

Friday Times

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4 Coding as a professional skill grows in popularity



12 Ceasefire takes hold after deadly Israel-Gaza violence



42 Hamilton racing the record book for motivation after title



Govt resigns amid 'infighting' rumors, disputes with MPs

SEE PAGE 9

Local

Parking disputes



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Parking disputes are becoming life-threatening. In the last five years, we have been reading stories about fights over parking that led to deaths. Recently, an incident occurred in Kuwait where a lion was used as a weapon. A Kuwaiti decided to end a quarrel with his neighbor over a parking lot in a very dangerous way by bringing the wild animal to have the final word.

The neighbor had objected that his parking space was occupied by his neighbor's guests in front of his house on a daily basis, and after a heated verbal argument, one of the men brought his lion to scare his neighbor! The neighbor was forced to hide in his car in fear of his life until some people managed to calm the owner of the lion and took him away.

This incident may seem funny to some, but it reflects the fact that there are people who may commit criminal acts over parking.

Raising predators in homes is a strange phenomenon and no less dangerous than having weapons and ammunition at home. Another incident occurred in 2013, when a



It is necessary to stop those who keep predators as pets

citizen found a lion roaming in the street after escaping from its owner's house. The man called the police and a veterinarian was brought to deal with the situation. It was said that its owner was about to sell the lion to another person, but they had an argument and the beast got a chance to escape.

The presence of predators in the possession of some people who cannot tame them may be a symbol of wealth and dominance, but I think this is dangerous because it may attack them or get out on the street at any time and kill innocent people. It is necessary to stop those who keep predators as pets.

In 2014, a Filipina helper was killed in Kuwait by a lion in the house of her sponsor, who told security authorities she was bitten by a dog. But her injuries said something else and showed that the death was due to a lion's bite. Officials must stop those who acquire predators and punish anyone who owns them with imprisonment and a fine. People's lives are not cheap and not games to play with.

It is really odd to see some people taking these animals with them in their cars to show off in front of people, which can cause uncontrollable disasters, especially since predators are difficult to control if attacked by pedestrians on the street. I believe the state must monitor these people and impound the animals.

This article was not meant to list the crimes or sad incidents that have occurred due to disputes over parking, but the lesson is that some people do not hesitate to use a weapon to harm others, whether it is a predator or a gun. Eventually, one will go to prison and the other will get injured, if not killed.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



KUWAIT: A beach in Fintas is seen at twilight. — KUNA

Fill-and-run incidents accelerate

By Nawara Fattahova

Workers at gas stations in various areas are complaining about the increasing number of motorists who fill their tank and simply drive away without paying.

Despite the cameras installed at all petrol pumps around Kuwait, some drivers dare to leave without paying. According to a worker at a gas station in Daiya, this is happening on a daily basis. "We work shifts, so my working hours change, but I have faced thieves who drive away without paying in all shifts. This scenario repeats daily, if not with me, then with other workers," he told Kuwait Times.

The station manager explained that the company deducts any financial shortfalls from the worker's salary, which is later reimbursed if the thief is caught. "When someone drives away without payment, we get their plate number from the cameras and report it to the police. When they are caught and pay up, it will be transferred to the account of the worker. This procedure may take two months or more," he pointed out.

"I have been working in this station for about three years, and many of such incidents have happened with me. It happens about two or three times a month. One of the

highest bills was of a woman in a jeep who filled up with petrol worth over KD 20 and drove away," a worker at a fuel station in Shuwaikh said.

Workers at a gas station in Salwa have also faced similar experiences. "Almost every week during my shift, there is a vehicle driving away without paying. I noticed that most of these incidents happen in the night shift. Sometimes drivers find they don't have cash to pay, and the station doesn't accept credit cards, so they leave their civil ID to bring money. These people always return and pay," he said.

Lawyer Aziz Al-Sayed noted such thieves may be sentenced to up to three years in prison. "Driving away without paying is considered a misdemeanor, as this theft was committed without breaking in, so the thief will be sentenced to imprisonment or a fine. The company of the fuel station will receive the stolen amount, in addition to compensation for the harm caused by this illegal act," he explained.

Lawyer Khaled Al-Juwaisri added that this act may even be classified as a crime with a harsher sentence if the station from which the thief drove away without paying is a public station or the government has shares in it. "This would be considered as stealing public funds no matter the amount. It's the same as stealing a revenue stamp."

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Students practicing coding and programming at CODED.

— All photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Coding as a professional skill grows in popularity in Kuwait

By Faten Omar

Coding is an enormously flexible tool that you can use to do amazing things that are otherwise manual and laborious or just impossible. If you're using a smart phone or a computer, then you must know that all these devices are using some kind of programming.



Coded instructor Hamza Abdel Moneim during the interview.

Kuwait Times explored Coded, the first academy in the Middle East that offers coding bootcamps that teach web and mobile development using the latest programming languages and frameworks. The academy aims to create a generation of world-class Arab coders. With 24 completed bootcamps and more than 250 graduated coders, it is trying to take Kuwait into a new world of digits and codes.

Hamza Abdel Moneim, a senior instructor at the academy, told Kuwait Times the academy was founded in 2015 by Ahmad Marafi and Hashim Bebehani, who established it out of a need for coders in Kuwait and the Middle East, where according to him, there is a lack of this type of talent.

"After four years of establishing Coded, we expanded into other GCC countries. We held two bootcamps in Saudi Arabia - a 14-week bootcamp in cooperation with the Saudi Federation for Cyber Security, and another two 3-week bootcamps later," he said.

Abdel Moneim noted that the bootcamps are ideal for anyone serious about learning coding in order to build or work in a startup or tech team. "We offer intensive courses that teach the latest programming languages and frameworks currently used by leading tech companies. The student will undergo logic and technical tests and a personality interview to prove their commitment to the teach-

ing program. We select specific people, where we take up to 20 students for the graduate students' program, who will be learning for up to eight hours a day," he explained.

Abdel Moneim affirmed that people use apps daily for many purposes, recommending people to learn how to code and program to evolve their businesses. Coded's educational methodology focuses on having students learn by developing projects and completing practical tasks using the tools they acquire in class. It teaches people to code through bootcamps and recently launched an online platform Barmej that features different courses in Arabic for people who have difficulty programming in English.

Local

The academy has a Full-Stack intensive web and mobile development bootcamp for complete beginners, even those from different major backgrounds. Fresh Grad is an intensive web and mobile development bootcamp for recent university graduates. It is a 12-week course teaching the fundamentals of web and app development to fresh graduates. Enterprise is a fully customized intensive coding bootcamp for companies and organizations. Games Dev and Juniors coding camps are for children aged 6 up to 14, to teach them the ABCs of coding and technology using robots, art and science.

Shereen AbdulQader, a computer science graduate, told Kuwait Times that joining the coding academy changed her computer skill level. "I joined to put my skills to the test because I heard that it pushes you to do better and takes your skills to another level. Also, coding will help you in the job market. When I graduated, I felt that what I had was not enough," she said.

Studying for three months and building more than three functioning applications, students expressed their happiness over what they had accomplished so far. "What we do in a full semester or one course of learning programming at the university, we can do that here in one to three weeks max. It is not only trying to teach us programming, but they make sure that the programming languages, tools and techniques are in demand in Kuwait and the Middle East," AbdulQader said.

She starts at 8:30 am and stays until 10 pm. "The day ends at 4:30 pm, but we are passionate about coding, so we stay on to learn, because you are building a career by learning and developing," she added.

"I joined because now we are entering the fourth industrial revolution, and all industries are trying to shift to digital transformation. I need to have the basic mindset of what program languages exist in the market," said Abdullah Al-Hasan, who majored in industrial engineering.

Hassan said that four years ago when he was studying in the US, he heard about coding from his friend. "My friend explained to me about coding. Every time I came to Kuwait, they had talks in Al-Hamra, so I made sure to attend those talks. After I graduated, I joined them."

He noted that students are developing websites and apps from zero. "We developed a game over a weekend – in two days. You are always applying what you have learned. My mindset has shifted to be more technical. They gave us the framework and mindset to get into new technology, and it was a challenge when we were going to present the final demo of our project. I think there is potential for the project, as I have never heard of artificial intelligence technology in the Middle East," Hassan told Kuwait Times.

It can be argued that coding is one of the most important skills for current and future generations to learn. Many believe it should form part of the national curriculum on par with native languages, sciences and maths. In this regard, many countries, especially in the Gulf, have started to organize bootcamps, workshops and exhibitions for the new generations to be introduced to the technological world.

Kuwait is active in this field, and this can be seen through the cooperation of the public and private sectors to hold forums, exhibitions and programs for youth, such as Zain Great Idea (ZGI) tech startup accelerator program, the Kuwait CERN exhibition, HH Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award, Arab Robotics Championship that was held at Kuwait University, technical support project for youth by UNDP and many more.

The United Arab Emirates organizes the 1 Million Arab Coders Initiative to empower Arab youth with modern technology and its basic tools, namely programming, the language of the modern era. It also has a partnership between the world's leading technology companies and educational

systems in various countries to strengthen the education sector and raise quality standards and outputs under the umbrella of programs like the Smart Learning initiative.

As for Qatar, the Ministry of Transport and Communications (MCIT) organized the second edition of the Digital Youth Festival (Your Ambitions). Also, youth can have fun with robotics and coding at Qatar National Library.

Bahrain's steady evolution into a regional hub for technology start-ups has begun to influence young people there to develop the skills required for jobs and roles. The digital empowerment in education in Bahrain starts in very early stages in schools. Bahrain offers many innovations for youth such as the youth innovation center e-services, young coders club, etc. UNDP Bahrain and Microsoft have partnered to create a computing curriculum for secondary students that explores digital empowerment and online safety.

Oman has the Oman Technology Fund Program for developing youth skills, in addition to the IT Kids Innovation Theatre and after-school engineering classes that both sectors organize.

The situation is the same in Saudi Arabia, where millions of Arab coders are refining their digital skills to take on the future through a program aimed at strengthening their technological expertise. Udacity has partnered with the Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Foundation (Misk) in Saudi Arabia on the Misk Udacity Connect Program to provide young Saudi nationals with the knowledge and skills needed.

We are living in the digital age and the growth of technology does not seem to be coming to a stop. As a matter of fact, the use of electronic devices is growing exponentially every year.

To learn more about Coded, visit
Instagram: [joincoded](#)
Website: [joincoded.com](#)



Student Abdullah Al-Hasan learning how to code.



Shereen AbdulQader is a student at the academy learning programming.

**'Bootcamps
teach youth
tech skills for
the future'**



Local

Competitive Kuwaiti women weightlifters break social norms



The Kuwaiti women's weightlifting team and coaches. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti women have broken yet another social "glass ceiling" by entering the world of weightlifting, competing successfully in various tournaments both here and abroad. The Kuwaiti women weightlifting federation, established in September, managed to take its team of 24 athletes to several international tournaments in a step declaring that Kuwaiti women weightlifters are ready and able to compete.

Speaking to KUNA on their experiences, several women athletes displayed enthusiasm and willingness to conquer their respective sport. Tefool Hassan, an under 49-kg competitor, revealed that she came to the sport after

being introduced to CrossFit some years ago. She indicated that CrossFit included weightlifting routines, which helped her to transition smoothly to weightlifting. Hassan affirmed that the more weight she lifted, the more she wanted to improve under the guidance of her coaches and encouragement of teammates. She added that she is looking forward to the Arab tournament in Tunisia in December and the GCC championship in January.

In similar statements, Nour Al-Awadhi - an under 64-kg weightlifter - said Kuwaiti society has become more accepting of the idea of female weightlifters. On the historical record of women weightlifting, Awadhi said women

had to wait until the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney to compete in the sport, while their male counterparts were competing since 1896. Awadhi indicated that Kuwaiti women are eager to represent the country in global tournaments, stressing that their performance will improve with support and encouragement from the federation, families and society.

Under 71-kg competitor Dalal Al-Shatti pointed out that she had to go through several sports before settling on weightlifting. Sports in general should be available to all with no gender, age or ability restrictions, she affirmed.

Kuwaiti Weightlifting Federation Chairman Talal Al-Jassar said forming a women's team

was a historic step for Kuwaiti sports, affirming that the move was in compliance with international regulations. In the forthcoming period, Kuwaiti women weightlifting will be pushed forward with training camps and international participations to hone the athletes' skills and improve their competitive spirit both mentally and physically.

On the technical level, Coach Hussain Saeed said the team members are displaying a progressive level of commitment to the sport. He added that women weightlifters in Kuwait are developing rapidly, citing the first women's weightlifting competition in October as evidence. — KUNA

New Kuwait 2035 vision: Promising future strategy

KUWAIT: Kuwait is taking confident steps towards a bright future with the promising New Kuwait 2035 vision aimed at bolstering the country's financial status to include a variety of income resources other than oil revenues. The plan, considered as a gateway to the future, helped Kuwait recently to jump in the World Bank Group's (WBG) ease of doing business index. Kuwait was amongst the 10 best improvers reaching the 66 position in the list, which included 190 countries.

Last year also saw Kuwait improving its position in the Middle East region by developing its competitive standards, a matter acknowledged by the World Economic Forum's (Davos) global index, which saw the country jumping eight positions to rank 46 out 141 countries. According to Ernst & Young, Boursa Kuwait will attract around \$10 billion in investments as a result of promotion by international entities such as Morgan Stanley (MSCI), Britain's FTSE Russell, Standard and Poor's Dow Jones, etc.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is predicting a 3.5 percent growth in the non-oil sector the Kuwaiti economy in 2020. Kuwait is well aware of the importance of diversifying income away from oil, which represented 90 percent of the country's national production. Speaking on the issue to KUNA, Mamdooh Salam - an international oil economy expert -

affirmed that Kuwait is capable of overcoming short-term crises at the moment; however, long-term challenges should and must be met by diversifying the economy of the country. He stressed that Kuwait must follow other GCC countries' steps to meet future economic challenges, saying that depending on oil will not serve the ambitions of the country.

The 2035 vision was launched by HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah some two years ago to transform



Kuwait into an international hub for business and commerce. Since then, Kuwait launched various projects within the vision in coordination between the public and private sectors. With the opening of the Jaber Causeway project, which links Kuwaiti City with Subiya in the north of the country, the development plan saw a boost, paving the way for the future Silk City project.

In a previous statement to KUNA, Dr Kristian Ulrichsen of Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy said that the success of the New Kuwait 2035 vision depended on finding balance in political and economic spheres. He indicated that Kuwait was able to achieve the plan via executive and legislative powers' cooperation; otherwise, conflict between the two entities might affect the development strategy. Kuwait seeks to put the private sector on the forefront of its efforts to reshape the economy, especially with the IMF indicating that the sector is able to assimilate 100,000 Kuwaiti citizens in its workforce within the upcoming five years.

On this matter, Research officer at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) Dr Sophie Olver-Ellis said the New Kuwait strategy is promising, stressing that the private sector will be at the forefront of development efforts in the country. The academic, who is preparing a study on bolstering the private sector role in the post-oil Kuwait economy, indicated that the government was gearing towards decreasing government involvement in development projects by 30 to 40 percent. She said Kuwait is not far off in its efforts to "liberate" its economy; however, she warned that the country must take necessary steps to compete in the 21st century economic world. — KUNA

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Local

Kuwait fiercely condemns Israeli aggression on Gaza

Kuwait renews support for Palestine's rights

KUWAIT/NEW YORK: Kuwait expressed utter rejection and condemnation of Israel's aggression on the Gaza Strip, which is killing and wounding scores of people. Israel's ongoing airstrikes on the Palestinian territory is a "continuation of the Israeli occupation's practices and crimes against defenseless Palestinians, constituting a flagrant violation of international laws and norms", read a Kuwait foreign ministry statement. "This will only lead to more violence and will undermine any chances for peace," it added.

Meanwhile, Kuwait renewed full support for Palestine in its battle against Israeli violations. The remarks were made by Kuwait's First Secretary Bashar Al-Duweisan, while discussing the

Israeli violations against Palestinians, during the UN General Assembly Fourth Committee's meeting late Wednesday. Palestinians have been suffering Israeli violence for over 50 years, he said. International laws state that Jerusalem is Palestine's capital, Duweisan noted, calling on all countries to recognize this.

Israel is continuously violating the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) articles on protecting Palestinians' rights. In March 2018, Israeli forces killed over 210 Palestinian civilians with 46 being children during a peaceful protest. He expressed regret over the UNSC's weak role in protecting Palestinian civilians and ending Israeli violence. He also expressed concern over the expansion of Israeli settlements,

which is a violation of UNSC's article 2334.

Kuwait is backing Palestine's request to expand the Fourth Committee's membership to include more regional powers that it could play an effective role, said Duweisan. He called on the international community to exert more efforts to protect Palestinians rights and put pressure on Israel to end its occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories. He also called for investigating the over use of power and weapons against Palestinian civilians and bring those involved in acts of violence to justice. Moreover, Duweisan called for lifting the illegal land and marine siege on Gaza Strip and allow freedom of movement in the strip and the West Bank. — KUNA



Bashar Al-Duweisan

Kuwait contributes \$6m to UN bodies

NEW YORK: Kuwait has announced voluntary contributions to a number of UN agencies, programs and funds worth \$6.4 million, reiterating continuing support for UN humanitarian and development activities. This was brought up during Kuwait's speech on Wednesday evening delivered by Diplomatic Attache Dhari Al-Faris at the UN Pledging Conference for Development Activities. Four years after adopting the sustainable development agenda, "we have become convinced that there is still a long way with the slow progress, along with many lessons to be learned, taking into account new opportunities derived from scientific advances, technology and innovation," he said.

Faris pointed out that Kuwait's keenness to support developing countries is in accordance with their needs, cooperating with all development partners, strengthening international efforts to address existing and emerging development challenges. Since 2008, Kuwait has channeled 10 percent of its total aid to the affected countries through UN agencies and organizations, and has allocated \$15 billion for 2015-2030 to finance development projects in developing countries through Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED).



Dhari Al-Faris

Beneficiaries included UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Emergency Response Fund, he said. The contribution includes the UN Development Program (UNDP) with \$570,000, in addition to \$500,000 each to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Faris announced a voluntary grant of \$500,000 to the development fund for the revitalized resident coordinator system to ensure a successful transition, provided that Kuwait's voluntary contribution to UNDP will be deducted and divided for the years 2020-2021 and will be allocated to the activities of the resident coordinator in Kuwait. — KUNA

Kuwait, China discuss economic relationship

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Acting Minister of Finance Maryam Al-Aqeel held talks yesterday with China's Vice Minister of Commerce Qian Keming. The two sides discussed the latest updates on their bilateral economic, trade, and strategic rela-

tionship, the finance ministry said in a statement. They also stressed the importance of exerting joint efforts to make success of their signed projects, and contribute to attaining the New Kuwait 2035 vision.

The Kuwaiti-Chinese talks are one of the fruitful outcomes of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's recent visit to China, said the statement. The discussions were held in presence of Kuwaiti Ambassador to China Sameeh Hayat, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD) Khaled Mahdi, and Assistant Undersecretary for Economic Affairs at the Finance Ministry Nabil Al-Abduljaleel. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Acting Minister of Finance Maryam Al-Aqeel holds talks yesterday with China's Vice Minister of Commerce Qian Keming yesterday. — KUNA



MUSCAT: The GCC ministers taking part in the meetings. — KUNA

GCC states seek to overcome trade obstacles

MUSCAT: The GCC countries are eager to overcome obstacles facing the development of trade amongst them, said Kuwaiti Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Services Khaled Al-Roudhan yesterday. This statement to KUNA came after the minister's participations in the 58th meeting of the commerce and cooperation committee, the 46th meeting of the industrial cooperation committee, and first meeting

of the ministerial evaluation committee.

The meetings focused on GCC economic integration and finding solutions to overcome obstacles in facing of joint commercial cooperation, stated the minister. Roudhan revealed that the gatherings included for the first time ever a meeting between ministers and prominent Gulf business figures, adding that the participants had a serious discussion on further boosting commerce and the transport of commodities in the region.

He revealed that a Kuwaiti proposal on solving problems facing small-to-medium size businesses was discussed during the ministers-business personnel meeting. The three meetings held yesterday dealt with efforts to amend the regulation concerning patents, challenges facing the steel industry in the region, giving priority to national products made in GCC countries, and other prominent issues. — KUNA

Local

Govt quits amid 'infighting' rumors, disputes with MPs

Amir accepts resignation • Assembly dissolution unlikely

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday submitted his resignation to HH the Amir two days after MPs filed no-confidence motions against two ministers and amid alleged infighting within the Cabinet. HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah accepted the resignation of the government and ordered the Cabinet to serve as a caretaker one until a new government is formed.

The Amir will now rename the same premier or appoint a new one to form the next Cabinet amid signs of strains in Assembly-government ties. Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, who met HH the Amir yesterday, said dissolving the National Assembly is not seen as likely at present and accused the "government team" of not working in tandem. MP Saleh Ashour clearly said that there are "differences" within the Cabinet members that led to the resignation.

The outgoing Cabinet is one of the longest serving in Kuwait,

which has been witnessing political disputes between the Cabinet and lawmakers since 2006 that repeatedly led to dissolving the Assembly and Cabinet resignations. Former finance minister Nayef Al-Hajraf resigned just before the start of the new Assembly term last month and his resignation was accepted. He quit to avoid facing yet another grilling over interest rates being charged by the pension agency from retired Kuwaitis.

MPs on Tuesday grilled Minister of Public Works Jenan Bushehri and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah over alleged financial and administrative violations. Both grillings ended with MPs filing no-confidence motions against the two ministers. Bushehri announced her resignation as soon as she finished refuting charges against her and accused companies and contractors of using MPs to topple her. The interior minister's request to have his grilling debate behind closed doors was rejected and he faced the questioning in public.

MPs blamed disputes among Cabinet ministers for the dramatic

turn of events that eventually led to the resignation of the Cabinet. Opposition MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain welcomed the resignation and called for a comprehensive national reconciliation, early polls and the appointment of a new prime minister who should pave a new path. The lawmaker warned that the return of the same prime minister will result a grilling.

Opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri called for not returning Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh in the new Cabinet, insisting there is no use in the resignation of the government if the new Cabinet does not change course in running the country and in dealing with people. MP Mohammad Al-Dallal said the resignation was timely and insisted that the next Cabinet must attract people with vast experience in politics and administration. MP Abdullah Al-Kandari said the new Cabinet must be capable of achieving the aspirations of Kuwaitis, tackle corruption and stay away from infighting. This is the seventh government under Sheikh Jaber that resigned since he was first given the job in late 2011.

Court commutes death sentence

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The court of cassation yesterday sentenced a bedoon, who had been earlier sentenced to death for stabbing his father to death in Rehab, to life imprisonment. The court argued that the murder was not premeditated as the suspect was only trying to stop his father from harshly beating his sister and mother. His father then stabbed his son, which made him snatch the knife and stab him in the neck. The court added that the suspect, his sister and mother had injuries resulting from the father's assault.

Co-op pharmacies get reprieve

Presided by Ministry of Commerce and Industry Undersecretary Mustafa Redha, the license violations committee met yesterday to study the issue of closing pharmacies in various co-ops. The committee recommended that all pharmacies will continue operating with temporary six-month licenses until a final sentence is passed in a case filed to contest and repeal law number 28/1996. The recommendations were endorsed by Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah, who stressed the need to respect laws and enforce them.

CMA fines company

The Capital Market Authority's disciplinary council met yesterday and decided to fine a real estate company KD 10,000 for violating disclosure and transparency regulations stipulated in law number 7/2010 and its amendments. Notably, the company had failed to disclose its financial data within the legal grace period ending on June 30, 2019 and only did so on Aug 8, 2019.

15% of Kuwait's population suffers from diabetes



KUWAIT: Kuwait Diabetes Society and Novo Nordisk officials are seen during the press conference yesterday.

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Endocrinologist and diabetician at Mubarak Hospital and Chairman of the Kuwait Diabetes Society Dr Waleed Al-Dhahi said Kuwait is among the countries with a high percentage of diabetics. He added the percentage of cases is up to 15 percent of the population or 425,000 diabetics, with around 200,000 more who haven't been diagnosed yet.

Dhahi was speaking during a press conference as Kuwait Diabetes Society marked World Diabetes Day in cooperation with Novo Nordisk. Dhahi said many look at diabetes as a "friend", but this is a false idea because diabetes is an aggressive enemy that must be fought. He said the state must fight it before individuals do so. It must have a major role in confronting it and should have general programs to support diabetics during various stages of the disease. This should be through spending on major awareness campaigns to educate and warn people about the disease.

Dhahi said the Arab world has 39 million diabetics, and this number will double within 15 to 20 years. He advised those who want to prevent diabetes to carry out periodical examinations, especially as those who have the risk of getting diabetes are physically inactive and suffer from blood pressure. Endocrinologist and KDS Secretary Dr

Khalid Al-Jinae said heredity plays a major role in contracting diabetes, as well as obesity, which has high rates in the country. He said prevention includes maintaining a healthy weight, physical activity and early discovery.

Meanwhile, Novo Nordisk General Manager Dr Akin Aksekili said the company has changed the lives of diabetics since its establishment 95 years ago and now supplies half of the insulin needs of the world. "We are a company that touches people's lives, and this is why we are partnering with KDS to help people and support KDS efforts. We are also screening people, like at The Avenues, where we screened 1,350 people for diabetes, and will continue to do this," he told Kuwait Times. He added a walkathon will also be held.

Responding to a question on how to help people who cannot afford treatment, he said Novo Nordisk is in contact with the Kuwaiti government on discounts for medicine given to the government to reflect positively on patients, "because we cannot go directly to the patients". "We would also like to train diabetics through KDS," he added.

"We are taking a different approach with oral insulin. It is a pill that the patient ingests, which will release insulin through the stomach instead of using needles," said Aksekili. He said research is still going on with stem cells, promising "good news" on the company's 100th anniversary in 2023.

News in brief

Accounting irregularities

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has issued orders to refer "all irregularities regarding accounts of the army fund (budget) and relevant accounts to the public prosecutor." The ministry said in a statement yesterday that the minister had taken this decision after a probe panel that had been formed upon a decision by him "concluded that there had been some parties involved in these offenses that warranted referral to the public prosecutor". Sheikh Nasser's decision has been taken for sake of boosting transparency, adopting neutrality with respect of legal proceedings and in line with keenness on protecting public funds. — KUNA

Nasser Al-Sayer passes away

KUWAIT: Leading Kuwaiti businessman Nasser Mohammed Nasser Al-Sayer died at the age of 90 yesterday. He was buried yesterday afternoon at the Sulaibikhat cemetery. Sayer was the founder and chairman of Al-Sayer Group of Companies, which holds the exclusive agency for Toyota and Lexus vehicles in Kuwait. Sayer is a former member of parliament and served on the boards of many major corporations in Kuwait.

Fugitive escapes

KUWAIT: Police are looking for a Kuwaiti prisoner who escaped while being treated at Farwaniya Hospital, as he took advantage of not being handcuffed and fled. Three policemen from the general department of reform institutes and sentences implementation were detained for negligence in attending to a prisoner, and are being questioned for removing the cuffs from the fugitive. The prisoner was sentenced to 15 years in jail. A police source said the hospital's surveillance cameras are being reviewed to find out whether the fugitive had accomplices. — Hanan Al-Saadoun



Indonesians quitting their 'rice addiction' over diabetes fears

South Korea's model daughter-in-law

Page 18

Page 16



NEW DELHI: Commuters drive along a motorway under heavy smog conditions in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

Delhi smog engulfs kid's race, golf event

'After the run we felt suddenly so exhausted and had difficulty breathing'

NEW DELHI: Hundreds of children ran a charity road race through poisonous smog in New Delhi yesterday, triggering a storm of criticism about the damage to their health. Delhi and other cities in northern India have again been blanketed by haze that hits each winter due to build-up of vehicle fumes, industrial emissions and smoke from agricultural fires in regions around the capital.

The toxic air in the capital has taken pollution levels to almost 20 times World Health Organization safe limits—causing authorities to close all schools until Friday, ban construction and impose road rationing for drivers with odd number registrations one day and even the next. But despite the conditions, children as young as nine competed in a road race through the city organized by a non-profit organization to mark International Children's Day.

The decision to go ahead with the race caused a storm of social media anger. "I feel all

these organizers need to be sued," said Tamanna Sharma, head of an environmental service consultancy on Twitter. "Running in this air quality is a death sentence." "This is the most idiotic

“**This is the most idiotic thing to do**”

thing to do," said an Indian Forestry Service officer Parveen Kaswan on Twitter.

Vanshika Rawat, 11, who took part in the race, told AFP "we do face a lot of trouble because of the pollution. Our eyes burn, we have difficult

breathing". "You can see there is so much fog around and there's so much smoke. After the run we felt suddenly so exhausted and had difficulty breathing," added 10-year-old Nitakshi Sharma. Amod Kanth, head of the Prayas group which organised the race, said it was not possible to call off the event at the last minute.

"The children would have come anyway because they wanted to and this event happens every year. They are here and the weather is good, we don't have any problem," said the activist who campaigns for children and the poor. Pollution has been building up in Delhi over the past decade. But the new peak came amid increasing warnings about the dangers to children and adults.

Reacting to the children's race, climate policy expert Siddharth Singh said the damage to children's lungs caused by the Delhi pollution is "irreversible". "They will suffer with this for the rest of their lives," he told AFP. A 2016 WHO report

estimated that 100,000 children aged under 14 die each year in Indian cities because of PM2.5 pollution—the tiny particles that get into the lungs and bloodstream—in the street and homes.

But medical experts say the Indian capital must brace for a health emergency affecting all ages. The start of the four-day Panasonic Open India golf tournament was delayed for five hours because of the poisonous cloud. Some players wore masks when play eventually started and organisers said the event could be shortened if the pollution remains serious.

