



**2** Trade exchange with Kuwait  
\$4bn in 2018: British envoy



**21** At Instagram hotspot,  
LOLs trumping likes



**24** BJP forced out  
in Maharashtra



**25** Philippines' poverty-driven,  
world-beating pool stars



# MPs call on premier to form Cabinet with clear roadmap

## Public revenues rise, but wages eat up over half the budget



DOHA: Fireworks are seen above Khalifa International stadium ahead of the 24th Arabian Gulf Cup Group A football match between Qatar and Iraq in the Qatari capital yesterday. — AFP (See Page 28)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MPs yesterday continued to press new Prime Minister HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah to form a government with a clear roadmap to tackle major challenges facing the country, mainly fighting corruption and resolving the problem of stateless people. MP Adel Al-Damkhi called on the premier, who was appointed to the post for the first time after serving as foreign minister for several years, to fight corruption and select ministers for the Cabinet "who have no black record".

He said the premier should not pick his Cabinet based on interests or quotas or to make some people happy, warning the prime minister that he will bear the consequences of his selections. Damkhi also urged the prime minister to have a clear development plan that pays great attention to development and safeguards the interests of the nation. The lawmaker said the new government should apply the law equally and should apply a real development plan unlike previous Cabinets which were "full of big words but no substance".

MP Thamer Al-Suwaid said the prime minister must have a clear national roadmap that paves the way for resolving major problems in the country including citi-

zenship matters, bedoons and achieving people's aspirations. He said the premier must pay greater attention to resolving financial problems facing the Kuwaiti people, recalling that the country has provided loans worth KD 22 billion to 160 countries, while there are 400,000 Kuwaiti debtors in the country.

With the ministers of defense and interior dismissed and the foreign ministry vacant after his appointment as PM, Sheikh Sabah is faced with the possibility of forming a Cabinet with almost new faces. Other ministers who may not return include the minister of public works Jenan Bushehri, who resigned following a grilling and former finance minister Nayef Al-Hajraf, who also resigned before facing a grilling. MPs have also objected to the return of the ministers of education and health and minister of state for Cabinet affairs. There have also been some objections against the minister of commerce and industry.

Meanwhile, the finance ministry told the Assembly's budgets committee yesterday that government staff wages in the past fiscal year - 2018/2019 - topped KD 11.4 billion, more than half of the total spending of KD 21.8 billion. It also said oil revenues reached KD 18.4 billion and made up around 90 percent of total public revenues as a result of an increase in oil prices.

## Kuwait coach plays down 10-time champs' chances in Gulf Cup

DOHA: Kuwait coach Thamer Anad played down his team's chances in the Arabian Gulf Cup that kicked off in Qatar yesterday, as the Kuwaitis continue their return to international competition after long suspensions that have hurt sports in the country. Soccer's governing body FIFA in Dec 2017 lifted a suspension order on Kuwait that it imposed in 2015 over what it called government interference in the game.

In August, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) lifted its separate ban on Kuwait after nearly four years. It had banned the country over a new sports law that it said interfered with the autonomy of the Olympic movement. "I think everyone knows the conditions of the Kuwaiti team, the four-year suspension, the Kuwaiti sports problems," Anad told a news

conference ahead of Kuwait's opening Group B match against Saudi Arabia today.

"This certainly affected the sporting level of all the games, and even on the youth stages we saw a total absence of Kuwaiti teams for four years. After suspension, there has to be a rebuilding process of teams in all sports," said Anad, who took over in September following the dismissal of Croatian coach Romeo Jozak after defeat to Australia in the World Cup qualifiers. "Kuwait are not favorites because of problems and suspension, (but) we are able to return Kuwait to its position."

The country has won the competition a record ten times. It will face a weakened Saudi Arabia team playing without Al-Hilal players today after the club's Asian Champions League match in Japan on Sunday. Saudi Arabia said two weeks ago that it would join the regional tournament, having initially decided to skip its 24th edition, which is being held in Qatar. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt severed political, trade and transport ties with Qatar in mid-2017 over accusations that it supported terrorism. Doha denies the charge. — Reuters

## Minister denies firing Kuwait Airways staff

By Meshaal Al-Enzi

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Acting Finance Minister Mariam Al-Aqeel denied reports claiming that she gave orders to terminate a number of Kuwaiti pilots, engineers and employees at Kuwait Airways. "Such reports are completely fake," Aqeel stressed, noting that hiring or terminating Kuwait Airways pilots, engineers or

employees is out of her jurisdiction as minister.

Aqeel expressed dissatisfaction with the publishing of false or fake news, be it intentionally or accidentally. She called for scrutinizing any news that would cause instability at Kuwait Airways and affect its employees' performance.

Kuwait Airways also rejected reports by some newspapers and on social media about Aqeel's decision to dismiss any of its pilots, engineers or employees, noting that this is only up to Kuwait Airways, its board and executive management, which have no such intentions. In the statement, Kuwait Airways Chairman Tousef Abdul Hameed Al-Jassim stressed Kuwait Airways has full pride in its employees in various positions, adding company regulations mainly focus on the vocational security of all staff members.

## Kuwait's first heart transplant a success

KUWAIT: The first heart transplant surgery in Kuwait has been completed successfully on a 20-year-old patient, Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah said yesterday. The patient was being treated for a serious cardiac ailment, where his failing heart was replaced with a healthy one from an organ donor, the minister said in a statement. The success of the procedure required a great degree of meticulousness and preparation, he explained, saying such an operation needed a state-of-the-art team and profound expertise.

On the success of the surgery, the minister said it was a testament to the tremendous progress the health ministry has made in recent years, besides being another

notable accomplishment for Kuwaiti healthcare. He thanked everybody who contributed to the success of the country's first heart transplant, including the surgical team and staff members.

Meanwhile, HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated Sheikh Basel on the success of the heart transplant. Heaping praise on this "historic" healthcare achievement, the Amir expressed his warm sentiments in a cable he sent to the health minister yesterday, in which he also acknowledged the meticulous efforts of the entire surgical team.

Physicians Dr Riyadh Tarzi, Dr Mohamad Shamsa, Dr Mohammad Al-Banna, Dr Khaldoun Al-Hamoud and Dr Mohammad Badwi were lionized by HH the Amir for their intellect and expertise that helped make the procedure a success. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the health minister. — KUNA

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## Local

# Trade exchange with Kuwait hit \$4 billion in 2018: British envoy

## 10th British Trade Expo kicks off in Kuwait



KUWAIT: His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah inaugurates the 10th British Trade Expo.—Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



British Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport speaks during the press conference.

By Ben Garcia and KUNA

KUWAIT: The volume of trade exchange between Kuwait and Britain reached \$4 billion last year, British Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport said. Speaking at a press conference on the opening of the Kuwait-Britain exhibition, Davenport lauded the growing trade exchange between the two countries. He pointed to other big chances to boost fruitful cooperation between the two friendly states. He stressed the depth of the historical relations between the two sides, pointing out that commercial and economic cooperation with Kuwait is a key part of the development of the bilateral ties. The ambassador pointed to many British companies working in Kuwait, affirming that the embassy is keen on facilitating the duties of the British investors and firms. On military cooperation, he referred to a tangible development in the military ties between the two sides, and to the signing of the joint declaration last May on the defense, training and military exercises domains. He revealed that some British military personnel arrived in Kuwait two days ago to take part in a three-day drill with the Kuwaiti forces.

### 'Treaty of Friendship'

The three-day British Trade Expo kicked off on Monday at Sheraton Hotel; the 10th exhibition organized by Al-Jabriya Exhibition Group under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah. Ambassador Davenport thanked the organizer on yet another milestone in the area of trade. The exhibition coincided with the 120th anniversary of a 'Treaty of Friendship' between Kuwait and Britain. "Although Britain first established ties with Kuwait as long ago as 1775, this treaty marked a new phase in our relations, ushering in a period of ever-closer cooperation and partnership," he said.

"I thank Ahmed Ismael Behbehani, Chairman of Al-Jabriya Exhibition Group, who brought here together an excellent range of British companies from many different sectors. It has been a pleasure for the British Embassy and our department of international trade to support them in celebrating British-Kuwaiti cooperation," Davenport said.

With regards to trade and investment between the two countries, Davenport noted they are on an upward trend on both sides. "Kuwait continues to invest strongly in the



His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah visits Kuwait Times' booth at the exhibition.

UK. More and more companies from the UK are seizing opportunities in Kuwait, especially in the energy, infrastructure, education, health and IT sectors. Trade volume has increased by 10-20 percent in the last two years. There is lots of potential for more growth. We are very appreciative for Kuwait being a major investor in the UK. More and more Kuwaiti students are also pursuing their studies in Britain than ever before," he said.

### Prince William's visit

Davenport also announced the upcoming visit of Duke of Cambridge Prince William to Kuwait early next month. "We do not have details of the visit as yet, but what was already announced earlier was that he is going to visit two countries in the Gulf - Kuwait and Oman. We are all looking forward and with lots of anticipation to welcome him,"

he said. Behbehani said this year's expo is the most important economic event for Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf, as it brings together British and Kuwaiti companies and institutions to celebrate both past and future successes. This year's expo witnesses the participation of organizations showcasing the latest British products and commodities as well as financial, legal, health, medical, educational, training, investment, motor vehicles and other important goods and services.

Al-Jabriya Exhibition Group started its activities in 1997 and it grew from strength to strength. It has succeeded in attracting the highest levels of visitors ever since. Some of the exhibitors include Kuwait Times, HSBC, BSK, British Airways, Jazeera Airways, KES, Top Gear, Costa Coffee, Ataya, Ernst & Young, Aston Martin, Bentley, Jaguar, McLaren, etc.

## Failaka relics showcased at Peninsula archaeology event

KUWAIT: The 4th International Seminar on the Archaeology of the Arabian Peninsula kicked off yesterday at Kuwait National Library, as it sheds light on the historical periods Failaka Island went through from the Bronze age, to the Hellenistic period, until the Islamic one. "This seminar comes in cooperation between the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) and The French Center for Archaeology and Social Sciences (CEFAS) for the fourth time," NCCAL Secretary General of Kamel Al-Abduljalil Kami Al-Abduljaleel said in a speech he delivered at the opening of the seminar. This cooperation aims at enhancing and developing the future visions in the fields of archeology, as well as exchanging similarities between Kuwait's and the Arabian Peninsula artifacts, especially those in Failaka Island through research papers and scheduled lecture, he said. This seminar will demonstrate the nature of Failaka environment through the discovered artifacts, and the effect of its distinguished historical location on its surroundings, he added. It will also tackle its habitats and the latest developments of the field work there by the foreign missions participating with the works of Kuwaiti excavation team. Failaka Island is considered the most important Kuwaiti island regarding its archaeological heaviness, as it dates back to 2000 BC and is located 20 kilometers far eastern Kuwait City, at the length of 13 cubic kilometers, and the width



KUWAIT: Failaka relics showcased during the event.— KUNA

off six cubic kilometers, with the size of 78 cubic meters, and was known for Ikaros, he affirmed. This seminar is a great opportunity that gathers eminent group of archeologists and greatly contributes in

offering developed historical studies and researches, he added. The two-day seminar includes scientific sessions to discuss the latest discoveries on Failaka, and a field trip to the island.— KUNA



A group photo of participants in the seminar.

In my view

## We need to raise the bar to close the gap

By Sami Dimassi

As the world gets closer to celebrating the fourth anniversary of the landmark Paris Agreement, the optimism and enthusiasm surrounding this historic achievement is muted. Countries around the world have collectively failed to curb the rise of greenhouse gas emissions, which have risen 1.5 percent per year in the last decade and hit a new high of 55.3 gigatons of CO2 equivalent in 2018. In the absence of drastic change, scientists now expect to see a 3.2 degree C rise in temperature by the end of this century.

Today, the UN Environment Program (UNEP) released the tenth edition of its Emissions Gap Report, which makes for some stark reading. As it does every year, the report looks at the projected volume of greenhouse gas emissions in 2030 and the progress countries are making in reducing them.

The report found that countries' collective ambition must increase more than fivefold over current levels to deliver necessary emissions cuts to keep temperature rise to below 1.5 degree C. Countries that signed up to the Paris Agreement have set this target as their ambition, with each country setting Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) - their commitment to achieving it. Yet even if these NDCs are fully implemented in their current form, the world's emissions budget, allowable under this target, will be exhausted by as early as 2030.

The report also found that economy-wide climate action remains extremely limited in certain areas, including a complete phase-out of fossil-fuel subsidies, comprehensive and ambitious carbon pricing, and making all finance flows consistent with the Paris Agreement. Despite the urgency of the matter, countries that have traditionally led the way in economic development have not done their fair share of the heavy lifting. Carbon footprints need to fall, lifestyles need to become more sustainable, and much more needs to happen in a shorter period of time. So, how do we stay within the 1.5 degree C limit? And how do the challenges and opportunities affect the still-developing region of West Asia, which has been mostly reliant on fossil fuels for its economic development?

West Asian nations must, like all other nations, revise their NDCs by 2020 to close the emissions gap by 2030. This scaling up of climate ambition is not only necessary, but can also bring massive benefits to the region. This year's Emissions Gap Report also looks at the energy transition and the potential of efficiency in the use of materials, which can play a big role in closing the emissions gap and holds special relevance for the West Asian region.

The region's countries are blessed with abundant natural resources other than oil: the potential for solar power to provide energy is obvious. Renewables are now the cheapest source of new power generation and a worldwide transition to renewable energy could reduce emissions of CO2 from the power sector by 78 percent in 2050, and West Asia countries are already making headway. It is estimated that in the GCC alone, investment in renewables totaled almost \$10 billion between 2006 and 2018, with more than half of this amount coming in the last two years. Plans to integrate the solar power supply chain within the region are also an encouraging sign that renewables are now seen in a broader economic light.

Finance is another area with potential for action. With the transition to renewables and better energy efficiency alone requiring supply-side investments of \$1.6-3.8 trillion per year from 2020-2050, the opportunities for finance abound. The region is already home to several financial hubs, and opportunities for growth in these fields will only increase as the world moves to achieve the commitments under the Paris Agreement. Recent examples of financial initiatives in the region include the \$26 billion Dubai Green Fund, which demonstrates the attractiveness of this approach.

Young people constitute nearly half of the population in the Arab region. Arab youth have demonstrated time and again their determination and innovation. We have witnessed their drive to support their countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and realizing the objectives and milestones set out in the visions of their nations. We are also witnessing their passion and enthusiasm in environmental activism. Governments of the region can harness youth innovation and equip the inheritors of our planet with the awareness and tools which they need to promote sustainable solutions to address the global challenge.

The effects of climate change are already with us, while others are yet to be felt. Flash floods seen in Yemen, heat spikes in Kuwait, and rising sea levels that could see 11 percent or more of Bahrain under water in a few decades time, are just examples. It is clear that things need to change and that ambitions must be scaled up. Humanity's future lies in the transition to a low-carbon future. And while the task to make this transition happen is enormous, so too is the responsibility of all countries. West Asian countries can truly make their mark, and with the right incentives, policies, and support, can lead the way in fighting for a better future for generations to come.

— Sami Dimassi is Director and Regional Representative of the UN Environment Program's Regional Office for West Asia

Local

# Amir receives state officials, publishers



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets yesterday at Bayan Palace National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, as well as Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional Court Justice Yousef Al-Mutawaa. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, as well as Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional Court Justice Yousef Al-Mutawaa. His Highness the Amir also received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir received as well Sheikh Dr Suaad Mohammad Al-Sabah, who presented to the Amir a book on Mohammad bin Sabah Al-Sabah, the sixth ruler 1896-1892. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received Chairman of the Board of Directors of Al-Dar Kuwaiti Media Publishing House Sheikh Sabah Mohammad Al-Sabah, who presented to the Amir a review on the 10 most influential Arabs for the year 2018. In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is set to patronize and attend the 19th edition of His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah's Informatics Award at 10:00 am at Bayan Palace today. —KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah reads a book he received from Sheikh Sabah Mohammad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a book from Sheikh Dr Suaad Mohammad Al-Sabah.

## Palestinian official honors Kuwaiti envoy for his support

LONDON: Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Information Nabil Abu Rudeineh honored yesterday Kuwait's Ambassador to the UK Khaled Al-Duwaisan for his prominent role in supporting the Palestinian cause in UK's political circles. This came during a ceremony held at the residence of Palestinian Ambassador to UK Husam Zomlot in the presence of Arab ambassadors to UK. In a statement to the press, Abu Rudeineh said that Duwaisan considered a strong Arab voice in defending the Palestinian cause. Kuwait's Amir, government and people provides financial and political support to the Palestinians without regard to the consequences of their positions, he said. Some Arab capitals are experiencing multiple disturbances and dangers threatening their existence and identity, pointing out that the so-called Arab Spring is nothing but Israeli western projects aimed at spreading anarchy.

Abu Rudeineh also criticized the unlimited American support for the Israeli occupation authority, which stands against the right of the two states and supports their aggressions to the holy sites. Regarding Arab support for the Palestinian people, Abu Rudeineh said that Kuwait was among the first Arab countries that supported the Palestinian cause politically and financially. Kuwaiti delegations and missions continue to visit the Palestinian city of Ramallah, where a delegation from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education recently concluded

contracts with Palestinian teachers to work in Kuwait, he said. "These visits are not normalized with the Israeli occupation," he stressed.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Zomlot in his speech said that the Palestinian issue was and remains present in the priorities of the Ambassador Duwaisan's daily agenda during his meetings with the British side. Zomlot also praised Duwaisan's support and care to the Palestinian case, and the message which Arab ambassadors were keen to send to the British Foreign Minister last week calling on the British government to abide by international law and oppose what the US administration said regarding the legalization of Israeli settlements. Honoring Ambassador Duwaisan is a tribute to Kuwait, which supported the Palestinian cause in particular and the Arab issues in general, he added.

In the meantime, Ambassador Duwaisan expressed his thanks and gratitude for this honor by the Palestinian leadership, noting, "The Palestinian issue is one of the constants of the Kuwaiti foreign policy." He added that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attaches great importance to the Palestinian cause, as he stresses the necessity to provide everything that would enhance and support the Palestinian presence in the world. Duwaisan said that Kuwait has been and will continue to support Palestinian people and case in all forums around the world. — KUNA

## WHO regional director visits diabetes institute

KUWAIT: The Director General of the Dasman Diabetes Institute Dr Qais Saleh Al-Duwairi met with the Regional Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) for the Eastern Mediterranean Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, where they discussed fostering potential means of collaborations between the Institute and WHO.

During the visit, they discussed scientific and research topics and issues of common interest. Dasman Diabetes Institute was nominated by the Minister of Health for the Emirates Foundation Award for Health Development at the World Health Organization. Therefore,

Dr Duwairi had the privilege of highlighting the institute's contribution in the field of diabetes research and its translation of this research in clinical practice.

Dr Mandhari complemented the leading role of Dasman Diabetes Institute, which was established by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, describing the institute as one of the most prestigious research institutions not only in Kuwait, but also regionally and internationally. During the visit, Dr Mandhari toured the institute where he was briefed on the most important research projects, the facilities and services.



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## Local

# Zain's entrepreneurs visit Google and Microsoft at Silicon Valley

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the continuation of the third phase of Zain Great Idea 5 (ZGI 5) at San Francisco in the United States of America. The program's finalists took part in field trips to the headquarters of Silicon Valley's top technology leaders, most notably Google and Microsoft.

