The forum will begin at 9:30 a.m. and will witness the attendance of the country's most prominent guests and attendees from the leading IoT/ICT companies. The event will take place at the Al-Raya Hall on November 21 and will be a one day event with two sessions, morning and evening. This event comes in tandem with Ooredoo's strategy of being a leader in the market in terms of Digital Transformation. Registration is opened to all under the link <https://www.ooredoo.com.kw/portal/en/b2d2019>.

This event is being held under the supervision of Ooredoo Business with its fixed services arm FASTtelco Business with the aim of shedding the light on the major milestones and achievements for

## Ethnic Bangladeshis lose jobs as mango-mad farm owners shun thirsty rice

**NAOGAON:** Kalamoti Kujur used to make good money as a laborer in the paddy fields near her home in northwest Bangladesh. But five years ago, in response to drought, landowners started growing mangoes instead, which need less water and attention than rice. Kujur, a member of the Oraon ethnic minority in Naogaon district, lost her job and now struggles to support her family.

Many local people like her who do not own land used to earn 200 taka (\$2.36) a day laboring in the rice fields. "But, in recent years, the landlords are transforming their paddy fields into mango gardens, making us workless," she said. In the Barind region of northwestern Bangladesh, rice has long been the sole source of income for the landless Oraon, who traditionally make a living as farm laborers or sharecroppers.

But frequent droughts, poor precipitation and increasing temperatures in the region - which environmental experts link to climate change - have made growing the thirsty crop tougher. Mango trees can be cultivated with fewer people, they say, and use up to 80% less water than growing rice. As rice harvesting season approaches, there are no longer enough jobs for all the Oraon living in Naogaon, Kujur said. Like many others in the area, her eldest son has left their village for six months

to find work in another district. "The male members of our families are compelled to migrate for work, so we have to stay home alone, which makes our lives difficult," said the 45-year-old mother of three. Tajul Islam, a farm owner in Porsha sub-district, has replaced his 5 hectares of rice with four mango orchards. Amid drier weather and higher temperatures, rice farming was losing him too much money, he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "We know shifting to mango farming from paddy (rice) cuts off work for ethnic people, but we prefer mango farming as it requires less labour," Islam said.

### 'No rain, no crop'

The Oraon people were brought from India to Bangladesh by the British colonial government to construct railways in Bengal. They and other ethnic minority groups in Naogaon make up about 7% of the district's more than 2.5 million residents, official data shows, although local charities and minority rights groups say the real figure is higher.

Water scarcity is a common problem for ethnic minorities in Barind, known as "plain-land people", a moniker distinguishing them from other groups in Bangladesh's hilly areas. The region is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, according to a February study by environmental engineers at Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University in Dinajpur and Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology.

Temperature extremes in the region have increased, while annual rainfall has decreased, leading to a reduction in water availability, they found. In Naogaon's Porsha sub-district, the entire ethnic minority population of about 15,000 is affected by water shortages, according to local non-profit Barendrabhumi Samaj Unnayan Sangstha (BSDO), which works with those communities. — Reuters



establish a strategic partnership to open up new prospects," Al Nahedh mentioned.

The partnership between Kuwait and China is reflected in some interesting numbers, he said, pointing out that by the end of 2018, the total number of projects undertaken by the Chinese companies in Kuwait was around 120 with a total value of more than 21 billion dollars. On the bilateral trade between China and Kuwait, Al Nahedh said that it reached about \$19 billion in 2018, up 55 percent year on year. Currently, China is the largest exporter to and second largest importer from Kuwait. China is also Kuwait's largest non-oil trading partner. "In addition, Kuwait is China's ninth largest source of crude oil imports," He said.

### Closer relations

Al Nahedh said: "As the relationship between China and Kuwait is getting closer, Kuwaiti banking sector can gain from increasing number of Chinese EPC companies winning mega projects in Kuwait, such as the new city development, the Silk City project and many others). Kuwaiti banking sector can also gain from setting up of communication channels to discuss strategic approaches." On the other hand, he pointed out that Chinese banks can gain from experiences of reputable banks such as Kuwait Finance House. Furthermore, he said that Chinese banks can benefit from the strategic support for long-term business development between the two banks and the two countries.

### Technology and leadership

"As China is home to some of the largest technology companies in the world and a tech giant, I would like to point out that Kuwait Finance House (KFH) is able to benefit from the Chinese experience," Al Nahedh explained. He added that KFH offers advanced banking services, it also invests heavily in financial technology and embraces innovation through partnering with Fintech companies as part of KFH Capital's investments, the investment arm of KFH Group.

Al Nahedh said that Kuwait Finance House applies Artificial Intelligence AI, in accordance with the highest levels of security, quality and professionalism. It has been a pioneer in leveraging blockchain. It applied this technology in instant cross-border remittance service using Ripple's blockchain technology. All these confirm that KFH is keeping abreast of the latest financial technology and is fully aware of the importance of adapting to change and building partnerships with BigTech across the world, in China, Asia, USA and Europe.

"KFH released the first fully automated 24hr digital self-service branches in Kuwait under the theme of KFH-Go, showing the emphasis on convenience and higher lev-



els of service quality. Most importantly, KFH was among the first to deploy a cross border remittance service with RippleNet, putting KFH at the forefront of innovation in the region as KFH taps into blockchain technology as an enabler for its growth." He added.

### Successful strategy

"As one of the largest banks in the Middle East, KFH's successful strategy is based on the highest and the best international standards, including competing in a constantly evolving environment, integrating innovative solutions and banking technology into operational processes, launching digital transformation initiatives and rearranging products and services to suit the needs and nature of key operational sectors.

"Al Nahedh revealed. He added that KFH aspires to apply Robotics in all its banking processes and lead the way to build the best digital bank in the Middle East, both in the systems it uses and the services it provides to customers. Therefore, KFH looks forward to exploring possible opportunities for cooperation with China in the field of banking technology.

In conclusion, Al Nahedh expressed his thanks to the organizers of the International Financial Cooperation Forum 2019, noting that such events could help to explore more opportunities between China and Arab countries, especially Kuwait. As a Guest of Honor, Kuwait participated in the forum with a delegation headed by Kuwait's Ambassador to China Samih Hayat, head of the Kuwait Investment Office in Shanghai, Abdul Razaq Al-Baeijan, and a number of representatives of local Kuwaiti banks and businessmen. The Kuwaiti delegation, including KFH, was honored on the sidelines of the conference.

What's on

# NBK grants Ascia's dream to learn culinary arts come true

National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues its "I Dream To Be" initiative, a first-of-a-kind initiative that aims at granting wishes for children with severe illnesses around Kuwait, giving them the chance to live their dreams. Ascia Sayed, 7 years old, is undergoing treatment at NBK Hospital and suffers from Leukemia, has always desired to learn how to cook and bake. NBK helped in making her dream come true in cooperation with the "Cooking Club".

NBK welcomed Ascia and provided her with an engraved culinary apron and cap with her name on to be totally prepared to her experience. Ascia enjoyed

full experience learning from different cooking classes under the supervision of certified chefs in a safe, clean and healthy learning environment. "Ascia's dream to learn culinary arts is yet another wish granted through NBK's initiative 'I Dream To Be'. We are proud to be a part of the children's dreams and expand our support to them as much as possible," said Joanne Al Abdul Jaleel, NBK Public relations officer.

"I Dream To Be" initiative is a lifetime experience for children with life-threatening conditions," she added. "This initiative is a great way to spread joy and show that there's always a positive side to a dif-

icult situation. We ask children what they want to be and try to fulfill that for them."

NBK has been at the forefront of supporting Kuwait's community through a range of initiatives towards education, health, sports and social responsibilities. NBK's "I Dream To Be" initiative was launched in 2014 and is dedicated to always putting the child's wish first. This initiative aims to improve a quality of life for children facing life-threatening illnesses. This unprecedented initiative aims at creating a sustainable momentum that transcends from the goodwill of a few to a commitment by the community as a whole.



## ACK obtains engineers Australia accreditation

The Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) has received confirmation that all engineering programs at the college are now fully accredited by Engineers Australia (EA). Dean of the School of Engineering, Dr Mohammed Abdul Niby, proudly announced that this umbrella accreditation is the culmination of meticulous and persistent attention to quality standards and enhancement of programs since the initial accreditation in 2009 for the Bachelor Degree qualifications in Electrical and Petroleum Engineering. In 2012, EA accreditation was extended to cover Bachelor Degrees in Civil and Mechanical Engineering.

During the past two years, the School of Engineering undertook a major project to complete a detailed submission covering accreditation for the diploma level qualifications and re-accreditation for the bachelor level qualifications across all engineer-

ing streams. This involved a four volume set of documents providing full details regarding a comprehensive mapping of each ACK course against the standards required by the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). In addition, the College was required to provide evidence of quality standards associated with both academic and administrative policies and practices.

Receipt of the full accreditation letter was met with great delight across the campus in September 2019. Dr Abdul Niby highlighted the significance of this accomplishment for ACK engineering students and alumni. He explained: "All ACK engineering students, in any discipline, can now receive a qualification that has both international academic content and transnational industry recognition."

"An ACK engineering graduate is now able to produce evidence to prospective employers that their diploma and/or bachelor level studies are at the same standard as a student studying in Australia. Further, ACK engineering alumni are immediately eligible for full associate membership of the professional engineering body, Engineers Australia," he added. ACK has always been committed to offering programs that have a combination of required academic knowledge and industry skills so that students are job ready upon graduation.



## MNH's co-sponsors Horeca Kuwait 2020

Preparations for the Horeca Kuwait 2020 exhibition are steadily progressing and attracting many companies to take part in it as an event providing a golden opportunity to scientifically exchange expertise that would match the local market's needs and future expansion plans. The exhibition is due to be organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Co. at Mishref International Fairgrounds in the period of January 20-22, 2020.

In this regard, Mohammed Nasser Al-Hajery & Sons Ltd (MNH) Company recently announced joining the exhibition's sponsors, which is a resumption of its participation in it since its inception. Commenting on his company's participation, MNH's executive manager, Gabriel Faraon stressed that MNH realizes the significance of maintaining high level of professionalism in all what it does in order to

cope with the rapid changes going on in local, regional and international markets. He also noted that MNH is always keen on excelling in serving both its customer and suppliers.

"Cafes and Restaurants" section is responsible for the operation of many of our most famous brands, such as Haagen Dazs Cafe which was one of our first achievements in this area. We serve our famous ice cream in a cozy atmosphere along with our delicious coffee, Illy Cafe. We have expanded and currently run five Haagen Dazs cafe's across Kuwait," he underlined pointing that, as usual, MNH would display its basic exclusive brands of Illy Cafe, Dilmah tea, Haagen Dazs Ice Cream, Italian Coffee machines, dairy products, juices, Indomie, medical sweeteners and Lotus Biscuits.

Further, Faraon added that MNH had recently launched its Espresso Cafe serving Illy Cafe with an Italian twist and Sutus, Dilmah T-Bar, a Turkish restaurant that serves delicious Turkish cuisine in addition to Khaneen, Hatay and Solia restaurants serving middle Eastern dishes prepared by professional chefs at the company's Central Kitchen. Finally, Faraon stressed that the key to MNH over 70 years' success has been serving various dishes following utmost accurate standards that highly appeal to customers' taste and wins their satisfaction.



## HGTV hosts Guinness World Records attempt at Al Shaheed Park

With less than one week to go before the Guinness World Records attempt for the world's 'Largest Gardening Lesson', HGTV (Home and Garden television), beIN and Al Shaheed Park are inviting Kuwaiti residents to register to take part in the prestigious event. On November 16, the 30-minute beginners' lesson, hosted by popular influencer Alzainah of @itallgrows, will focus on growing your own organic herbs, fruit and vegetables, and how this helps contribute to a healthier lifestyle for all the family.

Participants will not only be able to enjoy the

completely free event hosted by the gardening expert, but also be able to say they were an integral part of the Guinness World Records attempt - walking away with a goodie bag and enjoying light refreshments alongside Alzainah at the conclusion of the record attempt. Registration for the fun community event is almost full. If you wish to attend, please register online by visiting @itallgrows on Instagram and following the link. Those who miss out on a ticket can still watch on from outside the main event area and enjoy the atmosphere of the informative event.



Within LOYAC's Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA)'s annual Peace festival held in collaboration with Al-Shaheed Park, the park visitors recently enjoyed a wonderful evening with Kuwaiti singer, Metrif Al-Metref before an audience of 2500 visitors. The concert included a number of Al-Metref's most enchanting songs that highly appeal to the Kuwaiti audience. Speaking on the occasion, Al-Metref said that he is currently preparing a new single written by Yemeni poet Mohammed Al-Qasimi. Notably, Al-Metref is the son of the late Kuwait singer, Yousif Al-Metref. He started singing with friends and peers at an early age until his father found out how talented he was when he had already achieved fame. His father had always urged him to focus on his studies and ignore hobbies like playing the Oud.



## Toasted Ravioli

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 cup Italian bread crumbs
- 1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 lb. frozen ravioli
- Marinara, warmed (for serving)
- Vegetable oil, for frying
- Marinara, sauce for serving

### DIRECTIONS

**For frying:**  
Line a large baking sheet with parchment. In a shallow bowl, whisk together eggs and milk. In another shallow bowl, combine bread crumbs and Parmesan. Season with salt and pepper. Working one at a time, dip ravioli in egg mixture then in bread crumbs, pressing to coat. Place on prepared baking sheet. Freeze until solid, 30 minutes.

In a large pot over medium heat, heat

2" oil until shimmering (about 365°). Working in batches, fry ravioli until golden and pasta is cooked through, 3 to 4 minutes, flipping as necessary. Place on a paper towel lined plate and immediately sprinkle with more Parmesan. Serve warm with marinara for dipping.

### For air fryer:

Line a large baking sheet with parchment. In a shallow bowl, whisk together eggs and milk. In another shallow bowl, combine bread crumbs and Parmesan. Season with salt and pepper. Working one at a time, dip ravioli in egg mixture then in bread crumbs, pressing to coat, then dip back in egg mixture. Place on prepared baking sheet. Freeze until solid, 30 minutes. Working in batches, place in basket of air fryer and cook at 400° for 7 minutes. Remove from basket and top with Parmesan. Serve warm with marinara sauce for dipping.



## NOTICE

The TIES Center cordially invites you to another session on the Stories of Prophets on November 14, at 7 pm. In this class, we will discuss why Prophet Musa (AS) asked to see Allah (SWT). His response, what happened to mount Tur when Allah (SWT) manifested Himself to it, and As-Sudeyis analysis of that event. We will also learn what the Bible says about seeing God and discuss five things Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told his Companions. Finally, we will see how Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) resolved a dispute between a Jew who claimed that Musa (AS) was the best prophet and a Muslim who asserted that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was. We will also discuss some unique traits of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and why his nation is superior to others. Come and learn more about the life and times of Prophet Musa (AS) in a serene and relaxed environment.

## NOTICE

Mishal Al-Sabah to hold a seminar titled 'Rights and Liberties' with the participation of Dr Ayed Al-Manna and Jasim Mohammad Al-Jazza on November 17, 2019 at 7:30 pm. Address: Najlaa Al-Niqi Cultural Forum, Salmiya - Blajal street, Al-Oula Towers - Middle Tower, second floor - building 33.



# The cost to stop women dying in childbirth? 46 military aircrafts

**NAIROBI:** Countries need about \$264 billion - the equivalent cost of 110 military aircrafts - to end maternal deaths, gender based violence, child marriage, and provide family planning to all women by 2030, said a United Nations study. An investment of \$115.5 billion - which is equivalent to the cost of 46 high-end military aircrafts - would end needless maternal deaths by 2030, researchers said at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Kenya.

The price for ending the 12 million child marriages every year would be \$35 billion, they said, adding it would cost \$600 to spare a girl from becoming a child bride - the equivalent cost of a one night in a luxury hotel. Nations have committed to three global goals related to women's sexual and reproductive rights within the next 10 years, but the report by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) found there was a funding shortfall to meet these targets.

"We now know how much and where we need to invest. These figures are a drop in the ocean compared to the dividend expected and the funds available," UNFPA Executive Director Natalia Kanem told the global conference late on Tuesday. "I believe it's wrong to even refer to this as a cost. These are smart, affordable investments that will transform the lives of women and girls, their societies, and our world. The cost of inaction is much higher."

Every day more than 800 women die from preventable causes during pregnancy and childbirth, according to the UNFPA. More than 230 million women want to prevent pregnancy but are not using modern contraception. One in three women globally have faced some

form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, while harmful practices - such as child marriage - mean every day 33,000 girls are being forcefully wed, according to the UNFPA.

Researchers said the \$264 billion would be used for interventions like hiring medical staff, purchasing drugs, contraceptives and obstetric supplies, research, providing counseling and boost community outreach programs. John Stover, director of Avenir Health which was involved in the study, said the cost was not any higher because many of the interventions to combat gender based violence were the same required to reduce child marriage and female genital mutilation.

"Keeping girls in school and economic empowerment are key to all of these interventions. So in reality, it's not very expensive - we have some idea how to do it, we just need the will power to go forward and do it," Stover said. Kamau Macharia, principal secretary at the foreign ministry in Kenya - where one in five girls are married before 18 and 35% of maternal deaths are caused from unsafe abortions - said the amount to meet the global goals was "miniscule".

"\$264 billion is miniscule in the face of the cost of the thousands of dead mothers, the cost of the hundreds of thousands of orphaned children who are left behind and the cost of families broken up by abuse and violence," said Macharia. The three-day summit, which started on Tuesday, involves more than 6,000 participants ranging from heads of state to financial institution and civil society groups from 160 nations discussing sexual and reproductive health and rights. — Reuters

## Google healthcare data move makes some queasy

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Google on Tuesday defended a project aimed at modernizing healthcare while giving it access to medical data of millions of people. Reports that Google was amassing medical data prompted a blog post by the Internet giant revealing a project code-named "Nightingale," evidently in tribute to Florence Nightingale whose nursing work during the Crimean War in the 1850s is credited with turning such work into a profession.

