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Tabtabaei returns to Kuwait to attend mother's funeral

Former MP thanks Amir on arrival; will turn himself in and seek pardon

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Fugitive former MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei attended his mother's funeral yesterday at Sulaibikhat cemetery, which was also attended by a number of current and former lawmakers. Informed sources said Tabtabaei's mother passed away on Thursday in Turkey, where she had been visiting her son. She had been hospitalized in the intensive care unit there, which is the reason why Tabtabaei did not return earlier with fellow former MP Fahd Al-Khannah to turn himself in.

"I thank HH the Amir for allowing me to attend my mother's funeral, which is characteristic of him," Tabtabaei said on arrival at Kuwait airport on Friday. Sources said Tabtabaei will turn himself in to authorities to serve a 42-month prison sentence handed by the court of cassation over charges of breaking into the National Assembly. However, Tabtabaei intends to file a petition to get an Amiri pardon, similar to what Khannah did.

In addition, well-informed sources said more former MPs indicted in the same case will similarly return to Kuwait soon, including former MP Jamaan Al-Harbash. Meanwhile, Kuwaiti citizen Mohammed Nayef Al-Doussary, who was also sentenced to 42 months in prison over charges in the same case, arrived in Kuwait yesterday to turn himself in and file an amnesty petition.



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem (right) consoles former MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei during his mother's funeral at Sulaibikhat cemetery yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KD 130 health insurance fees eyed from 2020

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The health ministry and the Health Assurance Hospitals Company (Dhaman) have started coordinating to prepare a work plan to implement new health insurance fees on expats by the beginning of 2020, said official sources. The sources added that a media campaign will be rolled out to explain the new health insurance mechanism to expats, bearing in mind that the new fee would be KD 130 per expat working in the private sector and the same for each of their dependents.

The sources said the new fee will cover medical and radiology tests and treatment. However, the new law does not specify who will be responsible for providing visitors with healthcare, but explained that paying for healthcare for dependents depends on the company the expat is registered with.

Moreover, the sources noted the health ministry will fully support the insurance hospitals as part of its plan to force expats to receive medical treatment in private hospitals and leave public hospitals only for citizens. "Nonetheless, public hospitals will exceptionally receive expats in emergency cases for certain fees determined in related ministerial decisions," the sources explained, noting that fees paid to private health insurance hospitals will be supervised by the health ministry to prevent "overburdening" expats.

Pence avoids top Baghdad leaders during Iraq visit

BAGHDAD: US Vice President Mike Pence avoided meeting Iraqi federal government leaders during a surprise trip yesterday to the country, where deadly anti-government protests have highlighted Washington's diminished influence. In his first visit as vice president, Pence visited American troops at Ain al-Asad base in western Iraq's Anbar province, but was not expected to travel to the capital. His trip came after weeks of anti-government rallies across Baghdad and the south.

Iraqi officials told AFP that Pence spoke to

Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi by telephone. "There won't be a meeting as they had a phone call. The prime minister isn't going to Anbar" to meet Pence, one source said. President Barham Saleh's office told AFP it was not aware Pence was coming to Iraq and had no meeting planned. The US embassy said it had no details to share.

Pence did meet Iraqi Kurdish President Nechirvan Barzani and his prime minister Masrour Barzani in Arbil, the Kurdish presidency said, publishing pictures of the encounters. Pence tweeted images of himself and his wife speaking to US forces and carrying a roast turkey, traditionally served during the American Thanksgiving holiday celebrated next week. "Happy Thanksgiving from Iraq. @SecndLady and I are so honored to be with our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines here in Iraq!" he tweeted.

The visit echoed President Donald Trump's

own surprise trip to Ain al-Asad a year ago, where he briefly met troops just after Christmas but controversially did not see officials in Baghdad. Trump's visit was veiled in such secrecy that there was speculation most Iraqi authorities had not been told he president was coming. Pence's trip came as the death toll from weeks of anti-government rallies across Iraq's capital and the south rose even further.

One protester was killed and 17 were wounded in clashes with security forces yesterday on the Al-Ahrar bridge in Baghdad, a medical source said. Demonstrators have massed on three main bridges leading from their protest camp in Tahrir (Liberation) Square to the western bank of the river Tigris, where government offices and foreign embassies are based. Since Thursday, nine protesters have been killed in skirmishes with security forces there.

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ARBIL, Iraq: US Vice President Mike Pence (left) is greeted by Kurdistan Prime Minister Masrour Barzani as President Nechirvan Barzani looks on yesterday. — AFP

BJP in surprise comeback in Maharashtra

MUMBAI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party made an unexpected comeback to power yesterday in wealthy Maharashtra state, home to the country's financial capital, after prolonged backroom negotiations saw presidential rule lifted after days of uncertainty. President Ram Nath Kovind imposed direct rule on India's richest state last week after fiercely fought elections last month led to weeks of haggling between parties over forming a government.

The state was previously ruled by Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party and its rightwing regional ally Shiv Sena. But they failed to agree another power-sharing deal despite results showing the coalition had won a comfortable majority for a second consecutive term. Shiv Sena quit the partnership, hoping to convince their ideological rivals, the center-left Indian National Congress, and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) to form a government instead.

In the end though the BJP pulled off a major upset by joining hands with a top NCP leader to form a coalition, announcing the deal yesterday. "This bolsters the BJP and Modi's image in the state and the country," political commentator Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay told AFP. "While there were some questions being raised about their loss of dominance following election results, this verdict will cement Modi and BJP's control in the state", he added.

The coalition still needs to prove its majority in the state legislature in a week's time in order to stay in power. India has been battling an economic slowdown, and the imposition of presidential rule was a setback for Modi and for Mumbai, which is home to business tycoons, the stock market and the glitzy Bollywood film industry. Under India's constitution, New Delhi can take direct control of a state in the absence of a local government and after obtaining consent from the president. — AFP

First Saudi woman races car in kingdom

DIRIYAH, Saudi Arabia: Sliding behind the wheel of a sleek electric SUV, Reema Juffali has blazed a trail in male-dominated motor sports as the first Saudi woman to race in the kingdom. Such adrenalin rushes were unimaginable for women in the ultraconservative Islamic kingdom until June last year, when it overturned the world's only ban on female motorists as part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's wide-ranging liberalization drive.

Juffali, a 27-year-old who made her

motoring debut just months after the decades-old ban ended, competed Friday and yesterday in the Jaguar I-PACE eTROPHY, an all-electric race in Diriyah, close to the capital Riyadh. "The ban was lifted last year and I never expected to race professionally," said Juffali, sitting in her black-and-green Jaguar I-Pace, an electric sports utility vehicle. "The fact that I am doing it... is amazing," Juffali, clad in a racing suit, told AFP in an interview close to the racing circuit in Diriyah.

Juffali, who hails from the western city of Jeddah and was educated in the United States, participated as what organizers call a "VIP" guest driver, becoming the first Saudi woman to race on home soil. Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal, Saudi Arabia's sports authority

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RIVADH: Saudi Arabia's first female race driver Reema Juffali poses in front of her car in the Diriyah district of the Saudi capital on Nov 20, 2019. — AFP

Lion cub mummies feature in huge ancient Egypt find

SAQQARA, Egypt: Egypt yesterday unveiled a cache of 75 wooden and bronze statues and five lion cub mummies decorated with hieroglyphics at the Saqqara necropolis near the Giza pyramids in Cairo. Mummified cats, cobras, crocodiles and scarabs were also unearthed among the well-preserved mummies and other objects discovered recently. The antiquities ministry announced the find at the foot of the Bastet Temple, dedicated to the worship of cats among ancient Egyptians, in the vast necropolis.

Antiquities Minister Khaled El-Enany described the discovery as "a (whole) museum by itself". He said initial archaeological studies showed that five of the mummies are lion cubs. Other artifacts uncovered in the dig included statues of an Apis bull, a mongoose, an ibis, a

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GIZA, Egypt: Visitors observe mummies of cats and other felines displayed after the announcement of a new discovery at the Saqqara necropolis yesterday. — AFP

Local

Crown Prince departs Kuwait for a private trip



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah departed the country on a private trip yesterday. Upon departure, His Highness the Crown Prince was seen off by National Assembly Speaker Marzuq Al-Ghanem, senior sheikhs, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and senior state officials. — KUNA

Nobel Prize should be given to Kuwait's Amir next year

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: For his humanitarian work and commitment to needy people around the world, HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah deserves a Nobel Peace Prize next year, according to Mishale Al-Hajji, President of the High Committee for Public Relations of the Catholic Church in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Speaking to Kuwait Times on the sidelines of an awards ceremony on Friday during which he officially received a certificate from a Guinness World Records official for the 'Longest Sentence Using Artificial Flowers,' Hajji said they are now strongly lobbying for the prize to be given to HH the Amir next year. "On behalf of our Bishop Camillo Ballin, the Catholic Church of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia is strongly lobbying for the award. We want this award to be given to HH the Amir of Kuwait in 2020," he said.

Hajji said the record dedicated to HH the Amir is a small token of what he has done for many people around the world. "In the sentence, we spelt out the words 'Amir of Kuwait Prince of Humanity,' which is now recognized as the 'Longest Sentence Using Artificial Flowers.' We used 6,200 flowers and our intention is to send our huge thanks to HH the Amir for his humanitarian work. He deserves this



KUWAIT: Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohammad Abdullah Abulhassan receives a certificate from a Guinness World Records official for the 'Longest Sentence Using Artificial Flowers.' — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

recognition, we are strongly lobbying for the Nobel Prize next year for HH the Amir of Kuwait," he added. The ceremony was attended by Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohammad

Abdullah Abulhassan, on behalf of HH the Amir, and witnessed by several officials including the Ambassador of Lebanon to Kuwait John Makaron.

Kuwait's PM receives congratulatory cables

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received Thursday a cable from His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, congratulating him on the new post and assignment to form the new government. In his cable, His Highness the Crown Prince expressed his best wishes and success for the premier on forming the government and working to serve the people of Kuwait, under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also received a cable from Parliament Speaker Marzuq Al-Ghanem, congratulating him on the new post and assignment of formation of the new government. In the cable, Ghanem said that he sent his greetings to the premier on behalf of all members of Parliament, expressing his best wishes and success on forming the government and working to serve the Kuwaiti people, under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir.

Furthermore, His Highness the Prime Minister received a cable from the President of the Kuwait National Guard His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, congratulating him on the new post and assignment to form a new government. In his cable, His Highness Sheikh Salem expressed his best wishes on forming the new government and working to serve the Kuwaiti people, under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled received similar cables from Vice President of the Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, as well as former prime ministers His Highness Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah underscored the significant role of the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry under the current critical circumstances in the region. Addressing an emotional farewell ceremony held at the ministry, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said these exceptional regional conditions necessitate national unity and concerted efforts as well as the need to favor national interests. He added that the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry and its senior officials shoulder a major responsibility for addressing swift changes in the region by delivering a message of moderation which is the basis of the country's foreign policy. He seized the opportunity to expound on his career at the ministry and to laud the great efforts of its staff to promote Kuwait's regional and international position.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said he was so proud of Kuwait's highly reputed and internationally recognized and appreciated diplomacy. In the meantime, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah congratulated Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled on having been chosen as Prime Minister, hailing his great efforts as the country's top diplomat. He wished the new prime the best of luck in his new duty under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He also commended Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's great efforts that gained Kuwaiti diplomacy much appreciation and accreditation at both regional and international levels. — KUNA

Egypt, KFAED ink KD 25 million loan deal

CAIRO: Egypt and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) yesterday signed a loan agreement worth KD 25 million (around \$85 million). The loan will be used in bankrolling a road project that is part of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula development project. It was signed by Egyptian Minister of Investment and International Cooperation Sahar Nasr and KFAED Director-General Abdulwahab Al-Bader, with Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouli attending. The project aims at promoting Egypt's road network, boosting road safety and reducing operation costs. It is the 52nd loan offered by the KFAED to Egypt, hitting a total of KD 1.39 billion (\$3.5 billion). — KUNA



CAIRO: Egyptian Minister of Investment and International Cooperation Sahar Nasr (right) and KFAED Director-General Abdulwahab Al-Bader shake hands after signing the agreement. — KUNA

Gulf Bank sponsors NUKS USA conference

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced its sponsorship of the annual National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS) Conference in the United States. This year, Gulf Bank is partnering with NUKS as part of its ongoing corporate social responsibility commitment to supporting and empowering Kuwaiti youth.

This year's NUKS Conference will be taking place in San Diego, California from November 28 until December 1 and will host several events and activities for Kuwaiti students who are studying abroad in the United States. Gulf Bank will be organizing numerous entertaining activities for the students starting November 30, which will include raffle draws for cash prizes and more. The Gulf Bank human resources team will also be participating at this year's conference to offer career and training opportunities to students.

Commenting on Gulf Bank's sponsorship of this year's NUKS Conference, Dari Al-Bader, General Manager of Corporate Affairs at Gulf Bank, said: "We are proud to sponsor this year's NUKS Conference, as we recognize the importance of this conference and its impact on our students in the United States. Throughout the year and through various activities both at home and abroad, Gulf Bank is proud to maintain a robust corporate



Dari Al-Bader

social responsibility program, proudly advocating for women empowerment, sustainability, health, fitness, national heritage, and the empowerment of our Kuwaiti youth. This year, we are excited to be hosting a number of exciting surprises for our Kuwaiti students, designed to remind our youth of their primary goal of studying in the US: to obtain an education that they will someday put to work for the future of our country."

Gulf Bank will be represented at the conference by a number of employees from the bank's Human Resources, Communications, and Consumer Banking departments, in addition to select employees who graduated from the United States with bachelor's or master's degrees.

NBK opens new branch in Farwaniya to replace old location

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) yesterday announced the opening of its new branch in Farwaniya, replacing its previous location, and to continue serving customers seamlessly starting from Sunday 24th November. The new branch is located in block 4, street 113, building 30. The new Farwaniya branch welcomes customers during the weekdays from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, and again from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm except on Thursday, providing customers with all banking services.

Speaking of the new opening, Ghadeer Al-Awadhi, Assistant General Manager of Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We are committed to providing our services without any interruption to ensure our customers continue to enjoy the quality services and products we've designed specifically for them. We look forward to serving our customers at our new branch in Farwaniya from today as we concluded our last working day in our previous branch on Thursday."

Awadhi added that NBK's employees in the new branch are ready to receive customers during the working hours and serve their needs with the same outstanding level of service they've come accustomed to at NBK.

Awadhi added: "We are focused at having a network of branches covering all of Kuwait so that our customers can enjoy the best banking experience and complete their transactions quickly and easily at any time, wherever they are. This comes as part of our strategy to maintain our leadership position and satisfy the needs of our customers with products and services that are advanced, rewarding and secure." NBK continues to strengthen its leadership position in the consumer banking sector by



Ghadeer Al-Awadhi

maintaining the largest network of banking services in Kuwait, provided through branches, ATMs and POS terminals. NBK also allows customers to manage their accounts and finances round the clock seven days a week through the NBK Online Banking and NBK Mobile Banking, as well as the NBK Contact Center on 1801801.

The bank also provides integrated banking services and constantly updates its NBK Mobile Banking App to offer a safe and secure way for customers to conduct transactions such as opening accounts, applying for loans, credit card limit increase, advanced payment features like e-Payments to enable online payment for purchases and NBK Quick Pay for fast and easy transfers, managing the accounts and cards while travelling, checking the NBK Miles and NBK Rewards Points, activating dormant accounts, establishing standing orders, finding the nearest branch, ATM or CDM in Kuwait, requesting an account statement or new checkbook, and many more services that make using NBK Mobile Banking App the perfect companion in Kuwait and when travelling.

Kuwaiti Speaker honored by Arab Lawyers' Union

CAIRO: The Arab Lawyers' Union held a ceremony honoring Kuwait National Assembly Speaker Marzuq Al-Ghanem in recognition of his firm stances on the Palestinian cause and supporting the struggle of the Palestinian people. Ghanem affirmed to the audience at the event that without the support of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as well as His Highness's unwavering stance, he (Ghanem) would not have taken such strong and principled position vis-a-vis the Palestinian issue in all international forums. The Arab League praised the stances and efforts exerted by the Kuwaiti top lawmaker to serve his country, its people and the issues of his nation. This came in a speech by the League's Assistant Secretary General and Director of the Department of Palestine and the Occupied Arab Territories, Ambassador Said Abu Ali during the ceremony. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait stresses 'safe' return of Syrian detainees, missing persons

Kuwait renews call for Yemeni parties to resume negotiations

NEW YORK: Kuwait stressed the importance of achieving "real and tangible" progress in the Syrian detainees and missing persons' file, allowing international organizations to visit detention centers and prisons. This came during a speech by Kuwait's Permanent Delegate to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi on Friday evening during a session of the Security Council on the Syrian political track. He confirmed Kuwait's supportive position toward the safe, voluntary and dignified return of Syrian refugees.

In the speech, Otaibi pointed to "the important progress witnessed in the Syrian political process, namely the holding of the first round of meetings of the Syrian Constitutional Committee." In this regard, he praised the efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen during this year, "which contributed to reaching an agreement on the committee. "We followed the work of this committee, which met through its enlarged body of 150 members, and also with its 45-member mini-body in Geneva during the first half of this month," he said. "We should commend the Syrian parties for taking this pivotal step and participating in the committee's work," hoping that dialogue prevails and parties engage in constructive discussions leading to understandings on the Syrian constitution.

He urged all parties to join efforts and work to achieve their legitimate aspirations, and the unity, independence, sovereignty, and integrity of Syria in accordance with resolution 2254 and the Geneva Declaration of 2012. He renewed Kuwait's support for the

work of the independent and impartial international mechanism, as well as the commission of inquiry established by the Secretary General of the United Nations, which was recently launched.

Otaibi expressed concerns over developments in northwestern Syria, and condemnation of targeting innocent civilians, pointing to a statement issued by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the "alarming figures" it contained about the number of children killed, which exceeded 1,100 in 2018-2019. He reiterated the call for the necessity of a ceasefire throughout Syria as stipulated in Security Council resolutions, in particular Resolution 2401.

On the other hand, Otaibi affirmed his condemnation of the repeated Israeli attacks on the sovereignty and territories of Syria, in violation of the UN Charter and international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 350. He also stressed that there is no military solution to the Syrian conflict but a political settlement in accordance with Resolution 2254, which laid out a roadmap for a political transition. The transitional phase includes several stations, including the drafting of a constitution and the holding of free elections under the auspices of the UN and includes all Syrians, including those abroad.

Yemeni negotiations

Meanwhile, Otaibi on Friday expressed hope that the Riyadh Agreement will help pave the way to a comprehensive political resolution of the conflict in Yemen.

Addressing a UN Security Council session on the situation in Yemen, he invited them to further peace negotiations in Kuwait. "We meet here today while positive and constructive indications are gaining momentum towards solving the Yemeni crisis," Ambassador Otaibi pointed out. "On top of these indications are the signing of Riyadh Agreement by the Yemeni government and the Transitional Southern Council on November 5," he said, appreciating the mediation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the deal. "The deal signals the commitment of Saudi Arabia and the partners in the Coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen to stabilize the country. Under this deal, the Yemeni government was able to resume its operations in Aden, the interim capital city of the country," he said.

Ambassador Otaibi welcomed the drop in military operations inside Hodeidah and the resumption of humanitarian aid deliveries. However, he regretted that United Nations experts are still unable to carry out the necessary inspection of a floating oil tanker in the Red Sea, the condition of which may result in an imminent environmental disaster. He demanded that all parties allow humanitarian agencies to carry out their work without restrictions, noting that the State of Kuwait has pledged \$600 million to Yemen since the conflict began. "Out of Kuwait's total aid pledges, \$350 million have been delivered to the UN aid agencies," he stated. He voiced hope that the implementation of Riyadh Agreement would lay the groundwork for confidence building, initiating a



HAZZANU: Children play with the frame of a tent at a camp for the displaced near the town of Hazzanu, about 20 kilometers northwest of the city of Idlib, on September 30, 2019. — AFP

comprehensive political settlement to crisis of Yemen, and opening new horizons for the implementation of the Stockholm Accord, the GCC initiative for Yemen, the outcomes of the national dialogue and the UN Security Council resolution 2216.

Somalia's unity

Separately, Kuwait reiterated calling on the international community to support the sovereignty and unity of Somalia. This came during a speech Otaibi delivered in a meeting of the UN Security Council on Somalia. He welcomed achievements attained on the level of national reconciliation despite challenges facing the Somali federal government

in the process of rebuilding and stabilizing the country. Ambassador Otaibi also praised efforts exerted by the federal government to create conditions for holding general elections by 2020-2021. "Yet, we are concerned over armed militias' growing abilities, especially the ones of Al-Shabab," he said. According to the UN Secretary General's report, worrying developments are taking place regarding Al-Shabab's capabilities of manufacturing explosive devices: a matter that is denounced, especially that those devices are used to target the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), in addition to troops of the UN and international partners, noted the Kuwaiti envoy. — KUNA

Farwaniya houses most 'bachelors' in private residences

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) has listed 800 houses for letting housing units to bachelors in private or model residential areas, and owners have been warned to evict them or have the electricity supply disconnected. MEW explained that electricity was disconnected in 200 of those houses, while the owners of 200 others legalized their status by only letting the units to families. According to MEW statistics, Farwaniya topped all areas in terms of letting housing units to bachelors in private residential areas.

Co-ops' jobs

As part of a plan to replace expats working in co-ops with citizens, the ministry of social affairs and some co-ops recently appointed 527 citizens in leading positions, said informed sources. The sources added that 1,249 jobs had been listed in various co-ops pending replacing expats and filling them with citizens. "42 percent of the jobs are now filled with citizens," the sources added.

Search for railings thief

Hawally security forces located and impounded a vehicle a thief was using to steal aluminum railings from pedestrian footbridges in various areas, said security sources. Notably, a citizen recorded the suspect stealing the railings on video and published it on social media, which triggered a search for the vehicle. It was found abandoned with the stolen items in it in Salwa. Further investigations are in progress to identify the owner and interrogate him. Notably, the suspect will be facing charges of stealing and damaging public property.

Kuwaitis released

Well-informed diplomatic sources stressed that efforts exerted by Kuwait's embassy in Iraq succeeded in releasing three Kuwaitis who had been detained there while hunting in Muthanna governorate. Notably, the three citizens were arrested while hunting in no-hunting zones and were interrogated by Iraqi intelligence. Iraqi authorities had banned hunting in the southern deserts after Qatari hunters were kidnapped there in 2015.

Fire guts Jleeb workshop

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Firefighters battled a blaze that gutted a carpentry workshop in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh yesterday. The flames spread over an area of 400 square meters in the carpentry located inside

the basement of a three-storey building in the area. Firemen evacuated the building before extinguishing the blaze, which helped prevent human injuries. Kuwait Fire Service Directorate said in a statement. An investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.



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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A ship passes by as Kuwait City's skyline is seen in the background. — Photo by Isiam Al-Sharaa

Kuwait, UK governments launch 'Gulf Women in Cyber Security Fellowship'

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KUWAIT: Salem Al-Othaina, Chairman and CEO of the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA), and Tim Voase, Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy, launched the inaugural meeting of the 'Gulf Women in Cyber Security Fellowship' yesterday. The Fellowship is sponsored by the UK Government and brings together 22 of the most talented female cyber security professionals working in government, academic, critical infrastructure and commercial roles in the six GCC countries.

In his opening speech to the Fellows, British Deputy Head of Mission Tim Voase said: "Statistics show that generally, women are globally under-represented in cyber security, and STEM careers more generally and have to overcome high barriers to get to their positions. Yet women in the Gulf hold key cyber leadership positions. These women set the tone on cyber security for their countries and the region and provide a positive example for the whole world. The UK government is delighted

to have established this Fellowship to support these remarkable women, and to ensure that their example and experience can benefit future generations of female cyber security professionals here and around the world."

Welcoming the Fellows on behalf of the State of Kuwait, Engineer Layal Al-Mansoury, Director of Cyber Security at CITRA said: "It is our pleasure to host the first GCC Gulf Women in Cyber Security Fellowship meeting and workshop. The fellowship group is an impressive selection of active women specialists in cyber security in the GCC. I hope this will be a great experience for everyone, and a stepping stone to achieve greater outcome."

The Fellowship is implemented by the UK Government's partner PGI and includes a program of two regional meetings, and a three-day trip to London. It aims to build strong relationships and multi-lateral links between future cyber leaders within the GCC and UK, as well as promoting positive role models for gender diversity within the cyber security industry globally.



KUWAIT: Speakers attend the panel discussion during the conference.

EQUATE shares sustainable strategy achievements

KUWAIT: The EQUATE Group, a global producer of petrochemicals, presented its sustainability strategy and showcased its efforts to achieve gender equality during a conference on the 'Sustainable Development Goals: Achievements and Challenges' organized by the Women's Research and Studies Center at Kuwait University and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Held from November 11th to 13th, the Conference hosted EQUATE President and CEO, Dr Ramesh Ramachandran, in its opening ceremony.

Dr Ramachandran said: "Throughout my 30 years of experience in multiple countries and despite the regional differences, I have realized that when it comes to women empowerment, teams face similar gender equality challenges. They are able to hire talented women but always lose them in their mid-career. Our biggest challenge is to make sure we don't lose these women that we have invested in so much, because teams featuring gender equality are much more productive and successful."

Dr Ramachandran added: "For us to succeed or to grow and to be more profitable, it is imperative that the teams and the staff in whichever functions we choose, rely on the presence of women, which enables companies like ours to be more successful and we see that in EQUATE here in Kuwait." The Group leveraged the UN Women's Empowerment Principles (UN WEP) as a benchmark for its policies and practices, and developed a 3-year action plan in its duty stations in Kuwait, USA and Canada. The plan included the launch of its global program named 'ELEVATE' that aligns with the fifth SDG on gender equality and the New Kuwait Vision, and aims to strengthen and promote gender equality.

In a panel discussion during the conference, Performance Management Rewards Senior Specialist at EQUATE and also a member of the 'ELEVATE' program, Lulwah Al-Munifi, presented the structure of the program. Meanwhile, the Senior Enterprise Applications Consultant at EQUATE and also a member of the 'ELEVATE' program, Zainab Haider, focused on the action plan to successfully implement the UN WEP. Today, women account for only 22 percent of the workforce in the global oil and gas sector, one of the smallest ratios among major industries. EQUATE's goal is to increase the percentage of women working in this industry from six percent to 10 percent within five years and empower them to partake in leadership positions.

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Pope in Japan to preach anti-nuclear message

Indonesia ministries ban pregnant, LGBT job seekers



BEIRUT: Lebanese demonstrators raise a new giant sign of a fist that bears the Arabic word "revolution" on it in Martyr's Square on Friday, after the sign was burnt overnight by unknown perpetrators. —AFP

Lebanese celebrate 'real' independence day

Hezbollah accuses US of meddling in Lebanon crisis

BEIRUT: Lebanon marked 76 years of self-rule Friday, with protesters joining festivities nationwide instead of a military parade to mark what they say is a first year of "real independence". Christians and Muslims from across the political spectrum have for weeks marched together united in their rejection of a governing class they deem inept and corrupt. The youth-led movement has boosted a new cross-sectarian pride in the small Mediterranean nation that was torn by a bloody 1975-1990 civil war - a fresh sense of optimism that was on full display Friday.

"We're all here together to build a new Lebanon," said one reveler in the crowds in Beirut's central Martyrs' Square, Karl, a middle-aged cyclist with a national flag draped on his bicycle. As night fell, dance music boomed out from loudspeakers and thousands waved lighters, mobile phone torches and candles, while others lighted balloon lanterns and released them into the sky. Throughout the day, tens of thousands had massed across the country for outdoor festivities - the upbeat mood in stark contrast to the sober state ceremonies held in the morning. The street movement brought down the government last month, though a new cabinet has yet to be formed.

'Organic' independence

The demonstrations have brought together people from different religious and political backgrounds, who share the hope of sweeping out a system they say is broken and often unable to provide even basic services. "It's the first time Lebanese from all religious communities have protested en masse without a political party calling for it, and against all parties," said 21-year-old university student Tamara. "That's

real independence - one that's organic".

In a sign of defiance on Friday, demonstrators in Beirut replaced an iconic symbol of the protests, less than 24 hours after it was burnt down by an unknown perpetrator. After dark, dozens of demonstrators in Martyrs' Square hauled into place the giant cutout of a clenched fist, inscribed with the word "revolution".

In the afternoon, huge crowds cheered on an alternative civil society parade representing various groups, from students and farm workers to scouts, hikers and bikers. A team celebrating nature clutched flowers and tree branches, while elsewhere women were clanging saucepans, as they have done every evening to protest against the government. And a troop of expatriates - the Lebanese diaspora being famously widespread - pushed suitcases in front of them.

About 600 Lebanese expatriates were expected to be travelling in, from the Gulf, Europe, North America and as far afield as Australia, to join the party. "I hope this independence day will be a turning point," said Leila, a woman carrying cymbals in both hands. "Our pockets are still empty but we've found a new dignity," she told AFP, before zipping back into the crowd.

Wajed, a 26-year-old activist, also said this year's independence day gave him fresh hope. "We want to emancipate ourselves from the corrupt people governing us," he said. A revised version of the national anthem is making the rounds online to pay tribute to Lebanese women, many of whom have played a central role in the protests. Two people have so far been killed during the protests, a far cry from the hundreds

dead in similar demonstrations in Iraq.

Meanwhile, Hezbollah accused the United States of meddling in the formation of a new Lebanese government on Friday, its strongest accusation yet of US interference in Lebanon's political and economic crisis. As Lebanon grapples with the worst economic crisis since its 1975-90 civil war, Hezbollah deputy leader Sheikh Naim Kassem told Reuters he did not see signs of a new conflict. Hezbollah would not be dragged into strife, he said.

He also said the economic crisis which has spread to the banking system was hitting the Shiite group's followers along with everyone else in Lebanon. Hezbollah backed putting corrupt officials on trial "regardless of who they are", he added. The protests led Saad Al-Hariri to quit as prime minister on Oct 29, toppling a coalition government that included the heavily armed Hezbollah.

"The first obstruction in the formation of the government is America, because it wants a government that resembles it and we want a government that resembles the Lebanese people," Kassem said. The crisis would continue, he said, until foreign parties gave up on trying to achieve their goals. US officials had been in direct contact with Lebanese politicians and officials, he said. "Let them leave us alone so we can reach an understanding among ourselves. The more they intervene the more they delay the solution."

Though they hold a parliamentary majority, Shiite Hezbollah and allies including the Christian Free Patriotic Movement continue to seek a deal with Hariri over a government which they say should include both politicians and technocrats. Asked why Hezbollah and its

allies had not opted to form a cabinet on their own, Kassem said the group preferred the prime minister be chosen through agreement with the main parties.

The position is reserved for a Sunni Muslim in Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing system. Hariri is Lebanon's leading Sunni. "There are continuous contacts between Hezbollah and Prime Minister Hariri to pick the prime minister," Kassem said. The United States has said it stands by protesters who are demanding reforms and an end to corruption, and that it is ready to work with a new government that can build a stable, prosperous and independent Lebanon.

Sources close to Hariri have said he is sticking by his demand for a cabinet of experts because he believes it would be best placed to secure international support and steer Lebanon out of crisis. Kassem said the first step towards dealing with the crisis would be the formation of a government which should start by implementing an emergency economic plan after amending it if necessary.

The causes of the crisis included by bad policies and corruption, he said. "We support the people 100 percent in putting the corrupt on trial," he said. "The corrupt must stand trial in Lebanon regardless of who they are ... we support all measures that limit corruption and that recover looted wealth." The protests in Lebanon have been overwhelmingly peaceful despite occasional confrontations. "I do not see signs of a civil war in Lebanon. Hezbollah is determined not to fall into strife that America wants. But we have information of American attempts to create some security problems," he said. —Agencies

Iran warns regional states of consequences if they stoked unrest

DUBAI: Iranian Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri yesterday warned regional countries of unspecified dire consequences if it is proven that they meddled to stoke unrest in Iran, the semi-official news agency Fars reported. "Some countries in the region should know that they will not have an easy life in the region if clues are found that show they intervened to create unrest in Iran," said Jahangiri, quoted by Fars.