Throughout four successful past editions, ZGI empowered, trained, and invested in hundreds of creative and driven Kuwaiti youth, of which many now own thriving and active Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to this day. Zain Great Idea has been one of the most successful initiatives Zain presented to the Kuwaiti market as part of its comprehensive innovation and entrepreneurship strategy, with the aim of offering Kuwait's entrepreneurial community the chance to take their startups to entire new levels.

During the second week of their stay in San Francisco, Zain's entrepreneurs gained invaluable experiences to develop and accelerate their tech startups by visiting the headquarters of the world's biggest technology leaders. The trips featured visits to the main headquarters of Google, Microsoft, Pinterest, and venture capital firm 500 Startups in Silicon Valley. ZGI 5's finalists also took part in a seminar presented by Tesla cofounder Marc Tarpenning, which took place at Stanford University, the world's first-ranked university in entrepreneurship.

Zain's entrepreneurs also presented their tech startups to a number of Silicon Valley investors and specialists, who provided valuable feedback and insights with the aim of developing and accelerating their startups. The presentations were supervised by Mind the Bridge's consultants and mentors. Upon their arrival in San Francisco, the finalists presented their tech startups to Mind the Bridge's top management, headed by Founder and CEO Marco Marinucci, who shared his strategic experience in business and entrepreneurship with them. Throughout an entire day, the finalists also met many local entrepreneurs in San Francisco, who shared their success stories and mentoring advice.

Zain's finalists will stay in San Francisco (specifically Silicon Valley, the world's capital of tech startups) throughout three weeks, guided by Mind the Bridge's consultants and mentors. The San Francisco program will feature extensive seminars and workshops to develop and accelerate the ZGI 5 final tech startups, which were originally selected by the judging panel in Kuwait.

Zain recently concluded the second phase of ZGI 5 in Kuwait, where nearly 100 ambitious entrepreneurs pitched their projects and ideas to the judging panel, who in return selected 10 finalists that are now taking part in the third phase: the international accelerator program in collaboration with Brilliant Lab and Mind the Bridge. Zain's 10 finalists are Faisal Al Basri - Mezan, Yousef Al Husaini - Baimis, Abdulwahab Al Refaei - Cybersys, Reem Al Farhan - CTC, Rawan Al Sabah - The Capital, Mishari Amin - Touch point, Dalal Al Qattan - That Designs, Fahad Al Baghli - The Wish List, Majed Al Hamlan - Blue Outdoors, and Mohamed Al



ZGI entrepreneurs and Zain officials at Google headquarters.

Raqem - WellbiON. ZGI was first launched in 2010 as a Corporate Social Responsibility initiative designed to support the youth into making their entrepreneurial dreams come true. Zain was the first in the region to launch such a comprehensive program of this kind. Then, throughout nearly 10 wonderful years, the company embraced over 500 entrepreneurs, travelled to 4 countries, and helped nearly 70 of the brightest Kuwaiti minds accelerate their ideas into active and thriving SMEs in the market.

ZGI is established by Zain in association with Brilliant Lab, a startup Accelerator Service from Kuwait, and Mind the Bridge, a global organization bridging the world through entrepreneurship education for startups, enterprises and investors to succeed in global markets. Mind the Bridge is based in Silicon Valley with offices in US, London, Italy, and Spain.

The latest edition of the program features an all-new phase to the program: Co-developing. After Zain Great Idea is over, finalists will get full access to Zain's cross-functional team to help them get the most out of their newly accelerated startup. ZGI's entrepreneurs will be able to get consultations, mentoring, deals, tactics/strategies, and more from Zain specialists in various areas that are essential to any business, including sales, marketing, communications, legal,

networks, IT, and more. Zain is well aware of the crucial role played by private sector organizations in supporting social and economic sustainability projects. Springing from its growing commitment towards practicing its social respon-

sibility, the company is committed to printing a positive print through all its activities. This has led Zain to embrace the most influential issues in the community, including the support of youth, entrepreneurship, and innovation.



ZGI entrepreneurs and Zain officials at Microsoft headquarters.

## KIB gold sponsor of NUKS-USA conference

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced its sponsorship of the 36th annual conference for the National Union of Kuwait Students (NUKS) - USA branch. Held under the slogan 'a generation of builders for a giving nation,' the conference will take place in California from November 28 to December 1. The event will be attended by a large number of journalists, politicians, economists, prominent social figures, athletes, and more.

On behalf of KIB, Nawaf Najia, Senior Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at the Bank will be attending and participating in the event's activities. The conference will feature a number of activities spearheaded by a group of national figures who seek to share expertise with students.

On this occasion, Najia said: "Our participation in this conference year after year comes as part of our social responsibility strategy which aims at empowering youth and positively impacting all members of the community.



Nawaf Najia

Moreover, we strongly believe in the importance of this conference, as it gathers a large number of local students who are studying abroad together with prominent figures and experts across various areas."

Najia added that this sponsorship reflects KIB's unwavering commitment to empowering future generations of leaders and promoting educational initiatives and student-based activities.

The Bank actively seeks to support young, local talents, as well as engaging with them to nurture their potential and help them achieve their ambitions.

KIB's participation in this event, which is considered one of the largest student events taking place both inside Kuwait and abroad, will include a diverse range of activities and initiatives. Additionally, the Bank will also be available at a dedicated booth during the event, aiming at engaging with students and introducing them to products and services, as well as suitable career opportunities for graduates hoping to join the banking and finance sector.

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**KUWAIT:** The Commercial Bank of Kuwait offered silver sponsorship to the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training's third annual career fair, which was organized recently.

## Local

# Expat, bedoon students could be expelled to create room for Kuwaitis in public schools

## 30,000 non-Kuwaiti students currently registered in public schools

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Education (MoE) is currently listing all non-Kuwaiti students in various public schools pending expelling those who do not meet public school admission conditions, well-informed sources said. "The current numbers indicate that a great deal of violations are involved," the sources said. They added the move will include expelling expat and bedoon (stateless) students in order to put an end to overcrowding

in certain schools, namely those in Farwaniya and Jahra.

The sources added that educational zone directors have been instructed to check non-Kuwaiti students' cases to make sure they meet public schools admission conditions and list all violations pending expulsion next year. Moreover, the sources stressed that unlike employees involved in violations, parents will not be punished for any illegal registration. "Over 30,000 non-Kuwaiti students are currently registered in public schools with a very

high cost despite MoE's attempts to cut expenses," the sources stressed.

In addition, the sources explained that non-Kuwaiti students include children of Kuwaiti women, the children of teachers, diplomats, cemetery workers and others. Sources said bedoons currently registered in public schools include children of Kuwaiti women and military personnel only.

### Online payment

Ministry of Health's (MoH) assistant under-

secretary for food and medicine control Dr Abdullah Al-Bader announced launching an online payment service to collect the fees to obtain medical equipment and lab needs documents from the engineering department effective Dec 1. Bader added that the new online payment service will enable companies and suppliers registered with MoH to purchase the tender condition handbooks advertised on MoH's website and the official gazette Al-Kuwait Al-Youm without visiting the MoH engineering department.

### 'Urfi' marriage

The justice ministry yesterday stressed that 'Urfi' (customary) marriage is incriminated under Kuwaiti laws, and that unlike other countries, Kuwait's ministry of justice does not accredit any 'Urfi' marriage contracts made between couples. In this regard, the manager of the ministry's attestation department Dr Fahd Al-Dhaen said deserting spouses and harsh financial conditions have significant impact on divorce rates, which are increasing.

## Man killed, two injured in Sixth Ring Road crash

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** A Kuwaiti man was killed and two others were injured in an accident reported on the Sixth Ring Road Monday night. Occupational Jahra fire station men dealt with the accident. An investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the deadly crash.

### Car crashes into store

A driver yesterday lost control over his vehicle and crashed into a printing and copying store in Salmiya, said security sources, noting that fortunately, patrons inside the store only suffered minor injuries from the broken glass.

### Security loophole

The interior ministry relations and security information department commented on reports in local media about holes in the security fence of Rawdatain oilfield. It con-



**KUWAIT:** Pictures taken from the scene of the accident.

firmed that some parts of the fence had collapsed due to torrential rainwater gushing under the fence, and security forces were stationed at all such gaps. It added that coordination was made with KOC to fence the gaps, which was done.

### Search for suspect

Police received a call about a person in

an abnormal condition in Um Al-Haiman, so a patrol was dispatched. As soon as the man saw the police car, he got into his vehicle in an attempt to escape. He hit the door of the patrol car, and was able to escape by driving on the wrong side of the road. The vehicle was later found in front of a house in the area. The car was impounded and police are looking for the man.



### Fire drills

Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFS) carried out two mock exercises yesterday - the first at the Arab Open University and the other at a Jabriya fuel station. The scenario of the first exercise was about a fire in an administrative office, so Ardiya and Farwaniya centers responded and formed

two teams - one for rescue and the other to fight the fire. The building was evacuated. Rescuers found two "injured" persons and handed them to paramedics. The second scenario was about a fire in two vehicles inside a car wash area of a gas station. Hawally fire center responded, evacuated the petrol pump and fought the blaze. One "unconscious" person was found.

### News in brief

#### More than half women in Kuwait subject to violence

**KUWAIT:** A survey on social violence by the Kuwait Society for Human Rights showed 54 percent of women (of various nationalities) in Kuwait are victims of violence. The survey was presented by lawyer Atiyah Al-Shatti during a symposium titled 'towards a national vision to eradicate violence against women.' Psychological abuse tops the list (45 percent), followed by physical abuse at 36 percent, sexual abuse at 16 percent and economic abuse at 2 percent. The percentage of victims not informing authorities about domestic violence is 78 percent. The ages of those surveyed range from 17 to 57 years - a total of 320 respondents of both genders. — Al-Rai

#### Kuwaitis' prosecution in Philippines

**KUWAIT:** Official sources rejected the conditions of Philippines labor agencies to make those who bring domestic helpers to Kuwait to sign a 'judicial contract' that allows to drag the Kuwaiti sponsor to a Philippine or foreign court. Sources said the contract that is being presented by some domestic help offices is in violation of Kuwaiti laws and encroaches on the country's sovereignty. They said the contract is the central point of difference between Kuwait and the Philippines, which hinders the signing of the domestic help agreement between the two countries, although they have agreed on all other items. The sources said any office using that contract will be closed for six months as an initial punishment. — Al-Qabas

#### E-crime cases on the rise

**KUWAIT:** Recent justice ministry statistics showed the number of electronic crime cases at the courts reached 1,057 during the first half of the year, which is an increase of more than 3,300 percent compared to the first six months of 2018, with 18 cases only. Judicial sources said the cases are presented by individuals against others and by the government against individuals. They said the most notable cases are those of blackmail, threats, defamation, insults and invasion of privacy. Cases also included misuse of the phone, urging debauchery and insulting local and foreign leaders. The sources blamed the increase on social media and the wrongful use of technology, which led victims to go to courts at a rate of six cases daily. — Al-Qabas

## Arab Group stresses need of UNSC reforms

**NEW YORK:** The Arab Group at the UN General Assembly underlined the importance of a comprehensive UN Security Council reform, especially after over two decades of discussions aimed at enlarging the Council's membership and improving its work methods. This came during a speech by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, on behalf of the Arab Group at the UNGA, on the issue of equitable representation in the Council, increasing the number of its members and related matters.

Otaibi expressed the Arab Group's belief that it is vital to reform the UNSC by reaching solutions that are widely accepted by member states. Reforming UNSC is under the Charter of the Organization, he said, adding that there are several challenges related to the reform, most notably the veto. He regretted that the vast majority of times that the veto has been used, especially during the last three decades, have been on issues concerning the Arab region.

The Arab Group, considering its political, cultural and heritage specificity, deserves to be represented as a stand-alone bloc at the UNSC, representing about 350 million people including 22 member countries; about 12 percent of the general membership of the UN, Otaibi pointed out. He also underscored the need for any documents issued within the framework of the negotiations process to accurately reflect the positions of all countries and groups.

On the issue of improving and developing the working methods and procedures of the Council, Otaibi said that it is imperative to make more effective and transparent work by agreeing to permanent procedures instead of temporary ones. He called for creating a role for the concerned countries and their participation in the discussions on issues for the UNSC, in accordance with Article 31 of the UN Charter. The Arab Group calls on the subsidiary organs of the UNSC and its committees to provide full information on their activities to the UN members, stressing the need for the Security Council to adhere strictly to the limits of its mandate under the Charter, he said.

On behalf of the Arab Group, Otaibi welcomed the progress made in previous sessions in identifying common elements between the positions and proposals of the countries, with regard to the five negotiating issues and the existence of many fundamental points of difference. The Arab Group affirms its determination to continue to participate actively and positively during the next round of government negotiations and are open to consultation with all other negotiating groups, achieving real and comprehensive UNSC reforms within a framework of transparent and constructive spirit, he said. — KUNA

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Conan: The world's most famous dog

## Three women named finalists for top human rights prize

Page 9

Page 8



THUMANE, Albania: Emergency workers clear debris at a damaged building 34 km northwest of the capital Tirana yesterday after an earthquake hit Albania. — AFP

# Powerful earthquake kills 13 in Albania

## Collapsed buildings bury residents; 39 pulled alive from wreckage

**TIRANA:** At least 13 people were killed when the most powerful earthquake to hit Albania in decades shook the capital Tirana and the country's west and north yesterday, tearing down buildings and burying residents under rubble. Residents, some carrying babies, fled apartment buildings in Tirana and the western port of Durres after the 6.4 magnitude quake struck shortly before 4 am.

In the northern town of Thumane, Marjana Gjoka, 48, was sleeping in her apartment on the fourth floor of a five-storey building when the quake shattered the top floors. "The roof collapsed on our head and I don't know how we escaped. God helped us," said Gjoka, whose three-year-old niece was among four people in the apartment when the quake struck.

The quake was centered 30 km west of Tirana, the US Geological Survey (USGS) said, and was also felt across the Balkans and in the southern Italian region of Puglia. Hours later a magnitude 5.4 earthquake hit Bosnia, with an epicentre 75 km south of Sarajevo, monitors said. There were no immediate reports of injuries. Five people were found dead in the rubble of apartment buildings in the northern Albanian town of Thumane and a man died in the town of Kurbin after

jumping out of a building, a Defense Ministry spokeswoman said.

Seven bodies were pulled from collapsed buildings in Durres, the main port and tourism destination, the Defense Ministry said, adding 39 had been pulled out



### Residents trapped under the rubble

alive from under the ruins. Defense Minister Olta Xhacka said 135 people were injured. Firefighters, police and civilians were removing the debris from collapsed buildings in Thumane. Most of the buildings that collapsed were built of bricks, a Reuters reporter said. Rescuers in Thumane used a mechanical digger to claw

at collapsed masonry and remove a tangle of metal and cables. Others groped with bare hands to clear rubble.

Two people were pulled from rubble in Thumane four hours after the quake, a Reuters reporter said. Doctors said they were in a bad condition. "Everything at home kept falling down," Refik, a Tirana resident, said of the impact on his sixth-floor apartment. "We were awake because of the previous quakes, but the last one shook us around," he told Reuters, referring to smaller tremors recorded in the hour before the main quake. Rescuers told local media one of the dead was an elderly woman who saved her grandson by cradling him with her body.

#### Trapped

Xhacka said the quake's epicenter was in Durres. It was followed by 100 aftershocks. "Durres and Thumane are the areas worst hit. Rescue-and-save work continues in the collapsed buildings there," she said as troops pulled a victim from a hotel in Durres. At least 135 people were injured, with 72 hospitalized, Xhacka said. Two planes from fellow NATO-member Romania were expected to land with specialized search and rescue equipment and help was coming from Italy and Turkey, Xhacka said.

Greece had sent emergency services for search and

rescue operations, its premier's office said. "Firefighters and army staff are helping residents under the rubble", in Durres and Thumane, the Defense Ministry said. An unidentified man, with a wound dressing on his right cheek, told News24 TV his daughter and niece were among those trapped in a collapsed apartment building in Durres. "I talked with my daughter and niece on the phone.

They said they are well and are waiting for the rescue. Could not talk to my wife. There are other families, but I could not talk to them," the man said. Located along the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, between Greece and Macedonia, Albania experiences regular seismic activity. An earthquake of 5.6 magnitude shook the country on Sept 21, damaging around 500 houses and destroying some. The Defense Ministry had said it was the most powerful quake in Albania in the last 30 years.

The images of collapsed buildings in urban areas suggested yesterday's quake was more powerful than one in 1979 which razed a neighborhood of a northern town. Neither of those two earlier earthquakes caused fatalities. The Balkan nation is the poorest country in Europe, with an average income of less than a third of the European Union average, according to Eurostat data. — Reuters

## Labour leader hits back after rabbi criticism

**LONDON:** Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn yesterday defended his handling of anti-Semitism allegations after Britain's most senior rabbi suggested the issue was a "new poison" within the party that had been "sanctioned from the very top". In an unprecedented intervention ahead of next month's election, Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis suggested Corbyn was "unfit for high office" due to his perceived failure to clamp down on the problem within the party.

But in a speech to launch a package of race and faith policies, Corbyn hit back at the charges, branding anti-Semitism "vile and wrong" and insisted his party had a "rapid and effective system" to deal with complaints. "There is no place whatsoever for anti-Semitism in any shape or form, or in any place whatsoever, in modern Britain and under a Labour government it will not be tolerated in any form whatsoever," he added.

"Where cases have been reported to us... we have a rapid and effective system of dealing with them and that process is constantly under review." The comments contrast starkly with the assessment of Mirvis, who described Corbyn's previous claims to have dealt forcefully with all accusations as "mendacious fiction".

In a scathing comment piece in The Times, he said the veteran socialist was responsible for "a failure of leadership" which was "incompatible with the British values of which we are so



LONDON: Opposition Labour party leader Jeremy Corbyn launches Labour's Race and Faith Manifesto yesterday. — AFP

proud". "How complicit in prejudice would a leader of Her Majesty's opposition have to be to be considered unfit for office?" he asked, adding British Jews were justifiably "gripped by anxiety" ahead of the December 12 poll. The chief rabbi said it was not his place to tell anyone who to support next month but he advised "every person to vote with their conscience".

#### 'Sense of insecurity'

Labour has been dogged by allegations about widespread anti-Semitism among members since Corbyn - a lifelong supporter of Palestinian causes - took over as leader in 2015. A number of MPs have since quit the party, accusing the veteran socialist of allowing the problem to flourish in its ranks and doing little or nothing to tackle it.

Two former Labour lawmakers spoke out yesterday in support of Mirvis' condemnation.

"It is heartbreaking to see a party so many of us joined to fight racism and which had such a proud record of fighting for equality reduced to this," said Ian Austin, who left Labour in February. "Corbyn & co should be so ashamed," he wrote on Twitter.

Meanwhile Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, the highest ranking Anglican cleric, said the intervention by Mirvis "ought to alert us to the deep sense of insecurity and fear felt by many British Jews." The chief rabbi's statement provides all of us with the opportunity to ensure our words and actions properly reflect our commitments to mutual flourishing and inclusion, for the common good," he added.

Last week, Welby and his deputy, Archbishop of York John Sentamu, warned candidates standing for election to reject hate speech during the campaign. The Muslim Council of Britain said it also supported Mirvis speaking out but noted the ruling Conservatives had also failed to deal with allegations of Islamophobia in its ranks. "This an issue that is particularly acute in the Conservative Party who have approached Islamophobia with denial, dismissal and deceit," it added.