The news also caused the US Office for Civil Rights in the Department of Health and Human Services to launch an inquiry to make sure Google was obeying laws regarding keeping people's medical information private, according to the Wall Street Journal. Google has made no secret of its collaboration with health care providers on computing tools to improve patient care. In the post Tuesday, Google released information about a collaboration with US health systems non-profit Ascension that includes moving data and analytics to a private, secure cloud hosted by the internet firm.

Ascension could also use Google computing tools to allow employees to communicate and collaborate securely in real time from different sites, according to the post by Google cloud industry products and solutions president Tariq Shaikat. "All of Google's work with Ascension adheres to industry-wide regulations regarding patient data, and come with strict guidance on data privacy, security and usage," Shaikat said.

"To be clear: under this arrangement, Ascension's data cannot be used for any other purpose than for providing these services we're offering under the agreement, and patient data cannot and will not be combined with any Google consumer data." The internet colossus disclosed little about what it is testing in Project Nightingale as it competes to be the preferred platform for patients and care providers. "It is a shame that the rush of distrust is hitting this one for Google," said analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group.

"This is actually them trying to do something good. Project Nightingale is, for the most part, intended to improve the quality of healthcare." Google's cloud team works with dozens of healthcare service providers on technology to analyze medical data and make it readily available to patients and those treating them, according to the company. "Google is really doubling-down on healthcare," said Wedbush Research managing director Daniel Ives. "Health care is really the next frontier that Google, Amazon, IBM, Apple and others are going after." — AFP

CLINIC

PAGE







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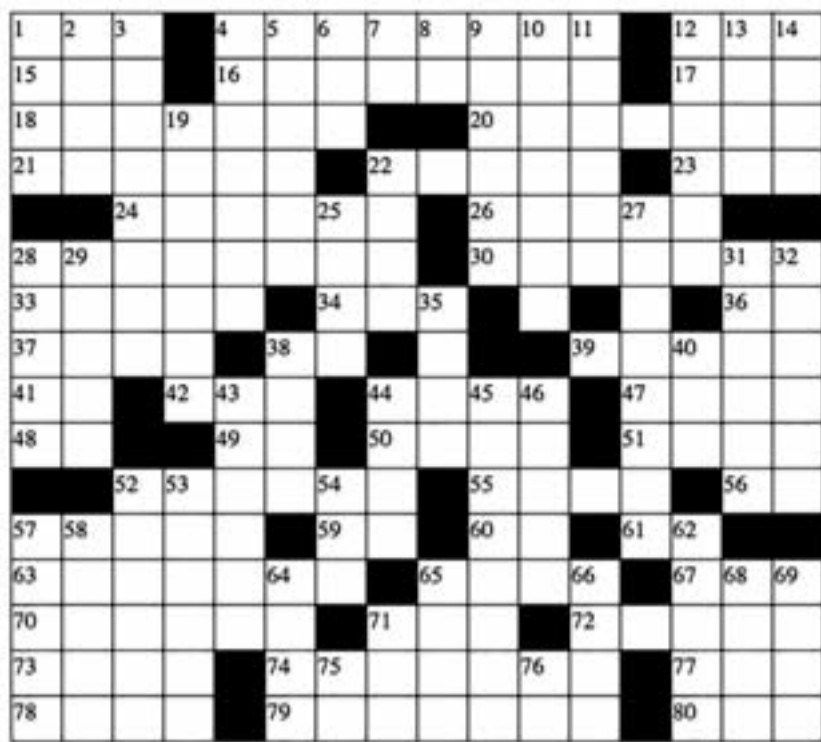
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2359



ACROSS

- 1. (Australian and New Zealand) A disparaging term for English immigrants to Australia or New Zealand.
4. A language spoken by the Atakapa people of the Gulf coast of Louisiana and Texas.
12. A potent estrogen used in medicine and in feed for livestock and poultry.
15. (informal) Of the highest quality.
16. Concluding state of pregnancy.
17. (Norse mythology) One of the Aesir known for his beauty and skill with bow and skis.
18. A genus of Paridae.
20. Contrary to your interests or welfare.
21. Stem foremost or backward.
23. A piece of furniture that provides a place to sleep.
24. Spread or daub over.
26. The capital and largest city of Ghana with a deep-water port.
28. A city in the northern panhandle of Texas.
30. In accordance with nature.
33. Music performed for dancing the polka.
34. A long projecting or anterior elongation of an animal's head.
36. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
37. The basic unit of money in Botswana.
39. Desire strongly or persistently.
41. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
42. The widely studied plant virus that causes tobacco mosaic.
47. A mountainous landlocked communist state in southeastern Asia.
48. A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
49. Being one more than one.
50. A male monarch or emperor (especially of Russia prior to 1917).
51. An elaborate song for solo voice.
55. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
56. (astronomy) A measure of time defined by Earth's orbital motion.
57. Small genus of plants constituting the family Batifacaceae.
59. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
60. The use of bacteria or viruses of toxins to destroy men and animals or food.
61. A hemoprotein composed of globin and heme that gives red blood cells their characteristic color.
63. Absence of the sense of smell (as by damage to olfactory nasal tissue or the olfactory nerve or by obstruction of the nasal passages).
67. A white linen liturgical vestment with sleeves.
70. In the Arabian Nights a hero who tells of the fantastic adventures he had in his voyages.
72. A minor Hebrew prophet (8th century BC).
73. Type genus of the Amiidae.
74. Any member of a Siouan people speaking one of the Dhegaha languages.
77. An inflammatory complication of leprosy that results in painful skin lesions on the arms and legs and face.
78. British artist and writer of nonsense verse (1812-1888).
79. (British) A minicar used as a taxicab.
80. An informal term for a father.

DOWN

- 1. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
2. United States newspaper publisher (1858-1935).
3. Ground meat formed into a ball and fried or simmered in broth.
4. Congenital absence of the heart (as in the development of some monsters).
5. Of or relating to the palm of the hand or to the area at the base of the thumb.
6. Brief episode in which the brain gets insufficient blood supply.
7. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
8. Being one hundred more than three hundred.
9. A port city in southwestern Iran.
10. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
11. Convey by horizontal mass movement of a fluid.
12. The room in the palace of a native prince of India in which audiences and receptions occur.
13. Other than what is under consideration or implied.
14. A vehicle mounted on runners and pulled by horses or dogs.
19. South African mongoose-like viverrine having a face like a lemur and only four toes.
22. A slender double-reed instrument.
25. The inner and longer of the two bones of the human forearm.
27. Pastry made with a cream cheese dough and different fillings (as raisins and walnuts and cinnamon or chocolate and walnut and apricot preserves).
29. Any of numerous small rodents typically resembling diminutive rats having pointed snouts and small ears on elongated bodies with slender usually hairless tails.
31. Skillful (or showing skill) in adapting means to ends.
32. East Indian tart yellow berrylike fruit.
35. A bachelor's degree in music.
38. Morally bad or wrong.
40. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
43. An unwholesome atmosphere.
44. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
45. Of or relating to rabbis or their teachings.
46. (Welsh) Lord of Annwn (the other world).
52. Lack of normal muscular tension or tonus.
53. Remove from the bar.
54. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
58. A hard copal derived from an African tree.
62. Being derived from.
64. Severe diabetes mellitus with an early onset.
65. (New Testament) The sages who visited Jesus and Mary and Joseph shortly after Jesus was born.
66. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
68. A Russian river.
69. With no effort to conceal.
71. (in Scotland or Ireland) A mountain or tall hill.
75. An expression of greeting.
76. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may find yourself awake at an early hour this morning. You could be helping someone move or driving someone to the airport. Whatever the case, you are available to help. Sympathy and understanding are emotional qualities that take on a greater importance now. Even though it is the top of the morning when you help this person, you are reflective and may be a mirror for this person's focus. You are equally-minded and easy to talk with-a good mediator as well. As a sociable and slightly frivolous orientation sets in this afternoon, you may find yourself planning a neighborhood get-together. There is time to relax-perhaps a massage or some leisure time in a pool.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are good at relations regarding politics, diplomacy and sales-not to mention considerate and helpful. This is a good day for you to deal in sales or presentations. You have an inner urge to be all things to all people and would rather bend than argue. You will be helping a friend today because you are willing to listen and not criticize. You are a natural diplomat, always concerned with the comfort and welfare of others. You stay in the background, but are able to manipulate and bring out cooperation in others every time. A real estate profession is something you might seriously consider. This is a day you should enjoy-relax.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Progressive people and idealistic groups or concepts play a more important role in your life now-a new cycle begins. There is a concern for something bigger than any one person-perhaps an interest in civic affairs or even some new recycling technique. You are very communicative, flexible, mental and other-oriented today. You will find many, particularly young people, listen to your ideas and advice. Your laser-like mind makes conversations fast-paced and illuminating. A ready wit and a great sense of humor create a rewarding day. You may join a self-help group or find yourself talking about a self-help book to a close friend this evening. Whatever the case, you have insight into your own emotions and drive. You can be a good mentor.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Easy does it-this is one of those busy days. If you need to concentrate on a particular chore, it would be a good idea to suggest that others either help you or leave you alone to do your work. This way, you will not get as many interruptions-and who knows-someone might help you with your special chore or project. A family gathering may be planned for later this day, perhaps a picnic. Tonight could complete your little gathering with a nearby outdoor concert. A music festival or some other type of fun activity with lots of children and unique exhibits just gives everyone the perfect opportunity to get to know each other better.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Having and appreciating things of beauty and value plays a big role in your life at this time. Making the most of what you have, striving for security and stability; that's the impulse that stirs in you now. You find yourself talking about investing and may even have a personal plan. Provided you do not spend the entire budget on the fancy things that catch your eye, a shopping expedition can be a financially favorable one for you now. Circumstances may expand your appreciation and enjoyment of your life situation. Your system of values may deepen, providing you with a better sense of discrimination and good taste. There is a desire to purchase items and you might forget when to stop adding to your basket. You are inspired to write poetry.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You are not bound by relationships and are thus not much of a domestic. You find it easy to work with other people and tend to pour a lot of energy into those around you. Foreign affairs may catch your attention at this time. Perhaps an investment you are thinking about is beginning to show quite an upswing in potential. You will find support from others when you turn your attention to health, food, nutrition and areas where service or attention to detail is in high focus. You may enjoy working with a group of people that have similar thinking or politics. With your powerful spirit, you enjoy your strong emotions and have an active social life. There are opportunities to show off your charming side this evening at an upscale social affair.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You are very much the creature of habit. The encircling network of friends and relationships are crucial to your success or lack thereof from time to time. You are nourished in great measure by the atmosphere and conditions you are able to set up. You may, however, tend to fluctuate between uninspired routine and crazy binges. For the next few days you may want to spend some time in organizing your thoughts and goals-making lists. Do not forget to walk around your home and make any necessary notes about updates. This is a good time to change the air filters, set out a soaker hose, clean vents, etc. Enjoy a bit of time away from work and responsibilities, perhaps by short trips to fun places this weekend. Consider creating a butterfly garden.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

It is easy for you to express yourself to others-you always manage to make a good appearance. You have an easy manner and find it easy to communicate with just about anyone. You like beautiful surroundings, everything that is calm, tasteful and harmonious. You may be planning a water garden for those hot summer days-maybe a few goldfish. This afternoon you will find yourself involved in several fun conversations with those you love. You are very giving, conciliatory and even flattering in relationships, able to adjust to any situation. Budget restraints are definitely needed so that some item you want in the future will become more attainable.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You would like your conversations and thinking to stay somewhere near the surface today. This is a day of rest, and deep problem-solving conversations are certainly not on your to-do list. You can create new subjects easily with all the interests you have. You will enjoy your friends today-you love to interact with them. There may be an occasion to teach someone how to write music or to put one of your poems to music. You appreciate change, variety and making local connections-there may be an open house or opening day for some new business. You have many avenues to explore this weekend and many positive things to accomplish.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Circumstances may press you and tend to bring out the rebel in you. A little bicycle ride or just a change of scenery for a short while will help to bring your emotions back in balance. Self-control is the accepted and admired behavior, and you are able to respond in positive ways. Circumstances work together to bring out your ideals-making it easier to make your dreams real. You are very original when it comes to home and surroundings-the environment you build around you. This could also manifest in new ideas for unusual ways of supporting yourself in the future. Get outside and be with friends this afternoon-enjoy a breath of fresh air! This evening, literature is on your mind.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

There are changes around your household that may not be the most pleasant for you. Change would be easier if you could have more control. However, if you are paying for these changes, you have the power! This doesn't mean you could be bossy, but it does mean you could become more influential with the price, color, style, etc. If you do not care about any of these, the changes will probably stay. Progressive people and idealistic groups or concepts play an important role in your life. This may be a special day when you have been looking forward to a trip to a museum, art show or the opening night of a play where a family member is performing.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Everything points to your taking the lead in today's activities. You could feel great support from those around you. You feel healthy and natural. You will find that today is packed full of communication with friends, especially those you may not have seen in some time. Perhaps it is time for a reunion. Practical and effective ideas are the ones that make the most sense-putting them to good use is a focus for you. Material things are foremost on your mind in many respects; an emphasis on the real rather than the ideal. This is the time you may decide to install a porch instead of a deck. Now when company comes, there will be a place to put them. If it is a porch with wide windows, you will enjoy sitting out there for meditations.

Wordsearch Puzzle

New York City 2

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.



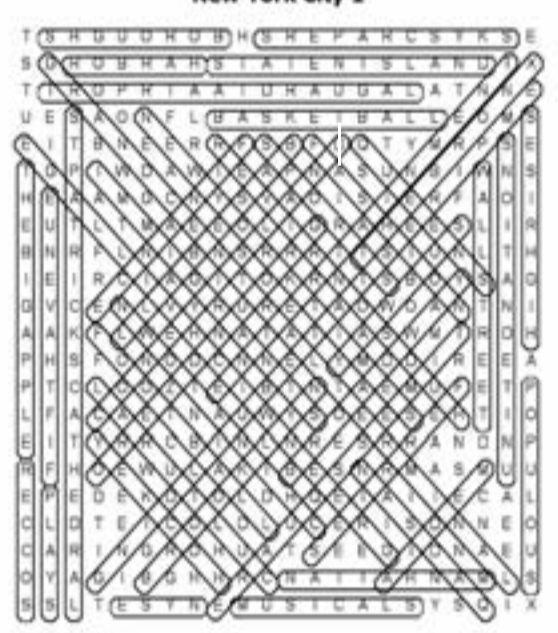
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Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution

New York City 1



- BASKETBALL, BOROUGHS, BRADSHAW, BROOKLYN, CHINATOWN, CONY ISLAND, CULTURAL, EMPRES STATE BUILDING, ENTERTAINMENT, FASHION, FERRIS, FIFTH AVENUE, FINANCE, FOOTBALL, GRAND CENTRAL, TERMINAL, GREENWICH VILLAGE, GROUND ZERO, HARBOUR, HIGHRISES, HOCKEY, HUDSON RIVER, IMMIGRANTS, LAGUARDIA AIRPORT, MANHATTAN, MEDIA, MUSICALS, NASDAQ, NEW YORK TIMES, NYSE, PLAYS, POPULOUS, QUEENS, SKYSCRAPERS, SOCCER, SPORTS, STATES ISLAND, ST PATRICKS CATHEDRAL, SUBWAY, THE BIG APPLE, THE BRONX, TIMES SQUARE, UNITED NATIONS, WALL STREET.

The hidden message is: THE STATUE OF LIBERTY WAS A GIFT FROM FRANCE AND WAS DEDICATED IN EIGHTEEN-EIGHTY-SIX

Yesterday's Solution



# Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2019



French urban climber Alain Robert, 57, popularly known as the 'French Spiderman', climbs the 152 m tall 'Tour Ariane' office skyscraper, located in La Defense, the high-rise business district situated west of Paris. — AFP

## French support for Polanski crumbles amid new accusations

The "unconditional support" Roman Polanski has enjoyed from the French film establishment seems to be crumbling after a new rape claim against the controversial director. Interviews to promote his new film "An Officer and a Spy"—which opens Wednesday—have been either cancelled or pulled since a French photographer claimed on Friday that Polanski raped her in 1975 when she was 18 after beating her "into submission" at his Swiss chalet.

In Paris late Tuesday, women's rights supporters blocked one of a number of special advance screenings of the film—the French title of which is "J'accuse" (or "I accuse") — shouting "Polanski rapist" and carrying banners saying "Polanski-persecutes women". The 86-year-old French-Polish film-maker has been a fugitive from US justice since admitting to the statutory rape of a 13-year-old girl in 1977. He was accused of drugging and raping the girl, and fled to France when it appeared a judge was reconsidering his release.

Photographer Valentine Monnier claimed Polanski tried to make her swallow a pill when he pounced on her after they had gone skiing in Gstaad. "I thought I was going to die," she said in an open letter published by Le Parisien newspaper. Monnier said she felt impelled to speak out after Polanski appeared to compare himself to the hero of his new film, Alfred Dreyfus, the Jewish officer wrongly persecuted as a spy by French army at the turn of the 20th century. The former actress had previously written to the French first lady Brigitte Macron to complain about Polanski getting public funds to rewrite history to "cover up his criminal past".

### Deafening silence

After vociferous denials and threats to sue the newspaper from Polanski's lawyers, his wife actress Emmanuelle Seigner and Jean Dujardin, the film's Oscar-winning star, have since withdrawn from major interviews on French television and radio to promote "An Officer and a Spy". French public radio—one of the film's promotional partners—also shelved another popular show on Monday that featured a pre-recorded interview with Louis Garrel, who plays Dreyfus in the film.

Despite being forced to step down as president

of the French Oscars in 2017 after protests by feminist groups, Polanski has weathered previous allegations of rape and sexual assault from other women. In her letter, Monnier criticized the "unconditional support that (French) artists and intellectuals" have long given Polanski. But this time his powerful supporters inside the film industry have remained silent.

And in a further blow to legendary film-maker, the French directors' guild, the ARP, could suspend

when she was just 12. Her lengthy interview prompted an outpouring of support, which many observers saw as a turning point in France's uneasy relationship with the #MeToo movement.

Haenel is so far the only star to speak out in support of Monnier. "I believe her. Her stand is all the more courageous because her aggressor is powerful," she said. The actress had earlier poured scorn on those who had defended Polanski, daring them to "read the description of what he did... to

sexual intercourse with a minor before fleeing the country.