Arvind Kumar, head of chest surgery at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi, said cases of lung cancer among non-smokers are already skyrocketing. "In 1988, patients of lung cancer were mostly known smokers. In 2018, 50 percent cases of lung cancer were non-smokers," he told a conference on air pollution in Delhi. The city is likely to see "an explosion" of lung cancer cases in coming years, he warned. — AFP

Tear gas kills Iraq protesters as authorities feel the heat

Deaths marked a resurgence of bloodshed

BAGHDAD: Four protesters were killed by tear gas canisters in Baghdad yesterday as security forces try to snuff out the largest grassroots movement to sweep Iraq in years. Iraq's political elite has come under renewed pressure in recent days from both the street and the international community to seriously address calls for sweeping reform.

There has been mounting international criticism of the authorities' response to the protests, which have left more than 330 dead since October 1. Early yesterday, four protesters were killed by tear gas canisters near the main Baghdad protest camp in Tahrir (Liberation) Square, medical sources told AFP. Skirmishes broke out between security forces and protesters, with clusters of young men wearing surgical masks and construction helmets tossing tear gas canisters back at riot police stationed behind concrete blast walls.

The protesters have occupied the square for three weeks, braving live rounds, stun grenades and even machine gun fire. Security forces have relied heavily on tear gas to confine protesters to Tahrir, but human rights groups have accused them of improperly firing the canisters directly into crowds at point-blank range, piercing protesters' skulls and chests. "Didn't the marjiaiyah (the Shiite religious leadership) say forces shouldn't use live fire? Doesn't this

count as live fire?" one protester yelled angrily. Just beside him, a demonstrator was carried away after collapsing on the ground overcome by the potent tear gas.

Shutdown spreads

Yesterday's deaths marked a resurgence of bloodshed after a few days of relatively peaceful protests in the capital. The crowds in Tahrir have swelled with students and striking teachers in recent days. In the southern hotspots of Diwaniyah, Nasiriyah, Hilla and Kut, schools and most government offices were closed on Thursday. Yesterday, the Old City of Najaf — one of Shiite Islam's holiest sites — joined in with a general strike. "We're ready to take a loss for a day, or a month, or even 20 months. We've been losing for 16 years," said one merchant.

He was referring to the time passed since a US-led invasion toppled longtime dictator Saddam Hussein ushering in a sectarian power-sharing system demonstrators says is corrupt and must be replaced. Iraq is OPEC's second-largest producer but still lacks public services like reliable mains electricity or drinking water. "We have one message: we don't want this government," said Ali, a demonstrator in Tahrir. To address protesters' demands, the United Nations mission in Iraq (UNAMI) has proposed a phased program of reforms. It calls for an im-



BAGHDAD: Young Iraqis use a giant slingshot as they gather in the capital Baghdad's Khallani square during ongoing anti-government demonstrations. — AFP

mediate end to violence, electoral reform and anti-corruption measures within two weeks and constitutional amendments and infrastructure laws within three months.

Medics 'fear for lives'

UNAMI chief Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert has

secured the support of Shiite spiritual leader Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani and discussed the reform roadmap with members of parliament on Wednesday. MPs have received a draft electoral reform bill but have yet to discuss it, and are planning to interrogate two ministers as part of a planned cabinet reshuffle. — AFP

Egypt under fire over 'shrinking' freedoms during UN rights review

GENEVA: Egypt faced strong criticism at a UN review of its rights record Wednesday, with diplomats voicing alarm over detention conditions and shrinking freedoms in the country recently rocked by mass protests. Speaking before the United Nations in Geneva, Egyptian Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Omar Marwan insisted that Egypt was making great efforts to improve respect for human rights.

But during the so-called Universal Periodic Review — which all 193 UN countries must undergo approximately every four years — representatives of a wide range of countries voiced concern over serious abuses. Many voiced alarm at allegations of torture, extrajudicial killings, and enforced disappearances, as well as concerns over mass trials, dire conditions in detention, discrimination against women and use of the death penalty.

But shrinking space for civil society in the country seemed to be a particular concern, after some 4,000 people, including lawyers, activists, professors and journalists, were detained in a wave of arrests following rare protests against Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi in September. Sisi has faced international condemnation for a crackdown on civil society groups since he took power in 2014, a year after the military toppled Islamist president Mohamed Morsi. "We remain particularly concerned by restrictions on human rights defenders and political activists, including arrests, travel bans and asset freezes," British Ambassador Julien Braithwaite told the assembly.

'Brutal' conditions

Swedish Ambassador Veronika Bard agreed, urging Egypt to "stop unduly restricting space for civil society, including through asset freezes, travel bans, long periods of pre-trial detention and growing numbers of arrests." But Marwan flatly denied the country was restricting free speech and assembly. In interview with AFP after the review, he maintained that "there is a right to demonstrate... (and) everyone has the right to express their opinions."

"But they are not allowed to vandalize or commit violence or incite to hatred," he said, speaking through a translator. A number of diplomats also voiced concern Wednesday over conditions in detention in Egypt, amid accusations by rights groups of torture, overcrowding and medical negligence in jails.

Egypt on Monday opened up Tora prison in Cairo for a media tour following a UN report on the "brutal" conditions in which Morsi was held in prison before his death. A group of independent rights experts said the death of the ousted Islamist president, who was held in Tora for five years, could amount to a "state-sanctioned arbitrary killing". Morsi's fate was also raised by several countries, with the Turkish representative urging Egypt to "ensure that a prompt, impartial, thorough and transparent investigation is carried out by an independent body to clarify the cause of death."

Duty to speak up

Marwan meanwhile complained to AFP that the UN experts had not waited for "correct information" from Egyptian authorities before publishing their statement, and stressed that Morsi's death was under investigation. UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions Agnes Callamard however told AFP she had closely followed procedures, and that it was her duty to speak up since other prisoners risked succumbing to the dire prison conditions. — AFP

Russia bolsters new Syria base on Turkish border

MOSCOW: Russia has begun moving helicopters and other equipment to a new Syrian base on the Turkish border, state TV reported yesterday, weeks after US forces left the area. Two Mi-35 attack helicopters and a transport helicopter were moved from the Hmeimim base on the Mediterranean to Qamishli airport in northeastern Syria, reported Zvezda television, which is run by the defense ministry.

Earlier reports suggested Russia had been negotiating a long-term lease of Qamishli airport, which is about 500 kilometers to the northeast of Hmeimim. The civilian airport outside Kurdish-controlled Qamishli has been under the control of Syrian regime throughout the conflict. Russia also sent on-ground support, fuel and a meteorological service to Qamishli and has 10 vehicles on the ground to "ensure continuous flights, safety of the helicopters and the defence of this territory", air force official Timur Khodzhaev told the channel.

"The main goal is to ensure calm," he said. The new base is protected by Russia's Pantsir missile system and the landing area is encircled by military police, according to the channel. Russia's military is expanding into northeastern Syria following the withdrawal of US forces ordered by President Donald Trump last month, which triggered a Turkish invasion into the Kurdish-populated territory. The Turks and Russians have since agreed to launch joint patrols in the area to ensure Kurdish forces withdraw from the zone near the Turkish border, which includes Qamishli.

The US previously backed the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in their fight against the Islamic State group. Earlier this month the US military met Kurdish officials outside Qamishli, and a source who took part in one of the meetings told AFP that US forces wanted to return to the area. AFP correspondents also saw a US convoy in a village east of Qamishli on Wednesday. — AFP

International

Ceasefire takes hold after deadly Israel-Gaza violence

34 Palestinians have been killed in exchanges of fire

GAZA CITY: A ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza took hold yesterday after two days of fighting triggered by an Israeli strike on an Islamic Jihad commander, with 34 Palestinians killed in exchanges of fire. Both Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad and Israel's military confirmed the ceasefire early yesterday brokered by Egyptian and UN officials — the usual mediators between Gaza and Israel.

Five rockets were fired at Israel from Gaza after the ceasefire came into effect and air defenses intercepted two of them, the army said, but the incident did not appear likely to set off another severe round of fighting. “#Egypt and the #UN worked hard to prevent the most dangerous escalation in and around #Gaza from leading to #war,” tweeted Nikolay Mladenov, UN envoy for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, who travelled to Cairo for the talks.

“The coming hours and days will be critical. ALL must show maximum restraint and do their part to prevent bloodshed.” The agreement, which entered into force at 5:30 am (0330 GMT), came after the death toll from Israeli air strikes rose to 34 since Tuesday. Islamic Jihad claimed a number of the dead as members.

Palestinian officials said eight members of the same family had been killed in an Israeli strike overnight, including five children. Israel's military said the man killed in the strike in Deir Al Balah in the central Gaza Strip was an Islamic Jihad rocket unit commander. Relatives, neighbors and an Islamic Jihad spokesman disputed that, with some saying he had been a Palestinian Authority military police officer.

“This is a war crime. You are killing innocent children, sleeping at home,” neighbor Adan Abu

Abdallah told AFP. Israeli military spokesman Jonathan Conricus told AFP: “He was an Islamic Jihad commander and he, like many others, have the tactic of hiding ammunition and military infrastructure in their own residence. “Of course we try always to minimize the amount of non-combatants killed or injured.”

‘Ticking bomb’

The escalation began early Tuesday with Israel's targeted killing of a top Islamic Jihad commander, Baha Abu Al-Ata, who it accused of being behind rocket fire and other attacks. Israel's military alleged he was planning more violence and called him a “ticking bomb,” while one top security official said the strike was able to reach him in the bed where he slept, presumably with a drone.

The strike triggered almost immediate retaliatory rocket fire from Islamic Jihad at Israel, setting off air raid sirens and sending Israelis rushing to bomb shelters in the country's south and central regions. Israel's military said some 450 rockets had been fired at its territory since Tuesday morning and air defenses had intercepted dozens of them in fireballs high in the sky.

No Israelis were killed, though damage was caused and one rocket narrowly missed speeding cars on a busy highway. Israeli medics said they had treated some 63 people as of Wednesday night, all with mild injuries and almost half with “stress symptoms.” Israel responded with air strikes, saying it targeted Islamic Jihad militant sites and rocket and missile-launching squads.

Unusually, it singled out Islamic Jihad rather than hold Hamas, the Islamist movement that rules Gaza, responsible for the violence. Israeli



An Israeli soldier stares at armored vehicles, stationed at about 10kms from the southern Israeli city of Sderot, near the border with the Gaza Strip. — AFP

analysts said it was a clear signal the army sought to avoid a wider conflict. Hamas repeatedly said it would not abandon its ally, but it was faced with seeking to maintain a fragile truce with Israel that has seen tens of millions of dollars in Qatari aid flow into the impoverished Gaza Strip since last year. Islamic Jihad initially declined all mediation, but apparently decided by Wednesday night it was ready to negotiate.

An Egyptian official said the ceasefire reached overnight included an agreement that

Palestinian groups in Gaza work to prevent violence by demonstrators during weekly protests near the border fence. In return, Israel agreed to stop hostilities and commit to a ceasefire during the weekly demonstrations, according to the official. Israel did not confirm any of those claims.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had not commented publicly on the ceasefire, but had on Wednesday said Islamic Jihad must stop its rocket attacks or “absorb more and more blows”. — AFP

Trump dodges rows to focus on Erdogan friendship

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Wednesday sidestepped disputes snaring US relations with fellow NATO member Turkey, instead telling visiting President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that he is a “fan.” On a day when Congress was holding its first nationally televised hearings in the impeachment probe against Trump, the US president spent several hours meeting at the White House with Erdogan and claimed to be paying no attention to his domestic crisis.

“I would much rather focus on peace in the Middle East,” he told a joint press conference with Erdogan, describing the impeachment as a “hoax” and a “joke.” But Trump steered equally clear of controversy over Turkey, which is rapidly becoming one of Washington's most problematic partners in a tinderbox region. Relations have been under severe strain following Erdogan's ordering of an October offensive against US-allied Kurdish forces in northern Syria.

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. Despite the letter, Trump's withdrawal of US soldiers effectively gave Turkey a green light to mount what appears to be an extended occupation of a large swath of Syria where ethnic-Kurds had held sway.

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 jihadists 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.

Initial reports said that Erdogan not only ignored Trump's letter but threw it in the trash. On Wednesday, he told the press conference that he had used the trip to return the letter to its sender. Trump, however, insisted on his close ties to Erdogan, saying: “We have been friends for a long time.” And at the press conference, where openly friendly reporters from both countries were chosen to ask softball questions, Trump doubled down. “I'm a big fan of the president,” he said. — AFP

Jihadist trapped between Turkey, Greece to return to US

ISTANBUL: A suspected US jihadist, trapped for days between the Turkish and Greek borders, will be sent back to the United States following talks with Washington, Turkey's interior ministry said yesterday. The man, identified as Muhammad Darwis B, a US citizen of Jordanian descent, was captured in Syria on suspicion of ties to the Islamic State group, according to state news agency Anadolu.

Turkish authorities say the US initially refused to accept him, and that he chose deportation to Greece, only for Greek authorities to refuse him entry on Monday. He has since been trapped in no-man's land between the borders, next to Turkey's northeastern province of Edirne. Turkish border guards provided him with food and a car to sleep in at night, Anadolu said. There was an apparent breakthrough on Thursday, with the interior ministry saying: “The necessary pro-

ceedings are being undertaken to send back the foreign terrorist fighter to America after the US committed to taking him back to the country,” according to Anadolu.

Turkey has criticized Western countries for not taking back captured members of IS, and has lately publicized its efforts to deport jihadists back to their countries of origin. It follows criticism of Turkey's offensive last month against Kurdish militants in northern Syria, which Western governments complained would undermine the fight against IS. Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu said last week that Turkey had nearly 1,200 foreign members of IS in custody, and had captured 287 during the offensive in Syria. The Hurriyet newspaper said Wednesday that 959 suspects were being prepared for deportation, with the largest numbers coming from Iraq, Syria and Russia. — AFP

International

Pressure builds as Trump impeachment probe hears new claims, higher-stakes

WASHINGTON: Two top US diplomats delivered gripping testimony Wednesday about Donald Trump's efforts to get Ukraine to investigate his potential 2020 rival Joe Biden, as the impeachment inquiry into the president shifted into a new phase of high-stakes televised hearings. Trump dismissed the probe in the Democratic-led House of Representatives as a "witch hunt" and said he was "too busy" to watch the first public hearings, during which he received staunch backing from Republican lawmakers.

William Taylor, the top US diplomat in Ukraine, began his testimony before the House Intelligence Committee with a new revelation about Trump's efforts to pressure Kiev — the main issue of just the fourth impeachment process in US history. Democrats accuse Trump of abusing his power by using US military assistance and a possible White House meeting to pressure President Volodymyr Zelensky into opening a probe into the Democrat Biden and his son Hunter, who served on the board of Ukrainian gas company Burisma.

The key evidence is the official White House transcript of a July 25 telephone call between Trump and Zelensky in which the US president asked his Ukrainian counterpart to investigate the Bidens. Taylor testified that he was told Trump cared more about the probe than he did about Ukraine. The grey-haired former Army officer and veteran diplomat, who testified in a closed hearing last month, said he had since become aware of a telephone call between Trump and the US's EU ambassador Gordon Sondland, which a member of Taylor's staff overheard.

The staffer asked Sondland after the call what Trump thought about Ukraine and was told that "President Trump cared more about the investigations of Biden," Taylor said. Freshman House Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, an outspoken Trump critic, said the new Taylor comment added "a layer of proximity" for the president.

"(Trump) himself was making and partaking in some of these phone calls... And that really

adds a much more disturbing degree of the involvement that he had in using the powers of government to create politically motivated investigations," the New York representative told CNN. Asked about the new allegations, while hosting his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the White House, Trump replied: "First time I've heard it." Sondland "did speak to me for a brief moment, and I said no quid pro quo under any circumstances."

'He didn't open investigations'

Republicans sought to undercut the witnesses' testimony by focusing on Hunter Biden's role on the Burisma board, pointing out that he was paid \$50,000 a month and questioning his qualifications. They also stressed that the Ukrainians were not aware for months that the White House had put a hold on the nearly \$400 million in military assistance and that it was eventually released in September.

"What did President Zelensky actually do to get the aid?" asked John Ratcliffe, a Texas Republican congressman. "The answer is nothing. He didn't open investigations. He didn't do any of the things that House Democrats say that he was being forced and coerced and threatened to do." In his opening statement, Taylor recalled opposing making US military aid to Ukraine or a White House visit by Zelensky contingent on Kiev investigating the Bidens.

"Withholding security assistance in exchange for help with a domestic political campaign in the United States would be crazy," he said. "I believed that then and I believe it now." Taylor said an "irregular policy channel" involving former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani, Trump's personal attorney, was pushing for the Ukrainian probe into the Bidens. Fellow witness George Kent, a career diplomat, was asked what interests Giuliani was promoting.

"I believe he was looking to dig up political dirt against a potential rival in the next election cycle," said the deputy assistant secretary of



WASHINGTON DC: Representative Jim Jordan (C), Republican of Ohio, looks on during the first public hearing held by the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence as part of the impeachment inquiry into US President Donald Trump, on Capitol Hill. — AFP

state. "I do not believe the United States should ask other countries to engage in selective politically associated investigations or prosecutions against opponents of those in power because such selective actions undermine the rule of law."

'Scorched-earth war'

If the House impeaches Trump, it would then go to trial in the Senate, where Republicans enjoy a 53-47 majority. The next hearing is scheduled for Friday, featuring the US ambassador to Ukraine who Kent said was recalled by Trump after being subjected to a "smear campaign" by Giuliani. Eight more witnesses, including Sondland, are to appear next week, the second of several planned weeks of hearings.

The investigation threatens to make Trump the third US president to be impeached, after Andrew Johnson in 1868 and Bill Clinton in 1998, although the Senate would need to convict him to remove him from office. Neither Johnson nor Clinton was convicted. But in 1974, Richard

Nixon resigned in the face of certain impeachment and removal from office for the Watergate scandal.

In his opening statement, committee chairman Adam Schiff, the California congressman overseeing the probe, said the proceedings will examine "whether President Trump sought to exploit (Ukraine's) vulnerability and invite Ukraine's interference in our elections." "If this is not impeachable conduct, what is?" Devin Nunes, the top Republican on the panel, hit back by accusing Democrats of a "carefully orchestrated media smear campaign." "It's nothing more than an impeachment process in search of a crime."

Coming just one year before 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 impeachment, but Trump's sizable voter base — which delivered his shock victory in 2016 — rejects the allegations. — AFP

Key moments in impeachment hearing

WASHINGTON: During hours of detailed and at times dramatic public testimony Wednesday, two star witnesses shed light on US President Donald Trump's pressure on Ukraine at the heart of the impeachment inquiry against him. American viewers finally heard firsthand from key figures in the Ukraine scandal, beginning with Washington's top envoy to Kiev William Taylor, and deputy assistant secretary of state George Kent. Here are key moments in the nationally televised impeachment hearing:

New revelations

A crucial surprise came when Taylor revealed a phone call between Trump and another diplomat occurred one day after the president's controversial July 25 call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Taylor said his staffer was with Ambassador to the European Union Gordon Sondland and overheard Trump on the call "ask-

ing Ambassador Sondland about the investigations" of Democratic rival Joe Biden. The staffer asked Sondland what Trump thought about Ukraine. "Ambassador Sondland responded that President Trump cared more about the investigations of Biden, which (Trump lawyer Rudy) Giuliani was pressing for," than about Ukraine itself, Taylor added. The revelation is important because it highlights Trump's knowledge about the effort to get Kiev to probe the Bidens and deflates a Trump defense that he "hardly" knows Sondland, as he said last week.

Republican attacks

Republicans accused the witnesses of being out-of-touch bureaucrats too removed from Trump's inner circle to speak authoritatively about what happened, or to know the president's intentions. Trump loyalist Jim Jordan, aggressively questioning Taylor, sought to paint a muddled pic-

ture of Ukrainian-related discussions, including Taylor's communications with Sondland. "We've got six people having four conversations in one sentence," Jordan told Taylor, referring to closed-door testimony by Sondland, "and you told me this is where you got your clear understanding?" The intelligence panel's top Republican Devin Nunes meanwhile attempted to discredit the Democratic effort as "nothing more than an impeachment process in search of a crime."

Biden wrongdoing? 'None'

In his call with Zelensky, Trump urged his counterpart to "look into" possible wrongdoing by Biden, whose son Hunter was on the board of Ukrainian energy company Burisma when his father was vice president. Republicans have used that talking point to suggest the Bidens were involved in corruption. No such evidence has emerged. When the Democratic counsel asked

Kent whether there were any facts to support those allegations, Kent replied, "None whatsoever," adding that Biden acted in accordance with official US policy. Kent did say he raised concerns with Biden's staff that his son's status with Burisma "could create the perception of a conflict of interest."

'Irregular' channel

Taylor spoke of an irregular channel, set up by Giuliani, that "undercut" official US policy with Ukraine while seeking to help the president politically. Washington officially supported Ukraine receiving military aid, in particular to counter Russian aggression, but the witnesses warned that Giuliani was seeking to condition such aid with Kiev launching politically motivated investigations. "I began to sense that the two decision-making channels — the regular and irregular — were at odds," Taylor said. — AFP

International

Italy to declare state of emergency in Venice as flood causes massive damage

‘Tourists are taking pictures but the city is suffering’

VENICE: Italy was poised to declare a state of emergency for Venice yesterday after an exceptional tide surged through churches, shops and homes, causing millions of euros worth of damage to the UNESCO city. Tourists larked around in the flooded St Mark's Square in the sunshine, snapping selfies in their neon plastic boots and taking advantage of a respite in bad weather which has driven the high tides.

Sirens warning of fresh flooding rang through the canal city early yesterday but the water level remained low compared to Tuesday's tide, the highest in 50 years. Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, who has called the flooding “a blow to the heart of our country”, met Venice's mayor and emergency services before jumping in a speed boat to visit businesses and locals affected by the tide.

Residents whose houses had been hit would immediately get up to 5,000 euros (\$5,500) in government aid, while restaurant and shop owners could receive up to 20,000 euros and apply for more later, he said. Several museums remained closed to the public yesterday. As authorities assessed the extent of the damage to Venice's cultural treasures, such as St Mark's Basilica where water invaded the crypt, locals were defiant.

“It's my way of making a living, what can I do?” Stefano Gabbanoto, 54, told AFP as he opened his newspaper kiosk despite the flooding. Austrian

tourist Cornelia Litschauer, 28, said she felt mixed emotions seeing Venice's famous square half submerged. “For the tourists it's amazing, it's something to see. But for the people who live here it's a real problem,” Litschauer said, cradling her white Chihuahua Pablo “It's strange. Tourists are taking pictures but the city is suffering.”

‘Need to adapt’

The Locanda Al Leon hotel said its bookings had suffered from the international media coverage of the flood, with some guests cancelling their rooms after seeing images of Venice underwater. Under the arches of the Ducal Palace, a couple from Hong Kong posed for photos in the chilly morning sun. “This (trip) was planned a long time ago so we couldn't change it,” groom Jay Wong, 34, said. “Actually this is a good experience. It's an adventure.” Tuesday's “acqua alta,” or high waters, submerged around 80 percent of the city, officials said. Only once since records began in 1923 has the water crept even higher, reaching 1.94 meters in 1966.

Many, including Venice's mayor, have blamed the disaster on climate change and warned that Italy — a country prone to natural disasters — must wake up to the risks posed by ever more volatile seasons. “We need to be resilient and adapt. We need a policy that looks at the climate through completely different eyes,” Environment

will be decided in 2021, and called in the meantime for the “hustle and bustle” over the issue to stop. Georgelin confirmed the five-year timeframe set by Macron for rebuilding the religious edifice — a deadline some experts see as too ambitious.

‘Still in danger’

Villeneuve, however, has previously said the target could only be met if the spire is rebuilt to resemble its former self. The Notre-Dame, part of a UNESCO world heritage site covering the banks of the River Seine in Paris, lost its gothic spire, roof and many precious artifacts in the April 15 blaze. Paris prosecutors said in June a poorly stubbed-out cigarette or an electrical fault could have started the fire and opened an investigation into criminal negligence.

Last month, the culture ministry said nearly one billion euros (\$1.1 billion) had been pledged or raised for the gargantuan reconstruction. The cathedral remains enveloped in scaffolding and plastic sheeting. Georgelin told MPs the Notre-Dame “remains in danger”. “The phase of securing the edifice is not over. It will be done when the scaffolding around the spire has been dismantled,” he said, and warned of winter gales threatening to “destabilize” the temporary, protective structure.

On the positive side, the Notre-Dame “no longer seems to be emitting lead” offsite — a major concern shortly after the disaster that saw hundreds of tons of lead in the roof and steeple melt. Villeneuve, the cathedral's architect since 2013, told the RTL broadcaster last month: “Either I restore it identically, it will be me, or they make a contemporary spire and it will be someone else.” — AFP



VENICE: People wearing waterproof shoe covers walk across the flooded St Mark's Square. —AFP

Minister Sergio Costa said yesterday. Mayor Luigi Brugnaro has estimated the damage to Venice at hundreds of millions of euros (dollars).

The Serenissima, as the floating city is called, is home to a mere 50,000 residents but receives 36 million global visitors each year. A massive infrastructure project called MOSE has been under way since 2003 to protect the city, but it has been

plagued by cost overruns, corruption scandals and delays. “This engineering solution that will end up costing nearly six billion euros has got to work,” Transport Minister Paola De Micheli said. 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 it caused worrying vibrations and engineers discovered it had rusted. — AFP

Tempers flare over rebuilding of Notre-Dame

PARIS: The French army general charged with overseeing the rebuilding of Paris' fire-mangled Notre-Dame, has caused astonishment by publicly telling the cathedral's chief architect to “shut his mouth” in a sign of tension over the monument's future look. General Jean-Louis Georgelin and chief architect Philippe Villeneuve are at odds over whether to replace the cathedral's spire — which was toppled in the April 15 blaze — with an exact replica, or mix things up with a modern twist.

President Emmanuel Macron, who appointed Georgelin to head the massive reconstruction project, has said he is in favour of adding a “contemporary” touch. But Villeneuve insists the tower must be redone exactly as it was before. Tensions boiled over into an open squabble at a meeting of the cultural affairs committee of the National Assembly — the lower house of parliament — late Wednesday. “As for the chief architect, I have already explained that he should shut his mouth,” Georgelin erupted, to gasps of astonishment from those present at the meeting.

The former army chief of staff suggested that “we move ahead in wisdom so that we can serenely make the best choice for Notre-Dame, for Paris, for the world”. He said the final option

Brexit will be the real end of the British Empire: Tusk

BRUSSELS: Britain will be a “second-rate player” after Brexit, unable to compete with big powers like the US, China and EU, outgoing EU Council president Donald Tusk warned Wednesday. The former Polish premier said Brexit supporters were deluded if they thought leaving the EU would bring a return to dominance on the world stage, saying the departure marked “the real end of the British Empire”.

Tusk's outspoken intervention comes in the midst of a UK election campaign in which Brexit is one of the key issues dividing the parties, and he urged those seeking to keep Britain in the bloc not to lose hope. Some Brexit backers have argued that leaving the EU, the world's largest trading bloc, will enable Britain to forge closer economic ties with other countries around the world.

“You could hear in these voices a longing for the Empire. But the reality is exactly the opposite — only as part of a united Europe can the UK play a global role,” Tusk said in a speech at the College of Europe in Bruges — a finishing school for the next generation of

EU bureaucrats. “And the world knows it... after its departure, the UK will become an outsider, a second-rate player, while the main battlefield will be occupied by China, the US and the EU.”

Prime Minister Boris Johnson is fighting the December 12 election on a pledge to “get Brexit done” after failing in a pledge to get Britain out on October 31. The new departure date is January 31, but the main opposition Labour party is pledging to renegotiate the divorce deal and put it to a second referendum, while the Liberal Democrats have vowed to scrap Brexit altogether. Tusk, who leaves office at the end of the month, has made no secret of his opposition to Brexit.

“The UK election takes place in one month. Can things still be turned around?” Tusk said. “The only words that come to my mind today are simply: don't give up. In this match, we have had added time, now we are in extra time, perhaps it will even go to penalties?” Days after the incoming head of the European Commission, the bloc's executive, said the shock of Brexit had brought the remaining 27 members together, Tusk hailed their unity during more than two years of tortuous talks with London.

“The EU27 have maintained extraordinary self discipline and loyalty among themselves, despite London's attempts to ‘bilateralism’ with these negotiations,” Tusk said. Tusk also used the speech to take aim at French President Emmanuel Macron over his recent blocking of EU membership talks with North Macedonia and Albania and his call for rapprochement with Russia. — AFP

International

Friday, November 15, 2019

Acting Bolivia leader aims to end growing power vacuum

‘There is no coup in Bolivia. There is a constitutional replacement’

LA PAZ: Bolivia's interim president Jeanine Anez moved Wednesday to fill the power vacuum left by the resignation of Evo Morales, who said he was ready to return from exile in Mexico to “pacify” the country, as riot police clashed with his supporters and one was killed. Anez, a 52-year-old deputy senate speaker before proclaiming herself acting president on Tuesday — a move endorsed by the Constitutional Court — named 11 cabinet ministers and appointed a new military high command.

In a press conference at the presidential palace, she reiterated a pledge to “hold elections in the shortest possible time.” Anez named former diplomat Karen Longari as foreign minister, and a right-wing senator, Arturo Murillo, as minister for the interior. Her economy minister Jose Luis Parada worked for the local government in the wealthy eastern province of Santa Cruz, an opposition bastion. Rejecting Morales' claims that her presidency amounted to a coup, she said: “There is no coup in Bolivia. There is a constitutional replacement.”

“The only coup d'Etat in this country has been by Evo Morales,” she said, referring to a 2016 referendum that blocked the ex-president from running for re-election, but which Morales had overturned by the Constitutional Court. Riot police fired tear gas during clashes with hundreds of Morales' supporters who marched towards the presidential palace to protest Anez's appointment. A 20-year-old man was shot and killed in a village near the eastern city of Santa

Cruz during a clash between Morales supporters and police, a doctor said.

Pro-Morales demonstrations

Bolivia has been in political turmoil since a controversial October 20 election in which Morales was awarded a fourth term as president. Opposition figures cried foul, claiming electoral fraud, and an audit by the Organization of American States (OAS) found clear evidence of vote count manipulation. Ten people have now died and more than 400 have been injured in the protests, according to prosecutors. A previous toll put the number of deaths at eight.