The anti-Semitism controversy came to a head within Labour in February this year, when nine MPs quit the party over the leadership's handling of the issue. A 2016 report by the former head of civil rights group Liberty, Shami Chakrabarti, concluded the party was "not overrun by anti-Semitism". But others disagree and the Equality and Human Rights Commission has now launched a formal inquiry into whether Labour "unlawfully discriminated against, harassed or victimised people because they are Jewish". — AFP

## Trump defenses in impeachment investigation

**WASHINGTON:** President Donald Trump has maintained throughout the impeachment inquiry that he did nothing improper in his dealings with Ukraine, even as witnesses have detailed efforts by his White House to get Ukraine to take actions that could help him politically. Here are Trump's positions on the main aspects of the investigation:

#### Joe Biden, Ukraine, Election

Trump says he did not ask Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy to investigate Joe Biden, a leading Democratic contender in the 2020 presidential election, for corruption. Instead, he said, he had been looking for a broader probe into corruption in Ukraine. "I will tell you this about Joe Biden, I never - I never said it specifically on him," Trump said on "Fox and Friends" on Friday. But a rough transcript of a July 25 telephone call shows that Trump asked the Ukrainian president to investigate whether Biden, while U.S. vice president, pressed Ukraine to fire Ukraine's top prosecutor to stop a probe of Burisma, a natural gas company on which Biden's son Hunter had served as a director.

Biden and his son have denied any wrongdoing, and no evidence has

emerged to substantiate the allegations. Trump also asked Zelenskiy to look into a conspiracy theory that Ukraine, not Russia, interfered in the 2016 election and that an email server used by the Democratic Party is being hidden in the country. "I would like you to find out what happened with this whole situation with Ukraine," he said. "The server, they say Ukraine has it."

#### No Quid Pro Quo

Trump says he did nothing wrong in his dealings with Zelenskiy and points to the impeachment inquiry testimony of Gordon Sondland, a Trump donor and U.S. ambassador to the European Union, who said the president told him in a phone call on Sept. 9 that he wanted no "quid pro quo" from Ukraine in return for the release of much-needed military aid. Sondland testified, however, that the White House declined to invite Zelenskiy to meet with Trump in Washington in order to pressure the Ukrainian president to announce the investigations Trump wanted.

Sondland said that "everyone was in the loop" at the highest levels of the Trump administration about the pressure campaign. Sondland said he gradually came to believe that the White House was holding back the \$391 million in security aid to pressure Ukraine. Trump's acting chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, acknowledged that White House withheld the money in order to push Ukraine to investigate the 2016 election, although he later reversed those comments. — Reuters

International

# Tens of thousands rally worldwide against 'violence against women'

## In violent protest, Mexican women demand action on femicide, rape

**PARIS:** Tens of thousands have rallied across the world to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, as France unveiled new measures to combat domestic violence. Demonstrators on Monday gathered in countries as diverse as Guatemala, Russia, Sudan and Turkey, where riot police in Istanbul blocked the path of roughly 2,000 protesters before firing tear gas and plastic bullets to disperse them.

The French government announced it would make it easier for doctors to share information on vulnerable women and write into law the concept of psychological "entrapment", following massive rallies in France over the weekend. Roughly 87,000 women and girls were murdered around the world in 2017, according to the United Nations. Monday's rallies - animated by growing anger over the failure of justice systems to punish offenders - follow a weekend of protests against what is being termed femicide.

Crowds marched through the streets of Moscow to highlight the government's failure to pass laws protecting women, and hundreds of Sudanese women chanted "freedom, peace and justice" as they gathered in Khartoum in the first such protest in decades. In Mexico City, masked demonstrators with sledgehammers smashed glass panes of bus stops, spray-painted monuments and clashed with riot police Monday to protest authorities' failure to halt soaring rates of femicide and rape in the country.

### 'Sexist, patriarchal attitudes'

Tens of thousands of Spaniards marched in Madrid on Monday evening following a weekend of protests. Spain's long-standing laws against gender violence have not halted the problem - 52 women have been killed by their partners or ex-partners since the start of 2019. South Africa has one of the worst records of any country on gender violence and the government has faced several rounds of mass protests on the issue.

President Cyril Ramaphosa used Monday's events to launch a campaign to improve victims' access to justice and urge men to drop their "sexist and patriarchal attitudes". The UN warned that more action was needed around the world, singling out Afghanistan as a country where too little is done to counter sexual violence and rape. And in a rare move, global police cooperation agency Interpol launched an international appeal to find eight men suspected of murdering or committing violence against women.

### 'Electric shock'

The French government is among those to face sustained pressure for reform - at least 117 women have been killed by their partner or former partner since the start of the year, according to a count by AFP, compared with 121 women last year. Also, 213,000 women have suffered physical or sexual violence carried out by their partner or ex-partner, according to the latest official figures. The lights of the Eiffel Tower were switched off for one minute at midnight to mark the day.

Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said he hoped his new measures would deliver an "electric shock" by focusing on ending "absurdities" and "dysfunctional aspects" in the law. He said the measures, to be put to parliament in January, would be backed by 360 million euros (\$400 million) of additional funding. Advocates for women's rights broadly welcomed Philippe's announcement but called for more concrete help. "What is needed is to bolster special measures such as offering sanctuary and then supporting the victims," said Francoise Brie, who heads the National Federation of Women's Solidarity.

Equality Minister Marlene Schiappa promised that the new measures would be funded, but also stressed in a newspaper interview that the "fight against marital violence is not just a question of money". An AFP examina-



**BOGOTA:** Women demonstrate on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women during a national strike on Monday. — AFP

tion this month of every case of femicide in France showed how the justice system had failed to act in the face of warning signs of the potential for violence. But in

an open letter Monday, more than a dozen top French judges urged women to keep faith in a system that is "improving and adapting itself". — AFP

## In Mali, dreams and sadness for the Sahel express railway

**BAMAKO:** The sign above the station entrance declares that this is the Dakar-Niger Railway: the start of a trek from the arid Sahel to the tropical Atlantic, 1,300 kilometers away. But for those hoping to buy a ticket for a legendary journey, disappointment awaits. Not a single train has travelled on the line connecting the capitals of Mali and Senegal since May 17, 2018. Today, knee-high weeds grow on the track at Bamako station. The beloved green train carriages - once Mali's lifeblood - lie rusting and abandoned, their toilets taken over by beggars. Nevertheless many of the railway's workers - unpaid but still technically employed - continue to show up at the station, a colonial-era bijou in ochre stone, complete with clock and signs for the ticket office. There, they while away the hours playing cards, snoozing on a bench or chatting in the now deserted offices, where talk inevitably turns to the glory days.

### Halcyon times

"It was non-stop partying," recalls driver Moussa Keita, who for 38 years would take the train on its long haul to the Mali-Senegal border, where drivers would change over. Every village along the track would fete the arrival of the train, which brought in fresh fish from the coast or a precious package from Europe, as well as freight, its mainstay. The platforms would be swirling with color and charged with emotions as families greeted loved ones or bade them farewell.

The Dakar-Bamako line was conceived in the late 19th century in the heyday of France's colonial era as a means to haul valuable commodities from the heart of its African possessions and link Mali - then called French Sudan - to the distant coast. A quarter of a century went by as engineers and armies of colonial workers carved out the track from scorched terrain, before the line was inaugurated in 1924. Its trains became a source of deep national pride. "You can't imagine how this station looked when the train arrived and the whistle blew," said Keita. "We were stars, we had girlfriends in every station on the line."

### Musical tracks

In 1970, the station cafeteria became the unlikely start-



**BAMAKO:** Employees of the central train station prepare tea on Oct 21, 2019. — AFP

ing point of what grew into the legendary group, the Rail Band, formed by some of the cream of Mali's musicians. "It all began here!" recalls the group's drummer and co-founder, Mamadou Bakayoko, his eyes twinkling as he recalled the band's lineup and all-night parties that would draw "hundreds" of revelers. "Over there, we had Salif Keita on the mic, here we had Tidjani Kone on sax and Mory Kante on balafon," a local xylophone, he said. But that was a bygone era.

For about 10 years Mali has been battling a deadly conflict which began with a jihadist insurgency in the north, spreading to the centre and into neighboring countries. Bamako has seen a number of attacks but has largely escaped the wider conflict. Like elsewhere however, the rail line has been overtaken by road transport, albeit blighted in Mali by frequent bus crashes. So poor a state is the road between Bamako and the border that it has prompted huge protests in recent months.

As revenues bled away, Mali and Senegal no longer had the money to subsidize the cherished rail line. In 2003, the railway was privatized. One after another, Canadian, US

and French interests all chanced their arm. That, too, failed, and in 2015 came the last roll of the dice - dual state control. But the stratospheric cost of renovating the line was too much. "By the end, we had to have speed limits of 30 kilometers per hour - before, the trains used to race along at 80 kph," said Mahamane Thienta, who worked as an inspector for 37 years.

### 'Nation's memory'

The Dakar-Bamako Ferroviaire company still technically employs 428 workers, but none has been paid for 10 months. In an old hangar, working without computer or light - the electricity was cut off several years ago - Moussa Traore is deep in piles of dusty boxes. He is the railway's official archivist, taking care of 14 tons of photos and documents. "A lot of the managers don't understand why I keep these documents," Traore, clad in traditional robes, said, as he showed off old photo albums dating from 1956. "This railway is the nation's memory - in its operations, its economic value, its history and culture. We must not forget it." — AFP

## Slash emissions now or miss 1.5C goal, UN warns

**PARIS:** The world will miss its chance to avert climate disaster without an immediate and all-but-impossible fall in fossil fuel emissions, the UN said yesterday in its annual assessment on greenhouse gases. The United Nations Environment Program said that global emissions need to fall by 7.6 percent, each year, every year until 2030 to limit global temperature rises to 1.5C.

The harsh reality is that emissions have risen on average 1.5 percent annually over the last decade, hitting a record 55.3 billion tons of CO2 or equivalent greenhouse gases in 2018 - three years after 195 countries signed the Paris treaty on climate change. The World Meteorological Organization said Monday that atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations hit an all-time record in 2018.

The Paris deal committed nations to limit temperature rises above pre-industrial levels to "well below" 2C, and to a safer 1.5-C if at all possible. To do so they agreed on the need to reduce emissions and work towards a low-carbon world within decades. Yet the UN found that even taking into account current Paris pledges, the world is on track for a 3.2C temperature rise, something scientists fear could tear at the fabric of society. Even if every country made good on its promises, Earth's "carbon budget" for a 1.5-C rise - the amount we can emit to stay below a certain temperature threshold - would be exhausted within a decade.

In its own words, the UN assessment is "bleak". While it insisted the 1.5-C goal is still attainable, it acknowledged that this would require an unprecedented, coordinated upheaval of a global economy that is still fuelled overwhelmingly by oil- and gas-fuelled growth. "We are failing to curb greenhouse gas emissions," UNEP's executive director, Inger Andersen, told AFP. "Unless we take urgent action now and make very significant cuts to global emissions we're going to miss the target of 1.5C."

### Cost of inaction

The Emissions Gap report, now in its tenth year, also details the cost of a decade of government inaction. Had serious climate action begun in 2010, just after the Copenhagen summit that breathed new life into the debate, annual needed emissions cuts would be 0.7 percent for 2C of warming and 3.3 percent for 1.5C. "10 years of climate procrastination has led us to where we are today," said Andersen.

The report highlighted specific "opportunities" for big emitters to push their economies into line with the Paris goals. While advice varies between countries, the theme is clear: completely phase out coal, significantly pare back oil and gas, and dramatically build up renewable energy. G20 nations were singled out as laggards: although they produce around 78 percent of all emissions, only 15 rich nations have outlined plans to reach net-zero. The Trump administration, meanwhile, notified the UN earlier this month that the US will pull out of the Paris treaty, and has taken steps to boost fossil fuel production, including subsidies for technology to capture and store CO2 emissions from power plants. In all, countries must increase their contributions to the climate fight five-fold to deliver the cuts needed for 1.5C.

Last year the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change - the world's leading scientific body on the subject - issued a stark warning that going beyond 1.5C would increase the frequency and intensity of heatwaves, superstorms and mass flooding. With just 1C of warming so far, 2019 is projected to be the second hottest in human history, a year marred by deadly wildfires and cyclones rendered more frequent as temperatures climb. And despite the need for urgent action, with global energy demand set to continue rising for years, the UN itself conceded yesterday that "there is no sign of (greenhouse) gas emissions peaking in the next few years." That turning point should have come years ago, said Alden Meyer, director of policy at the Union of Concerned Scientists. — AFP

## Ultra-Orthodox Jews fight domestic violence in Israel

**KFAR SABA:** "If you are scared, that is not shlom bayit," reads the slogan that Esty Shushan hopes will encourage religious Jewish Israeli women like her to leave violent marriages. The phrase, which literally translates as "peaceful home", is vitally important in Judaism - meaning an obligation to protect the unity of the family. Shushan, 42, is making sure to frame her organization's campaign in the language of her ultra-Orthodox community, which makes up around 10 percent of Israel's population.

Seven years ago, driven by high levels of gender inequality in her community, Shushan co-founded an association to improve ultra-Orthodox women's visibility and political representation. Called Nivcharot, meaning "The Chosen", it now has around 15,000 supporters. Ultra-Orthodox Jews live in close-knit communities often closed off to the wider world, with patriarchal family structures common. Shushan and her colleagues hope that ultra-Orthodox women will be more comfortable opening up to others from their

own community. In a room in an educational centre in the city of Kfar Saba north of Tel Aviv in central Israel, they meet to finalize their new campaign. Hair hidden under hats or wigs, they wear long clothes that cover their elbows and knees, preserving their modesty in the traditional way for ultra-Orthodox Jews. Over pizza and soft drinks, they strategize how best to encourage victims to speak out.

### Rabbi first

Violence against women occurs throughout Israeli society, said Mally Shechory Bitton, a couples therapist and professor at Ariel University in the Israeli settlement of Ariel in the occupied West Bank. But in ultra-Orthodox communities there is also a taboo on discussing it, she said, with a feeling that you "shouldn't wash your dirty linen in public". "Orthodox women turn to the rabbi before turning to the police, which also makes the phenomenon of domestic violence difficult to quantify," she said.

Abuse is not only physical but can be psychological, sexual and even economic, she added. In ultra-Orthodox communities, men tend to focus only on reading sacred Jewish texts, often relying on women to earn a salary. Despite this, sometimes "women have their credit cards taken by their husbands," Shechory Bitton said. Attitudes have evolved, however, and two shelters for abused religious women have opened in recent years. "Awareness is growing but it is still not enough," Shechory Bitton said.



**KFAR SABA:** A picture taken on Nov 18, 2019, shows Israeli activists (from left) Esty Shushan, Rachel Morgerstern, Hila Hassan Lefkowitz, Esther Twersky, and Yael Elimelech of the Nivcharot foundation, an ultra-Orthodox feminist group, during a work meeting. — AFP

### Spilled wine

Back in Kfar Saba, Shushan and her colleagues hunch over a computer selecting images to distribute for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on Nov 25. They are careful to maintain conservative social norms, and avoid images directly depicting gender-based violence. Instead they choose a photo of wine spilled on a white tablecloth accompanied by the shlom bayit slogan, hinting at violence during the traditional weekly Shabbat dinner. Shushan hopes the campaign can educate women "not to stay in unhealthy relationships". Raheli

Morgerstern, 31, another member of the organization, said religious women are taught from an early age the importance of the sanctity of the home. This can lead, she said, to abused women staying silent over fears of ostracization or "shame". "Marriage is sacred for Jews and the ultra-Orthodox in particular, but you shouldn't stay married at any cost," she said. Morgerstern says divorce, even if it is permitted under Jewish law, often has "a very, very high price," with ultra-Orthodox women who pursue separation often excluded from their community. Nivcharot's campaign will be shared on WhatsApp and social media. — AFP

## International

# Trump presents 'incredible' hero of Baghdadi raid - Conan the dog

## Conan - the world's most famous dog

WASHINGTON: "So this is Conan - right now, probably the world's most famous dog." In a stream of superlatives, Donald Trump on Monday introduced to the world the military dog involved in the raid that led to the death of Islamic State group leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. "Conan did a fantastic job," the US president told the White House press corps, assembled for a brief, unannounced ceremony with the Belgian Malinois and its handler.

"So brilliant, so smart," said Trump, joined for the event by First Lady Melania Trump and Vice President Mike Pence who lavished fulsome praise of his own on the four-legged "hero." "The dog is incredible," Trump continued. "Conan is a tough cookie. And nobody is going to mess with Conan." According to the US account of the raid on Baghdadi last month, Conan cornered the jihadist leader in a dead-end tunnel in his Syrian hideout, where Baghdadi detonated a suicide vest, killing himself and two children.

Conan was injured by the electric cables exposed in the detonation but appeared to have made a full recovery. "Conan was very badly hurt, as you know," Trump told reporters. "They thought maybe he was not going to recover. He recovered actually very quickly and has since gone on very important raids." "I love this dog," declared the president, saying Conan had been awarded a "medal and a plaque" for its service. The US president - who ended a tradition going back more than a century by not having a dog in the White House - has made much of Conan's role in the raid. Trump had highlighted the dog's injuries

when he initially announced the high-profile October 26 operation. He went on to declassify the military dog's identity - a closely guarded secret - by retweeting its picture. And he went as far as publishing a photoshopped image of himself bestowing the canine hero with the Medal of Honor, the country's highest military distinction.

### 'Ultimate fighter'

Monday's ceremony triggered a brief flurry of confusion when the White House let it be known after the event that the canine "hero" was in fact a female - only to later reverse course, confirming Conan was well and truly a good boy. Details about Conan's life, achievements and family background are scant, but he certainly comes from good stock: US Navy SEALs used a Belgian Malinois in the 2011 raid in Pakistan that killed Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

The head of US Central Command, General Kenneth McKenzie, has called Conan a "critical member of our forces," with an impressive record of 50 combat missions in four years of service. Calling Conan the "ultimate fighter, ultimate everything," Trump said the dog was "primitime, age-wise" and nowhere close to retiring. "I asked one question," Trump said. "I said, 'What chance would a strong man have - really strong, tough, a fighter - what chance would this person have against Conan, without the guns?'"