US authorities have repeatedly tried to have Polanski extradited to face trial, with no success. French film legend Catherine Deneuve, who attacked the #MeToo movement last year as a puritanical "witch-hunt", has been one of Polanski's most stalwart supporters, with Thierry Fremaux, the director of the Cannes film festival also warning in 2017 that Polanski's "case was



him as early as next week after telling AFP Tuesday that it supported "all victims of sexual violence and harassment". It said it is considering changing its rules so that "every member convicted of a sex crime would be expelled and any under police investigation would be suspended."

### #MeToo turning point

Even before the new rape claim there were signs last week that the "tolerance" of predatory sexual behavior in the industry was evaporating after acclaimed actress Adele Haenel said she was sexually harassed by the director of her first film

the child of 13 on which he forced himself" in Los Angeles. Haenel added that his case was "symptomatic of a society where women who suffer sexual violence are ignored and treated with contempt."

But Samantha Geimer, whom Polanski was accused of raping in Jack Nicholson's LA home two years after the alleged rape in Switzerland, criticized Monnier for not speaking out earlier. How could Monnier have "sat silently while I was called a liar and a gold digging whore in 1977 knowing they may have prevented it," she tweeted. Polanski was charged over Geimer's rape, but pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of unlawful

one which you need to really know before you can talk about".

Alberto Barbera, the head of the rival Venice film festival, where "An Officer and a Spy" premiered in August, said that "we should make a clear distinction between the man and the artist" while the veteran Greek director Costa-Gavras also defended Polanski, saying "it was 40 years ago... Forgiveness is necessary in society." — AFP





Sotheby's auctioneer Oliver Barker takes bids on the painting by Paul Signac titled 'La Corne d'Or' (Constantinople) during an auction in New York City. — AFP photos



Sotheby's specialists hang painting by Paul Signac titled 'La Corne d'Or' (Constantinople).



A Sotheby's specialist displays the 1886 painting by Vincent van Gogh titled 'People strolling in a Park in Paris.'

## ART MEETS AI: COMPUTER-GENERATED WORKS SET FOR NEW YORK SALE

Two paintings up for auction in New York highlight a growing interest in artificial intelligence-created works—a technique that could transform how art is made and viewed but is also stirring up passionate debate. The art world was stunned last year when an AI painting sold for \$432,500, and auctioneers are keen to further test demand for computer-generated works. “Art is a true reflection of what our society, what our environment responds to,” said Max Moore of Sotheby’s.

“And so it’s just a natural continuation of the progression of art,” he added. Sotheby’s will put two paintings by the French art collective Obvious up for sale on Thursday, including “Le Baron De Belamy.” The European classic style portrait is part of the same series as “Portrait of Edmond Belamy”, which sold for more than 60 times the lowest estimate at Christie’s during

the 2018 fall auctions. The paintings were made using a technique called “generative adversarial network,” or GAN.

GAN involves feeding thousands of images of the same style into a computer until the machine concludes that it has created a new portrait that it thinks accurately reflects that style. “Katsuwaka of the Dawn Lagoon” was created in a Japanese style using the same GAN algorithm. Auctioneers have put modest prices on the two paintings. “Katsuwaka” has a pre-sale estimate between \$8,000 and \$12,000, while “Le Baron” has been priced between \$20,000 and \$30,000.

“We do not expect as big a result as last year,” said Pierre Fautrel, one of the three members of Obvious. “We just want to see if there are people who are ready to buy around these prices and if the market will continue to build,” he added. Moore said the sale of

“Portrait of Edmond Belamy” showed that there is “a marketplace for this new body of work” but that it’s still “in the very early stages.” “That will be a good indicator of where the market is,” he said. In the fledgling artificial intelligence market, Obvious is not the most sought-after group of artists.

### Not for everyone

Steven Sacks, owner of the bitforms gallery in New York says his client, the Canadian-Mexican artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer has already made around \$600,000 for an AI artwork. Whereas Obvious’s paintings are fixed, most of Lozano-Hemmer’s works use software to change in real time according to data about each viewer’s perspective. Other prominent AI artists who are exhibiting their work across the world include Germany’s Mario Klingemann and Turkish-born Refik Anadol.

Klingemann also makes portraits, sometimes tweaking the input data with voluntary glitches to avoid replication. Anadol uses mostly video to produce abstract data-based animations. Klingemann’s “Memories of Passersby I”, a stream of portraits created by a machine, sold for \$40,000 at Sotheby’s in London in March. Sacks and several other artists AFP spoke to were critical of the “Bellamy” sale last year. They feel that that painting is not representative of the potential of AI and argue that Obvious is imitating other works whereas they are creating something new.

“For me it was a problem because it wasn’t authentic,” said Sacks, who subscribes to a school of thought that works made by AI should constantly be changing, usually on screens. Some also criticize Obvious for giving the impression that AI can create works of art without human interference. “An artist choos-

es. He lightens, he reinforces. Can a computer do that?” asks French painter Ronan Barot, who has collaborated with British AI artist Robbie Barrat.

The debate continues to rage. Fautrel of Obvious denies that his collective merely imitates other artworks and sees AI as a “tool” and not an end in itself. Despite their differences, they all agree the market for AI paintings is growing and that the sale of “Bellamy” has drawn attention to the burgeoning technique. “I don’t think this new style is for everyone but I think you’re going to start catching the attention of a lot of people that aren’t necessarily art collectors but are very interested in the technology behind AI,” said Sotheby’s Moore. — AFP

## ‘Friends’ reunion special could be headed for HBO Max

Could “Friends” be getting back together, if only for a one night stand? The Hollywood Reporter and Variety on Tuesday reported that preliminary talks were underway for an unscripted reunion special that would feature all six “Friends” actors and air on upcoming streaming service HBO Max, a unit of AT&T’s WarnerMedia. HBO Max had no comment on the reports, which follow hints by Jennifer Aniston that something might be underway.

The talks are still in the very early stages and would not involve reviving the hit comedy series that ended in 2004, the two entertainment industry publications said, citing unidentified sources. HBO Max secured the rights to all 10 seasons of “Friends” for its streaming service that is scheduled to launch in April 2020. The series has found a new lease of life on Netflix where it was the second most-watched show in 2018, according to Nielsen data.

Aniston joined Instagram in October by posting a recent selfie with “Friends” actors Matt LeBlanc (Joey), Courtney Cox (Monica), Matthew Perry (Chandler), Lisa Kudrow (Phoebe) and David Schwimmer (Ross). Asked about a possible new “Friends” project, Aniston told talk show host Ellen DeGeneres last month: “We would love for there to be something, but we don’t know what that something is. So we’re just trying. We’re working on something,” Aniston said she posted the selfie because “because we miss each other and we all happened to be in the same part of the world.” — Reuters

US actress Jennifer Aniston arrives for The SAG-AFTRA Foundation’s 4th Annual Patron of the Artists Awards at the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts in Beverly Hills. — AFP



## Bats and broccoli: Exploring London’s ‘ghost stations’

From film sets to bat sanctuaries and vegetable gardens, London’s disused Underground stations host a subterranean world of surprises. Now a new exhibition at the London Transport Museum is offering the public a glimpse into the British capital’s “ghost stations”—with guided tours for more intrepid enthusiasts. One group of aficionados gathered at Piccadilly Circus station, with the thunder of trains reverberating through the tunnels, to see a part of the station not used for years. Just a stone’s throw from one of London’s busiest stations, they stepped into a world frozen in time, with signs in outdated typography directing long-gone passengers “To The Trains”. The space is now used to store equipment and as ventilation, but during World War II, Piccadilly Circus helped “preserve priceless works of art from bombing”, Siddy Holloway, who organises the “Hidden London” tours, told AFP. Several parts of the London Underground, nicknamed “The Tube” because of the rounded shape of its circular tunnels, have changed their function with surprising results.

### Secret activities

The exhibition at the Covent Garden museum runs until January and curator Matt Brosnan said it was a chance to explore the history of abandoned stations through time. It also “tries to give visitors the opportunity to immerse themselves in the atmosphere of these places and explain why they have been abandoned, how they have sometimes been adapted for very different uses and sometimes even secret activities in times of war,” he added.

Overground platforms at Highgate station in north London were shut in the late 1950s after 90 years of service. Left abandoned, the nearby tunnels on the disused line have since

attracted bats from neighboring woods and are now a protected habitat for them. During World War II, it was humans who sought sanctuary in the tunnels and stations of the Tube, sheltering from German bombs. Black and white photos show children sleeping in hammocks stretched out on the tracks, while other children play draughts and adults dance or listen to the radio.

Down Street station, which closed in 1932, secretly housed the headquarters of the Railway Executive Committee (REC) during the war. The REC controlled the main British railway lines and the movement of troops and equipment. The station was completely adapted to allow 40 people to work and even live in a bomb-proof environment. It housed offices, meeting rooms, toilets, dormitories and a dining room, whose atmosphere and menu is recreated in the exhibition. Wartime prime minister Winston Churchill was among the guests who savored its hearty meals—a rare luxury in a country where food was rationed.

### Finding a new life

Some of these war-time refuges are finding new life in the modern age. A few years ago, air raid shelters built in the tunnels far below the Northern Line in Clapham, south London, were transformed into a vegetable garden where broccoli, coriander and peas thrive in artificial light. While most of those above ground are unaware of the ghost stations under their feet, they may recognize them from the big screen. Aldwych station appeared in “V for Vendetta” (2005) and in “The Battle of Britain” (1969), while disused areas of Charing Cross were in the James Bond film “Skyfall” (2012). — AFP

## Licensed to thrill: Bond author’s steamy letters go on sale

Sexually-charged letters between James Bond creator Ian Fleming and his wife Ann were put up for auction on Tuesday, part of a collection of correspondence that also charts the success of his 007 books. They couple first met in 1934, when Ann was married to her first husband, but they did not tie the knot until 1952 — the year Fleming wrote “Casino Royale”, his first novel about the fictional super spy. The letters reveal the intensity of their relationship, particularly before they married.

In one, Ann wrote to ask Fleming to “put me in your bed with a raw cowhide whip in my hand so as I can keep you well behaved for forty years”. The collection contains more than 160 letters written by both of them, estimated at £200,000-£300,000 ahead of the December 3-10 sale. Gabriel Heaton, books and manuscripts specialist at Sotheby’s auction house, said the correspondence offered an “unmatched record” of Fleming’s life and career.

### Outlet for libido and imagination

The letters begin when he was working in intelligence during World War II, cover his journalism and the creation of Bond, including time spent writing at his Goldeneye estate in Jamaica. “James Bond was very much a product of Ian and Ann’s relationship,” Heaton said. “It is no coincidence that Ian wrote his first Bond novel in the same year they married, both as an outlet for his libido and imagination, and also in an attempt to make money for a woman who was used to being unthinkingly rich.”

The letters reveal the couple’s heartache at the death of their daughter at just a few hours old, born while Ann was married to her second husband, newspaper magnate Viscount Rothermere. “I have nothing to say to comfort you. After all this travail and pain it is bitter. I can only send you my arms and my love and all my prayers,” Fleming wrote to her. They later had a son, Caspar, an event Fleming celebrated

by buying a golden typewriter.

Their correspondence describes a life of glamour and privilege but also, as the years progress, an increasing bitterness in their life together. “You mention ‘bad old bachelor days’—the only person you stopped sleeping with when they ceased was me!” Ann complained in one letter. Fleming also describes the extraordinary process of writing a Bond book a year.

“I have written a third of it in one week—a chapter a day. I expect I shall get stuck soon but to date it does well & interests me,” he wrote of what would become “From Russia, with Love”. “The first half is about Russia & that has always interested me. They have decided to murder Bond. A beautiful spy called Titania Romanova is about to appear. Cool er!” — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

# 'Historic' Disney+ streaming launch marred by glitches

Disney flung open its vast archive with the arrival of its much-hyped new television streaming service Tuesday, but the big launch was marred by glitches which prevented many customers accessing titles from Mickey Mouse cartoons to Star Wars. The introduction of Disney+ marks a huge bet by the media-entertainment giant, pitching it into direct conflict with on-demand services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime which have disrupted the Hollywood media landscape.

It went live overnight on televisions, tablets and smartphones across the US and Canada, featuring thousands of movies and TV episodes from Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Lucasfilm and National Geographic. Disney chief Bob Iger called the launch "a historic moment for our company that marks a new era of innovation and creativity." But after a

series of posts on social media from users unable to watch, Disney acknowledged problems with the rollout, saying it was due to strong demand.

"The consumer demand for Disney+ has exceeded our high expectations," the company said in a statement. "We are pleased by this incredible response and are working to quickly resolve the current user issue. We appreciate your patience." The real-time web monitoring service Downdetector reported at least 8,000 problems accessing Disney+ by 1400 GMT.

Dozens of Twitter users posted messages about the glitches, some using images of the Disney film "Ralph Breaks the Internet," or the hashtag #DisneyPlusFail. Others complained of long wait times trying to contact technical support. Excited fans had stayed up until the small hours to be among the first to

watch "The Mandalorian," a new live-action Star Wars television series which is among a handful of Disney+ exclusives available at launch.

In early reviews, the Los Angeles Times called the first episode "safe-but-entertaining," describing it as "long on impressive special effects and alien shootouts, and short on a fresh story line." Vanity Fair praised the pilot's action sequences but found the show "lacking the achingly human element of the 'Star Wars' universe." New episodes will be released each Friday.

**'We admire them'**

Traditional Hollywood studios like Disney until recently have been happy to pocket billions by selling streaming rights for their titles to the likes of Netflix and Amazon. With the launch, Disney will now forgo an estimat-

ed \$5 billion in revenues from those streaming rights deals, and instead charge users directly for access to its archive of television and film content. Disney is undercutting most rivals with a monthly price of \$6.99, or \$12.99 packaged with Hulu and its sports service ESPN+.

Disney+ will be rolled out to Australia and New Zealand next week, and most of western Europe in March. The company expects to have between 60 million and 90 million subscribers by 2024. While some of Disney's previous rights deals are yet to expire-for example, "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" remains on Netflix in the US for now-Disney+ will be the "exclusive streaming home for films released by The Walt Disney Studios in 2019 and beyond," the company said.

Netflix boss Reed Hastings has said that his company welcomes the competition. "I'm

not saying we worry about them, we admire them," he told the Dealbook conference in New York last week. "I'll subscribe, they've got great shows." Warner Bros parent company AT&T is following a similar strategy with its May launch of "HBO Max," while Universal Pictures parent Comcast is also set to introduce "Peacock" next year.

"Obviously there will be a lot of players out there," said Clark Spencer, president of Walt Disney Animation Studios. "But I think for us having that depth of that library and the storytelling talents that sit within the studio, it's really gonna be what sets us apart," he told AFP at the recent "Frozen II" world premiere in Los Angeles. — AFP



In this photo Thai chef Chumpol (3rd left) holds the two Michelin stars award during a ceremony in Bangkok. — AFP

## Thai cuisine restaurants get two Michelin stars for first time at home

Two restaurants in Bangkok have each earned a pair of coveted Michelin stars, the first time the leading guide has awarded the accolade to local establishments offering Thai cuisine. Located in Bangkok, the restaurants Sorn and R-Haan were upgraded from their previous one-star rating in the third edition of the "Michelin guide in Thailand", unveiled Tuesday in the capital. Sorn celebrates traditional techniques and recipes from southern Thailand, where it sources from a network of small producers.

At the helm of R-Haan, Chef Chumpol offers food inspired by products from all regions of the kingdom. No

establishment won three stars in this 2020 edition, but three others retain two—the French restaurants Le Normandie and Mezzaluna, as well as that of German twin brothers Suhring. This year some 29 establishments in Thailand received stars. Gwendal Poullennec, international director of Michelin Guides, said the ratings showcased "Thailand's rich diversity and high quality of local produce".

Thailand is already famed for its street food and Bangkok's curbside crab omelette standout Jay Fai retained its one star. Despite criticism over its alleged Eurocentrism and focus on pricey restaurants, the red guide, created in 1900, remains a key reference in the world of the gastronomy. Out of some 20,000 restaurants listed worldwide, only about one hundred have achieved the highest distinction of the "three stars". Michelin covers Asia in Tokyo, Hong Kong and Macau, Shanghai, Seoul, Singapore, Taiwan and Bangkok. — AFP

## Ricky Gervais to host record fifth Golden Globes

Provocative British comic Ricky Gervais will host the Golden Globes for a record fifth time in January, organizers announced Tuesday. The annual film and television awards are seen by many as an important bellwether for Oscars success, but the ceremony's more informal-and often alcohol-fueled-tone is also a draw for stars and audiences. Gervais' no-holds-barred humor as host has drawn praise and criticism in previous years, when he took sharp digs at A-listers and the industry.

"Once again, they've made me an offer I can't refuse. But this is the very last time I'm doing this, which could make for a fun evening," Gervais said in a statement. Lorenzo Soria, president of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, said Gervais' return meant audiences should "expect the unexpected." Gervais hosted the ceremony for three consecutive years from 2010-12, before returning in 2016. His most recent appearance saw Gervais crack risqué jokes about former Olympic athlete and transgender activist Caitlyn Jenner, and scandal-hit director Roman Polanski.

Gervais-himself a multiple Golden Globe winner for "The Office" and "Extras"-greeted the crowd with the line: "Shut up, you disgusting, pill-popping deviant scum!" Last year, 18.6 million viewers tuned in for a ceremony hosted by comedian Andy Samberg and actress Sandra Oh. The 77th annual ceremony will take place in Beverly Hills on January 5, with a total of 25 awards handed out for film and television across a three-hour broadcast. — AFP



US singer/songwriter John Legend arrives for the 2019 Baby2Baby Fundraising Gala at 3Labs in Culver City, California. — AFP

## John Legend named People magazine's 'sexiest man alive'

Multi-talented singer and actor John Legend was named People magazine's "sexiest man alive" on Tuesday, but said he wondered whether he could live up to the title. Legend, 40, is married to model Chrissy Teigen with whom he has two children and is the first black man to have achieved coveted Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony (EGOT) status for his work on stage and screen. "I was excited, but I was a little scared at the same time because it's a lot of pressure," the entertainer told People magazine.