Iran has blamed "thugs" linked to exiles and foreign foes - the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia - for stirring up unrest following hikes in gasoline prices which led to the detention of about 1,000 demonstrators and some of the worst violence in a decade. Iran's regional rival Saudi Arabia and its arch-foe Israel have backed US moves to reimpose sanctions that have crippled Tehran's economy, after Washington withdrew from the Islamic Republic's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Iranian troops and members of the elite Revolutionary Guards helped police quell violent unrest in Kermanshah province this week, Iranian officials said yesterday, accusing "US agents" of being among the armed protesters. Rights group Amnesty International said at least 30 people were killed in the western province, making it the worst-hit by days of protests over gasoline price rises in which more than 100 people were killed nationwide. Iran rejected the death toll figures as "speculative". The unrest appears to be the worst violence at least since Iran stamped out a "Green Revolution" in 2009, when dozens of protesters were killed over several months. "All the forces of the Revolutionary Guards, the (paramilitary) Basij, the Intelligence Ministry, police, and the army took part actively in controlling the situation," Parviz Tavassolizadeh, the head of the judiciary in Kermanshah, was quoted as saying by the Fars agency. Tavassolizadeh said the rioters were armed and burned public property, Fars reported.

Death toll

Meanwhile, Amnesty International updated its estimated death toll in the unrest to 115 from 106. "We believe that the real figure may be much higher. We are continuing to investigate," Katy Pownall, Amnesty's deputy head of news, told Reuters in an email. Bahman Reyhani, the Revolutionary Guards' commander in Kermanshah, said "the rioters belonged to anti-revolutionary (exiled opposition) groups and America's intelligence services," the semi-official Tasnim news agency reported.

Reyhani did not name the groups. Armed Iranian Kurdish militants have long operated near the province's border with Iraq. The Guards said calm had returned across Iran on Thursday. Guards spokesman Brigadier General Ramezan Sharif said the protests had been initiated by royalists seeking the return of the Pahlavi dynasty toppled by the 1979 revolution, and the exiled Mujahideen Khalq armed opposition group, Tasnim reported.

He said "secessionist" groups were also involved, apparently referring to ethnic Arab and the Kurdish militants. Protests began in several areas on Nov 15 after the government announced gasoline price hikes of at least 50 percent and imposed rationing. The unrest spread to at least 100 towns and cities as demonstrators demanded senior officials step down. Iran condemned a US decision to impose sanctions on the Iranian information minister on Friday for his role in a nationwide Internet shutdown meant to help stifle the protests. —Reuters

The end of King Bibi?

JERUSALEM: Benjamin Netanyahu's indictment on corruption charges prompted speculation that the end of his decade-long tenure was nigh, though several key allies expressed support for the beleaguered Israeli premier. The Jewish state woke up to an indicted sitting prime minister for the first time, after the attorney general announced late Thursday he had charged the 70-year-old with bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

After months of speculation Avichai Mandelblit's decision was the worst possible outcome for Netanyahu, hitting him with the most serious charges. Israel's longest-serving premier swiftly hit back, vowing to fight on and accusing the police and legal system of bias against the right-wing in an often angry speech. Any trial is likely to be months away, and if Netanyahu is found guilty - a final conviction exhausting appeals could take years.

In a video statement posted online Friday Netanyahu said he would abide by any ruling. "We will accept the decisions of the court, there is no doubt about that" and "we will act in accordance with the rule of law," he said. Netanyahu's political authority is now under more intense scrutiny than ever. Israel has been without a functioning government for nearly a

year, with Netanyahu, nicknamed 'King Bibi', staying on as interim premier after two inconclusive elections in April and September.

Parliament now has less than three weeks to find a candidate who can gain the support of more than half of the 120 lawmakers, or a deeply unpopular third election will be called. Columnist Amit Segal, writing in the Yediot Achronot daily, said Mandelblit had ended any chance of Netanyahu reaching the threshold. "The prime minister's political situation is painfully clear: his chances of reaching 61 seats are almost non-existent."

Netanyahu's centrist rival Benny Gantz will now seek to encourage defections either from within the PM's Likud party or from allied right-wing parties. But a number of the PM's key allies said they would stand by him for now, stressing that he had not yet been convicted of anything. Among them was Education Minister Rafi Peretz, whose Jewish Home party is an ally of Netanyahu's, as well as Foreign Minister Israel Katz and Culture Minister Miri Regev from inside Likud.

Gantz, leader of the Blue and White coalition, late Thursday called on Netanyahu to step down and focus on the corruption allegations - a scenario that would see the premier out of power for the first time in ten years. But he appeared primed to continue fighting the charges while clinging onto office. "What is going on here is an attempt to stage a coup against the prime minister," Netanyahu declared in a televised response to the charges.



JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gestures as he speaks during a meeting of the rightwing bloc at the Knesset on Nov 20, 2019. —AFP

'End is clear'

In Tel Aviv Friday, around 70 anti-Netanyahu campaigners demanded that he step down, an AFP journalist said. "The corrupted, go home, Bibi, go home," signs read. A smaller counter demonstration chanted slogans in favor of the PM. Under Israeli law, while ministers cannot remain in place after being indicted, a premier is not legally

required to resign unless convicted and with appeals processes exhausted. In addition to the premiership, Netanyahu holds portfolios including agriculture and health, positions he will likely have to vacate in the coming days. The charges against him range from receiving gifts worth thousands of dollars to a deal to change regulation in favor of a media group in exchange for positive coverage. —AFP

International

Frustrated Trump lashes out at impeachment probe

President takes to Fox to air long, incoherent list of grievances

WASHINGTON: An irate Donald Trump said Friday he welcomes the prospect of an impeachment trial, as the US leader lashed out at "crazy" and "corrupt" opponents probing potential abuse of presidential power. After a week of dramatic impeachment testimony from current and former administration officials, an embattled Trump took to a favorite broadcaster to air a long, occasionally incoherent list of grievances - against the FBI, his political adversaries, impeachment inquiry leaders, the "deep state," and more.

"These people are sick," Trump raged down the telephone line to Fox at the start of a 53-minute tirade that showed how angered and unsettled he has been by an impeachment inquiry that threatens his presidency. Multiple witnesses, in often damning testimony under oath, buttressed charges the president conditioned much-needed military aid and a coveted White House meeting on Ukraine investigating his political rivals.

But with many Republicans seemingly unmoved, Trump bashed the testimony as "total nonsense" and said he relished the chance to defend himself. "Frankly, I want a trial," Trump told morning show Fox and Friends. The House Intelligence Committee has not formally concluded its role

in the inquiry, possibly waiting for a court ruling on Monday that could empower members to force senior Trump aides to testify.

But Democrats appear determined to hold an impeachment vote in the House of Representatives by the end of the year, which could see Trump go on trial in the Senate in January. Removing him from office would require conviction by a two-thirds majority in the Republican-controlled upper chamber.

'Crazy as a bedbug'

The increasing prospect of becoming only the third US president formally impeached, after Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton, has riled the brash New York billionaire, and he fired off multiple attacks against rivals leading the effort. His main Democratic nemesis in Congress, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, is "crazy as a bedbug" for pressing a "scam" impeachment, he fumed.

House Intelligence Committee chairman Adam Schiff, who has presided over the public phase of the inquiry? A "nutjob" and a "sick puppy" who should be sued for having "lied" about the president's "flawless" Ukraine call, Trump added. Trump was quick to say he "hardly" knows

several of the witnesses, including his own ambassador to the European Union Gordon Sondland, who said Trump sought a quid pro quo from Ukraine.

But he rushed to the defense of his personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani, who has emerged in many accounts as having orchestrated the shadow policy to pressure Ukraine. "Rudy is a great crime fighter," Trump said, giving an unqualified endorsement to one of the most controversial figures in the Ukraine saga. "He is a friend of mine. He is a great person, an iconic figure in this country," he said of the former New York mayor. Trump also repeated the conspiracy theory that Ukraine, not Russia, interfered in the 2016 US election - just a day after a former National Security Council expert, Fiona Hill, denounced that in testimony as a "fictional narrative" advanced by Russia to harm the United States. "They have the server from the DNC - Democratic National Committee," Trump said of Ukraine, claiming that Democrats gave the computer to "a company owned by a very wealthy Ukrainian".

The claim appeared to alarm Fox hosts, including Steve Doocy. "Are you sure they gave it to Ukraine?" a skeptical Doocy asked Trump. "That's what the word is, and that's what I asked actually in my phone call," Trump responded,

referring to his July 25 conversation with Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky at the heart of the impeachment inquiry. Trump mentioned his political rival Joe Biden to Zelensky and pressed the new president to investigate a Ukrainian firm where Biden's son worked while his father was vice president. Democrats argue that Trump's demand that a foreign leader investigate his potential adversary in the 2020 presidential election is impeachable conduct. Trump has said he was merely pressing Ukraine to ramp up its anti-corruption efforts. But he also claims the Bidens were involved in corruption.

There is no evidence to back up the assertion, but Trump nonetheless repeated it on Fox, saying "you have to say Joe Biden is corrupt". Biden, who leads the Democratic 2020 nomination race, has said Trump has smeared him with corruption allegations because he fears a Biden candidacy. Polls show American voters believe Biden would have the best shot at defeating Trump. But Trump seized on polling released this week that shows him winning in hypothetical matchups against Biden and other Democrats in battleground Wisconsin, a state Trump flipped in 2016 but which Democrats aim to retake. "I'm going through the roof," Trump boasted. — AFP

Trump gives blessing for Pompeo exit

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said Friday he would support Secretary of State Mike Pompeo if he quit to run for Senate, as the top US diplomat becomes increasingly embroiled in the impeachment drama. Trump's blessing for his close ally's potential departure marks the first public confirmation that Pompeo is considering the Senate race next year in his home state of Kansas.

Always careful not to upset Trump, Pompeo has been coy in his statements on a Senate bid even as his repeated trips to Kansas and regular interviews with media in the Great Plains state increasingly left little doubt. In an interview with "Fox and Friends," Trump said that Pompeo told him, "Look, I'd rather stay where I am" but that he "loves Kansas". "If he thought there was a chance of (the Republican Party) losing that seat, I think he would do that, and he would win in a landslide because they love him in Kansas," Trump said. Kansas is heavily Republican and has not elected a Democrat to the Senate since 1932, the longest streak that any state has shut out one of the two major US parties. But neither



WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on Oct 21, 2019, US President Donald Trump listens to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo during a Cabinet Meeting at the White House. — AFP

party is taking chances on next year's election, in which Trump is seeking a second term. Kansas elected a Democrat as governor last year and the Republican candidates for the Senate nomination include Kris Kobach, a fire-brand anti-immigration activist who is unlikely to appeal to centrists.

Harboring future ambitions

Just in September, Pompeo emerged as the king of US foreign policy after the departure of John Bolton, Trump's hawkish national security adviser who was considered a master of inside-Washington maneuvering. But a Senate victory would ensure continued influence for the 55-year-old Pompeo regardless of whether Trump

wins next year - or if Trump, despite all his public statements, suddenly sours on him, as the mercurial president is wont to do with people around him. Pompeo, an evangelical Christian former congressman with roots in the populist Tea Party movement, is widely seen as harboring ambitions to run for president himself in 2024. And then there is Ukraine. Pompeo, who cast himself as a defender of the State Department when he arrived in March 2018, has come under fire for not vigorously defending diplomats caught up in the scandal.

Pompeo declined, for example, to offer any support for career diplomat Marie Yovanovitch, whom Trump removed as ambassador to Kiev, bad-mouthed to Ukraine's president and assailed by Twitter while she was appearing before Congress. Pompeo is also increasingly implicated personally in the scandal. He acknowledged that he was on the July 25 call in which Trump asked Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, for "a favor" - an episode that triggered the impeachment inquiry.

Gordon Sondland, the US ambassador to the European Union, said under oath that Pompeo was kept in the loop of what the envoy considered an improper effort by Trump to force Ukraine to announce an investigation into domestic political rival Joe Biden. In strikingly harsh language, Thomas Friedman, the longtime foreign affairs columnist of The New York Times, accused Pompeo of failing to heed lessons from his classes at the elite West Point military academy, where Pompeo graduated first in his class. — AFP

23 die as violent unrest in Chile enters 5th week

SANTIAGO: The death toll from violent unrest in Chile rose to 23 yesterday as the country entered its fifth week of social unrest. Looting and demonstrations took place in cities across the South American nation, and an agreement on a political roadmap that will see Chile draft a new constitution has halted neither the anger, nor the bloodshed. Furious Chileans have since October 18 been protesting social and economic inequality, and against an entrenched political elite that comes from a small number of the wealthiest families in the country, among other issues.

The crisis is the worst in three decades of Chilean democracy and has led to around 2,000 injuries, including some 280 people who suffered eye damage from shotgun pellets. The latest death was a 13-year-old boy who an interior ministry official said was run over by a van during protests in Arica, about 1,300 miles north of the capital Santiago. Thousands of people gathered again on Friday in Plaza Italia, the center of the demonstrations in Santiago and the site of weekly rallies that have seen massive turnout since the social upheaval broke out.

"We cannot ease up. We have to keep expressing ourselves because we have not achieved anything, because the repression continues and also (the government) keeps signing fake agreements, like the peace deal," Claudia Ortolani, a young protester said. Nearby, hooded men were squaring off against police, who broke up the crowd with tear gas and water cannons. Meanwhile, about a hundred people protested outside the Costanera Center, the largest mall in South America, as around twenty riot police guarded the entrance to the building.

While protests earlier in the week had been huge, the outbursts of violence multiplied in the capital's metro area on Thursday and Friday. The anger in the streets had eased after last week's agreement by Congress to draft a new Constitution. But with people back on the streets in force again, President Sebastian Pinera's government again appealed for calm. — AFP



SANTIAGO: A demonstrator is held while riot police are hit by a petrol bomb during clashes at a protest against the government on Friday. — AFP



BOGOTA: Demonstrators confront riot police during a protest a day after a nationwide strike by students, unions and indigenous against the government of Colombia's President Ivan Duque on Friday. — AFP

Duque promises social reforms as 3 dead in protests

BOGOTA: Protesters picketed the home of Colombian President Ivan Duque on Friday, defying a curfew and the leader's promises of a "national conversation" on social policies following massive anti-government demonstrations that have left three dead and dozens wounded. "Starting next week, I will launch a national conversation to strengthen the current social policy agenda, working in a united way with medium- and long-term vision, which will allow us to close the social gaps," Duque has said in a televised speech earlier in the day.

"This conversation will take place regionally with all the social and political sectors. I will use electronic media and participatory mechanisms... so that we can all build a meaningful path of reform." The popularity of Duque's right-wing government - a key ally of the United States - has been on the wane since his election 18 months ago, as it deals with hosting 1.4 million refugees from neighboring Venezuela's economic meltdown as well as the complex fallout of a 2016 peace deal with FARC rebels and rampant drug trafficking.

Hundreds of thousands of Colombians took to the streets in Bogotá and other cities on Thursday to protest Duque's economic, social and security policies, as part of a nationwide general strike. There were arrests and clashes as trade unions, students, opposition parties and the South American country's indigenous organizations vented their anger. The protests come

amid social upheaval across South America, as a wave of unrest over the past two months has battered governments in Chile, Bolivia and Ecuador.

Duque's statement Friday came shortly after Bogotá mayor Enrique Penalosa declared a nighttime curfew in the capital, following clashes between protesters and police in the southern part of the city of seven million earlier in the day. The president said he was stepping up the police presence and ordering the "deployment of joint patrols of police and army in the most critical places." But that didn't stop hundreds of people from showing up outside the president's house in Bogotá, singing the national anthem while banging pots and pans in a form of protest that is common in parts of Latin America, though not in Colombia. The protesters dispersed peacefully about one hour after the 9:00 pm (0200 GMT on Saturday) curfew began.

Hundreds of demonstrators protested in cities across the country earlier in the day, following protests in the western Valle del Cauca department on Thursday that Defense Minister Carlos Holmes Trujillo told reporters had left three dead. Penalosa said 76 bus stations were attacked during the violence in Bogotá, some of which were totally destroyed, and 79 busses were vandalized. Some 230 people were arrested, he added. The violence and looting paralyzed the public transport system, forcing hundreds of people to hoof it to their homes or offices. There were also 122 civilians wounded, 151 security forces hurt and 146 people detained, the government said. Defense Minister Carlos Holmes Trujillo announced late on Friday that vandalism had been brought under control in Bogotá and the curfew was being mostly successful. — AFP

Trump, Reps give voice to Ukraine conspiracy theories

NEW YORK: They have been viewed as bogus for months, but President Donald Trump and his Republican supporters are giving unprecedented publicity to conspiracy theories as they fight Democratic Party attempts to impeach him. Analysts say the repetition of debunked claims could have damaging long-term consequences for American democracy, particularly since Democrat supporters are not immune from peddling conspiracy theories of their own.

The Republicans' conspiracy theories currently center on Ukraine. They have claimed repeatedly that it was that country - not its neighbor Russia - who interfered in the 2016 US presidential election. Kiev hacked Hillary Clinton's emails, not Russian operatives, the theories go, and it is Ukraine who is in possession of a Democratic National Committee server.

Former National Security Council expert Fiona Hill denounced the theories as a "fictional narrative" advanced by Russia to harm the United States. "These fictions are harmful even if they are deployed for purely domestic political purposes," she told lawmakers during her testimony on Thursday. Republicans constantly allege that Trump's potential 2020 challenger Joe Biden may have acted corruptly in Ukraine.

On Tuesday, former US special envoy to Ukraine Kurt Volker called that "not credible." Republicans continue to use them as a mantra anyway. Devin Nunes, the most senior Republican on the committee that is conducting the impeachment hearings, repeatedly cites them, as does Donald Trump Jr and conservative Fox News anchor Sean Hannity. Trump himself often relays these long debunked stories to his 67 million Twitter followers.

Tactical

Conspiracy theories have prospered online for decades, but they are no longer on the sidelines. Analysts say that the election of Trump has brought them into the highest spheres of public consciousness.

The hearings, broadcast live on television, are testament to that. Joseph Uscinski, an associate professor of political science at the University of Miami, says other presidents, notably Richard Nixon, have flirted with conspiracy theories but never referenced them so openly.

"Trump seems to be just the opposite, where he's just very forward with these theories and he uses them to motivate people who are sort of outside of the party mainstream." He also uses the conspiracy theories to deflect criticism. Uscinski told AFP. Conspiracy theories are not new. Polls regularly indicate that a majority of Americans believe Lee Harvey Oswald was not the only shooter in the November 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Eric Oliver, professor of political science at the University of Chicago, argues that conspiracy theories have spread more widely since the rise of the Christian right in the 1970s. "These are people often times who have a very intuitionist worldview and by that they sort of really draw on their gut feelings as a guide to what's going on." They are also entertaining a lot of supernatural beliefs and apocalyptic beliefs and this type of thinking coincides well within a conspiratorial viewpoint," he said.

Oliver conducted a poll recently in which 18 percent of respondents said they believed Ukraine tried to manipulate the 2016 vote. He says fact-checking, which has become very popular in recent years owing to the large amount of information disseminated online, fails to have any impact on Americans with strong beliefs. "When people often encounter facts that are inconvenient to their prior beliefs, they just simply dismiss the facts and they think about something else," he said. Uscinski sees similarities among some Democrats, particularly supporters of left-winger Bernie Sanders. "His entire campaign is built around a conspiracy theory. That the one percent of the richest people control all politics and the entire economy, which isn't true," he said. — AFP

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May his soul Rest in Peace

International

South Africa blocks arms sales to Saudi and UAE in inspection row

South Africa defense industry heavily reliant on Gulf exports

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa is blocking arms sales to countries including Saudi Arabia and the UAE in an inspections dispute, endangering billions of dollars of business and thousands of jobs in its struggling defense sector, according to industry officials. The dispute centers on a clause in export documents that requires foreign customers to pledge not to transfer weapons to third parties and to allow South African officials to inspect their facilities to verify compliance, according to the four officials as well as letters obtained by Reuters.

Officials at major South African defense groups Denel and Rheinmetall Denel Munition (RDM) said the dispute was holding up their exports, as did a third big defense company which asked not to be named. RDM said some of its exports to the Middle East had not been approved since March. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which account for at least a third of South Africa's arms exports and are engaged in a war in Yemen, have rejected the inspections which they consider a violation of their sovereignty, the sources said.

Oman and Algeria have also refused inspections and seen their imports from South Africa blocked, the industry officials added. Government officials in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman and Algeria did not respond to emails and phone calls from Reuters seeking comment, nor did their embassies in South Africa. Asked about the inspection clause issue, Ezra Jele, South Africa's director for conventional arms control in the defense ministry, said that authorities considered criteria including human rights, regional conflict, risk of diversion, UN Security Council resolutions and national interest when evaluating applications for export permits.

He did not comment on specific cases. The Aerospace, Maritime and Defense Industries Association of South Africa (AMD) says the dispute could threaten the sector's survival. "We've got one clause that's disabling us from

exporting 25 billion rand (\$1.7 billion) worth of value today, right now," Simphiwe Hamilton, the head of the AMD said. The industry body estimates the export blocks put an additional 50 to 60 billion rand in future business at risk and could cause the loss of up to 9,000 jobs at defense firms and supporting industries.

Yemeni conflict

Since democratic rule was established in 1994, South Africa has sought to reform its defence industry - once a pillar of the racist apartheid regime - by making export approvals subject to human rights considerations. Saudi Arabia is leading an alliance of Arab states, including the UAE, to try to restore the government of Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, who was ousted from the capital Sanaa by the Iran-aligned Houthis in 2015.

In February, Amnesty International accused the UAE of diverting arms supplied by Western and other states to militias accused of war crimes in Yemen. In the same month, a CNN investigation said Saudi Arabia and the UAE had transferred American weapons to Yemeni fighters, breaking the terms of their arms sales with the United States. The UAE did not respond to the Amnesty allegations. The Saudi military coalition did not respond to CNN's allegations, but a senior UAE official denied it violated end-user agreements.

The South African defense industry has become increasingly reliant on exports, which have grown more than 12-fold since 1990 as domestic defense spending has declined. Exports now make up the bulk of revenues for

major defense companies including Denel, Paramount Group, Hensoldt South Africa and RDM, which is a joint venture between Denel and German industrial giant Rheinmetall. Saudi Arabia and the UAE alone represented a third of South Africa's 4.7 billion rand of authorized arms exports in 2018, according to data compiled by the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC), a group of ministers and deputy ministers that approves the exports.

'Encroaching on sovereignty'

Requiring buyers not to transfer weapons to third parties is common practice in the international arms trade, stipulated in export documents known as end-user certificates. Requiring inspections, though uncommon, is not unheard of. Germany, for instance, requires them for small arms sales to certain countries. The industry officials told Reuters that South Africa had long included a clause in its end-user certificates requiring on-site visits, though it was rarely acted upon.

Clients regularly amended or deleted the clause, and the NCACC still granted export permits, they said. But in 2017, arms control officials moved the clause to the front page of the certificates, and some countries refused to sign them, according to the officials. The clause requires customers to grant "access and permission to South African Government Authority's representative(s) to verify they are in compliance with

South Africa's defense export regulations.

"This is what's making some of these countries uncomfortable," Hamilton said. "You are encroaching on their sovereignty, and they cannot allow that." An NCACC official, who was not authorized to speak publicly, would not comment on the reason for the new format, and industry officials said they had not been told. Matters did not come to a head until this year because arms contracts are often signed years before the anticipated delivery date, the company officials said.

Some companies have already indicated that they will need to cut more than 500 employees if they can't export their products soon, trade union Solidarity said. On July 3, Solidarity and other unions wrote to Public Enterprises Minister Pravin Gordhan stating that failure to resolve the impasse would lead to "job losses on a massive and irreversible scale".

"Customers in the UAE have already begun firing trials with China, India as well as Serbia with the intention to replace RDM as a preferred supplier of ammunition," said the letter seen by Reuters. Three weeks later, Norbert Schulze, RDM's CEO at the time, wrote to the NCACC urging it to take action. In his Aug 5 response, also seen by Reuters, NCACC chairman Jackson Mthembu said the body would not grant an exception.

"The NCACC is aware of the possible loss of jobs occasioned by the inability to export in the time being. However, as your organization would appreciate, compliance with regulations sometimes produces negative impact," he wrote. The government is encouraging defense companies to avoid an over-reliance on the Gulf, the NCACC official said. But building up business in new markets would take time. "It's not like selling Coca-Cola. It can take 5-7 years to go into new markets," one defense company official said. "I don't think the politicians are aware how serious this is."—Reuters



Industry warns of billions in lost business, job cuts

UAE in weapons making push as allies restrict sales

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is making a push to develop high-tech military hardware that would give it control over critical defense capabilities and lessen reliance on imports. Wary of threats from rival Iran, and concerned over moves by some allies to hold up arms sales, the UAE is reshaping a military industry already seen as the region's most sophisticated. State defense companies have been brought together to form EDGE, a \$5-billion conglomerate to spearhead development of advanced weapons for the country's military. Those ambitions were put on display at this week's Dubai Airshow where the military handed an EDGE company a \$1 billion contract for guided missiles.

"Like many countries, on specific critical capabilities you want to have sovereignty," EDGE Chief Executive Faisal Al-Bannai said. The UAE's defense industry dates back two decades, built through joint ventures and technology transfer programs. Much of it now sits under EDGE, manufacturing drones, small armaments and providing maintenance. Despite close ties with the West, the oil-rich Gulf nation has had difficulty acquiring some sophisticated weapons.

The United States will not sell armed drones to the UAE under a longstanding export policy limiting their use. Recently, some European countries have blocked sales to the UAE over its involvement in the Yemen war. Meanwhile, the UAE maintains close ties and continues to buy weapons from China and Russia. Abdulla Al-Hashimi, assistant undersecretary for support services at the UAE ministry of defense, said sovereign capabilities were a "necessity" for security and the economy.

Emerging threats

A series of attacks in the Gulf over the summer, blamed on Iran by the United States, highlighted new threats to the security of Gulf states. Tehran denied involvement. Oil tankers off the UAE coast were sabotaged and a swarm of missiles and drones temporarily wiped out half of Saudi Arabia's oil production in a September attack. EDGE could develop directed energy technology, Bannai said, which can be used to counter drone threats. Directed energy weapons emit focused energy in the form of lasers, microwaves, electromagnetic radiation, radio waves, sound or particle beams.

"The Emiratis not only believe that they can make a profit in this sphere but also that they are well-equipped to understand and counter regional threats," said Robert Mogleinicki, a resident scholar at the Washington-based Arab Gulf States Institute. The UAE is expected to spend \$17 billion on defense next year, according to US-based defense analysis firm Teal, up from \$14.4 billion in 2014 when last disclosed by the government. Today, just a fraction is spent domestically. Abu Dhabi, the main petroleum producing emirate, is leading the development of the country's industry.

There, the move is seen as a step not only towards more diversification of an oil-based economy but towards "greater strategic autonomy with regards to foreign and defense policies," said Jean-Loup Samaan, associate professor at the UAE National Defense College. EDGE, which wants to build on joint ventures that developed the country's defense industry, also has eyes on exporting. That could draw new scrutiny, US Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs R. Clarke Cooper said Washington would like the UAE to establish greater oversight as it develops its military industry. —Reuters

Guinea-Bissau: Coups, cashews and cocaine

BISSAU: Guinea-Bissau is a poor and underdeveloped country in West Africa that has suffered chronic political instability, making it vulnerable to corruption and drug trafficking. Here is some background:

Four coups

The former Portuguese colony on Africa's western bulge achieved independence in 1974 after an 11-year armed struggle led by the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC), today the ruling party. Since then it has been through four successful coups - the last one in 2012 - as well as 16 attempted, plotted or alleged coups. Instability and conflict have battered infrastructure and development.

Political instability

The current president, Jose Mario Vaz, was elected in 2014 for a five-year term that has been overshadowed by a row with the PAIGC over his choices of prime minister. Since he sacked PAIGC leader Domingos Simoes Pereira as

prime minister 2015, Vaz has named a succession of replacements who have been unable to win parliamentary backing. Vaz's surprise sacking of Prime Minister Aristides Gomes in October drew fierce criticism from the international community. Gomes first took office in 2018 after mediation by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) regional bloc, which warned of "risks of a civil war" in Guinea-Bissau and called on Vaz to respect the election due November 24.

High poverty

The tropical country - sandwiched between Senegal and Guinea - is slightly larger than Belgium and includes a scattering of 88 islands in the Atlantic Ocean called the Bijagos. Its population of 1.87 million people (World Bank, 2018) includes a range of ethnic groups, languages and religions. More than two-thirds of the population earn under two dollars a day and more than a third are in extreme poverty (less than one dollar a day), according to the UN. Guinea-Bissau is ranked 177th out of 189 on the UN's 2018 Human Development Index. Largely as a result of poor healthcare services, average life expectancy is 57.8 years.

Cocaine, corruption

Poverty and chaotic administration have made the country a fertile ground



BISSAU: Two men look at the presidential election candidate list on the eve of the presidential elections in Bissau, in Guinea-Bissau. —AFP

for Latin American drug lords trafficking cocaine to Europe. The UN has praised progress since Vaz's election in fighting drug trafficking, but in 2018 expressed disappointment about flagging efforts. In September, police seized some 2 tons of cocaine which had arrived in Guinea-Bissau from Colombia - the largest such haul in the country's history. Guinea-Bissau was ranked 172nd out of 180 countries by Transparency International in 2018 for perceived levels of corruption.

Cashew cash-in

The country's main export is cashew nuts, which financed nearly half of the 2017 national budget. It is Africa's third-largest cashew producer after Ivory Coast and Tanzania. Economic growth reached 5.9 percent in 2017, but slowed to around 3.8 percent in 2018 after a drop in cashew production because of poor weather and a fall in prices, according to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Growth is forecast to reach 4.3 percent in 2019. —AFP

'Horror houses' shed light on care crisis for Nigerian drug addicts

LAGOS: The day his wife walked out 10 years ago, Nigerian musician Jagunlabi started taking drugs to make the shadows go away. The drugs came to stay. Today, after suffering a heart attack, Jagunlabi is desperate to end his addiction but has no idea how to get help. "I don't know where to go, I can't trust (rehab) centers here," he said, sitting in a park in the nation's economic capital Lagos. "They can chain you, molest you." Substance abuse in Africa's most populous country has been described as an "epidemic" by the United Nations but there is almost no proper treatment available for those trying to recover.

The grim problem has come to light after a string of raids on so-called rehabilitation centers where hundreds of inmates,

mainly men and boys, have been found chained and abused in atrocious conditions. The unregulated institutes — billed as Islamic schools or run by evangelical churches — are used by desperate families who often send relatives struggling with drugs, drink or mental illness in the hope they will get better.

But the treatment is brutal and relies more on prayer than proven medical interventions. Jagunlabi, who gave only his stage name, recounted how his family had tried to take him to a religious camp just two days earlier. "A week of prayer and fasting... it would kill me. I'm too weak," he said. Once a successful performer who has now seen his career destroyed by addiction, he showed off newspaper clippings about his music from the early 2000s. "I used to be big," he said. "I need medication, I need to sleep".

Just 300 psychiatrists

The scandal over the abusive centers - dubbed "horror houses" by the media - has put pressure on the authorities. President Muhammadu Buhari insisted "no responsible democratic government would tolerate the existence of the torture cham-



KADUNA: Some of the 300 male students of 'different nationalities' are pictured in the Rigasa area of Kaduna in northern Nigeria after being rescued by police from an Islamic seminary where they were tortured and sodomized. —AFP

bers" and officials have sought to close the worst of them. But moves to clamp down on the facilities have had mixed results. In the city of Kano, in mainly Muslim northern

Nigeria where most of the abusive institutes have been uncovered, many relatives have refused to pick up those freed from the centers. —AFP

22 years old and on the brink of death from vaping

WASHINGTON: With a raging fever, vomiting and diarrhea, Gregory Rodriguez thought he had some kind of bug when he checked himself into the emergency room at a New York hospital in September. Two days later, he was unconscious, hooked up to an

artificial lung and a candidate for a double lung transplant. "I didn't think that vaping had (anything) to do with getting sick," the 22-year-old computer science student told AFP, two months after the ordeal that brought him to the brink of death in just a few hours. Doctors have attributed it to his constant e-cigarette use.

But emergency physicians in Jamaica-Rodriguez's Queens neighborhood did not immediately make the connection with vaping. As was often the case at the start of the vaping epidemic, discovered over the summer, doctors initially sent Gregory home with antibiotics, thinking he only had an infection. But then

Rodriguez returned to the hospital, unable to breathe, and admitted to vaping cannabis for the past two years. "At first, I was hesitant to let them know that I vape, because unfortunately THC is still illegal in the state of New York," he said.