On Wednesday, demonstrations took place in Morales strongholds of El Alto, around 20 kilometers (nine miles) from La Paz, and El Chapare, a coca-growing region in the center of the country. The La Paz clashes took place three blocks from the presidential palace, where Anez was presiding over the appointments of the new military top brass.

Anez praised the “democratic disposition of the Armed Forces and police” who abandoned Morales last weekend, prompting him to resign on Sunday after weeks of protests. Police units in various parts of the country had rebelled on Friday, siding with opposition supporters. On Wednesday, troops tried to remove barricades on the main highway linking two of the country's biggest cities, Santa Cruz and Cochabamba, amid efforts to resume business as usual after three weeks of protests and strikes brought



LA PAZ: A Bolivian indigenous woman is seen on the pathway from El Alto to La Paz. — AFP

much of the country to a halt.

Public transport services in La Paz were returning to normal on Wednesday, and bank and businesses reopening. “We are doing everything possible to bring everything back to normal,” said police chief, General Yuri Calderon. He said dozens of small police stations had been ransacked and burned by pro-Morales supporters in the wake of the ex-president's resignation.

Morales ‘ready to return’

“If the people ask me, we are ready to return to pacify” Bolivia, Morales told a news conference in Mexico City, where he arrived Tuesday after receiving political asylum. Morales, who became the country's first indigenous president in 2006 and ruled for nearly 14 years, resigned Sunday and fled Bolivia after losing the support of the army and police. — AFP

Second Ebola vaccine introduced in DR Congo

GOMA: The Democratic Republic of Congo yesterday introduced a second vaccine to fight a 15-month-old epidemic of Ebola in the east of the country, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said. The new vaccine, produced by a Belgian subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson, will be administered to about 50,000 people over four months, the charity said.

More than a quarter of a million people, many of them frontline health workers, have been immunized with another anti-Ebola vaccine in a program begun last year. The epidemic began in August 2018 in the province of North Kivu before spreading to neighboring Ituri and South Kivu — a remote and largely lawless region bordering Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. The notorious hemorrhagic virus has so far killed 2,193 people, according to the latest official figures. It is the DRC's 10th Ebola epidemic and the second deadliest on record after an out-

break that struck West Africa in 2014-16, claiming more than 11,300 lives.

Two-dose vaccine

Fifteen people received an injection of the new vaccine in MSF facilities in the North Kivu capital of Goma early yesterday, a spokeswoman for the charity said. The formula is administered in two doses at 56-day intervals, and those who have received the vaccine have been reminded to return for the second shot, she said.

The disease's epicenter is about 350 kilometers north of Goma, a sprawling urban hub of between one and two million people on the border with Rwanda. Four Ebola cases were recorded in the city in July and August, sparking fears the virus could spin out of control in a chaotic, mobile environment. Efforts to combat Ebola in eastern DR Congo have been hampered by militia violence and local resistance to preventative measures, care facilities and safe burials.

Health workers have been attacked 300 times, leaving six people dead and 70 wounded since the start of the year. Despite these problems, statistics point to a downward trend. The health ministry late Wednesday said it had recorded four new cases of Ebola but no deaths, while 508 suspected cases were being monitored. “In its current phase, the epidemic is not urban but has become rural,” Professor Jean-Jacques Muyembe, in

charge of coordinating the anti-Ebola fight, said last month. “We have to track it down, force it into a corner and eliminate it,” he said.

Novel vaccines

The new J&J vaccine was initially rejected by DRC's former health minister Oly Ilunga, who cited the risks of introducing a new product in communities where mistrust of Ebola responders is already high. But Ilunga's resignation in July appears to have paved the way for approval of the second vaccine. He currently faces charges that he embezzled Ebola funds. Both vaccines are novel formulas that, when they were introduced, had been tested for safety but were unlicensed, meaning that they had yet to achieve formal approval from drug authorities.

The first vaccine, rVSV-ZEBOV, has been given to 251,079 people, according to figures released late Wednesday. Manufactured by the US laboratory Merck Sharpe and Dohme (MSD), the vaccine was licensed by the European Commission last week. It is being marketed under the brand name of Ervebo. On Tuesday, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced it had “prequalified” Ervebo — an important regulatory procedure that will allow the drug to be quickly deployed in future Ebola outbreaks. —AFP

Foreign forces in Sahel struggle with public support

BAMAKO: If military operations depend on winning hearts and minds, the thousands of foreign troops deployed to the Sahel to combat jihadism seem to be on losing ground. At first welcomed, these troops find themselves today in the crosshairs as a growing number of locals in this fragile region accuse them of failure or covert exploitation.

“We don't see the justification for these bases, we don't see the results on the ground,” said Maikoul Zodi, a prominent figure in Niger civil society. “How can 20,000 foreign soldiers be unable to defeat 3,000 terrorists?” asked Ibrahima Kebe, host of a weekly show broadcast by a small Malian anti-establishment station, Patriot Radio. France has some 4,500 soldiers in the Sahel, the UN has 13,000 peacekeepers in Mali, and the G5 Sahel alliance — Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger — is mustering a joint deployment of 5,000 troops.

“The French people must understand that their leaders' policies are sowing misery in our countries and prompting our people to emigrate there,” Kebe said in a broadcast in mid-October. He branded the region's leaders as “national lackeys under the orders of Paris,” and charged: “In the name of the French people, the multinationals are pillaging our resources.” Gabin Korbeogo from the Organization of Democratic Youth of Burkina Faso (ODJ) alleged “the only goal (of the French forces) is to protect their strategic interests and consolidate their dominant position in the Sahel region. —AFP

International

Indonesians quitting their 'rice addiction' over diabetes fears

'In my first week without rice I felt like I was being possessed by ghosts'

JAKARTA: Indonesian Mirnawati once ate rice with every meal, but its link to diabetes convinced her to join a growing movement to quit a staple food in the third biggest rice-consuming nation on Earth. As World Diabetes Day was held yesterday, the Southeast Asian nation is struggling to tackle a disease that affects as many as 20 million of its 260 million people, and has emerged as one of its deadliest killers behind stroke and heart disease.

But kicking the rice habit isn't easy, with Indonesia's favorite dish nasi goreng (mixed fried rice) sold everywhere, and the grain woven into the culinary fabric of a nation whose late dictator transformed it into a must-have meal. "In my first week without rice I felt like I was being possessed by ghosts," said Mirnawati, a 34-year-old former construction company employee who goes by one name. "But now I'll never go back to it," she added, about four months into her new diet.

Complications from diabetes, which affects some 425 million globally, can lead to heart attacks, stroke, blindness and even limb amputation. Most of the world's sufferers live in low and middle-income countries like Indonesia. Rice is packed with fiber and key vitamins. But an unbalanced diet that relies too heavily on refined

white rice has been linked to an increasing global prevalence of diabetes and insulin resistance as it raises blood sugar levels, according to experts.

That is what led Mirnawati — along with her mother and cousin — to drop rice in favour of more vegetables, meat and nuts. It is a step that an increasing number of Indonesians are taking in an informal 'no rice' movement, although there are no official numbers. The push, partly driven by social media, has been backed by local governments including cultural capital Yogyakarta which last year rolled out a campaign to convince residents to go without rice at least one day a week.

Rice politics

Indonesia's legacy of rice politics makes the task tougher. Rice — and rice production — was the cornerstone of dictator Suharto's ambitious bid for food self-sufficiency. The program began in the 70s and in a couple of decades had weaned much of the population off corn, sweet potatoes and other staples in favor of rice.

Before he was toppled in 1998, the iron-fisted leader spent years telling citizens not only what they could say, but also what they could eat. With local governments pushing the message, Suharto's administration even sold rice



JAKARTA: This picture taken on November 13, 2019 shows an Indonesian rice seller waiting for customers. — AFP

consumption as a ticket to higher social status. "People were given this illusion that rice was healthier, gave you a higher social status and tasted better than other staple foods," said Anhar Gonggong, a historian at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences.

"There was an authoritarian aspect to this rice myth. Not in the sense that guns were pointed at

people to force them to eat rice, but it implanted the myth deeply in the minds of many Indonesians. "Now we know the impact that rice has had on our society." The policy turned rice from a food that many in the sprawling archipelago rarely consumed into a staple that Indonesians now gobble down at a rate almost three times the global average of 53 kilograms annually.—AFP

China accused of 'falsifying' organ donation data

SYDNEY: China is engaged in the "systemic falsification" of voluntary organ donation data, an academic paper suggested Friday, calling into question Beijing's claim to have ended forced-harvesting of organs from prisoners. In a study published in the peer-reviewed journal BMC Medical Ethics, three academics examined China's official national and provincial transplant data and determined it was likely "man-made" based on a "mathematical model".

China began producing the voluntary donation data a decade ago to help prove it had stopped the practice of harvesting organs from prisoners — and was now only taking them from willing donors. But the Australian National University's Matthew Robertson, one of the paper's authors told AFP they studied official data from 2010-2016 and found that "there were numerous signs that the data was made up".

They found a formula "familiar to many high-school students" that not only fitted yearly donor tallies, but almost exactly predicted what the tally would be in 2017 ahead of time. Robertson said it was possible but "extraordinarily implausible" that the quadratic formula — which fitted the data with 99.7 percent accuracy — would be accurate by "coincidence". More likely, it shows that the data was fabricated following a

formula. The analysis also revealed anomalies in statistics provided by China's state-controlled Red Cross — including periods when the number of organs transplanted per donor was around 20, a medical impossibility. The paper's findings are already prompting calls for some medical cooperation with China to be frozen. "It shows that it was premature to believe everything that China said without any scrutiny," Wendy Rogers, a professor of clinical ethics at Macquarie University in Sydney told AFP.

"I certainly think there should be a moratorium on any engagement with China on anything to do with transplantation. That would include participation in scientific meetings, publications of papers and-so-forth." Rogers said she believed the data may have been falsified because China wants to be recognised as a world leader in transplant science, but cannot admit its experience came via "murdered prisoners of conscience".

In July, the London-based China Tribunal — an independent investigation into forced organ harvesting — concluded that the practice had been widespread in China for many years and continued today. The tribunal said detained members of the outlawed spiritual movement Falun Gong were "probably the main source" of organ supply in China. China has repeatedly denied that claim, saying the organs had come from prisoners who were executed but that practice stopped in 2015.

Since pilot projects with voluntary donors began in the early 2010s, Beijing has reported tremendous success, with the number of voluntary deceased donors increasing from 34 in 2010, to 6,316 in 2018.—AFP

Death toll in Australia bushfires rises to four

BURRELL CREEK: The death toll from devastating bushfires in eastern Australia has risen to four after a man's body was discovered in a scorched area of bushland, police said yesterday. Three others have perished in bushfires in New South Wales, the state worst affected by a series of catastrophic fires that broke out along the eastern seaboard late last week.

Residents found the body — believed to be a 58-year-old man last seen on Friday — near the New South Wales town of Kempsey, one of several areas hit by the fires in recent days. More than 100 blazes were burning on Thursday but a respite from tough conditions has seen the danger from many fires downgraded and residents returning to sift through the remains of their homes. Hundreds of houses have already been damaged or destroyed and more than one million hectares (2.5 million acres) of land burnt in the blazes.

Challenging conditions were expected to flare again in Queensland and New South Wales at the weekend as the temperature rises and winds pick up, and many blazes are still proving difficult to contain. In Burrell Creek, dozens of firefighters were preparing to battle an out-of-control bushfire that has so far engulfed 24,000 hectares from the coastal town of Old Bar inland to Hillville in northern New South Wales.

Native wildlife has also been badly hit by the bushfires, with conservationists estimating that hundreds of koalas have perished. As many as 350 koalas died in a single nature reserve near Port Macquarie alone, raising fears for the future of the creature in the area. Nick Boyle, of Taronga Conservation Society, said "our hearts are breaking" not only for the victims but also for the "defenceless wildlife" that had been killed by the state's "earliest and worst" bushfire season.

"Pressures on the koala were already compounding," he said, citing habitat loss and non-native predators. "And now this." Bushfire-prone Australia is experiencing a horrific start to its fire season, which scientists say is being exacerbated by climate change. The Bureau of Meteorology says human-caused climate change is increasing the "frequency and severity" of dangerous bushfire conditions by raising temperatures, sapping moisture from the environment and causing an earlier and more extreme fire season.

The bushfires have created mounting pressure on the conservative government to curb fossil fuels and cut greenhouse gas emissions. Australia's leaders, ever-conscious of the country's economic reliance on mining exports, have been steadfastly ignoring those calls. — AFP

International

Sri Lanka political author attacked ahead of key polls

COLOMBO: Armed men stabbed and injured a writer in Sri Lanka yesterday, a week after he published a book criticizing the main opposition candidate at Saturday's presidential polls, police said. The attackers stormed the home of Lasantha Wijeratne, who released his book "Wasteful Development and Corruption" last week and gave a copy to ruling party candidate Sajith Premadasa.

"Four men broke into the house and stabbed him in the arm after holding a pistol to his wife's head," Wijeratne's lawyer Tharaka Nanayakkara told AFP by telephone. "They smashed furniture before escaping." Nanayakkara said the attackers accused Wijeratne of harming the campaign of Gotabaya Rajapaksa who is believed to be in a close race with Premadasa for the top job. Gotabaya is the brother of former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, during whose decade in power until 2015 at least 14 journalists were killed according to Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

Police said they launched an investigation into the incident in the south of the island nation, but were yet to arrest any suspects. It came even as Election Commission chairman Mahinda Deshapriya said the campaign had been relatively peaceful compared to previous polls. However, he said the behaviour of both private and state-controlled television networks had been highly biased and he hoped to prosecute offenders after the election.

Media campaign 'worst ever'

No media organisation has been prosecuted for violating election laws, but last week Deshapriya banned a state TV network from broadcasting any political content after accusing it of partisan coverage. However, the Commis-

sion reversed the move the next day following protests that it was not being even-handed with all media outlets violating campaign rules governing broadcasts.

"The run-up to the election was relatively peaceful, but the campaign in the media is the worst we have ever seen," Deshapriya said. Campaign rallies ended Wednesday night leaving two days of cooling period before Saturday's poll at which 15.99 million people are eligible to elect a leader from a record 35 candidates — including two Buddhist monks and just one woman. Frontrunners Premadasa and Rajapaksa wrapped up their final rallies amid tight security involving hundreds of elite police and paramilitary units.

Premadasa, 52, is the son of assassinated president Ranasinghe Premadasa who was targeted by a suicide bomber during a rally in Colombo in 1993. Gotabaya Rajapaksa narrowly escaped a suicide bomb attack in 2006 blamed on Tamil Tiger separatist rebels. While ethnic tensions have eased, this year the country was rocked by coordinated Islamist extremist bombings on Easter Sunday that killed at least 269 people. The European Union on Wednesday despatched 30 additional election observers around the country, joining 50 who have been in Sri Lanka for a month following the campaign.

Prisoners pardoned

In other news, more than 250 Sri Lankan convicts aged over 65 have been given amnesty just days after the president sparked outrage by pardoning the well-connected killer of a Swedish teen, officials said yesterday. Jude Jayamaha, the scion of a wealthy Sri Lankan family and convicted in 2005 of murdering Yvonne Jonsson, walked free from death row on



COLOMBO: Supporters of the ruling United National Party (UNP) and New Democratic Front (NDF) presidential candidate Sajith Premadasa attend a final campaign rally under rain.—AFP

Saturday after Maithripala Sirisena's pardon.

His release prompted outrage from the victim's family, rights groups, and people on social media — and also initiated a mini-rebellion from inmates at the country's main high-security prison, who demanded similar treatment. In an apparent bid to calm the situation, Sirisena — due to step down after elections on Saturday — issued a pardon for some 267 prisoners aged over 65. "We have now got orders from the president and the prisoners will walk free today and tomorrow," a justice ministry official told AFP.

Officials said all those granted pardons were

serving time for offences other than rape or murder. Jayamaha was initially sentenced to 12 years in jail for the brutal murder of Jonsson, who was 19. His trial heard her skull had been fractured into 64 pieces. An appeal court upgraded the sentence to the death penalty, a decision reaffirmed by the Supreme Court in 2014. Ruling party presidential candidate Sajith Premadasa said earlier this week he would consider every legal option to overturn the pardon if elected. There are around 375 people on death row in Sri Lanka, but the country has had a moratorium on executions since 1976. — AFP

Taleban still holding Western hostages

KABUL: A Taleban spokesman said yesterday the insurgents were still holding two Western hostages, as officials stayed tight-lipped over the outcome of an apparent prisoner swap announced by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani earlier this week. Ghani announced on Tuesday that his government would "conditionally" release three high-ranking Taleban insurgents, including Anas Haqqani, brother to the leader of the eponymous Haqqani Network, one of the Taleban's deadliest and most feared factions.

He did not specify the fate of the Western hostages — an Australian and an American — but noted that their health had been deteriorating, and that their release would help pave the way for peace negotiations. Two days later, Taleban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed to AFP that no swap had yet taken place.

"The three people have not been handed

over to us, and we have not freed our prisoners yet," he said. The reasons for the delay were not clear. Afghan officials remained tight-lipped yesterday, and the Australian foreign office has said it will not provide a "running commentary" on the process. The US ambassador had initially welcomed Ghani's statement, but officials have given no further information since.

Waheed Muzhda, who served as an official in the Taleban's 1996-2001 regime, said the swap still could happen, but suggested the delay could be an issue of trust. "The concern is that there will be a tweet by Trump or another American official to say the deal is off, as it happened in the case of peace talks," he told AFP. Earlier this year, the Taleban and the US were on the verge of a deal that would have seen Washington begin withdrawing troops in return for security guarantees from the insurgents. —AFP

Australian universities adopt guidelines for foreign interference

SYDNEY: Australia announced measures to combat foreign interference at its universities yesterday, setting new guidelines around the key areas of research collaboration, cybersecurity, and international partnerships. There has been growing concern about China's clout on campuses following a series of hacks, controversial donations and incidents of political intimidation linked to Beijing.

The new guidelines push universities to enhance their cybersecurity systems, undertake due diligence before signing partnerships with overseas organizations, and train staff to recognize foreign influence attempts. Academics are urged to be wary of sharing knowledge on sensitive topics and discern how joint research with international scholars could potentially be misused. Education Minister Dan Tehan said the guidelines were designed to "ensure universities understand the risks and know what steps to take to protect themselves".

It comes after Australia established a task force in August to help protect sensitive re-

search, cyber-defenses, and free speech. Schools and government officials — including spy agencies — have also committed to more intensive consultation to protect Australia's national interests. The changes follow a data breach at the Australian National University last year that exposed sensitive staff and student data going back two decades.

The country's universities have also taken tens of millions of dollars from Beijing to establish "Confucius Institute" branches — similar to Germany's Goethe-Institut and France's Alliance Francaise — that steer clear of issues damaging to China's ruling Communist Party. Beijing denies interfering in campus life. Foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said yesterday that allegations of "Chinese infiltration" in Australian institutions were "pure nonsense". Geng said at a regular press briefing that China hopes Australia will "uphold the principles of fairness, transparency and non-discrimination", and "avoid politicizing normal exchange programs". —AFP

International

S Korea's model daughter-in-law

As Korean women shun their traditional expectations, the men look to migrant women

HOENGSEONG: In a mountain village thousands of kilometers from her native Philippines, Emma Sumampong nurses her elderly mother-in-law, while also caring for her husband and children, working on the family farm, and holding a part-time job. She is one of tens of thousands of women who have married South Korean men and migrated to the rapidly ageing nation, where local women are increasingly shunning marriage and traditional expectations that wives should care not only for their husbands, but their elderly in-laws too.

Migrant women such as Sumampong, who met her husband Lee Byung-ho through a Philippine church matchmaking service, are making up some of this shortfall. Unlike other developed Asian economies such as Hong Kong and Singapore, South Korea has never allowed foreign workers in its care industry unless they are ethnically Korean, but some regions have been subsidizing so-called "marriage tours" for single men in rural areas struggling to find native wives.

Sumampong juggles the needs of three generations in her rural home, but also must work on the family land and hold down a job. "I have to stand strong both in mind and body to overcome whatever difficulties will come my way," the 48-year-old explains. Her days begin at 5am, when she rises to make breakfast for the family and to do household chores before taking her three children to school. She then goes to work as a clerk at the county office.

In the afternoon, when she is not at work Sumampong tends the family vegetable fields, before cooking dinner, cleaning up, and helping her children with their homework. She is the main carer for her 89-year-old mother-in-law — who cannot walk unaided — helping her to use the toilet, bathe, and dress. Her efforts have been noticed: In June the nation's Family Welfare Association gave her "hyobu" status, an award for "filial service" to her parents-in-law — she also cared for her hus-

band's ailing father until he died in 2012.

No one to marry

While there is a specific category for migrant wives, the national award is open to all. But fewer and fewer South Korean women are willing or able to provide such care, traditionally regarded as part of the daughter-in-law role. Entrenched patriarchal attitudes mean that working mothers must take on most domestic chores, as well as performing in their jobs — a situation causing some women to reject family life.

Last year 22.4 percent of single South Korean women thought marriage was necessary, down from 46.8 percent in 2010, according to government data, while the birth rate is one of the lowest in the world. The nation is facing a demographic time bomb — by 2030 almost a quarter of the population will be at least 65 — and with little state help provided there are concerns about who will care for the elderly if families do not.

Park In-seong, 48, who looks after his ill, widowed mother in Incheon, has tried international marriage agencies, so far without success. "Realistically, no Korean woman would marry a man like me, because it automatically means having to support my mother," he concedes. "Some men are very lucky — they somehow ended up with very kind wives who care for their parents-in-law," he says, adding: "I'm so envious of them, but I know I can't be one of them."

In the countryside, the problem is even more pronounced after decades of youth migration — particularly women — to the cities. Those that are left often strongly adhere to traditional gender roles. Sumampong's mother-in-law is a case in point: she was infuriated whenever her son tried to help his wife with housework. "She always emphasized men are like kings," Sumampong recalls, but says she tries to keep a positive attitude about what's expected from her. Asked if she is happy, she says: "I was just very glad to start a family with my husband."



HOENGSEONG: This picture taken on August 30, 2019 shows Emma Sumampong (L) and her mother-in-law Kim Geum-nyeo (R) during an interview with AFP at her house in the mountainous town of Hoengseong. — AFP

Role model

Lee makes a modest income from his job at an electronics company, supplemented by income from the farm. So Sumampong plans to use her prize money — about US\$2,000 — to visit her family in the Philippines, whom she last saw six years ago. She is viewed as a role model by some in her village of Hoengseong.

Municipal official Nam Koo-hyun — who nominated her for the 'hyobu' award — says: "She sets such a good example to other migrant wives in our town." Around 260,000 women have moved to the South to marry Korean men. Some 15,000 arrive each year, the largest proportions coming from China, Vietnam and the Philippines, often seeking to escape poverty.

Some face abusive relationships, while experts say many migrant wives are pushed to adopt patriarchal Korean values, whatever their original culture. There are even textbooks stipulating Korean men like women who "genuinely

respect their husbands and follow their husbands' opinions", and who "speak tenderly and behave in a twee manner". Hyunjoo Naomi Chi, a public policy professor at Hokkaido University in Japan, explains: "The hyobu award reproduces the traditional gender roles... as if being the sole caretaker of the family is something all women should do.

"And to give out these awards to migrant women is even more ridiculous, as if to say that to be a wife of a Korean you need to be this 'ideal woman'. "This is now almost a myth as young Korean women leave rural areas specifically because they do not want to do so." Bonnie Lee, who works in Seoul and has no plans to marry, agrees the awards are outdated. "Virtually no Korean woman in their 20s and 30s would want to be called a 'hyobu'," she insists, pointing out: "We've never had such awards for filial sons-in-law, because they don't exist." — AFP

Emperor performs thanksgiving rite with Sun Goddess

TOKYO: Japan's new Emperor Naruhito yesterday began an elaborate and secretive ritual dating back 1,300 years, giving thanks to the Sun Goddess Amaterasu as part of his enthronement rites. The Daijosai, considered the most important ritual for Japan's imperial household, came three weeks after Naruhito proclaimed his ascension to the Chrysanthemum Throne and is performed only once in an emperor's reign.

Television footage showed the emperor in white silk vestments walking slowly through a specially constructed complex of wooden buildings in the imperial palace known as the Daijokyu. Escorted part of the way by servants, Naruhito entered one of two halls where the main ritual would take place overnight. The emperor was to offer newly harvested rice to Amaterasu, from whom the Japanese imperial line is considered to have descended, and other deities of heaven and earth.

He was to recite prayers for peace and "share" a feast with the goddess including salmon, abalone, jujube fruit, and millet, washed down with sake. Empress Masako, wearing a white layered ki-

mono, was to offer her own prayers in separate halls within the Daijokyu. Other royals and several hundred attendants, including Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, took part in separate pavilions. No foreigners attend the sacred rite. The emperor disappeared from sight after he entered the main hall by torchlight. Throughout the rituals that end just before dawn on Friday, he was to be accompanied only by a lady-in-waiting.

'Simple ceremony'

The rite was mentioned in historical documents dating back as far as the seventh century but was discontinued for more than 200 years because of civil war and financial constraints, starting up again in the late 17th century. The Daijosai, which is carried out whenever a new emperor ascends the throne, is estimated to cost 2.7 billion yen (\$25 million), including building and dismantling the Daijokyu and later banquets at the palace.

The Daijokyu complex is built on an area of about 2,700 square meters and consists of around 30 pavilions of different sizes for those performing and observing the rituals. "It was originally a simple ceremony using natural materials but it is expensive to replicate it in the modern age," said Keiko Hongo, professor at the Historiographical Institute of the University of Tokyo.

The buildings are of a traditional, simple construction. The floors are laid with straw mats and the pillars made from logs with unstripped bark. The Daijosai, though not officially a state occasion, has drawn criticism given its highly religious nature and cost. The rice used in the Daijosai was planted earlier in the year after



TOKYO: Japan's Empress Masako (2nd R) walks towards Yukiden, one of the two main halls of Daijokyu, where Daijosai ritual of great thanksgiving takes place, at the Imperial Palace. — AFP

palace courtiers selected sites using an ancient ritual involving the shells of rare green sea turtles.

Two thin plates made from turtle shells were heated over a flame to produce cracks, which "told" officials to grow the rice in two locations — the ancient capital of Kyoto and the Tochigi region north of Tokyo. The harvesting in September was also bound in ritual. — AFP

Lifestyle

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**Chinese tourists
say 'I do' to Serbia**

Page 24

**Disputed Western
Sahara becomes
kitesurfing hotspot**

Page 26

**Lil Nas X nabs award
at country music gala**

Page 22

Lifestyle | Movies

Tears as hit film shines rare light on China school bullying

A harrowing drama about school bullying has struck a strong personal chord with Chinese cinema audiences and soared to the top of the box office, after authorities belatedly gave it the go-ahead. "Better Days" shines a spotlight on what the state-run China Daily called "a nationwide problem which has existed for years" but is rarely broached in Chinese films. A real-life case went viral this week about a seven-year-old girl who needed hospital treatment after a group of fellow pupils forced scraps of paper into her eyes.

"Better Days" has grossed at least 1.4 billion yuan in the nearly three weeks since its release, according to the China Movie Data Information Network. Starring Zhou Dongyu and Jackson Yee, two popular figures in Chinese cinema, the film is based on a novel and tells the story of a teenage girl who teams up with a school drop-out to protect her from bullies. The girl's plight has left cinema-goers deeply moved, with many people commenting online that they had been reduced to tears. For a few, the film is a reminder of a past they would rather forget.

The film also highlights the pressures of the "gaokao", the notorious examination for Chinese universities. China's communist authorities appear to have only very reluctantly allowed the film by Hong Kong director Derek Tsang to show because of the sensitivity of the subject.

In February it was abruptly pulled without explanation from the Berlin Film Festival days before it was to be screened. It also failed to come out as scheduled in June in China's heavily vetted cinemas, before finally being released in the world's most populous country on October 25. Many Chinese have speculated

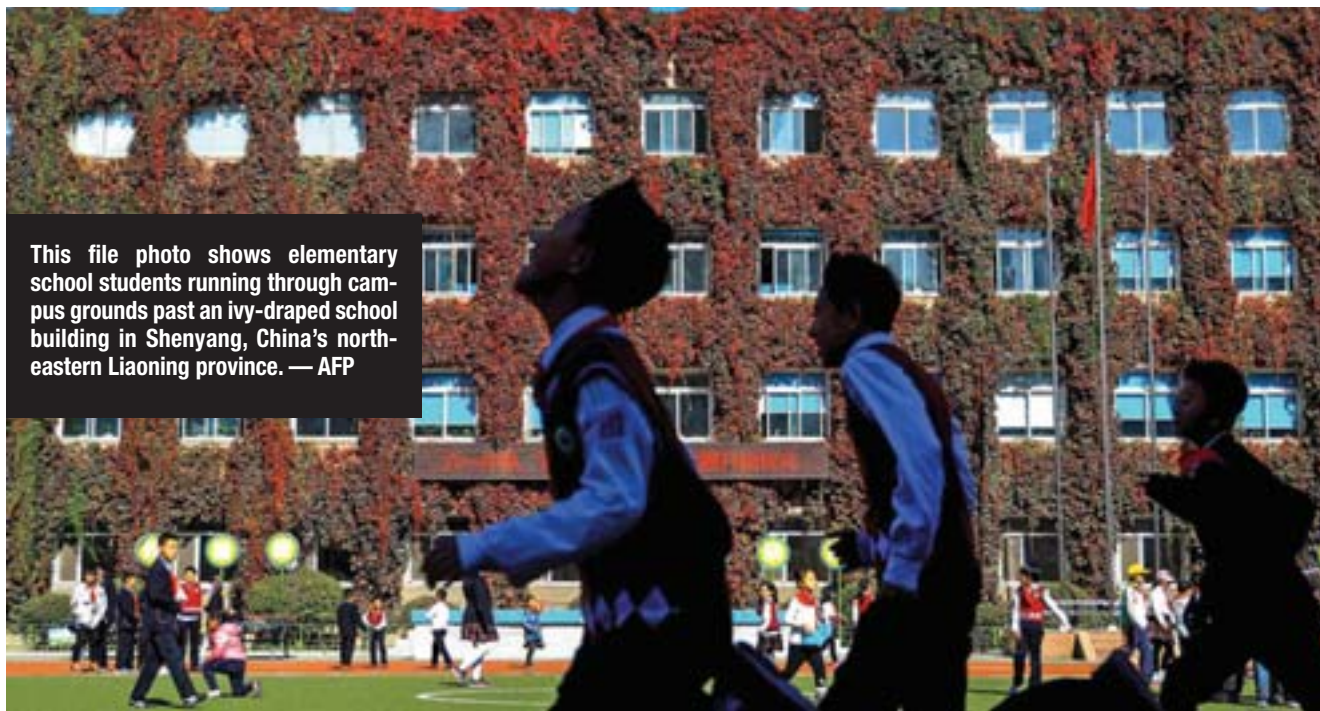
online that it was only green-lighted after cuts were made. The film was released overseas last week.