"Everyone's going to be picking me apart to see if I'm sexy enough to hold this title. I'm (also) following Idris Elba, which is not fair and is not nice to me!" British actor Idris Elba took the title last year. Other actors and singers who have been given the title by the magazine's editors in recent years include Blake Shelton, Chris Hemsworth, Adam Levine, George Clooney and Channing Tatum.

Legend, currently a coach on US television talent series "The Voice," won the first of 10 Grammys for his 2004 debut album "Get Lifted" and its hit ballad "Ordinary People." He took home an Oscar for the song "Glory" for the movie "Selma," a Tony for co-producing the Broadway play "Jitney" and an Emmy for producing the 2018 television adaptation of "Jesus Christ Superstar" in which he played Jesus. Legend appears on the front cover of the People magazine issue appearing on newsstands on Friday. — Reuters



In this file photo Ricky Gervais arrives at the 73rd annual Golden Globe Awards, at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

## Award-winning film 'Atlantics' offers haunting take on life in Senegal

To capture the harsh reality of life in Senegal, film director Mati Diop chose young people she met at building sites, bars and in Dakar's poorer suburbs as the stars of 'Atlantics', a ghost story about migrants and those they leave behind. The coming-of-age tale has already won critical acclaim, securing the Grand Prix award at the Cannes Film Festival in May, and it will reach a wider audience this month when it hits US cinema screens and debuts on screening platform Netflix.

The film centers on Ada, a young woman facing a forced marriage whose life unravels after her secret lover Souleiman drowns at sea. Like thousands of West Africans in recent years, he had risked his life on the Atlantic route via the Canary Islands to Europe in search of a better future. But rather than focusing on the migrants' fate, Franco-Senegalese Diop highlights the challenges and struggles faced by many young people inside Senegal, where around half the population live below the poverty line.

"It was very delicate to make a movie about this because you take the risk of locking an entire youth and an entire country within the theme of immigration, and that was everything which I did not want to do," said Diop, the first black female director to win the jury prize in Cannes. To preserve authenticity, Diop chose not to employ professional actors in key roles. She met Ibrahim Traore, who plays Souleiman, on a construction site. Other cast members were found outside night clubs or in the streets where the film is set.

Traore's character decides to brave the ocean after not being paid for months for his building work - a common issue in Senegal where underemployment is widespread. "Everything that was covered in the movie exists in Senegal," said Amadou Mbow, who plays a police officer who ends up being possessed by Souleiman's ghost. "It's really Senegal's reality: forced marriage and exploitation of the youth."

The number of Senegalese risking the Atlantic route has fallen sharply from its mid-2000s peak, when tens of thousands reached the Canary Islands or died trying. But the lack of opportunities is a growing issue in a country where more than 40 percent of the population is under 15. — Reuters



The Sheikh Duaj Al-Khalifa Theatre hosted a concert where Iraqi singer Oras Sattar and Kuwaiti singer Mishari Al-Awadhi performed popular songs. Al-Awadhi, presented some of his old and new songs in addition to some of popular Kuwaiti songs by old singers. Mishari is also an actor and participated in different musical theatre plays. Iraqi singer Oras Sattar sang a special song about Kuwait, written by Sheikh Duaj Al-Khalifa. Oras Sattar released his first song in 2010.



A woman walks past an artwork as she visits the exhibition 'The non-conformists - The Story of a Russian Collection' at the Montpellier Contemporain Museum (MOCO) in Montpellier, southern France. — AFP

## Lifestyle | Features

## Malabar Gold &amp; Diamonds unveils diamond jewelry collection 'Opulence'

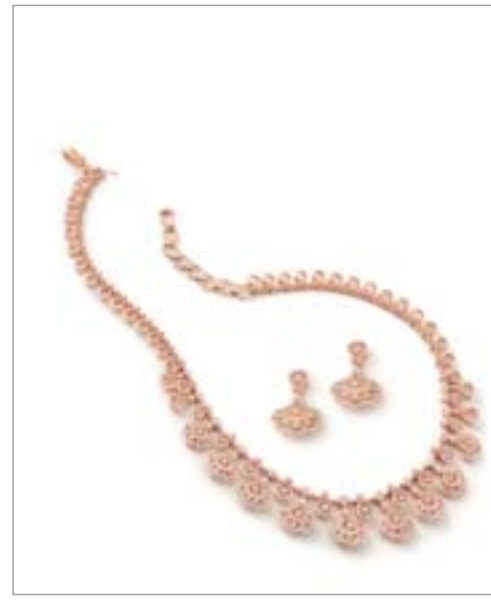
Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the largest jewelry retailers globally, has unveiled 'Opulence' diamond jewelry collection, the latest stunning diamond jewellery collection inspired by heirlooms of the world. The vibrant jewelry collection named 'Opulence' revives the beauty of classic handlooms created for royals.

The retro collection's heart is found in the works of four brocades standing out as unique inspirations - shimmering Banarasi, elegant French, royal Turkish and ornate Chinese Cloud - in classic yet stylish diamond jewelry settings. The collection has been created using cutting-edge technology that not only adds more sparkle to every single diamond but gives the whole jewelry piece a grand look, making it perfect for special occasions.

Every piece in the Opulence collection

is a hallmark of intricate craftsmanship and thoughtful design inspired from the luxurious past. At Malabar Gold & Diamonds, each piece of diamond comes with an IGI/GIA certification and passes through 28 internal quality tests which guarantees that the diamond jewelry purchased is of good quality, correctly sourced and rightly manufactured. They also provide lifetime maintenance and cash buyback guarantee for the jewellery purchased from all their outlets.

The company also offers exquisite and beautiful jewellery as a part of various brands presented at Malabar Gold & Diamonds' namely Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewelry, Era - Uncut Diamond Jewelry, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Divine- Indian Heritage Jewelry, Precia - Gem Jewelry and Starlet - Kids Jewelry



## Four things you can do with Huawei Watch GT 2's health features

Wearable technology today has intricately woven itself into the very fabric of our modern lives, with various wearable devices becoming mainstream. While these devices serve primarily as extensions of user's smartphones, their functionality when it comes to health monitoring plays a major role as well. With the Huawei Watch GT 2, Huawei's latest foray into the wearables market, Huawei brings to its users a smartwatch packed with features that focuses on its user's health, ranging from monitoring body data to sports and even sleeping patterns. Here is how you can use your Huawei Watch GT 2's various health features.

## Keep track of every workout

Be it running, swimming, cycling or even free training, every kind of workout you do has a different effect on your body. The Huawei Watch GT 2 is capable of recognizing up to 15 different kinds of sports including indoor and outdoor sports, swimming and free training, further recording all the essential data accurately for a more analytical approach to your fitness regimen. In addition to recording the data, the Huawei Watch GT 2 also helps you with better workouts, with preinstalled plans and courses.

The Huawei Watch GT 2 will also notify you to get up and exercise at regular intervals, emitting a tone that encourages the user to stand up and move if they have been inactive for a certain amount of time. Additionally, it also records your daily step count, number of calories burned as well as the number of times you stand.

## Monitor your heart rate

The Huawei Watch GT2 comes with the all-new self-developed TruSeen 3.5 heart rate monitoring technology that accurately monitors heart rate in real-time along with support for oxygen saturation monitoring, giving users an easy understanding of their heart rate. If the heart rate is higher than 100 bpm or lower than 50 bpm for more than 10 minutes in its inactive state, the smartwatch will alert the user.

## Sleep much better than before

Thanks to the built-in Huawei TruSleep 2.0 technology, the Huawei Watch GT 2 can monitor sleep quality, real-time heart rate monitoring and sleep breathing quality, then uses this big data with Huawei AI technology to score



sleep quality. Accurately identifying six typical sleep problems such as difficulty falling asleep, shallow sleep, light sleeping during the night, early waking, multiple dreams, and irregular work schedule, the smartwatch can provide hundreds of sleep improvement suggestions to improve your sleep. Additionally, you will also get 8 detailed reports that include nighttime sleep duration, deep sleep ratio, shallow sleep ratio, rapid eye movement ratio, deep sleep continuity, awake times, respiratory quality, comprehensive sleep monitoring and many more, all catered towards improving your sleep patterns.

## Maintain your stress levels

Stress is one of the most common threats today and thanks to the self-developed Huawei TruRelax technology, users can relieve stress by recording Heart Rate Variability values and following the instructions for breathing activities that will help them calm down, reducing the risk of stress related threats.

Packing the Kirin AI, Huawei's first self-developed wearable chip that ensures powerful performance with low power consumption, the Huawei Watch GT 2 46mm series can operate continuously for up to two weeks, with both the intelligent heart rate monitor and call notification functions switched on along with improved battery life in GPS tracked sports mode. In the classic mode, the Huawei Watch GT 2 42mm series can operate continuously for up to one week.

## 15 Smart Workout Modes



## Kim Kardashian West used duct tape to shape her figure

The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star has unveiled her newest product for SKIMS launch - a brand new body tape - as she admitted she used to use gaffer's tape to give herself a better cleavage. Speaking on her Instagram story, she said: "I am so excited you guys. Today we are announcing that we are launching boob tape and we are launching it in three different shades of nudes. We're also calling it body tape. Usually when you see boob tape like this it comes in one shade. I've been working on this for a really long time and I've never seen it in different shades before. When I started using it, I would use a gaffer's tape, which obviously was super uncomfortable. But this material is super soft and super stretchy - but not too stretchy because you want it to hold. It's like the perfect

amount of stretch." Meanwhile, the 39-year-old television personality previously revealed she wanted to "share her tape secret" with the world. She shared at the time: "I definitely had to share my tape secret with you guys!! It's my secret trick to have perfect cleavage in photos. You tape them up so they are super lifted. It takes a little work but trust me it's all worth it LOL ... I've used everything from duct tape to packing tape to masking tape and I think that the best I found is gaffer's tape. It sticks the best! Make sure you don't have any lotion or oils on when you're lifting your boobs up with the tape. Just brace yourself for when it's time to take it off LOL. (sic)"



## Bebe Rexha inspired by 90s fashion

The 'Back To You' hitmaker loves the "edgy" style of throwback fashion and she likes how trends "come back around". She said: "I love going into a time like the '80s or '90s and looking at what the edgy kids were wearing, and then [looking] at what the classic kids would go out in. I'm inspired by that, and I feel that a lot of those trends always comes back around." And the 30-year-old singer likes to "mix" classic and edgy styles. She added: "I like mixing a classic and edgy. I go for a black outfit: a simple black dress or jumpsuit. Then I add edgy accessories to make it a little bit more rock and roll." Or I add a red, because it signifies strength, royalty and power. It draws peoples' eyes to you. And it looks good on me!" Meanwhile, the singer feels the most important part of her new Bebe Loves Bebe campaign is making sure there is clothing that suits all body shapes because self-love is very important. She shared to People Style magazine: "The most exciting part has been definitely being fans wearing up to meet and greets, and talking about wearing pieces with everyone. It's really cool and important that [the collection] be for everybody, no matter if you're thin, or thick. Self-love is important to promote. For me, especially, because self-love was always something I struggled with while growing up. I would look at supermodels in magazines who were always so thin and I wanted to look like that. I think that thin is beautiful, but so is thick, and everything in between."

## Emma Stone uses fragrance to help define the characters she plays

The 'La La Land' star always likes to choose a particular scent and relate it to her individual acting roles as it helps her get into character. She said: "I've been using fragrance to help me define each character I've played since I was 16. Even now, I can smell that scent and be taken straight back. My sense of smell is super-strong - maybe overcompensating for my terrible eyesight? - so scent has always been the quickest sense-memory for me. I remember most of the time periods in my life through scent." And the 31-year-old actress admits she could live without most beauty products, but she'd really struggle without perfume. She added: "I could probably live without beauty products, but I would be pretty sad to be without lip balm, perfume, and sunscreen because without it I'd turn into a dragon. I have those in my bag at all times." The 'Amazing Spider-Man' actress has revealed some of her biggest beauty necessities - lots of sleep and drinking plenty of water. She told Vogue.com: "Sleep is definitely very important to me - I feel pretty crazy without it. And [I drink] as much water as humanly possible - turns out that caps out at about 2 to 3 liters a day and you can internally drown if you have too much. The more you know!" Meanwhile, Emma previously admitted she felt "gloomy" about coming into her 30s and admits it was a "bittersweet" experi-

ence. She shared: "I got gloomy for about a week, but realized the most interesting part about becoming an adult is most things become bittersweet. I'm still finding my voice. It's OK if not everybody likes you, and that doesn't make it more appealing to convince them of why you are likeable. So that was a major lesson, not falling over myself to win over the unwinnable. Nobody knows what they're doing! We're all just a bunch of people trying to figure out how to get through the day."



## Kristen Stewart struggled with her identity when she first found fame

The 'Charlie's Angels' star feels "so lucky" to live in this "particular time of history" as she is at a place where she is "fully allowed" to express who she is. She said: "I think I'm so lucky to live in this particular time of history. I just think ... if you were to look at kids

right now, even just five years, seven to 10 years younger than me, they would find my sort of struggle to come to terms with like identity and communication kind of silly. And I feed off them, even though I think that I might've had something to do with feeding that, a little bit, because it was like ... not the hardest thing to get to know myself it was just ... it takes a few years to actually articulate who you are. And now that I'm living in a time where that's fully allowed, in a way that is expressed and honest ... that wasn't that way five to seven years ago." And the 29-year-old actress is feeling "stimulated and progressive" in her career and is ready to tell the world the stories she wants to. Speaking to E! News at the Charlie's Angels premiere in Los Angeles about what makes her strong, she added: "And that I align with the people that I love and that I want to support. To be specific, who knows, but I'm very happy right now in feeling not bored and stimulated and progressive and in the place that I need to be to tell the stories that feel true to me. And that's rad."



# Classifieds

Thursday, November 14, 2019

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**Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours**

**BY DAY:** Relatively hot with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 22 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

**BY NIGHT:** Cool with light variable wind to light to moderate south westerly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
<b>STATION</b>	<b>MAX. EXP.</b>	<b>MIN. REC.</b>	<b>SFC. CHART 13/11/2019 0000 UTC</b>		
KUWAIT CITY	29 °C	19 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	30 °C	11 °C			
ABDAILY	31 °C	15 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	30 °C	17 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C			
SALMIYAH	27 °C	22 °C			
AHMADI	24 °C	23 °C			
NUWAISIB	29 °C	16 °C			
WAFRA	32 °C	14 °C			
SALMY	- °C	- °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	11/14	Relatively hot and with a chance for scattered light rain later on	29 °C	12 °C	VRB-SW	06 - 26 km/h
Friday	11/15	Relatively hot and Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundersy later on	29 °C	13 °C	SW-NE	12 - 40 km/h
Saturday	11/16	Partly cloudy to cloudy and A significant decrease in temperature with a chance for rain	25 °C	11 °C	SW-NE	15 - 45 km/h
Sunday	11/17	Partly cloudy to cloudy and Humid with a chance for rain that might be thundersy at times	24 °C	14 °C	NE-SE	20 - 50 km/h

PRAYER TIMES		
Fajr		04:48
Sunrise		06:10
Zuhr		11:32
Asr		14:33
Sunset		16:54
Isha		18:14

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT		
MAX. Temp.		31 °C
MIN. Temp.		14 °C
MAX. RH		95 %
MIN. RH		13 %
MAX. Wind		SW 18 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.		0 mm

**Hospitals**

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

**Clinics**

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

**CHANGE OF NAME**

**I, Mathu Thadathil Mathew**, holder of Indian Passport Number J 0976591, do hereby change my name to (Given name: Mathu, Surname: Thadathil Mathew) as per my Adhar Number 3826 2249 3565 for all purpose. I also undertake effect the change in all my other public documents.

**I, Melita Mathu Mathew**, holder of Indian Passport Number P 9484735, do hereby change my name to (Given name: Melita, Surname: Mathu Mathew) as per my Adhar Number 2190 5103 3734 for all purpose. I also undertake effect the change in all my other public documents.