On September 18, his body quickly broke down. He was hooked up to a ventilator, but it wasn't enough. His lungs were filled with a viscous substance, like custard, due to extreme inflammation of his respiratory airways. Oxygen could no longer enter his bloodstream. "He was within hours of dying," said Dr. Mangala Narasimhan, the regional director of critical care medicine at Northwell Health, who treated him. —AFP

International

Pope Francis arrives in Japan to preach anti-nuke message

Francis to pay tribute to 'hidden Christians'

TOKYO: Pope Francis arrived in Japan yesterday, where he is expected to deliver a robust anti-nuclear message of peace in the only country to have suffered an atomic bomb attack. The 82-year-old Argentine is fulfilling a long-cherished ambition to preach in Japan, where years ago he hoped to be a missionary.

He arrived in Tokyo in heavy rain and high winds, the white cape of his papal outfit blowing up around his face as he stepped gingerly down the staircase from the Thai Airways plane that carried him from the first stop of his tour in Thailand. His four-day trip will begin with visits to Nagasaki and Hiroshima, cities forever associated with the nuclear bombs dropped on them at the end of World War II, killing at least 74,000 people and 140,000 people respectively.

In a video message to the Japanese people before he left the Vatican, Francis railed against the "immoral" use of nuclear weapons. "Together with you, I pray that the destructive power of nuclear weapons will never be unleashed again in human history," said the head of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics. Francis arrives from Thailand, where he preached a message of religious tolerance and peace.

He is expected to do the same in Japan, a country with only approximately 440,000 Catholics out of a population of 126 million. The majority of Japanese practice a mixture of Shinto and Buddhism, two closely intertwined faiths based on the worship of nature and spirits, but many in Japan also observe Christian festivals such as Christmas. Christians endured centuries of bloody repression in Japan after the religion was introduced to the country by a Spanish Jesuit priest in 1549.

In the 17th century, Japan was closed to the outside

world and Christians were persecuted, tortured, crucified and drowned as they were forced to recant their faith. When Japan reopened to the world in the mid-19th century and the missionaries returned, they were astonished to find an estimated 60,000 who had secretly kept the faith alive and followed a unique version of Catholicism blended with Japanese culture and religious rites. Francis is expected to pay tribute to these so-called "hidden Christians"-or "kakure kirishitan" in Japanese-during his trip today to Nagasaki, where they were discovered.

'Can't forget the bomb'

Francis will also visit Hiroshima and deliver remarks at the world-famous peace memorial that marks the day on August 6, 1945 when the atomic bomb was dropped. Father Yoshio Kajiyama, director of the Jesuit social centre in Tokyo, was born in Hiroshima shortly after the war and is eagerly awaiting the pope's anti-nuclear speech. "My grandfather died the day of the bomb in Hiroshima, I never knew him. Four days later my aunt died when she was 15 years old," said the 64-year-old. "If you grow up in Hiroshima, you can't forget the bomb."

In Tokyo on Monday, Francis will meet victims of the "triple disaster", the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown in 2011 that devastated large swathes of north-eastern Japan. His trip will also include meetings with the new Emperor Naruhito and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, as well as delivering a mass in a Tokyo baseball stadium. On the first leg of his latest Asian tour, Francis spent three nights in Buddhist-majority Thailand, another country where just a sliver



NAGASAKI: A general view shows the city skyline and port of Nagasaki at Mount Inasayama yesterday. — AFP

of the population is Catholic.

He met with Thai King Vajiralongkorn and also sat down with the Buddhist Supreme Patriarch-the head of Thailand's Buddhists-readily taking off his shoes during the visit to adhere to local customs. His cousin Sister Ana Rosa, who has worked as a missionary in Thailand

since 1966, was a near constant presence by his side during the visit, serving as his interpreter. In his final public address in Bangkok, the pontiff expressed gratitude to the small Catholic community for the warm welcome he received. "I am leaving you with a task: do not forget to pray for me!" — AFP

Religion in Japan: It comes naturally

TOKYO: As Pope Francis, the head of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, prepares to visit Japan, AFP looks at the religions the Japanese have followed for centuries.

What's the main religion?

There is no state religion in Japan but the nation's principal religions are Shinto and Buddhism. The two are closely intertwined - so much so that the estimated numbers of believers in the country do not add up. Shinto groups claim 86 million believers and Buddhism sects 85 million followers, according to the latest tally by the government's cultural affairs agency. The combined figure, 171 million people, is far larger than the nation's entire population of 126 million, suggesting tens of millions of "double-ups".

What is Shinto?

Shinto is a naturalistic, polytheistic religion that originated in ancient times. All natural objects and phenomena are considered to have their own divinity, meaning that Gods or spirits are everywhere in nature. Followers believe these Gods can be benevolent or malevolent and need to be placated by offerings at shrines.

There are no holy scriptures and no founding leader although some view the emperor as the "top priest" of Shinto and religious rites have played a central role in ceremonies for new Emperor Naruhito's



TOKYO: Pope Francis attends a meeting with Bishops at the Apostolic Nunciature in Tokyo yesterday. Pope Francis arrived in Japan for a visit that will take him to Nagasaki and Hiroshima to warn of the dangers of nuclear weapons and pray for peace. — AFP

enthronement. People also buy charms at shrines to pray for good luck in everything ranging from exams or business to safe childbirth and road safety. Worshipping ancestors is another important element of Shinto. Shinto also plays a central part in the most traditional of Japanese sports - sumo wrestling.

How is Buddhism different?

Shinto is Japan's indigenous religion but Buddhism has spread widely since arriving in the sixth century via China and Korea. Unlike Shinto, Buddhism is rules-based with a clear doctrine and spiritual leader. Worshipers go to a temple, rather than a shrine (for Shinto), where there is a monk to assist in the prayers. Buddhism in Japan was brought in from abroad and spread from the aristocracy, whereas Shinto sprang out of people's daily life. The two religions are very closely linked and it is not uncommon for a Buddhist temple to have a shrine in its compound or vice-versa. Generally, Japanese people adopted

Buddhism in addition to their native belief rather than "converting" from Shinto.

What about Christianity?

Christianity was brought to Japan in the mid-16th century by Francis Xavier, a Catholic missionary of the Society of Jesus, and Christians have a bloody history of being repressed and persecuted in the country. There are an estimated 1.9 million Christians in Japan, of whom 440,000 are Catholics. In addition, there is a larger but undetermined number of practicing non-Japanese believers, according to the Catholic Bishops Conference. Schools set up by missionaries have played a great role in promoting education in Japan. Rather than practicing it in a religious sense, many Japanese people take part in Christian events for fun - Christmas parties and weddings in chapels are both popular. Muslims, Jews and Hindus are also present in Japan but in small numbers and there is no official government tally. — AFP

France takes aim at US inaction in Middle East

MANAMA: French Defense Minister Florence Parly took aim yesterday at "gradual US disengagement" in the Middle East and said its failure to respond to provocations blamed on Iran set off a dangerous chain of events. Since May, tensions in the Gulf have escalated alarmingly with attacks against tankers, a US unmanned drone being downed, and strikes on key Saudi oil facilities in September.

Iran was blamed but denied involvement, and the United States has avoided equivalent retaliation despite its Saudi ally being in the crosshairs. "We've seen a deliberate gradual US disengagement," Parly said at the annual Manama Dialogue on regional security, adding it had been "on the cards for a while" but had become clearer with recent events.

"When the mining of ships went unanswered, the drone got shot. When that in turn went unanswered, major oil facilities were bombed. Where does it

stop? Where are the stabilizers?" she asked. "The region is accustomed to the ebb and flow of US involvement. But this time it seemed more serious." Speaking from the same stage in Bahrain, Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel Al-Jubeir insisted there was no US withdrawal from the region and no doubt about its commitment. "We believe the US is very dependable ally, and has been for the past seven decades" he said.

"There is a desire in the US historically to try to retreat from the international scene, but that desire is not reflected in America's posture". Jubeir defended Riyadh's measured response to the September strikes, saying the kingdom was being "strategically very patient" in its investigation so there is "not a shadow of doubt" on where the drones and missiles came from. "We have said all along we don't want war, so to jump into war very quickly is not a rational position."

General Kenneth McKenzie, commander of US Central Command, which covers the Middle East, also deflected the criticism of America's role in the region, although he conceded it may not top the list of priorities. "We have a carrier in the theatre, we've reinforced Saudi Arabia... so I'm not sure I would agree with the narrative of abandonment or a narrative of walking away," he told reporters on the sidelines of the conference. — AFP



MANAMA: Adel Al-Jubeir (center), Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, attends the 15th Manama Dialogue, a regional security summit organized by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), in the Bahraini capital Manama yesterday. — AFP

South Korea, Japan seek summit after intel pact thaw

NAGOYA: Japan and South Korean foreign ministers agreed yesterday to arrange a summit between their leaders next month, seeking to build on a lowering of tensions after Seoul stuck to a key military pact. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Moon Jae-in could meet in China next month, their ministers agreed on the sidelines of a G20 meeting in Nagoya, Japan. The summit would take place on the occasion of the Japan-China-South Korea trilateral scheduled for next month, said a Japanese diplomat who declined to give his name.

Ties between the two countries, both key US allies in the region, have hit rock bottom in recent months over trade and Japan's historic war-time atrocities. This led to Seoul threatening to withdraw from a key military intelligence-sharing pact, alarming the United States who said that would benefit only North Korea and China in the region. But late Friday, with only six hours until the pact was due to expire, South Korea reversed course and agreed to extend it "conditionally", warning however it could be "terminated" at any moment. The accord, known as GSOMIA, enabled the two US allies to share military secrets, particularly over Pyongyang's nuclear and missile capacity. Washington welcomed Seoul's decision but urged the pair to "continue sincere discussions to ensure a lasting solution to historic issues". Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe gave a muted response to the decision on



SEOUL: South Korea's President Moon Jae-in (right) talks with Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong during their meeting at the presidential Blue House in Seoul yesterday. — AFP

Friday, stressing that co-ordination between Tokyo, Seoul and Washington was "very important" while his defense minister urged South Korea to extend the pact "in a firm manner".

The relationship between Japan and South Korea is overshadowed by the 35 years of brutal colonization by the Japanese - including the use of sex slaves and forced labor - that is still bitterly resented today. Ties began a downward spiral after a series of South Korean court rulings ordering Japanese firms to compensate wartime forced labor victims. This infuriated Tokyo, with Japan insisting the matter was settled in a 1965 treaty normalizing diplomatic relations between the two countries, which included significant reparations.

'Long-term drift'

The historic dispute morphed into a trade spat between the two market economies, as Japan removed South Korea from a so-called "white list" of countries that enjoyed streamlined export control procedures. South Korea hit back with similar trade restrictions and a decision to scrap

the intelligence-sharing pact, surprising analysts who thought defense ties would be immune from the diplomatic row.

While insisting the issues of trade and GSO-MIA were completely separate, Japan's trade ministry announced that working-level talks would resume between the pair to thrash out their trade differences. "Thus far Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has signaled no shift in his government's position on either the white list or the dispute over compensation for colonial-era forced labor that triggered this year's crisis in bilateral relations," noted Tobias Harris, an analyst at Teneo consultants. "Without assurances that Seoul will adhere to Japan's understanding of the treaty, it may be difficult to prevent the long-term drift in the relationship," added Harris. The G20 gathering focused on global trade issues - including the reform of the World Trade Organization - as well as the environment and African development. Motegi said ministers had agreed on the "urgent" need to reform the WTO amid a collapse in the multilateral trading system and the US-China trade war. — AFP

Indonesia ministries ban pregnant, LGBT job seekers

JAKARTA: Several Indonesian ministries are banning pregnant, disabled, or LGBT job hunters in favor of what one called "normal" applicants, the Ombudsman said Friday, slammed as "arbitrary and hateful restrictions" by a rights group. The report comes as the world's biggest Muslim majority country takes applications from millions of candidates who are applying for some 200,000 civil-service jobs nationwide.

Indonesia, a Southeast Asian archipelago of some 260 million, has seen a jump in discrimination against gay and transgender people in recent years - while sexism in the workplace is also prevalent. On Friday, Ombudsman Indonesia commissioner Ninik Rahayu said an investigation found that the

defense and trade ministries as well as the Attorney General's Office (AGO) were discriminating against candidates in their job advertisements.

"The Defense Ministry prohibits pregnant women from applying for a job, while the AGO and the trade ministry ban transgender people," Ninik told AFP. "(The AGO) even made a hurtful statement that said 'we only accept normal people'," she added. "Banning people from applying for a job simply because they are transgender is not acceptable and is a violation of human rights," she added.

The Ombudsman called on the ministries to revoke their hiring policies but only the trade ministry has so far complied, Ninik said, adding her office first noticed the discrimination this year. On Thursday, an AGO spokesman told reporters that the institution banned gay and transgender applicants in favor of "normal" candidates. On the AGO's website, it said job applicants must not be color blind, physically or "mentally" disabled including those who have "sexual orientation disorders (transgender) or LGBT". — AFP

Analysis

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Washington Watch

Netanyahu's
real crimes

By Dr James J Zogby

After years of investigation and months of delay, Israel's Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit formally indicted Benjamin Netanyahu for crimes ranging from his violation of public trust to bribery and fraud. Israel's apologists will argue that the fact that a sitting Prime Minister has been charged with crimes against the state and people presents compelling evidence of the country's democracy and commitment to the rule of law.

This is the very point that Mandelblit made in announcing the indictments - "The public interest requires that we live in a country where no one is above the law." However, this is only partially true since it appears that in Israel the principles of democracy or the rule of law only apply to Israeli Jews or the interests of the state, itself. In fact, Netanyahu's entire sordid career is evidence of the selectiveness of Israeli's sense of justice.

In the past the Netanyahu household has been charged with some of the pettiest forms of corruption imaginable. For example, his wife was found guilty of taking the empty bottles from beverages consumed at official state functions and keeping the money she received for turning them for recycling. The Netanyahus were also known to bring three weeks of dirty laundry on two-day official state trips and sending them to the hotel in which they were staying for a night so that the cleaning bill would be charged to the state's budget. This is the sort of past petty thievery for which the Netanyahus were famous.

Looking at the recent indictments, it is clear that the Prime Minister has graduated to bigger and better forms of fraud and corruption. What's striking, however, is that all of the crimes with which he is charged were focused on feeding his ego or his appetites. In some instances, they were favors done for a businessman in exchange for hundreds of thousands of dollars in gifts, in others they were the corrupt deals he made with various media tycoons in which he promised them benefits in exchange for their guaranteeing him positive coverage in their news outlets.

There is no doubt, that in all of these cases, Netanyahu's behavior has been clearly criminal and reprehensible, and, as described by the Attorney General, a breach of the public's trust. But what I find so striking and disturbing, is that these crimes pale in significance when compared to what Netanyahu has done to the Palestinian people and the prospect for Israeli-Palestinian peace - crimes for which he will not be called to account. After Oslo, Netanyahu organized a back-door lobby to mobilize US Congressional opposition to the peace accords. This was the first time an Israeli lobby worked in the US to oppose their own government. He should have been charged with treason.

Back in Israel, during the same period, he organized with Ariel Sharon and a few others a smear campaign of incitement against Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The campaign was so virulent and threatening that many Israelis, including Rabin's wife, held Netanyahu responsible for Rabin's assassination. Netanyahu should have been charged with incitement.

In 1996, he was elected prime minister on a platform dedicated to ending the peace process and he did everything he could to slow down, distort, and ultimately sabotage the Oslo Peace Process. Even the agreement he signed with the Palestinians at Wye so encumbered the process that by the end of his first term in office, peace was on life support. He should have been charged with destroying the prospects for peace and putting at risk the lives of millions.

During his last three terms in office, he incited violence and hatred against Palestinians, both those who are citizens of Israel and those living under occupation. This has fueled extremist settler movements that have engaged in daily acts of violence, destruction of property, and murder. He also encouraged soldiers in the Israeli army to murder defenseless Palestinians and supported them when they were charged with crimes. In addition, as he did with Rabin, he has falsely accused his Israeli opponents of being too close to the Arabs and accused the Palestinian citizens of Israel of being enemies of the state. He should have been charged with hate crimes.

During his time in office he has: expanded settlements on stolen Palestinian land and the demolition of Palestinian property; overseen a number of devastating assaults on Gaza resulting in the indiscriminate massacre of thousands of innocent civilians and the destruction of Gaza's infrastructure; instituted and maintained a cruel blockade of Gaza's population, as an act of collective punishment, in which, for long periods of time, food, medicine, and other essential items were restricted or severely regulated - resulting in death, disease, and impoverishment of millions of innocents. He should have been charged with war crimes.

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

All articles appearing on this page are the personal opinion of the writers. Kuwait Times takes no responsibility for views expressed therein.



A bike-delivery food messenger stands next to another man as they both use smartphones along the side of a street in the Iranian capital Tehran yesterday. — AFP

Net outage forces Iranians to resort to old ways

Iranians struggled to adjust to life offline for almost a week and were forced to resort to old ways due to a near-total internet blackout imposed amid violent protests. The demonstrations flared on Nov 15, hours after a shock decision announced at midnight to raise the price of petrol by up to 200 percent in the sanctions-hit country. The timing of the announcement was seen as a bid to forestall chaos, such as caused by motorists stocking up on fuel before the hike took effect.

The Internet restrictions, for their part, apparently aimed to temper shows of dissent and anger over the move and stop footage of the unrest from being shared. Brigadier General Salar Abnoosh, a deputy head of the Basij volunteer militia, said Friday that the internet outage had helped to "disrupt the complicated" plans by Iran's enemies.

Yesterday - day seven of the Internet restrictions and the start of the working week in Iran - people in Tehran were trying to overcome problems brought on by the outage. Some said they had been forced to make long journeys to carry out simple transactions that they used to be able to do in a couple of clicks online. "We have no other choice," said a woman in her 30s who only gave her name as Asgari. "What I could have done by using Internet now I have to do by telephone or some other means," she told AFP. "I've taken today off from work to come into town to

do something which I could've done by using the Internet." Others said they were having difficulty reaching loved ones overseas. "I wanted to call my children but I couldn't," said Taheri, a man in his 70s. "They were worried and had to go and get a card to call us. This is not right."

Economic impact

For many in Iran, the lack of internet access was more than just a hindrance to social activity. The country has a thriving online economy, with its own equivalents for apps like Airbnb, Amazon and Uber. They have come through the outage largely unscathed as people can still access domestic applications on their phones. However, smaller businesses that rely heavily on social media to stay in touch with their clients suffered during the outage.

Among them were travel agencies whose services were badly disrupted. "An acute problem has been created for all travel agencies," said Hormatollah Rafiei, head of the Travel Agents Guild Association. "The sale of foreign tickets and reservations for foreign hotels reached zero and some travel agencies closed due to financial losses," he said, quoted by IANA news agency.

Connectivity in Iran "began to fluctuate on Friday evening (November 15) before a sequence of cuts that saw levels fall to a nadir of four percent" compared with normal levels, said Netblocks, a site that monitors global internet

disruptions. "Apart from fluctuations on Sunday, access to the outside world flattened consistently until Thursday when limited connectivity appeared across most regions," it said. Yesterday, connectivity was back up, the monitor added.

'What can we do?'

Iran's arch-enemy the United States slapped sanctions on its telecommunications minister overnight "for restricting internet access". The minister, Mohammad-Javad Azari Jahromi, said he was just another Iranian made to suffer the consequences of sanctions that the US reimposed after withdrawing from a 2015 nuclear deal. "I'm not the only member of club of sanctioned persons," he tweeted. "Before me, Iran ICT startups, developers, cancer patients and EB children were there," he said, referring to epidermolysis bullosa (EB). Iran says the US sanctions have hindered its access to drugs for EB, a skin condition that afflicts children, causing several deaths.

The government said it would unblock the Internet only when it was sure it would not be abused. Mina, a woman in her 50s, said she had little choice but to sit tight. "My family lives abroad and I was always in touch with them but now I have no contact with them," she told AFP. "I need to get a phone card because it's too expensive to call abroad (from a fixed line phone)," she added. "What can we do? We are trying to stay patient!" — AFP

With schools shut,
Haiti children
also endure crisis

In the middle of the deadly political unrest that has rocked Haiti for more than two months, another crisis is unfolding - most schools are closed, leaving Haitian children with nothing to do and their parents flailing to cope. In some homes, parents are trying to teach their own kids, while simultaneously working to assuage their mounting anxiety about the violence they see every day in the streets. "I'm muddling through. I don't really know how to do all this," confesses Edine Celestin, who is holding a reading workbook in her lap. "One might think it's easy to teach your kids, but you only realize afterwards that the child did not understand what you said, and you have to teach the same lesson three or four times."

Since September, Celestin has tried to make sure her five-year-old daughter gets some kind of schooling each day. Their living room has become a classroom. But somewhere between her bedroom and the makeshift schoolhouse, little Lyne-Renee is prone to boredom - she hardly ever even leaves the house anymore, due to the risk of violence erupting outside. "She has to know how to read and write, at least a little bit, in order to be admitted to a primary school next year," Celestin says. "Registration will take place in January and February. We have a lot of work to do," adds the worried mother, who knows that the spots in the best schools are highly coveted.

No money, no teachers

Haiti's public schools already suffer from a severe lack



Samara, 8, is homeschooled by her dad Samy Janvier while her little brother Sammy Jr gets a reading lesson in Delmas, south of Port-au-Prince, on Nov 20, 2019. — AFP

of funding and teachers. They can only accommodate a third of the pupils. The impoverished Caribbean nation's crisis began in late August, prompted by a national fuel shortage. Since then, protests against unpopular President Jovenel Moise have raged. Barricades block the streets, and armed gangs roam freely. Nearly 70 percent of the schools have remained closed, according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and its cultural agency UNESCO.

"The school principal told us several times, 'Come on Monday to do a bit of work.' When we arrive, the teachers are not there, and the principal is alone with five or six students," explains Reeves Bosquet, who is 20 but still hopes to complete his high school education. Bosquet is not alone - many children in Haiti get a late start on going to school and suffer through frequent interruptions in their attendance along the way when their parents cannot afford to send them.

45 years after Nixon,
another US president
faces impeachment

On Aug 7, 1974, a trio of top Republican leaders went to the White House and told President Richard Nixon that party support was eroding and impeachment was inevitable. He resigned the next day. Fast forward 45 years, and another US president, Donald Trump, is facing impeachment by the House of Representatives and a potential trial in the Senate. Unlike Nixon, however, Trump appears to enjoy - at least for the time being - the support of Republican lawmakers, and has given no hint that he'll buckle in the face of what he calls a partisan "witch hunt".

"Part of the story of Watergate and the investigation is watching Republicans peel off, start to call into question their support for Nixon," said Kevin Mattson, a professor of contemporary history at Ohio University. "Now they just seem to be stiffening," said Mattson, author of "Rebels All: A Short History of the Conservative Mind in Postwar America". "Partisanship is so much stronger today than it

was back in the days of Watergate." Trump is accused of withholding vital military aid from Ukraine, a country at war with Russia, in a bid to elicit political dirt on potential 2020 Democratic rival Joe Biden. Adam Schiff, chairman of the Democratic-controlled House committee conducting the impeachment inquiry, claimed that Trump's conduct goes "beyond anything Nixon did". "What we've seen here is far more serious than a third-rate burglary of the Democratic headquarters," Schiff said in a reference to the 1972 break-in at the Watergate hotel that led to a cover-up attempt and eventually Nixon's resignation.

Trump, like Nixon, is accused of "using the powers of the presidency for personal political reasons," said Jon Marshall, an assistant professor at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. But the accusations against Trump are indeed more serious than those facing Nixon, said Louis Caldera, who served as Secretary of the Army under president Bill Clinton and now teaches at American University.

"One is just about domestic politics," Caldera said, while Trump "withheld military aid to an ally at war". "He's not advancing legitimate US national or foreign policy ends," he said. "He's basically trying to stir the pot to create problems for a political rival." Alan Baron, a lawyer who served as special impeachment counsel in the cases of four federal judges, said Trump's actions were essentially a shakedown that "makes Watergate look like child's play."

Decline of bipartisanship

What's changed since Nixon faced impeachment and today, Marshall said, is the "media environment and the nature of our politics. There was much more bipartisanship in the 1970s in Congress than there is now," said Marshall, author of "Watergate's Legacy and the Press: The Investigative Impulse". "There were conservative Democrats and there were liberal Republicans and they were used to working together."

As for the media landscape, "the status of the media and how much people trust the media is just radically different now than it was in the 1970s," said Mattson. The three network TV channels in the 1970s and a few major newspapers and news magazines "really determined the coverage," Marshall said. "It's much easier now for people to choose a partisan outlet that they feel comfortable with," he said. "And of course we now have an infinite number of social media outlets and websites that people can go to get their own partisan spin on things."

In addition, Marshall said, Trump can take his case to the American people directly through Twitter while Nixon only had recourse to occasional news conferences. With Trump capable of firing off an angry tweet at any moment, "members of Congress cross this president at their peril," Caldera said, knowing opposition could endanger their chances of re-election. — AFP

Business

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12 Dubai Airshow: Jet industry's grand masters fight to a draw**13** In first big speech, Lagarde tells Europe to 'innovate and invest'**14** New Mercedes-Maybach GLS: New form of luxury

CALIFORNIA: Tesla co-founder and CEO Elon Musk stands in front of the newly unveiled all-electric battery-powered Tesla's Cybertruck at Tesla Design Center in Hawthorne, California. —AFP

Tesla Cybertruck pickup suffers a setback

Shattered glass: Futuristic design questioned

DETROIT: Tesla Inc's launch of its futuristic Cybertruck pickup suffered a setback when its "armored glass" windows shattered, but it was the overall look of the electric vehicle that worried Wall Street on Friday, driving the automaker's shares down 6%. In the much-anticipated unveiling to cheering fans late on Thursday, Tesla boss Elon Musk had taken aim at the design, power and durability of mainstream trucks, only to be shaken when his boast about his new vehicle's windows backfired.

"Oh my God, well, maybe that was a little too hard," Musk said, after his head of design, Franz von Holzhausen, cracked the driver's side window with a metal ball in a series of tests for the crowd at the event in Los Angeles. He allowed von Holzhausen another throw to the rear passenger window, only to see that crack as well. "It didn't go through, so that's a plus side," Musk said, adding: "Room for improvement."

Musk singled out the Ford F-150, the top-selling vehicle in the United States, to highlight the capabilities of the Cybertruck, showing an edited video of the two trucks in a back-to-back "tug-of-war" in which the Tesla truck wins. Some Wall Street analysts praised the launch on Friday, but others doubted the futuristic design's mass appeal. Tesla shares were down 6% at \$333.41. Shares of Ford and General Motors rose about 2%. General Motors' first electric pickup will go on sale in 2021, around the same time as Tesla's, GM Chief Executive Mary Barra told investors on Thursday.

"Musk has been enthusiastic about his Blade Runner-inspired design for months, but we were still surprised how futuristic he went with this one and believe it may shatter his dreams," Cowen analysts wrote in a note. "While we are pleased to see Tesla enter the most profitable segment of the North American passenger car market, we do not

see this vehicle in its current form being a success." The US pickup truck market is one of the world's most profitable vehicle segments and is dominated by Ford, General Motors Co and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV (FCA).

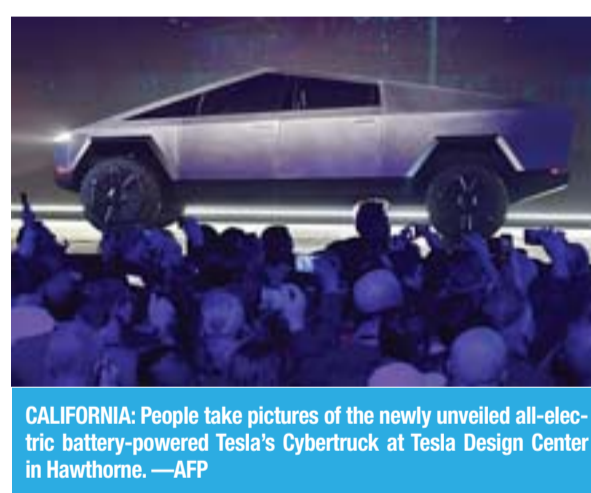
Pickup buyers are fiercely brand loyal and are viewed as traditional in their choice of vehicle. JP Miller, CEO of Paul Miller Ford in Lexington, Kentucky, sells an average of 100 new Fords a month, around 40% of which are pickup trucks. Many of them are work trucks, and Miller said when watching Tesla's unveiling on Thursday night he could not see any of his customers wanting a Cybertruck. "I have to say, I was a little confused," Miller said. "Pickup trucks are critical for building America and I couldn't see how that could apply to Tesla's truck."

Friday's selloff dented a 40% rally in Tesla's shares that was sparked after Musk reported an unexpected quarterly profit on Oct. 23. That stock surge scalded traders betting Tesla will fail to survive an eventual wave of electric vehicles made by more established automakers. But even after traders recently cut their short bets against Tesla to 22% of its float from over 30% in August, its stock remains one of the most shorted on Wall Street, according to S3 Partners, a financial analytics firm. That level of short interest underscores widespread skepticism about Tesla's path to long-term profitability.

'Ugly'

Online critics also made fun of the pickup's spacecraft style look. "I wish Elon Musk hadn't blocked me on Twitter after I said his Mars colonization idea was dumb, so I could tell him how ugly his new #Cybertruck is," tweeted author @MarkDice, who has 1.5 million YouTube followers.

With a starting price of \$39,900, the Cybertruck



CALIFORNIA: People take pictures of the newly unveiled all-electric battery-powered Tesla's Cybertruck at Tesla Design Center in Hawthorne. —AFP

takes aim at the heart of Detroit automakers' profits, while drawing familiar support from Tesla watchers online. "Yes, it looks like a retro version of the future. It's supposed to," said @AElchamaa. To show off the robust design of the new pickup, Musk asked von Holzhausen to take a sledgehammer to the side of the vehicle, whose exterior will be made from the same stainless steel used in the Starship rocket developed by Musk's SpaceX aerospace company.

The crowd cheered when the hammer bounced off the surface without leaving a mark. But Karl Brauer, executive publisher at Kelley Blue Book and Autotrader, said Musk was trying to sell too much - a new technology and an outlandish design. "There are fans out there who'll buy anything with a Tesla badge on it, but this will unlikely pierce the meat of the truck market," Brauer said. "Tesla is putting up too many barriers for people nervous about stepping out of their comfort zone." —Reuters

have the opportunity of a great place to live and build a family." Stamp duty kicks in at two percent on property transaction values between £125,001 and £250,000.

It is levied at five percent of the next portion up to £925,000, at 10 percent of the amount up to £1.5 million, before ramping up to 12 percent on sums above that value. The new surcharge would add an extra three percent to every bracket for non-residents. The proposed measure comes as the finance ministry's haul from stamp duty fell by 10 percent to £8.4 billion in the last fiscal year - the biggest drop in a decade. Brexit uncertainty weighing on the housing market and suppressing sales has been blamed for the drop—AFP

Uber still in the dark on London license renewal

LONDON: Uber is waiting to find out whether its taxi licence in London, one of its most important markets, will be renewed, just three days before it is due to expire in the latest stage of a long-running battle with the city's transport regulator. Transport for London (TfL) rejected a renewal request in 2017 due to shortcomings it said it found in the firm's approach to reporting serious criminal offences and driver background checks, prompting legal action. A judge in 2018 then granted Uber a probationary 15-month licence, after the Silicon Valley-based company had made several changes to its business model.

In September, TfL gave Uber just a two-month extension, far short of the maximum possible five years, and imposed further conditions covering ride-sharing, appropriate insurance and driver document checks. Uber's licence in London currently expires on Nov 25. On Friday, both TfL and Uber declined to comment. Ahead of the latest decision, Uber said it would introduce measures such as a discrimination button enabling drivers and riders to report abuse, enhanced safety training for drivers and a direct connection to the emergency services.

The taxi app's presence in London has angered the drivers of the city's iconic black cabs, who have previously blocked streets in protest, arguing the firm is a threat to their livelihoods. The company says its roughly 45,000 drivers in the city enjoy the flexibility of their work and that it has taken several steps to improve safety. But in a possible sign that the regulator wants to have more power over new entrants by granting shorter licences, fellow ride-hailing service Ola gained only a 15-month right to operate earlier this year.