Bully or be bullied

The Global Times, one of the ruling Communist Party's mouthpieces, cited a survey that found more than 32 percent of Chinese primary and middle-school pupils have been bullied. Six percent were frequently bullied, it said, which given China's vast population means tens of millions of young children. "When you were a kid, you bullied others or were bullied by others, right?" says a policeman in the film, summing up the scale of the problem.

Cinema-goers are left in no doubt that the government is taking bullying seriously with public-service announcements before and after the film. One message details the steps the government is taking, such as the launch last year of a major anti-bullying campaign in primary and middle schools. On Tuesday, a law professor writing in the China Daily said that the film "has sparked a public debate on school bullying".

Qiao Xincheng, of Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, said that a meeting last month of China's rubber-stamp legislature made clear that bullying is a top priority. Psychological counseling of bullies is one prime way to stop them, argued Qiao, while also calling for security guards in schools. The age of criminal responsibility should be lowered from 16 to 12 for the worst offences, said Qiao.—AFP



This file photo shows elementary school students running through campus grounds past an ivy-draped school building in Shenyang, China's north-eastern Liaoning province. — AFP

Alicia Vikander, Wash Westmoreland on thriller 'Earthquake Bird'

Swedish-born Oscar winner Alicia Vikander performs in both English and Japanese in her new movie, thriller "Earthquake Bird", as she immerses herself in 1980s Tokyo. The actress portrays an expat translator caught up in a love triangle in the film, directed by Wash Westmoreland and based on the novel of the same name by Susanna Jones.

Vikander's character Lucy Fly begins a romantic relationship with photographer Teiji (Naoki Kobayashi) but things start to unravel with the arrival of fellow expat Lily Bridges, played by Riley Keough. Reuters spoke with Vikander - who played cyborg Ava in "Ex Machina" and won an Oscar for "The Danish Girl" - and with Westmoreland about the movie, released on streaming service Netflix on Friday.

Q: Is speaking Japanese a hidden talent of yours?

Vikander: "I always had this dream of going to Japan, it was the one country that I wanted to go to. I managed to go there like three ... four years ago for the first time for press and then, the second time, I just said, 'oh my God, I just want to be in this culture for a longer period of time' but the only thing that would make that happen is if a film would be made here." "(The film) was an opportunity for me, to embrace myself in that culture and go there."

Q: Your characters Ava and Lucy, were they uniquely difficult to embody?

"My, kind of, revelation when I prepped for (Ava), was realising that when I made her like a refined human, like a human 2.0, if I made all the human-like movements, but I just made them a bit more refined and without twitches, then it felt a bit off ... With Lucy ... she's more expressive in a way. She tries to hold it back but I don't think she really can."

Q: How much is "Earthquake Bird" an exploration of love versus obsession?

Westmoreland: "It really looks at this relationship between these two characters and it's more to do with their past, and particularly ... damaging experiences (Lucy) had in the past. Their relationship has both elements of love and obsession because there is something that connects the characters very deeply but there's also something that keeps the characters apart."

Q: I recently spoke with (director) Brian de Palma, who was asking what 'happened to beauty in cinema'. Here, picture quality and a hint of the 1980s are noticeable - was that on purpose?

Westmoreland: "(With) cinematographer Chung-hoon Chung ... and Yohei Taneda, my production designer, we started talking about the colors and the palette and this kind of Tokyo blue-grey. It's the color the city goes after sunset so we wanted that to permeate the film... We wanted to create this world that was immersive."—Reuters

'Mandalorian' creator Favreau teases more 'Star Wars' surprises

"The Mandalorian" creator Jon Favreau and cast members debuted the "Star Wars" series on Wednesday at a red-carpet event for fans and promised more surprises following the reveal of an unexpected new character in the first episode. "The Mandalorian," which runs on Walt Disney Co's new Disney+ streaming service, is the first live-action series set in the galaxy far, far away that was first seen on screen in the 1977 movie "Star Wars".

The series stars Pedro Pascal as a bounty hunter sent on a sensitive mission. The first season will run for eight episodes. "There are lots of surprises in the show. Part of what is fun about doing

eight episodes is that each one could have a surprise and twist," Favreau said in an interview at the premiere in Hollywood. The audience was composed largely of fans, some of whom carried bounty-hunter helmets.

The first episode, released on Tuesday, ended with the Mandalorian finding a character that looks like a baby version of the Jedi Master Yoda from "Star Wars" films. It was unclear how the baby may be related to Yoda or fit into the story, sparking debate among fans. Favreau and cast members did not shed much light at Wednesday's premiere. Disney is releasing "Mandalorian" episodes weekly starting on Friday.

"You have to see the shows to figure out who this baby Yoda really is, and what he is all about, or even if he is really a baby Yoda," said Carl Weathers, who plays Greef Carga, a man who gives bounty assignments to the Mandalorian. "He has his own name, and he is very interesting and very knowledgeable and very cute," Weathers said. "I never use that word, but he is a cute little guy."—Reuters



In this file photo British singer Rod Stewart performs on stage during his concert as part of his 'Hits Tour' at the Ziggo Dome in Amsterdam. — AFP

Rock'n'rolling stock: Rod Stewart creates his own downtown train

British pop stalwart Rod Stewart has spent decades laying down tracks of a different kind thanks to a little-known lifelong hobby-building model railways. The gravel-voiced singer has spent the past 23 years creating an imaginary American city and railway in his Los Angeles mansion. He opened up about his “addictive” hobby to “Railway Modeler”, bagging the cover page of the British hobbyist magazine’s December issue. “When I take on something creative like this, I have to give it 110 percent,” Stewart told the publication in an exclusive interview.

“If I’d have realized at the start it would have taken so long, I’d have probably said ‘No!’” The father-of-eight-whose hits include “Maggie May”, “You Wear It Well” and his cover of “Downtown Train”—said he began his latest project soon after he built his LA home in the early 1990s. He earmarked the attic for his intricate cityscape, which he named “Grand Street and Three Rivers City”. It features skyscrapers, warehouses and hills, alongside railway infrastructure like tracks, stations, tunnels and bridges. “I don’t like to see flat backdrops, they spoil the illusion, so I went for more buildings and streets than tracks. Just to give it a great depth,” he said.

‘I got hooked’

The roots of Stewart’s hobby date back to his childhood in Britain, and a family holiday aged eight to Bognor Regis on the English south coast. The ageing rocker recalled seeing a model railway shop’s window display and thinking “if only I could get paid to build a model railway like that”. But Stewart, who grew up in Archway, north London, opposite busy railway tracks, did not have enough room in the family home for a model train set.

Only by the mid-1960s and his late teens, when the family had moved to a new house, was

he finally able to go full steam ahead with the pastime. “I got my own bedroom and built a layout all around the perimeter walls. Even across the window,” Stewart said. Fast-forward three decades and he had become an international star, but he had not lost his enthusiasm for replica train sets.

Now living in the United States, he decided to embark on his most ambitious layout yet based on American scenery, becoming a regular customer at two shops selling model railroads in Los Angeles. The music icon acknowledged he was so hooked that he would keep working while on the road touring—even booking an extra room in hotels to serve as his model-making workshop.

‘It’s the landscape I like’

The 74-year-old, who revealed earlier this year he has been given the all-clear after developing prostate cancer, added he was more of a landscape artist than a train geek. “I can’t tell a Niagara from a Hudson,” Stewart said, referencing well-known US locomotives. “It’s the landscape I like. Attention to detail, extreme detail, is paramount. There shouldn’t be any unsightly gaps, or pavements that are too clean.”

Stewart is not the only celebrity to have revealed a passion for model railways. Entrepreneur and film director Walt Disney, singer-songwriter Neil Young, crooner Frank Sinatra and “The Who” frontman Roger Daltrey are all said to have been fellow enthusiasts. Daltrey was quoted by music publication the NME in 2014: “The great thing about model railways is you can be doing a bit of woodwork, a bit of painting, a bit of this, a bit of that, and having fun with your mates and you can listen to the radio.”—AFP

Regrets I’ve had a few, says ‘My Way’ songwriter

He wrote the music for “My Way”, one of the world’s most popular songs, but Jacques Revaux would like to mention a few of his regrets. For one, “I don’t even have a photo with Frank Sinatra,” the French songwriter laughed. The legendary American crooner may have made the song a global hit, but not many people know it was actually a French song first. Fewer still—not even in France, where the credit often goes to the singer Claude Francois—are aware that Revaux wrote the original.

Yet half a century after he wrote the first draft of the classic, and despite being elbowed into the shadows not just once but twice, the 79-year-old Revaux is still happy he did it his way. The prolific songwriter scribbled down a number about a couple falling out of love titled “For Me” in his own rather idiosyncratic English in 1967 when he was 27. He took it first to the “French Bob Dylan”, Hugues Aufray, who said, “Bloody hell, it’s good, but it’s not for me,” Revaux told AFP.

The British singer Petula Clark and the Egyptian-born diva Dalida also turned it down before Revaux—who by then had penned a string of hits—bumped into French megastar Francois in the Riviera resort of Cannes that summer. They ate together and “Cloclo”, as Francois is known to generations of his fans, teased Revaux over never writing a song for him. “You do all sorts of rubbish for everyone else, why not for me?” Revaux recalled Francois telling him, even though the singer’s managers had rejected the tune.

Slightly done over

Some time later sitting by the pool at Francois’s mansion, the singer asked him again. “Well, are you going to play me some of your rubbish then?” he demanded. Revaux picked up his guitar—and the rest is history. Francois recorded the song as “Comme d’Habitue” (As Usual), but before it was released Revaux got a call from his editor. “He said Claude wanted his name on all the songs (on the album), and it wasn’t on this

one. Would I mind sharing the credit with him for the music?”

“I said, ‘No problem’... at the time we didn’t know what we were doing,” Revaux said. And so the song’s official credit still reads: “Music: Claude Francois, Jacques Revaux. Lyrics: Gilles Thibaut.” And now, as tears subside, Revaux finds it all so amusing. “I don’t regret it,” he said, before admitting that actually he has one or two. “My only regret is that I disappeared as the composer” as far as the public was concerned, he said. “Peace be upon his ashes, but Claude, like all the big stars, want to claim the credit.”

That said, Revaux admitted that Francois sang it fantastically and gave a bit of “muscle” to his “syrupy” original. That summer the former Canadian teen idol Paul Anka heard the song while he was on holiday in France and later rewrote its storyline into one of someone reminiscing on life.

Rights sold for one dollar

Having got the rights for a nominal dollar, he gave the song another tweak, especially for Sinatra, who had earlier told him that he was quitting show business. “I’m sick of it, son,” he had told him, saying would record only one more album before he hung up his hat. But Anka chipped away at him, and Sinatra recorded it at the end of 1968 “in one take”, according to the legend.

Released a few months later, it was a massive hit, boasting 75 weeks in the British Top 40 — a record that still stands—and re-recorded by Elvis, the Sex Pistol’s Sid Vicious, Robbie Williams and Julio Iglesias. Today it is the song most played at funerals in the world. Even so, Revaux had mixed feeling when he first heard Ol’ Blue Eyes sing it. “First of all I was happy, it was Sinatra, but shame on me” he failed to realize it was a masterpiece, he admitted.—AFP

Slang spreads message for Nigeria’s ‘opera queen’

Dressed in a bright red and blue robe and backed by a local band with an eclectic range of instruments, Helen Epega beats a steel drum as she declaims dramatically to an unseen audience. The opera she composed and is performing in a Lagos theatre is an unusual, trance-like mix of classical and indigenous music - but what makes it unique is that she is singing in pidgin. By writing it in West Africa’s lingua franca - a blend of English and indigenous languages - she hopes to spread its message as widely as possible.

“I just wasn’t able to communicate with people the way I wanted to, and being in Lagos you hear so many different languages

and so many different tribes,” Epega told Reuters TV. “But the one we all speak is pidgin.... I think more people will be able to understand the opera and feel less intimidated...because I think opera is for everyone.” Nigerian-born Epega, 38, spent most of her formative years in Britain before returning home in 2008.

Her ‘Song Queen: A Pidgin Opera’ - for which she cites Fela Kuti and Katie Bush as musical influences - debuted in London’s Royal Opera House in 2015, where she added elements of Cockney slang to the libretto. It transferred to Cape Town the following year and now she is performing it for the first time in her home country. It tells of a family of ethereal singers who try to maintain peace and balance in the world’s realms through their songs. “I want to create an identity through art that inspires pride....” she said. “I really do believe that music can end all wars.” — Reuters

Lifestyle | Awards



Lil Nas X, left, and Billy Ray Cyrus pose in the press room of the 53rd annual CMA Awards at the Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, Tennessee. — AFP photos



Jessie Ryan



Garth Brooks

Lil Nas X nabs award at country music gala where women take spotlight



Dan Smyers, left, and Shay Mooney of Dan + Shay.

Overnight sensation Lil Nas X scored a Country Music Award Wednesday, a milestone for the gala that can sometimes feel like music's whitest night. A little bit country, a little bit southern rap, the Atlanta native's infectious single "Old Town Road" was famously booted from Billboard's country list earlier this year—triggering accusations that the country industry pigeonholed the song as hip hop purely because the novice musician is black.

The award for "Musical Event of the Year" was given to Lil Nas X—who this year broke a decades-old record for longest reign over the Billboard Hot 100, music's most closely watched singles chart—along with country veteran Billy Rae Cyrus, who lent vocals for the remix of the hit that received Wednesday's honor.

The award was presented off-air, but Lil Nas X attended the gala sporting his signature youthful grin along with a black cowboy hat and black western jacket with gold fringe. The 53rd annual awards show in Nashville, Tennessee kicked off by spotlighting the many women of country's pantheon, with a medley from more than a dozen female artists. The performance included a tribute to genre legend Loretta Lynn, who at 87 looked radiant as artists Jennifer Nettles along with Karen Fairchild and Kimberly Schlapman of the group Little Big Town sang her hit "You're Lookin' at Country."

The Highwomen, the recently formed supergroup of Natalie Hemby, Maren Morris, Amanda Shires and Brandi Carlile—an artist who cleaned up at this year's Grammys—also wowed with a rendition of "Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad" off Tammy Wynette's 1967 debut album. The stars earlier this year formed the collective—which pays homage to the Highwaymen, a male supergroup that included Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, Kris Kristofferson and Willie Nelson—to highlight the disproportionate number of women artists on country radio and at country festivals.

Hello, Dolly

Carrie Underwood, Dolly Parton and Reba McEntire took over hosting duties, replacing the duo of Underwood and Brad Paisley who had been charged with sprinkling one-liners over the evening for the past 11 years. "What do you call three women hosting the CMAs? Your lucky night!" quipped Parton, a 73-year-old icon of country but also American pop culture at large, who arrived to the show in a crystal-encrusted cream gown that hugged her famously impossible curves and featured a thigh-high slit.

McEntire, wearing an azure gown that brought out her signature shock of red hair, delivered a more earnest line: "We're doing it for all the little girls watching tonight, dreaming of rul-



Thomas Rhett performs onstage.

Lifestyle | Awards

Friday, November 15, 2019



(Left to right) Robert Williford, Luke Combs, and Wyatt B. Durrette III.



Blake Shelton



Matthew Ramsey of Old Dominion

ing the world of country music.” “Or maybe just ruling the world.” Garth Brooks won the coveted Entertainer of the Year award, besting Underwood, the only woman nominated in the top category this year.

Kacey Musgraves snagged both Female Vocalist of the Year and Music Video of the Year for her song “Rainbow,” and fiddle player Jenee Fleenor became the first woman to win a CMA for Musician of the Year. Morris won Album of the Year for “Girl,” as Luke Combs took home the honor for Male Vocalist of the Year. Willie Nelson, 86, made his first appearance at the CMAs since 2012.

The illustrious outlaw artist known for his long pigtail braids, activism, and distinctive blend of country, blues and folk performed a duet of the song “Rainbow Connection” with critical darling Musgraves, whose poppy brand of psychedelia-infused country saw her post a banner 2019.

The night celebrating country’s women did shy from getting particularly political—a CMA tradition of sorts—staying mum on the #MeToo movement and keeping pointed calls for shaking up the gender status quo to a minimum. After Underwood asked her, “What do you have against men?” Parton kept the banter playful. “Well, me, if I get lucky!” the superstar said to a chorus of laughter and cheers. — AFP



Maren Morris performs onstage.



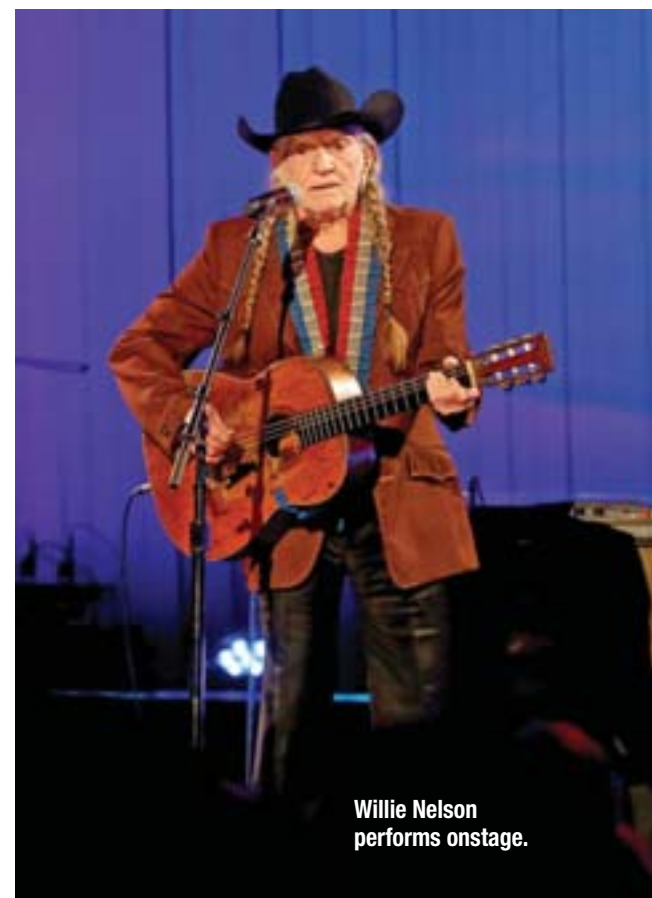
Carrie Underwood performs onstage.



(Left to right) Charles Kelley, Hillary Scott, Halsey, and Dave Haywood of Lady Antebellum perform onstage.



Miranda Lambert performs onstage.



Willie Nelson performs onstage.



Chinese tourists wear traditional dresses as they take part in a Serbian wedding show for tourists in an ethno village Gostoljublje, near central Serbian town of Kosjeric, 80 km south of capital Belgrade. — AFP photos

Chinese tourists say 'I do' to Serbia



A “bride” in a pretty white dress and trainers runs through a field, her long white veil fluttering behind and her “groom” in hot pursuit. It’s not a scene from the Hollywood hit “Runaway Bride” but a traditional Serbian wedding ceremony—only with most of the roles played by Chinese tourists. Enticed by visa-free travel and low costs compared to Western Europe, the Chinese have been coming to Serbia in their droves.

The landlocked Balkan state is now one of the fastest-growing destinations in Europe for Chinese travelers, topping the charts last year, and has been rolling out the red carpet. From Chinese restaurants, to street signs in Mandarin, infrastructure has quickly sprung up. Chinese police were even dispatched to the streets of Belgrade in the summer to help communicate with their compatriots, a program also piloted in other European cities.

And in rural western Serbia, locals in the small, picturesque holiday village of Gostoljublje have also found a way to claim a slice of the pie. Zeljko Sredic, who owns the resort of wooden holiday homes, lays on a full Serbian wedding experience, without actually getting hitched. “We chose to do weddings because they include all the customs: the culture of cuisine, song, dance, costumes and so on,” he told AFP. Against rolling hills and farmland, the wedding extravaganza has been wooing the Chinese in particular since it began two years ago.

Costumes and dancing

On a recent Saturday, two busloads of tourists mostly from Shanghai were welcomed with folk music and drawn into a traditional circular “kolo” dance by their Serbian hosts. “They always want something unusual, something different and this is definitely something you cannot find in agencies that have typical tours to offer,” Katarina Jovancic, the group’s Serbian guide, said on the sidelines of the dancing. Next, the women were given traditional white aprons, while men donned boat-shaped peasant caps and were cast in their “wedding” roles.

Peals of laughter erupted as they were led through a series of rural traditions, including shooting an apple, riding up a hillside in a horse-drawn carriage and “bargaining” a price for the bride. To everyone’s surprise, the Chinese bride put her own stamp on the ceremony by heading for the hills before she was “caught” by the groom, played by a local Serb. The celebration wrapped up with food and drink, though some of Serbia’s dairy-heavy dishes, such as the creamy cheese known as kajmak, were dropped to accommodate Chinese tastes. “We wanted to offer authentic Serbian cuisine, but it turned out that it was not realistic,” Sredic said.

China’s best friend

Of the 1.2 million people who visited Serbia in the first



eight months of this year, the Chinese dominated with 92,000 arrivals, or more than five times the number for all of 2016. The surge started in 2017, when Serbia became the first country in Europe to scrap visas for its far eastern ally, a sign of the two nations' flourishing political ties. China has "no partner that is more reliable than Serbia, nor a friend that is more sincere," Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic proudly proclaimed in September.

Belgrade and Beijing have been especially close allies since the 1990s, with economic links growing in recent years. For China, Serbia is a key foothold on the European continent for its global infrastructure ambitions to funnel goods to Western markets. Belgrade, for its part, welcomes the investment, with Chinese firms building bridges and highways through the country, plus scooping up a collection of debt-hit mines and industrial plants.

More affordable

Chinese tourists also see Serbia as a gateway to the rest of the region, said Flora Xu, a guide from the Chinese travel agency 54 Traveler. Neighboring Bosnia recently followed suit by dropping visa requirements, while Albania lifted them for the tourist season and Montenegro has

made it easier for large groups to enter. "Because the other neighbors have also opened their gates to the Chinese", by relaxing visa regimes, "people became interested in this part of the world they previously heard nothing about", the guide told AFP.

For younger travelers like Xin Li, a 37-year-old electrical engineer who played the "father of the groom" in the mock wedding, the Balkans offer a cheaper European experience than pricier capitals in the West. "It is the first time for us to go to Europe," he told AFP, saying he and his wife were excited to "see something different". Their tour started in Belgrade and was set to weave through western Serbia, stop off in mountainous and coastal towns in Montenegro, and wrap up in Mostar and Sarajevo in Bosnia. The nine-day Balkan tour which the tourists who AFP spoke to were on cost around 9,980 yuan excluding flights.

Local economy and heritage

Serbia cannot boast the stunning coastline of its neighbor Croatia but Chinese visitors flock to Belgrade's historic Kalemegdan fortress and the capital's shopping districts. And some tours even make a stop at the site of the former Chinese embassy bombed by NATO in 1999. The

tourist trail also includes the western Zlatibor mountainous region. The country has invested millions of euros in its tourism sector in recent years, with the influx of travelers providing a welcome source of cash.

Last year, tourism to Serbia brought in 1.5 billion euros, contributing more than three percent of GDP. In Gostoljublje, the weddings have an-

other benefit too. "This is very important, to keep alive the story of how weddings looked in the past," said Milija Lazovic, the leader of a quartet of folk singers, who helped guide the experience with around a dozen other locals. "Everybody is involved, if needed, so everyone can earn something," he added. —AFP



Former Balenciaga artistic director Thimister dies at 57

Dutch fashion designer Josephus Thimister, a former artistic director at Balenciaga, has died at the age of 57, the French fashion federation said on Wednesday. "It is with sadness that the Federation de la Haute Couture et de la Mode has learned of the passing away of Josephus Thimister, whose avant-garde style, elegance and skills in cutting have, for many years, contributed to the creative momentum in Paris," the body said in a statement.

Thimister worked for Balenciaga's luxury ready-to-wear lines from 1991 to 1997 before setting up his own house. In 2005, he became head designer at French luxury footwear label Charles Jourdan. Born in Maastricht in 1962, he studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp before working under Karl Lagerfeld and Jean Patou at the House of Patou in Paris. In 2010, having closed down his own house due to lack of investment, he was persuaded to return to Paris couture by federation chief Didier Grumbach.

The ensuing collection called "Bloodshed and Opulence" featuring Cossack jackets splattered with fake blood and trousers scorched with brown paint to resemble burns was described by one critic as "stark, bleak and disturbing". "I am not a political



In this file photo in Paris shows Dutch designer Josephus Thimister posing for the photographer. —AFP

person but fashion has a voice and it is time to express my views," Thimister, who was of Russian-Dutch extraction, told an interviewer at the time.

"We are still feeling the aftershock of the Bolshevik Revolution and the rise of communism, when Europe fell apart," he said. "We have never recovered. We have lost our soul and our spirit." According to France's Fashion Dictionary, Thimister made his mark at Balenciaga "through his minimalist style and great skills in cutting in modernizing the house's image". — AFP

Newly discovered Artemisia canvas sells for record 4.8 mn euros

A newly discovered canvas by the female 17th-century Italian painter Artemisia Gentileschi sold for almost 4.8 million euros (\$5.3 million) on Wednesday, a record for the artist, auction house Artcurial said. The sale came amid a surge of interest in the rare female baroque painter's extraordinarily dramatic work, and smashed the base estimate of between 600,000 and 800,000 euros. The painting "Lucretia" depicts the ancient Roman noblewoman who killed herself after being raped, showing her bare-breasted and about to plunge a dagger into her chest.

It was discovered only recently, in a private collection in the southeastern French city of Lyon, where it had been stored unrecognized for some 40 years. After a "long bidding battle" over the telephone, the painting was sold in Paris for 4,777,000 euros to a European collector, the French auction house said. It nearly doubled the previous record for her work — 2.8 million euros for a painting of Saint Catherine sold in Paris in 2017. It is extremely rare for Artemisia works to come on the market.

After years of obscurity, Artemisia (1593-1654) is now recognized as one of the greatest painters of the post-Caravaggio era and one of the few to match the great Baroque master's sense of drama and light. Her status as of the few female painters of the period has also fuelled a surge of interest in her work and life. "The interest in older paintings is growing," said Matthieu Fournier, director of the department of old masters at Artcurial, and art expert Eric Turquin in a statement. "For the first time we are seeing contemporary art collectors migrate towards classical art", they added. Turquin had earlier said the work is "worthy of the great museums of the world" and "comes to us in an exceptional state of conservation". In a sign of Artemisia's growing prominence, the National Gallery in London will next year stage the first major exhibition of her work in Britain, bringing together 35 works from around the world. —AFP

Kite-surfers maneuver their kites at Dakhla beach in Morocco-administered Western Sahara.—AFP photos



Disputed Western Sahara becomes kitesurfing hotspot

In the heart of disputed Western Sahara, a former garrison town has become an unlikely tourist magnet after kitesurfers discovered the windswept desert coast was perfect for their sport. In Dakhla, an Atlantic seaport town punctuated with military buildings in Morocco-administered Western Sahara, swarms of kitesurfers now sail in the lagoon daily. “Here there is nothing other than sun, wind and waves. We turned the

adversity of the elements to our advantage: that’s the very principle of kitesurfing,” said Rachid Roussafi.

After an international career in windsurfing and kitesurfing, Roussafi founded the first tourist camp at the lagoon at the start of the 2000s. “At the time, a single flight a week landed in Dakhla,” the 49-year-old Moroccan said. Today, there are 25 a week, including direct flights to Europe. “Dakhla has become a world

destination for kitesurfing,” said Mohamed Cherif, a regional politician.

Tourist numbers have jumped from 25,000 in 2010 to 100,000 today, he said, adding they hoped to reach 200,000 annual visitors. The former Spanish garrison is booming today with the visitor influx adding to fishing and trade revenue. Kitesurfing requires pricey gear—including a board, harness and kite—and the niche tourism spot attracts well-off visitors of all nationalities. Peyo Camillade came from France “to extend the summer season”, with a week’s holiday costing about 1,500 euros (\$1,660).

Only the names of certain sites, like PK 25 (kilometre point 25), ruined forts in the dunes and the imposing and still in-use military buildings in Dakhla, remind tourists of the region’s history of conflict. In the 1970s, Morocco annexed Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony, and fought a war with the Algeria-backed Polisario Front from 1975 to 1991, when a ceasefire deal was agreed.

A United Nations mission was deployed to monitor the truce and prepare a referendum on Western Sahara’s independence from Morocco, but it never materialized. Without waiting for the political compromise that the UN has been negotiating for decades, hotels have sprouted from the sand along the coast, and rows of streetlights on vacant lots announce future subdivisions.

Good communication

“The secret to success is to develop kitesurfing with good communication focused on the organization of non-political events,” said Driss Senoussi, head of the Dakhla Attitude hotel group. Accordingly, the exploits of kitesurfing champions like Brazilian Mikaili Sol and





the Cape Verdian Airton Cozzolino were widely shared online during the World Kiteboarding Championships in Dakhla last month. The competition seemed to hold little interest for Dakhla's inhabitants however.