**I, Sherwin Mathu Mathew**, holder of Indian Passport

**REQUIRED**

**DRIVER**

Transferable visa (article 18)

Send CV by WhatsApp:

**66990274**

Number T 5334952, do hereby change my name to (Given name: Sherwin, Surname: Mathu Mathew) as per my Adhar Number 2472 9763 6887 for all purpose. I also undertake effect the change in all my other public documents. (C5472) 13-11-2019

**Airlines**

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578

**Flight Schedule**

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page ([www.kuwait-airport.com.kw](http://www.kuwait-airport.com.kw))

**DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION**

Arrival Flights on Thursday 14/11/2019					Departure Flights on Thursday 14/11/2019				
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time		Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	KAC 774	Riyadh	13:35			
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	JZR 212	Jeddah	13:45			
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	IRA 607	Mashhad	13:55			
QTR	8276	ZAZ	00:20	ZAV 4133	BSR	14:00			
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	UAE 877	Dubai	14:00			
KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC 672	Dubai	14:00			
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	KAC 662	Abu Dhabi	14:00			
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	KNE 231	Riyadh	14:10			
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	SVA 500	Jeddah	14:15			
RJA	642	Amman	01:20	GFA 221	Bahrain	14:15			
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	FDB 059	Dubai	14:20			
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	QTR 1078	Doha	14:25			
PGT	828	Istanbul	02:00	KAC 792	Madinah	14:40			
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC 304	Mumbai	14:45			
KAC	156	Istanbul	02:35	JZR 222	Riyadh	14:45			
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC 618	Doha	14:50			
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	KAC 562	Amman	14:50			
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:50	KAC 788	Jeddah	14:55			
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	KAC 118	New York	15:00			
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KNE 529	Jeddah	15:05			
JZR	406	Kochi	03:05	KAC 412	Bangkok	15:10			
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	ETD 303	Abu Dhabi	15:15			
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	OMA 645	Muscat	15:20			
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	ABY 127	Sharjah	15:35			
RBG	1559	Alexandria	03:45	UAE 857	Dubai	15:45			
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:00	KAC 546	Cairo	15:50			
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	KNE 531	Jeddah	16:05			
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	FDB 051	Dubai	16:10			
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	JZR 732	Cairo	16:10			
DHX	170	Bahrain	04:25	QTR 1072	Doha	16:15			
MSR	0516	Cairo	04:25	KAC 502	Beirut	16:15			
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	KAC 198	Baku	16:20			
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:50	FEW 241	Alexandria	16:45			
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	SAW 705	Damascus	17:00			
IGO	1759	Delhi	05:10	JZR 116	Doha	17:05			
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	SVA 510	Riyadh	17:15			
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	GFA 215	Bahrain	17:30			
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	JZR 214	Jeddah	17:35			
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	JZR 124	Dubai	17:40			
KAC	552	Cairo	05:50	JZR 104	Bahrain	18:00			
KAC	362	Colombo	06:05	QTR 1080	Doha	18:10			
BAW	157	London	06:10	KAC 158	Istanbul	18:10			
KAC	702	Asyut	06:10	JZR 612	Tbilisi	18:15			
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	JZR 302	Istanbul	18:20			
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	MSR 620	Cairo	18:30			
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	IRA 667	Esfahan	19:00			
KAC	106	London	06:40	FDB 063	Dubai	19:05			
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	RJA 640	Amman	19:05			
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	GFA 217	Bahrain	19:05			
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	07:05	UAE 875	Dubai	19:05			
IRA	601	Tehran	07:10	ABY 123	Sharjah	19:20			
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	KAC 744	Dammam	19:25			
QTR	8511	Doha	07:15	NIA 161	Cairo	19:30			
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC 616	Bahrain	19:40			
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	KAC 674	Dubai	19:45			
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:00	KAC 776	Riyadh	19:45			
KAC	352	Kochi	08:05	FDB 057	Dubai	19:50			
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	KNE 381	Taif	20:00			
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	KAC 174	Munich	20:00			
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	OMA 647	Muscat	20:05			
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	NIA 1505	Asyut	20:10			
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	DLH 624	Frankfurt	20:10			
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	MEA 402	Beirut	20:15			
GFA	209	Bahrain	09:05	JZR 126	Dubai	20:20			
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	RBG 213	Sohag	20:30			
GOW	061	CNN	09:30	KAC 620	Doha	20:30			
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	QTR 8446	LGG	20:40			
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	QTR 1088	Doha	20:40			
JZR	410	Delhi	09:50	KLM 445	Amsterdam	21:00			
IRA	675	Lar	09:55	ETD 307	Abu Dhabi	21:10			
SVA	132	Riyadh	10:00	UAE 859	Dubai	21:15			
IJW	137A	Al Najaf	10:00	JZR 612	Colombo	21:15			
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC 168	Paris	21:20			
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	THY 764	Istanbul	21:30			
OMS	223	Muscat	11:00	KAC 164	MXP	21:40			
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC 676	Dubai	21:45			
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	GFA 219	Bahrain	21:50			
JZR	1342	Al Najaf	11:20	KAC 564	Amman	21:55			
NIA	1407	Sohag	11:35	QTR 1082	Doha	22:05			
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	ETD 309	Abu Dhabi	22:15			
AHY	119	Baku	12:05	KAC 786	Jeddah	22:20			
JZR	252	Amman	12:20	AIC 981	Chennai/Ahmedabad	22:25			
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	RBG 555	Alexandria	22:30			
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:30	JZR 128	Dubai	22:50			
MSR	610	Cairo	12:45	GEC 8486	Frankfurt	22:55			
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	BBC 043	Dhaka	23:00			
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:10	MSC 501	Alexandria	23:10			
				MSC 415	Sohag	23:15			
				MSR 614	Cairo	23:30			

## News

# Lebanon protests flare as president shuns demands

BEIRUT: Lebanese protesters blocked main roads yesterday, angered by what they saw as the president ignoring their demands in nearly a month of demonstrations, after a man was shot dead. Hundreds protested near the palace of President Michel Aoun in the town of Baabda outside the capital, where security forces laid coils of barbed wire across the access road. Aoun had said on television the previous night that Lebanese who did not see any decent person in power should “emigrate” - a comment that, despite the presidency scrambling to clarify it, immediately sent angry protesters to the streets.

One man died of gunshot wounds overnight as the army opened fire to disperse protesters south of the capital, the second such death since the start of the largely peaceful protests. Protester Engy, 47, said she had been shocked by the president's comments. “What the president said was very belittling. It was as if we didn't even exist,” the engineer said, carrying a Lebanese flag. “So we've come out to make sure he hears us.”

Lebanon's unprecedented protest movement, which broke out on Oct 17, has been calling for a complete overhaul of a political elite accused of inefficiency and corruption. After the government stepped down on Oct 29, protesters demanded a fresh cabinet composed of experts not affiliated with any of the traditional political parties. But Aoun in the interview argued that a government made up solely of independent technocrats would not represent the people or be able to set policies. “Where should I look for them? On the moon?” he said, arguing true independents were scarce in a country where most people follow a specific political party.

Aoun also criticized the street movement's lack of leadership, after previously saying he would be prepared to meet representatives to hear their demands. Among the protesters outside his office, Nisreen Hujairi, 29, described Aoun's interview as a “disappointment”. “A president is supposed to unite, not divide” the people, she said, just over a week after a pro-Aoun rally was welcomed in Baabda. “With two people

falling martyr, the state has fallen too,” she said, referring to the fatal shooting late Tuesday.

Yesterday, an unknown gunman stepped out of his car and opened fire on protesters at a roadblock north of Beirut, the National News Agency said. The Red Cross said it had transported four wounded people to hospital. It was not immediately clear who the attacker in the village of Jal al-Deeb was, or what motivated him.

From early morning, activists had blocked roads inside the capital, as they did the main highways connecting Beirut to the north and south of the country, with the smoke of burning tires blackening the air in several places. One activist, Antoine Saad, manning a roadblock in Jal al-Deeb said he found the president's comments disdainful. “He needs to know the people don't want him anymore and he needs to go.”

The protests erupted spontaneously last month after the government announced a plan to tax calls made via free mobile phone apps such as WhatsApp. But they quickly morphed into a mass cross-sectarian movement denouncing everything from unemployment and rampant poverty to poor healthcare and endless power cuts. The World Bank says around a third of Lebanese live in poverty, and has warned the country's struggling economy could further deteriorate if a new cabinet is not formed rapidly.

The former cabinet will remain in a caretaker capacity until a new one is formed, but required parliamentary consultations on the matter have not even been scheduled yet. Forming a government typically takes months in Lebanon, with protracted debate on how best to maintain a fragile balance between religious communities. In his interview, Aoun suggested a new cabinet made up of both technocrats and politicians.

He did not deny the existence of US pressure to exclude his powerful ally, the Shiite movement Hezbollah, from any future government, but said he could not be forced to do so as it represents “a third of Lebanese.” — AFP

traitors,” demonstrators cried last week as lawmakers began discussing the draft law. The bill is expected to be put to a vote today, roughly a month ahead of presidential elections also widely rejected by the street.

Many Algerians suspect those in power of handing over natural resources to foreign companies with the new law, having already “squandered” oil revenues, said El Mouhoub Mouhoud, economics professor at Paris-Dauphine University. “These opinions are a testament to the current government's lack of credibility in the eyes of the people.” Nevertheless, Mouhoud told AFP, everything “suggests that in this new draft law, the mineral title (rights to underground resources) stays in the hands of the state, while exploitation and investment operations can be shared” more favourably than before for foreign investors.

Francis Perrin, director of research at the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs (IRIS), said that while the text makes “adjustments” to the legislation, “the broad direction of Algerian policy on oil and gas is absolutely not called into question”. The law will continue to guarantee that state-owned oil company Sonatrach has a majority stake in all projects involving foreign players. — AFP

A senior White House official, who asked not to be identified, acknowledged the high tension but said Trump wanted to find solutions. “This is nearly a 70-year alliance. It has helped both of our countries through very, very dark times. We are not going to throw it away lightly if there is a way forward,” the official said. Trump needs to avoid antagonizing the Republicans who will be voting on his fate in case of an impeachment trial.

But those legislators have little love for Erdogan and the feeling is likely mutual. The House of Representatives showed its displeasure with Turkey in October by voting to recognize the mass destruction of the Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire as genocide. Modern-day Turkey continues to deny the accusation of genocide, saying Armenians were merely among the many other victims of World War I. The vote infuriated Erdogan.

The State Department defended the invitation to Erdogan, saying the complex issues make face-to-face talks important. “Don't look at these things as rewards, they are the execution of diplomacy,” an official said. But there will be tension to spare even beyond the Syrian Kurds and the S-400s. Washington is angry over the long-term detention of Turkish citizens working for US consulates, while Ankara continues to push hard for the extradition of the Islamic cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom Erdogan claims engineered a failed 2016 coup.

Republican congresswoman Liz Cheney raised another point of contention: The ugly scenes during Erdogan's last Washington visit, in 2017, when his bodyguards beat up protesters outside the Turkish ambassador's residence. “The Erdogan regime's use of violence against civilians anywhere is inhumane, uncivilized, and unacceptable,” she wrote in a letter demanding that the State Department bar any of the “thugs” involved from returning. — AFP

to downgrade diplomatic ties with Iran. But fears of a wider regional conflict as Washington steps up economic pressure on Iran seem to have prompted the alliance to de-escalate tensions.

“The latest round of escalation by Iran in the Arabian Gulf has played a major role here in addition to the desire of the US administration to utilize the collective effort of the Gulf countries - as a bloc - to counter Iran,” Gulf expert Ali Baker told AFP. Washington and its allies have blamed Iran for recent attacks on key Saudi oil installations as well as a string of assaults on oil tankers in the Gulf. Tehran denies the accusations.

But there was no indication yet whether the Saudi-led bloc will lift its economic blockade on Qatar. “The football diplomacy is a welcome step but it falls short of resolving the Gulf crisis,” said Baker. “The Qataris would like to see the blockade lifted as soon as possible and the end of other hostilities to show there is a serious will to end the crisis.”

The development prompted a mixed response from Qataris, with many welcoming the move but calling for an immediate end to the blockade. “They are talking about signs that the Gulf crisis is coming to an end,” Hamad Lahdan Al-Mohannadi, a Qatari engineer, said on Twitter. “The only indicator by which you can say that the crisis will end is (the end of the siege).” — AFP



BAABDA, Lebanon: Lebanese demonstrators try to remove barbed-wire and metal barricades placed by anti-riot police on the road leading to the presidential palace yesterday. — AFP

## Impeachment hearings open...

Continued from Page 1

Speaking minutes before the start of the hearings, Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic speaker of the House, said the probe was necessary to show Trump he can't do “whatever he wants”. “That he is not above the law,” Pelosi said. “And that he will be held accountable.” Democrats who control the House plan to prove over several weeks of hearings that Trump abused his office by asking Ukraine to conduct a politically motivated investigation into his potential 2020 Democratic rival Joe Biden.

Trump, who maintains he did nothing wrong, lashed out at the inquiry with a series of tweets early Wednesday, morning citing prominent supporters who called it a “partisan sham”. Addressing the intelligence committee hearing, the panel's top

Republican Devin Nunes assailed the impeachment process as “a carefully orchestrated media smear campaign” that was part of a “scorched-earth war against President Trump”.

The investigation threatens to make Trump only the third US president to be impeached, after Andrew Johnson in 1868 and Bill Clinton in 1998, although to be removed from office he would need to be convicted by the Republican-led Senate. Neither Johnson or Clinton was convicted and removed. But in 1974 Richard Nixon resigned in the face of certain impeachment and removal from office for the Watergate scandal.

Hearings are expected to be fiery as a series of government officials take the stand to testify about Trump's Ukraine machinations during the middle of this year. Coming just one year before national elections, the hearings carry great risks for both parties and no certain reward, with a divided US electorate weary of Washington infighting. Polls show a slim majority of Americans favor impeaching the president. But they also show that Trump's sizable voter base, which delivered his shock victory in 2016, rejects the allegations. Trump has focused his personal defense on ensuring Republicans in Congress heed their views.

## Venetian anger after historic...

Continued from Page 1

higher, reaching 1.94 m in 1966. “It was unbelievable, the water rose so quickly,” said resident Tiziano Collarin, 59, as he surveyed the damage. “Windows were blown out, there are those who have lost everything,” he said as the flood alarm rang out to warn those in the canal city that the tide, which had receded somewhat overnight, was coming in once again.

The fire brigade said it had carried out over 250 operations as well as laying on extra boats as water ambulances. Around 150 fire fighters were deployed to rescue people stranded on jetties and to recover boats broken free from their moorings. A 78-year old was killed by electric shock as the waters poured into his home, Italian media reported. President of the Veneto region Luca Zaia said 80 percent of the city had been submerged, causing “unimaginable damage”.

German tourist Gabi Brueckner, 58, said the nighttime drama had been “horrifying”. She echoed the mayor in blaming climate change and said she feared like many

## Gaza death toll hits 23 as...

Continued from Page 1

According to Israel, Ata was responsible for rocket fire at Israel as well as other attacks and was planning more violence, with the military calling him a “ticking bomb”. The flare-up raised fears of a new all-out conflict between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza, who have fought three wars since 2008.

A total of 23 Palestinians have been killed so far, including Ata and his wife, according to Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry. Islamic Jihad confirmed the dead included other members of its armed wing, while the health ministry said three children were also among the dead, and that more than 70 people were injured.

Since Israel's killing of Ata in what was believed to be a drone strike, at least 20 rockets have been fired into Israel from Gaza and dozens have been intercepted by air defenses, according to the army. There have been no Israeli deaths, though damage has been caused and one rocket narrowly missed cars on a busy highway. Israeli medics said they had treated 48 people with light wounds, while schools were closed in areas near the Gaza border for a second day running.

Schools in the blockaded Gaza Strip, an enclave of two million people, have been closed since Tuesday.

Republicans accuse the soft-spoken and prosecutorial Schiff of an unfair and unconstitutional process. They have also sought, in closed door depositions over the last six weeks, to refocus attention on Biden's link, through his son, to Ukraine, and on the widely discredited theory Trump apparently believes that Ukraine assisted Democrats in the 2016 election. But Schiff has said he will not put up with attempts to hijack the hearings and turn them into a political circus.

Democrats have amassed evidence that Trump sought to leverage Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky's desire for a meeting between the two leaders and for some \$391 million in aid to get Ukraine to find dirt on Biden, who could face Trump in next year's presidential election. The key evidence is the official White House transcript of a July 25 phone call showing Trump pressuring Zelensky to open investigations into Biden and the 2016 conspiracy theory. The White House has refused to hand over other records on Ukraine policy or allow top Trump aides involved in the decision to pressure Zelensky to testify.

On Tuesday Trump's chief of staff Mick Mulvaney - who has publicly confirmed the broad outlines of Democrats' allegations - rejected a subpoena to appear before the committee. The first witnesses Wednesday will be William Taylor, the top US diplomat in Ukraine, and George Kent, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs. Both have already testified in private that Trump clearly used his power and aid to pressure Zelensky for investigations that would help him in the 2020 vote.

“I had concerns that there was an effort to initiate politically motivated prosecutions that were injurious to the rule of law, both in Ukraine and the US,” Kent told investigators. On Friday, Marie Yovanovitch, the US ambassador to Ukraine whom Trump removed earlier this year, will testify.

Democrats on Tuesday unveiled the schedule for public testimony next week by eight more witnesses, all of whom previously testified behind closed doors. House Republicans are preparing to argue that Trump was within his rights, given Ukraine's history of deep corruption. “Democrats want to impeach President Trump because unelected and anonymous bureaucrats disagreed with the President's decisions,” they said in a strategy memorandum over the weekend. — AFP

people that “it will get worse and at some point Venice will drown”. A massive infrastructure project called MOSE has been underway since 2003 to protect the city, but it has been plagued by cost overruns, corruption scandals and delays.

The plan involves 78 gates that can be raised to protect Venice's lagoon during high tides - but a recent attempt to test part of the barrier caused worrying vibrations and engineers discovered parts had rusted. “They've done nothing, neglected it. It doesn't work and they have stolen six billion euros. The politicians should all be put in jail,” said local Dino Perzolla, 62.

St Mark's Square in one of the lowest parts of the city was particularly affected, its vestibule inundated with water. “It was apocalyptic, enough to give you goosebumps,” said Marina Vector, as she and her husband used buckets to scoop water out of their shop selling Venetian festival masks. “The storm was so bad it broke the marble flood barrier out front. Nothing's survived,” she said.

Tables and chairs set out for aperitifs bobbed outside bedraggled luxury hotels, where people of all ages seeking safety from the storm late Tuesday had been forced to climb in through windows after gangways washed away. “I've never seen anything like it in my life. There was a terrifying wind, it was a hurricane. It was horrible,” said local Cristina, as she fought back tears. — AFP

Unusually and in a sign it was seeking to avoid a wider conflict, Israel's announced targets were confined to Islamic Jihad sites and not those belonging to Hamas. It normally holds Hamas, the Islamist movement that rules the Gaza Strip, responsible for all rocket fire from the enclave as the territory's de facto rulers.

Israeli analysts were quick to highlight the change of approach. “For the first time in the current era, Israel drew a distinction between Hamas and Islamic Jihad,” commentator Ben Caspit wrote in Israeli newspaper Maariv. “By so doing, Israel deviated from its iron-clad principle that Hamas, as the sovereign power in Gaza, has to pay the price for any action taken by anyone in the Gaza Strip. That is now no longer the case.”

Islamic Jihad is the second most-powerful militant group in the Gaza Strip after Hamas and has taken responsibility for rocket fire. Hamas, however, said it would not abandon its ally. “As long as the Israeli warplanes bomb the Gaza Strip, the resistance will respond to the Israeli aggression and defend the Palestinian people,” a joint statement from Gaza militant groups said. The flare-up comes at a politically sensitive time for Israel.

A Sept 17 general election ended in a deadlock and a new government is yet to be formed. It was the second election since April, when polls also ended inconclusively. The violence has drawn international calls for calm. Britain's Foreign Office said: “We call on all sides to rapidly de-escalate the situation, and support the UN and Egyptian efforts to achieve that objective.” — AFP

## Algerian energy law fuels anger on streets

ALGIERS: A draft law on Algeria's oil and gas sector has been met with hostility by an anti-regime protest movement that fears “the nation's wealth” is being sold off to multinational companies. But experts say the pushback from the streets is not entirely justified, seeing it rather as a symptom of the distrust that dogs any decision taken by authorities deemed “illegitimate” by opponents. For nearly nine months Algeria - Africa's third-largest oil producer and a top 10 global gas producer - has been swept by an unprecedented popular movement challenging a regime in place since independence from France in 1962.