TfL's latest decision will come less than three weeks before a general election and fewer than six months before Londoners decide whether to reelect Mayor Sadiq Khan, who is also chairman of TfL. He has criticized Uber, which was first licensed in London in 2012 during the tenure of his predecessor and now Prime Minister Boris Johnson. "You will know my track record which is standing up to the big boys, and they are boys, and make sure everyone plays by the rules," Khan told listeners to a phone-in earlier this year. —Reuters

UK's Tories plan property tax hike for foreign buyers

LONDON: Britain's Conservatives said Friday they will make foreign individuals and companies pay more tax on residential property purchases if they win next month's election. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's party said it would levy an additional three

percent surcharge on the country's stamp duty land tax for buyers who are not tax residents in Britain.

UK residents and foreign buyers currently pay the same level of stamp duty, which is applied at various rates that rise with the value of the transaction. There has been sustained criticism of the level of foreign ownership of properties in Britain, primarily in London, despite drops since the 2016 Brexit referendum amid ongoing economic uncertainty.

There are no official statistics on the sales of residential property to overseas buyers, but studies show they have accounted for as much as a third of purchases in parts of central London in recent

years. Meanwhile, a 2017 York University report showed that 13 percent of new homes across the capital were bought by non-residents in 2014-16. Analysts and political parties agree this inflates house prices and makes it harder for people to get a foothold on Britain's notoriously expensive property ladder.

The Conservatives estimate the stamp duty surcharge will raise up to £120 million (\$155 million, 140 million euros) a year, which they say will help fund programs to tackle rough sleeping. "Britain will always be open to people coming to live, work, and build a life in this great country," said Treasury minister Rishi Sunak. "The steps we are taking will ensure that more people

Dubai Airshow: Jet industry's grand masters fight to a draw

Demise of A380 forces Emirates to embrace smaller jets

DUBAI: After insisting for 15 years that the superjumbo is the future, Emirates airline has been forced by the demise of the A380 to embrace smaller wide-body jets, resulting in a flurry of manoeuvres between planemakers at this week's Dubai Airshow. The 555-seat A380 is near the end of production, setting off a series of interlocking deals as top buyer Emirates reviews its fleet against the backdrop of fragmenting travel demand. Delays in the 406-seat Boeing 777X also weighed in the shake-up.

"We have to face the reality of the cancellation of the (A380) program and the effect it has on our network, which is why we conducted a root and branch (review)," Emirates President Tim Clark told reporters at the airshow. The double-decker A380 superjumbo and the big twin-engined Boeing 777, plus mid-sized 787s and A350s, were all spread out in front of VIP chalets - the queens, bishops and knights in a game of industry chess being played out across the globe.

Big jets tend to be profitable especially when full. Periodically, the industry designs smaller planes that match both the range and efficiency of larger ones, allowing smaller pieces on the industry chess board to topple larger ones. While reducing its remaining orders for A380s, Emirates placed an expanded order at the show for 50 Airbus A350s but shelved earlier plans to order the 330-seat A330neo, an upgrade of an earlier model.

It substituted part of an order for delayed 777X jets for 30 Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners - 10 fewer than originally planned in a tentative 2017 order - as part of a \$25 billion order shake-up. For passengers, the roughly 300-seat, lightweight mid-sized jets offer more choice and frequencies. Many airlines say they can fly almost as profitably as the larger models but with less risk to the bottom line. The downside? Planes fill more quickly and passengers can flee to other carriers. Airport congestion is also a concern.

Emirates insists the superhub model it pioneered - which takes advantage of Dubai's location to capture global traffic using large aircraft - remains intact despite

the new twist. But the smaller planes allow some of its rivals to fly profitably with fewer commercial risks and this week's deals imply Emirates no longer feels immune from such pressure. "Given the changed environment, Emirates has been forced to adapt the tactics of some of the carriers they have been competing with," said analyst Richard Aboulafla of Teal Group.

Stalemate

The shift sparked frantic talks by planemakers to ensure their models were included in the new mix of Emirates' mid-sized jets. Each suffered losses but the result was broadly a stalemate, analysts said. Airbus suffered a setback with the loss of the A330neo at Emirates and may have to cut output, they said. But it ensured its own A350 picked up the slack and won a ticket to any future contests to replace A380s still in service.

Boeing cemented a key win for the 787 after two years of uncertainty over the earlier provisional deal. But recent 777X delays opened the door to Emirates readjusting the blend in favour of the Airbus A350, at the expense of the 787. Emirates' decision to expand its A350 order coincided with cancellations for the same jet at Abu Dhabi's struggling Etihad, prompting speculation of a politically balanced adjustment. Airline officials strongly denied any link and Clark said planners had identified more room for future growth in revenues with the A350 than the A330neo, which would nonetheless remain "in the mix" for the future alongside more 777X purchases. Analysts said the net result of reducing A380 and 777X orders and switching to smaller models was about 18,000 fewer seats on order than previously planned before the show, which some analysts described as a response to overcapacity. "Manufacturers have sold too many airplanes," Adam Pilarski, senior vice-president at consultancy AVITAS, said.

While the spotlight fell on the Emirates wide-body order rejig, the Dubai show highlighted Boeing's efforts to shore up confidence in its grounded 737 MAX with fresh



DUBAI: Photo shows a view of a Russian Helicopters VRT 500 twin coaxial rotor light helicopter on display during the 2019 Dubai Airshow. — AFP

sales and changes sweeping the narrow-body markets. Beefed-up single-aisle jets increasingly cover distances reserved for wide-bodies. Sharjah's Air Arabia ordered 120 Airbus including 20 of the long-range 200-240-seat A321XLR. Sources say it may leapfrog northern Africa to

fly non-stop as far as Casablanca, a mission currently served from neighboring Dubai by an Emirates A380. "The single aisles are the pawns of the industry but very effective ones," Rob Morris, head consultant at UK-based Ascend by Cirium, said. — Reuters

Nigeria economy grew in Q3 after oil output rises

ABUJA: Nigeria's economic growth rose to an annual rate of 2.28% in the three months to the end of September after the production of its main export commodity, crude oil, rose to a more than three year high, the statistics office said on Friday. The economy, Africa's largest, expanded by 0.17% in the previous quarter and 0.47% in the same period a year earlier. The country has struggled to shake off the effects of a 2016 recession that ended the following year.

Growth rates in Nigeria have been bouncing back this year, though from a low base, after the oil sector, which accounts for around two-thirds of government revenue and 90% of foreign exchange, shrugged off its negative performance in the first quarter. Crude production in the third quarter stood at 2.04 million barrels per day, its highest since the first quarter of 2016, the statistics office said. Friday's data release comes ahead of the central bank's announcement of its main interest rate on Tuesday and days after the statistics office said annual inflation was at a 17-month high in October.

Nigeria recorded the highest quarterly growth in September since the last quarter of 2018 as the oil sector rose 6.49%. The non-oil sector rose 1.85% during the period. Razia Khan, chief economist for Africa and the Middle East at Standard Chartered, welcomed the oil sector performance but added that it raises concerns that Nigeria could come under more pressure to adhere to its OPEC quota. The non-oil sector is showing signs of recovery but is inadequate for Nigeria's potential, Khan said.

"Given the hoped-for faster passage of the 2020 budget, and efforts to boost private sector credit, we expect more of a recovery to emerge all-round in 2020," Khan said. The central bank has been trying to boost growth by forcing commercial banks to lend to stimulate the economy but it has also kept benchmark interest rates high and liquidity tight in a bid to support the currency and wade off inflation. The central bank has forecast growth of 3% for 2019 while the IMF expects the year to finish off at 2.3%. — AFP

Pakistan central bank keeps rates on hold as inflation steadies

KARACHI: Pakistan's central bank kept its main interest rate at 13.25% on Friday, having recently stopped hiking rates as data on the economy has begun to show that inflation is steadying. The bank said it expected inflation to ease in the second half of the fiscal year to the end of next June and remain broadly unchanged in fiscal 2020 at 11% to 12%.

Furthermore, the current account balance, the broadest measure of the country's trade with the rest of the world, turned to a surplus in October for the first time in four years, the bank said, meaning external pressure on Pakistan's finances is receding. "The market sentiment has begun to gradually improve on the back of sustained improvements in the current account and continued fiscal

prudence," the statement said. "In the first four months of the current fiscal year, the current account deficit contracted by 73.5% to US\$ 1.5 billion," it added.

It said the government's primary balance - the balance of revenue versus spending excluding debt-servicing costs - is likely to enter a surplus in the first quarter of next fiscal year for the first time in almost four years. "This, together with the end of deficit monetization has qualitatively improved the inflation outlook." The bank last lifted rates in July, when it hiked by 100 basis points. It was the ninth increase since the start of 2018 as the country faced rising inflation, a big current account deficit and downward pressure on its rupee currency.

The International Monetary Fund is currently reviewing Pakistan's progress on reforms agreed as part of a bailout package in July. Under the terms of the \$6 billion bailout, the government has put in place tough measures to meet a fiscal deficit target set by the IMF. The rupee has appreciated 5.6% since hitting a low in June, and inflation stood at 11% year-on-year and 1.8% month-on-month in October. The bank said it expected inflationary pressures to ease in the second half of this fiscal year. — Reuters



KARACHI: Workers prepare to pack whole squids for export at a fish factory at a fishery port in Karachi. — AFP

NBK announces winners of Al Jawhara Weekly Draws

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait continues to reward its customers with Al Jawhara Account through weekly, monthly and quarterly draws. The bank recently announced the winners of the weekly draw for the month of November, naming, Hussam Ahmad Asad, Khaton Ali Husain and Nanda Gopal Kuttiyappan as the winners of the KD 5,000 prize each.

Automatically entering customers into the draws, Al Jawhara Account gives customers a chance to win KD 5,000 weekly, KD 125,000 monthly and a KD 250,000 grand prize quarterly for every KD 50 deposited into their account. If no withdrawal or transfers occur on the account during the required period, customers will receive an additional chance to enter the draw for every KD 50 held in the account, doubling their chance to win.

Since 2012, the National Bank of Kuwait has rewarded loyal customers with a total worth of prizes up to KD 2,200,000 in the weekly, monthly, and quarterly Al Jawhara draws. All the draws are conducted in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce & Industry and the name of all the winners are announced. Customers can open an Al Jawhara Account by simply visiting any NBK Branch. Also, NBK Customers can conveniently open an Al Jawhara Account through the NBK Online Banking and NBK Mobile Banking. For more information about Al Jawhara Account, please visit: nbk.com.

Albwardy to buy Meikles Hotel

HARARE: Dubai-based Albwardy Investments said yesterday it would buy Zimbabwe's Meikles Hotel for \$20 million and would upgrade what is one of the southern African nation's most well-known establishments. The current owner, Meikles Limited, has over the past few years struggled with low occupancy levels and has lacked foreign exchange to refurbish the property in Harare.

Albwardy said the investment had been approved by Zimbabwe's stock exchange and competition commission, while the shareholders would vote on the transaction next month. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.300
Euro	339.140
Sterling Pound	394.980
Canadian dollar	230.790
Turkish lira	54.340
Swiss Franc	309.560
US Dollar Buying	296.850

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.801
Indian Rupees	4.240
Pakistani Rupees	1.967
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.687
Nepali Rupees	2.646
Singapore Dollar	225.070
Hongkong Dollar	38.896
Bangladesh Taka	3.541
Philippine Peso	5.995
Thai Baht	10.095
Malaysian ringgit	77.826

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.201
Qatari Riyal	83.633
Omani Riyal	790.903
Bahraini Dinar	808.560
UAE Dirham	82.904

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.400
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.919

Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.222
Tunisian Dinar	111.060
Jordanian Dinar	429.530
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.167

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfr Selling Rate

US Dollar	303.940
Canadian Dollar	230.850
Sterling Pound	395.190
Euro	338.175
Swiss Frank	303.510
Bahrain Dinar	808.290
UAE Dirhams	83.155
Qatari Riyals	84.390
Saudi Riyals	81.945
Jordanian Dinar	429.975
Egyptian Pound	18.873
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.695
Indian Rupees	4.230
Pakistani Rupees	1.959
Bangladesh Taka	3.534
Philippines Pessio	5.898
Cyprus pound	18.085
Japanese Yen	3.795
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.648
Malaysian Ringgit	73.370
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	43.680
Thai Bhat	11.060

Turkish Lira	53.385
Singapore dollars	223.191

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY BUY SELL

EUROPE	
British Pound	0.384081
Czech Korune	0.005195
Danish Krone	0.041041
Euro	0.328478
Georgian Lari	0.121440
Hungarian	0.001147
Norwegian Krone	0.029323
Romanian Leu	0.065204
Russian ruble	0.004796
Slovakia	0.009095
Swedish Krona	0.027671
Swiss Franc	0.299126
Australasia	
Australian Dollar	0.198600
New Zealand Dollar	0.189367
America	
Canadian Dollar	0.232614
US Dollars	0.305500
US Dollars Mint	0.305700
Asia	
Bangladesh Taka	0.002998

Chinese Yuan	0.041871	0.045371
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036923	0.039673
Indian Rupee	0.003628	0.004400
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002719	0.002899
Korean Won	0.000248	0.000263
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069245	0.075245
Nepalese Rupee	0.002624	0.002964
Pakistan Rupee	0.001294	0.002064
Philippine Peso	0.005918	0.006218
Singapore Dollar	0.218039	0.228039
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001318	0.001898
Taiwan	0.010020	0.010200
Thai Baht	0.009733	0.010283
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.801015	0.809065
Egyptian Pound	0.018705	0.021446
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000211	0.000271
Jordanian Dinar	0.423210	0.432210
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000153	0.000253
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021180	0.045180
Omani Riyal	0.785262	0.793154
Qatar Riyal	0.082928	0.083762
Saudi Riyal	0.080060	0.081360
Syrian Pound	0.001290	0.001510
Tunisian Dinar	0.102564	0.110564
Turkish Lira	0.046545	0.056390
UAE Dirhams	0.082217	0.083043
Yemeni Riyal	0.000989	0.001069

Business

Trump, Xi send positive signals on deal to defuse US-China trade war

Trump says deal 'potentially very close'

BEIJING: The leaders of the United States and China on Friday both underscored their desire to sign an initial trade deal and defuse a 16-month tariff war that has lowered global growth, providing a welcome boost to financial markets. Chinese President Xi Jinping, in rare comments on the trade tensions with Washington, said Beijing wants to work out an interim or 'phase one' trade pact, but is not afraid to retaliate when necessary. Hours later, US President Donald Trump said a trade accord with China is "potentially very close," although he insisted that any deal would have to be weighted to favor the United States after years of trade imbalances with China. Speaking on Fox News Channel's "Fox & Friends," Trump also urged China and Hong Kong to calm the situation in Hong Kong, wracked by months of pro-democracy protests, calling it a complicating factor in the trade talks.

The S&P 500 and Dow Jones indexes eked out gains on Friday after the comments by Trump and Xi, reversing losses triggered earlier in the week by reports that a truce could slip into next year. Economists say the prolonged dispute between the world's two largest economies is lowering global growth, disrupting supply chains, curtailing investment and curbing business confidence. "We want to work for a 'phase one' agreement on the basis of mutual respect and equality," Xi told representatives of the New Economy Forum organized by Bloomberg LP, according to a pool report.

"When necessary we will fight back, but we have been working actively to try not to have a trade war. We did not initiate this trade war and this is not something we want." Global financial markets retreated this week on fresh fears that the trade talks could founder, unnerved by reports that Trump could sign into law two bills backing protesters in the Chinese-ruled city of Hong Kong. Trump did not make clear his intentions during the Fox News interview, saying, "We have to stand with Hong Kong but I'm also standing with President Xi."

Concerns of a broader deterioration in Sino-U.S. ties

weighed on markets this week. US Navy warships twice sailed near islands claimed by China in the South China Sea in recent days, angering Beijing. Completion of a phase one trade deal could slide into next year, trade experts and people close to the White House have told Reuters, with Beijing asking for more extensive tariff rollbacks and Washington countering with increased demands of its own. Trump said he was troubled by Xi's insistence on "equality," countering that the United States had suffered for years due to large Chinese trade surpluses.

"I told President Xi, 'This can't be like an even deal. We're starting off from the floor and you're already at the ceiling,'" Trump said in the Fox News interview. China's official Xinhua news agency quoted Xi as saying ties between Washington and Beijing were at a pivot



Xi seeks mutual respect, equality

otal moment. "Both the United States and China should strengthen their communication over strategic issues and avoid misunderstanding and misjudgment," it quoted Xi as saying during a meeting with former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in Beijing.

More trade talks?

China has invited top US trade negotiators for a new round of face-to-face talks in Beijing, the Wall Street Journal said, citing unnamed sources. It added that Beijing hoped the talks could take place before next Thursday's US Thanksgiving holiday. US officials have



LOS ANGELES: The Land Rover Defender 110 car on display during the AutoMobility LA event, at the 2019 Los Angeles Auto Show in Los Angeles, California. The four-day press and trade event precedes the Los Angeles Auto Show, which runs November 22 through December 1. — AFP

indicated willingness to meet but have not committed to a date, it added, and they would be reluctant to travel for the discussions unless China made clear that it would make commitments on intellectual property protection, forced technology transfers and agricultural purchases. Trump told reporters at the White House the US-China trade deal was coming along well, adding, "The question is whether or not I want to make it."

Former US Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky said she assumed China would insist on some tariff relief in the phase one deal. "Otherwise, this is an entirely one-sided exercise, and I've never known the Chinese to negotiate one-sided deals to their disadvantage," she said at a group interview on the sidelines of the Bloomberg forum. Officials from Beijing had sug-

gested Xi and Trump might sign a deal before Dec 15, when US tariffs on about \$156 billion in Chinese goods are set to take effect, including holiday gift items such as electronics and Christmas decorations.

In Beijing on Wednesday, Vice Premier Liu He, China's chief negotiator in the trade talks, said he was cautiously optimistic on a phase one deal. Bloomberg News said, citing people who attended a dinner event ahead of the forum. "The two countries should really ink the deal the sooner the better, at least a truce, and that will inject some certainty into the market and the economy," Hu said. "Based on this, we can clear out a consensus on complicated structural problems, and strive for a comprehensive final agreement." — Reuters

Europe urged to 'innovate, invest'

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Christine Lagarde has urged European countries to "innovate and invest" more to support growth at a time of global uncertainty, in her first major policy speech as president of the European Central Bank. The ECB's ultra-loose monetary policy would "achieve its goal faster and with fewer side effects" if euro area governments supported it with fiscal policy, Lagarde told a banking conference in Frankfurt.

The eurozone economy is expected to grow just 1.1 percent this year—"much lower than previously forecast", she said, as "trade tensions and geopolitical uncertainties" take their toll. "Europe needs to innovate and invest to respond to these challenges and preserve its competitiveness in the longer run," said Lagarde, whose previous job was head of the International Monetary Fund.

She called for an investment drive across the 19-nation currency bloc that should be "more productive, more digital and greener". The speech by Lagarde, who took on her new role as the ECB's first female chief at the start of the month, was highly anticipated by markets keen for a hint of her future policy stance. "For the time being, Lagarde meets the expectations that she could become the leading economic and political voice for Europe rather than quickly shaking up the ECB," said ING Diba bank analyst Carsten Brzeski.

'Global shift'

Lagarde's comments echoed those by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and



President of the European Central Bank (ECB) Christine Lagarde

Development (OECD) which had on Thursday likewise urged governments to loosen the purse strings. Warning that the global economy was headed for its weakest economic growth "since the global financial crisis", it said governments had not invested enough to improve their long-term infrastructure, advance new technologies or combat climate change. Hobbled by the US-China trade conflict and Brexit turmoil, the OECD now expects economic activity to grow at around 3.0 percent in 2020-2021 — down from a 3.5 percent rate projected only a year ago.

Elsewhere on Friday, a closely watched survey by the firm IHS Markit found that the eurozone's economy was seen to have "near-stalled" in November after successive months of manufacturing decline. In her speech, Lagarde homed in on the weakening manufacturing sector as she

stressed the importance of strengthening domestic economies. "We are starting to see a global shift-driven mainly by emerging markets—from external demand to domestic demand, from investment to consumption and from manufacturing to services," she told the Frankfurt audience.

New start

Lagarde has previously suggested she would stick closely to predecessor Mario Draghi's accommodative monetary policy mix of cheap credit, record-low interest rates and massive bond purchases to stimulate the economy and drive up stubbornly low inflation. But Lagarde, a lawyer and not an economist by training, has also pledged to make her mark with a push for more action on climate change, gender equality and making the ECB's language more jargon-free.

On Friday, the former French finance minister said she would launch "a strategic review" of the bank's monetary policies. Lagarde's arrival at the ECB comes as its governing council was divided as never before over Draghi's final stimulus package in September. The measures saw the bank restart a monthly government and corporate bond buying program and cut a key rate deeper into negative territory.

But the measures drew howls of protest from some council members who said they were too heavy-handed and would deepen the pain for eurozone banks already struggling to make a profit amid historically low interest rates. One of Lagarde's first orders of business as ECB president was to whisk the 25-member council away from the bank's glass-and-steel headquarters for a "retreat" in a plush hotel outside Frankfurt to heal the rift. Lagarde will hold her maiden ECB press conference on December 12 after chairing her first governing council policy meeting. — AFP

Bondholders jockey for lead ahead of Argentina talks

LONDON: Several factions of Argentina's bondholders are jostling for influence ahead of restructuring talks with incoming president Alberto Fernandez as Latin America's third-largest economy tries to avert a default, more than a dozen sources familiar with the process said. Argentina is once again buckling under the weight of its sovereign debts, which total around \$100 billion, and Fernandez needs to urgently agree a deal with creditors to ease the burden and give his government space to try to revive the economy.

Several investors told Reuters they are growing increasingly annoyed by a lack of clarity on the plans of the new government, which is set to take over on Dec. 10. Fernandez has not yet named his economic team or said how he will deal with the debts, which have become painfully costly after a collapse of the peso.

"The general frustration is how slow the incoming administration has been to name people and get the ball rolling," a source at a large fixed income investor that holds Argentine debt said, adding that with more clarity things could change "fairly quickly". Fernandez this week told the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) head Kristalina Georgieva he has a "sustainable" plan to meet creditor obligations as well as maintain growth, without giving details. A media representative for Fernandez did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Friday.

A creditor committee of at least 20 members was formed last month as bondholders look for ways to avoid losses, which could reach tens of billions of dollars, on their holdings. A second group is now being assembled, led by US-based emerging markets-focused investment manager Gramercy, three sources said, amid differences over the way forward. A third group of mostly hedge funds holding bonds restructured after a prior Argentine default was also being brought together, sources said.

Gramercy has previous experience in Argentina, where its distressed debt chief investment officer Robert Koenigsberger was involved in debt talks in 2009. Several bondholders said a range of proposals for bundling creditors were circulating, although some said they would rather stick to a larger single group controlling a bigger debt slice. The process of organizing creditors is still in the early stages and it is not clear how much of Argentina's debt each grouping represents at this stage.

Gramercy's proposal, which also involves emerging markets investment manager Macrosynergy Partners, has put together a number of possible scenarios, three sources familiar with the plans said. One of these includes an extension of maturities to ease the pressure on Argentina's struggling finances, but no write-down. "The group's preferred scenario is to get a five-year extension, but there is no haircut," one of the sources said. — Reuters

Bombshell GM lawsuit has bribes, backdoor schemes

NEW YORK: General Motors' bombshell lawsuit against Fiat Chrysler reads like a crime novel, with jaw-dropping bribes, a custom-made Italian watch, and splurges on a luxury wedding and \$7,000 feasts at upscale restaurants. Meanwhile, FCA's deceased CEO is portrayed as the mastermind behind a Machiavellian plot to essentially take control of the United Auto Workers union and force GM into a merger and consolidate his power.

FCA aimed to keep labor brass "fat, dumb and happy," as the US Justice Department has said of a bribery scheme that centered on a fund set up to provide worker training but instead padded the pockets of union leaders. The lawsuit comes as GM tries to pivot away from a bruising 40-day strike that ended in late October that effectively shut down its US operation, and further weighed on the company's public image following controversial factory closures.

The suit, filed in federal court on Wednesday, recasts key events in the auto industry over the last decade and adds to pressure on the UAW as it continues efforts to recover from the federal investigation that has taken down multiple officials, including its president, Gary Jones, who resigned Wednesday — after the union moved to oust him.

FCA has dismissed the allegations, saying they are an attempt to undermine its merger with French giant PSA. The lawsuit depicts the late FCA chief executive



TURIN: In this file photo, the logos of automobile companies (left to right) Abarth, Lancia, Fiat, Alfa Romeo and Jeep are pictured at the entrance to the Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) at the Fiat Mirafiori car plant in Turin, Italy. — AFP

Sergio Marchionne as the architect of a scheme to manipulate UAW labor talks in order to raise costs for GM so much it would be forced to join forces with FCA, creating a global auto behemoth led by Marchionne.

The colorful narrative includes accounts of Marchionne's relentless chase of GM, meetings between union brass and GM Chief Executive Mary Barra, descriptions of a bogus hospice organization to hide FCA bribes and a photograph of a Venice wedding of a union leader allegedly paid for by FCA. Barra, speaking at an investor conference Thursday, said "we

had to take action" as more details about the scandal emerged and as the company realized it was not dealing with a level playing field.

GM said it is seeking to recover the "billions of dollars" it lost as a result of FCA's influence on the UAW. Barra also laid down a tough line on labor relations in general. "There's a lot of conversation about job security and job security is not something you negotiate," she said. "Job security is something that you earn and making sure they all understand it in their role I think is something we'll double down on as we go forward." — AFP

Business

New Mercedes-Maybach GLS - new form of luxury

Brand's style embodied in sublime beauty, supreme aesthetics, elegance

DUBAI: The Mercedes-Maybach GLS 600 4MATIC (combined fuel consumption: 12.0-11.7 l/100 km; combined CO2 emissions: 273-266 g/km) represents a new form of luxury in the SUV segment. The Mercedes-Maybach GLS combines the body form and superior, robust technical basis provided by the GLS, the S-Class among SUVs, with all the technical and material luxury of a top-class sedan.

Its spacious interior with the highest-grade materials and extremely effective noise insulation creates a stylish, cocoon-like feel-good atmosphere. From their pleasantly elevated seating position, thanks to electrically operated roller sun blinds on the two rear side windows, the passengers can decide for themselves how much of their surroundings they want to see.

"The Mercedes-Maybach brand represents 'Ultimate Luxury' in its most contemporary, purest form", says Gordon Wagener, Chief Design Officer at Daimler AG. "The brand's style is embodied in sublime beauty, supreme aesthetics and elegance. In order to define the luxury of the future, we are taking the concept of Sensual Purity to the next level and transforming ourselves from a premium manufacturer to the world's leading design brand." The AIRMATIC suspension included as standard or the optional, fully-active suspension with E-ACTIVE BODY CONTROL effectively keep the road bumps at bay. For the first time there is a dedicated Maybach drive program that ensures even more comfort in the rear.

This is the only system on the market that can individually control spring and damping forces at each wheel, suppressing rolling, pitching and lifting movements. Together with ROAD SURFACE SCAN and the curve inclination function CURVE, E-ACTIVE BODY CONTROL makes an exceptional level of comfort possible, and supports the claim of Mercedes-Benz to build the world's most intelligent SUV suspension.

E-ACTIVE BODY CONTROL operates with 48 volts. The system is based on the AIRMATIC all-air suspension system and offers the same all-round self-leveling. Furthermore, the electrically driven hydraulic pump generates dynamic forces that overlay the air suspension forces and actively support and dampen the vehicle body, e.g. during linear and lateral acceleration or when driving on uneven roads. The body no longer squats or pitches during braking and acceleration, and on poor road surfaces the system is even able to recuperate energy, roughly halving the energy requirement compared with the preceding system in the S-Class.

Additional features to enhance occupant comfort: - In CURVE drive mode, the Mercedes-Maybach GLS actively leans into bends by up to 3 degrees in three stages, like a motorcycle. This reduces the lateral forces acting on the occupants. Cornering is therefore made much more pleasant, especially for the front and rear passengers. - The ROAD SURFACE SCAN function comprises a stereo multi-purpose camera that continually records the road surface ahead of the vehicle.

The suspension struts are then activated so as to substantially reduce the body movements when driving over surface undulations, as the suspension responds even before the uneven stretch is reached. This enhances the comfort in particular away from paved roads.

The recovery function is included as part of



the Off-Road drive program and helps to free the vehicle more easily if it gets stuck in sand, for example. If possible the suspension level is automatically raised and lowered automatically several times, which alternately increases or reduces the ground pressure of the tyres and therefore improves traction. The V8 engine with a displacement of four liters, which can develop 410 kW (558 hp) and 730 Nm of torque, is an engine variant developed exclusively for Maybach and moves the car discreetly and powerfully. The engine is combined with the 48-volt system EQ Boost. An additional 250 Nm of torque and 16 kW/22 hp output are available temporarily via EQ Boost.

Power is transmitted by the 9G-TRONIC automatic transmission. The wide spread of

elegance to the profile.

The same applies to the brand emblem, which is positioned at various points such as on the D-pillar. As a special, Maybach-specific feature, two-tone paintwork is available in seven different, elegant color combinations.

The 22 or 23-inch wheels were developed exclusively for this model, with the 23-inch version echoing the pinstripe theme. The tailpipe trim elements with a small cross rib emphasize the model's identity as a Mercedes-Maybach.

Another eye-catching feature of the Mercedes-Maybach GLS are the electrically extending running boards. They make accessing and leaving the high seating position both convenient and safe. With surfaces of



ratios for gears one to nine ensures a significant reduction in the engine speed and is a decisive factor behind the high levels of drive and ride comfort. Likewise, standard is the transfer case with variable transfer of the drive torque from 0-100 percent (Torque on Demand) between the axles.

Two-tone paint finishes are optionally available, and these underline the balanced proportions of the body. A total of eight combinations are planned, the color named first being that of the lower section: cavanisite blue/iridium silver; designo diamond white bright/obsidian black; iridium silver/designo diamond white bright; iridium silver/selenite grey; obsidian black/kalahari gold; obsidian black/patagonia red; obsidian black/rubellite red; emerald green/mojave silver.

These paint finishes are rendered particularly elegant by the fluid course of the separating lines, where a fine pinstripe in the one color merges into the body of the other color along the vehicle's beltline. This fine line once again echoes the pinstripe motif. The Mercedes-Benz star surmounts the bonnet in the classic way, while the fine, vertical chrome struts of the Maybach radiator grille create a pinstripe effect. Effective chrome highlights around the side windows, and the chrome inserts in the side sill panels, lend dignity and

anodised aluminum laced with black rubber strips, illuminated in the dark and particularly wide in the area of the rear doors, they ensure a very special visual appeal.

When in their retracted state, the running boards are concealed behind the side sill panels. If a rear door is opened, the running board on the side concerned automatically swings into position in around one second. This default setting can be changed using a special menu in the MBUX infotainment system. In the interests of spaciousness in the rear, the Mercedes-Maybach GLS is only available with two seat rows.

Luxury, leather, reclining seats

The appointments of the Mercedes-Maybach GLS 600 4MATIC are already decidedly luxurious as standard. The two outer rear seats can be electrically converted into reclining seats. Padded areas and the dashboard are finished in fine nappa leather as standard, with a range of further cushions and leather interior linings available on request.

The high-gloss or open-pore wood surfaces of the trim elements, plus the upholstery in nappa magma grey/black or nappa mahogany brown/macchiato beige as standard ensure a very high perceived value. The same color combinations are also available for



the optional designo Leather package. For this a lighter upholstery color in crystal white/silver grey pearl will become available as an alternative soon after market launch, awakening associations with interior design in luxury yacht-building and thereby underlining the high quality of the selected materials. One typical Mercedes-Maybach detail is the color rose gold for the piping on the white leather.

An electrically opening panoramic sliding/tilting sunroof with an opaque roller blind is standard equipment, as are dematises massage seats. Obtainable on special request, the fixed centre console transforms the car into a spacious four-seater whose rear is just as suitable for working as for relaxing. This console is available with extending, folding tables, even a refrigerator with space for champagne bottles. Suitable silver champagne flutes for this are available from the accessories range.