What chance? And I guess the answer, pretty much, was 'none.'" The US leader also took the opportunity to trumpet once more the raid on



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump (left), Vice President Mike Pence (2nd left) and First Lady Melania Trump stand with Conan - the military dog that was involved with the death of ISIS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi at the White House. — AFP

Baghdadi, who had led IS since 2014 and at the time of his death was the world's most wanted man. "It was a flawless attack," Trump said. "We have done a

lot of work since the raid. Certain things have happened that are very important," he added, without going into details.—AFP

### News in brief

#### US officials meet Haftar

WASHINGTON: Senior US officials met with Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar Monday to discuss steps toward ending his offensive on Tripoli, and accused Russia of exploiting the conflict, the State Department said. The delegation, which included the US ambassador to Libya Richard Norland, aimed to establish "steps to achieve a suspension of hostilities and a political resolution to the Libyan conflict," the statement read. The officials underscored full US "support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Libya and expressed serious concern over Russia's exploitation of the conflict at the expense of the Libyan people." —AFP

#### Kangaroo killer avoids jail

SYDNEY: An Australian man who deliberately mowed down at least 20 kangaroos with a truck avoided jail yesterday after pleading guilty to animal cruelty, local media reported. The dead animals, including two joeys, were found littered over roads in the far south-east of the country in September. Bega District News reported that Nathan Sanger, 20, appeared in a local court yesterday where he admitted his role in the killing spree, which lasted an hour and sparked widespread outrage. The court heard Sanger had caused "a lot of suffering to a large number of defenseless animals" in an act of "gratuitous cruelty." —AFP

#### Nine Pakistani navy killed

QUETTA: At least nine members of the Pakistan navy were killed and 29 other people injured when their bus fell into a deep roadside ditch in the south of the country yesterday, officials said. The bus was on its way to Karachi from a naval base in Balochistan province when it developed a technical fault and crashed on a mountain pass on the Makran Coastal Highway, Muhammad Jameel, assistant commissioner for Bela town near where the accident took place said. "Nine soldiers of the navy were killed and 29 others including women and children were injured in the incident," Jameel said, adding— Reuters

#### US recalls S Sudan envoy

WASHINGTON: The United States, a key supporter of South Sudan, said it was calling back its ambassador for consultations as it shows frustration with dueling leaders' failure to form a government. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo wrote on Twitter that he called back the ambassador "as we re-evaluate our relationship with the government of South Sudan." "We will work with the region to support efforts to achieve peace and a successful political transition in South Sudan," he said. The United States, which contributes about \$1 billion a year in mostly humanitarian aid for the young country, has been especially vocal in its exasperation over the lack of progress in South Sudan.—AFP

#### Thousands displaced in Nigeria

KANO: Thousands of villagers have been displaced following days of attacks by armed "bandits" on 10 remote communities in central Nigeria, emergency services said yesterday. Gunmen on motorbikes stormed into a string of villages in the Shiroro district of Niger state from Friday to Monday, shooting and torching homes and forcing residents to flee. "We have so far documented 4,000 people displaced by the bandits," Niger State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) spokesman Ibrahim Audu Hussein said. "The IDPs (internally displaced persons) are sheltered in a camp in nearby Kuta district," said Hussein, warning the number could increase as more people were arriving at the camp.—AFP

## Tension deepens as Google fires the 'Thanksgiving Four'

SAN FRANCISCO: Google has fired four employees on the grounds they had violated data security policies, but the tech titan was accused of persecuting them for trying to unionize staff. The dismissals of the quartet - dubbed the "Thanksgiving Four" on social media - deepened staff-management tensions at a company once seen as a paradigm of Silicon Valley freedoms but now embroiled in numerous controversies.

A memo to employees titled "Securing our data" sought to correct what Google contended was misinformation about the purported wrongdoing, saying it involved "systematic searches for other employees' materials and work." Google, the money-making engine of parent company Alphabet, confirmed a copy of the note published by Bloomberg News but declined to comment further to AFP.

The memo said the information accessed by the individuals, "along with details of internal emails and inaccurate descriptions about Googlers' work, was subsequently shared externally." But the Tech Workers Coalition said the employees had been fired for "organizing at work" and urged others at Google to speak out. "This is meant to scare workers, don't let it," the campaign group tweeted, appealing for other employees to step in and hire the four. At least one job offer

## Georgia opposition stages fresh protest despite crackdown

TBILISI: Up to 20,000 opposition supporters rallied in Georgia yesterday, stepping up pressure on the increasingly unpopular ruling party, despite a police crackdown last week and the arrest of protesters. Waving Georgian and European Union flags, and chanting "Change!" and "Resign!" protesters marched on the capital Tbilisi's main thoroughfare before gathering outside the parliament building.

Opposition leaders said at the rally that mass protests will continue until their demands for electoral reforms, the government's resignation and snap legislative elections are met. "Georgian people and the entire opposition spectrum is trying to force the ruling party to introduce a fair electoral system in the country," the leader of opposition Republican Party, Levan Berdzenishvili said. "Mass protests will continue until our demands are met," he added.

Braving sub-zero temperatures, hundreds of protesters - who were mostly young - stayed at the protest overnight, many dancing to electronic music. They blocked entrances to parliament, vowing to prevent lawmakers from entering the building where a plenary session. In the early hours yesterday, police arrested five protesters and briefly detained prominent opposition MPs, Giga Bokeria of the European Georgia party, and Tengiz Gunava of Georgia's main opposition force, the United National Movement.

"The government has lost popular support and only relies on police force," one of the protesters, Elene Mikadze, 21 said. "That means its end is coming." Pro-opposition Mtavari TV station reported that riot police has been deployed in numbers in parliament's underground compound and in the prime minister's office.

The demonstrators have held a series of mass protests after MPs from the ruling Georgian Dream party voted down on November 14 legislation to hold parliamentary elections next year under a new proportional voting system. Opposition parties have called the rallies after forming a rare united front against Georgian Dream led by oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili, whom they accuse of orchestrating the bill's failure.

came through in response.

One of the workers fired was connected to a petition condemning Google for working with the US customs and border patrol agency, which has been involved in President Donald Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration. "Four of our colleagues took a stand and organized for a better workplace," read a Medium post by Google Walkout for Real Change, which organized a staff protest last year over the issue of sexual misconduct. "This is explicitly condoned in Google's Code of Conduct, which ends: 'And remember ... don't be evil, and if you see something that you think isn't right - speak up.'" "When they did, Google retaliated against them." Authors of the post contended that Google policies on data security were tightened simply to provide cover for getting rid of the workers. "This is classic union busting dressed up in tech industry jargon, and we won't stand for it," they said.

### Global disputes

The Google workplace has been disrupted by employee opposition to top-level decisions ranging from forging contracts with the US military to tailoring a version of the search engine for China. A year ago, Google employees poured out of premises at its Mountain View campus and around the world to protest the company's handling of sexual misconduct allegations. When they were still suspended prior to the firings, two of the quartet on Friday addressed a protest rally at the company's San Francisco offices, according to US media.

Jeffrey Hirsch, a University of North Carolina law professor and former National Labor Relations Board attorney, said Google could face legal problems unless



TBILISI: Protesters demanding the government's resignation and early parliamentary polls march towards the parliament in Tbilisi yesterday. —AFP

### Rejected compromise

Protesters say that the current voting system unfairly favors the ruling party, which won nearly 77 percent of seats in the 2016 parliamentary election despite garnering only 48.7 percent of the vote. Georgian Dream has ruled out early polls and on Monday rejected the opposition's new compromise initiative of legislative amendments that would create a level playing field for all the political forces in the tiny Black Sea nation. Last Monday, riot police used water cannons to disperse protesters and arrested several dozen people outside the parliament building. Ten demonstrators have been jailed for terms ranging from four to 13 days for "disobeying police orders".

Georgia's public defender said at the time that the prosecution of the peaceful protesters "failed to meet minimum judicial standards." In a joint statement last week, the embassies of the United States and European Union criticized Georgian Dream's failure to introduce the electoral reform and expressed solidarity with the protesters. Ivanishvili had promised "large-scale political reform" following a summer of protests that saw 240 people injured in a police crackdown.

Two protesters including a teenage girl lost an eye. In power since 2012, the ruling party has seen its popularity plummet amid widespread discontent over economic stagnation and perceived backsliding on its commitment to democracy. Critics accuse Ivanishvili - who is widely believed to be the man in charge in Georgia - of persecuting political opponents, suffocating critical media, and creating a corrupt political system where his private interests dominate government decision-making.—AFP



CALIFORNIA: A man rides a bike past a Google sign and logo at the Googleplex in Menlo Park, California. — AFP

it could show a consistent approach towards other staff accused of the same conduct as the four. "If not, Google will likely have to reinstate the employees and pay them back pay," he told Bloomberg. Google's virtual monopoly on internet searches has provoked accusations that it abuses its global dominance to attract more advertising money at the expense of others, such as the news media.

In France, an alliance of press groups is fighting back with a complaint under the European Union's new copyright law. AFP has brought a separate complaint against Google. Like Facebook and Twitter, Google also stands accused of turning a blind eye to political disinformation on its platforms. Last week, the search leader updated how it handles political ads, stepping up actions it says it is taking in the buildup to the US presidential election next year.—AFP

## Bad weather threatens Thanksgiving travel

COLORADO: Two powerful storms packing heavy snows and strong winds are expected to sweep across the western half of the United States this week just in time to wreak havoc on the plans of millions of Americans traveling for Thursday's Thanksgiving Day holiday. Heavy snow began falling in Denver on Monday night, with the National Weather Service (NWS) warning motorists of "significant travel delays" from the accumulating snow. Snowfall is expected to increase over the course of the night to about 2 inches per hour, the NWS said.

A storm will dump more than a foot (30 cm) of snow as wind gusts reach 45 mph (72 kph) in an area from southern Wyoming to central Colorado. The same storm will then drop 6 to 12 inches (15.2 to 30.5 cm) of snow as it moves east across Nebraska and Kansas and into Minneapolis before reaching the upper Great Lakes by today, the NWS said. Most school districts in the Denver metro area, along with state government offices, announced that they would be closed.

A second strong storm is expected to dump heavy snow on parts of the Pacific Northwest starting today night, with blizzard-like conditions in Oregon and Northern California, the NWS said. "Everyone say a prayer to the Colorado weather gods that my flight doesn't get cancelled on Wednesday night," Evelyn Graham, a 26-year-old biology student at the California State University in San Marcos, said in a Twitter message. "I wanna go home for Thanksgiving."

Some 55 million travelers will fly or drive at least 50 miles from their homes this Thanksgiving, according to the American Automobile Association. At Denver International Airport, nearly 500 flights scheduled to depart and arrive today have been canceled ahead of the storm, airport spokesman Alex Renteria said.—Reuters



## International

# Three women named finalists for the top human rights prize

## Yemeni, Mexican and South African women nominated

GENEVA: A Yemeni lawyer who exposed secret prisons and torture, a Mexican champion fighting femicide and a South African women's rights activist were nominated yesterday for a top human rights prize. This marks the first time that the Martin Ennals Award jury has presented three women finalists to be in the running for the prestigious award. The winner will be announced in Geneva on February 19, 2020.

Among the finalists for the award—often referred to as the Nobel Prize for human rights—is 42-year-old Yemeni lawyer Huda Al-Sarari, who has worked with a range of rights organizations to expose a network of secret prisons run by foreign governments in Yemen since 2015. That year, the Saudis intervened in Yemen at the head of a military coalition against Iran-backed Houthi rebels, who had seized control of the capital

Sanaa. Since then, tens of thousands have died in the conflict, most of them civilians, and millions more have been driven to the brink of famine, according to humanitarian organizations.

Al-Sarari has in recent years unveiled the existence of several secret detention centers where "the worst violations of human rights were committed: torture, disappearances or even extrajudicial executions", the award organizers said in a statement. She "collected evidence on more than 250 cases of abuse taking place within the prisons and succeeded in convincing international organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to take up the cause," they said. The lawyer was hailed for pushing on with her pursuit of justice despite threats and defamation campaigns against her and her family.

### Fighting femicide

Another finalist is Norma Ledezma, a 53-year-old Mexican human rights activist who began working to fight femicide and support the families of victims after her daughter, Paloma, disappeared on her way home from school in Chihuahua. Mexico has the most femicides of any country in Latin America, according to Amnesty International. There are more than nine such murders in the country every day, according to UN Women.

Ledezma is one of the founders and the director of Justicia Para Nuestras Hijas, a local organisation that offers legal counsel and support to ongoing cases, and is involved with a range of other victims' assistance organizations. She has supported over 200 investigations into cases of femicide and disappearances, on behalf of both

male and female victims, and is also responsible for the creation of a Special Prosecutor for Women Victims of Violence in Chihuahua. "In spite of having received numerous death threats, she continues with her human rights work," organizers said.

The third finalist is Sizani Ngubane, a 73-year-old South African activist for women's and indigenous people's rights. She began her career as an activist with the ANC, before going on to found the Rural Women's Movement (RWM), which works against gender-based violence and for women's rights to land, education, property and inheritance. The Geneva-based Martin Ennals Foundation is named after the first secretary general of Amnesty International, who died in 1991. The prize is judged by 10 leading rights groups, including Amnesty and Human Rights Watch. — AFP

## Zombies, brollies and happis: Moments of Pope's Japan trip

TOKYO: Pope Francis has wanted to visit Japan since he was a young missionary and his trip was filled with emotion and memorials—but also some light-hearted moments. Here are some highlights of his four-day trip, which capped an Asia tour that also took in Thailand:

### A 'happy' Pope

The majority of the pope's public appearances were somber affairs, celebrating mass or marking disasters such as the Fukushima nuclear meltdown or the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But the 82-year-old threw off the shackles of formality during a speech to young people, departing frequently from his prepared remarks and joking with the audience, asking them at one point if he was boring them and if he should go on.

He said some young people today are like "zombies", who are bored by everything and "no longer dream, laugh or play." "We have invented all sorts of gadgets but we still can't take selfies of the soul. Thank God!" said the pope, who seemed invigorated by his exchanges with Japan's youth. In more unscripted activities, he was presented with a colorful "happi" shirt, a traditional garment worn for Japanese festivals, and the beaming pontiff immediately put it on over his white vestments, giving a thumbs-up to the crowd.

### Papal umbrella

Francis was exposed to some choice Japanese weather during his trip, with fierce winds and torrential rain greeting his arrival and blowing his robes around. A storm-complete with thunder and lightning-broke hours before his solemn speech marking the atomic attack on Nagasaki, forcing the faithful to huddle under umbrellas and transparent water-proofs. The pope was also shielded by a phalanx of brollies and delivered his speech under a protective tarpaulin but he broke from cover to pray at the memorial, his bowed head pelted with

rain becoming one of the images of the trip. Just hours later, the weather had completely changed and the crowd celebrating Mass with him in Nagasaki's baseball stadium had to shield themselves not from the rain but from a fierce sun.

### Emotional high

There were several moments of high emotion during the trip, with many survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki attacks or Fukushima nuclear disaster breaking down as the pontiff comforted them. But the pope seemed especially moved by the testimony of 17-year-old Matsuki Kamoshita who described how he wanted to kill himself after the Fukushima disaster, as he was bullied after being evacuated. In a strong and steady voice but trembling with emotion, Kamoshita challenged adults to reveal the truth about the contamination and fallout of the disaster, saying: "I don't want them to die before us, having lied or not admitting the truth." The pope rushed up to him after the speech and they had a long exchange, the boy bowing and struggling to keep his emotions in check, before throwing his arms around the pope in a touching, spontaneous moment.

### Rock-star welcome

Any worries that Francis might receive a muted welcome in a country where less than one percent of the population is Catholic was quickly dispelled, as enthusiastic crowds turned out wherever he went. The centerpiece was a Mass at the vast Tokyo Dome, packed out with around 50,000 worshippers, the pope moving through the crowds in his popemobile, beaming, waving, and kissing a steady stream of babies presented to him by his guards. At one point, Francis stepped down from the popemobile to greet the crowds and was mobbed by enthusiastic people jostling for a brief greeting. "Very busy schedule for a rock-star pope," headlined the Nikkan Sports tabloid. — AFP



TOKYO: Pope receives flowers from women dressed in kimonos as he leaves Tokyo's Haneda airport yesterday. — AFP

## Two killed, seven injured in Kashmir grenade attacks

SRINAGAR: At least two people were killed in grenade attacks in Kashmir yesterday and two militants shot dead by Indian forces, officials said, in one of the region's most violent days since New Delhi imposed a security clampdown. The Indian government shut down internet and phone lines and flooded the Muslim-majority region with security forces to back its August 5 move to strip Kashmir of its autonomous status and impose tighter central control.

Amid heightened tensions, suspected militants staged two grenade attacks yesterday, a top police official, speaking on condition of anonymity said. One was thrown at a group of village councilors and government officials waiting outside an administration building in the village of Hakura, south of the main city of Srinagar. The police official said two people were killed and at least four injured. The second grenade was lobbed into a store next to an entrance to the University of Kashmir in Srinagar, injuring three people, the official added.

The attacks were the worst on one day since the clampdown—which has been gradually eased by India—started. A grenade attack in early November killed one person. The government has insisted that "normalcy" is returning to Kashmir, but locals are still cut off from the internet and dozens of political leaders remain in detention. Food shops are only open for a few hours each day and no public buses and taxis have operated since the clampdown. Protests are held regularly.

India has accused neighboring Pakistan,



KASHMIR: A security personnel (left) stands near the site of a grenade blast at a market place outside the campus of Kashmir's main university in Srinagar yesterday. — AFP

which also claims Kashmir, of sending fighters across their unofficial border and security forces have stepped up operations against militants. A military spokesman said two rebels were killed in a siege in the Pulwama district on Monday and yesterday. Media reports said both were Kashmiris. Indian and Pakistan have disputed the mountainous region since they became independent and split in 1947.

Kashmir has been divided between them since then and the rivals have fought two of their three wars over the Himalayan region. An insurgency that erupted in Indian Kashmir in 1989 has claimed tens of thousands of mainly civilian lives. Kashmir's special status had previously prevented people from outside the region from buying land or getting government jobs there. — AFP

## Bangladesh to shut brick kilns; air quality soars to world's worst

DHAKA: Bangladesh said yesterday it will shut hundreds of soot-belching brick kilns around its capital Dhaka as part of measures to reduce thick smog enveloping the city and pushing air quality levels to among the world's worst. Residents in several other cities in South Asia, including India's capital New Delhi and Lahore in Pakistan, have also been breathing toxic smog in recent weeks amid uncontrolled emissions and crop burning.

Air Visual, an independent online air quality index (AQI) monitor, pegged Dhaka's air quality as the poorest in the world on Monday. "The situation is very critical. Just a few days ago air quality of Dhaka was the third or fourth worst in the world. But now it tops the ranking," Environment Minister Mohammad Shahab Uddin told reporters.

Uddin announced a range of measures to combat the severe pollution levels, including shutting down illegal brick kilns and sprinkling water on major roads and

construction sites twice a day. Waste burning would be halted at dozens of sites and trucks carrying construction materials such as sand would have to be covered, he added. The government was backed by the High Court, which ordered the closure of the illegal kilns by the next 15 days, deputy attorney general Abdullah al Bashir said.

As part of longer-term efforts, the government said it would phase out the use of bricks in its construction projects. Soot from brick kilns—which use coal and wood to make bricks from clay—is a major air pollutant and the second largest contributor to global warming after carbon dioxide. The kilns in Bangladesh mostly run from November to April and have been identified by authorities as a key cause of air pollution. "We have started phasing out use of bricks from this year and by 2025 their use will be completely phased out," Environment Ministry secretary Monsurul Alam said.

Construction—including the building of major bridges, metro railway lines and elevated highways—has been a key economic driver in the South Asian nation in recent years. Leading environment group BAPA said the illegal kilns made up the majority of those in use in the country. "We need comprehensive and urgent plan to tackle air pollution," BAPA's general secretary Sharif Jamil said. "We must shut down illegal kilns as they don't abide by even the minimum emission standard." — AFP



DHAKA: A laborer cuts a steel sheet at a workshop in Dhaka yesterday. — AFP

## 'Armed men' hijack Papua New Guinea plane, steal baggage

KOKOPO: A charter airline in Papua New Guinea said armed men hijacked one of its planes Tuesday and forced the pilot to fly to a remote unused airstrip before they made off with the cargo. Tropicair told AFP that eight armed men approached the plane as it was refueling in Gasmata, on the island of New Britain and forced the pilot to take off.

A company spokesman said there were no other passengers on board. "Upon arrival at the airstrip, the armed men stole the baggage and cargo that was on board the aircraft and fled the area," Matthew Brutnall said. "The Captain was not injured during this event and the aircraft was not damaged" and has since been returned to Port Moresby.

The Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary confirmed they are now investigating the incident. West New Britain Police Commander John Midi told

AFP that "police still have no details on the cargo that was stolen and we will rely on the information given by the complainants". Gasmata is a remote part of the island's south coast on a route predominantly used by workers on nearby logging projects. Midi confirmed the pilot was not injured, but may have been traumatized by threats from the armed assailants.