The draft energy law, which has not been officially published, was sent to Algeria's cabinet on Oct 14. Since then, it has been added to the protesters' list of grievances with the ruling class, seen by demonstrators as “thieves” that have “plundered” the country's wealth. “You sold the country,

## Trump meets Erdogan, hails...

Continued from Page 1

Trump ordered US troops stationed in the border area to withdraw ahead of the Turkish invasion, while exhorting Erdogan in an extraordinarily undiplomatic letter to avoid too much bloodshed. “Don't be a tough guy. Don't be a fool!” Trump wrote in the letter, which was reportedly thrown by Erdogan into the trash.

Despite the letter, Trump's withdrawal of the US soldiers effectively gave fellow-NATO member Turkey a green light for what appears to be an extended occupation of a large swath of Syria.

This outraged many in Congress, which saw the move as an abandonment of the Kurds, who died in large numbers while fighting alongside US forces against Islamic State militants in the area. The reshuffling of forces in the region was also criticized in Washington as a boon for Russian ambitions. “Given this situation, we believe that now is a particularly inappropriate time for President Erdogan to visit the United States, and we urge you to rescind this invitation,” a bipartisan group of legislators wrote to Trump last week in a letter made public Monday. Trump was defiant yesterday, saying: “We have been friends for a long time.”

On top of the Syria mess, Turkey's role in NATO is under question following Erdogan's decision to buy the Russian S-400 anti-aircraft missile system. Washington has excluded Turkey from the F-35 stealth warplane program over the purchase, creating even more tension in the troubled Western alliance. Erdogan has responded by suggesting he could instead buy Russian warplanes as well.

## Saudi, Bahrain, UAE to play in...

Continued from Page 1

Gulf states may be gradually moving to a reduction of tensions that have divided the region's conservative energy-rich monarchies.

The boycotting countries had refused to participate in the previous Gulf Cup two years ago, which was originally scheduled to be held in Qatar just a few months after the crisis erupted. But they took part when the tournament was subsequently moved to Kuwait. “(We) officially accepted Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain's participation in the 24th Gulf Cup in Doha at their request,” said Jassim Al-Shukali, vice president of the AGCFF in front of the logos of the Saudi and UAE soccer federations.

The Saudi-led alliance had so far defied pressure from Washington to lift its blockade on Qatar, which hosts a huge US airbase. Qatar has refused their demands to shutter Doha-based broadcaster Al-Jazeera, close a Turkish military base in the emirate and



Sports

# US athletes slam World Athletics over Diamond League reform

## Moves greeted with howls of protest across athletics world

LOS ANGELES: USA Track and Field's athletes grouping on Tuesday lashed out at World Athletics plans to cut several events from next year's Diamond League series, accusing the sport's global governing body of being "out of touch".

In an open letter to World Athletics chief Sebastian Coe, USATF's Athletes Advisory Committee called on the global body to reverse plans to axe the triple jump, the 200 meters, steeplechase and discuss from the Diamond League program.

The IAAF, which changed its name to World Athletics this week, announced the overhaul on November 6, claiming the moves would help streamline Diamond League events in an effort to make meetings more attractive for television audiences.

However the moves have been greeted with howls of protest across the athletics world, while American triple jump star Christian Taylor has announced the launch of a global group aimed at giving athletes a

bigger say in the sport.

In its letter to Coe, the USATF athlete's grouping said it "wholeheartedly condemned" the Diamond League reforms.

"The IAAF and Diamond League organisers have shown themselves to be completely out of touch with the sport they are entrusted to grow and protect," the letter said, accusing world authorities of shutting athletes out of the reform process.

"We understand changes need to be made in order to attract the appeal of a global audience, but the IAAF has shown no desire to include a sufficient number of athletes in the thought or decision-making process and this is where our frustration lies.

"By eliminating the opportunity for discussion, we see that you do not have the athletes as partners in this process. Consequently, the decisions being made appear self-serving and biased."

Although several of the downgraded events would continue to feature at

Diamond League meetings, they will not have the same prize money, effectively relegating them to second tier status.

"The United States athletes have grown exhausted of accepting the unfavorable decisions made by the IAAF, which are typically made with minimal input from the athletes," the USATF's athletes council added.

"It is our hope that you would immediately reverse these actions to remove the events from the Diamond League schedule, and bring athlete representatives to the table to correct this major misstep."

The group said it supported athletes like Taylor who were trying to create a coalition to protect athletes' interests.

World Athletics' reforms have met with widespread criticism. On Saturday, triple jump world record holder Jonathan Edwards said denying Taylor a stage to compete was "beyond comprehension."

"There are so many things wrong with World Athletics decision re Diamond



Sebastian Coe

League events but what Usain Bolt showed one of the sport's true stars (Christian Taylor) is beyond comprehension," Edwards said on Twitter. — AFP

## Indian wrestler Phogat ready for tilt at MMA world title

NEW DELHI: Competing at the Olympic Games is the dream of most athletes but Indian wrestler Ritu Phogat has always wanted to script a different destiny. Phogat won gold at the 2016 Commonwealth Wrestling Championship but switched to the combat sport of mixed martial arts (MMA) in February, much to the disappointment of India's wrestling federation who saw her as a strong medal contender in the 48kg category at Tokyo 2020.

Phogat, who will make her MMA debut against South Korea's Kim Nam-hee at One Championship's Age of Dragons event in Beijing on Saturday, says she never gave much thought to qualifying for the Olympics.

"It never crossed my mind," she told Reuters by telephone from Singapore where she trains. "I always wanted to do something different. Script my own journey on the international stage. "I want to win a World Championship belt for India. I want to be the first in mixed martial arts to win that for my country."

The 25-year-old is from one of India's most famous wrestling families. She started in the sport aged eight, under the tutelage of her wrestler father Mahavir Singh

and followed in the footsteps of her elder sisters Babita and Geeta, who have both won Commonwealth Games gold.

Their cousin, Vinesh, is one of India's top medal hopes for Tokyo. The Phogat sisters achieved cult status in 2016 when the film 'Dangal', which is based on the family's story, became the highest-grossing Indian movie ever made.

Before they were famous, however, growing up in their village in Haryana was tough. "We struggled to fit into society," Ritu Phogat said. "Our family was surrounded by naysayers in those early days, but we had each other for support. Together we found a way to block out all the outside noise."

The sisters are very close - Babita and Geeta sprung to Ritu's defence when her decision to quit wrestling drew criticism on social media earlier this year. MMA is the third-most popular sport in the world, behind soccer and basketball, according to Nielsen. India alone accounted for nearly 100 million viewers last year, Rajesh Kaul, the head of Sony Pictures Networks India's sports business, told the Hindu newspaper March.

Phogat, who discovered MMA on YouTube at the age of 18, said her deci-



Ritu Phogat (right)

sion to sign for the Asian promotion One Championship in February was a "no-brainer". "I see this sport growing by leaps and bounds in India," she said. "My debut will be shown live on TV and I hope it inspires the next generation ... Our country is changing. Young girls now have

a platform to take up any sport." Phogat has trained in Brazilian jiu-jitsu, boxing and muay Thai ahead of her MMA bow but she remains a wrestler at heart. "My natural style makes it much easier to control all the takedowns ... I hope I can use that to my advantage," she said. — Reuters

## Astros being investigated over 2017 cheating claims

LOS ANGELES: The Houston Astros said Tuesday the team was cooperating with a Major League Baseball investigation into allegations the team illegally stole signs during their 2017 World Series-winning campaign.

A report in The Athletic website earlier Tuesday quoted former Astros pitcher Mike Fiers as saying the team stole signs from opposing teams during their home playoff games in 2017. The team decoded the signs with the assistance of a camera positioned in the outfield — a violation of Major League Baseball rules.

"Regarding the story posted by The Athletic earlier today, the Houston Astros organization has begun an investigation in cooperation with Major League Baseball," the Astros said in a statement on Tuesday. "It would not be appropriate to comment further on this matter at this time."

Sign-stealing in baseball is the act of observing signals by opposing teams, most commonly between pitchers and catchers, in an attempt to gain a tactical advantage by identifying what kind of pitch is likely to be thrown.

Major League Baseball forbids teams from using electronic assistance — such as a camera — to help steal signs. Sign-stealing by players in the field is allowed but generally frowned upon. Fiers told The Athletic that the Astros had used a video feed from the outfield relayed to a television monitor positioned near the home dugout to decipher signals.

The veteran told the website the practice had rankled him because it had led to pitchers being relegated to the minor leagues. "I just want the game to be cleaned up a little bit because there are guys who are losing their jobs because they're going in there not knowing," Fiers said.

"Young guys getting hit around in the first couple of innings starting a game, and then they get sent down. It's ruining jobs for younger guys. The guys who know are more prepared. But most people don't."

The Athletic also quoted three sources from inside the Astros who confirmed that sign stealing was used by the team. The report said an Astros employee would watch the opposing team's catcher's signals on a video monitor, and then bang a trash can loudly to let hitters know what pitches were being thrown.

"That's not playing the game the right way," Fiers told The Athletic. "They were advanced and willing to go above and beyond to win." During the 2017 playoffs, the Astros won the American League Championship Series 4-3 after winning all four home games against the New York Yankees.

The team then won two out of three of its home games in a 4-3 victory over the Los Angeles Dodgers in the World Series. Yankees chief Brian Cashman, speaking to reporters at the general managers' meetings in Arizona on Tuesday, declined to comment directly on the allegations.

However, Cashman said teams who cheat should face "consequences". "You decide to play by the rules, or you don't," Cashman said. "And if you don't, there's consequences. You're putting yourself at risk whether it's future employment, current employment, or sanctions or what have you. "It's not a technology question as much as how you want to operate." — AFP

## US Olympic chiefs to strip USA Badminton of governing status

LOS ANGELES: United States Olympic chiefs on Tuesday moved to strip USA Badminton of its governing body status after it failed to implement a range of reforms recommended in a 2018 audit. United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee chief executive Sarah Hirshland said in a statement the organisation had begun the formal process required to decertify USA Badminton.

"We have set high standards in order to associate with the Olympic and Paralympic movements in the United States, and we must hold organizations accountable when they don't live up to those standards," Hirshland said.

"Seeking to revoke recognition is not a decision that the USOPC came to easily, but we believe it is the right and necessary action in the interest of the athletes we all serve." The USOPC had demanded action after a 2018 audit of USA Badminton raised concerns in several areas including athlete safety, financial and accounting practices and general governance.

In an open letter to members of the US badminton community released Tuesday, Hirshland said several of the issues raised in the 2018 audit had not been adequately resolved. "We have attempted to work with USAB's leadership over the course of the last year to address our concerns, however those efforts have not yielded the results necessary to give me confidence in USAB's ability to continue to serve its athletes as an NGB (national governing body)," Hirshland wrote.

"We remain committed to working with USAB's leadership to address our concerns but have so far not found a willing partner." The decertification process — known as Section 8 proceedings — will see USOPC select an independent three-person panel which will review the case and hear evidence from both sides before deciding a course of action.

Hirshland did not give a timeframe for the proceedings, stating only that it could be several weeks or "a few months." The USOPC's moves to improve governance of different sports follows the scandal which embroiled USA Gymnastics following revelations of sexual abuse by former USA team doctor Larry Nassar. — AFP

## Reed won't dial down the passion at Presidents Cup

MELBOURNE: Patrick Reed's fiery, competitive spirit has ruffled feathers in the past but the golfer nicknamed 'Captain America' says he has no plans to dial down the intensity when he tees off for the United States at next month's Presidents Cup.

The last time Reed wore American colours it ended in acrimony at the 2018 Ryder Cup, where he lost both his matches playing with Tiger Woods as the United States suffered a 17.5-10.5 thrashing by Europe in Paris.

His disappointment spilled over into a now infamous interview with the New York Times in which he castigated the American team for having ego problems and criticised captain Jim Furyk's selections.

Reed said he had long since smoothed things over with team mates and that U.S. captain Woods expected him to be his natural, passionate self against the International team at Royal Melbourne.

"Tiger has always just told me and told all of our guys, 'be who you are, go out and play golf, and at the end of the day, go out and do your job,'" the 29-year-old told reporters at a conference call on Wednesday.

"It's something that I've always done. I mean, if I

go out there and I try to be someone else or do something differently on the golf course, now all of a sudden I'm playing away from my strengths and my golf game.

"That's something Tiger doesn't want from any of our guys. He wants us to go out there, feel relaxed, go out and do what we do and play golf." His pairing with Woods at the Ryder Cup was a major misfire and prompted Reed to complain that he had wanted to be paired with Jordan Spieth but that Spieth had nixed the idea.

Playing at Royal Melbourne as one of Woods's four captain's picks, Reed was reluctant to say who he would like to pair up with until seeing how the famed sandbelt course was set up.

"Honestly, it would be unfair for me to say whether I want to — that I should play with Tiger or play with this guy or that guy because we haven't seen the golf course," he said.

"I would go to battle with any one of the guys on the team and feel confident that we could go and do our job, but at the end of the day, it all comes down to who we feel like the best match-up is for each golf course."

The former Masters champion carries a folded American flag with him whenever he plays a round and said he could not wait to wear the red, white and blue again. "My job is easy. I get to go play golf rather than our veterans out there and our military (who are) out there keeping us safe," he said. "Any time I can help represent our country, try to bring some joy to our country, means a lot to me." — Reuters



Patrick Reed

# Panthers storm back to stun Boston Bruins in shootout

## Pettersson's two goals power Canucks over Predators

**BOSTON:** Mike Hoffman scored the game-winning goal in the shootout as the Florida Panthers rallied from four goals down in the third period to stun the host Boston Bruins 5-4 Tuesday night. Keith Yandle tied the score with 1:39 remaining in regulation, and Aaron Ekblad, Frank Vatrano and Hoffman also scored in the third as the Panthers won their second straight in a shootout. Sam Montembeault made 15 saves between the third period and overtime after taking over for an ineffective Sergei Bobrovsky. Jonathan Huberdeau had three assists for Florida, and Yandle added two helpers. David Pastmak, Joakim Nordstrom, Anders Bjork and Zdeno Chara scored in a 7:36 span in the second period for the Bruins, who lost their fourth straight (0-2-2). Tuukka Rask stopped 25 shots.

### CANUCKS 5, PREDATORS 3

Elias Pettersson scored twice on his 21st birthday as host Vancouver defeated Nashville in a game that featured six goals in the final 14 minutes. Tanner Pearson also scored twice for the Canucks, the last an empty-net goal the length of the ice with 6.9 seconds remaining, and Adam Gaudette also tallied. Thatcher Demko made 34 saves as the Canucks snapped a four-game winless streak. Mikael Granlund, Filip Forsberg and Calle Jarnkrok scored for Nashville. Pekka Rinne stopped 21 of 25 shots for the Predators, who are 1-3-2 in their past six games after a four-game winning streak.

### AVALANCHE 4, JETS 0

Nathan MacKinnon scored two goals and had two assists, and Adam Werner made 40 saves for a shutout in his first NHL game as Colorado shut out host Winnipeg to extend its winning streak to three games. MacKinnon scored twice in the third period and assisted on goals from Cale Makar and Joonas Donskoi. It was the seventh multi-point game of the season for MacKinnon, who has three goals and five assists over his past three games. Playing in relief after an early injury to starting goalie Pavel Francouz, Werner made his unexpected debut a perfect one as the Avalanche recorded their first team shutout of the season. A fifth-round pick for the Avalanche in the 2016 NHL draft, Werner has a 5-4-0 record, a .908 save percentage and 2.88 goals-against average for the AHL's Colorado Eagles this season.

### RED WINGS 4, DUCKS 3 (OT)

Dennis Cholowski scored at 2:04 of overtime as visiting Detroit staged a late rally to edge Anaheim and hand the Ducks their fourth straight loss. Cholowski wristed a shot over the shoulder of Ducks goalie Ryan Miller off a pass from Robby Fabbri. Detroit's Dylan Larkin scored in the final minute of regulation to tie the game. Filip Hronek and Andreas Athanasiou also scored for the Red Wings. Jonathan Bernier made 24 saves as Detroit won its third straight game. Jakob Silfverberg, Josh Mahura and Cam Fowler scored for Anaheim.