A dedicated fragrance was developed for the Mercedes-Maybach GLS for active fragrancing as part of the optional AIR BALANCE package: the white osmanthus blossom, floral and light, is rounded off by a gentle leather note and spicy tea. The in-door speakers of the Burmester surround sound system are inset into the wood trim behind metal meshes. High-quality chromework and Mercedes-Maybach badges in the interior create further highlights. A stimulating contrast is created by the traditional materials, their craftsman-like finish and the modern high-tech appointments of the Mercedes-Maybach.

The removable tablet further enhances ease of operation when the rear passenger has adopted a particularly comfortable, reclined position with the separate cushions. If the occupant then also wants to use the seat's climatisation or massage function, listen to music or adjust the ambient lighting, they do not need to sit up again to select the setting.

There are also command menus that can be called up in the MBUX, MBUX Rear Tablet and MBUX Rear Seat Entertainment System. The MBUX Rear Tablet is housed in the extended centre console in the four-seater variant, while it is located in the fold-out luxury centre armrest with chrome trim element in the five-seater version. It also has space for an illuminated storage compartment with two USB ports. Optionally a wireless charging module for smartphones can be installed here.

Starting from this basis, added value that is typically Maybach is often a further result. For example, noise insulation in the interior has been raised to an even higher level by installing a rigid partition and a fixed parcel shelf behind the rear seats, separating the interior from the luggage compartment.

From the power transfer and suspension to

the headlamp technology, the technical systems of the Mercedes-Maybach GLS at least correspond to the most comfortable equipment level of the technically related Mercedes-Benz SUVs. There is a dedicated Maybach drive program for the suspension and powertrain; its settings offer rear seat passengers in particular the ultimate in ride comfort. With the standard MBUX Rear Tablet in the centre console or the armrest between the rear seats, the extensive comfort and entertainment functions can also be intuitively controlled from the rear seats.

The new Mercedes-Maybach GLS comes with many of the latest-generation Mercedes-Benz driving assistance systems included as standard. The PRE-SAFE(r) systems, which can increase the effectiveness of the car's protective functions by initiating in some cases reversible measures prior to an accident, are comprehensive and state-of-the-art, too.

Options include a package incorporating Active Stop-and-Go Assist and PRE-SAFE(r) Impulse Side. One of the stand-out features of the Executive seat in the Mercedes-Maybach is the cushion airbag in the seat cushion. In the event of a frontal impact, it is designed to stop the rear passenger from sliding under the belt when the seat is in the reclined position. The cushion airbag restrains the passenger as effectively as possible in the pelvic area and in this way boosts the restraint effect of the three-point seat belt equipped with inertia-reel tensioners and belt force limiters.

The following assistance systems are installed as standard: Active Distance Assist DISTRONIC; Active Speed Limit Assist; Traffic Sign Assist; Route-based speed adjustment; Active Steering Assist with Active Lane Change Assist and "emergency corridor" functions; Evasive Steering Assist; Active Lane Keeping Assist; Active Blind Spot Assist with exit warning; Active Brake Assist with turning manoeuvre function and cross-traffic function; PRE-SAFE PLUS.

Successful sub-brand: Mercedes-Maybach

The Mercedes-Maybach brand stands for exclusive luxury, maximum comfort and state-of-the-art technology in automotive engineering, services and accessories. It is seen as a trailblazer in defining style and status. The maximum of its name-giver Wilhelm Maybach was to create the very best from the very best. In 2014 Mercedes-Maybach was established as a sub-brand of Mercedes-Benz as part of a brand realignment. Since its market launch in 2015, more than 45,000 examples of the Mercedes-Maybach S-Class have been delivered worldwide. In 2018 more Mercedes-Maybach S-Class cars were sold than ever before: one in seven S-Class models sold was a Maybach.

Boursa Kuwait and MEIRA organizes workshop

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait held an Investor Relations (IR) workshop titled "Making the most of your annual report and IR website", at its premises, in collaboration with the Middle East Investor Relations Association (MEIRA) and its Kuwait Chapter on Wednesday, November 20, 2019. The one-day event, which attracted more than 100 IR practitioners from companies listed on Boursa Kuwait, highlighted the latest trends and international best practices for annual reports and IR websites.

Fahad Al-Bisher, Director of Investor Relations at Boursa Kuwait, delivered the welcome address highlighting the significance of the annual report and investor relations website in communicating a company's message to prospective investors. Al-Bisher also shed light on how the two were serving as the organization's windows to the outside world.

"The IR website and the annual report play an integral role in communicating your investment story to prospective clients. Offering valuable insights into financial performance and company developments, annual reports help attract new investors and build stronger relationships with stakeholders. With a dedicated portal or an IR section on the company website, organizations can engage investors in the business, both locally and abroad, more effectively," said Al-Bisher.

Al-Bisher also commented on the role of Boursa Kuwait in strengthening the investor relations field, saying, "In keeping with the commitment to promoting a robust, sustainable capi-



tal markets ecosystem in Kuwait, Boursa Kuwait has been exploring all avenues to empower our stakeholders, from listed companies and investors to other market participants, to achieve their business goals as well as drive our journey together towards realizing our shared vision.

The sixth IR seminar in collaboration with MEIRA has built on the success of our previous workshops to advance the investor relations landscape in our country and we look forward to more fruitful partnerships in the future." The workshop welcomed George Allen, Associate Partner at Instinct if Partners and Natasha Nelson, Account Director at Emperor, who explained international standards in developing a world-class annual report while presenting some case studies from regional and international companies. Both Instinct if Partners and Emperor are reputable international and regional consultancy firms specialized in communications, Investor Relations and annual reports.

MEIRA General Manager John Gollifer concluded the event by offering an interactive presentation on IR websites and explaining how IR practitioners can enhance their micro-sites, especially in the context of the annual MEIRA IR

Awards, celebrated every September.

Commenting on the session, John Gollifer, said: "We are always delighted to collaborate with Boursa Kuwait and share with IR representatives in Kuwait international market practices that will support them in their day-to-day activities. The annual report and the IR website are both essential communication channels and we at MEIRA are committed to sharing best practice IR with Boursa-listed companies. At the MEIRA Awards in September 2019, we recognized the best players in the Middle East and we are certain we will see new companies making it to the top of the list in the upcoming years."

The workshops part of a series of events held by Boursa Kuwait in collaboration with MEIRA and its Kuwait Chapter as part of the MOU signed between both entities back in 2017. The workshops aim to raise awareness about IR best practice and enable listed companies to benefit from effective IR processes and frameworks to drive business growth while helping advance the capital markets in Kuwait.

For IR inquiries, please contact Boursa Kuwait's Investor Relations unit at IR@boursakuwait.com.kw.

Burgan Bank appoints Al-Haqhaq as Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the appointment of Raed Al-Haqhaq as Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer, and Chief Executive Officer-Kuwait, after obtaining necessary approvals from the Central Bank of Kuwait. Al-Haqhaq will continue to play an outstanding role as usual. Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, Chairman of Burgan Bank said: "I would like to congratulate Raed Al-Haqhaq on his new position. His vast experience and execution during the past 24 years will definitely contribute to executing and realizing the Bank's growth strategy to drive the Group performance, and to reinforce our brand positioning."

Masoud Hayat, Burgan Bank Vice-Chairman and Group CEO commented, "Burgan Bank possesses a clear vision, strategy with a set of identified objectives, and an aspiration to keep growing. The appointment of Al-Haqhaq comes in line with our belief in supporting national talents, whom enjoy vast experiences and qualifications and are able to utilize them to achieve strategic targets and objectives. This is what Burgan Bank Group is aiming to achieve, as it works towards pioneering in the banking industry, on local and regional levels.

Al-Haqhaq is an industry veteran with more than 24 years of local and international banking experience in various sectors which include corporate, private banking and investment Al-Haqhaq holds a Bachelor of Science majoring in Strategic Management from California State University, Sacramento, USA. Al-Haqhaq has also completed a number of preparatory and administrative programs at Harvard Business School and INSEAD.



Raed Al-Haqhaq

What's On



Chinese community holds cultural show to mark country's 70th founding anniversary

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A Chinese cultural show was held on Friday at the Green Island Entertainment Area from 5 pm to 10 pm to mark the country's 70th founding anniversary. Members of Chinese community in Kuwait gathered at the Green Island to celebrate this auspicious occasion demonstrating Chinese cultural dance, food, martial arts and more. Chinese companies in Kuwait display several cars from GAC among other exhibitions.

Addressing the ceremony, Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Li Ming-Gang said the celebration was to mark the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the 48th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Kuwait. "The Chinese community today offers a night for all guests, including cultural activities, tasting Chinese food, cultural performances and photo exhibition. China and Kuwait share a good friendship, but unfortunately not many know much about our country and one of my tasks is to organize such events so that people know more about Chinese culture," he said.

Ming-Gang explained that these companies contribute to the implementation of many projects in Kuwait, adding, "I have been here in Kuwait for a year and visited more than 10 projects, some Chinese companies are involved in it. Engineers, companies, and workers from China work side by side with Kuwaiti partners to improve the lives of Kuwaitis."



— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

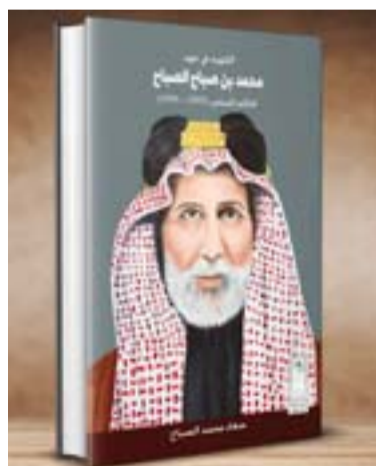


A new book released by Dr Suad Al-Sabah

Suad Al-Sabah Publishing and Distribution House released the book "Kuwait during the reign of Mohammad bin Sabah Al-Sabah" the sixth ruler 1892-1896, that is authored by Dr Suad Mohammad Al-Sabah. The book dealt with life in Kuwait and Kuwaitis during the reign of Mohammad bin Sabah who was born in 1838. His reign is considered one of the shortest a Kuwaiti Sheikh had during the 19th century, compared with his predecessor the fifth ruler his brother Sheikh Abdallah who ruled from 1866-1892, and his grandfather the third ruler who ruled for 45 years (1814-1859). The author said the main goal behind this study is to present an image about the life of Kuwait and Kuwaitis during this period from various social, economic and cultural aspects and its foreign relations. The book mentions important achievements of Sheikh Mohammad bin Sabah, and the military campaigns that Kuwait participated in during his reign, also Kuwait's hosting of Imam Abdalrahman bin Faisal Al Saud and his family and its political indicators, as Sheikh Mohammad bin Sabah backed the efforts of Al Saud.



Dr Suad Al-Sabah



GOLDEN JUBILEE

Palestinian Cultural Exhibition

All are welcome

To join us in solidarity with the Palestine & Jerusalem

Date Monday Nov. 25th - Thursday Nov. 28th 2019

Time 10:00 am - 1:30 pm & 16:30 pm - 20:30 pm

Place Women's Cultural and Social Society, Khaldiya Block 2, Al-Orouba Street



Al-Shaheed Park, in cooperation with LOYAC, held a Kuwaiti folkloric night by artist Salman Al-Ammari with popular band Al-Mass. A large crowd was in attendance at the open theater of the park. The event is within the activities of contemporary heritage festival.

Birthday Greetings

MUmar Imran, turns 10. God bless you and may you have prosperous future ahead. Best wishes and love from papa, mama, grandparents, aunties, uncles and cousin brothers Abdullah, Osama, Ali, Hassan, Mohsin, Talha and sisters Fatima, Ayesha, Meeqat and Aamina.



Can insects help clean up palm oil's tarnished image?

DUBAI: A pioneering entrepreneur believes insects can help improve the reputation of the palm oil industry, which for years has been accused of causing widespread deforestation, while slashing commercial farming's voracious water use.

Patrick Crowley, founder of Chapul, the first insect protein foods company in the United States, is proposing a "circular economy" for palm oil farmers so that waste and byproducts are used for farming insects on plantations. "The problem is the human behavior of clearing rainforests and peat bogs. It's not palm. It's the practice. That's how I see it," Crowley said. Palm oil is the world's most widely used edible oil, found in everything from margarine to soap, but has faced scrutiny in recent years from green groups and consumers, who have blamed its production for forest loss, fires and worker exploitation.

Crowley's insect plan, already being piloted for four years in Indonesia, the world's biggest palm oil producer, involves using empty palm fruit bunches that are often burned or left to rot after being processed. This waste has little or no market value but is high in fiber, the 40-year-old former hydrologist-turned-CEO said on the sidelines of a conference in Dubai on food production in areas with poor soils and water scarcity. Natural fungi and bacteria are added to this palm fruit waste to start the fermentation process, increasing its protein content and making it more digestible for insects, he said.

Black soldier flies, which are good at converting waste into protein, are given this waste just once before they are then ready to be harvested and fed to farmed fish, probably the world's fastest growing food-producing sector. Such insects replace fish meal, which is becoming increasingly scarce and expensive, and palm plantations are

attractive because they provide "the largest concentration of homogenous waste" that can be converted into feed with consistent quality, said Crowley.

Scientists say insect waste, known as frass, is also a great natural fertilizer and can go back into plantations to help boost palm yields, Crowley said. "We're already seeing an increase in productivity and decrease in use of pesticides in our pilot," he said.

Crowley was looking at ways to cut agriculture's water usage - 70 percent of the world's freshwater is currently used for farming - when watching a TED talk on insects made him "a reluctant entrepreneur." He used crowdfunding to set up Chapul - the Aztec word for grasshopper - a year before the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) published a report on insects.

The agency highlighted that they emit fewer greenhouse gases and less ammonia than cattle or pigs, require less land and water - and there are more than 1,900 edible insect species. Crowley said a consortium of partners bought land on Sumatra island to scale up their 2,000 square meters (0.2 hectare) pilot facility into five farms of five hectares each.

These farms would use a total of 1 million tons of waste per year, produce 200,000 tons of larvae, and save 20 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions, he added. Eduardo Mansur, director of land and water division at the FAO, said it is not only important but also necessary to transform the economic systems into circular models. "Is it possible to do it at once in all sectors? No, but we have to start where we can and agriculture sector, especially water in agriculture, offers a lot of opportunities" he said. "But we have to do it at a scale that will have positive impact to the planet." — Reuters

French gastronomes savor sake

PARIS: The sommelier lingers over her glass, taking in the bouquet while clutching a spoon of caviar and cucumber jelly. The union of food and beverage is "magical," she declares. But Paz Levinson, head sommelier at the high-end Anne-Sophie Pic restaurant group, is not savoring a sought-after vintage from Bordeaux or Bourgogne. She is holding a glass of sake, the humble Japanese rice drink. "Sake works very well with French cuisine," says the Argentine.

France is only the 11th largest market in the world for sake: total sales remain below two million euros (\$2.2 million) per year. But its consumption is on the up — imports increased by some 160 percent between 2012 and 2017. Anne-Sophie Pic — head chef and owner of the eponymous restaurant group — has won eight Michelin stars in her career, and she is a sake convert. She first used the drink in her recipes before adding it to the wine list. Other hotels and restaurants are equally keen.

In a growing market, entrepreneurs have sniffed an opportunity: French sake. Two companies already produce the drink domestically — both in wine-growing regions. Takuma Inagawa, a French-educated Japanese brewer, has a different idea. He wants to start production in an old warehouse in Fresnes, a town just south of

Paris. Despite his Japanese heritage and the industrial surroundings of Fresnes, he is keen to imbue the drink with the best French traditions. "We wanted local, French rice," says Inagawa, whose warehouse holds hundreds of bags marked "Camargue rice".

"The French are ready to accept sake but, with the trend towards a sustainable environment, there is a potential for French sake," says the 31-year-old, whose company Wakaze was set up in Japan making flavored versions of the alcohol.

He hopes eventually to use Burgundy oak barrels to age some of his product — believing this will please French and Japanese drinkers, as he has already produced a run of 17,000 bottles in his homeland. Sake began to get popular in France about 15 or 20 years ago, according to expert Sylvain Huet.

He says a "sushi boom" led to a "sake boom" in the restaurants and dining rooms on Rue Sainte-Anne, a Parisian street near the Louvre known as Little Tokyo because of the proliferation of Japanese businesses. But the impact was initially limited to that small area of Paris.

Huet though believes France has got a taste for the drink: "Over the next 10 years, the market in France will increase fivefold, even tenfold," he says. Huet set up his own Sake Fair in 2014 and says he catered to over 5,100 visitors in this year's edition. Similarly, sommelier Xavier Thuizat has also been enchanted by the drink, establishing his own tasting competition — "Kura Master" — in 2016. He says he hit an impasse six years ago, unable to find the right drink to go with certain foods. — AFP

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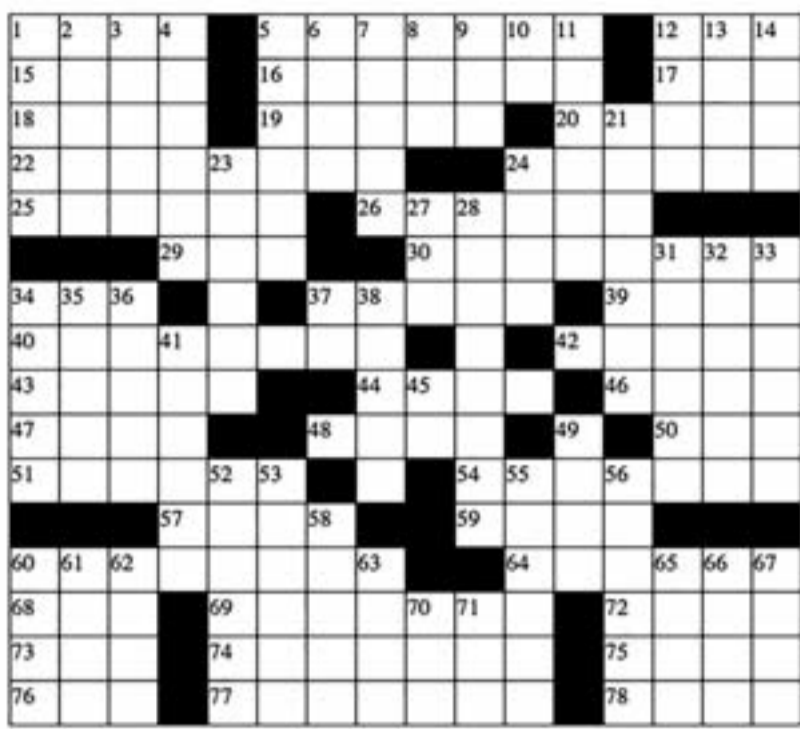
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ACROSS

1. Interchangeable with 'means' in the expression 'by dint of'.
 5. A tumor consisting of a mass of blood or lymphatic vessels.
 12. A dark-skinned member of a race of people living in Australia when Europeans arrived.
 15. Relatively small fast-moving sloth.
 16. English writer (born in France) of novels and short stories (1874-1965).
 17. Having undesirable or negative qualities.
 18. A state of confusion and disorderliness.
 19. Muslims collectively and their civilization.
 20. Excessively fat.
 22. That part of the ovary of a flowering plant where the ova form.
 25. Highly seasoned fatty sausage of pork and beef usually dried.
 26. A member of an agricultural people in southeastern India.
 29. An acute inflammatory disease occurring in the intestines of premature infants.
 30. Of or relating to or characteristic of the Bahama Islands or their inhabitants.
 34. An awkward stupid person.
 39. A ruler of the Inca Empire (or a member of his family).
 40. A wandering or disorderly grouping (of things or persons).
 42. Razor clams.
 43. Eaten as mush or as a thin gruel.
 44. The basic unit of money in Thailand.
 46. A self-replicating protein molecule that occupies a fixed place on a chromosome.
 47. Influential German idealist philosopher (1724-1804).
 48. Gully or streambed in North Africa and the Middle East that remains dry except during rainy season.
 50. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
 51. Elected Vice President and became 21st President of the United States when Garfield was assassinated (1830-1886).
 54. An endowment for the singing of Masses.
 57. A fencing sword similar to a foil but with a heavier blade.
 59. God of love and erotic desire.
 60. Nearest in space or position.
 64. I species.
 68. The cry made by sheep.
 69. Changed in form or character without becoming something else.
 72. Containing an unusual amount of grease or oil.
 73. Being five more than one hundred fifty.
 74. (biology) Permanently attached to a substrate.
 75. Having come or been brought to a conclusion.
 76. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on the sea or ships.
 77. A plant of the genus Kniphofia having long grasslike leaves and tall scapes of red or yellow drooping flowers.
 78. (archaic) A fitting reward.
- DOWN
1. (informal) "in the dumps".
 2. Any plant of the genus Inula.
 3. Of or in or relating to the nose.
 4. Of or relating to or characteristic of Tuscany or its people.
 5. Pertaining to or containing any of a group of organic compounds of nitrogen derived from ammonia.
 6. American political cartoonist (1840-1902).
 7. A Russian prison camp for political prisoners.
 8. One of the most common of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
 9. A unit of electrical resistance equal to the resistance between two points on a conductor when a potential difference of one volt between them produces a current of one ampere.
 10. Informal terms for a mother.
 11. Naked freshwater or marine or parasitic protozoa that form temporary pseudopods for feeding and locomotion.
 12. Assist or encourage, usually in some wrongdoing.
 13. Serving as or forming a base.
 14. A European river.
 21. Cheerful and bright.
 23. Come out into view, as from concealment.
 24. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
 27. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
 28. Small European grebe.
 31. Small air-breathing arthropod.
 32. Pertaining to one of the small sacs (as in a compound gland).
 33. A battle in 1645 that settled the outcome of the first English Civil War as the Parliamentarians won a major victory over the Royalists.
 35. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
 36. Relating to or located in the front.
 37. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
 38. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
 41. Any of various plants of the genus Althaea.
 45. A public promotion of some product or service.
 49. Fallow deer.
 52. Air passage consisting of a ventilation shaft through which air leaves a mine.
 53. Someone who walks unsteadily as if about to fall.
 55. Ground snakes.
 56. Small tree of dry open parts of southern Africa having erect angled branches suggesting candelabra.
 58. The Uralic language spoken by the Yeniseian people.
 61. (British) An open river valley (in a hilly area).
 62. An island in Indonesia south of Borneo.
 63. Of the nature of or undergoing an experiment.
 65. Actually being performed (or--for the audience--present) at the time of viewing.
 66. On or toward the lee.
 67. Explorer and United States naval officer.
 70. The former capital and 2nd largest city of Brazil.
 71. Any of various trees of the genus Ulmus.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may find that people are so busy today you won't be able to finish a sentence. Others may challenge your authority or the direction you are taking. Events could make it difficult for you to act. Your ideas may not find the support you need. This is a good time to back off and get a view of the day from a different perspective. Perhaps a break or an early lunch will provide the perfect opportunity to unwind and gain a focus. This afternoon points to your taking the initiative. Your special qualifications and your creativity are more likely to put you ahead of the pack, at work or home. You will receive a boost from your friends this afternoon.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This month's ending brings energy to learn and expand your horizons and move forward. What wonderful choices you will have this next birth year. A junior college or university around your area will have a booklet they can send you to choose your class. Art teachers, business investment counselors or any type of travel agenda can each be achieved. What you have to discover is where you want your adventure to begin and what you want to develop in the earning of a living. Now is the time to set a few dates for your goals. This is a good day to make some phone calls, set some dates and plan your path. A few co-workers or friends may want to help you celebrate this evening.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

There could be difficulties to work through today. It is important during this time to effectively communicate your ideas to others, especially those who are ultrasensitive. You will become alert to any thinking that needs to be changed and eventually be pleased with your efforts as well as the outcome. By this afternoon those confusing energies will be gone. There is a massive social change going on in your community and much of it is very positive. You may find a whole new set of friends coming across your path and you may also gain a new interest in an unusual sort of entertainment. Money causes change and some of your new friends may encourage you in those changes. A new friend will lead you in a positive direction tonight.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are riding a high now in terms of taking advantage of the cycles in your life. Good things are happening all around. This is the beginning of a series of years during which you should begin to consolidate and tie down the advances you have made in recent years. It may be best to begin to dig in and strengthen your current position rather than expand outward too much. Social and community endeavors may hold your attention this afternoon--there are more to come. You are interested, as many of us, in making the world a better place. Pick one subject and make it your job to create a public awareness campaign.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You and everyone you know seem to be in a good mood today and a sense of humor is not far behind. Some technical method or style of working may come to your attention that keeps you thinking about continued education. You may decide to check out the agenda at one of the community colleges in your area. You may be pleased at who is teaching these days. You may be called upon to teach or help others take a more independent approach to their life at this time. Your confidence is high and you can accomplish anything that is before you. This time in your life can have a profound effect on your psyche and may mark a time when your faith in a higher power, as well as in other people, will be most meaningful. Deep powers are being awakened.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This is a time for serious thinking. A practical mind takes on a special importance at this time. Taking care of the necessary underpinnings of life--health, work and such--becomes a greater preoccupation. School and studies of all kinds could be in order. This is a time for perspiration in the idea department. Perhaps a little more education will get you the job that will allow you more freedom, travel or power. This may be a time during which you can get ahead by finding your limits and establishing some criteria that will enable you to move forward with your goals. Everything conspires to reveal you at your most elegant, particularly in social situations this afternoon. Romance is very possible this evening. A candlelight dinner is in order.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

There is new energy available for professional endeavors now. This is a time of good fortune when things open up in a very natural way. New people in your life and new circumstances make it very easy to see which path you will want to claim for yours. Opportunities flourish and you may find yourself wanting and capable of doing most everything. You may be teaching young people today. You are not so egotistical as to believe that we should get away from the natural way of living our lives. You encourage young people to learn the old ways of navigation and communication so that they will never be without the ability to contact others or to find safety when they are lost at sea or land. You teach proper health practices and etiquette.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Things may seem magical in the way they work out today. This is a great time to organize and get things accomplished. This is a time when you have a greater appreciation for things of value. This could be a period of great material gain; it is certainly a time when material things have a great deal of importance. Your thoughts and goals are very clear. Upcoming events need planning so that the cost is kept down. Unforeseen expenses could be hard to find. You may have to be firm with a family member who seems to think that money grows on trees! This evening there is some energy present that will help you to heal, or to just feel better.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

An emotionally charged drama will be experienced in the realm of law, politics, education, travel or religion. You could be most persuasive with others and may add a great deal of calming energies to an intense debate or disagreement. The situation is a natural for self-expression and lends itself to your particular thoughts. You will enjoy the company of your loved ones this afternoon. Keep your positive attitude. You are feeling reflective and enjoy being with family members. Tonight when the subject of dinner comes around you may decide to cook a special dinner for everyone. If there are young people present, they could be in charge of some special side dish.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You can work effectively behind the scenes where distractions are minimal. Circumstances may require the use of your knowledge and persuasive communication skills. This could offer you your best opportunity to exercise your own personal power. Concentrate on ways in which to bring about a balance between responsibilities and relaxation. With your resourcefulness, today's obstacles can be converted into opportunities. You are good with numbers and could become most important in accounting. There will be increased opportunities to reach out to others through a social function this evening.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Communication skills are in demand--you may be requested to speak for the company or deal with the public. Your co-worker friends may become very close to you, almost like family. It is almost like an ongoing soap opera to hear about the next activity or event in your friend's life. Your emotions and the feelings of those around you may be very clear today. Gossip is easy to find, but you will encourage respect and refuse the gossip--thereby gaining appreciation from all. Many insights can be gleaned this afternoon from conversations regarding hypothetical situations. Don't be afraid to speak up when you see a situation that could bring about better business.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your directional abilities are in high focus. Others may slow you down from time to time by pulling you into conversations, but your mind is on whatever project you have set up for yourself. This could mean you are working at your job, but it could just as easily mean you are working in your garage or your garden. You and your loved one may decide to take up a new hobby or attend a class together--perhaps learning about herbs or drying flowers. Whatever the case, it will be something fun and decidedly different from your normal interests. There is a deepening of your love relationship this evening and you feel like having some special time alone with a special loved one. It is likely that more money will be coming your way soon.

Wordsearch Puzzle

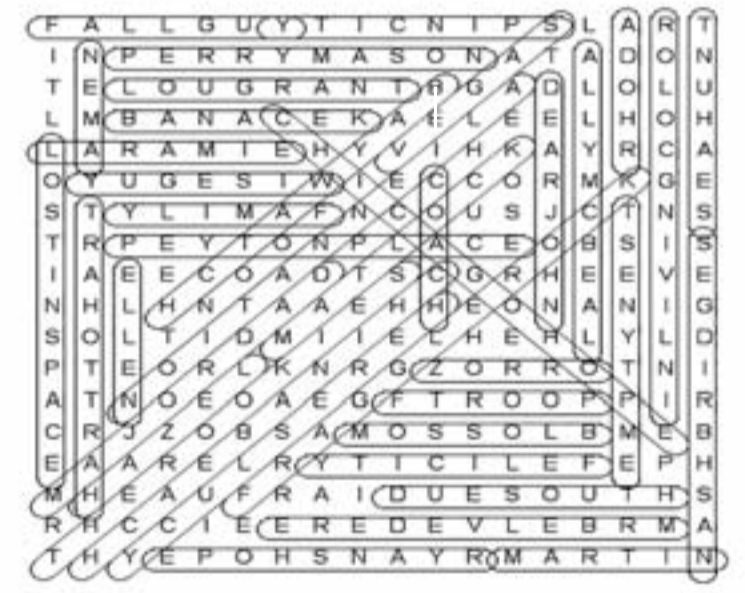
Old West 1

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 25 letters spell a George Eliot quotation.



- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| BANKER | FARRIER | LAWMAN | SALOON |
| BARKEEP | FORT | LIVESTOCK | SHERIFF |
| BILLY THE KID | FURS | MINER | SHOPKEEPER |
| BOOT HILL | GOLD MINE | OUTLAW GANG | SITTING BULL |
| BRAND | GOLD PANNING | PISTOL | STAGECOACH |
| CAMPFIRE | GRAZE | PLOW HORSE | TELEGRAPH |
| CATTLE DRIVE | HIRED GUN | POSSE | TRACKER |
| CHAPARRAL | HOGS | RAILROAD | TRAIL |
| COAL | HOMESTEAD | RANCH | TRAIN |
| CORRAL | HOTEL | RATTLESNAKE | UNDERTAKER |
| COWBOY | JUDGE | RIFLE | WATER TANK |
| DOC HOLLIDAY | LARIAT | SADDLE | WELL |

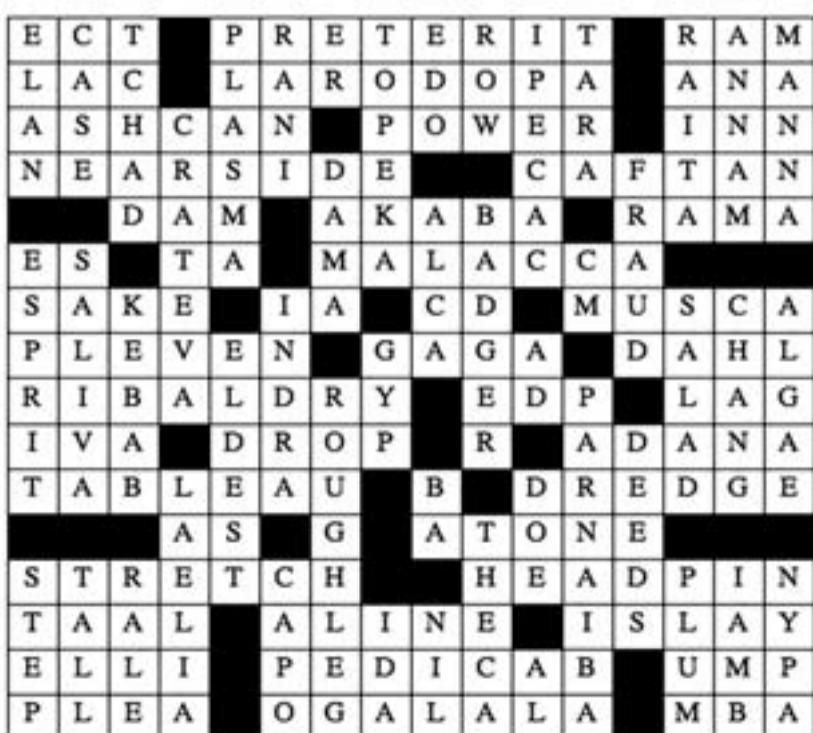
Friday's Solution



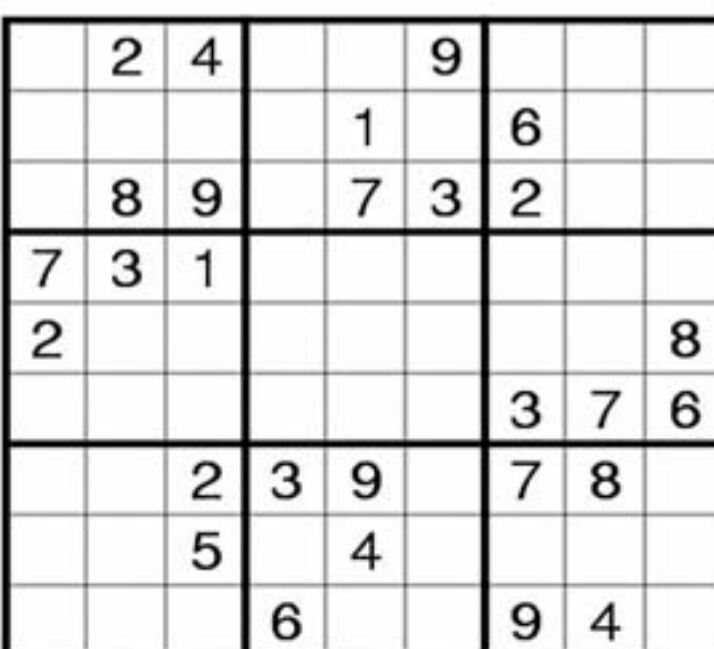
- | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| ALIEN NATION | DUE SOUTH | HERE'S LUCY | PERRY MASON |
| ALLY MCBEAL | ELLEN | IN LIVING COLOR | PEYTON PLACE |
| AMEN | EMPTY NEST | LARAMIE | RHODA |
| BANACEK | F TROOP | LOST IN SPACE | RYAN'S HOPE |
| BAYWATCH | FALL GUY | LOU GRANT | SEA HUNT |
| BLOSSOM | FAMILY | MAJOR DAD | SPIN CITY |
| CHICAGO HOPE | FELICITY | MARTIN | THE ROOKIES |
| CHINA BEACH | FRAGGLE ROCK | MATLOCK | VEGAS |
| COACH | HART TO HART | MR BELVEDERE | WISEGUY |
| DEAR JOHN | HAZEL | NASH BRIDGES | ZORRO |

The hidden TV show is: LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE

Friday's Solution



Daily Sudoku



Friday's Solution



Lifestyle

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2019



A pedestrian walks up a staircase of an overpass in Beijing. — AFP

Coldplay no-tour plan highlights growing climate awareness

British band Coldplay on Friday won plaudits for shelving a new album tour over environmental concerns, in the latest sign of climate change activism in the music industry. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) praised the move, as the group released its latest album—"Everyday Life"—with only two gigs, both in the Jordanian capital Amman. The performances, staged at sunrise and sunset without an audience, were broadcast free on YouTube.

"It is fantastic to see world famous artists stepping up to protect the planet," said the head of climate change at WWF, Gareth Redmond-King. "We all have a responsibility to lead by example in the face of this climate and nature crisis—inaction is not an option if we are to preserve our planet for future generations." Coldplay frontman Chris Martin told the BBC they would not tour until they had figured out how concerts could be more "sustainable".

He listed the amount of flying required and the use of items such as plastic water bottles as the band's primary concerns over touring. Activists say international music tours impact heavily on the environment, with concern about the amount of electricity used to power



In this file photo (left to right) Musician Jonny Buckland, Will Champion, Chris Martin, and Guy Berryman of the band Coldplay perform onstage at the 2012 MusiCares Person of the Year Tribute to Paul McCartney held at the Los Angeles Convention Center in Los Angeles, California. — AFP photos

stadiums to waste generated by concert-goers. Coldplay played 122 shows around the world across eight legs as part of the tour for their last album, "A Head Full of Dreams".

Martin said if the band do eventually hit the road for the new release, they hope the tour could be entirely carbon neutral. The band is set to perform another one-off con-

cert next Monday at London's Natural History Museum, with the proceeds donated to an environmental charity.

Cleaning up their acts

Coldplay's decision is the latest example of bands and the wider entertainment industry responding to growing concern about the climate crisis. US teenage sensation Billie Eilish revealed last month that she had tried to make her world tour "as green as possible" with the help of a non-profit consultancy. The singer told chat-show host Jimmy Fallon she had banned plastic straws and urged fans to bring their own refillable water bottles and to utilize recycling bins at venues.

On her next world tour starting in March, every site will feature an "eco-village" where concert-goers can learn about environmentalism, she said. Meanwhile The 1975, another British band, which this year collaborated with Swedish climate change icon Greta Thunberg, are also trying to move towards carbon-neutral touring. It pledged in September to plant a tree for every ticket sold ahead of their upcoming tour of Britain and Ireland.

Teenage activist Thunberg refuses to fly because of the carbon emissions involved. In

September, she travelled to a UN climate conference in New York by boat. She is currently sailing back to Europe. In Britain, live music events account for 405,000 tons of greenhouse emissions, according to the campaign group Global Citizen, which stages its own zero-waste festivals. Powerful Thinking, a think-tank focused on the festival industry, estimates the events generate some 23,500 tons of waste each year in the country.

This has led dozens of Britain's biggest festivals to try to clean up their acts, initiating everything from bans on single-use plastic to using renewable energy sources. The UK Music umbrella group representing the industry said 3.9 million people attended festivals in Britain in 2016. Glastonbury Festival, staged every June on a farm in western England, is partnering with charities such as Greenpeace, Oxfam and WaterAid to improve its sustainability. Organizers even deployed portable toilets that utilize technology to convert urine into electricity at this year's festival. — AFP



In this file photo Chris Martin of music group Coldplay performs onstage during the 2017 iHeartRadio Music Festival at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada.



In this file photo performers and models on the runway at the 2018 Victoria's Secret Fashion Show at Pier 94 in New York City. — AFP

END OF AN ERA AS VICTORIA'S SECRET SCRAPS ANNUAL FASHION SHOW

It was one of the most popular fashion shows for 20 years, but US lingerie brand Victoria's Secret is canceling its annual extravaganza amid controversy and weak financial results in the #MeToo era. The decision, in the offing since the summer, reflects a shift towards brands seen as more empowering of women, such as singer Rihanna's, and comes after several years of declining TV viewership. The brand is often accused of objectifying women and has been struggling to appeal to a younger generation of lingerie shoppers who increasingly prefer simpler, less sexualized designs.

Victoria's Secret has also received negative publicity surrounding its owner's links to Jeffrey Epstein, who killed himself in prison this year while awaiting trial on charges he trafficked underage girls for sex. The fashion show, in which models parade around with

angels' wings on their backs, first aired in 1995. It was broadcast around the world, with the venue changing from year to year. American viewers have declined by almost a third since 2014, from nine million then to 3.3 million in December last year.

The decision to scrap it was confirmed by Stuart Burgdoerfer, finance director of parent company L Brands, during a conference call with analysts about the brand's latest quarterly results. Victoria's Secret once defined glamour, attracting the most sought-after supermodels like Gisele Bündchen and Naomi Campbell. But Burgdoerfer added that the brand, which was the jewel in L Brands' crown for many years, had not been able to achieve a new lease on life despite recent leadership changes.

Its sales have been slipping in the past two years, weighing on the bottom line of L

Brands which reported a net loss of \$252 million in the third quarter, against a \$43 million loss a year earlier. Victoria's Secret sales were just over \$1 billion in the third quarter of 2019, down seven percent from the same period in 2018. More than 30 of its stores have closed since February. The brand seems to be paying the price, in part, for some marketing blunders.

The cast in the show's 2018 edition was more cosmopolitan than usual, following criticism that the brand had little regard for diversity in its choice of models. But days after last year's event, marketing director Ed Razek ruled out using transgender or plus-size models in future shows. His ill-judged comments came as demands for greater diversity on catwalks increases. They sparked an outcry on social media and he later apologized.

Rihanna

More serious perhaps is that the brand has regularly been mentioned in articles about disgraced hedge fund manager Epstein, who was accused of multiple sexual assaults on young women, many of them teenagers. Epstein, who was arrested in July, had been close to L Brands founder Leslie Wexner. Wexner was thought to be Epstein's biggest financial backer for a while after hiring him as a financial advisor in the 1980s.

Wexner said he severed ties with Epstein after the latter's conviction for sex crimes with underage girls in 2008. Moreover, countless women who accused Epstein of sexual assault said they were recruited to work for him on the false promise that he would get them jobs as Victoria's Secret models. Models' rights group the Model Alliance hailed the show's cancellation, noting that 100 models had

signed a letter calling on Victoria's Secret to join its "Respect" program aimed at preventing sexual assault and fostering fair working conditions.

With Victoria's Secret on the slide, Rihanna is the new star of the lingerie market with her "Savage X Fenty". The brand is big on diversity and seeks to project an image of women as the masters of their own bodies and desires. Supermodels Gigi and Bella Hadid and Cara Delevingne paraded its lingerie at New York Fashion Week in September, signaling how popular the brand has become. "It was the first time on the runway that I felt really sexy," supermodel Bella Hadid told Elle magazine. — AFP

First Marvel comic sets auction record

The first comic book produced by Marvel, the famed US publisher behind Spider-Man, X-Men and The Avengers, went under the hammer Thursday, fetching a record \$1.26 million, Heritage Auctions said. "This is a historic copy of a historic comic book," Ed Jaster, auction house senior vice president, said of the book, which was published in 1939 by Timely Comics, which later became Marvel.

"Without question, this is the granddaddy of all Marvel Comics, without which we would not have the characters and stories we enjoy in today's comics and feature films," Jaster added.

Under the direction of screenwriter Stan Lee, Marvel in the 1960s created superheroes which have become iconic today and whose cinema adaptations have conquered box offices worldwide.

The first copy of "Marvel Comics" was sold in very good condition and well above the price of 10 cents it fetched back in 1939. "Amazing Fantasy #15," in which Spider-Man first appears, slipped to second-highest Marvel comic ever auctioned, having sold for \$1.1 million in 2011. The most expensive comic book in history remains the first issue of "Action Comics" published in 1938 in which Superman makes his debut. It sold for \$3.2 million in 2014. — AFP

This image courtesy of Heritage Auctions shows a copy of Marvel Comics No. 1, the 1939 comic book considered the 'Big Bang' of the Marvel Comics Superhero Universe. — AFP



Posthumous Leonard Cohen album offers apt final waltz

Though his storied career needed no epilogue, Leonard Cohen's graceful new posthumous album "Thanks for the Dance" offers a satisfying postscript, giving fans one last chance to savor his inimitable poetry. Mere weeks before his death at age 82, Cohen released his 2016 album "You Want It Darker," a stirring work whose lyrics continue his metaphysical exploration of death, spirituality, and his place in the universe.

Though many saw it as the final chapter from a singular talent, Cohen had more reckoning to do—and the unfinished pieces he left behind are now integrated into his vast body of work. In mourning his father's death, Cohen's son Adam, also a musician, grew determined to do justice to the raw vocal recordings left behind. He assembled a number of star musicians including Spanish guitarist Javier Mas, Daniel Lanois and Jennifer Warnes—one of Cohen's collaborators and many flames—to compose sparse but warm instrumentals to accompany Cohen's rich baritone timbre.



Canadian singer and poet Leonard Cohen takes off his hat to salute in Paris. — AFP

The likes of artists Beck, Feist and Damien Rice also lent their talents to the new album. The nine tracks on "Thanks for the Dance" blend coherently into his oeuvre with forward-looking contemplations, examining the past not with nostalgia but with an inner drive to explore his own psyche. "It was nothing, it was business / But it left an ugly mark / So I've come here to revisit / What happens to the heart." Cohen intones on the opening track "Happens to the Heart."

Devotional investigation

In "Moving On"—an elegy to his one-time love and muse Marianne Ihlen, the inspiration behind the 1967 classic "So Long, Marianne" who died just months before Cohen—the artist considers his own restlessness in romance, a theme that has long pervaded his work. "And now you're gone, now you're gone / As if there ever was a you / Who broke the heart and made it new? / Who's moving on, who's kiddin' who?" he says. Adam Cohen has said his father recorded those vocals just after he heard of Ihlen's death.

"He was not trying to be a nostalgia act, like so many of his contemporaries," he recently told The New York Times. "He wasn't going backwards. He would say to me, 'I am taking the inner life very seriously.'" "And I think that's why it resonates so deeply to us. It wasn't an act. This was a devotional investigation into wherever he found himself." The haunting "Puppets" considers the world he would leave: "German puppets burned the Jews," he says, later delivering the line, "Puppet presidents command / Puppet troops to burn the land."

Cohen draws in listeners with his signature deadpan humor—but leaves them with poignant introspection. In the sensual "The Night of Santiago" he follows up amusing lines like "her nipples rose like bread" with a moving recollection of distant lust: "Though I've forgotten half my life / I still remember this." In his final public appearance promoting "You Want It Darker," the then ailing Cohen granted journalists in Los Angeles a glimpse into a work in progress.

He said, "God willing," the poetry would appear on his next album—it's now his final track, a last dance. His son retrieved audio of his father's recitation from the conference to include on the album. "Listen to the hummingbird / Whose wings you cannot see / Listen to the hummingbird / Don't listen to me," Cohen says, before the song drifts into silence. — AFP

Monty Python's Terry Gilliam outraged by climate change

Fresh from winning an award from the Cairo International Film Festival, outspoken British-American director Terry Gilliam on Friday lambasted Donald Trump, urged more action on climate change and denounced political correctness in Hollywood. Speaking in the Egyptian capital on his 79th birth-

takes down Trump, it will be Fiona Hill," he said in a briefing with reporters overlooking the Nile on the sidelines of the festival. The director who was part of the culture-shaping comedy troupe Monty Python received a lifetime achievement award from the festival this week.

Addressing the dire impact of climate change, Gilliam insisted that the 2016 Paris climate accord had not gone far enough to combat environmental degradation. "You got this planet and there's no question that it is in big trouble. We already have passed the danger mark," he said. "We keep on spending billions to try to get to Mars and by that time this planet will look like Mars," he added.

No stranger to controversy, Gilliam derided attempts to make films more socially inclusive, particularly with regards to gender and race. "In Hollywood, there's a lot of pressure if you're going to have a transgender character, then you have to have a transgender actor—it's ridiculous," he told AFP. "If you're going to have a serial killer then you've got to have a serial killer actor who has killed many people? It's illogical," Gilliam added.

He referred to actress Zoe Saldana who was criticized for portraying legendary soul singer Nina Simone, saying she was "pilloried" for darkening her skin for the role. "If

I'm going to play an Italian on film I'll darken my skin, I'll try to look Mediterranean," Gilliam said. "This is such superficial nonsense". He went to say the #Metoo movement had not made him rethink his casting decisions.

Last year, Gilliam sparked a firestorm by saying ambitious actresses willingly "paid the price" of having sex with disgraced film executive Harvey Weinstein. He has since walked back from those comments, describing Weinstein on Friday as a "complete monster", but said similar behavior in the film industry was likely inevitable. "Hollywood has always been and will probably continue to be about power, and power is always abused," he told AFP.

The Cairo festival, which runs until November 29, was the first Arab film festival to sign the "505002020" Gender Parity Pledge launched last year at the Cannes Film Festival. The pledge aims to promote gender equality in filmmaking after the Weinstein scandal. Gilliam's latest film, "The Man who killed Don Quixote", stars heart-throb Adam Driver and took 17 years to complete. — AFP



British film director Terry Gilliam speaks with reporters during an interview on the sidelines of the 41st edition of the Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF) at a hotel in the centre of the Egyptian capital Cairo. — AFP

day, the prolific filmmaker, known for cult classics including "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas", took a shot at the US president.

Gilliam praised former top White House Russia expert Fiona Hill's testimony in Thursday's impeachment hearings against Trump. "If anyone

Lifestyle | Features

Sandler, Pattinson indie films top Spirit Award nominations



Actress Natasha Lyonne

Adam Sandler and Robert Pattinson saw their Oscar hopes boosted Thursday as "Uncut Gems" and "The Lighthouse" led the Film Independent Spirit Awards nominations with five each, in the unofficial start to Hollywood's annual prize-giving season. While major studio releases are not eligible for the Spirit Awards, the prizes are still seen as a strong indicator of the independent movies that could eventually be Oscar winners.

Sandler stars as a brash, larger-than-life New York jewel dealer in the high-octane drama "Uncut Gems" from the Safdie brothers, who also earned a directing nod. Former "Twilight" and "Harry Potter" star Pattinson underlined his indie credentials with a nomination for Robert Eggers' black-and-white tale of two lighthouse keepers on a remote island.

Both films were made by production house A24, which once again dominated, earning 18 nods. The indie powerhouse is behind previous Oscar winner "Moonlight," as well as "Lady Bird" and "The Disaster Artist." Actresses Zazie Beetz ("Joker") and Natasha Lyonne ("Orange Is The New Black") presented the nominations at a Los Angeles press conference.

Film Independent President Josh Welsh described 2019 as "a year of bold, audacious and accomplished filmmaking" despite significant change and challenges affecting the movie industry. Netflix's "Marriage Story" was selected to receive the Robert Altman Award, which is bestowed upon one film's director, casting director and cast. The movie, starring Scarlett Johansson and Adam Driver, will

vie with "Uncut Gems" for the best feature prize.

While Sandler and Pattinson will compete for best male lead, A-listers Renee Zellweger ("Judy") and Elisabeth Moss ("Her Smell") were nominated for best female lead, and Jennifer Lopez ("Hustlers") will vie for the best supporting female award. Five best feature winners this decade have gone on to best picture glory at the Academy Awards, including "Moonlight," "Spotlight" and "Birdman." The winners, selected by Film Independent members, will be announced at the Spirit Awards on February 8 — the day before the Oscars. — AFP



Actress Zazie Beetz, right, attends the Film Independent Spirit Awards Nominations Announcement Press Conference, in Los Angeles, California. — AFP photos

From Bardot to Diana, Paris Match photos to go under hammer

They are the defining images of newsmakers down the decades from Princess Diana to Brigitte Bardot to Pope John Paul II. And now some 130 of the most iconic pictures taken by the French magazine Paris Match are to be auctioned on November 25 in Paris for prices of between 1,500-4,000 euros (\$1,660-4,400). The auction of the celebrated covers and double-spreads will mark the 70th anniversary of a publication whose trend-setting influence has always gone well beyond France.

The pictures include powerful images from nature and conflict zones and also of politicians ranging from the deposed shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, to Charles de Gaulle and late French president Jacques Chirac. But among the most unforgettable are those of personalities who have shaped the zeitgeist of the last decades.

Perhaps the most famous is the image of Britain's Princess Diana, sitting alone on the diving board of a luxury yacht as a bird flies by, just a week before her death in a Paris road accident in 1997. "Yes, it is a paparazzi photo, but it's one that has gone down in history. This photo is Diana, it's Lady Di and she only had eight days to live," said Marc Brincourt, former photo editor-in-chief at Paris Match and curator of the exhibition at the Cornette de Saint Cyr auction house in Paris.

"She is alone, on the diving board. And then the seagull going by," he added. Another image, by photographer Jack Garofalo from 1974, celebrates the 40th birthday of actress Brigitte Bardot, her chest exposed and flowers in her hair. "In order to pose like that in front of Jack Garofalo, you need to have trust," said Brincourt. "There is a trust between star and the photographer. Why? Because in that era, the stars were friends with the photographers and the Paris Match reporters," he added. — AFP

Wooden manger relics heading from Rome to Bethlehem

Wooden relics said to be from the manger that held the infant Jesus will be returned from Rome to Bethlehem in time for the Christmas season, Palestinian officials said on Friday. Bethlehem's mayor, Anton Salman, told the Palestinian news agency Wafa the move followed President Mahmoud Abbas's most recent visit to the Vatican, when Abbas asked Pope Francis for the return of the fragments held in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.

Salman said the relics were taken from Bethlehem around 1,000 years ago, and are now likely to be placed inside Saint Catherine's Church, adjacent to the Church of

the Nativity in Manger Square, the reputed site of Jesus's birth. There was no immediate confirmation from the Vatican. But Amira Hanania, a member of Abbas's Higher Committee of Churches Affairs, said the relics would arrive on November 30, the day the Palestinian town traditionally lights its Manger Square Christmas tree.

"It is an historic move. It returns to its original place, and it will be a factor of attraction to believers from inside Palestine and to tourists from all over the world," she said. "To celebrate Christmas with the presence of part of the manger in which Jesus Christ was born will be a magnificent and huge event." Although the provenance of ancient relics is

often questionable, they are revered by the Christian faithful, among whom are the coachloads of pilgrims who squeeze through a narrow sandstone entrance in the Church of the Nativity all year round to visit the birth grotto that is its centerpiece.

The return comes amid a wider discussion over whether Western collectors and museums should return objects to their countries of origin. The website of Santa Maria Maggiore says the relics currently lie before the basilica's main altar in a crystal reliquary shaped like a crib that "contains pieces of ancient wood which tradition holds to be part of the manger where the Baby Jesus was laid".

It said that the crypt was constructed by Virginio Vespignani at the behest of the mid 19th century Pope Pius IX "to contain the sacred relic of the Holy Crib". Preparations for Christmas are under way in Bethlehem, especially for Christians who make up around one percent of the Palestinian population in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. While the security situation has eased around the town in recent years, Israeli checkpoints guard the entrances to Bethlehem, which lies just south of Jerusalem in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. — AFP



In this file photo entrepreneur/manager Scooter Braun attends the 6th Annual Save the Children Illumination Gala at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.



In this file photo singer/songwriter Taylor Swift arrives on the red carpet for the Time 100 Gala at the Lincoln Center in New York. — AFP photos

Music exec reports 'death threats' amid feud with Taylor Swift

Music industry mogul Scooter Braun said Friday his dispute with megastar Taylor Swift over her music catalogue has left his family receiving "death threats." The 29-year-old pop artist famous for hits like "Shake It Off" began publicly sparring with Braun this summer over his company's purchase of her former label, Big Machine Label Group, which gave him a majority stake in the master recordings of her first six albums.

Last week, Swift-known for her calculating social media strategy-said on Tumblr that Big Machine heads were "exercising tyrannical control," claiming they were preventing her from performing at an upcoming awards gala and releasing a Netflix documentary including songs from her early catalogue. In the post she pleaded with her fans and fellow artists to back her cause.

Braun had not publicly spoken out on the matter, but early Friday dropped a lengthy Instagram post saying Swift's appeal had resulted in "numerous death threats directed at my family."

"I assume this was not your intention but it is important that you understand that your words carry a tremendous amount of weight," Braun wrote. "While disappointed that you have remained silent after being notified by your attorney 4 days ago of these ongoing threats, I'm still hopeful that we can fix this." Swift has not responded publicly to Braun's post. Earlier this week Big Machine had said it would allow Swift to perform some of her early hits at the American Music Awards on Sunday. — AFP

'Humor saved my life', says subversive director John Waters

Big smile flashing and pencil-thin moustache quivering, subversive director John Waters laughs heartily as he looks back at an improbable 40-year career that made him a trash film icon. "Humor saved me, saved my life," the 73-year-old sharp-dresser told AFP on the sidelines of the Thessaloniki Film Festival, where he was a guest of honor earlier this month.

From a homemade horror stage in his garage, Waters went on to tear down barriers with transgressive fare such as "Eat Your Makeup", "Mondo Trasho", "Multiple Maniacs" and the scatological classic "Pink Flamingos" in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These films also introduced his childhood friend and muse Glenn Milstead, aka Divine, as one of the world's first drag divas.

In the 1980s and 1990s, he became known to a wider audience with sixties musical homage "Hairspray". He also gave a young Johnny Depp an early break as a juvenile delinquent in "Cry Baby", and cast Kathleen Turner as a psychopathic killer in "Serial Mom". Looking back to that phase of his career, Waters has mixed feelings. "I became respectable... Suddenly the worst thing that can happen to a creative person has happened to me," the bad taste savant writes in his latest memoir, "Mr. Know-It-All: The Tarnished Wisdom of a Filth Elder".

Born into a middle-class Baltimore family, Waters was pretty clear about what he wanted to do from early on. A self-styled "disrespectful" child, Waters ran a horror house for neighborhood kids in his garage. "I remember when I was young, I never fit in right. I accepted that early. There was a world out there that I could find," he said. In school, he found that exaggerated behavior help shield him from bullies.

Worse than gay

"I was so disrespectful with the teachers that the guys that would beat me up had a little respect for me, they annoyed me but they thought I was crazy so they left me alone pretty much." "They didn't know what's the matter with me, they thought I was worse than gay." His family was "absolutely horrified" by his movies but his father got the worst of it, Waters recalls. "My father was named John Waters too, I was a junior so all these years I was

getting arrested he would have his name on the headlines, he would get my obscene phone calls, I was unlisted," he says.

Like a good father, Waters Sr bankrolled his son's early films-but even that ended up blindsiding him. "I paid him back with interest and he was so shocked to have his money back. He was the only investor that wished I hadn't paid him back," beams Waters.

Like Woody Allen and New York, Waters makes a point of including his home city in his movies-and he even enjoyed the backing of the local brass.

"Baltimore was a character in my movies," he says.

"I still live there. I grew up there. My oldest friends were there, my family was there...and the politicians, even when I made the most insane movies, they said keep making them."

Recently labelled a "national treasure" by the New York Times Book Review, Waters was a jury member at Cannes and proudly shows off his Order of Arts and Letters medal which he received from the French state in May.

"He's been doing films independently for many many years and even when he did Hollywood films he never lost his own touch and his independent spirit," said Thessaloniki Film Festival programmer Yorgos Krassakopoulos, who calls Waters "one of the funniest guys around."

A man of few-if any-taboos, Waters believes it's important to make people laugh, even on tough issues such as race and migration.

"You can make them change opinions. To me, they listen more, if you get somebody to laugh that disarms them for a moment," he says.

And he insists he only makes fun about things he "truly" loves and "never tried just being gross."

On the afterlife, Waters is unsure about the existence of God-"I haven't heard about him or her yet," he notes-but he's pretty sure on one thing: "I don't think I'll go to hell."

There's one thing however he'd definitely like to see before his time comes.

"I want the porn version of Hairspray," he says.—AFP

Marking 40 years, Simple Minds say touring 'keeps us going'

Forty years since releasing their debut album, Scottish rock band Simple Minds have no plans to slow down just yet, saying life on the road is "the thing that keeps us going" as they embark on a world tour next year. Formed in Glasgow in the 1970s, the group, whose name was inspired by a lyric from David Bowie's "The Jean Genie", has seen its line-up change over the years but is still fronted by founding members lead vocalist Jim Kerr and guitarist Charlie Burchill.

"We were surprised after a 10-year career and I certainly don't believe we would have been touring (in) this particular year," Burchill told Reuters in a joint interview with Kerr. "But as it turns out ... that's what we prefer to do most, is (to) tour. I think a lot of people stop because they can't deal with that side of it but for us, it's the opposite, that is the thing that keeps us going."

Simple Minds, who this month released compilation album "40: The Best Of - 1979-2019", and kick off the anniversary tour in February, are known for 1980s hits like "Don't You (Forget About Me)" from teen film "The Breakfast Club", which gave the group their first U.S. No. 1. "Whenever people ask us about ... what can we expect from

'Don't You (Forget About Me)' we point them to the fact that we didn't even include it on the album (which) came out a few months later ... We thought it's a great track but it's part of a movie soundtrack and very much a thing on its own," Kerr said.

"Even when they approached us to do it, we didn't fancy the idea of doing someone else's song as much as we made it Simple Minds' song." The band are known for addressing political issues in their music - song "Mandela Day" was written for a 1988 concert marking then still-imprisoned anti-apartheid veteran Nelson Mandela's 70th birthday while 1989's "Belfast Child" addressed Northern Ireland's "Troubles" conflict period.

"The issues are always the same. Racism, war, poverty, the geography changes. OK, apartheid ended, it was great to see that end for us ... It was great to see the Berlin Wall come down," Kerr said. "(These were) amazing things that we never thought we'd see in our lives ... but the subjects about walls, again, it (still) features on the news ... I still think the songs can be symbolic outside of the actual geography and time."—Reuters

Michael Jackson Hollywood movie reported in the works

Michael Jackson's story is headed for Hollywood from the producer who helped make hit film "Bohemian Rhapsody," industry media reported on Friday. Deadline, Variety and the Hollywood Reporter said producer Graham King had secured the rights, including music, from Jackson's estate to make a feature film about the life of the "Thriller" singer, whose legacy has been tarnished by allegations of child sex abuse.

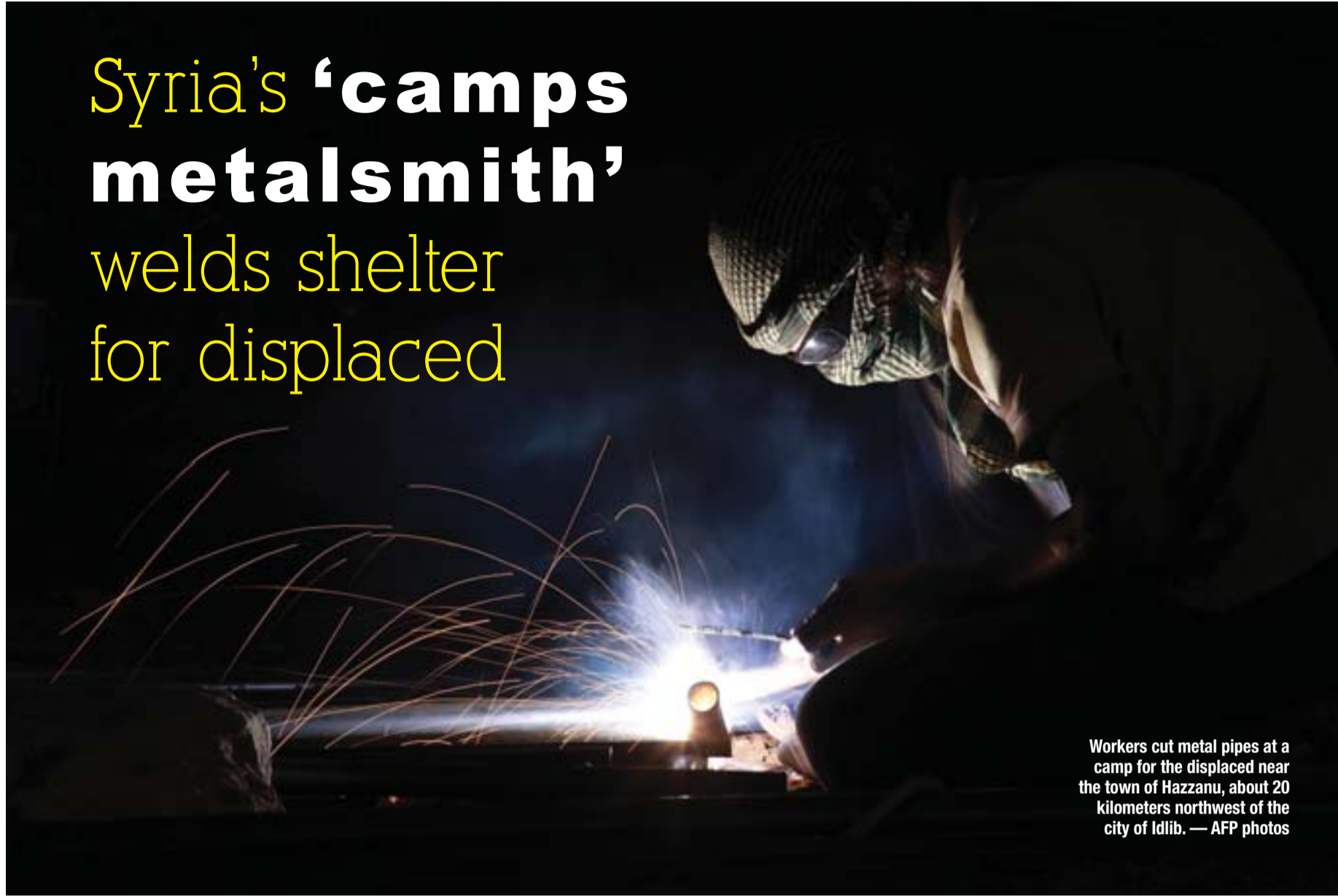
The movie is expected to span Jackson's journey from child star to global icon that ended when he died in 2009 at age 50 of an overdose from a powerful sleeping aid just weeks before a planned comeback concert. Deadline, citing unnamed sources, said the film "isn't intended to be a sanitized rendering" of Jackson's life. King's production company and the Jackson estate did not immediately return calls for comment.