Only a few young people with nothing to do and strolling families found themselves on the beach for the finals. Just as rare are the foreign tourists who venture into the town of 100,000 residents to shop. Like her friends, Alexandra Paterek prefers to stay at her hotel, some 30 kilometers from downtown. "Here is the best place in the world for learning kitesurfing," said the 31-year-old Polish stewardess. On her understanding of the broader regional context, she said: "It's an old Spanish colony and they have good seafood, for sure."

Like many tourists, she was under the impression that the area belonged to Morocco, as the destination tends to be marketed in the travel industry as "Dakhla, Morocco". That angers

the Polisario, which wants independence for the disputed region and tried last year in vain to sue businesses it said were "accomplices to the occupying military power."

The independence movement is now focused on challenging commercial deals between Morocco and the European Union that involve Western Sahara, according to the group's French lawyer Gilles Devers. Moroccan authorities are looking actively for investors for their development projects on the west coast, the most ambitious being the Dakhla Atlantique megaport with a budget of about \$1 billion to promote fishing.

Environmental concerns

On the lagoon, surrounded by white sand and with its holiday bungalows, "there is a struggle between developing aquaculture and tourism," said a senior regional representative, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "One has less impact on the envi-

ronment, but the other generates more revenue and jobs," said the representative, adding that "pressure from real-estate investors is very high." With the influx of tourists, the protection of the environment has become a major concern. "Everything is developing so quickly... we need to recycle plastic waste and resolve the issue of wastewater," said Rachid Roussafi.

Daniel Bellocq, a retired French doctor, worries for the future of this lagoon, that was "once so wild" that he has kitesurfed in for 20 years. "There is green algae that wasn't there before, it's becoming a septic tank," he said. Regional councillor Cherif, though, insists the bay is clean, saying: "All the hotels are equipped with wastewater management systems." For him, the real threat is from plastic waste, whether it is dropped by tourists or brought by sea currents.—AFP



Havana at 500: A city in four portraits



Cuban fisherman Roberto Molina, 69, walks at the Malecon -esplanade along the waterfront- in Havana.—AFP photos

Half a century since its founding by Spanish colonists, the Cuban capital Havana has become a byword for Latin American romance and revolutionary nostalgia. As the city prepares to celebrate its 500th anniversary on November 16, AFP interviewed four Havana residents, whose lives reflect its history and its recent changes.

1959 Chevy

Yosbel Sosa, 33, drives what he calls a “time machine”—a black Chevrolet Impala with red and white seats, dating to 1959, the year of late leader Fidel Castro’s revolution. In it, he drives tourists around the city’s historic sites: the restored dome of the Capitol, the colonial mansions, Art Deco buildings, Revolution Square and the picturesque Malecon seafront promenade.

“It helps to have an old-fashioned car,” he says. “Tourists want to visit the old part of town and learn the history of what happened 500 years ago.” Yosbel was studying law but gave up to work in the tourism sector, where he can earn more than the usual \$50 monthly salary of a state employee. The island received 4.75 million tourists last year.

After a day driving the classic car around, he takes public transport to get home to his wife and two children. “Sometimes I leave for work very early and I come home late when my children are already asleep,” he says. “It makes me sad not to see them and play with them. But my family is happy with my job.”

Fisherman’s memories

Roberto Molina is one of the many people who sit on the Malecon with a fishing rod dangling in the Atlantic. At 69, he has spent nearly half his life fishing like this, his face weather-beaten, walking down to the sea each day from his home a few hundred meters away. Hundreds of fishermen of fortune like Molina catch what they can with hook and line to eat or sell to private restaurants.

“There are fish in Havana, he says. “But you have to be the first to catch them.” In 1994 tens of thousands of people took to the sea from this bay in rafts, trying to flee the economic crisis that stemmed from the collapse of Cuba’s ally the Soviet Union. Crowds gathered on the Malecon to protest, Molina recalls. “Then he came along,” he says, miming the shape of a



Cuban fisherman Roberto Molina, 69, holds a fish at the Malecon -esplanade along the waterfront- in Havana.

beard on his chin to refer to Fidel Castro. “And everyone went home.”

When not fishing, Molina takes walks, queues to do paperwork and picks up food parcels provided by the state. All with good humor. “Havana people are cheerful,” he says. “If you succeed today, all the better. If you don’t succeed tomorrow, too bad. One way or another you’ll succeed in the end.”

Street artist

Beatriz Estevez, 29, gave up her law studies and turned to the arts. Reforms in the years since Fidel Castro stepped aside in 2008 have made it easier for Cubans to be self-employed. Beatriz makes handicrafts and stands dressed as a silver fairy in the busy Calle Obispo, a street of shops and restaurants, where tourists give coins to take photos with her.

“My dad yelled” when he heard of her decision, she says. “But then he said, my daughter, you are earning in a day what I make in a month. I can’t complain.” Beatriz’s father is a naval engineer. At the end of the day she takes a boat across the bay to her home in Regla. Her neighborhood is like “a country village in the city.” “People from Regla are more spiritual and relaxed,” she says. “Everyone knows one other. People sit down in the doorways of their homes.”



Cuban Yosbel Sosa, 33, drives his Chevrolet Impala ‘59 through the streets of Havana, in search of tourists.

Longevity

Doctor Alina Gonzalez does not have a car, and recent US oil sanctions have made the public transport network even more difficult. So the 57-year-old geriatric doctor walks the two kilometers (1.2 miles) to her job at the Centre for Longevity Studies. “We doctors are of the people. We are ordinary Cubans and that helps our patients to relate to us,” she says. “The problems they have are the same ones we have.”

Since 1962, a US embargo have made daily life in Cuba hard. Complications have increased in recent months after the US tightened trade restrictions further.

Alina looks after some of Cuba’s 2,000 centenarians. The island’s 11.2 million people have an average life expectancy of 79.5 years—comparable to that of the rich world. “I like what I do a lot. I love my profession, I love my family, I love my city. I love my country,” Alina says.

“It is true that there are difficulties. Sometimes it is a challenge. I have private talks with my refrigerator. I open it and say, what am I going to cook today?” Alina is married with a daughter. Seven years ago she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She underwent treatment and survived. She says she has an appetite to continue enjoying Havana, “walking through its beautiful parks, along the Malecon, in all its splendor, for a long time yet.”—AFP



Artifacts are displayed at the new exhibition Revealed: The Hunt for Bin Laden at the 9/11 Memorial Museum in New York City.—AFP photos



New York exhibition details 10-year hunt for Bin Laden

With a model of the Pakistani villa where he lived and a video of Barack Obama explaining his hesitancy about approving the raid, a new exhibition details the operation that killed 9/11 mastermind Osama bin Laden. "Revealed: The Hunt for Bin Laden", which opens Friday at the September 11, 2001 attacks museum in New York, plots the ten-year search for the brains behind the single deadliest attack ever on the United States.

"It's like being in the front row of history," Alice Greenwald, president and chief executive of 9/11 Memorial Museum, told AFP. "We get an insider's view into ... how the raid was actually conducted from the people that were there," she added. The US intelligence services-led manhunt culminated overnight on May 1 and 2, 2011 with operation Geronimo, the commando raid that left Bin Laden, the orchestrator of the atrocity that killed almost 3,000 people and destroyed the Twin Towers, dead.

The exhibition, which will run until May 2021, contains no shattering revelations, such as possible collaboration between American and Pakistani spies. But using around 60 objects, including some seized in the villa, and dozens of photos and videos, visitors can see the work of the intelligence services as they try to find the Al-Qaeda leader. The timeline includes bin Laden's departure without a trace from the Tora Bora mountains in Afghanistan in late 2001 and the key identification of his messenger Abu Ahmad al-Kuwaiti and his jeep in Peshawar in 2010.

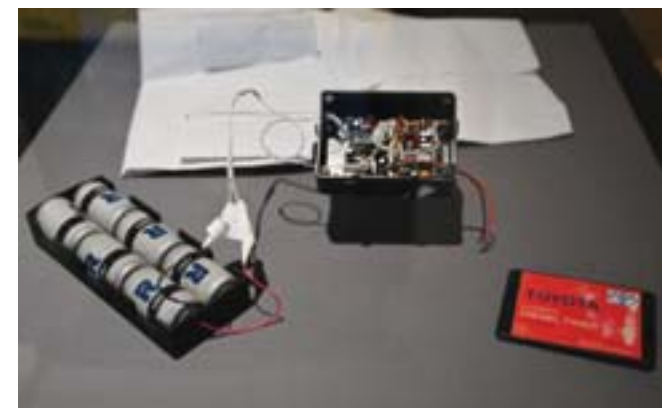
Al-Kuwaiti would lead US agents to the quiet garrison city of Abbottabad, 50 miles (80 kilometers) from the Pakistani capital Islamabad and the villa where a mysterious figure would take a few steps inside the compound every day, like a prisoner. The Americans nicknamed him "Pacer" before becoming convinced over time that he was the man they had been looking for—bin Laden. The exhibition focuses on the "human" story of the operation through multiple interviews: from senior officials who validated the assault to Navy Seal commandos who invaded the villa. Anonymous agents explain how they understood that to find bin Laden they had to follow people who were likely to help him. "The gravity of that decision-making and the burden of that decision-making really comes across in this exhibition," said Greenwald. "I think it is a reminder of how decisions that are so momentous actually get made," she added, referring to dilemmas about whether to attack the residence when it puts lives at risk.

US intelligence services were blamed for not sharing information that might have thwarted the attacks. The exhibition celebrates their renewed unity, tenacity and courage. It displays a cap worn by an agent who suffered head injuries when a bomb triggered by a double agent exploded at a meeting that they hoped would lead to new information about bin Laden.

Clifford Chanin, deputy director for programs at the museum, said the exhibition is the result of over three years of discussions with government agencies, during which he wondered "how much of the story would they let us tell because it's a classified mission." "We don't know what we weren't able to get because we don't know what it is. (But) in terms of the artifacts loaned to us and the access we got to people for interviews, we got much further into this story than anybody," he said.

The death of bin Laden, announced by Obama just before midnight eastern US time on May 1, 2011, was celebrated across the United States and particularly in New York, where there were spontaneous rallies in Times Square and at the World Trade Center site. For many Americans the exhibition is a moment to savor that night again.

"It's awe-inspiring to me to see the amount of work and effort, commitment done on behalf of our loved ones, by the military and intelligence division," said Patricia Reilly, whose sister died on the 101st floor of one of the towers. "It just brings back that feeling of gratefulness that I felt on the day that the president announced that they had killed bin Laden. We had waited so long for justice," she added.—AFP



Awe-inspiring

After 9/11, rivalries between the various branches of the

The rediscovered memories of a Viennese Jewish family



Masterpieces of the Japanese miniature collection of the Ephrussi family are pictured during in Vienna, Austria.—AFP photos



English artist Edmund de Waal, a descendant of the Ephrussi family, speaks during the opening of an exhibition of the Ephrussi family collection.

Another moving chapter in the story of the Viennese Jewish Ephrussi family—made famous in the book *The Hare With Amber Eyes*—has been written after around 40 members of the family reunited in the Austrian capital for the first time in decades. The family's history is one of splendor in Vienna's Belle Epoque heyday before persecution under the Nazis scattered the family across the world.

Last week Vienna's Jewish Museum inaugurated an exhibition tracing the Ephrussis' story, the centerpiece of which is the Japanese sculptures that accompanied the family on their tumultuous journey. One of them is the eponymous hare from the book by ceramic artist and Ephrussi descendant Edmund de Waal.

The status the Ephrussis enjoyed in Vienna at the turn of the 20th Century is clear from the edifice that still bears their name on the Ringstrasse, the showcase boulevard of the former Habsburg capital. With its five floors, neo-classical columns, ballroom, courtyards and gilded coffered ceilings, the ornate residence embodied the stunning success which took the Ephrussis from their roots as grain traders in Odessa to prominent figures in the world of finance in Vienna and Paris.

But after the Nazis annexed Austria in 1938, the family's downfall was swift: their property was seized, their home occupied, their bank erased from the business register. De Waal's great-grandfather Viktor Ephrussi left the country with two suitcases and died stateless in 1945.

Astonishing moment

The exhibition retraces these steps through objects that descendants of the family have donated to go on show in the city that expelled their ancestors. Gathered for the occasion from all over Europe, the United States and Mexico, some of the family previously had only a vague idea of what earlier generations had suf-



(Left to right) Director of the Jewish Museum Danielle Spera, Edmund de Waal, Vienna's mayor Michael Ludwig, Victor de Waal and his partner Mrs Esther pose for a picture during a reunion in Vienna, Austria.

ferred. "People have moved on as well, away from Vienna, so to us, to our generation and my children, it's a long time ago," Edward de Waal, another one of Viktor Ephrussi's great-grandsons, told AFP at the exhibition's unveiling.

It was Edmund de Waal who took up the challenge of retelling the family story in his best-selling book, which has so far been translated into 20 languages. "It's an astonishing moment in my life to walk around such a profound visualization and dramatization of our collective family story," 55-year-old Edmund said at the exhibition preview.

An 'unresolved' story

The thread that runs through his book is the spellbinding collection of 264 netsuke, tiny and exquisitely crafted Japanese sculptures first collected by Viktor Ephrussi's Parisian cousin Charles. Charles Ephrussi was a key figure in the Paris art world in Paris of the time, friend of Auguste Renoir and patron of other Impressionist artists, as well as the inspiration for the character of Swann in the works of Marcel Proust.

Charles sent the netsuke collection to Vienna as a wedding present for his cousin, where it was saved from the Nazis' plunder and passed down the generations, crossing continents as it went,

before arriving back in Vienna. For the next several years they will be one of the highlights of the Jewish Museum's collection. But Edmund de Waal is keen to stress that "this is not a perfect, beautiful story... about a family coming back and all being OK". He stresses that it remains "unresolved".

Part of the netsuke collection was recently auctioned to raise money for refugee charities and de Waal sees disturbing echoes from the past in the current political situation. "This a terrible moment in Europe for refugees, a terrible moment for anti-semitic rhetoric, a terrible moment for trying to cross a border," he says. As for the Palais Ephrussi itself, it was given back to the family in 1949.

However, as the city was still occupied and heavily damaged from the war, it fetched just 30,000 dollars when sold. Last week the palace played host to a reception for the family presided over by Victor de Waal, Edmund's 90-year-old father. Victor is one of those who intends to take advantage of a recent law enabling descendants of victims of Nazi persecution to apply for Austrian citizenship. A gesture he wants to dedicate to his grandfather Viktor Ephrussi, forced from the city all those years ago.—AFP

Comic

Word Search

Newspaper

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

DNATSSWENFIRISSNOIHS AF
 NARTXEMOVIESWNOTRPECUB
 OLISNH EEPLESEDISTEIVUNS
 ITSEA EVD E I ITTENETTELEN
 TEENDSMTIVNARIXCRTNTYM
 PFOLVUTNETLICARHOTTTUTU
 IEHEEEORIUOLOEONPLSRLL
 RLFDRVEBCAARLNSOETAECO
 CYASTOIRISTPINTLRINCUC
 STMBIRISSSTORSADOUSOCOE
 BSIOSCEIIEUEELLOPLYRML
 UELOENFHPONACTPYUHUOBL
 SFYKMIOOSINORGNMZTHSIK
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 DLNDNIEDTILIUIEELACWWA
 SPAATPAVCCKBSIESEENORR
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 WEATHERSSENISUBOURFANT
 LANOITANRETHNICOMPUTERS

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| ADVERTISEMENTS | CULTURE | INTERNATIONAL | PUZZLES |
| ARTS | EDITORIAL | INTERVIEWS | RACK |
| BOOKS | ENTERTAINMENT | LETTERS | REPORTER |
| BUSINESS | EVENTS | LIFESTYLE | REVIEWS |
| CIRCULATION | EXTRA | LOCAL | SECTIONS |
| CLASSIFIEDADS | FAMILY | MOVIES | SPORTS |
| COLUMNISTS | FASHION | NEWSSTAND | SUBSCRIPTION |
| COLUMNS | FINANCE | OBITUARIES | TECHNOLOGY |
| COMICS | HEADLINES | OPINION | TELEVISION GUIDE |
| COMPUTERS | HEALTH | PEOPLE | TRAVEL |
| COOKING | HOME | POLITICS | WEATHER |
| CROSSWORD | INSERTS | PUBLISHER | |

Yesterday's Solution

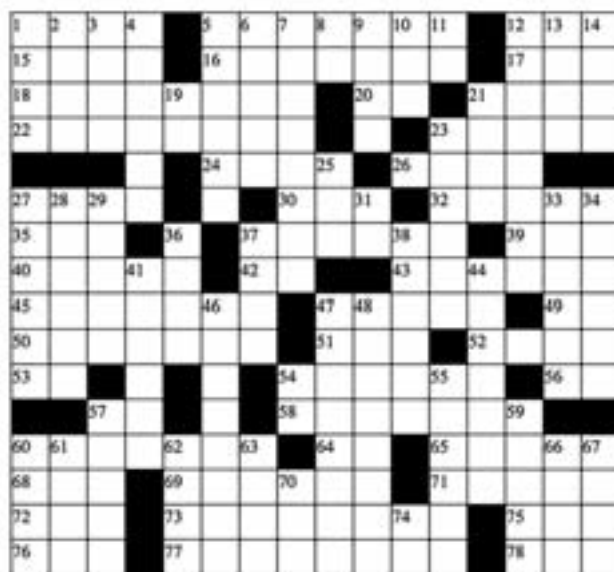
New York City 2

SLAITHWEMSEIILISREVINDU
 JIPIRESILFUEUTATS OHNQ
 JFSANITZGASREDBNAREPUNE
 RALETNADHPRSSOSOPCURLA
 RIZZEUEQFEIHAIDORATYHEN
 ISIGCEMNOGOSUPHOSWETS
 ELUKIMOSOLLOKKNDA
 GIRERERJALLFOREULNEN
 ECIFAEETRSASIDGMPLMHE
 LQSEFPWHPESEVURCESBMB
 DASTLSIYGNDLAFALANM
 QASLAPPNADLLOLHESPA
 CLEERAILNOLLOLHESPA
 OLMRTPLRINLLOLHESMET
 REECNEANKSOLLLOLHESIR
 NYDEERSEIUGOOLLOLHESRETE
 ICINCSPLESOPARTNHT
 ENATISAVNEIWORKSBNUE
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| APOLLO THEATER | FOXY | NETS | SILICON ALLEY |
| BALLET | HIGH LINE | NEWSPAPERS | STATEN ISLAND FERRY |
| BROOKLYN ZOO | LINCOLN TUNNEL | NYPO | STATUE OF LIBERTY |
| BROOKLYN BRIDGE | MADISON AVENUE | OPERA | THE CYCLONE |
| CARNEGIE HALL | MEDIA | PARADES | TOURISTS |
| CENTRAL PARK | MERCADALS | PIERS | TV NETWORKS |
| CHRYSLER BUILDING | NETS | PORT | UNIVERSITIES |
| COLLEGES | MONUMENTS | PROSPECT PARK | VENCORS |
| DIVERSE | MUSEUM HILE | RANGERS | WAVE HILL |
| ELLIS ISLAND | MUSEUMS | ROCKEFELLER CENTER | YANKEES |
| ENTERTAINMENT | | | |

The hidden message is: JOHN J FITZ GERALD POPULARIZED THE NICKNAME, THE BIG APPLE, IN HORSE RACING ARTICLES IN THE NINETEEN TWENTIES

Crossword 2360



ACROSS

- A fine grained mineral having a soft soapy feel and consisting of hydrated magnesium silicate.
- A steep-walled semicircular basin in a mountain.
- An elaborate song for solo voice.
- Flatter in an obsequious manner.
- The quantity contained in a case.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
- Of or relating to measure.
- A state in midwestern United States.
- Italian violinist (1782-1840).
- An unofficial association of people or groups.
- Tropical woody herb with showy yellow flowers and flat pods.
- An endorsement made in a passport that allows the bearer to enter the country issuing it v l.
- A light touch or stroke.
- Any plant of the genus *Inula*.
- (British) A title of respect for a member of the English gentry ranking just below a knight.
- Nonresinous wood of a fir tree.
- Silence (someone) by uttering "shush!".
- Being nine more than ninety.
- Animal food for browsing or grazing.
- Of or pertaining to or characteristic of Italy or its people or culture or language.
- An associate degree in nursing.

- Alternatively, a member of the family Nymphaeaceae.
- (Irish) The sea personified.
- The last imperial dynasty of China (from 1644 to 1912) which was overthrown by revolutionaries.
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
- 100 pfennigs equal 1 Deutsche Mark.
- A state in New England.
- A region of central Europe rich in deposits of coal and iron ore.
- A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
- Type genus of the Alaudidae.
- An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
- Psychoactive substance present in marijuana.
- Tropical American timber tree with edible fruit (canistel).
- A rotating disk shaped to convert circular into linear motion.
- A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
- One at a disadvantage and expected to lose.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

- A tool for tamping (e.g., for tamping tobacco into a pipe bowl or a charge into a drill hole etc.).
- A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
- Water chestnut whose spiny fruit has two rather than 4 prongs.
- Melon having yellowish rind and whitish flesh.
- Small voraciously carnivorous freshwater fishes of South America that attack and destroy living animals.
- A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
- A nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (trade name Clinoril).
- Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
- Fail to do something.
- A reptile genus of Iguanidae.
- A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
- Brightly colored carnivorous fish of western Atlantic and West Indies waters.
- Cloak that is folded or wrapped around a person.
- A member of a rural Finnish people living in eastern Russia.
- An organization of independent states to promote international peace and security.
- A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
- A resident of Ohio.
- A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
- (Babylonian and Assyrian) Goddess of love and fertility and war.
- Short and fat.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- An atom or molecule or radical or ion that forms a complex around a central atom.
- A genus of tropical Asian and Malaysian palm trees.
- A thin wedge of material (wood or metal or stone) for driving into crevices.
- Tropical Asian starlings.
- Capital and largest city of Lebanon.
- A favorite saying of a sect or political group.
- Mexican liquor made from fermented juices of an Agave plant.
- Herbs or shrubs or small trees.
- An ornamental but poisonous flowering shrub having narrow evergreen leaves and clusters of fragrant white to pink or red flowers.
- Small fatty fish usually canned.
- A soft gray malleable metallic element that resembles tin but discolors on exposure to air.
- Talks a great deal about uninteresting topics.
- The state prevailing during the absence of war.
- The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
- King of Saudi Arabia since 1982 (born in 1922).
- Chevroletian somewhat larger than the kanchil.
- Cheap showy jewelry or ornament or clothing.
- Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- God of love and erotic desire.
- A member of the Shoshonean people of Utah and Colorado and New Mexico.
- (Greek mythology) A maiden seduced by Zeus.

Yesterday's Solution

POMATTACAPADES
 ACECHILDBEDULL
 CHAMAEAAADVERSE
 ASTERNOLDIEBED
 BEDAUBACCRA
 AMARILLO NATURAL
 POLKANEBBGDA
 PULAEAMYEARN
 AS TMVAURA LAOS
 LEITITSARARIA
 ADALIABAICTT
 BATISARBWBHB
 ANOSMIA MINAALB
 SINBADBANHOSEA
 AMIADHEGITHAENL
 LEARMINICABDAD

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings



00:20 The 13th Warrior
02:10 Terminal Velocity
04:00 Mean Dreams
05:55 Valerian
08:20 Sinister Squad
10:00 UFO
11:40 Valerian
14:05 The Amazing Spider-Man 2
16:25 Enter The Warrior's Gate
18:20 American Ninja III
20:05 X-Men: The Last Stand
22:00 Layer Cake
23:55 Mom And Dad

14:15 Live PD: Police Patrol
14:45 Live PD: Police Patrol
15:10 It Takes A Killer
15:40 It Takes A Killer
16:05 Homicide Hunter
17:00 The First 48
18:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
19:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
20:00 It Takes A Killer
20:30 It Takes A Killer
21:00 The First 48
22:00 Homicide Hunter
23:00 Kids Behind Bars: Life Or Parole



00:50 Wolves And Warriors
01:45 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
02:40 I'm Alive
03:35 The Aquarium
04:25 Wolves And Warriors
05:15 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
06:02 Wildest Europe
06:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
07:36 Dark Days In Monkey City
08:00 Dogs 101: New Tricks
08:25 Crocodile Hunter
09:15 Crocodile Hunter
10:10 Crikey! It's The Irwins
11:05 Crikey! It's The Irwins
12:00 The Steve Irwin Story
13:50 The Crocodile Hunter: Best Of Steve Irwin
18:25 Crikey! It's The Irwins
22:05 The Steve Irwin Story
23:55 Crikey! It's The Irwins

00:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
00:30 Impractical Jokers
01:15 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA
01:45 Teachers
02:08 Friends
02:31 Friends
02:55 South Park
03:20 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA
03:45 Teachers
04:08 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
04:35 South Park
05:00 Friends
07:10 House Of Food
08:00 House Of Food
08:55 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA
09:20 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA
09:50 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA
10:15 Friends
12:20 Ridiculousness
14:30 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team
15:25 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team
16:15 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team
17:10 Friends
19:30 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
21:30 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA
22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
22:30 Patrice O'Neal: The Elephant In The Room
23:30 Most Ridiculous



00:10 EastEnders
00:40 Mrs Wilson
01:40 Holby City
02:35 Bad Move
03:00 Back
03:25 The Coroner
04:10 Father Brown
05:00 Doctors
05:30 Doctors
06:00 Doctors
06:30 EastEnders
07:00 Holby City
07:55 The Coroner
08:40 Death In Paradise
09:35 Father Brown
10:20 Bad Move
10:40 Bad Move
11:05 Doctors
11:35 EastEnders
12:10 The Coroner
12:55 Father Brown
13:45 Death In Paradise
14:40 Bad Move
15:05 Bad Move
15:30 Doctors
18:30 Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators
19:20 Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators
20:10 Mrs Wilson
21:10 Line Of Duty
22:15 The Good Karma Hospital
23:05 Press

00:30 Dodo Heroes
01:20 Animal Airport
01:45 Animal Airport
02:10 My Cat From Hell
03:00 Dirty Jobs
03:50 Somebody's Gotta Do It
04:40 Tanked
05:30 Animal Airport
06:15 My Cat From Hell
07:00 Dirty Jobs
07:45 Somebody's Gotta Do It
08:30 UFOs: The Lost Evidence
09:15 Strip The Cosmos
10:45 Cliptastic
11:10 Tanked
12:00 UFOs: The Lost Evidence
12:50 Storm Chasers
13:40 Invent It Rich
14:30 Man v Expert
15:20 Dirty Jobs
16:10 Tanked
17:00 Animal Airport
17:50 My Cat From Hell
18:40 Dirty Jobs
19:30 The Carbonaro Effect
20:20 Dirty Tricks
21:10 Breaking Magic
21:35 Breaking Magic
22:00 The Next Great Magician
22:50 Keeping Up With The Kruger
23:40 Tanked



00:00 The First 48
01:00 Homicide Hunter
02:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
02:55 Psychic Kids
03:50 It Takes A Killer
04:20 It Takes A Killer
04:45 Live PD: Police Patrol
05:10 Live PD: Police Patrol
05:30 The First 48
06:15 Homicide Hunter
07:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
08:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
08:20 The First 48
09:05 The First 48
09:50 Homicide Hunter
10:35 Homicide Hunter
11:30 Homicide: Hours To Kill
12:25 The First 48
13:20 Crimes That Shook Britain

00:00 Dead Of Night
01:00 Twisted Sisters
02:00 The Lies That Bind

03:00 True Nightmares
05:30 Murder Chose Me
06:20 Betrayed
07:10 Swamp Murders
08:00 Evil Online
08:55 Evil Online
09:50 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
10:45 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
11:40 Betrayed
12:35 Murder Chose Me
13:30 Murder Chose Me
14:25 Swamp Murders
15:20 Deadly Affairs
16:15 Deadly Affairs
17:10 Betrayed
18:05 Evil Stepmothers
19:00 Evil Stepmothers
20:00 Disappeared
21:00 Disappeared
22:00 Bride Killa
23:00 Til Death Do Us Part



00:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
01:00 Alex & Co.
01:25 Alex & Co.
01:50 Evermoor Chronicles
02:40 Alex & Co.
03:05 Binny And The Ghost
03:55 Evermoor Chronicles
04:45 Alex & Co.
05:10 Alex & Co.
05:35 Violetta
06:25 Binny And The Ghost
06:45 Rolling With The Ronks
06:50 Rolling With The Ronks
07:00 Raven's Home
07:25 Raven's Home
07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
07:55 That's So Raven
08:20 That's So Raven
08:45 K.C. Undercover
09:10 Bizaardvark
09:35 Jessie
10:00 Jessie
10:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
10:50 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
11:15 Bizaardvark
11:40 Bizaardvark
12:05 Liv And Maddie
12:30 Liv And Maddie
12:55 K.C. Undercover
13:20 K.C. Undercover
13:45 Bunk'd
14:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
14:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
15:00 Disney Cookabout
15:25 Shake It Up
15:50 A.N.T. Farm
16:15 A.N.T. Farm
16:40 Penny On M.A.R.S
17:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
17:10 Amphibia
17:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
18:00 Raven's Home
18:30 Raven's Home
19:00 That's So Raven
19:30 That's So Raven
20:00 Stuck In The Middle
20:30 K.C. Undercover
21:00 K.C. Undercover
21:30 Shake It Up
22:00 Shake It Up
22:30 Disney Mickey Mouse
22:35 Liv And Maddie
23:00 Liv And Maddie
23:25 Jessie
23:50 Jessie



00:00 PJ Masks
00:30 The Lion Guard
01:00 Sofia The First
01:25 Disney Junior Music Nursery Rhymes
01:30 Gigantosaurus
02:00 PJ Masks
02:25 PJ Masks
02:50 Paprika
03:00 Zou
03:15 Zou
03:30 Henry Hugglemonster

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

00:15 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
01:05 Masters Of Disaster
01:50 Mythbusters
02:35 Salvage Hunters: The Restorers