Crime is widespread in Papua New Guinea and this is not the first time Tropicair has suffered a hijacking. In 2007, the Sydney Morning Herald reported that security guards escorting a cash shipment forced Tropicair pilots to land at a disused World War II airfield and made off in a dinghy for the mainland. The pilots had quietly raised the alarm shortly after take-off and police eventually managed to apprehend four of the armed men and recover the cash. A fifth man was shot dead. — AFP

## Qatar backs Turkey's plans to settle Syrian refugees: Erdogan

ANKARA: Qatar could support Turkey's plans to settle more than a million Syrian refugees in northeast Syria after its offensive against Kurdish militia in the region, broadcaster NTV quoted President Tayyip Erdogan as saying yesterday. Turkey launched a military incursion against the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia last month, seizing a 120-km strip of land along its southeastern border.

Since launching its offensive, Turkey has urged Western allies to back its plans to build new towns in northeast Syria, where it says up to half of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees it currently hosts could be settled. It has called for an international donors summit to back the plan. Western officials say they would be reluctant to fund any project which involved involuntary returns or changes to Syria's demographics - something Ankara denies it is planning.

Speaking to reporters on his return flight from a visit to Doha, Erdogan said he presented his plans to Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, adding that "Mr Tamim liked our projects", according to NTV. Asked whether Qatar will help fund the plans, Erdogan said: "They are at the point of: 'We can carry out these efforts together'. There really isn't another way." Qatar's Red Crescent Society said last week it had opened a housing project in partnership with Turkey's AFAD emergency relief authority near the northern Syrian city of Al Bab, which Turkish-backed forces seized from Islamic State two years ago.

Relations between Turkey and Qatar have been close in recent years. Ankara supported Doha after Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt severed ties with Qatar in 2017, accusing it of funding militant groups. Doha denies the charge. Erdogan said that he had also presented the plans to Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump, adding that he would renew his call for a donors meeting at the NATO summit in London next week. He said that realising the plans would be "an example to the world".

The Turkish offensive was met by a chorus of criticism from Ankara's Western allies, who say the operation may hinder the fight against Islamic State. Turkey has rejected those concerns and said it will continue fighting militants. Ankara views the YPG, the main component of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), as a terrorist group because of its link to Kurdish insurgents on its own soil. It has been infuriated with US support for the group, and has repeatedly urged its allies to stop backing the militia. — Reuters

## Analysis

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ADVERTISING : 24835616/7  
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This picture taken on June 20, 2019 shows a crocodile on the banks of the Lospalos River. — AFP

## Militia leader grew rich by selling gold

Late last year, as President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir's hold on power weakened, one of Sudan's most feared militia leaders lashed out against the government of his long-time ally and benefactor. In a speech to cheering troops, militia chief Mohamed "Hemedti" Hamdan Dagalo sympathized with the thousands of protesters who had poured onto the streets in December demanding food, fuel and an end to corruption. He hit out at officials "who take what isn't theirs". "There are some people who are doing great harm, and they are the officials, not the poor," he raged.

After years of loyally supporting Bashir, Hemedti took part in the military coup that toppled the leader in April and is now a senior figure in the transitional government that is preparing the ground for elections in three years' time. Under the constitution, members of the transitional government aren't allowed to engage in private business activity. Now a Reuters investigation has found that even as Hemedti was accusing Bashir's people of enriching themselves at the public's expense, a company that Hemedti's family owns was flying gold bars worth millions of dollars to Dubai.

Current and former government officials and gold industry sources said that in 2018 as Sudan's economy was imploding, Bashir gave Hemedti free rein to sell Sudan's most valuable natural resource through this family firm, Algnunade. At times Algnunade bypassed central bank controls over gold exports, at others it sold to the central bank for a preferential rate, half a dozen sources said. A central bank spokesman said he had no information about the matter.

Airway bills and invoices, reviewed by Reuters, give a rare glimpse into Algnunade's dealings - a closely-guarded secret in a country where two thirds of the population live in poverty. The documents, covering a four-week period from the end of last year, show Algnunade sent around \$30 million of gold bars to Dubai, around a ton in weight. In the past, Hemedti has spoken openly about owning gold interests, most recently in an interview with the BBC in August. "I'm not the first man to have gold mines. It's true, we have gold mines, and there's nothing preventing us from working in gold," he said then.

But in response to Reuters' questions for this article, Hemedti's office denied any link between the commander and Algnunade. In a separate interview, Algnunade's general manager, Abdelrahman Al-Bakri, said the firm is owned by Hemedti's brother Abdelrahim, who is also the deputy head of Hemedti's Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Nevertheless, Bakri maintained there was no connection between Algnunade and Hemedti and his RSF, which has evolved from a militia in Darfur to Sudan's most powerful paramilitary group.

"Algnunade is as far as can be from the RSF," he told Reuters at the firm's heavily secured headquarters. He showed Reuters registration documents that named Abdelrahim as the company's owner. Reuters was unable to contact Abdelrahim. Bakri acknowledged that Algnunade exported gold to Dubai in late 2018 but said it had done so at the request of Bashir's intelligence agency. He denied the firm sold gold to the central bank at a preferential rate.

Hemedti's grip on Sudan's vital gold trade illustrates the scale of the challenge to rescue an economy broken by decades of mismanagement, corruption and war. His career began as a militia man in western Darfur, where rebels took up arms against Khartoum in 2003. Bashir mobilized several militia to quell the revolt and, in the conflict that followed, some 300,000 people were killed and two million more driven from their homes. The government disowned "outlaw" fighters who murdered civilians, but the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Bashir for war crimes and the United States imposed further economic sanctions against his government.

In Darfur, Hemedti earned a reputation as a ruthless commander and a loyal servant to Bashir. The president called him "Hemayti", meaning "my protector". After Hemedti seized the goldmines of Darfur's Jebel Amer mountain region, Bashir allowed him to hold onto the prize. "He became the new king of Jebel Amer and its gold," said Amjad Farid, a politician and pro-democracy activist. "For Bashir, he was his loyal boy, his protection force."

Hemedti and his militia took full control of the Jebel Amer mines in 2017 - the year the United States began lifting economic sanctions against Sudan. He faced few obstacles as he expanded his operations from Darfur to South Kordofan and other regions of the country. Algnunade traded with poor, artisan miners who used toxic mercury to extract gold, at grave risk to their health. The leftover soil, known locally as "Karta", was trucked to Algnunade's plants where it was treated with cyanide to harvest the remaining ore.

These practices have sometimes brought Algnunade into conflict with local people. In October, people in the town of Talodi, South Kordofan, set fire to the Algnunade plant, accusing the firm of plundering their gold and polluting their soil. — Reuters

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

## Why are more Timorese being attacked by cros?

Mario Da Cruz could only watch in horror as a small army of crocodiles killed a child on an East Timor beach - another victim of the tiny nation's soaring rate of attacks. Such incidents have jumped more than 20-fold over the past two decades with an average of one person a month falling prey to the ferocious reptiles, though not all are fatal. "I was walking along the beach and suddenly this group of crocodiles came out of the water so I panicked and ran, but one of them bit my leg," explains Da Cruz.

"Another attacked a small child who died right then and there," he says, adding that his home town of Lospalos has seen a jump in crocodiles striking humans. East Timor sits between Indonesia and Australia, and a large number in the impoverished nation of 1.2 million rely on the waterways for every aspect of life. People are targeted by crocodiles while they are fishing in small boats, or bathing and collecting water to drink.

"They have had a pretty serious increase in the number of crocodile attacks in the past 10 years," said Sam Banks, a conservation biologist at Australia's Charles Darwin University. Timor's rate of attacks jumped from fewer than one per year in 1996 to more than a dozen annually in 2014, the most recent data available. That jump made croc attacks a fatality risk 10 times greater than malaria, according to Sebastian Brackhane at Germany's University of Freiburg, who has studied East Timor's crocodile management.

Brackhane and other scientists have looked at what might be behind the jump in a country with a relatively low population of native cros, including the possibility of humans encroaching on their habitat. But "we think that an

increase in the number of large saltwater crocodiles is the primary factor", he told AFP. "The problem is not limited to (East Timor). Other islands, such as the Solomon islands and the Andamans, and several coastal areas of Indonesia show similar patterns of increasing human-crocodile conflict," Brackhane added.

### Reptile reverence

Many Timorese, who revere the reptiles, believe the rise in attacks is down to foreign creatures swimming over from Australia or elsewhere in search of food. Banks says that conservation efforts have boosted Australia's crocodile population, leading to greater competition for resources - and potentially forcing some to go farther afield. So he and Yusuke Fukuda, a wildlife scientist with Australia's Northern Territory government, are hoping that DNA testing will solve the mystery surrounding the sudden rise in crocodile attacks.

Scientists say it is feasible for the creatures, which can grow up to 20 feet (six metres) long and weigh 1,000 kg, to make the 500 km journey across the Timor Sea from Australia. It is also possible the reptiles could swim from Papua New Guinea, Indonesia or even Malaysia. Banks and Fukuda, with the blessing of Timorese officials, took DNA samples from 18 crocodiles during a recent two-week trip.

The pair headed out with Timorese officials to local streams and rivers. Armed with four-metre barbed poles they stood on the banks and targeted wild crocodiles, scooping skin samples from the fleshy part of their tails. "It's less 'out there' than it sounds," Banks said, explaining: "The DNA sampling pole is long...and (they) usually flinch and

bolt when sampled." They also took samples from wild crocodiles that had been caught by locals and kept in cages. The Timor samples were then compared against a database of Australian ones to see if there was a genetic match.

### 'Serious consequences'

Results from the first round of tests give no indication that foreign reptiles are present in local waters. "They're very much East Timorese. They don't show any evidence of Australian ancestry," Banks says. But he cautions that more testing across a wider area is required to get a clearer picture and to rule out foreign crocodile attacks. "The hypothesis still stands as it is. We don't have anything to disprove it quite yet," he insists.

Many Timorese are loathe to blame indigenous crocodiles, a reptile often referred to as abo -grandfather in the local Tetum language - and honored in ubiquitous shrines. The animals are central to Timor's creation myth that sees a young boy befriend a crocodile which later dies and is resurrected from the sea in the shape of the mountainous country. "People here see crocodiles as ancestors," said Nina Baris, a community leader in Lospalos. "According to our beliefs, if a crocodile bites someone then it means we have committed a grave sin," she added.

This reverence could mean that Timor's sky-high crocodile attacks are actually under-reported, and may complicate conservation efforts and strategies to prevent animal-human conflict. "It's not permitted to harm them (crocodiles). If you do, there are serious consequences," Banks said. "So you have to balance cultural values against human safety." — AFP

## Trump interventions undercut Pentagon leadership

President Donald Trump's interventions in US military policy, from reversing a Navy SEAL's demotion to withdrawal from Syria to a transgender ban, increasingly undermine Pentagon leadership, defense experts said Monday. The firing on Sunday of Navy Secretary Richard Spencer, who challenged Trump's intervention in the SEAL commando's case, was the latest sign of the US military's struggle with Trump's off-the-cuff, highly political micromanagement.

Critics called it a sign of "disarray" that could send dangerous signals to troops on the ground and to US allies overseas that the Pentagon command structure can be overruled at any time by Trump, who wields authority as the US commander-in-chief. "The senior military leadership is in a really difficult position," said Mara Karlin, Director of Strategic Studies at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University. "In terms of civil-military relations, what has been happening with the president is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue, it's a dysfunctionality issue."

### Political motivation

Last week Trump defied the Pentagon leadership by rejecting their plans to demote and force Navy commando

Edward Gallagher out of the elite SEALs after his conviction for having posed for a picture next to the body of a dead Islamic State fighter. Trump was drawn to supporting Gallagher after Fox News made his case a conservative political cause early this year. Navy officials feared that letting off Gallagher, who avoided conviction on murdering a prisoner in Iraq, would signal to other SEALs that they can get away with crimes.

"This was an outrageous, irresponsible interference by President Trump in the military justice system," Democratic Senator Jack Reed said Monday. "It signals to people that they can operate outside the rule of law and the Geneva Convention." But it was only the latest intervention by Trump in military affairs. Earlier this year, while the Pentagon was assessing bids for a \$10 billion cloud computing contract, Trump weighed in against Amazon, which owns the Washington Post, a frequent critic of his administration.

A new book on former Defense Secretary James Mattis, written by his speechwriter Guy Snodgrass, contends that Trump told Mattis to "screw Amazon" out of the contract, which was awarded in October to Microsoft.

### Border wall, transgender policy

Trump has interfered in numerous other ways: he forced the Pentagon to reallocate funds from base construction projects to his US-Mexico border wall and send troops to police the frontier. He has attacked key alliances, including NATO, and arms control treaties, and, against Pentagon advice, he avidly pursued a detente with North Korea while criticizing ally South Korea. Last

year he reversed, via Twitter, a Pentagon policy accommodating transgender soldiers.

He also pressured the Defense Department to hold a massive parade of military hardware; and in December unilaterally announced the withdrawal for US troops from Syria and Afghanistan, a move that led to Mattis's resignation. Many, if not most of those moves, analysts say, were driven by domestic political considerations rather than strategic rationale, and all were opposed by the Pentagon leadership. "It's important that we don't see these as discreet. There is one example after another," said Karlin.

### 'Mercurial' Trump

Peter Feaver, a specialist in civil-military relations at Duke University, says disagreements and tensions between the White House and the Department of Defense are normal. But with Trump it is extreme, he said, with the president dismissing his military advisors "out of hand". It's a big problem when "the boss is viewed as mercurial and hard to brief," Feaver said. "Most administrations would try to hide this stuff... Instead, this president does things in public."

The cost to both sides is a loss of trust, effectiveness and the ability to retain top talent. It also leads US partners and adversaries to questions decision-making in the Pentagon. "Allies need to trust that they can cut a deal with whoever they are dealing with on Trump's team, and that that will stand for what the president will finally do," Feaver said. "That's just harder to do in this administration, because the president keeps overruling his own team." — AFP

## Mosul gets not one, but two governors

Would the real Mosul governor please stand up? Two men are claiming to rule Iraq's northern province, gripped by a head-spinning drama against the backdrop of anti-government protests elsewhere in the country. Sunni-majority Mosul has been insulated from mass protests demanding regime change that have rocked Iraq's capital and Shiite-majority south since Oct 1. But it is dealing with its own political showdown, with two men on Sunday holding back-to-back press conferences to claim they were the city's rightful governor.

In one corner is Mansur Al-Marid - the 54-year-old incumbent governor seen as close to both the Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary force and influential neighbor Iran. "I'm the legitimate governor," he told AFP, denying the authenticity of a resignation letter circulated to journalists. And in the other corner is Najm Al-Juburi, 63, a recently-retired general who is considered close to Washington, archfoe of Tehran. Juburi, who claims to have been elected by the provincial council on Sunday, has pledged to bring "justice and equality" to Mosul. There's just one hitch: That council was officially dissolved by the parliament in Baghdad in October, as a step to appease protesters angered by corruption.

### Mosul's game of thrones

In the Iraqi system, provincial councils answer to federal lawmakers, but are elected by popular vote. The councils, in turn, elect the governors, who are meant to administer the day-to-day running of their regions. The Nineveh



Mansur Al-Marid



Najm Al-Juburi

provincial council elected Marid in May and last week its members said they had accepted his hand-written resignation letter. But sources within the council told AFP it wasn't submitted by him, and Marid pointed out it carries neither the proper provincial letterhead nor a date.

The council had acted quickly, however, and within days, 23 of its 39 members selected Juburi as the new governor. Juburi received military training in the United States, battled the Islamic State group in Mosul and is known to be backed by the Kurdish regional government, whose capital Arbil lies less than an hour from Mosul. Mosul was devastated by three years of IS occupation and the nine-month battle to oust the jihadists.

Swathes of it still lie in ruins, with entire neighborhoods flattened and thousands of families unable to return to homes littered with unexploded ordnance. The council manages an annual budget of \$800 million for the broader province of Nineveh, which is also supposed to receive millions in international aid for reconstruction. In the 12th

most corrupt country in the world, according to anti-graft watchdog Transparency International, that's an appealing sum. Across Iraq, government jobs, contracts and even administrative approvals are often awarded based on bribes, nepotism or political affiliation. Over the past 16 years, fake contracts, embezzlement and ghost employees cost the state \$450 billion, according to a government probe. That amounts to twice the yearly GDP for Iraq, OPEC's second-biggest crude producer.

### 'We're already in limbo'

The provincial councils have long been accused of being satellites in an extensive network of state graft. Marid's predecessor, Nawfal Akoub, fled Mosul in March after he and officials close to him were accused of stealing more than \$60 million in public funds, based on an investigation by the government's Integrity Commission. He is also accused of involvement in neglect blamed for a ferry sinking in Mosul on Mother's Day that left 150 people dead.

Akoub, sanctioned by the US earlier this year for the corruption charges, remains on the run. "The provincial councils are an extra link in the chain - they're yet another place for corruption and for politicians to tamper with state money," said political analyst Hamed Al-Sheikh. "Parliament was right to dissolve them," he told AFP.

Mosul isn't the only city where competition over governing posts has turned almost farcical. In January, three men claimed to be governor of Iraq's eastern Wasit province: One, who was fired but refused to surrender his post, his deputy, who sought to prolong his own term indefinitely, and a third, who claimed to be elected by the council. The provincial councils were among the first on the chopping block when the central government put forward measures to appease protesters. — AFP

## Business

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2019

**12** Trade optimism as world stocks hit highest in almost two years**13** Zimbabwe turns to charcoal for cooking as power outages bite**14** Ooredoo Kuwait sponsors the Industrial Revolution 4.0 international conference

HONG KONG: People attend the Alibaba company's stock trading debut at the headquarters of the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing in Hong Kong yesterday. Shares in Chinese online retail giant Alibaba soared almost eight percent on their Hong Kong debut, after raising at least 11 billion USD in the city's biggest IPO in nearly a decade. — AFP

# Alibaba shares surge on HK debut

## Asia's most valuable company soars almost 8%

HONG KONG: Chinese online retail giant Alibaba surged yesterday as it drew back the curtain on a Hong Kong (HK) listing the firm described as a vote of confidence in the embattled city. The long-delayed trading day got off to a glitzy start with chief executive officer Daniel Zhang joined on stage at a stock exchange ceremony by dignitaries including city Financial Secretary Paul Chan and former Hong Kong chief executive Tung Chee-hwa.

Soon after the gong was sounded, Asia's most valuable company soared almost eight percent, a bright start after a blockbuster initial public offering that has raised at least \$11 billion, making it the city's biggest in nearly a decade. "On the occasion of (Alibaba's) 20th anniversary, we have ushered in an important milestone, which is to come home, come back to Hong Kong for listing," Zhang said at the ceremony as crowds clapped and cheered.

The listing comes as a major boost to Hong Kong, which has been wracked by months of sometimes violent protests and the China-US trade war, sending the economy into recession. In a sign of the tensions that still permeate the city after some of the worst violence of the unrest, riot police were

stationed outside the exchange yesterday. Alibaba listed at HK\$176 - below an HK\$188 indicative ceiling originally announced - but briefly hit a high of HK\$189.50 in mid-morning business.

The stock pared the gains to end the day HK\$187.60, up 6.6 percent. With 500 million shares offered to investors, the company raised HK\$88 billion (\$11 billion) in the IPO, the highest since AIA garnered \$20.5 billion in 2010. If it chooses to use an over-allotment option to sell a further 75 million shares, it could bring in HK\$101.2 billion (\$12.9 billion). Numbers play a key role in the listing. Eight is considered an auspicious number in China and its stock code is 9988, which translates as "long-standing prosperity".