Jackson was tried and acquitted in 2005 on charges of molesting a 13-year-old boy. In 1994, he settled a sexual abuse civil lawsuit concerning another 13-year-old boy.—Reuters



US director John Waters speaks during a masterclass as part of the 60th Thessaloniki International Film Festival (TIFF) in Thessaloniki. — AFP

Syria's 'camps metalsmith' welds shelter for displaced



Workers cut metal pipes at a camp for the displaced near the town of Hazzanu, about 20 kilometers northwest of the city of Idlib. — AFP photos



Crouched between olive trees in northwest Syria, Jumaa al-Mustayf cuts long metal tubes with an electric saw to make tent frames for families displaced by war. With winter approaching in Idlib province, the man nicknamed "metalsmith of the camps" says his welding skills are in especially high demand. "So far the orders keep on coming," says the skinny 34-year-old, his skin sunburnt from days working out in the open.

placed from other parts of the country by fighting. Mustayf says he once ran a successful metalwork business in southeast Idlib, but two years ago the war forced him and his family to flee their home.

"I had to build my own tent to live in it. People saw it and they started placing orders. So I got to work," he says. On a patch of red earth near the village of Hazano, Mustayf has set up a makeshift workshop to supply residents in the nearby camp with sturdy frames to shelter them from a wet winter. Two men unload dozens of long metal poles from a small truck, stacking them on the ground. Hanging nearby, a modest cardboard sign reads: "Metalsmith of the camps".

A family business

Barehanded and sandal-clad, Mustayf saws through metal, sending sparks flying as he prepares parts for his latest order. The high-pitched screech of his saw temporarily drowns out the sound of a hammer banging on iron and the loud spluttering of nearby generators. A woman dressed in a long red robe and headscarf watches from afar, sitting cross-legged on a mat in the shade of an olive tree.

The metalsmith welds the structure together with one hand, the other clutching a welder's mask to keep sparks off his face. To help with the workload, he has enlisted the help of a few cousins and even his 13-year-old

nephew, who quit school to help his family make ends meet. In a month, Mustayf has sold 150 tents. Shelters handed out by non-governmental organizations are too small for large families, he says.

"They're good at withstanding rain and strong winds," he says of his own tent frames. The smallest frame he sells covers four by four meters and costs almost \$150, while the largest covers 36 square meters and goes for \$320. Customers then have to buy an outer shell of waterproof fabric from another

supplier, and pay someone else to lay a cement base for the tent. But despite the orders, Mustayf says his profits are slim. "We make little-just enough to live off and cover the family's needs," he says.

Indebted for a new tent

Eight years into the Syrian civil war, Idlib is one of the last parts of the country to escape regime control. Russia-backed regime forces pummeled the region for months over the spring and summer, killing around

1,000 civilians and displacing 400,000 people from their homes. Russia announced a truce in late August, but the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group says sporadic bombardment and clashes continue.

Reslan Mohammed, his wife, and eight children fled their home three years ago and have been living outdoors ever since. But this autumn, he decided it was time for a new dwelling. "The tent we have is not made for winter," the 48-year-old says. Scraping together enough money, he ordered Mustayf's smallest tent frame. Dressed in a long beige robe and wearing a scarf on his head, he watches as men carry the finished product to his family's patch in the camp.

Small children swing excitedly from the metal bars before they are even set in place. "I borrowed money from relatives and friends" to buy the new tent frame, Mohammed says. The new frame in place, he covers it with a patchwork of old blankets. They roll a large woven plastic rug over the earth and lay a thin mattress on top. Mohammed would also have liked a cement floor, but for the moment that luxury is too expensive. — AFP



Jumaa al-Mustayf welds metal pipes at a camp for the displaced near the town of Hazzanu.

Idlib has come under repeated bombardment by the Damascus regime and its Russian ally this year, causing hundreds of thousands of civilians to flee north towards the border with Turkey. More than three million people live in the jihadist-held region, and around half of them are already dis-



Children play with the frame of a tent at a camp for the displaced near the town of Hazzanu.



From Goya to Rubens, visitors marvel at Spanish duke's art-filled palace

Home to one of Spain's most important private art collections that includes paintings by Goya, Velazquez and Rubens, the Liria Palace was for decades Madrid's best kept cultural secret. But over 14,000 people have so far visited the home of the 19th Duke of Alba, the head of one of Spain's oldest and richest aristocratic houses, since it opened its doors to the general public in September and there is a two-month waiting period for tickets.

"The social pressure to see the collection was strong," said Alvaro Romero Sanchez-Arjona, head of the culture department at the Casa de Alba Foundation which runs the 18th century palace located near the bustling Gran Via, the Spanish capital's main shopping street.

Its most notable paintings include a portrait by Francisco Goya of the 13th Duchess of Alba that was recently returned after being leased to the Thyssen museum in Madrid, as well as portraits of other members of the five centuries-old House of Alba by Titian and Rubens.

The library, decorated in a vivid shade of emerald, displays a collection of letters by Christopher Columbus, a first edition of Miguel de Cervantes' classic "Don Quixote" from 1605, and the Alba Bible—the first Spanish translation of the Old Testament. Other treasures include luxurious tapestries and porcelain belonging to France's last empress and wife of Napoleon III, Maria Eugenia de Montijo, who died at the palace in 1920.

The Liria Palace was occupied by Communists during Spain's 1936-39 Civil War and was gutted by several fires that left just the four outer walls standing. But the priceless collection of paintings survived because they were stored in the cellars of the Prado museum and the Bank of Spain.

'Like a Zara window'

Duke Carlos Fitz-James Stuart and his family continue to live on the second floor of the palace which is off limits to the public but 12 rooms on the lower floors can be visited. This is the third palace that the Albas have opened for public visits since the death in 2014 of the duke's mother, the 18th Duchess of Alba who according to the Guinness Book of Records had more aristocratic titles than any other person on the planet.

Known for her shock of frizzy hair, flamboyant manner and outrageous clothes, the thrice-married duchess who was born in the Liria Palace was frequently photographed at society weddings and bullfights. She made headlines in 2011 when at the age of 85 she married a civil servant who was 24 years younger.



properties to visitors is a way to raise funds to help offset the huge costs of their upkeep.

But the decision to allow the public in Liria Palace has divided the Albas. The fifth son of the 18th Duchess of Alba, Cayetano Martinez de Irujo, blasted the move in an autobiography published in September in which he also recalled how he and his siblings were raised by nannies who beat them with bamboo canes, and lived a youth full of sex and cocaine. "My home will become a showcase like a Zara window," he wrote, referring to the popular Spanish-owned clothing chain. — AFP

These handout pictures from the Casa de Alba Foundation, show rooms at the Palacia de Liria, in Madrid. — AFP photos

Quarries offer hardscrabble wage to workers

MINYA, Egypt: Covered in fine white dust, laborers at a limestone quarry in southern Egypt toil in brutal conditions with little workplace safety for paltry pay. Laborers work in shifts at the quarry in the so-called White Mountain east of the river Nile outside Minya, about 265 km south of the capital Cairo. At noon, the morning shift clocks out and the afternoon workers arrive to begin their seven hour shift. But first they gather to share a communal lunch.

Under a makeshift palm frond shelter in the middle of the quarry, the workers sit on a ragged blanket to fill themselves on a humble meal of bread, cheese and eggs. Then they don goggles and wrap scarves around their faces in an attempt to keep out the clouds of white powder thrown up by the whirring machines. Huge electric saws on rails slice rows of blocks from the mountainside. Workers then stack the stone in long, neat rows.

The white bricks are destined to be used in construction, or ground down for use in ceramics. This same stone was the construction material of choice for cladding pyramids and tombs in ancient Egypt. The site AFP visited has 16 shift workers and a foreman. They handle the

dangerous machinery with finesse, and shrug off the dangers of a job where a mistake can prove fatal. "Workplace injuries here are severe - either death or permanent injury," Obeid Abu Ibram, a 34-year-old foreman, told AFP. "The machines were once secure and covered but over time the safety covers have popped off making them hazardous to those who do not take precautions," he said.

In recent years, authorities have closed a number of unlicensed quarries where there has been a growing toll from fatal workplace accidents. "Nearly 400 quarries have been closed east of the Nile but there are about 350 to 400 still operating," said Abu Ibram, who has been toiling in the same dangerous industry since he was 14. The daily wage for laborers is little more than 100 pounds (\$6), barely enough to support a family.

Abu Ibram would like to earn more, but sees no other career options for himself. "I have been working here for 20 years. I left my father and brother and I have no other field of expertise," he said. "But I don't like to complain much," he concluded. — AFP



MINYA, Egypt: Laborers work late at the "White Mountain" limestone extraction quarry site near this southern city on Nov 13, 2019. — AFP

Saudi Arabia takes over G20 reins

NAGOYA, Japan: Saudi Arabia took over the G20 presidency for a year after the kingdom's new foreign minister, a prince with diplomatic experience in the West, landed in Japan's Nagoya city on Friday to meet with his counterparts from the Group of 20 nations. Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud was appointed in October in a partial cabinet reshuffle, joining a new generation of royals in their 40s who rose to power under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, 34.

Diplomats say the G20 might help put Riyadh's problems behind it and could prompt it to close more disputed files such as the Yemen war and the boycott of Gulf neighbor Qatar, though they have yet to see much progress. King Salman has hailed the kingdom's G20 presidency as proof of its key role in the global economy.

Prince Faisal picked up the baton at a ceremony yesterday in Nagoya, where G20 foreign ministers have gathered for talks. Japan - which headed the G20 this year - was the kingdom's second-largest export market last year, at \$33 billion, according to IMF trade data. Apart from its reliance on Saudi oil, Japan has deepened its ties to the kingdom thanks to Japanese technology

conglomerate SoftBank Group. Riyadh has been a big supporter of SoftBank's massive Vision Fund.

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi told Prince Faisal he was pleased to meet him for the first time and both sides wanted to boost relations, according to a read-out from Japan's foreign ministry. Motegi praised Saudi work to stabilize southern Yemen, where Riyadh orchestrated a deal to end a power struggle between Yemen's government, which it backs, and southern separatists.

King Salman also said this week Riyadh wants a political settlement in Yemen, where it has battled Iran-aligned Houthis in a nearly five-year war that has killed tens of thousands and drive parts of the country to the brink of famine. A diplomatic source said there had been an "apparent de-escalation" in Yemen's conflict in recent weeks.

Diplomats said that Saudi Arabia plans more than a dozen G20 summits throughout the year on tourism, agriculture, energy, environment and digital economy. Top diplomatic and business contacts suggest Riyadh has already gotten over much of the opprobrium it received over journalist Jamal Khashoggi's murder, but it still struggles to attract foreign investors, said analyst Neil Partrick. A Saudi court charged 11 suspects in a secretive trial and Western allies imposed sanctions on individuals. Riyadh has sought to fix its image or turn attention to its social reforms since Khashoggi's 2018 killing at the hands of Saudi agents in Istanbul. — AFP



NAGOYA: Japan's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi shakes hands with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan to mark the handover to the Saudis as future G20 hosts yesterday. — AFP

Palestinians risk all to work in Israel

MITAR CHECKPOINT: It is well before dawn when the first work deprived Palestinians arrive to sneak through a two-meter hole cut in the metal fence that is supposed to keep them out of Israel. The men are among the thousands of Palestinians working in Israel illegally, risking bad working conditions, exploitation and jail for a chance of employment. On the morning AFP visited, Yunis, from Dahariya in the southern West Bank, was one of hundreds running the gauntlet as police patrolled the area.

They play a cat and mouse game with Israeli security - sometimes making several attempts before crossing without being spotted. "I got here at 3:00 am and found police patrols ahead of us," said the bearded and wrinkled 55-year-old. "I know I am leaving my house and I may not come back but this bitter life drives us to adventure."

Around a kilometer or so away, Palestinians lucky enough to have permits queue in a long line at the Mitar crossing between Beersheba in southern Israel and the West Bank, waiting for their documents to be checked and their bags and bodies to be searched. Visibly tired, they wear winter jackets and carry small bags containing food and work clothes. Around 70,000 Palestinians have official work permits, according to the Bank of Israel.

While reliable numbers are hard to come by, thousands more are estimated to be working illegally in the country - mostly in construction and other manual labor. They can earn far higher salaries than in the West Bank, but can be arrested or exploited by employers. Amir, 20, who like others didn't want to give his full name, comes from the town of Yatta near Hebron in the southern West Bank. He sneaks through the separation barrier to make money to help his fami-

ly. "The police arrested me four times," said Amir, alleging that he was held for several hours and beaten. He also said that he and his peers had been chased by police dogs.

Asked by AFP, Israeli police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld described allegations of beatings as "incorrect" and "misleading". "All border police activities take place according to strict orders and a strict protocol", with illegal workers returned to Palestinian areas, and serial offenders liable to prison sentences or fines, he said. Even if he avoids the police at the fence and finds work, Amir has to be careful, knowing he could still be arrested on the street. "We worked for months on the site without washing," he said. "We just want to live with dignity."

On the Israeli side of the crossing, taxis line up to ferry the men to nearby cities - both those with permits and those without. Tayseer, 38, had snuck across and avoided police searches by mingling successfully with those who had permits. "We make 130 shekels (less than \$40) each day and pay 50 getting across. We stay on the work site a week or more and after that return home." He said employers often pay far less than they initially promise. "They don't give us the rest because they know we are working without permits."

Khaled Amro from near Hebron didn't realize when he dodged through the fence in October it would be his last time. The 50-year-old was employed without a permit, but fell from a height and died. The police report said he fell from an open elevator while going up to sleep on the roof of a building site near Ramle in central Israel, his brother Muntaser told AFP. Khaled had been arrested in the late 1980s so was refused a permit, Muntaser said. "He was the head of the family with three kids to support. There is no work in the West Bank," Muntaser said.

Dakhil Abu Zaid Hamid of the Israeli trade union federation Histadrut said most of the 81 people killed during work incidents this year were Arab. Of these 42 died while working on construction sites, according to Kav LaOved, a hotline for workers' rights. It says the



BEERSHEBA: Palestinian laborers wait for an Israeli police vehicle to leave in order to cross illegally into Israeli areas through a hole in Israel's illegal barrier wall on Nov 20, 2019. — AFP

rate of deaths of construction workers is 2.5 times higher than in the European Union, and blames a lack of proper monitoring of work sites.

Even those with permits face potential exploitation. A recent Bank of Israel study found that 20,000 Palestinian workers paid a total of 480 million shekels to middlemen and employers to obtain work permits in Israel. It recommended cancelling a requirement that

Palestinians work only for a predefined employer. Back by the fence, Yunis admits failure for the day - the police are out in force and in daylight his chances of crossing undetected are slim. In total around 80 people were arrested that morning, according to police figures. Yunis said he had little choice to try again another day. "I am not afraid of death, there is no alternative." — AFP

Lion cub mummies feature in huge...

Continued from Page 1

falcon and the ancient Egyptian god Anubis in animal form. The artifacts belong to the 26th Dynasty which dates

Pence avoids top Baghdad leaders...

Continued from Page 1

Around 350 people have been killed and 15,000 wounded since demonstrations erupted on Oct 1 amid outrage over rampant government corruption and lack of jobs. Protesters are demanding a total overhaul of the ruling system in place since the US-led invasion of 2003 that toppled then-dictator Saddam Hussein. The US then dismantled Iraq's security forces and tried to rebuild the country's institutions by working closely with a newfound political class. But ties are now at their "coldest" since 2003, American and Iraqi officials have told AFP.

Abdel Mahdi, in office for the past year, has yet to visit Washington amid frustrations in the White House that his office was "too close" to Tehran. Tensions between the US and Iran have spiralled since Washington unilaterally pulled

back to the seventh century BC, Enany said.

The trove also boasts a collection of ancient Egyptian deities in the form of 73 bronze statuettes depicting the god Osiris, six wooden statues of Ptah-Soker and 11 statues of Sekhmet, the warrior goddess of healing. Egypt has sought to promote its unique heritage as a way to revive its vital tourism sector, which has been badly hit by political insecurity and attacks. However, critics say archaeological sites and museums suffer from negligence and poor management. — AFP

out of the 2015 deal over the latter's nuclear program and began imposing a series of crushing sanctions. Baghdad, which has close ties with both countries, has feared being caught in the middle. Washington has already slapped sanctions on Iraqi officials, military factions and institutions with ties to blacklisted Iranian organizations.

In July, the US singled out the leaders of two paramilitary groups in Iraq that Pence accused of being tied to Iran. Rayan Al-Kildani and Waad Qado - the former a Christian and the latter a member of the Shabak minority - were both sanctioned over "serious human rights abuse" by them or their organizations. Kildani reacted to Pence's visit yesterday, tweeting: "To the American vice president who came to Iraq stealthily... You are not welcome on Iraqi territory."

Kildani and Qado's factions belong to the Hashed al-Shaabi, a powerful Shiite-majority paramilitary network that includes many groups with close ties to Tehran. Hashed leaders and Iran have been widely criticized in the recent protests, accused of defending the very government the demonstrators want to bring down. Many of their offices have been burned in Iraq's restive south, the scene of new protests yesterday. —AFP

First Saudi woman races...

Continued from Page 1

chief, had touted it as a "watershed" moment for the kingdom. "Reema will have thousands cheering her on, as a professional racing driver," the prince told AFP.

Juffali, who made one of her first appearances in competitive racing at the F4 British Championship at Brands Hatch in April, has only about a year of professional racing experience under her belt. But she has had a passion for fast cars since her teenage years and grew up watching Formula One. She passed her driving test after she moved to the United States to study some years ago, and is now one of only a handful of Saudi women to have obtained a "racing license" in her home country, a mandatory requirement to race professionally.

Even outside the kingdom, only a few Saudi women have raced professionally. "For a lot of women who haven't had the opportunity to learn how to drive, to get behind the wheel is definitely something scary," explained Juffali. "For a lot of women in Saudi it's something so far away." Juffali said her dream is to one day race at Le Mans - a 24 hour competition in France that is one of the world's most prestigious and gruelling competitions. In Riyadh she raced against the season's veterans but will

not score any points.

Prince Mohammed has sought to shake off his country's ultraconservative image by allowing greater freedoms for women, including easing so-called "guardianship" rules that give men arbitrary authority over female relatives. But around a dozen women activists who long campaigned for the right to drive are on trial after being arrested last year, sparking widespread condemnation.

The driving reform has been transformative for many Saudi women, freeing them from dependence on private chauffeurs or male relatives. Newly mobile Saudi women are now embracing what was previously deemed a male entitlement - fast cars. Many are defying the perception that only dainty cars in bright colors are popular with women drivers.

Auto showrooms tapping women clients have rolled out a line-up of cherry red Mini Coopers, but sales professionals say many exhibit an appetite for muscle cars like the Chevrolet Camaro or the Mustang convertible. Some women are taking up drifting - oversteering the car to slip and skid or even spin, and other high-speed daredevilry - which is illegal in public but tolerated in the controlled environment of some theme parks.

Clad in skinny jeans and Harley-Davidson T-shirts, some women are also training to ride motorbikes at a Riyadh driving school, a scene that is still a stunning anomaly in the conservative petro-state. "Many (people) are surprised by all the changes happening in Saudi," said Juffali. "Seeing me in a car, racing... For a lot of people it's a surprise, but I am happy to surprise people." — AFP

Sports

Russia picks new athletics chief as doping crisis deepens

We represent athletes and they should not suffer: Yulia

MOSCOW: Yulia Tarasenko was appointed as interim president of Russia's athletics body yesterday following the suspension of previous head Dmitry Shlyakhtin by World Athletics. Tarasenko, the RUSAF sports director and head of the athletics federation of St. Petersburg, immediately sought to reassure Russian athletes she would fight their corner.

"We're not in a very joyful mood, the situation is very difficult in the federation, but we think there is a chance to fight for the federation," she said. "We represent athletes and they should not suffer," the new acting president Tarasenko told journalists.

Tarasenko was picked from three candidates after Dmitry Shlyakhtin resigned from the post of RUSAF president. Russian athletics' crisis deepened following Thursday's ruling by the Athletics Integrity Unit of global governing body World Athletics, which suspended Russia's reinstatement process and accused RUSAF of obstructing a probe into high-jumper Danil Lysenko.

It is now considering expelling RUSAF and suspending the provision allowing Russian to compete as neutral athletes, but for the moment awaits a decision by the world anti-doping agency on December 9 on whether to label Russia non-compliant.

Head coach of Russia's athletics Yury Borzakovskiy said yesterday that RUSAF's main goal

is "to protect the athletes and their coaches, so that they keep preparing for the Olympic Games and compete there."

"In what status is a different issue," he said. Some vocal Russian athletes have expressed frustration with the federation and accused authorities of hurting clean athletes by feet-dragging on needed reforms.

"Our athletics is in agony. We have lost four years. Clean athletes are still vulnerable and unsure whether they will get a chance to compete," three-time high-jump world champion Maria Lasitskene wrote in a ripping Instagram appeal to the Russian sports minister Friday.

Lasitskene, who has called on Shlyakhtin to step down repeatedly over the past months, told TASS agency yesterday that the new athletics chief Tarasenko is not a solution. "Shlyakhtin was changed to Shlyakhtin," she said. "Tarasenko is Shlyakhtin's appointee and should immediately quit the federation."

Lasitskene said yesterday's decision would only deepen the crisis and the federation should have instead picked a new face with a clear anti-doping stance and no connection to previous management.

"Congratulations to all who pushed for this appointment. Great job guys, the operation to liquidate Russian athletics is almost finished." —AFP



MOSCOW: Acting president of Russia's Athletics Federation (ARAF) Yulia Tarasenko speaks to media in the Russian Olympic committee in Moscow yesterday. —AFP

Japan's Hanyu wins NHK Trophy

SAPPORO: Two-time Olympic champion Yuzuru Hanyu clinched his fourth NHK Trophy yesterday, grabbing a ticket for next month's Grand Prix Finals. The Japanese figure skating star smashed an overall score of 305.05 points at the men's competition, marking his second straight Grand Prix victory this season.

France's Kevin Aymoz came to second with 250.02 points as Roman Sadovskiy of Canada was in third with 247.50 points. Carrying his comfortable lead at the short programme, Hanyu opened with a quadruple loop and nailed a superb quadruple Salchow at the free programme.

He fluffed a combination jump but kept his nerve delivering clean triple axels and displaying gorgeous steps and spins. As he completed his performance in style, Hanyu bowed deeply to his fans as they in turn tossed his Winnie the Pooh stuffed toys, his mascot, onto the ice.

"I was nervous," Hanyu admitted

after the competition. "I want to work hard in the (Grand Prix) finals by taking advantage of a lot of energy I received here" from his fans, he added. Hanyu booked his place at December's Grand Prix Finals in Turin, a showdown by top skaters after the six-round Grand Prix series.

Double world champion Nathan Chen of the US and Russian Alexander Samarin have already qualified. On the women's side, Russian young star Alena Kostornaia won her first NHK Trophy title.

The 16-year-old landed clean jumps to score an overall score of 240.00 points, sealing her second Grand Prix triumph this season. With her victory, Russia swept the women's competition of the season's Grand Prix series.

Defending champion Rika Kihira of Japan was in second place with 231.84 points, wowing the home crowd. Reigning Olympic and world champion Alina Zagitova placed third with 217.99 points, coming back from fourth at the short.

With yesterday's results, Kostornaia, Kihira and Zagitova qualified for the finals. "I want to produce results that I can be satisfied with" when she competes in the finals, Kostornaia said. Kihira said: "I want to aim at a perfect performance in the Grand Prix Finals."



SAPPORO: Japan's Yuzuru Hanyu performs during the Men Short Program at the Grand Prix of Figure Skating 2019/2020 NHK Trophy in Sapporo. —AFP

Earlier in the day, French ice dance duo Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron won their first NHK Trophy title with a record 226.61 points. "We were very focused on not doing any mistake and skating well with emotion," Papadakis said.

Asked about qualifying for the Grand Prix Finals, Cizeron said: "We are really, really happy to be able to go to the final. We are going to do our best." Reigning world champions Sui Wenjing and Han Cong of China easily won the pairs title with 226.96 points. —AFP

KIB title sponsor of Kuwait Marathon 2019 under slogan 'Run for Life'

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced its title sponsorship of Kuwait Marathon 2019, a landmark local sporting event organized by Circuit. Set to take place on December 21 at the newly built Sheikh Jaber Causeway, the event will be the first of its kind to take place on the bridge. Online registration is open on www.thekuwait-marathon.com, where the last date to register will be on December 1, 2019.

The Marathon will include four categories open to participants of all ages, including: 5km, 10km, 21km and 42km. Participants will be able to walk, run or combine both. More than just a race, the sporting event will feature a full program of activities, including the distribution of great prizes.

On this occasion, Senior Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia, said: "KIB has always been committed to sponsoring and supporting events and initiatives that promote sports and help develop the local sports culture. This comes as part of our all-inclusive social responsibility program which seeks to leave a positive impact on the lives of

people in our community by promoting the importance of sport, physical fitness and healthy lifestyles to create a healthier, more productive community."

Najia further noted that KIB's sponsorship of this year's Kuwait Marathon under the slogan "Run for Life", comes in line with its overall vision of being a true "Bank for Life". The Bank's sponsorship comes as part of its belief in this unique event and its ability to attract people from all across the country. Additionally, KIB actively seeks to play an active and positive role in spreading health awareness, including encouraging people to play sports and boost their physical well-being, as well as taking care of their diets and adopting healthier lifestyles in general.

Moreover, Najia noted that in addition to sponsoring this race, KIB will also be present at a private booth dedicated to the Bank, offering a number of fun activities for contestants as well as their families.

On his part, Bader AlBanna, Co-founder of Circuit said, "We are thrilled to be organizing the Kuwait Marathon, the first event to take place on the Sheikh Jaber Causeway. We are looking forward to attracting a large number of participants of different ages, as we always strive to offer something new and different to promote physical activity as an integral component of people's everyday lives."

AlBanna also lauded KIB's sponsorship of this event, adding that: "KIB's title sponsorship of the Kuwait Marathon in its inaugural year is quite unique, and it emphasizes the important role the private sector and national institutions have in ensuring the success of such important sporting initiatives. KIB's support highlights the Bank's commitment to playing an

News that the All Blacks great had agreed to join the Wolfpack and lead the ambitious club into a first season playing in England's top-tier Super League sent shockwaves through the sport.

Though Canadians have little interest in rugby and know even less about Williams, the signing sparked national headlines. Toronto mayor John Tory rolled out the welcome mat. "Sonny Bill Williams is one of the best rugby players in the world and we welcome him to Toronto," Tory said. The city, however, is still waiting to welcome its newest sporting celebrity. In fact, it will be several months before Toronto rugby fans get a chance to chase Williams for an autograph or selfie.

A week after the 34-year-old's signing was announced on Nov. 7 the twice World Cup winner was introduced at a news conference in London.

Immediately afterwards he flew to Australia without a paying a quick visit to the city he will represent for at least the next two years.

As the Super League's only trans-Atlantic club, Toronto will play the early part of their schedule in England. Wolfpack CEO and chairman Robert Hunter telling Reuters that fans are unlikely to see Williams in the flesh until their first home game scheduled for April 11 against Hull FC.

"We talked about that (bringing him to Toronto) but it is just very difficult with his travel schedule," Hunter told Reuters. "He just finished the World Cup in Japan, he had been away almost six weeks from his family. We talked about it and decided not to do it. We may not see him here until April."

Founded in 2016 the team have a loyal hardcore fan base and Wolfpack games have devel-

oped a reputation as a fun and affordable sporting option in the city of 3.5 million where NHL Toronto Maple Leafs, NBA Raptors, MLB Toronto Blue Jays, MLS Toronto FC and Canadian Football League Argonauts vie for the sporting entertainment dollar.

To get noticed in such a competitive market Hunter says the Wolfpack had to go out and buy it. Last season the Wolfpack, who play in a quaint but soulless venue in downtown Toronto that seats 10,000, averaged close to 7,500 fans a game. As rumours of Williams signing intensified the club saw a spike in season-ticket sales and another when the deal was announced, leading Hunter to predict that all 11 home dates will be sellouts. "It is certainly buying headlines," said Hunter. "In this marketplace where a lot of our commercial busi-

ness is driven by ticket sales and sponsorship you have to go big.

"One of the goals is to build a brand in this marketplace. You've got to invest. "We're a small guy and we are just trying to keep our hand up so people know that we are there." The buzz generated by the signing of Williams may have boosted ticket sales but the excitement has quickly vanished and the Wolfpack are again out of the minds of Toronto sports fans. Hunter concedes that rugby is a niche sport in Canada and the real value in Williams signing will be felt at the grassroots level of sport.

But with him not arriving in Toronto until April and the club's last regular season game on Aug. 29 it is difficult to estimate how much corporate schmoozing can be squeezed into a five-month window. —Reuters

Classy Cooney helps Ulster to Clermont win

BELFAST: Scrum-half John Cooney guided Ulster to a 18-13 victory over Clermont in Pool 3 of the European Champions Cup in testing conditions in Belfast on Friday. Ireland back-rower Jordi Murphy and Cooney scored either side of the half as the French side found it difficult to settle into the fixture due to the weather and a hostile home following.

"This one is for the purists today with those conditions," uncapped Cooney told BT Sport. "One of our mantras is fight for every inch, it's something we've worked on for the last few years and you can see it by the way we played for 80 minutes," he added. Ulster coach Dan McFarland made four changes to the side who beat Bath in England last weekend in their opening match in the competition this season including starting South African winger Louis Ludik.

The visitor's Frank Azema switched half-backs as Scotland's Greig Laidlaw and Australian Jake McIntyre came in for experienced Morgan Parra and Camille Lopez after hammering Harlequins last Saturday.

McFarland's side claimed an early 3-0 advantage as scrum-half Cooney kicked the first of his two penalties. The hosts dominated the opening half an hour controlling possession in the driving rain and unpredictable wind.

Ireland back-rower Jordi Murphy crossed at the back of a driving maul and Cooney slotted the conversion for a 10-0 lead in front of a raucous Ravenhill crowd.

Azema's men were on the scoreboard after 32 minutes as Laidlaw kicked his first penalty goal of the season but his side trailed 10-3. Cooney and Laidlaw traded penalties either side of the half and the Irish province led 13-6 with 20 minutes to go.

Cooney crossed as he chipped over Raka, took two football-like touches, and slid on the wet surface to score his second try in as many European games after 62 minutes. Despite his missed conversion the home side led 18-6 and Laidlaw was subbed off for Parra.

The impact of ex-France international Parra was seen immediately as his control behind a dominant Clermont rolling maul led to referee JP Doyle signalling for a penalty try to cut the advantage to 18-13 with 12 minutes to play.

Despite a tense final 10 minutes with Cooney involved in a scuffle with half a dozen Clermont players Ulster held on for their third straight home win over the French outfit. Azema's men return to the Auvergne region with a losing bonus point but are second in the table two points behind the Irish province. On Saturday, title holder Saracens welcome the Ospreys in their first home fixture since they were handed a £5 million (\$6.5 million) fine and docked 35 points for breaching Premiership Rugby's salary cap rules. —AFP

With Williams out of sight, Wolfpack out of fans' minds

TORONTO: Sonny Bill Williams, the world's highest-paid rugby player and the sport's biggest name, has in recent weeks visited Japan, New Zealand, Australia and England. Williams has been seen in just about every corner of the globe where rugby is played with the exception of Canada and his newest team the Toronto Wolfpack, who have signed the hulking New Zealander to a reported two-year \$9 million deal.

Sports

Australia dominate Pakistan with bat and ball in first Test

At stumps Pakistan in big trouble on 64 for three

BRISBANE: Australia look certain to take a 1-0 lead in their series against Pakistan after dominating with both bat and ball on day three of the first Test in Brisbane yesterday. Big centuries by Marnus Labuschagne (185) and David Warner (154) helped Australia to a first innings total of 580 in reply to Pakistan's 240.

At stumps Pakistan were in big trouble on 64 for three, still needing 276 runs to make Australia bat again. Shan Masood was not out 27 and Babar Azam was 20 at the close. Pakistan bowling coach Waqar Younis said later that with such an inexperienced attack at their disposal, it was only natural that there would be tough times.