03:20 Misfit Garage
04:05 Misfit Garage
04:50 How Do They Do It?
05:15 How Do They Do It?
05:35 Garage Gold
06:00 Shed And Buried
06:20 Garage Gold
06:45 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
07:35 Alaskan Bush People
08:20 Gold Rush
09:55 Alaska: The Last Frontier
10:45 Salvage Hunters
11:30 Misfit Garage
12:20 Misfit Garage
13:05 Shed And Buried
13:30 Garage Gold
13:55 Salvage Hunters
14:40 Alaska: The Last Frontier
15:30 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
16:15 Bad Chad Customs
17:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier
17:50 Gold Rush
18:40 How Do They Do It?
19:05 How Do They Do It?
19:25 Misfit Garage
20:15 Misfit Garage
21:00 Salvage Hunters: Classic Cars
21:50 Bad Chad Customs
22:40 Wheeler Dealers
23:30 Deadliest Catch: The Bait



00:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
00:35 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
01:00 Boyster
01:20 Boyster
01:45 Counterfeit Cat
02:10 Counterfeit Cat
02:30 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
02:55 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:20 Boyster
03:40 Boyster
04:05 Counterfeit Cat
04:30 Counterfeit Cat
04:50 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
05:15 Supa Strikas
05:35 Supa Strikas
06:00 Lab Rats
06:25 Lab Rats
06:50 Phineas And Ferb
07:15 Phineas And Ferb
07:40 Gravity Falls
08:05 Gravity Falls
08:30 Phineas And Ferb
08:55 Phineas And Ferb
09:20 Big City Greens
09:40 Big City Greens
10:05 Phineas And Ferb
10:25 Phineas And Ferb
10:50 Lab Rats
11:10 Lab Rats
11:35 Phineas And Ferb
11:55 Phineas And Ferb
12:20 Gravity Falls
12:45 Gravity Falls
13:10 Furiki Wheels S1 Shorts
13:15 Phineas And Ferb
13:40 Phineas And Ferb
14:05 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
14:30 Phineas And Ferb
14:55 Phineas And Ferb
15:20 Big City Greens
15:45 Big City Greens
16:10 Supa Strikas
16:35 Supa Strikas
17:00 Disney 11
17:25 DuckTales
17:50 Phineas And Ferb
18:15 Phineas And Ferb
18:40 Supa Strikas
19:05 Lab Rats
19:30 Lab Rats
19:55 Furiki Wheels S1 Shorts
20:00 Disney 11
20:25 Gravity Falls
20:50 Phineas And Ferb
21:15 Phineas And Ferb
21:40 DuckTales
22:05 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
22:30 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
22:55 Furiki Wheels S1 Shorts
23:00 Furiki Wheels
23:25 Dude That's My Ghost
23:50 Dude That's My Ghost



00:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
01:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
02:00 E! News
03:00 Famously Single
04:00 The Platinum Life
06:00 WAGs Atlanta
07:00 WAGs Atlanta
08:00 E! News: Daily Pop
08:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
09:50 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
10:45 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
11:40 E! News
12:35 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
13:30 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
14:25 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
15:20 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Botched
19:00 E! News
20:00 The E! People's Choice Awards 2019
22:00 Live From The Red Carpet



00:30 What Really Happened
01:15 History's Most Hated
02:00 UFO Hunters
02:45 How The Earth Was Made
03:30 Fifth Gear
04:15 Rome: Rise & Fall Of An Empire
05:00 Ancient Aliens
05:45 Cryptid: The Swamp Beast
06:30 UFO Files
07:15 What Really Happened
08:00 How The Earth Was Made
08:45 Fifth Gear
09:30 Rome: Rise & Fall Of An Empire
10:15 Ancient Aliens
11:00 Decoding The Past
11:45 UFO Files
12:30 What Really Happened
13:15 UFO Hunters
14:00 How The Earth Was Made
14:45 Fifth Gear
15:30 Rome: Rise & Fall Of An Empire
16:15 Ancient Aliens
17:00 Decoding The Past
17:45 UFO Files
18:30 What Really Happened
19:15 UFO Hunters
20:00 How The Earth Was Made
20:45 Fifth Gear
21:30 Rome: Rise & Fall Of An Empire
22:15 Ancient Aliens
23:00 MysteryQuest
23:45 UFO Files



00:20 The Curse Of Oak Island
01:05 Storage Wars
01:25 Storage Wars
01:50 American Pickers Best Of
02:35 Pawn Stars
02:55 Pawn Stars
03:20 Hunting Hitler
04:10 Project Impossible
05:05 Forged In Fire
06:00 Road Hawks
06:45 The Curse Of Oak Island
07:30 Storage Wars
07:50 Storage Wars
08:15 American Pickers Best Of
09:00 Pawn Stars
09:20 Pawn Stars
09:45 Hunting Hitler
10:30 Project Impossible
11:15 Forged In Fire
12:00 American Pickers
12:45 DuckTales
13:30 American Pickers
14:15 Counting Cars
15:00 Football Godfathers
18:45 Mountain Men
19:30 Mountain Men
20:15 Mountain Men
21:00 Unidentified: Inside America's UFO Investigation
21:50 Ancient Aliens
22:40 Ancient Aliens
23:30 American Pickers



00:10 Fish Tank Kings
01:00 Straight To The Source: Korean Food
01:25 48 Hrs Destination
01:50 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
02:40 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
03:30 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
03:55 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
04:20 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces: Snow Special
05:10 Access 360 World Heritage
06:00 David Rocco's Dolce India
06:25 David Rocco's Dolce India
06:50 Confucius Was A Foodie
07:40 Sara's Australia Unveiled
08:05 48 Hrs Destination
08:30 Late Nite Eats
08:55 United Plates Of America
09:20 Log Cabin Fever
10:10 Somewhere In China
11:00 Access 360 World Heritage
11:50 David Rocco's Dolce India
12:15 David Rocco's Dolce India

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Work seems intense today but you possess a powerful, persistent drive and are a hard, steady worker. Some people find you deep, with a sense of mystery. You are willing to do work today that others would not go near, quietly putting an end to some difficult problems. Later today you might be helping others to learn technical techniques so that you will eventually not be so overburdened. You are able to direct others in your business and this may lead to a leadership position. You busy yourself this afternoon in some project that you had been putting off for some time. You will be creating a new form or format for presentation to some very important people. Some people may wonder how the business could ever get along without you.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are friendly and encouraging today. You somehow manage to find a creative environment or the creative in any environment, so as to provide the most beneficial area in which to work or play. Others want to join you in this project. You have a built-in sense of what the public wants and can always come up with just the right image. You find it easy to work with the emotions and feelings of others and with great imagination. You are great with kids and big on animals, sports and the outdoors. You are an instant umbrella of warmth, friendship and self-expression. Clear decisions affecting others could be made easily at this time. These are the attitudes and circumstances in which you find yourself teaching others.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

There are lots of energy and action this day. Your dreams and imaginings keep bumping into the real and the actual. You quickly pick up on what is expected of you, and you are accountable. You are learning to plan ahead as you see your goals begin to develop. You do the best you can in every situation that you experience. It takes judgment to make the choices that best benefit a situation. Consider this: your powers of perception are particularly sharp at this time, and you would do well now to work out the details of any plans that you have previously made. This evening, you may feel focused and even a bit radiant. You are either entertaining company or being entertained yourself tonight. The snacks are low calorie and nutritional-good for you!



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may realize that you may have been stagnating lately. There are opportunities today to rise above the mundane. Saying or writing with style comes naturally as you seek to write a program or progress report. It may seem that you are always writing technical material, and just now there is a desire for variety with some of your work. You may find yourself at a used book store reading all types of subjects. You may even find yourself involved with two books at once. Increasing your vocabulary expertise can be a fun ongoing activity, and you could find a friend to join you. Your ability to discriminate real breakthroughs and to spot new trends makes you able to work in areas at the very fringe of technology these days-more technology to write.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Before work begins this morning, conversations with co-workers could be in the religious realm or at least, spiritual. You have little interest in spirituality that is rampant these days. You could probably bring imagination and religious understanding to physical and scientific studies. Opportunity for further thought regarding the spirit tends to crop up during the day-you are open to new ways of thinking. Continued success on the career level may point to your abandoning some of your dreams. This afternoon, family matters tend to take precedence and you may have to help a young person to understand the word-concentration. You may even think of some fun exercise or game to play with the kids that will help with concentration.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You enjoy working hard and being organized and you exercise skill and discipline in anything that affects your career and reputation. You have the perfect combination to be in a management position at this time. If you think you are ready, this time may be best for pushing through any changes you may want to make in your career. You have good insight into all social activities that are around you and if you are not careful, you may find yourself involved in many club or social group responsibilities. You like to facilitate, compromise and otherwise show your talents-like a coat of many colors. New and creative projects help you to change that feeling of being in a rut. Chatting with neighbors or siblings this evening will help you to relax.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

An emphasis on discipline with regard to work and health is a keynote of the cycle now dawning in your life. Procedures, scheduling, details: you may become weak in some areas unless you take steps to correct any deficiencies. Deficiencies may only be when you fail to meet a deadline. You can do this... You will be pleased with your progress. Otherwise, you will have to run faster just to avoid falling behind. A desire for variety marks this phase and this especially applies to romantic experience and artistic taste. The latter tend to focus on literature and poetry. Communication with distant family members is possible this afternoon. A sociable, congenial, slightly frivolous orientation sets in this evening. A social involvement can be enjoyable.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This is a good time for promoting yourself and for letting others know what you have to offer. Right now, the key to career moves involves attending to nagging details-whatever you have neglected before. This is a time during which you may be able to move ahead with your ambition and your general life's purpose. You would make an excellent teacher of philosophy or religion-you cannot help but communicate these subjects to others and enchant all who come to know you. Your understanding of the unity behind appearances, along with the ability to put these thoughts into words, is a rare and valuable gift. You would make a good director, photographer, choreographer, etc. You like working with mental images.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You might like to ignore responsibilities and do some socializing, but realities demand you tend to business and forget your friends for the moment. This is one of the best times to make progress, push forward and rise to prominence. It will be hard for you to do wrong-all the cycles are working in your favor. Your career seems to get the support you need and this is one area of life that runs smoothly. You seem to understand what the public wants and mass marketing could be a natural for you. This is also a time when you may marry or take on a new role in the community or with other people. Your mind is ever on communication, how you present yourself, especially when negotiating. Enjoy cooking a new recipe tonight.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Independence on the part of people or events somehow challenges your authority today. Also, the forces of change assert themselves now and again, managing to overrule and overturn whatever you have managed to secure. Observing others, you will find that some people just naturally deal well with upheavals and adjustments-yet others may find much difficulty. You have great discipline and may find it enjoyable to teach young people how to solve difficulties they may uncover. You can demonstrate a good sensitivity and understanding about the needs of others. You know just the right words that will communicate positive messages. This could involve political issues. If not community politics, possibly club politics.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Opportunities may go against your own sense of responsibility. Career choices may require that you temporarily neglect the home. This is a tough call, and some compromise is perhaps the best way to a workable solution. This is a perfect time to be assertive and to move forward in your career decisions. You are driven when it comes to fulfilling your ambitions and carving out a career. There is no lack of energy or drive here, and nothing can stand in your way. Everything is poured into making the right moves-the correct decisions. You are outgoing, enthusiastic and always diplomatic-everybody's favorite. Politics or some other public career seems inevitable. Some experienced politician may tutor you in this process if that is what you want.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You enjoy working with whatever is psychological-the hidden, vulnerable, sensitive areas of the mind and self. You can handle material that is sensitive or taboo without batting an eye. This interest in all that is psychological makes you an excellent teacher. You also have a natural grasp for writing and after you worked with research, reports and projects, you may decide to go in a different direction. The different direction is what today is about. Where could you apply your talents and be the happiest your drive in the area of psychology, meditation, renewals of direction or perhaps, concentration on a focus to improve, may mean an advice column. If you are not with a mate, this may be a time you will meet someone very special.

Country Codes

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

CLINIC PAGE



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248 33 199

Friday, November 15, 2019

DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY
Canadian Board of Otolaryngology
Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.
Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons-Canada
A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases

- Diagnosis/Treatment of General Ear, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatric
- Minimally Invasive Endoscopic sinus surgery including Balloon sinuplasty
- Minimally Invasive Microscopic Endoscopic Ear surgery
- Diagnosis & treatment of Otolgy and Audology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
- Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
- Diagnosis & treatment of snoring & obstructive sleep apnea in clinic without surgery
- Diagnosis & treatment of voice and swallowing disorders
- Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

Salmiya, Belajat Street, Tel: 1881122

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

ACADEMIC CERTIFICATES:

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

SPECIALIZED IN:

- Dermatology & Cosmetic Treatments.
- Laser Treatments.
- Hair Transplant & Restoration.
- Body & Face Contouring.
- Injectable Fillers & Botox.

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

Specialized in:

- 1- Diagnostic and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty), Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4- Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6- Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24-hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring

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Dr Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj
ENT Specialist

- Laryngology Fellowship - Canada
- Fellow of the European Board Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery
- Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- Member of the British Laryngological Association
- Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- Member of the European Laryngological Society

Specialized in:

- Management of benign and malignant vocal cord lesions.
- Vocal cord augmentation.
- Treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
- Adenotonsillectomy using latest techniques.
- Thyroid surgery.
- Surgery for the deviated nasal septum.
- Endoscopic sinus surgery.
- Treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- Treatment of snoring.
- Treatment of vertigo.

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

daralshifa
Email: aahaddad@daralshifa.com

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

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

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- Hemorrhoids, fistula & anal fissure surgeries
- Breast surgeries
- Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

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DENTAL



Dr. Waleed Al-Sayid
Consultant, Prosthodontic, Implantologist & Cosmetic Dentistry



Dr. Nancy Johnson
Dental Consultant & Oral Surgeon



Dr. Subhrajit Sankarasingh
Orthodontist



Dr. Amna Alshakhs
Pedodontist



Dr. Adnan Al-Qasbi
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Classifieds

CHANGE OF NAME

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Surname: Mathu Mathew) as per my Adhar Number 2190 5103 3734 for all purpose. I also undertake of effect the change in all my other public documents.

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(C 5472) 13-11-2019

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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
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Clouds will increase gradually with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain later on.

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate south westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 14/11/2019 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	29 °C	19 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	30 °C	12 °C		
ABDALY	29 °C	13 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	30 °C	18 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	25 °C	21 °C		
AHMADI	25 °C	23 °C		
NUWAISIB	29 °C	15 °C		
WAFRA	31 °C	13 °C		
SALMY	- °C	- °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	11/15	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	28 °C	13 °C	SW-SE	12 - 40 km/h
Saturday	11/16	Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery with a chance for rising	25 °C	15 °C	SW-NE	15 - 45 km/h
Sunday	11/17	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times with a chance for	25 °C	16 °C	SE	22 - 50 km/h
Monday	11/18	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	24 °C	15 °C	SE-NE	15 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	04:49
Sunrise	06:11
Zuhr	11:32
Asr	14:32
Sunset	16:54
Isha	18:13

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	31 °C
MIN. Temp.	11 °C
MAX. RH	66 %
MIN. RH	14 %
MAX. Wind	SW 14 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Business

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2019

39 'Suffering' German economy narrowly escapes recession

40 UAE and Egypt launch \$20 bn joint program

41 Boeing drops automation system used to build 777



SIDDHPUR: Camels and their owners gather during a Cattle Fair near Saraswati river bank at Siddhpur, some 120 kms from Ahmedabad. — AFP

Love of cash hinders India's move to a digital economy

99.3% of the junked currency back in banking system

SATARA: India's dependency on cash may slow the country's transition to digital payments despite large numbers of internet and mobile phone users. For many citizens living in rural areas, cash is still the bedrock of daily existence because of a lack of facilities. Sudhir Shinde, a farmer from Satara district in India's western state of Maharashtra says he withdraws more money from his bank than required as the money vending machine in his village has not been operational for months.

"If I need money urgently, I must make a 32 kilometer trip to Satara town, which is not always possible," said the 37-year-old sugarcane farmer Shinde, while buying fertilizers for his winter-sown crops. "I always keep money in hand assuming family emergencies like hospitalization or any other such urgent requirements". Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi backed a shock ruling in November 2016 to outlaw 86% of cash in circulation to target undeclared "black money" and fight corruption.

The demonetization got rid of old 500 and 1,000 rupee banknotes and Modi said that would boost the country's digital economy, unearth unac-

counted wealth and reduce the use of cash. But 99.3% of the junked currency is back in the banking system, suggesting that only a minuscule portion was unaccounted illicit money or fake currency notes, and India's addiction to cash is now, perhaps stronger than ever.

Cash wanted

One of the key objectives of the note ban was to discourage the use of cash, but India continues to see a surge in currency in circulation even as economic growth has slowed to a six-year low. Central bank data shows that since the controversial demonetization gambit, currency in circulation has grown, rising 17% to 21.1 trillion rupees (\$295.7 billion) as of the end of March 2019.

The ratio of currency in circulation to GDP has risen to 11.23% as of March 2019 up from 8.69% at the end of March 2017. To be sure, digital transactions have grown, rising 19.5% in value in 2018/19 and 22.2% in 2017/18, the Reserve Bank of India said in a report. On whether India's efforts to move to electronic payments has been slow, the central

bank noted what it said in a statement last week.

To promote digital payment, the RBI has established "state of the art payment systems that are efficient, convenient, safe, secure and affordable" that has resulted in a rapid growth in retail digital payment systems. Meanwhile, it will promote the use of e-payments for parking, fuel and toll collection, and has ordered banks not to charge bank customers for online transactions in the National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) system from January 2020.

Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests people in Asia's third-largest economy prefer cash for various reasons, including to avoid paying higher taxes after a national sales tax was implemented in mid-2017 and higher charges from retailers. Smaller stores who don't enjoy high volume sales often charge customers extra, to make up for what they must pay the service partners for electronic transactions. Higher operating costs have also led to a slowdown in opening of new ATMs, which has led to cash hoarding.

India has the fewest ATMs per 100,000 people among BRICS nations, according to the Interna-

tional Monetary Fund. Banks hobbled with bad debts have struggled to absorb the cost of software and equipment upgrades mandated by the central bank last year, along with higher land costs in the cities. Other factors such as the country's rural-urban divide have also affected the migration to electronic payments. "Digital economy has certainly gained momentum in metros, cities and to some extent in semi-urban belts. But it has not spread to rural belts or the informal sector where financial illiteracy is the issue," said Rupa Regre Nitsure, chief economist at L&T Financial Holdings.

"It is difficult to predict when the shift would happen because general education and financial education are different things," she added. India is the world's second-largest internet and mobile phone market by number of users, trailing only China. However, a survey conducted by social media firm LocalCircles shows a large number of people still prefer cash transactions over digital with an average of 27% people having paid for 50-100% of purchases over the last 12 months without a receipt.—AFP

Business

Global stocks dip as Chinese economic slowdown deepens

FX risk off sentiment 'alive and well'

LONDON: World stocks nudged down yesterday as Chinese economic data slowed in October and Germany only narrowly avoided a recession in the third quarter, adding to worries about the global growth fallout from the US-China trade war. MSCI's All-Country World index, which tracks shares in 47 countries, was down 0.14% after start of trading in Europe.

European shares fell after data showing the German economy grew just 0.1% in the third quarter, avoiding edging into a mild contraction thanks to consumer spending, but remaining weak nevertheless. The pan-European STOXX 600 index was down 0.2%, while Germany's DAX fell 0.4%. "Obviously it's better than expected, but actually I would argue is that it's a hollow victory because in effect it makes a fiscal response less likely," said Michael Hewson, chief markets analyst at CMC Markets in London.

"I think if they'd gone into a technical recession, the pressure to loosen the purse strings so to speak would have been much greater." Bond markets also appeared to largely shrug off the growth reading, with most 10-year euro zone bond yields were down around 2 basis point in early trade, with Germany's 10-year benchmark at -0.32%.

In Asia, stocks fell after soft economic data in China and Japan showed the trade war between Beijing and Washington was hitting growth in some of the world's biggest economies. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan fell 0.3%. Japan's

Nikkei stock index fell further, dropping 0.8%. Australia's S&P/ASX200 wiped earlier gains to close 0.5% higher, while Shanghai blue chips were up 0.15%, supported by expectations that the gloomy figures would add to the case for stimulus.

China's factory output growth slowed significantly more than expected in October, as weakness in global and domestic demand and the drawn-out Sino-US trade war weighed on broad segments of the world's second-largest economy. Fixed asset investment, a key driver of economic growth, rose just 5.2% from January to October, against expected growth of 5.4% and the weakest pace since Reuters record began in 1996. China and the United States are holding in-depth discussions on a "phase one" trade agreement, and cancelling tariffs is an important condition to reach such a deal, the Chinese commerce ministry said yesterday.

China's industrial production growth slowed sharply in October, with the 4.7% year-on-year rise well below forecasts for 5.4%. Investment growth hit a record low and retail sales also missed expectations. The weak figures also come as market confidence about a resolution being reached weakens, with a new Reuters poll showing most economists do not expect Washington and Beijing to strike a permanent truce over the coming year. Trump offered no update on the progress of negotiations in a policy speech on Tuesday. The Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday that talks had snagged on



DHAKA: People stand in a line to purchase onions, as prices have shot past \$2.35 per kg, in Dhaka yesterday. — AFP

farm purchases. US futures were down 0.14%, following a record-high close on the S&P 500 on Wednesday. Worries about spiraling violence as anti-government protests intensify in Hong Kong have also soured investor sentiment. Protesters paralyzed parts of Hong Kong for a fourth

day, forcing school closures and blocking highways and other transport links in a marked escalation of unrest in the financial hub. Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 0.8% to a fresh one-month low. In currency markets, safe havens such as the Japanese yen and Swiss franc gained. — Reuters

US household debt nears \$14 trillion

NEW YORK: Borrowing by American households rose for the 21st straight quarter in the July-September period and is more than \$1 trillion above the prior peak set in 2008 at the outset of the global financial crisis, the New York Federal Reserve Bank said Wednesday. Amid attractive interest rates, total household debt rose 0.7 percent to \$13.95 trillion in the July-September period compared to the prior three months, driven higher by mortgage borrowing as well as student and auto loans, according to the latest quarterly data.

The New York Fed also released data showing that borrowers from mostly black neighborhoods were having greater difficulty in paying their student loan debts than borrowers from mostly white and Hispanic neighborhoods. Rising wages and low unemployment also helped cut bankruptcies 13.4 percent below year-ago levels to 186,000. The rate of new delinquencies among mortgage borrowers was also the lowest on record.

"New credit extensions were strong in the third quarter of 2019, with auto loan originations reaching near-record highs and mortgage originations increasing significantly year-over-year," Donghoon Lee, a New York Fed research officer, said in a statement. "The data suggest that households are taking advantage of a low-interest rate environment to secure credit." Student loans rose \$20 billion to \$1.5 trillion, with 9.26 percent becoming past due by 90 days or more.

In a separate publication, the New York Fed also said data from racially segregated neighborhoods showed borrowers from area codes with a majority of black residents were more likely to borrow and about twice as likely to default on student loans than borrowers from majority-white areas, according to the New York Fed. The relatively higher default rates likely reflect a struggle to repay amid large income disparities, with average student loan balances approaching 100 percent of average income in black-majority areas, the New York Fed said. — AFP

Japan's economy nearly stalls in Q3

TOKYO: Japan's economy ground to a near standstill in the third quarter with growth at its weakest in a year as the US-China trade war and soft global demand knocked exports, keeping pressure on policymakers to ramp up stimulus to bolster a fragile recovery. Private consumption also cooled from the previous quarter, casting doubt on the Bank of Japan's view that robust domestic demand will offset the impact from intensifying global risks. The world's third-largest economy grew an annualized 0.2% in the third quarter, slowing sharply from a revised 1.8% expansion in April-June, preliminary gross domestic product (GDP) data released by the government showed yesterday. It fell well short of a median market forecast for a 0.8% gain and marked the weakest growth since a 2.0% contraction in July-September last year.

"Domestic demand had made up for some of the weakness in external demand, but we can't count on this to continue," said Taro Saito, executive research fellow at NLI Research Institute. "A contraction in October-December GDP is a done deal. The economy may rebound early next year, but will lack momentum." The feeble data may heighten calls from lawmakers for the government to boost fiscal spending to support the economy, which many fear will take a hit from a sales tax hike that took effect in October.

Private consumption grew 0.4% in July-September, slowing from a 0.6% increase in the previous quarter,

despite stronger demand from households which sought to beat the October tax hike. Capital spending, a rare bright spot in the economy, rose 0.9% in the third quarter, accelerating from the previous three months. That helped domestic demand add 0.2 percentage point to growth. But external demand knocked 0.2 percentage point off GDP growth, as exports were hit by the protracted China-US trade war that has upended world supply chains and hurt the global economy.

Trade war strains

Markets have been on edge in the past month as the United States and China seek to complete an initial trade deal to de-escalate their bitter tariff row. US President Donald Trump on Tuesday dangled the prospect of completing the initial deal with China "soon," but has so far offered no new details on the negotiations. The dispute has already hit big exporters hard. Japanese electronic giant Panasonic Corp last month reported a 12% drop in its second-quarter operating profit due to slumping sales of electric components to factory owners.

Moreover, worsening ties with South Korea had "a big impact" on already weak exports, Economy Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura told reporters after the GDP data release. "Exports will remain weak due to slack demand for cars and electronics parts. In addition, declines in tourists from South Korea are having large negative effects," he said. Relations between South Korea and Japan began to deteriorate late last year following a diplomatic row over compensation for wartime forced laborers during Japan's occupation of Korea. The dispute has spilled into trade as Tokyo put restrictions on exports of semiconductor materials to South Korea, Japan's No.3 trading partner. — Reuters

Business

‘Suffering’ German economy narrowly escapes recession

Berlin passes fiscal stimulus to bolster consumption

BERLIN: The German economy narrowly avoided an expected slip into recession in the third quarter as consumers, state spending and construction drove a 0.1% quarterly expansion in Europe's largest economy. On an annual basis, German gross domestic product expanded 0.5% from July through September after a 0.3% expansion in the previous three months, seasonally adjusted figures from the Federal Statistics Office showed yesterday.

“The German economy got away with a black eye: the technical recession could be avoided,” Deka bank analyst Andreas Scheuerle said. But he added that it is still too early to give the all-clear. The economy is “suffering from enormous global political uncertainty” and its flagship industry, the automobile sector, is not running smoothly anymore, Scheuerle said.

Manufacturers, whose exports have been a bedrock of German economic strength for decades, are struggling with weaker foreign demand, tariff disputes sparked by US President Donald Trump's trade policies and business uncertainty linked to Britain's decision to leave the European Union. The automobile sector, a key driver of overall growth, is also having trouble adjusting to stricter regulation following an emission cheating scandal and managing a broader shift away from combustion engines toward electric cars. “We do not have a technical recession, but the growth numbers are still too weak,” Economy Minister Peter Altmaier told ARD public television.

S Africa's SAA cancels flights, offers striking employees new wage

JOHANNESBURG: South African Airways (SAA) has cancelled flights scheduled for today and tomorrow because of a pending strike by a majority of employees but said yesterday it hoped its revised wage offer would avert the walkout at the state-run carrier. SAA has failed to turn a profit since 2011 while relying on state bailouts to fund a growing financing gap.

The airline is also without a permanent chief executive and has yet to file annual results for the two most recent financial years because of concerns about its viability as a business. Unions representing about 3,000 of its 5,000-member workforce said on Wednesday that cabin crew and other workers would strike over wages and plans to cut more than 900 jobs.

The carrier said on Wednesday it might never recover if the strike went ahead. Unions are demanding an immediate 8% increase, and after late night negotiations SAA said yesterday it would offer a 5.9% raise from April when it hopes to have secured the necessary funding. “The increase is not immediately available. We can only

Fiscal stimulus

Finance Minister Olaf Scholz has suggested abolishing the Soli income tax surcharge for most employees from 2021, which could boost household spending by providing overall stimulus worth about 10 billion euros a year. Speaking to the Bundestag lower house of parliament, Scholz defended his decision that high-income people should continue to pay the 5.5% surcharge. Despite criticism from Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative bloc, lawmakers passed the plan with the support of majority of the ruling coalition.

The BDI industry association called on Berlin to abolish the surcharge for all employees and bring the move forward to 2020 - a move which would cost the government another 10 billion euros. “The federal government must do more to increase public investment and improve conditions for private investment,” BDI Managing Director Joachim Lang said. France, where growth this year is expected to overtake that of Germany thanks to its more domestically driven economy, has already implemented a package to counter the “yellow vest” protests of the last year.

The French package worth 10 billion euros is made up mainly of tax breaks for low-income workers and pensioners this year, followed by a 5 billion euro cut in income tax next year. The European Commission expects the French economy to grow 1.3% this year while in Germany it expects a 0.4% expansion. Eurostat said yesterday that the combined economy of the 19 countries sharing

implement it once we have secured funding,” SAA spokesman Tlali Tlali said during a live interview on television news channel eNCA.

“We have a meeting scheduled for today at 2 o'clock and we are hopeful we will be able to resolve the issue ... It will include all the unions ... and if the meeting yields positive results we will then activate some contingency plans that will allow us to reinstate flights,” said Tlali. Only flights directly operated by SAA would be affected. Flights by subsidiaries Mango, SA Express and SA Air Link, as well as those of private operators, would not be affected, SAA said.

Indefinite strike

The airline said it expected unions to respond at an emergency meeting at 1200 GMT. Unions said the strike would begin at 4 am today and go on indefinitely. They are calling on SAA's check-in, ticket sales, head office, technical staff and ground staff to take part. Zazi Nsibanyoni-Mugambi, president of the South African Cabin Crew Association (SACCA) that is leading the strike with the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), said the new offer was unacceptable.

“They really need to get serious, 5.9% simply won't cut it. It's just over 1% more than we are asking for and we think it's attainable, so last night we asked SAA (negotiators) to go and get a fresh mandate from management,” said Nsibanyoni-Mugambi. Numsa spokeswoman Phakamile Hlubi-Majola said the union was still consulting its members on whether to accept or reject the revised wage offer. — Reuters



BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel arrives for the weekly cabinet meeting at the Chancellery in Berlin. — AFP

the euro grew 0.2% in the third quarter from the second, giving a 1.2% year-on-year expansion.