### 'Leading light'

The Hong Kong IPO is expected to curry favour with Beijing, which has sought to encourage its current and future big tech firms to list nearer to home after the loss of Alibaba and Baidu to Wall Street. Plans for an Alibaba listing in Hong Kong broke down in 2013, in part because the city's listing rules prevented founder and then-boss Jack Ma from retaining some control over the board

of directors. Alibaba then wanted an alternative class share structure to give selected minority shareholders extra control over the board, but the Hong Kong bourse declined to change its rules. It listed in New York in 2014 in a world record \$25 billion offering.

Since then, the Hong Kong exchange has tweaked the rules to allow double listings, while Chief Executive Carrie Lam had also been pushing Ma to sell shares in the city. Mainland authorities have also stepped up moves to attract such listings, including launching a new technology board in Shanghai in July. "We came home. We came back to list in Hong Kong," Zhang said. "It helped make up for our regret five years ago."

Asked whether the firm was planning to sell shares in mainland China, Zhang told reporters: "Hong Kong is a new starting point, but certainly not the end." Observers said the introduction of Alibaba could prove a boon for the exchange, which has had a torrid year that also saw it forced to drop a \$40 billion takeover bid for the prized London Stock Exchange Group, which would have created a global markets titan.

"Alibaba will be the leading light for bringing more companies in," Andrew



HONG KONG: (Right to left) Hong Kong Financial Secretary Paul Chan, former Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa, Alibaba Group independent non-executive director Daniel Zhang, Chief Executive Officer of Alibaba Group Laura Cha, Chairman of the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Joseph Tsai attend the company's stock trading debut at the headquarters yesterday. — AFP

Sullivan, a director at Pearl Bridge Partners, told Bloomberg Television. "You may see some new money being allocated." Li Xiaojia, chief executive of the Hong Kong Exchange, said: "The return of Alibaba,

especially the return of new economic leaders, along with already locally listed, highly successful large companies such as Tencent, will certainly paint a new, beautiful picture for the Hong Kong capital market." — AFP

## Thailand government approves economic stimulus measures

BANGKOK: The Thai government yesterday introduced new stimulus measures intended to boost the lagging economy, amid sluggish exports and a slow-down in private consumption. The government cut its forecast for 2019 growth last week to 2.6% from the 2.7% to 3.2% projected three months ago. Exports have declined amid global trade tensions and a strong baht, which makes Thai products more expensive abroad. The baht is Asia's fastest-rising currency this year.

"The new measures are estimated to inject more

than 100 billion baht into the economy and enable 2019 gross domestic product to expand by 2.6%, on target," Finance Minister Uttama Savanayana told reporters. The new measures allocate 200,000 baht (\$6,624.71) to support local businesses in more than 70,000 communities around the country. They also provide low-interest loans valued at 50 billion baht for agricultural cooperatives and farmers from the government's Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives.

The government will also provide handouts of up to 10,000 baht to small rice farmers and a debt moratorium. A cash-back scheme for real estate purchases will also be introduced for 100,000 people who earn less than 1.2 million baht annually. The new package comes less than a month after the government approved a similar stimulus package valued at 5.8 billion. In August, the government also introduced a \$10 billion stimulus program that included support for farmers and the country's tourism businesses. — Reuters

## German shoppers upbeat as holiday season nears

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: German shoppers are heading into the annual holiday season feeling slightly more upbeat after Europe's top economy narrowly avoided tipping in recession, a forward-looking monthly survey said. The GfK institute's confidence barometer climbed to 9.7 points for December, up 0.1 points from November's three-year low, it said in a statement.

"Consumers are therefore optimistic about the upcoming holiday season, one of the busiest times of year for a number of retail industries such as consumer

electronics and toys," said the pollster, following a survey of some 2,000 people. December's rebound was driven by a steep rise in confidence in future economic activity, after Germany earlier this month defied expectations to post 0.1 percent growth in the third quarter. Many observers had predicted that the German economy would shrink for a second consecutive quarter this year, meeting the definition of a technical recession.

GfK said an apparent easing of tensions in the US-China trade conflict and hopes that December's UK election would end some Brexit uncertainty had contributed to the more optimistic mood. The survey also found that Germans were more upbeat than last month about their income expectations, buoyed by high wages and a healthy labor market. Respondents said they were slightly less likely to splash out on large items than a month ago but the overall shopping mood remains "at a very high level", GfK said, as record-low interest rates make saving less attractive. — AFP

## Business

# Trade optimism as world stocks hit highest in almost two years

## Emerging Markets currencies weaken versus dollar

**LONDON:** World stocks hit their highest in almost two years yesterday, keeping record highs in sight, following fresh signs that the United States and China were working to end a bitter trade war that has dealt a blow to the global economy. China's Vice Premier Liu He, US Trade representative Robert Lighthizer and US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin held a phone call on issues related to a phase one trade agreement yesterday, China's commerce ministry said.

This, alongside a strong Hong Kong debut for Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba in the world's largest share sale of this year, boosted stock markets in Asia. Alibaba shares opened almost 7% higher in Hong Kong than their issue price and at a small premium to pricing in New York. The listing has been seen as a vote of confidence in Hong Kong after months of anti-government protests that have rocked the former British colony. European shares were marginally lower in early trade although the pan-European STOXX 600 remained within striking distance of four-year highs.

MSCI's 49-country main world share index edged up 0.1%, having touched its highest level in almost two years. It is less than 1% off record highs hit in early 2018. Trade in US stock futures were a tad firmer. A flurry of major acquisition activity has also supported world shares, with France's LVMH offering to buy US jeweler Tiffany & Co

and Charles Schwab Corp's agreeing to purchase US discount brokerage TD Ameritrade Holding Corp. Still, optimism over US/China trade talks remained the key driver following positive headlines from the world's two biggest economies on this front in recent days.

"While it is easy to be skeptical about these sorts of reports, given we've heard them so many times before, particularly the ones about a roll back of tariffs, they do tend to create a momentum all of their own," said Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets. "Even when they are denied, and no matter how cynical you are, it has tended to be a fool's errand in standing in the way of any move higher." The United States has imposed tariffs on Chinese goods in a 16-month long dispute over trade practices that the US government says are unfair. China has responded with its own tariffs on US goods.

The next important date to watch is Dec 15, when Washington is scheduled to impose even more tariffs on Chinese goods. Japan's yen fell to a two-week low of 109.205 per dollar, while the Swiss franc traded near a six-week low against the greenback as the optimistic tone sapped demand for safe-haven currencies. In the offshore market, the yuan briefly rose to a one-week high of 7.0188 versus the dollar. Yields on safe-haven government bonds

in the euro zone nudged higher, although the limited rise in borrowing costs suggested caution from bond investors.

"What we have seen, especially if I look at the equity side, is that the optimism (on US/China trade talks) is quite high so we rather have the potential for a risk-off move," said Sebastian Fellechner, a rates strategist at DZ Bank in Frankfurt. Elsewhere, Bitcoin, the world's biggest cryptocurrency, was 1.6% firmer at \$7,236.71, recovering from a six-month low on Monday after the People's Bank of China launched a fresh crackdown on cryptocurrencies. US crude was flat at \$58 a barrel. Brent crude was also little changed on the day at \$63.66 per barrel.

### EM currencies weaken

Currencies in the developing world traded slightly lower yesterday as the dollar strengthened on encouraging signals in US-China trade relations, and with South Africa's rand weakening after a warning from the International Monetary Fund. MSCI's index of emerging market currencies dipped 0.1%, while the dollar hit its firmest level in two weeks against Japan's yen earlier yesterday.

China's Commerce Ministry said top trade negotiators from both sides held a phone call yesterday, and discussed "core issues of concern". "Investors are just waiting for

more details before increasing their exposure to riskier assets, and definitely the dollar in this situation is benefiting," said Piotr Matys, emerging markets FX strategist at Rabobank. "It's a bit of, why take the risk and trade in EM assets when you can just continue buying the dollar." South Africa's rand weakened after the IMF said on Monday that the country faced a prolonged period of weak economic growth marked by rising unemployment, inequality and greater credit-rating risk if the government did not act fast to implement reforms. "Nothing new from the IMF, it is just a reminder that there are some serious issues and tremendous challenges South Africa faces to try and put the economy on a sustainable path," said Matys. The warning came as South Africa dodged a sovereign rating downgrade from S&P Global Ratings. The Turkish lira remained range-bound, while Turkish stocks edged slightly lower.

Russia hopes to seal a deal to supply Turkey with more S-400 missile systems in the first half of 2020, which analysts feel could pressure the lira by further antagonizing the United States, a country Turkey has had volatile relations with in recent times. Currencies in central and eastern European economies including Poland and Romania dipped slightly against the euro. Hungary's forint touched a new record low, extending declines to a sixth straight session. — Agencies

## NBK becomes first bank in MENA to adopt 3D Secure 2.0

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) became the first bank in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to adopt Visa's 3D Secure 2.0, which provides merchants and issuers with a seamless way to authenticate cardholders for eCommerce transactions before authorizing them. An enhancement of the 3D Secure standard introduced 17 years ago, 3D Secure 2.0 delivers a real-time, secure information sharing channel that merchants can use to send an unprecedented number of transaction details to the issuer.

As a result, the issuer can then authenticate customers with more accuracy without slowing down commerce or requesting a fixed password. The new and improved 3D Secure 2.0 standard adds to the long list of benefits financial institutions and merchants enjoy as participants in Visa's global payment network.

Ali Al-Mulla, Executive Manager, Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, said: "At NBK, we prioritize investing in the customer experience to maintain



Ali Al-Mulla

a high level of confidence amongst our consumers and merchants, whether transacting in Kuwait or abroad. Our aim is to provide customers with fast, friendly and dedicated services, and Visa is a key partner in ensuring that our goals are met without any compromise on security." Ankush Devadason, Visa's Country Manager, Kuwait, commented: "Digital commerce is the fastest growing area of payments, with connected devices now

functioning as payment devices.

This is one of the many reasons that it is critical we maintain trust - among consumers, businesses, and governments - and at the same time deliver quick and convenient user experience to ensure the ongoing digitalization of commerce. Collaboration with our partners is key to this process, and we are excited to be bringing this new technology to Kuwait - and, in fact, the wider MENA region - for the first time in partnership with our partners at NBK."

A recent Visa survey, launched in partnership with

the Kuwait Banking Association as part of its Stay Secure campaign, found that 84% of respondents in Kuwait said they have started making more online card payments in the past two years, emphasizing the importance of enhancing the online payments experience and ensuring its security in the country. As part of this commitment, Visa recently held its annual regional Security Summit in Barcelona, Spain which brought together payment industry experts from risk, business and operational departments of financial institutions, merchants, processors and other payment service providers.

At the forum, Visa launched a suite of innovative security capabilities to help prevent and disrupt payment fraud, breaking new ground in cybersecurity and fraud prevention across the region. NBK is committed to providing an integrated and advanced banking experience, ensuring it offers products and services that meet its customers' day to day needs and are complemented by safe and secure payment solutions.

The bank maintains its leading position in the sector through its digital solutions that make banking easier and faster while complying with the highest safety standards. NBK provides its products and services to individuals and corporate organizations through its large network expanding across the world, including Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, as well as major cities such as London, Paris, Geneva, New York, Singapore and Shanghai.

## Al Babtain maintains its leasing offers with peace of mind package on Nissan models

**KUWAIT:** Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babtain Company (AABC), the authorized dealer of Nissan vehicles in the State of Kuwait, is delighted to announce continuing its leasing offers on the Nissan ALTIMA, KICKS and X-TRAIL to accommodate its customers with an enriched driving experience on Kuwait's roads.

Nissan Al Babtain guarantees attractive leasing prices without down payment in addition to peace of mind package inclusive of free comprehensive insurance, free maintenance, a replacement car, roadside assistance and several benefits that comes along with the leasing offer guaranteeing peace of mind to all Nissan's customers.

The leasing offer includes ZERO down payment on the all new Nissan Altima, the sixth generation of Nissan's best-selling sedan, Nissan Altima features expressive styling, an uplifting interior, two new powertrains, and advanced Nissan Intelligent Mobility features. The car also features Apple CarPlay(tm) and an 8-inch multi-touch color display for complete in-car entertainment and ease of driver control. Cutting-edge Nissan Intelligent Mobility technologies have been integrated into the 2019 Altima as standard.

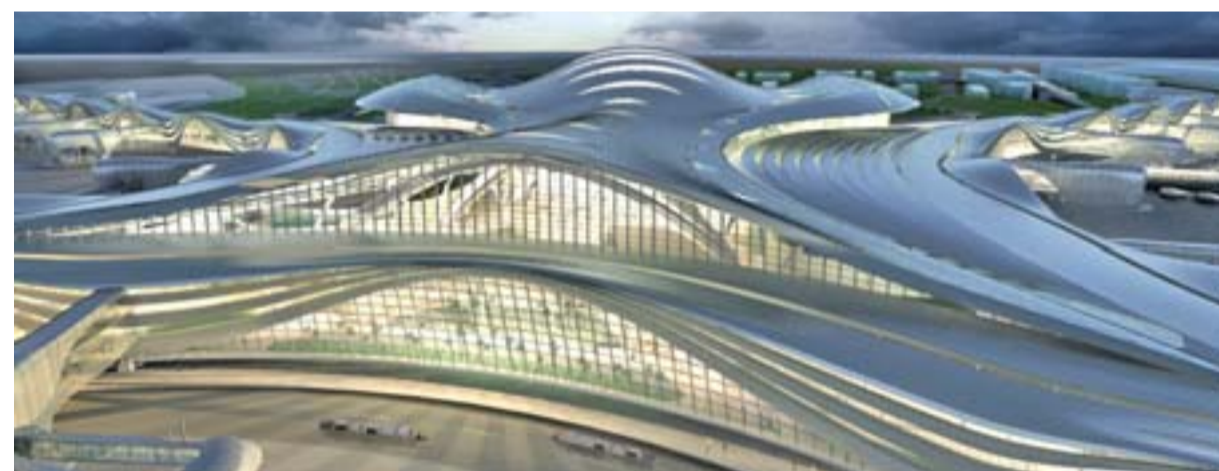
The Altima also provides front, side and rear safety monitoring and intervention technologies - including Automatic Emergency Braking with Pedestrian Detection, Lane Departure Warning (LDW), radar-based Blind Spot Warning (BSW), Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA) and High Beam Assist (HBA).

Starting at KD 99, 2020 Nissan KICKS has class-leading fuel efficiency thanks to its advanced 1.6-liter engine and lightweight platform. Starting at KD 109, the 2020 Nissan X-TRAIL is a customer favorite which gives young families and adventure-seekers more premium style options such as the choice between the five or seven-seat version. Nissan Al Babtain welcomes all to join in the exclusive leasing offers and visit Nissan Al Babtain showrooms located in Al Rai and Al Ahmadi area.

## Abu Dhabi Airports, Airport Dimensions and NAS seal deal

**ABU DHABI:** Abu Dhabi Airports has awarded the Midfield Terminal Building's (MTB) lounge construction and management contract to a joint venture between National Aviation Services (NAS) and Airport Dimensions, which combines NAS' regional operational experience and Airport Dimensions' expertise in managing passenger's needs at international airports. The new lounge will allow customers to enjoy the quality of premium lounge services, ensuring that ACH continues to provide its passengers with a high-quality experience.

Spanning over 3,500 square meters, the new lounge will be in the heart of the new MTB, offering access to independent travelers, regardless of which airline they travel with or the class of their ticket. The ideal location of the lounge makes it accessible to passengers who are either departing or transiting through ACH, where they can benefit from the lounge's wide range of services, combining Middle Eastern hospitality with world class facilities. Abu Dhabi Airports' partnership with NAS and Airport Dimensions to develop and operate the new MTB lounge represents Airport Dimensions' first project in the MENA region, adding to its global portfolio



of 18 lounges. Airport Dimensions manages lounges at some of the world's busiest airports, including London Heathrow and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport in Atlanta, Georgia. NAS currently operates 40 lounges across Africa, Middle East and Asia, including the VIP Terminal with meet and assist services at the Abu Dhabi International Airport.

Commenting on the signing of the new contract, Bryan Thompson, Chief Executive Officer of Abu Dhabi Airports, said: "The partnership with NAS and Airport Dimensions represents an exciting development for the future passengers of the MTB, as the new lounge will provide an unparalleled customer experience for those travelling through Abu Dhabi International Airport."

"We are pleased to be able to work with both NAS and Airport Dimensions on the construction and management of the new lounge.

NAS' operations within the Middle East mean that its regional knowledge will be invaluable in bringing this project to completion, whilst Airport Dimensions' extensive expertise in airport lounge design and management will help to create a lounge that leaves passengers refreshed in their journey," he added. Thompson concluded: "I offer my congratulations to both NAS and Airport Dimensions; and look forward to working with both companies as we prepare the MTB to receive passengers from across the globe to Abu Dhabi."

## EXCHANGE RATES

### AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

#### EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.500
Euro	337.080
Sterling Pound	394.330
Canadian dollar	229.810
Turkish lira	53.420
Swiss Franc	307.420
US Dollar Buying	297.050

#### ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.794
Indian Rupees	4.253
Pakistani Rupees	1.969
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.688
Nepali Rupees	2.652
Singapore Dollar	224.060
Hongkong Dollar	38.903
Bangladesh Taka	3.552
Philippine Peso	6.011
Thai Baht	10.095
Malaysian ringgit	77.877

#### GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.254
Qatari Riyal	83.688
Omani Riyal	791.423
Bahraini Dinar	809.090
UAE Dirham	82.959

#### ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.400
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.931

Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.223
Tunisian Dinar	111.130
Jordanian Dinar	429.810
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.188

### DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

#### Rate for Transfr Selling Rate

US Dollar	304.140
Canadian Dollar	229.195
Sterling Pound	393.585
Euro	307.059
Swiss Frank	305.750
Bahrain Dinar	808.820
UAE Dirhams	83.210
Qatari Riyals	84.445
Saudi Riyals	82.000
Jordanian Dinar	430.255
Egyptian Pound	18.909
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.679
Indian Rupees	4.247
Pakistani Rupees	1.958
Bangladesh Taka	3.536
Philippines Pessio	5.996
Cyprus pound	18.095
Japanese Yen	3.790
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.651
Malaysian Ringgit	73.665
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	43.665
Thai Bhat	11.055

Turkish Lira	53.325
Singapore dollars	223.338

### BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

#### CURRENCY BUY SELL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
<b>EUROPE</b>		
British Pound	0.385372	0.399272
Czech Korune	0.005123	0.014423
Danish Krone	0.040785	0.045785
Euro	0.327696	0.341396
Georgian Lari	0.101673	0.101673
Hungarian	0.000906	0.001096
Norwegian Krone	0.029112	0.034312
Romanian Leu	0.053259	0.070109
Russian ruble	0.004752	0.004752
Slovakia	0.009104	0.019104
Swedish Krona	0.027545	0.032545
Swiss Franc	0.298806	0.309806
<b>Australasia</b>		
Australian Dollar	0.198128	0.210128
New Zealand Dollar	0.189131	0.198631
<b>America</b>		
Canadian Dollar	0.223284	0.232284
US Dollars	0.300400	0.305700
US Dollars Mint	0.300900	0.305700
<b>Asia</b>		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003001	0.003802

Chinese Yuan	0.041869	0.045369
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036815	0.039565
Indian Rupee	0.003623	0.004395
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002708	0.002888
Korean Won	0.000248	0.000263
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069117	0.075117
Nepalese Rupee	0.002626	0.002966
Pakistan Rupee	0.001295	0.002065
Philippine Peso	0.005944	0.006244
Singapore Dollar	0.217580	0.227580
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001319	0.001899
Taiwan	0.009853	0.010033
Thai Baht	0.009739	0.010289
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013

<b>Arab</b>		
Bahraini Dinar	0.801546	0.809596
Egyptian Pound	0.018719	0.021459
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000211	0.000271
Jordanian Dinar	0.423492	0.432492
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000151	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021202	0.045202
Omani Riyal	0.785782	0.793674
Qatar Riyal	0.082983	0.083817
Saudi Riyal	0.080113	0.081413
Syrian Pound	0.001291	0.001511
Tunisian Dinar	0.102731	0.110731
Turkish Lira	0.046205	0.056050
UAE Dirhams	0.082271	0.083097
Yemeni Riyal	0.000990	0.001070

## Business

## Zimbabwe turns to charcoal for cooking as power outages bite

‘It’s all about money and survival’



**HARARE:** Prudence Mkonzo, a charcoal vendor in Zimbabwe, serves a customer as she stands beside 50-kilogramme polythene bags full of charcoal piled on top of each other as she openly sells her wares at Mbare Musika Market in Harare. Zimbabwe is losing more than 330,000 hectares of forest annually. Agriculture is still the number one driver of deforestation. —AFP photos

**MHONDORO NGEZI:** Miller Chizema walked through the forest near his home and came across a pile of freshly-cut logs - a sight that spurred the 82-year-old villager to dismay and anger. The logs were arranged in such a way that they were ready to be burnt into charcoal - a fuel that has become a substitute for Zimbabwe's energy shortages, at a terrible cost to its forests.