### CANADIENS 3, BLUE JACKETS 2 (SO)

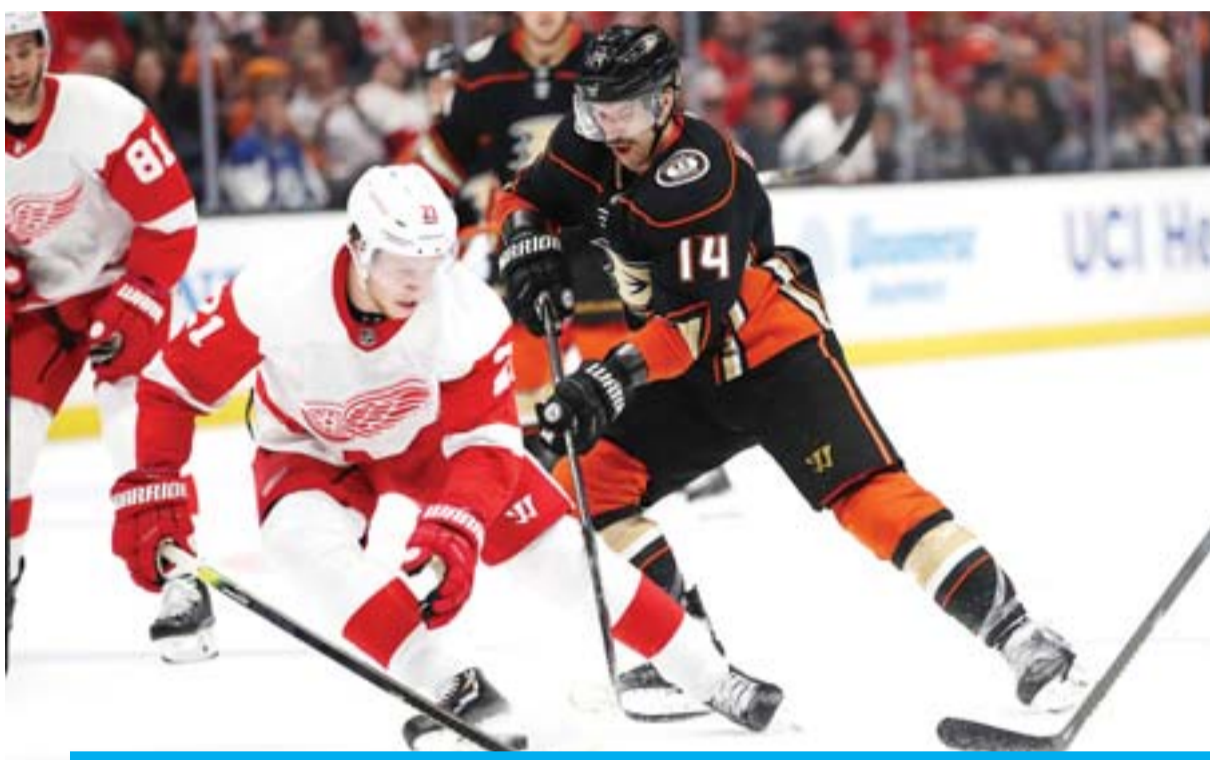
Jonathan Drouin scored the only goal in the shootout as Montreal defeated visiting Columbus. Drouin slid in a backhand during the top of the second round for the game-deciding goal. Montreal goalie Carey Price stuffed Cam Atkinson, Gustav Nyquist and Oliver Bjorkstrand in the extra session after making 33 saves in regulation and the shootout. Brendan Gallagher and Tomas Tatar tallied for Montreal, which moved to 6-1-1 in their last eight. Eric Robinson and Zach Werenski scored for the Blue Jackets in regulation.

### RANGERS 3, PENGUINS 2 (OT)

Rookie Kaapo Kakko scored twice, including the game-winning goal at 2:24 of overtime, as host New York survived squandering a two-goal lead and edged Pittsburgh. The Rangers improved to 6-2-1 in their past nine games thanks to Kakko's first career two-goal game. Kakko and Fox scored in the opening period for the Rangers, who also got a 30-save performance from Alexandar Georgiev. Artemi Panarin had an assist and extended his points streak to nine games. Justin Schultz scored, and Jared McCann tied the game with a power-play goal that ended Pittsburgh's 0-for-28 drought with the man advantage. Matt Murray finished with 24 saves for Pittsburgh, which played without Sidney Crosby (lower-body injury).

### COYOTES 3, BLUES 2 (SO)

Conor Garland scored the game-tying goal and the shootout winner to lift visiting Arizona past St. Louis, ending the Blues' seven-game winning streak. Clayton Keller also scored and Darcy Kuemper made 33 saves for the Coyotes, who stacked this victory on top of a 4-3 shootout



**ANAHEIM:** Dennis Cholowski #21 of the Detroit Red Wings handles the puck past Adam Henrique #14 of the Anaheim Ducks during the third period of a game at Honda Center n Anaheim, California. — AFP

road victory over the Washington Capitals on Monday. Jaden Schwartz and Colton Parayko scored for St. Louis. Jordan Binnington stopped 20 of 22 shots.

Kassian added a goal for Edmonton, whose two-game winning streak ended.

### KINGS 3, WILD 1

Anze Kopitar and Jeff Carter scored early goals, and Jonathan Quick made 27 saves as Los Angeles ended a three-game losing streak with a win over visiting Minnesota. Sean Walker added an empty-net goal in the final minute as the Kings won at the start of a stretch in which they'll play seven of eight games at home after losing all three during a just-concluded trip to Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. Matt Dumba scored for the Wild, who went 2-2-0 on a West Coast trip. Minnesota, which fell to 2-4-1 over its past seven games, got 32 saves from Devan Dubnyk. — Reuters

Brent Burns, Evander Kane and Patrick Marleau scored first-period goals, and San Jose cruised to another win over Edmonton — the Sharks' eighth in their last nine vs. the Oilers. Martin Jones made 21 saves while Erik Karlsson collected three assists for the Sharks, who have won also four straight games. Barclay Goodrow and Timo Meier each had a goal and an assist for the Sharks, who also got a goal from Tomas Hertl. Leon Draisaitl and Sam Gagner both registered a goal and an assist for the Oilers, and Zack

## Pooran banned for four T20 matches for ball tampering

**NEW DELHI:** West Indies batsman Nicholas Pooran has been banned for four T20 internationals for tampering with the ball in a one-day match against Afghanistan, cricket's world body announced yesterday.

Pooran admitted to "changing the condition of the ball" after video footage showed him scratching the surface of the white ball with his thumbnail in Lucknow on Monday. "He will now miss the next four T20I games for the West Indies and will have five demerit points added to his record," said an International Cricket Council statement.

Pooran said that he wanted to "issue a sincere apology to my teammates, supporters and the Afghanistan team for what transpired on the field of play on Monday in Lucknow". "I recognise that I made an extreme error in judgement and I fully accept the ICC penalty," he added.

"I want to assure everyone that this is an isolated incident and it will not be repeated. I promise to learn from this and come back



**LUCKNOW:** File photo shows West Indies' Nicholas Pooran plays a shot during the second one day international (ODI) cricket match between Afghanistan and West Indies at the Ekana Cricket Stadium in Lucknow on November 9, 2019. — AFP

stronger and wiser." The 24-year-old will be forced to sit out the team's three T20 matches against Afghanistan and the first game of their subsequent three-match series against India.

Pooran, who made 21 in a successful West Indies chase of 250 that led to a sweep of the three-match ODI series, is a left-handed

wicketkeeper batsman. He was the man of the match in the second ODI for smashing 67 off 50 balls.

Born in Trinidad, Pooran has played 16 ODI matches since his 50-over debut earlier this year. He has represented West Indies in 14 T20 games. — AFP

## Struggling batsmen give Australia selection headache

**MELBOURNE:** Australia's hopes of resolving their batting problems in time for the test series against Pakistan have proved forlorn, with a slew of candidates failing to stake their claim since the Ashes.

Selectors name the test squad on Thursday but will have to rely on their gut rather than hard numbers when picking an opening partner for David Warner and filling a middle order vacancy following the drawn series in England.

The Australia A tour game against Pakistan was to have offered an unofficial audition but all of the hopefuls fluffed their lines on Tuesday barring Cameron Bancroft, who scored 49 as the hosts were bowled out for a paltry 122.

Opener Bancroft, who was dropped mid-series in England after a string of failures, was only picked in the 'A' team after Nic Maddinson pulled out on mental health grounds and felt his chances of a recall were dim. "Probably highly unlikely, I would have thought," the 26-year-old told reporters.

Incumbent opener Marcus Harris, who averaged 9.66 against Joe Root's England in three tests during the Ashes, failed to cement his place with a score of

16. His top order rival Usman Khawaja poked around for six runs from 30 balls before being caught behind.

Opener Joe Burns, renowned for missing out on a place in the Ashes squad despite scoring 180 in the previous test against Sri Lanka in February, blew his chance to make an impression when he was bowled for a duck by Imran Khan.

Middle order hopeful Travis Head, also dropped during the Ashes, did little for his hopes of a recall with 13, while much-hyped youngster Will Pucovski was out for five following his twin failures for Victoria in the Sheffield Shield.

Australia's selectors have a far easier job picking the bowling contingent, with pacemen Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, James Pattinson and Pat Cummins fit for the first test starting in Brisbane on Nov. 21 and certain to be included in the 12-man squad with spinner Nathan Lyon.

Picking which of the quicks misses out at the Gabba will be a tougher call. For all his brilliance during the 50-over World Cup, Starc was used in only one test in England and could be benched in favour of Pattinson, who is relishing a rare spell of fitness after three years blighted by injury problems. — Reuters

## Kohli hails Maxwell for taking mental health break

**INDORE:** India skipper Virat Kohli yesterday lauded Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell's courage to take a break from cricket because of mental health issues and said international players should be looked after. Maxwell, one of the world's best batsman in the shortest format, left Australia's Twenty20 squad last month during a series against touring Sri Lanka. The move by the 31-year-old Maxwell was backed by his team and support staff with Cricket Australia saying he was a "special player" and they hoped to see him back in the summer.

Kohli praised Maxwell for putting his health before the game. "I am absolutely for it," Kohli said ahead of India's first Test against Bangladesh in Indore starting today. "I think what Glenn has done is remarkable and has set the right example for cricketers all over the world." He added: "I think these things should be respected and not taken in a negative way." Discussion of stress-related problems is uncommon in the sub-continent, even though players from other countries have quit tours because of mental health issues.

Jonathan Trott returned home from England's tour of Australia in 2013 with a stress-related illness. England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff admitted to dealing with depression and speculated that it may have been behind his prolonged drinking bouts as captain of a whitewashed England side during the 2006-07 tour of Australia.

Kohli recounted his own inhibitions dur-

ing his 2014 tour of England when he managed just 134 runs from 10 innings with highest score of 39. "I have gone through a phase in my career where it was the end of the world," said Kohli.

"In England 2014 I just didn't know what to do, what say to anyone, how to speak, how to communicate. "I could have said that I am not feeling great mentally and need to get away from the game. But you never know how that's taken.

"These things should of great importance. If you think that the player is important enough for the team or for Indian cricket to go forward he should be looked after." Kohli said the team were excited about their first day-night Test, the second match of the series starting November 22 at Kolkata's Eden Gardens.

Players have been getting used the pink ball during their net sessions in Indore. "The pink ball I played yesterday, I felt it swings a lot more as compared to the red ball because there's extra lacquer on the ball which doesn't go away too fast," he said. "And the seam holds upright quite a bit. I think if the pitch has extra help for the bowlers then the bowlers will be in the game, especially fast bowlers." He rated India's seam attack as the best in the world with Mohammed Shami, Umesh Yadav and Ishant Sharma in the 15-man squad.

Shami and Yadav shared 24 wickets during the recent South Africa series which India swept 3-0. "If you ask me, we're right at the top," Kohli said. "Batting was never an issue, spin was never an issue. After Zak (Zaheer Khan) and all the stalwarts went away, we were thinking how can we get back to the top, have the ability and the firepower to pick 20 wickets.

"Just seeing the way they've bowled, it's the belief that stands out. "Any kind of the pitch, any kind of opposition, they believe that they can get more out of the pitch than the opposition." — AFP

## Shakib's absence like losing 2 players

**INDORE:** Bangladesh captain Mominul Haque said yesterday the absence of banned all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan will be like missing two players, as the team prepared for their two-Test series in India. Bangladesh arrived in India in shock after Shakib was handed a two-year ban, with one-year suspended, for failing to declare illegal approaches by a bookmaker in 2018. The International Cricket Council (ICC) ban ruled Shakib out of the tour and next year's World T20 in Australia.

The touring side is also missing prolific opener Tamim Iqbal, who took a break due to family reasons. "We are missing three players in two players. Shakib bhai (brother) is two players in one, and then you have Tamim bhai," Mominul told reporters on the eve of the first Test in Indore starting today.

"It is challenging, but I also see it as a chance to do well for the rest of the players." Mominul, much to his surprise, was named Test captain in place of Shakib and the batsman feels the responsibility will only make him a better player. "I will probably be playing like I have always played as a batsman," said the left-hander. "The positive side of captaincy is that your cricket game (knowledge) becomes better." The 28-year-old added: "It is a huge opportunity for me as one of the junior players. — AFP

## Katy Perry to perform at women's T20 final

**SYDNEY:** American popstar Katy Perry announced yesterday she will be performing at the final of the Women's Twenty20 World Cup in Melbourne next March before an expected record crowd on International Women's Day. "Aussie Aussie Aussie Oi Oi Oi!"

Perry said in an Instagram post using the Australian sporting chant. "Let's break some records - join me in Melbourne on March 8, 2020 for the ICC @T20WorldCup Women's Final. We'll Roar in support of these awesome women on International Women's Day!"

The International Cricket Council said Perry would perform both before and after the final in "what is anticipated to be the biggest women's cricket match of all time." It said it was an opportunity to set a new world attendance record at a women's sporting fixture. The current record crowd of 90,185 was set at the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup final in Pasadena, California. — AFP

## Sports

# Sterling sanction casts shadow as England aim to seal place at Euro 2020

## Raheem left to defend himself from all of the haters

LONDON: England's plan to celebrate their 1,000th international by qualifying for Euro 2020 in serene style against Montenegro at Wembley today has been ripped up by Gareth Southgate's decision to drop Raheem Sterling.

The Manchester City winger was involved in a physical confrontation with Liverpool defender Joe Gomez at England's training base on Monday as emotions spilled over from the highly-anticipated Premier League clash between the two clubs on Sunday.

Sterling has been the star of a qualifying campaign dominated by off-field issues where the Three Lions have largely let their football do the talking on it. Bar a shock defeat to the Czech Republic last month, the World Cup semi-finalists have shown why they will be among the favourites to win a first major tournament in 54 years next summer.

Sterling has scored eight of his side's 26 goals in six games as he has blossomed into one of the world's best players for club and country since failing to find his best form at the World Cup 18 months ago. He has also been a leading figure as England have stood up to the racist abuse suffered by a number of players in Montenegro and Bulgaria.

One of Southgate's strengths since taking charge three years ago has been to foster a unity in the camp, far removed from the club-aligned cliques that hampered the chances of talented England sides of the past.

That now faces its biggest test as the bubbling rivalry between Liverpool and City threatens to spill over. Southgate's first instinct was reportedly to send Sterling home, but the intervention of senior players, principally Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson,

helped ease the feud and the 24-year-old has remained with the squad to train.

"I always have to find the right solution for the group and that's a very difficult line," said Southgate on Tuesday. "We have a very good understanding of the way that we have worked over the last couple of years, which has brought us a lot of togetherness that is still there."

"We are a united group. Now we have to turn our focus onto the football. We have a hugely important qualifier to reach a European Championship." Sterling has since apologised to Gomez and the rest of the squad.

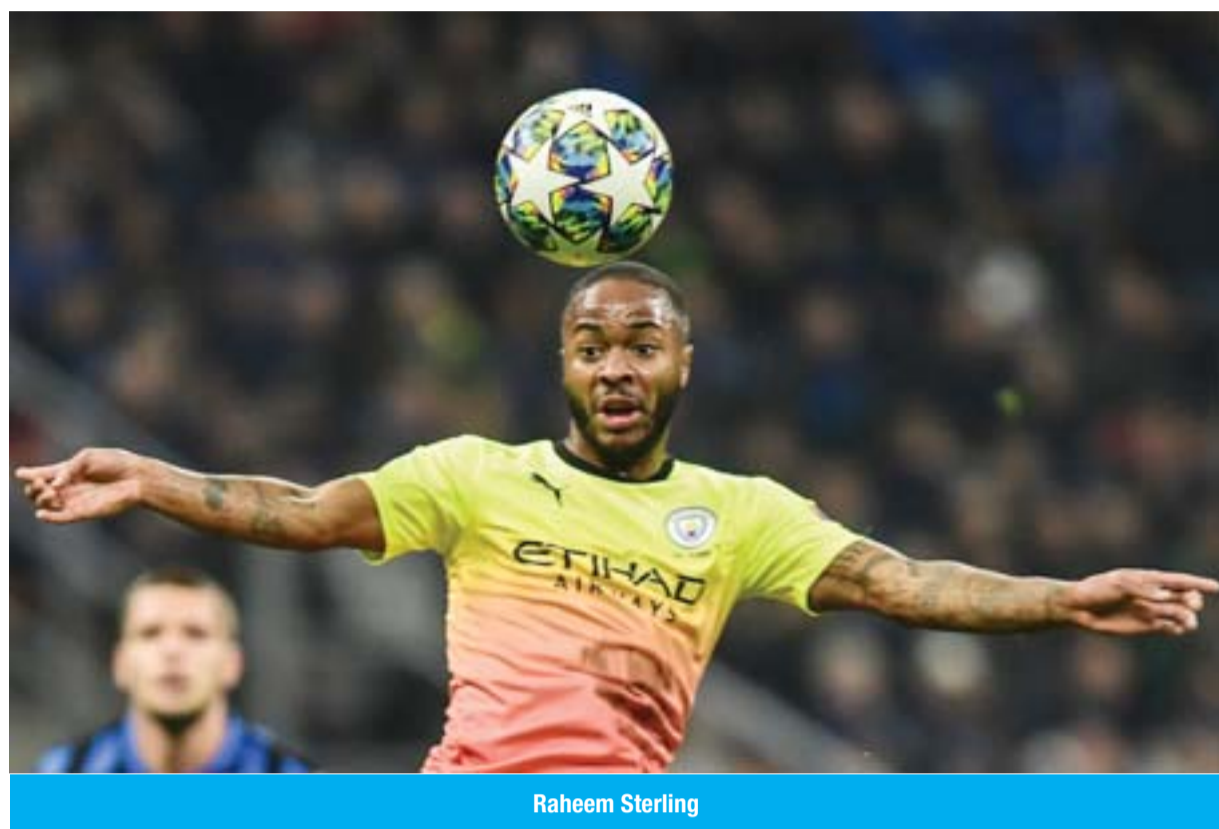
"I am man enough to admit when emotions got the better of me," he said in an Instagram post. "Me and Joe Gomez are good, we both understand it was a five to 10-second thing... it's done, we move forward and not make this bigger than it is."

Sterling could even return to action as soon as Sunday when Southgate's men travel to Kosovo. England will hope there is nothing riding on that match for them as a point against the side ranked 61st in the world today will be enough to guarantee qualification.

Even in Sterling's absence, Southgate is blessed with an array of attacking talent including Harry Kane, Jadon Sancho and Marcus Rashford that should continue England's free-scoring form.

But Southgate's action has been criticised by some for bringing a private incident into the public eye and putting Sterling under more scrutiny as a result. "Why this couldn't be handled internally?" said former England defender Rio Ferdinand.

"Now Raheem is left to defend himself from all of



Raheem Sterling

the haters that had had their keyboards turned off due to him becoming a very worthy ambassador for the English game." If England's long wait to win a major tournament is to come to an end, Southgate needs to

continue getting the best out of Sterling.