Germany's Statistics Office said private households increased their spending from July through September while state spending and construction also supported overall growth. Exports edged up on the quarter while imports remained broadly flat, the office said, suggesting that net trade could

have been a positive impulse on the economy as well. Alexander Krueger from Bankhaus Lampe said that he expected more meagre growth rates in the coming quarters as the trade outlook remained clouded. “The economic slowdown in China, the global trade dispute and the Brexit chaos are all pointing to a weaker economic momentum,” Krueger said. — Reuters

Chinese economy shows further signs of weakness

BEIJING: China's economy showed further signs of strain yesterday with data showing a sharp slowdown in consumer spending and factory production, while investment growth hit a record low as the trade war with the US takes its toll. The readings are the latest to give a headache to leaders in Beijing, who are battling the tariffs row with the US as well as a weak global outlook, while trying to control a debt mountain at home.

Officials said retail sales, a key gauge of spending by the country's vast army of consumers, grew 7.2 percent on-year last month, down 0.6 percentage points from September and short of expectations. The figures from the National Bureau of Statistics also showed growth in industrial production came in at 4.7 percent, from 5.8 percent a month earlier.

And fixed-asset investment expanded 5.2 percent in the first 10 months, the lowest recorded since comparable data began being reported in 1998. Forecasts had been for 5.4 percent. Liu Aihua at the NBS warned China was facing a “complex international economic situation” with downward pressure on the domestic economy. And analysts warned of more head-

winds for the world's number two economy, which expanded six percent in the third quarter, its worst reading in almost three decades.

“Not only were last month's data weak, but further weakness lurks ahead,” warned Martin Lyng Rasmussen of Capital Economics, saying he expects more monetary easing. Authorities have unveiled a series of measures to kickstart growth including major tax and rate cuts as well as scrapping foreign investment restrictions in its stock market. “Worsening growth prospects will likely push Beijing to do more to support growth,” said Ting Lu, chief China economist at Nomura International.

The latest figures follow data at the weekend showing factory prices falling at their fastest pace in three years as orders slow down, while consumer price inflation is only being supported by a surge in the cost of pork owing to an African swine fever epidemic. “China's manufacturing sector remained sluggish in October with no immediate respite likely, despite previous monetary easing measures,” warned Betty Wang of ANZ Research.

There are hopes that the trade stand-off with the United States can be resolved with the two close to a partial agreement that could see them begin to roll back the tariffs each have imposed on hundreds of billions of dollars-worth of goods. But Rasmussen warned that while optimism about a mini trade deal could “provide a boost to corporate investment in the near term”, the focus would soon afterwards shift to “more intractable issues that we think will eventually lead the (wider) trade talks to break down”. — AFP

Business

Egypt's textiles plan reveals backing for the state sector

State industry overhaul plans follow pre-2011 sell-offs

AL-MAHALLA AL-KUBRA: Behind an unassuming, scruffy perimeter wall, Egypt's largest textiles factory has languished for decades, losing money and breeding discontent as the economy shifted away from socialist-style planning. Far from letting go of Misr Spinning & Weaving Co in the Nile Delta city of Al-Mahalla Al-Kubra, however, the government has placed it at the centre of an ambitious plan to rescue loss-making national firms in the once-thriving textiles sector.

The plan shows how the government has reversed a trend under President Hosni Mubarak, who was ousted in 2011, of turning public enterprises over to the private sector, doubling down instead on its support of state firms. It will also provide a crucial test of Egypt's ability to boost job-creating industry as it exits a three-year reform program backed by the International Monetary Fund.

Economists have praised the reforms for contributing to stability and growth, which was a robust 5.6% in the third quarter. But outside the energy sector, the economy has been shrinking. The story of the Mahalla factory reflects a longer-term decline. It was set up by Egyptian businessmen in 1927 to make textiles from Egypt's renowned long-staple cotton, until then exported raw to manufacturers abroad. But the country's army rulers nationalized it in the early 1960s along with most of Egyptian industry, and Egypt's textile sector was later overtaken

by competition from Asia. Apart from a brief period of hiring in the post-2011 political turmoil, the factory had all but stopped taking on new workers for decades, allowing the workforce to shrink as employees retired or resigned. At a small grocery store opposite the company gate, workers last month said the company's three plants were operating at no more than 40% capacity. "Machines have stopped and the three plants are not productive. Every month, salaries are 10 days late and annual bonuses are delayed," said one worker who asked not to be identified.

Turnaround plan

Early this year the Ministry of Public Enterprise unveiled a 21 billion Egyptian pound (\$1.3 billion), 30-month plan to remake the state textile industry, which accounts for 65% of Egypt's textile manufacturing. It plans to merge 23 textile companies into 10, shift the operations of some plants to others nearby, and shut down further plants altogether to concentrate production in Kafr Al-Dawar near Alexandria, Helwan in southern Cairo and Mahalla, a city of half a million people. The Mahalla plant will absorb the operations of the adjacent, loss-making El Nasr Spinning, Weaving and Dyeing Co.

The government wants to sell some assets, mainly land, to finance new machinery to quadruple capacity, and is considering expand-

ing into labor-intensive garment production, Public Enterprise Minister Hisham Tawfik told the American Chamber of Commerce in April. Management compensation will be improved and linked to performance. The government was studying other loss-making sectors including chemical, pharmaceutical and metallurgical industries to develop turnaround plans, Tawfik said. He confirmed to Reuters this week that the plan was still on track.

Egypt needs to absorb 3.5 million new entrants to the labor market over the next five years, according to the IMF, but opening to the private sector - which international lenders say is crucial to longer-term economic success - has faltered. Economists say the increasing state presence may come at the expense of growth, and that the goal of reviving state industry seems motivated by a mix of ideology, a desire to tighten economic and political control, and concern that labor discontent could ignite broader unrest.

Economic grievances were widely cited during protests that broke out in Cairo and several other cities, including Mahalla, in late September. But the state faces a daunting task turning the textiles sector around. "We need to understand their economics. What sort of return on investment do they foresee?" said Mohamed Kassem, a board member of the Egyptian Federation of Industry and textile executive. "If their

calculations are not accurate they will lose a lot of money. If they are able to compete with India and China then they'll hit a home run."

Losses

Egypt's 23 spinning and weaving companies had a combined loss of more than 2.59 billion pounds in the year to June 2018, Finance Ministry figures show. Only one, Port Said for Spinning and Weaving, made a profit - at 5.2 million pounds. The Mahalla factory lost 667.2 million Egyptian pounds in the year to June 2018 on revenue of only 1.07 billion pounds, according to the most recently published figures. Assets stood at 1.57 billion and liabilities at 4.9 billion pounds. The number of employees is now 18,000, Tawfik said in April, down from around 35,000 at its peak in the 1970s and 1980s. The factory, spread over more than 600 acres, has long been a hotbed of political dissent.

Protests over pay and working conditions in December 2006 soon spread to other manufacturing centers in Egypt, and in 2011 its workers went on strike in the lead-up to Mubarak's overthrow. Services and infrastructure in Mahalla and surrounding villages, including its sewage network and roads, had been steadily deteriorating and unemployment had increased, the factory worker said. "It is the economic and living conditions that drive people to demonstrate," he added. — Reuters

Daimler seeks 1 bn euros in savings at Mercedes-Benz by cutting jobs

FRANKFURT: Tougher emissions rules will hit Daimler's profits in 2020 and 2021, prompting the German carmaker to seek more than 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) in savings from cutting staff costs at its Mercedes-Benz business by the end of 2022, it said yesterday. Daimler shares were down 2.3% in early trading at 52.17 euros, the biggest decline on Germany's DAX blue-chip index, which was down 0.3%.

Management positions will be cut by around 10%, and company said it would also seek more than 300 million euros from cutting personnel costs - plus another 250 million euros in fixed costs - at its trucks business. Daimler said it needed to sell more electric vehicles to meet tougher European Union rules which force carmakers to cut carbon dioxide emissions from cars by 37.5% by 2030 compared with 2021 levels, and following a 40% cut between 2007 and 2021.

The company said it expected to achieve a return on sales from operating activities at Mercedes-Benz Cars & Vans of at least 4% in 2020 and at least 6% in 2022. Mercedes-Benz expects car sales to grow by around 3% in 2020, but said potential trade tariffs and Brexit could depress the return on sales by up to 1%. Earlier this year, Daimler had said it hoped to achieve a return on sales of 3% to 5% at Mercedes-Benz Cars. — Reuters

UAE and Egypt launch \$20 bn joint program

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates and Egypt launched a \$20 billion joint investment program yesterday to develop "economic and social projects". Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan made the announcement during a visit to the Emirati capital by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. "We launched a joint strategic investment platform between the UAE and Egypt worth \$20 billion to implement vital economic and social projects for our brotherly countries," Sheikh Mohammed said in a tweet.

He added that he discussed with Sisi ways to strengthen relations and enhance coordination. The UAE has been a firm regional backer of former army chief Sisi since the military overthrew Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in 2013. The UAE and Egypt are also part of a Saudi-led alliance that 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. Cairo has been seeking investment to boost its sagging economy and create



ABU DHABI: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, attend a welcome ceremony in the Emirati capital's Al-Watan presidential palace yesterday in Abu Dhabi. — AFP

jobs. Poor and middle-class Egyptians have been bearing the brunt of harsh austerity measures since 2016 when the government secured a \$12-billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund in exchange for tough economic reforms. Nearly one in three Egyptians live below the poverty line, according to official figures released in July. The reforms have met with some pushback, fuelled by allegations of graft among the political and military elite. Rare, small-scale protests broke out

in September calling for Sisi's removal after an exiled Egyptian businessman accused the president and top military brass of rampant corruption. Egypt's economy took a battering in the immediate aftermath of the revolution that toppled longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak in 2011. Direct foreign investment has grown to record levels in recent years, but the national debt has ballooned since the pound was floated in November 2016, leading to a sharp depreciation. — AFP

Business

In swaps we trust? Disappearing dollars driving the currency trading dependence

Concerns over year-end dollar squeeze, funding costs

LONDON: As dollars dry up, global finance is growing increasingly dependent on opaque currency trading to keep cash flowing. Banks and other short-term dollar borrowers are becoming ever more reliant on the \$3.2 trillion-a-day foreign exchange swap market, data shows, leaving them dangerously exposed should US lenders stop feeding the system, even if only temporarily.

Swaps users had a scare in September, when the US Federal Reserve had to pump cash into markets as rates in the \$2.2 trillion US “repo” market spiked and spilled into FX swap markets, sending the premium to borrow dollars shooting higher. “It affected us in the FX swaps market a great deal. There was a lot of panic around, spreads widening, increased volatility,” said James Topham, a forex forwards trader at Canadian bank BMO, adding that on Sept 16 “unusually large and persistent” dollar borrowing was evident from clients.

Such reminders of potential disruptions to the “plumbing” of money markets, best exemplified during the 2008 financial crisis, have regulators on guard for anything that could trigger a repeat. Some now fear that swaps could be that catalyst, possibly as soon as the end of 2019, if US banks, the main conduit for dollars, cut back lending to meet cash reserve rules. “Around year-end ... the

normal supply dynamics will be thrown out,” said Topham. Tighter regulations stipulating lenders must hold at least 8% of capital as reserves, rising US protectionism and corporate cash repatriation are all shrinking dollar supply.

Reflecting the increased reliance on currency markets to borrow dollars, FX swap volumes have grown to represent 49% of total currency trading, from 42% in 2013, Bank for International Settlements (BIS) figures from August show. This has led the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the BIS, as well as monetary policymakers such as the European Central Bank, to keep a wary eye as the cost of borrowing dollars has inched higher in the past decade, making it more costly for global banks and companies to fund investments.

Off-balance sheet

Unlike regular ‘spot’ currency transactions, swaps involve two parties swapping one currency for another. Repayment is after a set period and fixed at a forward exchange rate determined by the gap in interest rates on the two currencies. Many central bankers say bank borrowing and funding via swaps, which are typically used for hedging, day-to-day liquidity management or even speculation, is driving

the increase in FX swaps as they are “off-balance sheet”.

This is favorable for banks and companies because the lower their debt, the higher their credit rating. It is also cheaper to hold a smaller amount of debt on the balance sheet. One central bank official said that authorities were keeping an eye on the end-2019 period but they are also concerned about borrowers’ ability to refinance.

“A lot of FX trading activity is very short term. That could expose banks to significant rollover risks,” the official added. Borrowing via swaps could amount to \$14 trillion or more, Claudio Borio, head of the BIS monetary and economic department estimated. And the dollar funding gap, the difference between non-US-banks’ dollar assets and liabilities, may be up to \$1.5 trillion, said Tobias Adrian, director of monetary and capital markets department at the IMF.

“Much of that has to be funded in FX swap markets, and those markets can be fragile,” Adrian told Reuters. While the IMF has “a very granular breakdown” of FX swap borrowing and risk managers typically perform stress tests on banks, Adrian said it remains a “worry”. The central bank official said stress tests implied some banks use swaps for more than 10% of their funding, while the BIS says dollars are on one

side of 90% of all currency trades.

Because dollar demand is so high, lenders ask for a price premium known as the cross-currency basis, which tends to become more negative as dollar shortages deepen.

This is increasingly costly for non-US banks without dollar deposits and dollar-denominated collateral and these must turn to swaps to finance trade and hedge investments. Other dollar-dependent borrowers, particularly in emerging markets, are also suffering. Aside from US banks, potential winners could include suppliers of petro-dollar liquidity such as major oil firms.

Back to basis

Money market traders and regulators do not expect a re-run of the 2008 and 2011 crises, when dollar borrowing dried up outside the United States as US banks hoarded it at home. The September repo rate spike abated as the Fed pumped cash into money markets and swap rates also eased. While the global dollar swap market lacks such a backstop, central banks outside of the United States can provide dollars via “emergency liquidity assistance”, aimed at financial institutions that are facing temporary liquidity problems. — Reuters

Boeing drops automation system used to build 777



WASHINGTON: The Boeing logo is seen during the 70th annual International Astronautical Congress at the Walter E Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC. — AFP

WASHINGTON: Boeing Co has abandoned a key automation system used to make fuselage sections for its 777 jetliners amid reports of reliability issues, and will instead partially switch back to mechanics, the planemaker said yesterday. The company began to build 777 fuselages in 2015 in an upright orientation, with robots drilling holes and installing fasteners, an initiative known as fuselage automated upright build (FAUB).

The world’s biggest planemaker said it had stopped using the system which, according to industry sources, caused problems with reliability and rework issues. Boeing had faced delays last year when the FAUB machine was tried out on existing versions of the 777. Instead, the company will switch to “flex tracks” - an automated method to drill the holes along the circumference of the

airplane that are then fastened manually.

The system was developed by Boeing Commercial Airplanes and has been tested in commercial and defense programs, company spokesman Paul Bergman said in an emailed statement. Implementation of flex tracks for the 777 fuselage began in the second quarter and Boeing expects the transition to be complete by the year-end, Bergman said.

There are no planned changes in total staffing and the company continues to implement robotic systems on areas such as wing manufacturing for the 777X. The setback highlights continuing pressure on the company’s management at a time it is trying to obtain approval to return its grounded 737 MAX jetliner to service before the end of this year. The change in production strategy for the 777 was reported earlier by Bloomberg. — Reuters

Consortium wins massive iron ore deal in Guinea

DAKAR: An Asian-backed consortium said it had won a bid to mine one of the world’s biggest deposits of iron ore, in a remote region of the West African state of Guinea. In a statement, Societe Miniere de Boke (SMB) said it had won a government tender to exploit blocks 1 and 2 of vast iron reserves in the Simandou mountains in the southeast of the country.

The deposits have been dogged by years of controversy, including allegations of bribery. SMB is a joint venture that includes a Guinean transport and logistical company, United Mining Supply; a Singaporean shipping company, Winning Shipping; Chinese aluminum producer Shandong Weiqiao; and China’s Yantai Port. The firm, created in 2014, says it is Guinea’s biggest bauxite exporter.

A source close to the bidding process said SMB won out over Australia’s Fortescue Metals Group because it had promised to export the ore through Guinea, as opposed to trucking it through neighboring Liberia. To do this, it promised to build a 650-kilometre railway line and a deep-water port at Matakong on the Atlantic coast. The source said the consortium mentioned an investment of \$10 billion (9.1 billion euros) over five years.

The Simandou deposits have been estimated at 2.4 billion tons of high-grade ore, which sells at a premium price as it causes less air pollution-

a major problem in China than lower-grade ore when processed into steel. But exploiting the lucrative deposit has been dogged for years by the region’s remoteness, squabbles over mining rights and allegations of corruption. Mining rights that were initially awarded to the Anglo-Australian giant Rio Tinto were handed in 2008 to BSGR, a company controlled by Franco-Israeli businessman Beny Steinmetz.

Legal battles

In 2010, after veteran opposition leader President Alpha Conde came to power, ending Guinea’s long period of authoritarian rule, BSGR’s rights were cancelled. A years-long legal battle ensued, culminating in an agreement earlier this year under which Steinmetz agreed to surrender any claim on mining rights while Guinea promised to drop prosecution for alleged corruption. However, investigations into alleged bribes have been opened in Switzerland, concerning Steinmetz, and in Australia and Britain, concerning Rio Tinto. Guinea has vast resources in raw minerals for industrial use as well as gold and diamonds, but its population of 12.7 million is one of the poorest in the world.

Despite the end of authoritarian rule in 2010, the country remains politically unstable, and deadly protests have erupted over suspicions that Conde wants to change the constitution in order to seek a third term in office. In May, the World Bank sounded a warning of “serious negative effects” on the environment and biodiversity from mining and hydro power schemes. On its website, SMB says it contributed \$600 million to the Guinean economy last year, and its development strategy attaches “primary importance to local results of mining and its environmental consequences.” — AFP

Sports

Hamilton racing the record book for motivation after title celebrations

SAO PAULO: Lewis Hamilton and Mercedes will dig deep for true motivation at this weekend's Brazilian Grand Prix when they return to action for the first time since celebrating a unique sixth drivers' and constructors' double this year.

A week after shaking off their hangovers following Hamilton's sixth title success, the team has to stay focused for two more rounds of the 2019 championship, starting in Sao Paulo and finishing in Abu Dhabi on December 1.

Unexpectedly and, perhaps, significantly, the Silver Arrows will race at the atmospheric and famous Interlagos circuit, where Hamilton won his first title with McLaren in 2008, without team boss Toto Wolff in charge.

Amid a swirl of speculation about his and the team's futures, he has decided to miss a race for the first time in six years with many observers suggesting his focus is less intense and others saying that Mercedes may be preparing to leave F1 for other challenge, including Formula E.

Wolff rejected the idea that any decision to leave was taken when he said "everything indicates that we will stay, but it's not given" and raised concerns about the future for motorsport. "In which direction is the automotive world developing?" he asked ESPN. "In what form is F1 relevant as an entertainment and technology platform? And, as a brand, whose first car was a racing car, do we want to stay on this platform in the long term?"

Predictably, with the major issues settled,

much focus in Brazil will be on the future of the sport in 2020 and beyond — which makes it inevitable that the top drivers and their teams will be watched and analysed closely.

Hamilton, 35 in January, has been linked consistently with a career-ending move to Ferrari if he loses enthusiasm at Mercedes and needs a final new challenge, but he is likely to banish the rumours with a committed showing.

The men of the future — Max Verstappen and Charles Leclerc — will both also be scrutinised for signs that they are ready to be future champions in F1's new age, from 2021, when the sport ushers in a new formula. Dutchman Verstappen, linked with both Mercedes and Ferrari, said this week: "I am happy where I am and I want to win with Red Bull. It's the team that allowed me to enter F1 and there is a sense of loyalty to them. I feel at home here."

He added that he and Hamilton may have appeared to be involved in verbal jousting recently, but that it was nothing serious. "We never quarrelled — we have talked to teach other and I respect him." With Hamilton and his Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas having finished first and second in the drivers' championship, Sunday's race will be more about the 'best of the rest' as Verstappen, Leclerc and his Ferrari team-mate Sebastian Vettel bid to finish third.

For drivers and teams, prize money running into millions of dollars is at stake as Leclerc, third, defends a 14-point advantage on Ver-



SAO PAULO: F1 World Champion, Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton, delivers a press conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil, ahead of the upcoming Formula One Brazilian Grand Prix on November 17. —AFP

stappen, who is five clear of Vettel. Leclerc is expected to take a 10-place grid penalty for taking a new engine, but even that news has not encouraged Verstappen. "I still think it's going to be hard," he said. For Hamilton, it will

be a battle with the record book as he continues his quest to overhaul Michael Schumacher who won seven world titles and 91 Grands Prix. The Briton now has six titles and 83 career victories. — AFP

China swim ace Sun tang faces CAS hearing over doping

MONTREUX: China's swimming star Sun Yang, accused of smashing a blood vial with a hammer, faces an eight-year ban if charges against him are upheld by the Court of Arbitration for Sport on Friday. Triple Olympic champion Sun, winner of 11 world titles and a national hero back home, will appear in person at the hearing in a bid to clear his name of allegations he missed an out-of-competition doping test in September last year.

FINA, the international swimming federation, confirmed in January that the swimmer had used a hammer to smash a vial containing his own blood sample. But the federation sided with the swimmer and cleared him of wrongdoing, finding that testers had failed to produce adequate identification or follow correct protocol during the procedure.

The ruling outraged the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) who took the matter to CAS demanding a ban of between two and eight years for Sun, who served a doping suspension

in 2014, for missing the out-of-competition test.

Sun "will be present" at Friday's CAS hearing and "is expected to testify," CAS secretary Matthieu Reeb told AFP. After being cleared by FINA Sun was able to compete in the World Championships in Gwangju, South Korea, in July, where he won two golds but became a focus of protests from rivals.

Australian Mack Horton refused to share the podium with Sun after coming second to him in the 400m freestyle. Horton received an ovation from fellow swimmers at the athletes' dining hall for his protest.

The court proceedings have been moved from the CAS headquarters in Lausanne to Montreux to cope with an expected high influx of media and will for only the second time in the tribunal's history be conducted in public. Proceedings will be live-streamed on the CAS website.

The first hearing in public, in 1999, also involved FINA, which had found Irish swimmer Michelle Smith De Bruin guilty of doping. Smith requested an open hearing. CAS ruled for FINA, who had found that Smith had tried to dilute her urine sample with alcohol.

The request for a public hearing this time came from Sun, who has battled to clear his name since the scandal blew up. "Public opinion, badly informed, has twisted the facts," Sun said recently on social media. CAS said a ruling will not be issued Thursday but at a later date following court deliberations. — AFP

Chadwick eyes Formula One but on her own terms

LONDON: Jamie Chadwick's ambition is to race in Formula One but with conditions attached — she wants to secure the drive on merit and not because someone pays for her to do so, she told AFP. The self-assured 21-year-old Briton took potentially a big step towards achieving that goal in winning the inaugural W Series title — an all-women single-seater six-race championship raced over 30 minutes and one lap — this year.

Chadwick is fully aware of the challenges facing her in a sport not renowned for female participation. The last woman to line up on the grid of a Formula One race was Italy's Lella Lombardi in the Austrian Grand Prix in 1976. "I want to be there on merit. I don't care if someone pays for me to be in Formula 1 tomorrow, I won't do it as I am not there on merit yet," she said after appearing at the Sport Industry Breakfast Club in London.

"I know if I jumped into an F1 seat tomorrow I would not do women in motorsport justice and I feel morally loyal to that," Chadwick, who has proven herself racing against male rivals, says she wants to know that she at least gave it her best. "If I have the opportunity,

which I believe I do after this year, to race at all levels and I am successful in all of them then I deserve a seat," she said. "If am not then I do not deserve a seat but so long as I have had the opportunity I cannot say I did not have the best shot at it." Chadwick said she was being tapped up in her teens by F1 teams — but there was a very expensive catch to their solicitations. "As a young driver you get phone calls every day," she said. "I had calls from three or four and I sat down with a team when I was 14 years old.

"I could not believe they were interested in me and could not understand why an F1 team would want to take me ahead of anyone else. "The contract came through and the zeroes were ridiculous.

"I thought for a very brief moment maybe they are going to give me this. But quickly I realised, no this is what they want me to pay them!" Chadwick's parents work in finance, which she says counts as a blessing as her desire to drive comes from within her not due to their ambitions. She has been signed up as a development driver by the once-dominant F1 outfit Williams. "I was so lucky the Williams thing came about," she said. "I told them that I could not pay for anything. "I don't think F1 teams should benefit from young drivers constantly being given false hope and led in all sorts of directions throughout their career." Chadwick, who needs 40 Super Licence points to qualify for a drive in Formula One and hopes to accrue some of them by successfully defending her title next year, equates W Series with boarding school in a positive sense. — Reuters

Sports

Friday, November 15, 2019

Shami-led pace pack puts India on top in Bangladesh Test

INDORE: Mohammed Shami led an inspired pace attack to give India the opening day honours after they bundled out Bangladesh for 150 in the first Test yesterday. Shami claimed three wickets, while fellow quicks Ishant Sharma and Umesh Yadav took two apiece to pack off the tourists early in the final session in Indore.

India were 86 for one at stumps after Rohit Sharma was caught behind off paceman Abu Jayed for six. Mayank Agarwal, on 37, and Cheteshwar Pujara, on 43, put on an unbeaten 72-run stand to see off the day's play. Agarwal survived a reprieve on 32 when Imrul Kayes dropped an easy chance at slip off Abu. Pujara looked solid in his 61-ball stay so far as he hit seven boundaries.

But it was the Indian bowlers who stood out after Bangladesh skipper Mominul Haque elected to bat on a green wicket at the start of the two-match series. Yadav, Sharma and Shami took wickets in the morning session before Mushfiqur, who top-scored with 43, and Haque put on 68 for the fourth wicket.

Spinner Ravichandran Ashwin broke the stand after getting Mominul bowled for 37. It was his 250th wicket in home Tests, and he added to the tally by then bowling Mahmudullah for 10. Shami ended Mushfiqur's resistance and struck on successive deliveries to stop the Bangladesh tail from wagging.

Shami bowled Mushfiqur and then trapped new man Mehidy Hasan lbw, prompting the umpires to break for tea. Taijul Islam then played out Shami's hat-trick ball after the break, but was later run out for one. Yadav cleaned up Ebadat Hossain to wrap up the innings in 58.3 overs.

At the start, Bangladesh endured three maidens before getting their first run through Imrul, but he managed just five more before becoming the first wicket. Sharma struck in the next over



INDORE: India's cricketer Mohammed Shami celebrates with captain Virat Kohli after the dismissal of Bangladesh's Mushfiqur Rahim during the first day of the first Test cricket match between India and Bangladesh at the Holkar Cricket Stadium in Indore yesterday. — AFP

to send Shadman Islam back to the pavilion, also for six. Batting remained tough for Mominul and Mohammed Mithun, who was trapped lbw for 13 by Shami finding swing and seam movement. It could have been worse for Bangladesh had India not been sloppy in the field.

Rahane, who spilled three chances at first slip, dropped Mominul when he had made only three, and Mushfiqur survived when put down

by skipper Virat Kohli at third slip. Bangladesh, who lost the preceding Twenty20 series 2-1, had a troubled build-up when star player and captain Shakib Al Hasan was banned for two years, with one year suspended, for failing to report approaches by bookmakers. The series is Bangladesh's first in the new world Test championship currently led by India. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the opening day of the first Test between India and Bangladesh in Indore yesterday:

Bangladesh 1st innings

Shadman Islam c Saha b Sharma	6
Imrul Kayes c Rahane b Yadav	6
Mominul Haque b Ashwin	37
Mohammed Mithun lbw b Shami	13
Mushfiqur Rahim b Shami	43
Mahmudullah b Ashwin	10
Liton Das c Kohli b Sharma	21
Mehidy Hasan lbw b Shami	0
Taijul Islam run out (Jadeja/Saha)	1
Abu Jayed not out	7
Ebadat Hossain b Yadav	2
Extras (lb3, w1)	4
Total (all out, 58.3 overs)	150

Fall of wickets: 1-12 (Imrul), 2-12 (Shadman), 3-31 (Mithun), 4-99 (Mominul), 5-115 (Mahmudullah), 6-140 (Mushfiqur), 7-140 (Mehidy), 8-140 (Liton), 9-148 (Taijul), 10-150 (Ebadat)

Bowling: Ishant 12-6-20-2, Yadav 14.3-3-47-2, Shami 13-5-27-3 (w1), Ashwin 16-1-43-2, Jadeja 3-0-10-0.

India 1st innings

M. Agarwal not out	37
R. Sharma c Liton b Abu	6
C. Pujara not out	43
Total (1 wicket, 26 overs)	86
To bat: V. Kohli, A. Rahane, R. Ashwin, R. Jadeja, W. Saha, U. Yadav, I. Sharma, M. Shami	
Fall of wicket: 1-14 (Rohit)	
Bowling: Ebadat 11-2-32-0, Abu 8-0-21-1, Taijul 7-0-33-0.	

Pucovski out of Test contention with mental health issues

SYDNEY: Young batting prodigy Will Pucovski pulled out of contention for a place in Australia's Test team to play Pakistan yesterday as he continues to battle mental health issues. The 21-year-old informed management of his decision during Australia A's three-day clash against Pakistan in Perth, which ended in a draw Wednesday and was seen as a "bat-off" with at least two Test spots up for grabs. Pucovski scored five in his only knock.

"We applaud Will for having the courage to discuss his situation with team management in Perth," said Cricket Australia's head of national teams Ben Oliver. "Will's decision not to nominate for Test selection was the right one in the circumstances and one that everyone in the Australian cricket family supports."

The first Test starts next week in Brisbane, with

Australia's squad due to be announced later yesterday. Pucovski's decision comes just days after middle-order batsman Nic Maddinson withdrew from the Australia A match for similar reasons.

That move came after short-format specialist Glenn Maxwell opted to take a "short" break from cricket to deal with similar challenges. Pucovski, who announced himself with a superb 243 for Victoria against Western Australia last season, has a history of mental health battles.

Following that double century, he took a long break and later told reporters: "It was one of those things where what it looked like from the outside wasn't quite matching up with what it was on the inside."