"It hurts to see forests decimated like this," said Chizema, who lives in Mhondoro Ngezi, in the centre of the country, 150 kilometers southwest of Harare. Some loggers come from as far as Harare, "where we hear there is a big demand for charcoal," he said. "We, as elders, try to discourage the practice, but it's all about money and survival."

For nearly six months, Zimbabwe has been in the grip of chronic power cuts, sometimes running to 19 hours a day. The price of cooking gas has increased more than six-fold since the start of the year, placing it beyond the reach of many. For many lower-income urbanites, firewood and charcoal have become the go-to sources of substitute energy - and rogue logging is the result. Zimbabwe is losing more than 330,000 hectares (815,000 acres) of forest annually, according to Abednigo Marufu,

general manager of the Zimbabwe Forestry Commission.

That's the equivalent to nearly half a million football pitches. "Zimbabwe is losing quite a lot of trees and forests... everywhere because there is no electricity and our people need to feed themselves, they need heating in their homes," he said. Even so, "agriculture is still the number one driver of deforestation," he said. A controversial land reform program launched in 2000 saw a surge in the loss of forest cover as people cleared land for cultivation. "Some of them started growing tobacco and cut down trees to use for curing their crop." The practice continues, as farmers view wood to be free compared to other options.

**Dilemma**

Authorities are confronted with an enforcement conundrum. Charcoal production is outlawed in Zimbabwe but it can be imported from neighboring Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi, with special permits. But Marufu said no such licenses had been issued for over a year, yet Zimbabwe was awash with charcoal. "How do you then know what charcoal is imported and locally produced?" Marufu asked rhetorically. A lot



**NGEZI:** Miller Chizema, an 82 year old villager sits on a pile of felled logs from the indigenous Mopani tree in a forest in Mhondoro Ngezi district.

of the older indigenous mopani trees have been reduced to stumps. AFP journalists saw numerous darkened patches where the logs had been piled and burnt into charcoal in the forests at Mhondoro-Ngezi.

Best Muchenje has been the district's forestry officer for the past two years. "Deforestation was already bad when I came here," he said. "But the power crisis has worsened the situation, (and) the mopani tree is a target because it is hard and produces quality charcoal." Mopani is one of the country's iconic indigenous trees that easily survive hot and dry conditions. The law allows those living in the sparsely populated villages to cut trees for personal use and not for commercial purposes.

**'Forests or humans'**

But for unemployed villagers like Enia Shagini, lack of money forces them to risk being fined or even jailed for cutting down trees for charcoal. She sells a 50-kilogram (110-pound) bag for the equivalent of less than 50 US cents (40 euro centimes). "We have children to send to school," said the mother of three, bemoaning a crackdown on illicit charcoal production which has widely been ignored. In the capital, charcoal ven-

dors at the Mbare market, just a few minutes' drive from downtown Harare, display dozens of 50-kilo polythene bags of charcoal for sale.

Prudence Mkonzo claimed she got her charcoal from Nyamapanda, near the border with Mozambique. "It's difficult bringing the stuff to Harare," she said. "We ferry it on trucks at night but sometimes you have to deal with the police at roadblocks. You need to be prepared to pay them bribes when you get stopped." She sold her charcoal at the equivalent of between US\$2.50 and US\$3.00 a bag, but sales are slow. People are struggling with unemployment and the country's worst economic crisis in a decade.

"There isn't much money going around so business is really bad. Some people are burning discarded plastic soft drink bottles for cooking." While the law is clear on production of charcoal, the government is in a dilemma. "It's a very complicated issue," Nqobizitha Ndlovu, newly-appointed minister for the environment and climate change said. "We acknowledge the shortage of electricity and that gas is expensive, so wood and charcoal are alternatives. So while we are worried about forests, we also worry about human beings." —AFP

## IMO 2020: The countdown to get clean

By Chris Wood, Managing Director Uniper Energy DMCC

Clean and compliant. Make no mistake, these two words will dictate the economic health of the world's shipping industry in the next two months. This is significant: the sector transports 90% of the world's trade, including energy.



Chris Wood

So, everyone should be watching the calendar. It is a mere forty days - a blink in an economic eye - until the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) ruling that bunker fuels from January 1, 2020 must be 0.5% sulfur, down from today's 3.5%.

One misstep after the clock ticks past midnight on New Year's Eve can spark costly rumors, dull operational credibility and give business away to competitors overnight. Ports and all other stakeholders - refiners, storage operators, traders, shippers - must ensure clean and compliant fuels flow through their terminals if uncontaminated with other blends and sub-0.5% sulfur.

Success means leveraging a major opportunity to expand global influence, as votes of confidence in global shipping lanes work their way down the maritime grapevine. Make sure you're on the right team: IMO 2020 is a game of confidence. Everyone must play by the same rules, but there must also be minor wiggle room for first-time mistakes in the early days.

The majority of those in the value chain are starting from ground zero with 0.5% fuels (we already supply more than 4mn tons of IMO 2020 and ECA compliant marine fuel oils). Volatility in the first quarter of 2020 is inevitable; it is the biggest shift in the shipping industry in 100 years, after all. Most importantly, don't let rogue waves of disruption derail the positive momentum on the many compliant seas. The fuel markets already contend with enough (volatile geopolitics, fluctuating oil prices, pressure to embrace digitalization, talent shortages, etc). Look at IMO 2020 through a prism of progress, not finger pointing.

**Dusting off cobwebs**

In this vein, all stakeholders must up their game amid the more stringent fuel rulebook - never a negative. IMO 2020 is spurring much more extensive collaborations along the value chain, such as smarter tank segregation and fuel testing to eliminate contamination. The ambiguity surrounding pricing - a thorn in the energy and shipping industry's side - has made it more challenging to comply. Some financiers' forecasts have little choice but to be riddled with guesswork.

The 'chicken and egg' element - supply-demand dynamics drive the price yet knowing the price influences supply-demand - has caused many headaches this year. But stronger opinions appear to be forming. It seems likely for now that \$200-\$300 will be the average price spread per metric ton of compliant low sulfur fuel oil (LSFO) over non-compliant high sulfur fuel oil (HSFO) in Q1 of 2020, according to half the respondents to a GIQ Industry Survey of more than 350 energy executives in Fujairah in October. A quarter (26%) said \$100-\$200/mt and another quarter (24%) said \$300-\$400/mt. More transparency may also come with the new bunker adjustment factor (BAF) indexing mechanism from Drewry and the European Shippers' Council, which aims to help shippers control bunker charges as shipping lines switch to compliant fuels. Watch this space.

Our meetings worldwide have revealed that many new players seek business locally under IMO 2020 terms - Fujairah's compliance efforts and UED's LSFO supply make the decision easy for them. We were also recently added by S&P Global Platts, the world's biggest energy pricing agency, to their Asia Market On Close (MOC) assessment process for Asian fuel oil.

The same applies for Singapore and Fujairah physical bunker fuel, the world's first and second largest bunkering hubs, respectively. This emphasizes our rapidly growing influence and credibility worldwide. Still, no matter the upside, IMO 2020 is new territory. Amid the noise, keep these two words as top priorities: clean and compliant. They are your allies in a market where you can never have enough.

## Without 'father' Evo, Bolivia's coca farmers feel orphaned

**SACABA:** Driven back by security forces and now leaderless after the departure of ex-president Evo Morales, Bolivian indigenous coca farmers have been left "orphaned" in their fight against the country's right-wing caretaker government. "He was our father, our father," wails Sonia Pena, 51, at a roadside camp where hundreds of protesters retreated after a violent confrontation with police on November 15 that left nine people dead.

Mostly farmers from Morales' political birthplace in the central coca-growing region of Chapare, the protesters are demanding the resignation of caretaker President Jeanine Anez. With a copy of the Bible in her hands, the right-wing senator took power after Morales quit on November 10 and fled to Mexico, where he was granted political asylum, after taking refuge in Chapare.

Gathered alongside a blockaded highway connecting Sacaba municipality with Cochabamba, the Andean country's fourth-largest city, none of the protesters show any desire to take up the mantle of leader. They are being "hunted" by security forces, they tell AFP. A day after the nine farmers were shot dead, Anez issued a presidential decree granting security forces immunity from prosecution for acts

of violence, fueling the farmers' rage.

At least 32 people have been killed in weeks of unrest over Morales, the socialist coca leader who after nearly 14 years as president sought a fourth term in the October 20 ballot. Morales claimed victory in the vote, but opposition groups said it was rigged. An audit by the Washington-based Organization of American States found irregularities in the results. Opposition groups, with the support of the urban middle and upper classes outraged by Morales' attempt to extend his reign, took to the streets and forced his resignation.

He fled to Mexico claiming to be a victim of a coup after losing the support of the military and police. A sense of abandonment now pervades the Chapare coca farmers. "We feel orphaned," says Virginia Munoz, a 63-year-old retiree. "We want Evo to return. He gave us back our cultural identity, here we are Quechuas, Aymaras, poor people." A socially fractured Bolivia took the first step into a future without Morales over the weekend with the annulment of the October 20 vote and the approval of new elections that exclude the former leader.

**Coca loyalty**

Morales arrived in Chapare when he was

Motor Co in October.

Los Angeles, London, Berlin, Tokyo and 30 other cities around the globe have been working to establish zero-emission zones by 2030. Those cities hope to curb accumulating greenhouse gases that contribute to extreme weather, higher temperatures and rising sea levels, which have steep economic, environmental and human costs. The transportation industry - which includes fossil fuel-burning ships, trains, trucks and planes - accounted for 14% of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2010, according to the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Over the last three years, DHL has kicked off "CO2-free last mile delivery" efforts with German cities like Berlin, Hamburg and Munich. Roughly 10,000 of the 12,000 StreetScooter electric vehicles on the road make DHL deliveries. They operate in Amsterdam, Vienna and cities around Germany - saving roughly 36,000 metric tons of CO2 per truck each year, StreetScooter said. "We have the most expe-



**SACABA, Bolivia:** Supporters of Bolivian ex-President Evo Morales eat at a soup kitchen in Sacaba. — AFP

21 after a severe drought ruined the countryside in the western region of Oruro, where he was born. He began his union life and rose up the ranks to become the almighty leader of six coca federations. As a congressman in 1997, he embraced the cause of the Chapare farmers to defend the chewing of coca leaves and other ancestral uses, despite pressure of the United States to eradicate the plantations that are also the raw material for cocaine.

With 57,000 acres Bolivia is the world's

third largest producer of the drug after Peru and Colombia. When in power, Morales approved the increase of territory for legal coca cultivation in Chapare and launched his own anti-drug campaign without the supervision or resources of the United States. "The coca movement has shown the greatest loyalty to Morales under all circumstances," sociologist Maria Teresa Zegada said. But "he was the man who took decisions, sometimes capriciously, and strongly focused on himself." — AFP



**NEW YORK:** A DHL employee delivers boxes in New York City. — AFP

rience on the road while others are still working on their first prototypes," StreetScooter's Stueck said in a recent interview.

Up-and-coming delivery competitor Amazon.com Inc in September gave the electric vehicle industry a jolt with its plan to order 100,000 electric delivery vans from Rivian Automotive LLC, a company it

funds. The first vans should hit streets in 2021. Meanwhile, Amazon said its delivery partners are using around 200 electric vehicles. United Parcel Service Inc has 1,000 electric and hybrid electric vehicles in its fleet, and FedEx Corp last year announced plans to deploy 1,000 electric vehicles in California. — Reuters

## DHL to debut zero-emission electric delivery vans in US

**LOS ANGELES:** Deutsche Post DHL Group's StreetScooter electric vehicle unit will enter the US market next year as delivery firms and municipalities work to cut greenhouse gas emissions. DHL will debut StreetScooter's zero-emission Work L delivery van in two urban US markets, one on each coast, starting in Spring 2020, the companies said. They did not specify which markets would be the first. Full deployment could come in 2022 and 2023, said Ulrich Stueck, StreetScooter's chief technology officer, who joined the company from Ford

## Business

# IMF approves 2-year credit line worth \$61 billion for Mexico

## Mexico tumbles into recession - bad news for Obrador

WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund said its executive board had approved a smaller two-year lending arrangement for Mexico worth \$61 billion, replacing the current flexible credit line of about \$74 billion. It said the new arrangement would bolster market confidence at a time when trade uncertainty, a sharp pullback in capital from emerging markets and increased risk premiums posed continued external risks to the Mexican economy.

The Mexican government intended to continue to treat the arrangement as "precautionary" and planned to request further reductions in the credit line as external risks receded. IMF Deputy Managing Director David Lipton said in a statement. Mexico's economy has been buffeted by uncertainty over the past three years due to the threat of trade wars with US President Donald Trump, and the credit line is viewed as an important stabilizer for its financial markets.

Mexico's finance ministry hailed the arrangement. "The decision of the (IMF's) executive board underscores that Mexico continues to meet all the qualification criteria needed to access, if required and without any conditions, the resources available through this instrument," it said. The IMF's new managing director, Kristalina Georgieva, said last month the organization would remain a "strong partner" of Mexico, following meetings with the heads of the Mexican finance ministry and central bank.

The IMF has recommended Mexico reconsider its position of limiting private companies' cooperation with state-owned oil company Pemex, whose debt is weighing heavily on the government's finances. Mexico's previous

arrangement was approved in 2017 for about \$86 billion, but was scaled back to \$74 billion in 2018 at the request of the Mexican authorities. In his statement, Lipton lauded the Mexican government's efforts to set strong fiscal policies that stemmed the rise in the country's public debt ratio, and a very tight monetary policy that helped reduce inflation.

He said financial supervision and regulation were strong, and the flexible exchange rate of the Mexican

Mexico, Canada, US trade deal is 'within range'

peso was playing a key role in the economy's adjustment to external shocks. But he warned the economy still faced external risks, including volatility in global financial markets, increased risk premiums, reduced capital inflows and continued uncertainty about Mexico's trade relations with the United States.

### Mexico in recession

The Mexican economy, Latin America's second-

largest after Brazil's, tumbled into recession in the first half of this year and has since remained stagnant, according to revised official data released Monday. The downward revision confirmed the economy's weak performance under leftist President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, who has struggled to deliver on his promise to kickstart growth since taking office in December 2018.

The economy contracted 0.1 percent in each of the first two quarters of 2019, after shrinking by the same margin in the fourth quarter of 2018, according to updated figures from the national statistics institute, INEGI. The news will again put Lopez Obrador's government on the defensive, as it confirms the recession-defined as two or more consecutive quarters of contraction-began in the first half of the year. The economy then registered zero growth in the third quarter this year, INEGI announced.

The growth figures were adjusted down from preliminary data for all but one of the past five quarters. The figure for the first quarter of 2019 was revised up slightly, from -0.2 percent to -0.1 percent. The figure for the third quarter of 2018 - the last full quarter under former president Enrique Pena Nieto - was revised down from 0.8 percent to 0.4 percent growth. Year-on-year, the economy contracted 0.2 percent from the third quarter of 2018 to the third quarter of 2019.

### Investor confidence down

Lopez Obrador won a landslide election victory in July 2018, and took office five months later promising to deliver economic growth of two percent for 2019 and an average of four percent across his six-year term. But he has

clashed with the business community on a number of key issues, notably by cancelling construction of a new \$13 billion airport for Mexico City that was one-third complete and replacing it with a rival project.

Investor confidence has also taken a hit from the grim financial outlook at state oil company Pemex, Mexico's largest firm. Pemex owes more than \$100 billion in debt, making it one of the world's most indebted companies. Lopez Obrador's government has plowed nearly \$10 billion in rescue funds into the firm, but with few visible results so far.

### US-Mexico-Canada deal

Meanwhile, US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on Monday that a version of the US-Mexico-Canada trade agreement that House Democrats could back was "within range" but that they needed to conduct a final review. President Donald Trump's administration has been pushing for the congressional passage of USMCA, which would replace the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement.

Trump has repeatedly accused Democrats of stalling a vote on the accord to avoid granting him a political win. "We are within range of a substantially improved agreement for America's workers. Now, we need to see our progress in writing from the Trade Representative for final review," Pelosi said in a statement. House Democrats have voiced concerns over the enforcement of labor and environmental provisions. Labor unions have publicly voiced opposition to the accord amid worry that it will not protect US jobs. — Agencies

## Kuwait tech talents represent nation in Huawei competition

KUWAIT: Huawei, a leading global provider of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and smart devices, has announced the winners of the Kuwait edition of the Huawei Middle East ICT Competition 2019. The longstanding competition, which falls under Huawei's strategy to develop the global ICT talent ecosystem, aims to nurture local talent in the ICT field with a vision to bring digital to every person, home and organization for a fully-connected and intelligent world.

The three winners, from Australian College of Kuwait, Kuwait University, and Swinburne University, were chosen from a field of more than 30 entries from six participating universities. In addition to competing against other winners from the Middle East, the regional winners will be invited back to China to take part in a competition with global Huawei ICT Competition winners.

The competition has been well received in Kuwait as it promotes innovation and creativity while serving as a bridge between the classroom and the workplace. By nurturing university students' talent in Kuwait, it also contributes to increasing national ICT competitiveness while supporting digital transformation efforts. Having already received certificates and prizes as Kuwait's national winners, the local teams have now earned a trip to China this November, where they will compete with their fellow finalists from around the Middle East region to win the ICT Competition's grand prize - US\$30,000.

Their visit will include the once-in-a-life-



time chance to work amongst some of the world's most renowned technology pioneers in Huawei's facilities. Participants will conduct field experiments at Huawei's specialized labs and research centers in its headquarters in Shenzhen, helping equip students with the tools needed to tackle complex challenges in areas such as cloud computing, IoT, and network security. The technical program will be complemented by a number of cultural experiences and knowledge-exchange opportunities while in China.