"Naseem (Shah) is only 16 remember and even Shaheen (Afridi) is only 19, so of course they are going to learn a lot from this tour," he said. "We've got to

give them time and hope they learn, and in a year or so they'll be a force."

Mitchell Starc did the early damage when Pakistan began their second innings, trapping captain Azhar Ali leg before for five. He then enticed Haris Sohail to waft at a ball well outside off stump, only to get a thick edge to Australian wicketkeeper Tim Paine.

Asad Shafiq was next to fall, edging Pat Cummins to second slip where Steve Smith took a comfortable catch. Labuschagne had earlier scored a magnificent maiden Test century in front of his home crowd at the Gabba.

The 25-year-old scored four 50s in the recent Ashes series but had been unable to convert any of those until his near chanceless innings yesterday. "On 97 I was thinking 'stay patient, stay calm' but I thought if the ball was up I'd have a crack," he said of the thick edge that flew through a vacant third slip area for a boundary.

"You always think as a kid how you are going to celebrate a hundred — that was nothing like I thought. "My emotions took over, it was very exciting - a dream come true." Earlier, teenage pace sensation Naseem claimed his first Test wicket when he had Warner caught behind for 154.

Warner only added three runs to his overnight score of 151 when he became the 16-year-old's first scalp. Naseem, whose pace has been impressive during this Test, eventually claimed Warner when the niggly opener was unable to avoid a short pitched ball and edged it to wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan, to leave the Australians 351 for two.

But that was the last hurrah from Naseem, who appeared to be injured and only bowled four overs in the day, with Waqar conceding he had been rested yesterday to protect his young body. The Pakistanis' hearts must have sunk when they saw Smith striding to the crease to replace Warner. But after hitting a



BRISBANE: Australia's batsman Marnus Labuschagne waves as he walks back to the pavilion after his dismissal on 185 runs on day three of the first Test cricket match between Pakistan and Australia at the Gabba in Brisbane yesterday. —AFP

boundary off Yasir Shah, the leg-spinner then clean bowled Smith, the seventh time in six Test matches that Yasir has dismissed the Australian number four.

Labuschagne and Matthew Wade shared in a 110-run partnership before Wade was well caught by Rizwan for 60 off Sohail. Sohail and Rizwan then

combined to have Travis Head caught down the leg side for 24.

The Pakistan bowlers toiled hard throughout the day and were rewarded when they took the last five Australian wickets for 35 runs, with Yasir (4-205) and Shaheen Afridi (2-96) the pick. —AFP

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on day three of the first Test between Australia and Pakistan at the Gabba in Brisbane yesterday:

Pakistan 1st innings 240	
Australia 1st innings (580)	
Pakistan 2nd innings	
Shan Masood not out	27
Azhar Ali lbw Starc	5
Haris Sohail c Paine b Starc	8
Asad Shafiq c Smith b Cummins	0
Babar Azam not out	20
Extras (lb3, nb1)	4
Total (for 3 wickets: 17 overs)	64
Fall of wickets: 1-13 (Azhar), 2-25 (Sohail), 3-25 (Shafiq)	
To bat: Iftikhar Ahmed, Mohammad Rizwan, Yasir Shah, Shaheen Afridi, Naseem Shah, Imran Khan	
Bowling: Starc 4-0-25-2 (Inb), Cummins 5-1-16-1, Hazlewood 6-1-16-1, Lyon 2-1-4-0.	

New Zealand hero struggles to explain success

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: A gritty BJ Watling, New Zealand's go-to man when the chips are down, produced an unbeaten 119 to put the Black Caps ahead of England in the first innings of the opening Test yesterday.

After rescuing his country as he has done many times in the past, Watling was at a loss to explain his ability to produce his best when New Zealand are in trouble.

"It just kind of happens" he offered at stumps on day three in Mount Maunganui, after guiding the Kiwis to 394 for six to lead England by 41.

He toiled under a blazing sun for

almost seven hours to notch his eighth Test century and pull New Zealand up from a precarious 197 for five.

"I love scoring hundreds for New Zealand and I really enjoyed that one," he said.

"I know I didn't want to field today... so that was driving me."

"I think I'm very limited and try and play to how I know best works for me."

Much of Watling's innings-saving mission was in partnership with Colin de Grandhomme in a 119-run stand for the sixth wicket and followed by an unbroken 78 with Mitchell Santner, who was 31 not out at stumps.

When de Grandhomme joined Watling after the dismissal of Henry Nicholls for 41 before lunch, New Zealand's top five were out and they were still 156 runs behind England's 353.

The tourists were feeling they were

heading for a comfortable first innings lead, but Watling patiently chipped away at the deficit.

De Grandhomme, meanwhile, characteristically punished anything loose — with a six and seven fours as he raced to 65.

Stokes was surprisingly kept out of the attack through the onslaught until the first ball after tea, when he had instant success.

De Grandhomme slashed at a wide delivery which Dom Sibley grasped one-handed in the gully, and the New Zealand all-rounder returned immediately to the dressing room.

Watling, carrying on with Mitchell Santner as his partner, levelled the scores turning Sam Curran to the fine-leg boundary and then put New Zealand ahead with a single through square leg.

Despite fears from both sides the previous day that the Bay Oval pitch

would start to deteriorate during its debut Test, the surface offered little support for the fast bowlers, although Somerset spinner Jack Leach was able to extract some turn.

Watling has been involved in three of the six best New Zealand partnerships for the sixth-wicket.

He scored 124 when partnering Brendon McCullum in a 352-run stand — then a sixth-wicket world record — to save a Test against India in 2014.

The following year he broke that record in a 365-run effort with Kane Williamson against Sri Lanka, and a few months later scored a century at Leeds in a famous win against England.

Against Sri Lanka in August, New Zealand won the second Test to square the series when Watling scored an unbeaten 105 in a 113-run sixth-wicket stand with de Grandhomme. —AFP

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at the close of day three in the first Test between New Zealand and England at Mount Maunganui yesterday:

England 1st innings 353 (B. Stokes 91, J. Denly 74, R. Burns 52; Southey 4-88, Wagner 3-90)	
New Zealand 1st innings (overnight 144-4)	
J. Raval c Denly b Leach	19
T. Latham lbw Curran	8
K. Williamson c Stokes b Curran	51
R. Taylor c Pope b Stokes	25
H. Nicholls lbw Root	41
B. Watling not out	119
C. de Grandhomme c Sibley b Stokes	65
M. Santner not out	31
Extras: (b2, lb4, w7, nb2)	35
Total: (six wickets, 141 overs)	394
Fall of wickets: 1-18 (Latham), 2-72 (Raval), 3-106 (Taylor), 4-127 (Williamson), 5-197 (Nicholls), 6-316 (de Grandhomme)	
To bat: T. Southee, N. Wagner, T. Boult	
Bowling: Broad 25-10-45-0, Archer 30-8-84-0 (5w, Inb), Curran 23-6-74-2, Leach 37-6-97-1, Stokes 16-4-37-2 (w2, Inb), Root 10-2-31-1.	

Karam and Sons Company shooting cup tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Shooting Sport Club will organize the Mustafa Karam and Sons Company Shooting Cup tournament at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex on Thursday, November 28 and will conclude on Saturday, November 30 with the participation of shooters from the club and National Guard, who will compete in the Olympic trap and skeet for men and women as well as juniors.

Secretary General of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Obaid Al-Osaimi said the Mustafa Karam Cup tournament is always on the KSSC agenda and is organized annually and always enjoys strong competition between all participating shooters.

Al-Osaimi, on behalf of the chairman and board members, thanked Mustafa Karam Company for its support and contribution to the sport of shooting.

He commended the moral and material support of the company to the shooters when they make achievements in the name of Kuwait, he also urged the shooters to exert their extreme efforts to be their motive to represent their country Kuwait in the best way possible. Registration for participation in the tournament will continue until Tuesday, November 26, while the closing ceremony will be on Saturday, November 30 at 5:30 pm.



Obaid Al-Osaimi

Rampant India on brink of big win in day-night Test

KOLKATA: A sparkling century by Virat Kohli and Ishant Sharma's four wickets put India on the cusp of a big win over Bangladesh on the second day of their maiden day-night Test yesterday.

The tourists were 152 for six at stumps in their second innings, still needing 89 runs to avoid an innings defeat in India's pink ball Test debut in Kolkata. Kohli made 136 as India, who lead the two-match series 1-0, declared their innings on 347 for nine and then Ishant rattled the Bangladesh batting.

Ishant struck early to leave Bangladesh tottering at 13 for four before Mushfiqur Rahim made an unbeaten 59 to take the five-day match to day three. Mushfiqur and Mahmudullah, who retired hurt on 39 with what seemed a hamstring strain, put on 69 runs for the fifth wicket to offer

some resistance against a persistent Indian pace attack.

Mushfiqur stayed on to complete his second half-century of the series with concussion substitute Tajjul Hasan losing his wicket for 11 to paceman Umesh Yadav and umpires called for end of play.

Mushfiqur survived two leg before wicket decisions that went against him but he successfully reviewed both the calls in his favour. Ishant trapped Shadman Islam lbw for nought and then claimed skipper Mominul Haque for a second zero in the same match.

The pace spearhead, who claimed five wickets in the first innings, bowled at a lively pace as one of his rising deliveries hit Mohammad Mithun on the helmet but the batsman went on to complete his innings.

Bangladesh were forced to take two concussion substitutes in Mehidy Hasan and Tajjul for Liton Das and Nayeem Hasan who were hit on the helmet by Shami on day one.

Earlier Kohli aced the pink ball Test as he completed his 27th century before falling to a stunning catch by Tajjul. Left-arm spinner Tajjul made it count with a wicket of Ajinkya Rahane for 51 and then took a diving catch at fine leg to send back



KOLKATA: India's Ajinkya Rahane (front) plays a shot during the second day of the second Test cricket match of a two-match series between India and Bangladesh at the Eden Gardens cricket stadium in Kolkata yesterday. —AFP

Kohli off paceman Ebadat Hossain. India lost a few quick wickets, but Wriddhiman Saha and Shami knocked a few boundaries and a six by the last man in pulverised the Bangladesh bowlers.

Pacemen Al-Amin Hossain and Ebadat took three wickets each. Kohli stood out

with his prolific scoring as he put on crucial partnerships including a 99-run stand with overnight partner Rahane.

The star batsman smashed fast bowler Abu Jayed for four straight boundaries in one over before finishing with 18 fours in his 194-ball stay. —AFP

Kim leads LPGA Tour Championship

MIAMI: Kim Sei-young produced a superb final hole birdie to maintain her two-shot lead at the halfway stage of the LPGA Tour Championship in Florida on Friday. The 26-year-old from Seoul fired a 175-yard six-iron to three feet on the 18th hole at Tiburon Golf Club and then drained a simple putt for a five-under-par 67, leaving her at 12 under for the tournament.

Kim, who had shot a seven-under-par 65 to lead by two strokes after Thursday's first round, is chasing her third win of 2019 at this week's LPGA Tour season finale. After reaching the turn at two under for the round on Friday, Kim suffered a wobble on the 10th when she posted her first bogey of the tournament.

However she recovered well to make birdies in three of her next four holes, before finishing with a flourish

on the 18th. Kim's birdie finish means she has a two-shot buffer heading into the final two rounds as she chases the \$1.5 million winner's cheque, the richest prize in women's golf.

Kim admitted the lucrative purse has raised the pressure for the tournament. "It definitely feels like US Open or British Open," she said. "It feels like a major tournament. But I try not to put myself under any extra pressure."

That relaxed approach will hold the key to her weekend, she added. "Just focus shot by shot and relax and enjoy, have fun on the course," she said. Germany's Caroline Masson heads the pursuit of Kim after posting a six-under-par 66 that left her at 10 under after 36 holes.

Masson played flawlessly in a bogey-free round that saw her vault up the leaderboard after making three birdies over the final five holes. Canadian Brooke Henderson and Nelly Korda of the United States were a shot back on nine under, three off the lead.

Henderson recovered brilliantly after a potentially

disastrous double-bogey seven on the par-five first, reaching the turn at level par after birdies on the fourth and sixth holes. Henderson then picked up five more birdies in six holes on the back nine to card a five-under-par 67.

"Not the start I wanted for sure, but I was able to get it back to even after the first nine holes and that was really important," Henderson said. "I kind of started to get things rolling a little bit...I just seemed to be making a lot of birdies, which is always a lot of fun."

Australia's Su Oh, is alone in fifth place on eight under after a roller coaster round which included seven birdies and two bogeys for a five-under-par 67. Three players — China's Liu Yu, Jessica Korda and Lexi Thompson — are tied for sixth on seven under, five off the lead.

World number one Ko Jin-young's hopes of mounting a challenge appear to have faded however after she could only manage a three-under-par 69. Ko heads into the weekend on four under for the tournament, eight strokes off the pace. —AFP

Sports

Mourinho makes instant impact as Tottenham beat West Ham

We have to make the right decision for the club: Mourinho

LONDON: Jose Mourinho delivered Tottenham's first away win in the Premier League since January in his first game in charge with a 3-2 win at West Ham to catapult Spurs up to sixth. Son Heung-min, Lucas Moura and Harry Kane got the goals as Mourinho made an instant impact after replacing the sacked Mauricio Pochettino on Wednesday.

A much-needed three points will help to endear Mourinho to a skeptical Spurs support who were sad to see Pochettino's five-and-a-half year spell in charge of the club end just six months after leading the club to a first ever Champions League final.

There was no love lost between Mourinho's Chelsea sides and Tottenham in the past, but his arrival had the desired impact for Spurs chairman Daniel Levy, even if a West Ham team devoid of confidence made for perfect opponents.

Mourinho followed Pochettino's example in leaving out Christian Eriksen with the Dane one of a number of Spurs players into the final months of his contract and showing no signs of agreeing a new deal.

"We have to make the right decision for the club," Mourinho said on Eriksen's future before kick-off, but his decision to field a front four of Dele Alli with Son, Moura and Kane worked. Kane had smashed the ball past beleaguered West Ham goalkeeper Roberto after just three minutes from Alli's pass but was denied by the offside flag.

An injury to first-choice stopper Lukasz Fabianski has coincided with a run of eight games without a win for West Ham with a string of errors from Roberto spreading a lack of confidence throughout the team.

The Spaniard could have done better when Tottenham did open the scoring nine minutes before half-time when another through ball from Alli found Son, whose shot had too much power for the hapless 'keeper.

However, Roberto was blameless for Spurs' second seven minutes later when a lovely flick from Alli sent Son racing down the left and his inch-perfect cross was met by Moura at the back post. The same two players should have combined for the visitors' third just two minutes into the second half when Son sent Moura clean through on goal, but the Brazilian dragged his shot wide to the despair of Mourinho, who sank to his knees on the touchline.

Tottenham's celebrations were only put on hold for another two minutes as Serge Aurier's cross picked out Kane to head home and become the third highest goalscorer in Spurs' history with 175. The England captain was furious at himself for not adding another on the hour mark as he dallied with just Roberto to beat and was dispossessed by a last-ditch challenge from Issa Diop.

Michail Antonio pulled a goal back for the hosts 17 minutes from time, but by the time Angelo Ogbonna scored West Ham's second six minutes into stoppage time it was too little, too late.

West Ham manager Manuel Pellegrini now waits to see if he faces a similar fate to Pochettino. The Hammers were expected to challenge for European qualification in the Chilean's second season but instead are 16th and in danger of falling even closer towards the relegation zone by the end of the weekend. — AFP



LONDON: West Ham United's Scottish midfielder Robert Snodgrass (R) clashes with Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane during the English Premier League football match between West Ham United and Tottenham Hotspur at The London Stadium, in east London yesterday. — AFP

Walker stretched off as Celtics fall in Denver

DENVER: Nikola Jokic scored 18 points, collected a season-best 16 rebounds and also had 10 assists and three steals during his third triple-double of the season to lead the Denver Nuggets to a 106-102 victory over the visiting Boston Celtics on Friday night. The game was marred by a scary incident that led to Boston guard Kemba Walker being taken off the court on a stretcher with 3:13 left in the second quarter. The Celtics later announced that Walker was diagnosed with "concussion-like symptoms" and was sent to a local hospital for further evaluation. Denver's Jamal Murray recorded a team-high 22 points to go with six rebounds and five assists as the Nuggets won their fourth straight game and eighth in the past nine. Will Barton added 15 points, and Paul Millsap contributed 14 points and 10 rebounds. Jaylen Brown had 22 points and 10 rebounds, and Jayson Tatum added 16 points for the Celtics, who have lost three of their past four games following a 10-game winning streak.

MAVERICKS 143, CAVALIERS 101

Luka Doncic collected 30 points and 14 assists as Dallas recorded a sweep of its four-game homestand with a convincing victory over Cleveland. Doncic, who shot 11 of 18 from the floor before sitting out the fourth quarter, became the eighth Mavericks player to score 30-plus points in three straight games. The last to accomplish the feat was Dirk Nowitzki (2010), who received a standing ovation after being shown on the Jumbotron during the first quarter. Nowitzki saw quite a performance from the home team, which surpassed 140 points for the second consecutive game. Justin Jackson had 19 points and Kristaps Porzingis scored 17 and added four blocks while playing in his 200th career game.

CLIPPERS 122, ROCKETS 119

Kawhi Leonard hit a go-ahead jumper with 15.4 seconds, lifting host Los Angeles over Houston in a thriller. Clippers guard Lou Williams scored all 26 of his points in the second half. Leonard finished with 24 points and six rebounds while Paul George had 19 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for the Clippers, who won their fourth in a row. James Harden had 37 points, 12 assists and eight rebounds for the Rockets, who dropped their second straight after an eight-game winning streak. Russell Westbrook scored 22 points, and Clint Capela had 17 points and 19 rebounds.

LAKERS 130, THUNDER 127

Anthony Davis scored 33 points, including his first career four-point play late in the fourth quarter, and LeBron James added 23 points and 14 assists as visiting Los Angeles held off Oklahoma City. It was the Lakers' second victory over the Thunder in a span of three days, as they earned a tightly contested 112-107 decision Tuesday at Los Angeles. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 17 points, and Danny Green added 14 as the Lakers won their sixth consecutive game and earned a 13th victory in their past 14 contests.

76ERS 115, SPURS 104

Tobias Harris scored 26 points while Joel Embiid



DALLAS: Jordan Clarkson #8 of the Cleveland Cavaliers at American Airlines Center in Dallas, Texas. — AFP

added 21 points and 14 rebounds to lift host Philadelphia past slumping San Antonio. Al Horford scored 18 points and Furkan Korkmaz had 17 to carry the Sixers to their third win in a row. Ben Simmons completed a triple-double with 10 points, 10 rebounds and 13 assists for Philadelphia, which improved to 6-0 at home. DeMar DeRozan paced the Spurs with 29 points while Rudy Gay added 22. The reeling Spurs fell to 5-11 overall and suffered their eighth consecutive loss, the longest skid since head coach Gregg Popovich took over in 1996-97.

JAZZ 113, WARRIORS 109

Mike Conley and Bogdan Bogdanovic combined for 10 points in a 16-2, second-quarter burst that ultimately helped propel host Utah over pesky Golden State in Salt Lake City. In winning a second straight game, the Jazz led by as many as 21 points early in the fourth quarter before the Warriors made an improbable late run that defied a fourth game in six nights on the road. Donovan Mitchell finished with 30 points, Conley 27 and Bogdanovic 17 for the Jazz. With Draymond Green missing his second straight game with a sore heel, Golden State suited up just eight players, and seven of them scored in double figures.

Wizards 125, Hornets 118

Bradley Beal had 30 points and 12 assists, and Washington rallied to defeat visiting Charlotte. The Wizards overcame a 13-point fourth-quarter deficit to win consecutive games for the first time this season. It was Beal's fifth-straight game with 30-or-more points, extending his career high. Thomas Bryant added 21 points and 11 rebounds while Davis Bertans (20 points) tied his career high with six 3-pointers.

PISTONS 128, HAWKS 103

Blake Griffin scored 24 points and host Detroit had its highest scoring first half in 36 years while snapping a five-

game losing streak as it pummeled Atlanta. Andre Drummond had 23 points and 15 rebounds in 27 minutes, and Bruce Brown supplied 14 points, seven assists and three steals while limiting Hawks star Trae Young to nine points on 3-for-12 shooting. Young poured in 38 points against the Pistons in the Hawks' season opener, a 117-100 Atlanta victory. Markieff Morris had 13 points, Langston Galloway tossed in 12 and Derrick Rose and Christian Wood added 11 apiece for Detroit. The Pistons shot 59.8 percent overall and made half of their 34 3-point tries.

NETS 116, KINGS 97

Spencer Dinwiddie continued to effectively fill in for injured Kyrie Irving by scoring 23 points as Brooklyn never trailed in beating visiting Sacramento. Dinwiddie started in place of Irving for the fourth straight game. Irving has been out due to right shoulder impingement and the Nets did not provide a further update on his status. Without Irving's 28.5 points per game, Dinwiddie set a career high by getting at least 20 points for the fourth straight game. He shot 8 of 15 overall, hit all seven of his free-throw attempts and handed out seven assists in helping the Nets win for the third time in four games.

HEAT 116, BULLS 108

Jimmy Butler scored a team-high 27 points on 7-for-10 shooting to lead Miami to a win in Chicago. Heat center Bam Adebayo finished with 16 points and 14 rebounds to notch his eighth double-double of the season. Kendrick Nunn (21 points), Goran Dragic (16) and Kelly Olynyk (10) also scored in double digits for Miami, which increased its season-high winning streak to five games. Zach LaVine led the Bulls with 15 points on 6-for-14 shooting. Coby White and Thaddeus Young scored 12 points apiece to lead a spirited effort from the reserve unit for Chicago, which has lost four of its past five. — Reuters

been out for six weeks. He lacked precision and his usual sense of timing but that is how it is," said Tuchel of Neymar.

The Brazilian only produced brief glimpses of his class and headed straight to the dressing room after being taken off, with some supporters jeering the 27-year-old as he departed. "It's normal, lots of players do that," insisted Tuchel, dismissing any controversy.

"Others go to the bench, but I didn't see it because I was focused on making changes on the field. There is no need to make a big thing about it." The main reason for Neymar's withdrawal, however, will have been to keep him fresh for next Tuesday's trip to Real Madrid when he will hope to make his first Champions League appearance this season. Lille had beaten PSG 5-1 when the sides last met in April, but they came here on a run of just one win in nine and without an away victory since March. — AFP

Barcelona leave it late to sneak past Leganes

MADRID: Barcelona needed a late winner from Arturo Vidal to beat bottom-club Leganes 2-1 yesterday and dig out a much-needed victory ahead of what could prove a crucial month in their season.

Vidal poked in a fortuitous goal in the 79th minute at Butarque after Luis Suarez headed home a Lionel Messi free-kick to cancel out a brilliant opener from Leganes forward Youssef En-Nesyri. Barcelona stay top of the table, three points above Real Madrid, who play later on Saturday at home to La Liga's surprise high-fliers Real Sociedad. A gritty win will also come as a relief to under-pressure coach Ernesto Valverde, whose team now turn their attention to Wednesday's crunch Champions League group game against Borussia Dortmund at Camp Nou.

A goalless draw against Slavia Prague earlier this month means Barca's qualification from Group F is no longer guaranteed. After Dortmund, they then play away at Atletico Madrid in La Liga to start a month that will include trips to Inter Milan in the Champions League and Real Sociedad in La Liga before the season's first Clasico at home to Real Madrid.

It was important therefore to avoid a slip against Leganes, playing their first game in front of their own fans since appointing Javier Aguirre as coach. The home side made the perfect start as En-Nesyri beat Gerard Pique with a wonderful early striker.

Pique has spent the international break juggling football with the Davis Cup, the revamped tennis tournament in Madrid that he is organising through his marketing company Kosmos. Doubts about the defender's focus would not have been allayed in the opening quarter of an hour. One pass from Roque Mesa was enough to set En-Nesyri free against the 32-year-old in the 12th minute. Pique jostled but was taken by surprise as En-Nesyri nipped inside and bent a shot into the far corner. Leganes might have had a second soon after and Pique would have been at fault, the defender allowing Martin Braithwaite in after failing to clear, but Oscar Rodriguez was unable to capitalise.

Crosses were a weakness for Leganes as three Barcelona headers all could have gone in. Suarez went close. Pique hit the post. Then Suarez did find the net, glancing in Messi's clipped free-kick for his ninth goal of the season. Barca's second owed much to luck but it came from another cross. Pique rose to head in but the ball missed him and cannoned off the foot of Ruben Perez. Vidal was waiting on the line to prod in. — AFP



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Sheffield United FC v Manchester United	beIN SPORTS	19:30
SPANISH LEAGUE		
RCD Espanyol v Getafe CF	beIN SPORTS	14:00
Osasuna v Athletic de Bilbao	beIN SPORTS	16:00
SD Eibar v Deportivo Alaves	beIN SPORTS	18:00
Villarreal CF v Celta de Vigo	beIN SPORTS	20:30
Real Valladolid v Sevilla FC	beIN SPORTS	23:00
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE		
Bologna FC v Parma Calcio 1913	beIN SPORTS	14:30
AS Roma v Brescia	beIN SPORTS	17:00
Hellas Verona FC v ACF Fiorentina	beIN SPORTS	17:00
US Sassuolo Calcio v SS Lazio	beIN SPORTS	17:00
UC Sampdoria v Udinese Calcio	beIN SPORTS	20:00
US Lecce v Cagliari Calcio	beIN SPORTS	22:45

Icardi, Di Maria hand PSG victory on Neymar's latest return

PARIS: Neymar made his latest comeback from injury for Paris Saint-Germain on Friday as first-half goals by Mauro Icardi and Angel Di Maria saw the Ligue 1 leaders ease to a 2-0 win over Lille at the Parc des Princes.

The in-form Icardi opened the scoring from close range in the 17th minute with his 10th goal in PSG's last nine games, and Di Maria doubled their lead just after the half-hour mark.

"I didn't expect too much from him because he has

25 Russia picks new athletics chief as doping crisis deepens

26 Australia dominate Pakistan with bat and ball in first Test

27 Mourinho makes instant impact as Tottenham beat West Ham



Liverpool late show sinks Palace

Wolves punish 10-man Bournemouth to extend unbeaten run



LONDON: Liverpool's Brazilian midfielder Roberto Firmino (2nd L) watches his shot go wide during the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Liverpool at Selhurst Park in south London. — AFP

LONDON: Liverpool showed once again why they are kings of the late winner at Crystal Palace yesterday as Jose Mourinho made an instant impact as Tottenham boss, masterminding an end to the club's dismal away record in the Premier League against rivals West Ham.

Hosts Palace were denied a shock first-half opener when James Tomkins' header was disallowed after VAR adjudged that Jordan Ayew had fouled Dejan Lovren.

Liverpool looked set to drop points for just the second time this season after Wilfried Zaha cancelled out Sadio Mane's opener but Roberto Firmino poked in after a goalmouth scramble to seal a 2-1 win.

Elsewhere, second-half goals from Ayoze Perez and Jamie Vardy earned Leicester City a convincing 2-0 Premier League win over Brighton & Hove Albion at the Amex Stadium yesterday. After failing to score with any of their first 11 attempts on goal, Leicester returned from the half-time break to punish Brighton

twice and stay second in the table.

Perez, whose three previous league goals for Leicester came in a 9-0 rout of Southampton last month, found the net from close range after Vardy broke through on the right flank.

Vardy slotted home a penalty at the second attempt. The English striker's initial attempt from the spot was saved but James Maddison's rebound was chalked off by VAR for encroachment. The visitors controlled possession from the kick-off and came close to a breakthrough twice inside five minutes, with Perez hitting the crossbar before Vardy's header forced a diving save from Brighton goalkeeper Mat Ryan. It was only after a change of approach from manager Brendan Rodgers that Leicester could capitalise on the break and record a seventh win in their last eight league matches.

Southampton took an early lead at the Emirates when Danny Ings fired them in front after Ryan

Bertrand's quick free-kick. Alexandre Lacazette levelled in the 18th minute after strike partner Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's shot was blocked by Bertrand.

Norwich lifted themselves off bottom spot in the Premier League with a 2-0 victory away to Everton while Burnley beat struggling Watford 3-0.

Manchester City are playing Chelsea in the evening kick-off, with Pep Guardiola desperate for a win to breathe new life into his team's title challenge after three defeats in City's opening 12 games.

But Frank Lampard's in-form side are not the visitors Guardiola would have picked as he looks to keep Liverpool in his sights, with six league wins on the bounce for his young side.

Meanwhile, Wolverhampton Wanderers continued their sparkling run of form in the Premier League with a 2-1 victory over 10-man Bournemouth at the Vitality Stadium yesterday. The visitors dominated the early exchanges and took the early lead inside 20 minutes

after Joao Moutinho curled a sublime free kick beyond Bournemouth goalkeeper Aaron Ramsdale for his first goal of the season.

Portuguese midfielder Moutinho created the second with a quick free kick to release Adama Traore, whose low cross was stroked home by Raul Jimenez for his 14th goal of the season in all competitions.

Bournemouth's hopes of a comeback suffered a blow after Simon Francis, who was shown a yellow card for a foul on Diogo Jota, brought down on the Spanish striker again to receive his marching orders.

Bournemouth manager Eddie Howe introduced Jefferson Lerma and Arnaud Danjuma Groeneveld at the interval to try to gain the hosts a foothold in midfield before defender Steve Cook pulled one back with a glancing header from a corner. But it was too little, too late for Bournemouth as Wolves held on to extend their unbeaten run to eight matches in the competitions. — Agencies

Shiffrin claims slalom gold after Vlhova crashes out at Levi

HELSINKI: American superstar Mikaela Shiffrin secured a record-breaking fourth slalom World Cup win at Levi yesterday, in a dramatic contest which ended when her Slovakian rival Petra Vlhova went flying at the third gate.

Despite a small error at the top of the second run, Shiffrin claimed her first victory of the season with an aggregate time of 1:57.57, comfortably ahead of second-placed Wendy Holdener of Switzerland by 1.78 seconds.

Austria's Katharina Truppe took third place with 1:59.51. Shiffrin's win at Levi, in Finland, makes her the first Alpine skier to take four World Cup victories at the Arctic Circle resort, breaking the previous record

of three held by German Maria Hoefl-Riesch and Austrian Marcel Hirscher.

"I wasn't thinking about the record," said the 23-year-old. "It was a great day and I just really enjoyed my skiing, I was laughing and joking before both runs," said the often nervous Shiffrin. "It was just nice to be here today."

The contest came to an electrifying end as Shiffrin's rival, Petra Vlhova, who went last because she was leading after the first run, made an uncharacteristic mistake close to the top of the course and tumbled out of the race.

In the first run, Vlhova snatched first place from the Shiffrin with a time of 58.65 seconds. She began her descent slower than favourite Shiffrin, but gained time over the second half of the run to knock 0.13 seconds off the American's pace.

Shiffrin praised the Slovakian's "strong skiing": "That's tough but she'll be back very fast. I feel a bit lucky with this win but I also feel good with my skiing so I'm happy," Shiffrin said after the second run.

Wendy Holdener's second-place brings her tally of slalom podium finishes to 23, which remains the record for most World

Cup podiums in a single event without ever standing on the top step. The win re-establishes Shiffrin's dominance after she was knocked into second place by 17-year-old New Zealand sensation Alice Robinson in the season-opening giant slalom three weeks ago in Soelden, Austria.

Shiffrin's victory takes her closer to eclipsing the career achievements of her countrywoman Lindsey Vonn, who bowed out earlier this year with 82 World Cup victories. Already a three-time overall champion, Shiffrin has notched 61 World Cup wins and is on track to pass not just Vonn's 82 but the record of 86 set by the Swede Ingemar Stenmark.

After the race Shiffrin was awarded her fourth reindeer — the traditional winner's trophy which is kept and looked after in Lapland throughout the year. She said she has not yet chosen a name to go with the previous years' Rudolph, Sven and Mr. Gru. Conditions on the floodlit slope at Levi — where the sun currently rises for just four hours a day — were described as "optimal" by the organisers, despite fog and mist at the top of the descent. — AFP



KITTILA: First-placed Mikaela Shiffrin from the US poses on the podium with Santa Claus after winning the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup women's slalom event at the Levi ski resort in Kittila, Finnish Lapland yesterday. — AFP