"I was more confused than at any other time in my life," he added. He seemed to recover and was parachuted into the Australia squad in January for two home Tests against Sri Lanka, but did not play and was released during the second Test as he continued to struggle with his mental health.

"Cricket Australia has committed to being open about the challenges faced in managing mental health," Alex Kountouris, Cricket Australia's sports science and sports medicine manager, said yesterday. "We are putting player wellbeing first and supporting them unconditionally." — AFP

Oosthuizen leads at 'Africa's Major'

SUN CITY: Home favourite Louis Oosthuizen produced a stunning birdie blitz to card a faultless nine-under-par 63 for a three-shot lead after the first round of the European Tour's Nedbank Golf Challenge yesterday.

Former Open champion Oosthuizen, seeking his maiden title in the tournament regarded as 'Africa's Major', turned in 32 and roared on with four birdies in his first five holes on the back nine as he burst clear of the field in search of a 10th European Tour win.

His round was made more remarkable by the fact that he missed Wednesday's Pro-Am tournament with kidney stones and was still unsure whether he would compete after waking up yesterday morning.

The South African leads at the Gary Player Country Club by three shots from Belgian Thomas Detry, who overcame a bogey six on the second hole to card seven birdies in a round of 66. Italian Guido Migliozzi set the early pace with six birdies on his front nine to turn in 30, but found it tough heading back to the clubhouse with bogies on the par-three 12th, and par-four 15th and 17th. He finished the first round in third following a 67.

Defending champion Lee Westwood is a further shot back after a bogey-free 68, the same score as veteran South African Ernie Els, who also carded four birdies. The Nedbank Golf Challenge is the penultimate tournament in the 2019 Race to Dubai, whose leader, Austrian Bernd Wiesberger, carded an opening round 71 for tied 25th. — Reuters

Sports

Test cricket to finally return to Pakistan with Sri Lanka tour

KARACHI: Test cricket will return to Pakistan after a long gap of 10 years after Sri Lanka agreed to a tour for two matches next month, the Pakistan Cricket Board announced yesterday. The vote of confidence from Sri Lanka is hugely symbolic, as it was the attack on their team bus during a visit to Lahore in 2009 which drove international cricket away from Pakistan as the country grappled with militancy.

Six policemen and two civilians were killed while seven Sri Lankan players were injured in the attack. For years afterwards, Pakistan hosted all its "home" games in the United Arab Emirates as foreign teams refused to visit the cricket-mad country for security fears.

But Pakistan has seen a dramatic improvement in security in recent years, and international cricket has begun to creep back. Minnows Zimbabwe became the first team to return Pakistan in 2015 for one-days and Twenty20s, followed by a Twenty20 series by a World XI in 2017, a one-off T20 match against Sri Lanka later that year, and a visit by the West Indies in 2018.

Sri Lanka also completed three one-day internationals and as many Twenty20s in Karachi and Lahore last month. But the announcement of a Test series, still the most

highly regarded cricket format, is an important step — especially when it involves Sri Lanka. "The Test series schedule was confirmed today after Cricket Sri Lanka gave their thumbs-up... following a highly successful visit last month," said a Pakistan Cricket Board statement Thursday.

The first Test will be played in Rawalpindi from December 11-15, while the second Test will be held in Karachi from December 19-23. "Sri Lanka's one-day and T20 tour not only delivered security from the top draw, but packed houses sent out a loud and clear message about the security situation in the country as well as passion for the game," the PCB said.

"This is fabulous news for Pakistan and its reputation of being as safe and secure as any other country in the world," added PCB director of international cricket Zakir Khan. The PCB statement quoted Cricket Sri Lanka's chief executive Ashley de Silva as saying they were "pleased" to confirm the tour.

"We are comfortable and convinced conditions are suitable and conducive for Test cricket," he was quoted as saying. The two Tests will be part of the World Test Championship, which is being played between the top nine teams of the world, culminating in a final in June 2021. — AFP



CANBERRA: File photo shows Pakistan's paceman Mohammad Irfan (R) celebrates his wicket of Aaron Finch of Australia with teammates during the second Twenty20 match between Australia and Pakistan at the Manuka Oval in Canberra on November 5, 2019. — AFP

Waqar Younis excited by teenage quicks

SYDNEY: Pace great Waqar Younis believes Pakistan's young and largely untested fast-bowling attack can cause big problems for Australia in their imminent Test series as the team looks to bounce back from a poor Twenty20 campaign.

Following the retirement of Mohammad Amir and Wahab Riaz this year, Pakistan have brought 16-year-old Nasim Shah and 19-year-old pair Musa Khan and Shaheen Afridi to Australia, along with veteran seamer Imran Khan senior.

While Imran destroyed Australia A in Pakistan's warm-up match in Perth this week with 5-32 in their first innings, Nasim produced eight high-quality overs in the second innings. Younis, Pakistan's bowling coach, said he saw enough during the match to suggest Nasim and Afridi, in particular, can shine on Australia's hard, fast pitches.

"Of course, that sort of performance (against Australia A) makes you feel that you're not naive being here and you can really do the job," he said in The Sydney Daily Telegraph newspaper yesterday. Pakistan dismissed

an Australian team featuring Test aspirants Joe Burns, Travis Head, Usman Khawaja, Marcus Harris and Cameron Bancroft for 122 then restricted them to 91 for two in the second innings.

"All those batters have played for Australia or are knocking at the door," added Younis. "So getting them out early and bowling out the entire team cheaply will probably give us a very good message, that we are here for the business."

"We want to win and we want to challenge this Australian side, so there's definitely confidence." The first of two Tests against Australia gets underway in Brisbane next week, with Pakistan looking to improve after losing the Twenty20 series 2-0.

Babar Azam and Iftikhar Ahmed, who are both in the Test squad, were the only Pakistan batsmen to make an impact over the short format. But Younis believes their batting stocks are deep enough to cope with a Test barrage from Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and James Pattinson. "I don't think Pakistan is worried about facing them or scared of any of them," he said. — AFP

Bancroft, Burns back as Ashes flops axed for Pakistan Tests

SYDNEY: Cameron Bancroft and Joe Burns got the nod yesterday for Australia's Test squad to face Pakistan, with Usman Khawaja and Marcus Harris axed after flopping during the Ashes series against England.

Bowling allrounder Michael Neser was also included as a back-up to the formidable pace attack of Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and James Pattinson. Bancroft was only rushed into the Australia A team at the last minute this week when Nic Maddinson pulled out to deal with mental health issues.

But he made the most of his opportunity, top-scoring with 49 in their first innings total of 122 all out to put himself in the reckoning after failing to make an impact in the Ashes on his return to Test cricket after a ball-tampering ban.

He is one of three specialist openers, along with Burns and Warner, but is more likely to play down the order if selected for the two Tests starting in Brisbane next week, followed by a day-night clash in Adelaide.

Burns was unlucky to be overlooked for the Ashes having scored a century in the last Test he played against Sri Lanka in February. National selector Trevor Hohns suggested he would open with Warner, pointing out that "he has Test hundreds on the board and has combined very well with David in the past".

Harris and Khawaja miss out after failing to impress in England or in the Australia A match, which was seen

as a "bat-off" for the Test slots up for grabs. "As always there were players who were unlucky to miss the squad. Those players remain firmly in the national selection frame and will continue to be monitored closely," added Hohns.

Middle-order batsman Travis Head, who was dropped for the last Ashes Test, was given another chance after young prodigy Will Pucovski, widely tipped to be included, pulled out of contention earlier Thursday citing his "mental wellbeing".

Pucovski, who announced himself with a superb 243 for Victoria against Western Australia last season, has a history of mental health battles. Following that double century, he took a long break and later told reporters: "It was one of those things where what it looked like from the outside wasn't quite matching up with what it was on the inside."

"I was more confused than at any other time in my life," he added. He seemed to recover and was parachuted into the Australia squad in January for two Tests against Sri Lanka, but did not play and was released during the second Test as he continued to struggle.

Pucovski is the third Australian Test aspirant in recent weeks to take time away from cricket to tackle mental health issues, with Maddinson and Glenn Maxwell also both currently out of action. Hohns said Neser was included due to "his ability move the ball both ways, giving the team another bowling option depending on the conditions".

"We are blessed to have four of the best fast bowlers in the world challenging each other for spots and most importantly playing as a group," he added.

Asutrialia Test squad: Tim Paine (capt), Cameron Bancroft, Joe Burns, Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Michael Neser, James Pattinson, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Matthew Wade, David Warner. — AFP

Sports

Patriots stand in way of Eagles extending win streak

PHILADELPHIA: The Philadelphia Eagles will be searching for their third consecutive victory when they host the New England Patriots on Sunday. After falling below .500 at 3-4 after an ugly loss at Dallas, the Eagles have responded with wins over the Buffalo Bills on the road and at home against the Chicago Bears. As a result, the Eagles have pulled into a tie for first place with the Cowboys in the NFC East.

The Eagles added wide receiver Jordan Matthews this week for his third stint with the franchise since deep threat DeSean Jackson was placed on injured reserve after undergoing abdominal surgery. The offense has been inconsistent, as evidenced by rolling up a 19-0 lead over the Bears before struggling the rest of the way in a 22-14 victory.

"Obviously he's (Jackson) unique, so it isn't going to be just one guy that does that," Eagles offensive coordinator Mike Groh said. "We have plenty of good players that are out there in the huddle with (quarterback) Carson (Wentz) and we have to find ways to create those explosive plays that you talk about, get guys open, and help them get open and then make the plays when the plays are there to be made."

But outside of tight end Zach Ertz (46 receptions, tied for fourth in NFL among tight ends), Wentz has been unable to move the ball downfield with his wide receiving corps consisting mostly of Nelson Agholor, Alshon Jeffery and Mack Hollins. Agholor and Jeffery have contin-

ued to drop passes throughout the first nine games. Head coach Doug Pederson doesn't believe it's a huge problem. "The ball is going to find the open guy," he said matter-of-factly. Pederson confirmed that left tackle Jason Peters had recent arthroscopic surgery on his knee, but was at practice on Wednesday.

For the first time this season, the defending Super Bowl champion Patriots will be entering a game following a loss, 37-20 on the road against the Baltimore Ravens. Actually, that loss snapped a 13-game winning streak, which had included three playoff games during the team's Super Bowl run a season ago.

Since 2002, the Patriots are 44-8 following a loss. New England was uncharacteristically sloppy against the Ravens with two costly turnovers, including a rare interception by quarterback Tom Brady. But the Patriots still stayed close late in the game until two fourth-quarter touchdowns by Baltimore.

"Hopefully, it will be a great second half of the season," said Brady, who has 14 touchdowns and five interceptions this season. "But it's really up to us to earn it, the people that are in the locker room. We've got to show up to work every day with a great sense of determination, commitment to doing our best for each other and for the team. We'll try to go get a win and it starts this week in Philly." The Patriots' defense has 32 sacks this season (fourth in NFL), and putting pressure on Wentz will be paramount if New



New England Patriots

England is able to start a new winning streak with a road win in a difficult environment.

Conversely, the Patriots realize the importance of putting points up early and often. "Anytime you play a defense like that, you know

they're not going to beat themselves," Patriots offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels said. "You know they're not going to make a bunch of simple mistakes and give you easy yards and opportunities." — Reuters

Racing's ex-All Black Bird wary of Saracens

PARIS: Racing 92's ex-New Zealand lock Dominic Bird says he is cautious of title holders Saracens' quality despite the English side sending a weakened outfit to Paris for their Champions Cup opener this weekend.

Sunday's visitors to the French capital have been given a 35-point deduction and fined more than £5 million (\$6.42 million) for breaching the Premiership's salary cap rules, pending an appeal, and coach Mark McCall is set to prioritise securing top-flight status over European success.

"I have no doubt it will be a very good second team. They had a little bit of stuff up and that's their problem," Bird told AFP on Tuesday.

"All I care about is that we will come up against one of the best sides, if not the best side in Europe this weekend and I'm excited about that challenge."

"Off-field stuff, that's their problem and how they deal with it. It doesn't make any difference to me. I know they are still going to come and play," the two-time All Black added.

McCall's defending league and European champions have won three from their opening four games in the Premiership this season despite the absence of squad members such as England World Cup runners-up Owen Farrell, Maro Itoje and Billy Vunipola.

Racing coach Laurent Travers said any issues to do with financial wrongdoings will have little impact on Sunday's proceedings against the three-time Euro-

pean champions. "If they have problems off the field I know they don't have any on the field. Unfortunately we're going to face them on the field," he said.

"So from that point of view we're expecting something very difficult. We're far from being favourites," he added.

McCall said he was unsure how many of his World Cup absentees would feature against the 2018 runners-up, who have only three wins from their opening nine matches in the Top 14, as well as against Ospreys next week.

"They've been away from the club for five months, they're not robots. We were going to weigh up whether they were in the right place physically and emotionally to be able to contribute these first two games," McCall told BT Sport.

"We're going to expose some younger players to European rugby over the course of the season and that's going to accelerate their development," he added.

Elsewhere this weekend, French champions Toulouse travel to Gloucester and two ex-winners meet as Bath host Ulster.

European Champions Cup fixtures (all times 13000 GMT unless stated)

Friday

Gloucester v Toulouse (1945)

Saturday

Bath v Ulster, Glasgow v Sale, La Rochelle v Exeter, Leinster v Treviso (both 1515), Clermont v Harlequins, Ospreys v Munster (both 1730)

Sunday

Connacht v Montpellier, Northampton v Lyon, Racing 92 v Saracens (1515). — AFP

Happy Springbok hooker Brits retires again

JOHANNESBURG: Rugby World Cup-winning Springbok forward Schalk Brits, 38, retired on Wednesday for the second time, and insisted there would not be another comeback. "Leaving (World Cup host nation) Japan with a gold medal was the perfect ending," stressed the ever-smiling Brits who quit in 2018 only to be lured back by coach Rassie Erasmus.

"I was on holiday with my family in Spain when I got a text message from Rassie, but at first I thought it was (Springbok prop) Vincent Koch playing a joke," recalled Brits. "When I realised it was really Rassie, I decided to give it one last shot and played for the Bulls and Springboks." The third-choice hooker at the World Cup behind Bongi Mbonambi and Malcolm Marx, he started in the huge pool victories over Namibia and Canada, scoring a try in each match. "Schalk was an invaluable member of our squad and someone who lifted the spirit among the players," said Erasmus.

"He set an example with his professionalism and superb workrate throughout the last two seasons." Brits made 15 Test appearance since debuting against Italy in 2008 and was part of the Springbok team that finished third at the 2015 World Cup in England.

He played for the Western Stormers, Golden Lions and Bulls — three of the four major South African rugby clubs — and spent nine seasons with the London-based Saracens from 2009.

Akker van der Merwe of the Sale Sharks and Joseph Dweba of the Cheetahs are among those who will be hoping to replace Brits in the Springbok squad next year. Since South Africa defeated England 32-12 in the World Cup final on November 2, forwards Tendai 'The Beast' Mtawarira, 34, Francois Louw, 34, and Brits have officially retired.

Media reports have hinted that forward Duane Vermeulen, 33, and utility back Francois Steyn, 32, will follow suit. — AFP

Sports

Harden scores 47 to help Rockets defeat Clippers

HOUSTON: James Harden poured in a game-high 47 points and served as the closer down the stretch of the Houston Rockets' 102-93 win over the visiting Los Angeles Clippers on Wednesday. After Kawhi Leonard provided the Clippers an 86-85 lead with a fadeaway jumper in the paint, Harden converted a driving layup and then drilled a 3-pointer as Houston reclaimed a 90-86 advantage. With just over 90 seconds to play, Harden nailed a dagger 3 for a 95-88 lead. Clippers coach Doc Rivers was ejected immediately thereafter. Houston extended its winning streak to five games. Harden shot 7 of 13 on 3-point attempts, grabbed six boards and had seven assists.

CELTICS 140, WIZARDS 133

Kemba Walker led a balanced Celtics attack with 25 points as Boston defeated visiting Washington to extend its winning streak to nine. Seven Celtics scored in double figures, including a career-high 18 off the bench from rookie Carsen Edwards. It marked the first time the Celtics have scored 140 points since Nov. 25, 1992, when they beat the then-Washington Bullets 150-112. Bradley Beal led all scorers with 44 points, who have lost six of seven. Isaiah Thomas, making his first start in Boston since the Celtics traded him in 2017, scored 18 points and dished out seven assists.

GRIZZLIES 119, HORNETS 117

Rookie guard Ja Morant scored on a drive to the basket with 0.7 seconds left to give Memphis a victory against host Charlotte. Terry Rozier (33 points) missed on a potential winning 3-point attempt for Charlotte on the game's last shot. Morant got back in the groove offensively and scored 23 points, as the Grizzlies recovered from

two sluggish second-half stretches. That helped Memphis win its second game in a row, both on the road.

TIMBERWOLVES 129, SPURS 114

Andrew Wiggins scored 30 points and Karl-Anthony Towns added 28 points and 11 rebounds as Minnesota waltzed past visiting San Antonio in Minneapolis. Jeff Teague added 18 points for the Timberwolves, with Jake Layman scoring 16, Jarrett Culver contributing 12 points and Robert Covington hitting for 10 points. Josh Okogie pulled down 10 rebounds for Minnesota, which has won two in a row and three of its past four contests. DeMar DeRozan led San Antonio with 27 points while LaMarcus Aldridge scored 23. The loss was the third straight for San Antonio and fifth in its past six games. The Spurs will play five of their next six games on the road.

LAKERS 120, WARRIORS 94

LeBron James had 23 points, 12 assists and six rebounds in three quarters, and Los Angeles coasted over visiting Golden State. Los Angeles center JaVale McGee finished with 18 points, 17 rebounds, including five on the offensive end, three blocks and three steals against his former team. Dwight Howard added 15 points and eight boards for the Lakers, who won for the ninth time in their last 10 games. Kyle Kuzma scored 22 points while starting for Los Angeles in place of Anthony Davis, who was rested since he is dealing with shoulder and rib soreness. D'Angelo Russell scored 21 points for Golden State, which has lost five in a row.

RAPTORS 114, TRAIL BLAZERS 106

Led by 36 points from Pascal Siakam and 30 points from Fred VanVleet, short-handed



HOUSTON: James Harden #13 of the Houston Rockets shoots the ball against the LA Clippers at the Toyota Center in Houston. — AFP

Toronto picked up a road victory over Portland. Rondae Hollis-Jefferson contributed 16 points and 11 rebounds, and Terence Davis added 15 points for the Raptors, who earned their fourth win in five games. Damian Lillard struggled for Portland, scoring a season-low nine points on 2-of-12 shooting. Rodney Hood led the Blazers with 25 points, hitting 5 of 10 3-point attempts. Portland lost for the sixth time in seven games.

MAGIC 112, 76ERS 97

Nikola Vucevic collected 25 points and

12 rebounds as host Orlando pulled away in the fourth quarter to defeat Philadelphia. Aaron Gordon added a double-double of his own with 18 points and 13 rebounds, along with seven assists, for Orlando, which outscored Philadelphia by a 32-15 margin in the fourth quarter. Terrence Ross and Evan Fournier each had 13 points as Orlando had seven players score in double figures to post just its second win in the last seven outings. Josh Richardson led the 76ers with 19 points. — Reuters

Kane, Strome help Blackhawks storm past Knights

LAS VEGAS: Patrick Kane and Dylan Strome each had a goal and two assists, Kirby Dach had one goal and one assist, and Corey Crawford stopped 39 of 42 shots to lift the Chicago Blackhawks past the Vegas Golden Knights 5-3 in Las Vegas on Wednesday night.

Zack Smith and Alex DeBrincat had two assists each, and Calvin de Haan and Erik Gustafsson scored 45 seconds apart in the second period as Chicago tallied five consecutive goals after facing an early two-goal deficit. The Blackhawks improved to 4-1-1 in their past six games while earning the franchise's first victory against the Golden Knights in eight tries.

Vegas fell to 0-3-1 in its past four games and has lost seven of nine (2-4-3). Aiming to break out of their recent funk, the Golden Knights surged to a 2-0 lead just 6:29 into the game. William Carrier opened the scoring with 17:02 remaining in the first period before William Karlsson added to the advantage with a power-play goal 3:31 later.

Kane trimmed the deficit to 2-1 with 13:15 remaining in the first period, whipping a one-timer

pass from Strome past Vegas goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury to extend his points streak to seven games. Kane has 14 points (six goals, eight assists) during the run.

Vegas' Nate Schmidt closed the scoring with a minute left in regulation. Karlsson had an assist on the goal. Vegas was 1-for-2 on the power play compared to 0-for-1 for Chicago. The Golden Knights outshot the Blackhawks 42-26.

Golden Knights forward Alex Tuch returned to the lineup after missing the club's four-game road trip with an upper-body injury he sustained during a Nov. 2 loss to the Winnipeg Jets. Tuch notched the secondary assist on the Karlsson goal and had a goal taken away on video review as he looks to build traction in the first half of the season.

Tuch missed Vegas' first 13 games with an upper-body injury that sidelined him late in the preseason. Both teams missed opportunities to capitalize on penalty shots. The Blackhawks' Smith hit the crossbar on his first-period attempt, while Vegas' Jonathan Marchessault partially fanned on his shot in the second period. Fleury finished with 21 saves. — Reuters

Tsitsipas reaches ATP Finals semis

LONDON: Stefanos Tsitsipas coasted past defending champion Alexander Zverev in straight sets to advance to the last four of the ATP Finals on Wednesday after Rafael Nadal came back from the dead to keep his title hopes alive.

The Greek tyro, 21, broke his big-serving German opponent three times in the Group Andre Agassi match to seal a 6-3, 6-2 win at London's O2 Arena.

The straightforward victory, which took Tsitsipas's head-to-head record against Zverev to 4-1, was in sharp contrast to the earlier match, in which Nadal produced an astonishing comeback to beat Daniil Medvedev.

The Spanish top seed was on the brink of defeat when facing a match point at 5-1 down in the deciding set but stormed back to win 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 7-6 (7/4). "Today is one of those days that one out of 1,000 you win and it happened today," said a delighted Nadal.

The 19-time Grand Slam champion, who also beat Medvedev in the US Open final, said earning a break back in the deciding set had infused him with confidence.

"When you have the first break, 5-3, then you are only one break away," he added.

"And I know from my personal experience how tough it is to close out matches, especially when you have two breaks in front and you lose the first one. From that moment I thought I can have a chance." Both players were under intense pressure after losing their opening round-robin matches on Monday.

Nadal is on a double mission in London — aiming to win the end-of-season event for the first time in his illustrious career and to secure the year-end number one spot.

Russia's Medvedev, who has won two Masters titles this season, took the first set on a tie-break to leave Nadal staring down the barrel.

The Spanish veteran broke his 23-year-old opponent in the first game of the second set, repeating the trick to level the match.

But Medvedev was quickly into his stride in the decider, sprinting to the net to dispatch a cross-court backhand past his opponent and earn a double break.

Nadal, who came into the tournament under an injury cloud, fended off a match point on his own serve and then, roared on by a lively crowd, broke Medvedev twice to level.

The match went to a tie-break and Medvedev was first to falter, hitting a regulation forehand wide to hand Nadal two match points and he grabbed the opportunity. — AFP

Sports

Congo keep Mane in check, but Senegal cruise to victory

JOHANNESBURG: The failure of Liverpool star Sadio Mane to score did not prevent Senegal cruising to a 2-0 win over Congo Brazzaville on Wednesday as 2021 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying began. France-based duo Sidy Sarr and Habibou Diallo netted within three minutes during the first half in Thies near Dakar to ensure the Teranga Lions collected maximum points.

Senegal finished runners-up to Algeria in the 2019 Cup of Nations, the second time they collected silver medals in a biennial competition they have never won. Mane and Napoli centre-back Kalidou Koulibaly are the stand-out players in a team expected to win Group I, where Guinea-Bissau overcame eSwatini (formerly Swaziland) 3-0 in the other fixture. Nigeria, third at the recent Cup of Nations, fought back to defeat Benin 2-1 in southeastern city Uyo with Samuel Kalu scoring the second half match-winner. Veteran Stephane Sessegnon gave Benin an early lead they retained until the stroke of half-time when Victor Osimhen levelled by converting a penalty.

Benin eliminated highly-fancied Morocco at the last-16 stage of the Cup of Nations in Egypt last July and took Senegal to the wire before making a quarter-finals exit. In the other Group L match, Jane Thabantso netted in the final minute to earn Lesotho a 1-1 draw away to Sierra Leone, who had taken a 72nd-minute lead through Kwame Quee in Freetown.

CAMEROON DISAPPOINT

Cameroon, automatic 2021 tournament participants as hosts, are taking part to get

competitive match practice and began disappointingly when held 0-0 at home by Cape Verde in Group F. The Indomitable Lions went to Egypt this year as defending champions, but managed only one win in four matches and were eliminated by Nigeria in the round of 16.

That unexpectedly early exit cost coach and former Dutch star Clarence Seedorf his job with Portuguese Toni Conceicao taking his place, assisted by Francois Omam-Biyik. Porto forward Vincent Aboubakar was recalled to bolster the attack, but Cape Verde held firm in Yaounde for a precious point. With Cameroon guaranteed one of the two qualifying places, Cape Verde will battle with Mozambique and Rwanda for the other slot. The shock among the first 11 qualifiers of 144 was the Gambia coming from behind to win a Group D match 3-1 in Angola.

After Wilson Eduardo put the Angolans ahead in the third minute in Luanda, Switzerland-based Assan Ceesay netted twice within 60 seconds midway through the opening half to turn the tide. Another Europe-based professional, Sulayman Marreh, got a third goal one minute from time as the Gambia avenged home and away 2022 World Cup qualifying losses to Angola two months ago. The widest winning margin was achieved by Sudan, who walloped Group C outsiders Sao Tome e Principe 4-0 in Khartoum, where the losers were reduced to 10 men by a 22nd-minute red card. Defending champions Algeria debut Thursday at home to Zambia and will be defending a 16-match unbeaten record since losing a 2019 Cup of Nations qualifier in Benin. — AFP



THIES: Anzouana Yhoan (#13) from Congo controls the ball at the Lat-Dior stadium in Thies, Senegal, during a qualifying game against Senegal ahead of the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations (CAF). — AFP

Rapinoe calls for more investment in US women's game

NEW YORK: Two-time World Cup winner Megan Rapinoe has been at the forefront of the US national women's team's fight for gender pay equity but the fiery forward has told Reuters she also hopes for more investment in the domestic league and better pay for club players.

Earlier this month, the US National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) announced new compensation guidelines for 2020, including a nearly 20 percent increase in the overall salary cap as well as allocation money allowing teams to invest in some players above the maximum salary.

However, the funds cannot be used to pay players who are members of the US and Canadian national teams, a move that Rapinoe, a standout for the NWSL's Reign FC, criticised. "We need to sit down and have more substantive conversations about what that looks like," the Californian told Reuters when asked about the allocated fund provisions. "It's going to be a necessary step before the NWSL gets going next year."

The NWSL could not immediately respond

to a request for comment. With a trial date set for May for the US women's national team's gender discrimination lawsuit against their governing body, the squad faces the possibility of a Summer Olympics training schedule clouded by legal issues.

Rapinoe has emerged as a larger-than-life figure in the sport after the United States' World Cup victory in France this year. In addition to her outspoken criticism of US President Donald Trump, she also serves as the face of a Budweiser advertising campaign that debuted in the run-up to the NWSL championship last month.

While attendances in the league increased to an average of 7,337 per game in 2019, Rapinoe said she is frustrated by the progress made. "More resources need to be put into the front office of the NWSL," added Rapinoe, who has said she would like to compete in the 2023 World Cup before she hangs up her boots.

As for her plans after she retires, the 34-year-old is focused on creating a pathway toward a role in the business of the NWSL, and is an advocate for a rumoured expansion team in Sacramento, or perhaps even Los Angeles.

She would also jump at the chance to be in charge of a team. "I'd be a great owner. I want to own one of these teams," said Rapinoe. "If the only thing that's said about us is how inspiring we are to little girls, then our marketing plan is a complete and utter failure," said Rapinoe. "Make me want to go to the game." — Reuters

Under-fire Courtois says he is among world's best keepers

BRUSSELS: Belgium's Thibaut Courtois says he is among the world's leading goalkeepers despite facing criticism over his form for Real Madrid in recent months.

"I've shown that I belong among the best in the world. There are perhaps 10 great goalkeepers and little to choose between them," he was quoted as saying by Belgian media ahead of Saturday's Euro 2020 qualifier in Russia.

"With my talent and my form, I am certain that I belong among the best. That is precisely why I have been criticised." He denied that he had started the season in poor form and was only now beginning to show an improvement.

"I have only conceded seven goals in La Liga so there is nothing wrong with my form," he said. Courtois faced criticism following Real's 3-0 defeat at Paris St Germain in the Champions League in September and then was substituted at halftime at home to Club Brugge after conceding two early goals last month.

"They were two bizarre goals and then I had to go off because I was sick," he said, adding that the storm of criticism that followed was unfair. "But I don't read the papers.

As a professional you only pay attention to what the coach, your team mates and those who know what it is like to be a goalkeeper say. To criticise someone for letting in a goal is very easy, but I've remained calm and done my work at training.

"I've never doubted my ability. To lose my self-confidence would be the biggest mistake I could make. You go downhill from there. "The pressure belongs at a clubs like Real and I don't have a problem with that. At (former clubs) Chelsea, at Atletico and now at Real, you have to achieve."

Courtois has gone a Belgian record seven matches without conceding for his national team, who have already qualified for next year's European Championship. They are looking to maintain their 100 percent record in Group I in St Petersburg on Saturday.

"I'd rather win 4-3 than play a goalless draw. Winning is the most important. But with respect to our opponents, most of the matches we've played recently we've been obliged to keep a clean sheet by keeping our concentration because we have been comfortably ahead," he added. — Reuters



HOUSTON: James Harden #13 of the Houston Rockets handles the ball against the LA Clippers at the Toyota Center in Houston, Texas. — AFP

Harden scores 47 to help Rockets defeat Clippers

See Page 46