The question remains what lasting impact the developments of the last two days will have on their relationship going forward. — AFP

## Villa retires after 19-year career

TOKYO: Star striker David Villa, Spain's top goalscorer, yesterday announced he will retire next month, ending a glittering career in which he won the World Cup, European Championships and Champions League.

The 37-year-old Vissel Kobe striker said he will call it a day at the end of the 2019 J-League season after a 19-year career that took in Barcelona, Atletico Madrid and Valencia while accumulating 98 caps for his country. "I have decided to end my professional career and that I have decided to retire," Villa told reporters in Kobe, his voice occasionally breaking with emotion. "I've been thinking about this for a long time. This is the result of discussions I had with my family and peo-

ple around me... I wanted to retire from football, not be forced to retire from football," he said.

Villa will become an investor in Queensboro FC, a new franchise based in the New York district of Queens that will play in the second tier of US football. "Even though I will no longer be on the pitch, I will continue to be involved in football in other ways and will continue to contribute to the football world," he said.

Villa played in three World Cups and was a member of the Spanish side that lifted the trophy in 2010 and won the European Championships in 2008, though he missed out on the 2012 triumph through injury. He scored 59 times for Spain, a national record.

His club honours include the 2010-11 Champions League, the 2011 UEFA Super Cup, 2011 Club World Cup and two La Liga wins in 2010-11 and 2012-13 with Barcelona. Villa scored the third goal for Barcelona at Wembley in the 3-1 win over Manchester United in the 2010-11 Champions League final.

He won a third La Liga with Atletico Madrid in his one season there in 2013-14 after leaving Barcelona. After leaving Atletico, Villa embarked on a successful spell in Major League Soccer for New York City, where he scored 80 goals in 124 appearances.

Villa was New York City's first-ever signing and his haul included the first goal scored at Yankee Stadium in an opening home victory over the New England Revolution. At Vissel Kobe, he played alongside fellow Spanish legend Andres Iniesta and German striker Lukas Podolski but the presence of the ageing foreign stars has done little to bring success to the ambitious Japanese club.

Vissel Kobe are currently languishing 10th in the J-League after 31 games — the same position they finished last year. Villa has scored 12 goals in 26 appearances for Vissel. He is expected to play three more J-League matches as well as semi-finals and finals of the Emperor's Cup. His retirement ceremony will be on December 7, the day of his last J-League game. — AFP

## Asprilla reveals drug trafficker's offer to kill rival player

BOGOTA: Former Newcastle United forward Faustino Asprilla has claimed a drug trafficker offered to murder ex-Paraguay goalkeeper Jose Luis Chilavert after an on-field clash between the South American pair.

Speaking in a documentary about his life, due to be screened at the end of the week, the former Colombia international said the extraordinary offer came in 1997. That was just three years after defender Andres Escobar was gunned down in his home city of Medellin by suspected drug cartel members after scoring an own goal at the World Cup that year.

"But you're mad! What will happen to Colombian football? It's not possible. No, no, no!" was Asprilla's response, the 50-year-old told the documentary makers. Asprilla and Chilavert had both been sent off during a World Cup qualifier in Asuncion — won 2-1 by Paraguay — ahead of the 1998 tournament.

Afterwards, Asprilla says he received a phone call from Julio Fierro, described by Colombia's attorney general's office as a drug trafficker. Fierro invited him to a hotel in Asuncion along with fellow former Colombia international Victor Hugo Aristizabal.

There, Fierro was waiting for them "with 10 people, drunk, and with pure Paraguayan women." "We were annoyed because we'd lost when the man arrived (and said) 'we need you to authorize these two guys to stay here in Paraguay, Asuncion, they want to go and kill that fatty Chilavert'," said Asprilla.

He told them that what happens on the pitch stays there and that the issue was over. But the "hitmen" insisted and asked him, "give us the order." Fierro's body was discovered in 2004 in what authorities believed to have been a settling of scores.

The 1990s was a sorry period in Colombian football. Several teams, including America, Millonarios and Envigado received mafia funding and were duly punished for it. Before even Escobar was assassinated, the Colombian team had been threatened during the 1994 World Cup.

Midfielder Gabriel Gomez left the tournament after playing one match because threats were made against him and his family should he play in the second game against hosts the United States. The coach Francisco Maturana also received a death threat should he pick Gomez.

The team's spokesman at the time said there was nothing uncommon about players receiving threats. Asprilla, known affectionately as "Tino," made his name in Europe for Italians Parma, winning the now-defunct European Cup Winners' Cup in 1993.

Three years later he moved to Newcastle, who were flying in the English Premier League and looking set for a first championship title in nearly 70 years. But the Colombian's arrival seemed to unsettle the team, despite his obvious talents, and they were pipped to the trophy by Manchester United, inspired by their own mercurial forward Eric Cantona. — AFP

## Resurgent Dutch on cusp of Euro 2020 and return to big time

PARIS: A thrilling crop of young players has Euro 2020 in its sights as the Netherlands prepare for a return to the big stage, while Teemu Pukki's Finland are on the brink of their first ever major tournament.

Ronald Koeman's side need just a draw at Northern Ireland on Saturday to guarantee a spot at their first international tournament since coming third at the 2014 World Cup. The Dutch had been in the doldrums since then until the arrival early in 2018 of Koeman, with the once mighty Oranje missing out on the previous European Championship and last year's World Cup in Russia.

The 56-year-old has revitalised his country's dormant national team with the help of a crop of young players who are putting a famous footballing nation back on the map. Rising stars including Frenkie de Jong, Donny van de Beek and Matthijs de Ligt have joined more experienced campaigners Virgil van Dijk, Georginio Wijnaldum, Daley Blind and Ryan Babel to go top of Group C ahead of the final two rounds of qualifiers.

They are level on 15 points with fierce rivals Germany but above them on head-to-head record and three ahead of Northern Ireland, who realistically need a win to carry on their battle for a spot in the tournament.

A late double from 25-year-old Memphis Depay, a revelation in qualifying with six goals in five appearances, in Rotterdam last month helped sink the brave Northern Irish and means they just have to avoid defeat at Windsor Park to join the likes of Italy and Spain.

Germany meanwhile just need to better Northern Ireland's result to make sure of their place. The Finns are also on the verge of making history, with a win over lowly Liechtenstein in Helsinki on Friday enough to see them qualify for their first ever European Championship.

They lie second in Group J behind already-qualified Italy thanks to a magical run inspired by the incredible form of star man Pukki. The Norwich City striker has scored seven of his side's 12 goals in eight games, with his brace in a 3-0 win

over Armenia last time out opening a five-point gap between them and their third-placed opposition.

That win all-but guaranteed them a spot in their first major tournament, and Pukki's fame in his homeland is such that in September, after a discussion on climate change at the Elysee Palace in Paris, Finnish President Sauli Niinisto handed his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron a Pukki replica shirt.

"There are two games left and it's in their own hands," said Finland coach Markku Kanerva. France are among several big hitters also a hair's breadth away from the main tournament. They might qualify before they even take the field against Moldova at the Stade de France today. Didier Deschamps' world champions will take their place at the finals should third-placed Iceland not beat Group H leaders Turkey, although a win for France over bottom side Moldova would be enough regardless of what happens in Istanbul.

England can rubber stamp what has long looked to be certain qualification with a draw over winless Montenegro at Wembley, with Gareth Southgate's side another one pushing young players to the forefront. Raheem Sterling will not play following a brief spat with Joe Gomez in the wake of Liverpool's 3-1 win over Manchester City, although Southgate insisted a line had been drawn under the incident. "I love all of my players," Southgate said. "We are like a family and all families have disagreements."

Reigning European champions Portugal meanwhile will have the chance to defend their title with a win over Lithuania, who have collected just a point from seven Group B games, if Serbia fail to beat Luxembourg.

The Portuguese are a point ahead of the Serbs as coach Fernando Santos recalls Lokomotiv Moscow forward Eder, whose goal won Euro 2016, with teenage star Joao Felix sidelined. They are also without Everton midfielder Andre Gomes after he suffered a horrific leg injury against Tottenham Hotspur earlier in the month. — AFP



Altaf Karam

## Kuwait bowling team leave for Indonesia

KUWAIT: Kuwait bowling delegation will leave to Indonesia to participate in the world individuals championship to be held from Nov 16 - Nov 24. The delegation is headed by bowling club secretary and men team director Salem Al-Aradah and play-

ers Jassim Al-Saqer and Altaf Karam.

The technical and administrative departments seek to provide the best circumstances to enable the team to perform with distinguished levels in the tournament in which the best world stars are participating.

**25** Indian wrestler Phogat ready for tilt at MMA world title

**26** Pooran banned for four T20 matches for ball tampering

**27** Sterling sanction casts shadow as England aim to seal place at Euro 2020



## Lakers slip past Phoenix Suns

Young's 42 points carry Hawks past Nuggets



PHOENIX: Dwight Howard #39 of the Los Angeles Lakers slam dunks the ball over Frank Kaminsky #8 of the Phoenix Suns during the first half of the NBA game at Talking Stick Resort Arena in Phoenix, Arizona. — AFP

PHOENIX: Kyle Kuzma had 23 points off the bench and hit a pair of key 3-pointers down the stretch, and the Los Angeles Lakers pulled away from the host Phoenix Suns for a 123-115 victory on Tuesday. Anthony Davis had 24 points and 12 rebounds for Los Angeles, and LeBron James added 19 points and 11 assists. James made a 3-point shot and Kuzma sank two treys in a row in a 90-second stretch as the Lakers closed on a 12-2 run to win for the eighth time in nine games. The Suns, who have lost two of three, did not have a field goal in the final 3:28. Lakers guard Rajon Rondo had five points and seven assists in 14 minutes in his return after missing the first nine games of the season due to a right calf strain. For Phoenix, Ricky Rubio and 21 points and 10 assists, Devin Booker 21 points and Aron Baynes 20 points.

### 76ERS 98, CAVALIERS 97

Joel Embiid had 27 points and 16 rebounds for his fifth double-double of the season to lead host Philadelphia. Embiid's dunk with 13.2 seconds left turned out to be the winning basket in a game that Cleveland led by five with five minutes left. The late hoop, following an empty possession from each team, put Philadelphia up by one. On Cleveland's final possession, Kevin Love missed a 3-point attempt. The ball bounced around with players diving all over the floor for the rebound, and the clock eventually ran out. Love and Jordan Clarkson each scored 20 points for the Cavaliers.

### PACERS 111, THUNDER 85

T.J. Warren scored 23 points and Indiana used a dominant third quarter to cruise a victory over Oklahoma City in Indianapolis, the Pacers' seventh win in eight games. Malcolm Brogdon added 20 points and former Thunder

forward Domantas Sabonis notched his fifth straight double-double with 18 points and 16 rebounds for the Pacers, who outscored Oklahoma City 34-20 in the third quarter. Danilo Gallinari scored 14 points and Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 11 for Oklahoma City, which shot 1-for-18 from 3-point range over the first three quarters. The Thunder finished 6 of 25 from beyond the arc en route to losing their second straight and dropping three of their last four games.

### HEAT 117, PISTONS 108

Jimmy Butler had a season-high 13 assists to go with 20 points as short-handed Miami defeated road-weary Detroit. Heat center Bam Adebayo also had a double-double — 18 points and a season-high 14 rebounds. Heat guard Kendrick Nunn also played well with 20 points as Miami used a 17-0 second-quarter run to improve to 4-0 at home this season. Detroit, 1-5 on the road, was led by Luke Kennard, who had a game-high 22 points, all in the second half. He missed all seven of his first-half shots and shot 8-of-11 after the break.

### BULLS 120, KNICKS 102

Rookie Coby White set a Chicago franchise record with seven 3-pointers in a quarter, and the Bulls pulled away for the win over visiting New York. White made his first six 3-pointers during a 22-0 run by the Bulls in the fourth quarter. He made history in front of his college coach, North Carolina's Roy Williams, who visited Chicago to see his former point guard in action. A sellout crowd gave White a standing ovation as he left with 1:31 to play. He finished with 27 points and made 7 of 11 attempts from beyond the arc. Zach LaVine added 25 points for Chicago. Marcus Morris paced New York with 22 points and nine rebounds.

### JAZZ 119, NETS 114

Rudy Gobert converted the tiebreaking dunk with 55.6 seconds remaining as Utah overcame a 15-point deficit and pulled out a victory over Brooklyn to improve to 6-0 in Salt Lake City. Donovan Mitchell led all scorers with 30 points, and Gobert contributed 18 points and 15 rebounds for the Jazz. Utah guard Mike Conley also had 18 points. Kyrie Irving led the Nets with 27 points but shot 10 of 30 from the field. Reserve Spencer Dinwiddie added 21 while DeAndre Jordan collected 15 points and 17 rebounds.

### HAWKS 125, NUGGETS 121

Trae Young scored a season-high 42 points and had 11 assists, Jabari Parker had 20 points and nine rebounds, and visiting Atlanta beat Denver. The Hawks' Alex Len scored 17 and Kevin Huerter had 11 points before leaving with a left shoulder injury early in the second half. Will Barton had 21 points, Nikola Jokic scored 20, Paul Millsap had 19 and Jamal Murray finished with 18 for Denver. Monte Morris added 14 off the bench.

### KINGS 107, TRAIL BLAZERS 99

Bogdan Bogdanovic recorded season highs of 25 points, 10 assists and four steals to lead Sacramento over visiting Portland. Buddy Hield added 20 points and Nemanja Bjelica contributed season bests of 19 points and 12 rebounds as the Kings won for the fourth time in the past five games. Harrison Barnes scored all 16 of his points in the second half, and Richaun Holmes added 11 points and 10 rebounds. Damian Lillard scored 27 points and CJ McCollum added 24 for the Trail Blazers, who fell for the fifth time in their past six games. Hassan Whiteside had 17 points, and Kent Bazemore scored 12. — Reuters

## Chelsea win battle to sign icon Kerr

LONDON: Australian striker Sam Kerr will test herself at the top level of European football after impressing in her homeland and the United States as she joined Chelsea yesterday. The 26-year-old Matildas captain — who scored five times in this year's World Cup as the Australians reached the last 16 — signed a two-and-a-half-year contract with the Women's Super League club.

Kerr, who has been a mainstay at Perth Glory since 2014 while also playing for Chicago Red Stars in the United States, will be available for selection from January. According to a report in the Sydney Morning Herald last week it is believed Kerr — who also attracted interest from Lyon, Bayern Munich and Real Madrid — will earn worth more than £467,000 (\$600,000) a year, not including potential bonuses.

However, Kerr — the all-time leading scorer in the Australian and American leagues — said she felt Chelsea were a team that had laid a solid base for winning silverware. "The WSL is the best league in Europe," she said.

"I want team success and I don't want it to come easy. I feel Chelsea have been building something special over the years and I want to be a part of that — I want to lift some trophies." Chelsea manager Emma Hayes said Kerr's decision showed that they were a marquee club.

"The fact she chose Chelsea when she could have gone to any club in the world is a testament to the players and the staff here," said Hayes. "Sam has proved time and time again in the NWSL (National Women's Soccer League in the USA) that she is a prolific goalscorer.

"She's won the golden boot many times and she's a player that can make things happen, but she's also a fantastic team player. She saw this as the best place for her to grow and take the next step in her career. That's a wonderful compliment to us all."

Kerr, who has twice been shortlisted for FIFA Player of the Year and is one of the sport's biggest names, made her debut for Perth Glory at 15 and spent four years at the club before moving to Sydney FC. She returned in 2014 for a second stint. Known for her pace, agility and heading ability, as well as her trademark backflip goal celebrations, she has also played in the United States since 2013, first at Western New York Flash, then Sky Blue FC in New Jersey and Chicago. — AFP

## Thiem into ATP Finals semis

LONDON: Dominic Thiem produced a scintillating display of attacking tennis to beat Novak Djokovic and qualify for the last four at the ATP Finals on Tuesday, leaving the Serbian facing a shootout against Roger Federer. In the standout match so far at London's O2 Arena, the Austrian fifth seed took the fight to the world number two, recovering from losing the first set to triumph 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/5).

Earlier, Federer put himself back in the mix at the end-of-season event with a 7-6 (7/2),

6-3 win against Italian debutant Matteo Berrettini in their round-robin clash. Federer and Djokovic will face off today in a repeat of this year's Wimbledon final to determine who else will progress from Group Bjorn Borg.

Thiem was forced to play high-stakes tennis against the 16-time Grand Slam winner, taking the breath away with some of his inside-out forehands and single-handed backhands. Forced to play at his limit, he hit 50 winners compared with Djokovic's tally of 27 but also racked up 44 unforced errors.

"This was really one of these special matches, what I've practised all my life for, all my childhood for," Thiem said. "Really epic one in an amazing atmosphere, beating a legend of our game. And also I've qualified for the semi-finals, which is the best.

"Coming back from 1-4 (down in the

deciding tie-break) was a little bit of luck, but it was an unbelievable match and one I'll never forget. Novak is the best player in the world and I had to do something special."

In a captivating first set the players swapped a break apiece but Djokovic, a five-time ATP Finals champion, edged the tie-break. Undaunted, Thiem broke his opponent at the first opportunity in the second set and, with Djokovic's error count climbing, went on to level the match. Thiem also drew first blood in the decider but cracked in the sixth game as Djokovic levelled the match and appeared to have engineered a switch in momentum. The Austrian successfully challenged at 30-30 in the 10th game after his forehand was ruled out, preventing a match point for Djokovic and he toughed it out to level at 5-5.

He then broke Djokovic to love to earn a

chance to serve for the match but stumbled and the decider went to a tie-break. Still the drama was not finished. Thiem slipped to 4-1 down but battled back to win it on his second match point when Djokovic dumped a forehand into the net.

Third seed Federer had put himself under the cosh by losing his opening round-robin match to Thiem. The six-time champion was not at his fluent best on Tuesday but ultimately had too much for his Italian opponent.

The Swiss upped his game to take the first set tie-break comfortably and broke immediately at the start of the second set to leave the big-serving Berrettini with too much to do. Federer was asked after his win against Berrettini whether his defeat to Djokovic at Wimbledon had left emotional or mental scars. — AFP