In addition, students and their mentors will have the opportunity to meet their country's ambassador to China during the Huawei-organized Ambassadors Summit Discussions event. This will provide the participants with the chance to discuss with respected leaders and cultural envoys their future ambitions and anticipations for their national ICT sector.

Congratulating the winners, Trevor Liu, President of North GCC, Middle East Region, said: "Huawei recognizes the importance of nurturing local talent so that they have the knowledge and expertise to lead tomorrow's highly connected, intelligent world. By investing in future talent and building a more robust ICT talent ecosystem in Kuwait, we are investing in the future of the country. The winning teams are well deserved of the honor to represent Kuwait in the Huawei ICT Competition global final in China. I offer them

my congratulations and wish them the best of luck in the competition's final stage."

Throughout the Huawei ICT Competition stages, contestants receive the latest updates on emerging technologies that are reshaping Kuwait's digital economy. These include Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data, the Internet of Things (IoT), and most importantly 5G broadband - seen as a crucial digital-service enabler. The competition is a unique opportunity for students to test their abilities in these cutting-edge fields, and helps colleges and universities to better understand the talent requirements of today's top businesses and government leaders.

During the final, participants are equipped with an online guide and are supervised by university professors. University professors play the role of the student's tutor, accompanying national winners to Huawei's headquarters and discussing with Huawei the future development of the competition and Kuwait's wider ICT talent ecosystem.

The last edition of the Huawei ICT Competition 2018 saw 14,551 students participate from across the Middle East. From these, 4,113 students were selected to take part in the preliminary rounds. 310 students passed on to the final round, and 39 traveled to China to compete internationally. A total of 17 ministries and 226 universities took part in total across the region.

## Gulf Bank strengthens Easy Pay partnership

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is proud to announce strengthening its Easy Pay partnership with X-cite by Alghanim Electronics, wherein, Gulf Bank credit card customers can now shop online at Xcite.com or by X-cite mobile application and pay over 12 months at 0% interest. X-cite by Alghanim Electronics is the largest multi-brand electronics retailer in Kuwait with a collection of over 300 global brands, available in its 30 branches around Kuwait.

Gulf Bank's Easy Pay feature is available at all X-cite physical stores since October 2018 and Gulf Bank Cardholders have been availing Easy Pay feature on their shopping at X-cite stores. With the addition of online shopping at X-cite website and Mobile Application, customers can now enjoy a more stress-free online shopping experience, and pay for electronic & home appliances over an extended period of time with no additional processing or interest fees.

The process for enrolling online shopping transaction at X-cite into Easy Pay is seamless. Customers can buy electronics and home appliances from X-cite online shopping portal or via Mobile application and select "Gulf Bank Easy Pay" payment option at the payment page before entering their credit card details, and the transaction will automatically be converted into 12 months installment with 0% interest and processing fees. Customers can also avail multiple Easy Pay facilities on their credit cards at the same time.

Commenting on the announcement,

Ahmad Al Amir, Assistant General Manager of External Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "X-cite by Alghanim Electronics is one of the most popular companies in Kuwait - it's rare to find a house or office without at least one product from X-cite in it. That is why we are delighted to expand our partnership with X-cite as an Easy Pay partner."

The Easy Pay program will allow all Gulf Bank credit cardholders an even more convenient way to purchase their electronic devices and appliances without worrying about additional processing or interest fees. At Gulf Bank, we are always on the look-out for new and innovative ways to treat our customers, and are constantly working to launch creative solutions that make our customers' lives that much easier.

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

To learn more about Gulf Bank's Easy Pay service and to check out the list of participating outlets, customers can visit one of the Gulf Bank's 58 branches or log on to [www.e-gulfbank.com](http://www.e-gulfbank.com).



Ahmad Al Amir

## Ooredoo sponsors Industrial Revolution 4.0 conference

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, first to launch innovated digital services in Kuwait was the Strategic Sponsor for the 1st International Conference organized by The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, titled the Industrial Revolution 4.0 - Digital Transformation. The Conference was held last Friday in Radisson Blu Hotel.

The conference covered many subjects that are related to digital transformation such as Fintech, impact of technology on the accounting profession, the new auditor in the digital age, embracing digital transformation for sustainable and scalable growth. The conference hosted many distinguished speakers and panelists from both GCC and India who are experts in their respective fields.

The Vice President of ICAI CA. Atul Kumar Gupta who inaugurate the conference. Indian Ambassador Jeeva Sagar and the Chairman of Kuwait Accountants and Auditors Association Faisal AlTabikh. The conference hosted top professionals from Kuwait including 300 plus Chartered Accountants, members from some other GCC countries and UK.

Commenting on this sponsorship, Ooredoo Kuwait Senior Director of Corporate Communications Mijbil Alayoub said: "We're proud to participate in this conference, which provides a good opportunity to interact with industry leaders in the field of digital transformation, and pro-



vides a constructive platform for exchanging expertise. In which we believe that the Kuwaiti market deserves to have the latest and most advanced and innovative modalities to keep up with international trends of digital transformation."

For more information, please contact 131, our team will answer all inquiries around the clock 7 days a week. Or visit our website [www.ooredoo.com.kw](http://www.ooredoo.com.kw) or the nearest shop to you, or simply use our App 'MyOoredoo' for updates and more.

## Chinese Embassy holds 'China Night'

KUWAIT: On November 22nd, the Chinese Embassy in Kuwait held the 'China Night' event at the Green Island in Kuwait city to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, and to showcase the country's profound culture and history, progress and achievements over the past 70 years.

Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Li Minggang and wife, Lin Ying hosted over 1,000 guests at the event, including Kuwaiti government officials, diplomatic corps in Kuwait, representatives of various sectors, media partners, members from Chinese enterprises and institutions, overseas Chinese and students, and local residents in Kuwait.

Speaking at the event, Ambassador Li Minggang said that the Chinese Embassy held this celebratory event 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. Stressing the long-lasting friendship between China and Kuwait, Li hoped that the "China Night" event would help

the Kuwaiti community learn more about the Chinese culture and history, as well as its achievements over the past 7 decades, and would further promote a mutual cooperation for prosperity between both countries.

The event which was designed to offer the guests an opportunity to discover the charm of China from different perspectives featured an array of programs with Chinese elements, including themed photo exhibitions, a Chinese culture exhibition, product presentations from Chinese enterprises, Chinese delicacies and a gala dance performance.

The gala performance started with the song "Today is your birthday, my motherland", in addition to the Chinese community in Kuwait's performances which included Chinese songs, poetry reading by children, Chinese fan dance, Xinjiang folk dance, band performance, a violin solo and many more. The evening was concluded with the chorus "My Motherland and Me".

The lively event was held in a delightful atmosphere, filled with harmony and joy. Guests attending the event appreciated the rich and diverse Chinese culture, and commended on China's outstanding development over the past 70 years. They also expressed their confidence in China's future and aspiration for closer relations between China and Kuwait and further alignment of China's Belt and Road Initiative and Kuwait's 2035 vision to better benefit the people of both countries.

What's On



Prof Isam Zabalawi



Dr Sa'ad Al Omari



# ACK holds graduation ceremony

By Nawara Fattahova

343 students of the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) graduated on Monday. The graduation ceremony was held under the auspices of the Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr Hamed Al-Azmi at the Jumeirah Beach Hotel.

Prof Isam Zabalawi, President of ACK said that this is the graduation of a new cohort of the ACK students, and to confer upon them their degrees as an acknowledgement and endorsement for all the hard work they have put in during the past few years. "We are here to honor their achievements, whether joining their predecessors in the public or pri-

trustees, administrators, the faculty members, the students and the alumni we would not have reached this educational status that the ACK has achieved," he pointed out.

At ACK, the primary core value is to "Enable human potential within a culture of care". This in conjunction with ACK's vision: "To generate human capital equipped with practical knowledge and employability skills that contributes to the economic development and welfare of Kuwait" are the underpinning pillars of the ACK brand. ACK is based on the principle that learning is the vehicle that we as students, faculty members and staff use in order to know, to do, to be and to live together and to transform our

be impressed with the growing high quality of programs, academics and graduates. Today as you celebrate your graduation, I encourage you to enjoy your moment. This is a moment you will remember throughout your life. On this occasion I leave you with this message: Never stop learning. Seek wisdom from wherever you can find it, share what you know with others, and above all be kind. From this day forward, the real learning of life begins," she stated.

Dr Sa'ad Al Omari Chairman of the Board of Trustees expressed his sadness for the passing of our founding chairman, Abdullah Al-Sharhan. "Words fail to express the extent of my debt and gratitude to Al-Sharhan and I will strive with all my energy to keep true to his vision for this college and our country. I am honoured to welcome the esteemed members of our Board of Trustees and our international partners from Australia and Canada," he noted.

"I would like to thank the Private Universities Council for their guidance and support. Also special thanks to our faculty and staff, all those who are in attendance tonight, our students and their families and guests. To our students I say: you have worked very hard, with honesty and integrity, to be here tonight. You have earned not only your academic qualification, but also the right to go forth into the world and to shape it," he added.

Mahsa Rahimi represented the class of 2019. "Tonight is a special, momentous night for all of us graduates, teachers and parents. We are harvesting our hard-work and efforts that we have built over the years. We all did it. We have

accomplished one of many milestones of our lives. I joined ACK four years ago. A fresh high school graduate. And here I am today, graduating from the School of Business with a Bachelor's degree in Marketing. ACK opened all the doors of opportunities for us. ACK was more than just studies; it has taught us patience, perseverance, independence and commitment. It is a place where I built upon my experiences and shaped my personality," she stressed.

Mohannad elsayed spoke on behalf of his fellow graduates. "Thank you all for celebrating this special day with us. I thank my instructors, and all staff members at the Australian College of Kuwait and my parents for their continuous support. I can't forget how I felt when I first saw the aircraft, and when I was informed that we will be responsible for repairing it as aviation students. I can't deny that I was nervous about carrying such a responsibility, but at the same time, I was excited about the experience. Moreover, being a part of a new environment, I learned how to depend on myself to study and to explore the different aspects of aviation," highlighted elsayed.

"Truly, ACK is our second home that witnessed most of our encounters, success, and challenges that we have faced. At ACK, we were prepared to learn, explore and get to know ourselves. I have to mention that practicing in the aviation school workshop and hangar made me more confident and well prepared for my internship at Kuwait Airways. This experience made me proud of being part of the ACK community," he concluded.



Mohannad elsayed



Mahsa Rahimi



vate sectors, or in pursuing their higher education or in developing their own startups as innovators or entrepreneurs," he noted.

"Tonight, is an occasion not only for our graduates, but also for their families and friends, our partners from Australia and Canada, academic faculty members, members of our administrative body and all who are present with us tonight," added Zabalawi.

"I would like to welcome you all, and specially the members of the Board of Trustees, Australian Embassy counsel and the delegates from Central Queensland University and Cape Breton University who played a major role in leading the students today to receive internationally recognized qualifications. Without the diligent and effective ACK management including our board of

society," he explained.

Zabalawi concluded with a message for all of the graduates, parents, colleagues, and members of the administrative body. "The ACK is proud of you and of the knowledge, attributes and employability skills you have acquired, enabling you to work in a modern and authentic environment. At ACK our conducive environment energizes you to meet the needs of the workplace and to have a positive attitude as well as the consciousness associated with the social and ethical responsibilities".

Alastair Dawson spoke on behalf of the strategic academic partners for ACK offering congratulations to the latest cohort of graduates for this college. "As a group, we have been working with your College, ACK for a number of years now and collectively have continued to



Health & Science

# US FDA approves Global Blood Therapeutics sickle cell disease drug

WASHINGTON: The US Food and Drug Administration said on Monday it approved a drug from Global Blood Therapeutics Inc to treat sickle cell disease in adults and children 12 years or older. The treatment will be priced at \$10,417 per month, or around \$125,000 per year, and will be sold under the brand name Oxbryta. It is the second drug in recent days to win US approval for sickle cell anemia, and the first to target the underlying cause of the disease rather than symptoms.

Last week Novartis AG's Adakveo won US regulatory clearance to reduce the incidence of sickle cell-related pain crises, a common and debilitating symptom of the disease. "Today's approval provides additional hope to the 100,000 people in the US, and the more than 20 million globally, who live with this debilitating blood disorder," the FDA said in a statement.

GBT's drug, known chemically as voxelotor, works by preventing red blood cells from sickling, a deformation that restricts flow of oxygen in blood vessels, leading to severe pain and organ damage. GBT says that reduced blood cell sickling will significantly relieve symptoms in sickle cell patients. It will track patients' long-term symptom reduction in a confirmatory study it will launch by the end of this year.

GBT based the price of its drug partly on estimates of the annual cost of care for sickle-cell patients, which can currently run in excess of \$285,000 per year to manage patients' symptoms, GBT's chief executive officer, Ted Love, told

Reuters in an interview. "We felt we had the opportunity to price this drug in a way that funded innovation but was also a good deal for the wider healthcare system," Love said.

State Medicaid programs, which cover about half of US sickle cell patients, will receive discounts that bring the cost of the drug down to just under \$100,000 per year, or around \$8,000 per month, GBT executives said on a Monday conference call.

The Medicaid programs will take about three to six months to conduct a review of Oxbryta before providing widespread reimbursement, but some patients will still be able to begin treatment before that process is concluded, they said.

GBT expects that its drug, Oxbryta, will be used in combination with Novartis's drug, Adakveo, for the portion of sickle cell patients who have frequent pain crises. Love told Reuters. Novartis has priced Adakveo between \$84,852 and \$113,136 per year for most patients. The company's shares closed up about 7 percent. Sickle cell disease in the United States primarily affects African Americans.

About half of the patients the company expects to treat with Oxbryta are covered by Medicaid, and another 15 percent are covered by Medicare, GBT executives said. Sickle cell disease remains most prevalent in sub-Saharan African countries, where many of the estimated 300,000 children born annually with the condition may die before the age of 5. The disease is also common in India. — Reuters

## VIVA organizes Ski-Max calories challenge

KUWAIT: VIVA, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers and enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, and a subsidiary of STC Group, has organized an exciting sport event, in cooperation with Flare Fitness Center as part of the Prostate Cancer Awareness Campaign 'Move for Movember' campaign under the #because\_we\_care umbrella.

Many athletes have clubbed together at the fitness center to raise awareness about the prostate cancer and support the cause, and add to the real momentum building in the fight against this disease. The event featured surprises and Ski-Max calories challenge, and the winners who have burnt the most calories received valuable prizes from VIVA.

Hosting this special event was a way to highlight the significant role in which sports can play in prompting athletes to talk about Prostate Cancer, raise awareness of the disease and offer support to those suffering from it. In addition, to promote the determination to make prostate cancer a disease the next generation of men will be able to face.

This event falls in line with the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda at VIVA which strives to support various initiatives in the health, education, sports, environment and entrepreneurship arenas, all in benefit of our society.



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- 24-Hour Holter monitoring
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- WART Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistaloscope)
- Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
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- Gallstones & Abdominal Hernia Surgery

**Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:**

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- Fellow of American College of Surgery
- Canadian Board of General Surgery
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- American Board of Colo-Rectal Surgery
- American Board of Surgical Critical Care

**Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad**  
Surgery Department  
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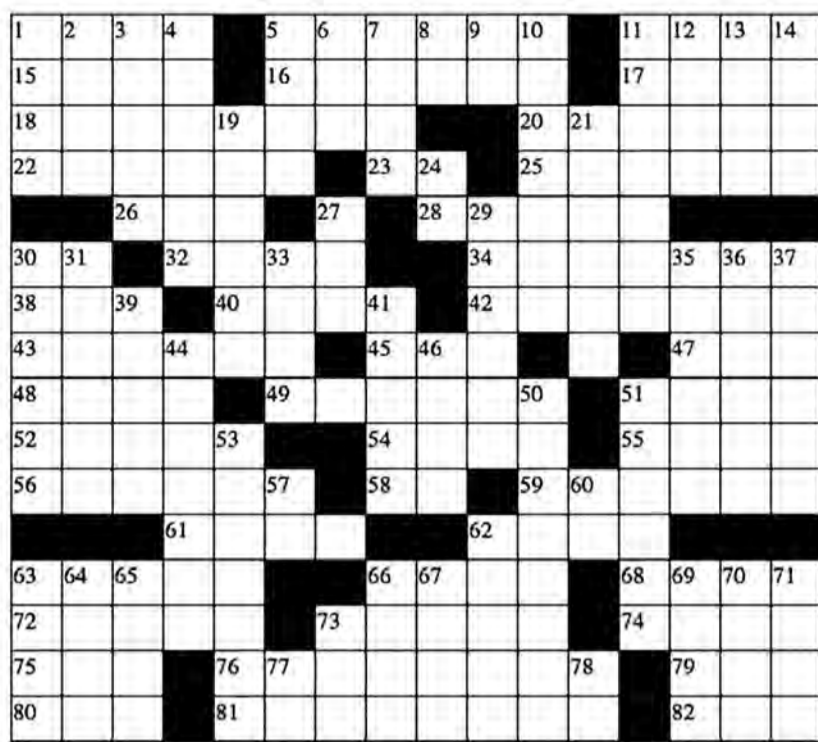
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- Gallbladder stones surgeries.
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- G.I. surgeries.
- Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- Anal surgeries.

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Stars

CROSSWORD 2370



ACROSS

1. Loose or flaccid body fat.
5. Of or relating to the palm of the hand.
11. A set of tags and rules (conforming to SGML) for using them in developing hypertext documents.
15. A star that ejects some of its material in the form of a cloud and become more luminous in the process.
16. A motorboat with an open deck or a half deck.
17. A midwestern state in north central United States in the Great Lakes region.
18. The chief mast of a sailing vessel with two or more masts.
20. A university town in east central Illinois adjoining Champaign.
22. A large strong and aggressive woman.
23. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
25. East Indian tree that puts out aerial shoots that grow down into the soil forming additional trunks.
26. Tag the base runner to get him out.
28. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
30. The district occupied entirely by the city of Washington.
32. A ballistic missile that is capable of traveling from one continent to another.
34. Beans and extinct related forms.
38. (Greek mythology) The winged goddess of the dawn in ancient mythology.
40. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
42. French philosopher and theologian.
43. (informal) Very bad.
45. Being six more than fifty.
47. Being two more than fifty.
48. A former copper coin of Pakistan.
49. Bright with a steady but subdued shining.
52. How a result is obtained or an end is achieved.
54. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
55. Freedom from difficulty or hardship or effort.
56. A serious (sometimes fatal) infection transmitted by the bite of an infected rat flea (especially bubonic plague).
58. A state in north central United States.
59. Feeling mild pleasurable excitement.
61. In bed.
63. Of short duration or distance.
68. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
72. A Portuguese province on the south coast of China and two islands in the South China Sea.
74. An amino acid that is found in the central nervous system.
75. A transuranic element that has not been found in nature.
76. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
79. A run that is the result of the batter's performance.
80. A hormone produced by the anterior pituitary gland.
81. Hard yellowish to brownish wax from leaves of the carnauba palm used especially in floor waxes and polishes.
82. The last (12th) month of the year.

DOWN

1. A federally chartered corporation that purchases mortgages.
2. A rich soil consisting of a mixture of sand and clay and decaying organic materials.

3. (zoology) Pertaining to or characteristic of birds.
4. A Japanese cheer of enthusiasm or triumph.
5. A series of steps to be carried out or goals to be accomplished.
6. An associate degree in applied science.
7. A substance for packing a joint or coating a porous surface to make it impervious to gas or liquid.
8. A hard brittle gray polyvalent metallic element that resembles iron but is not magnetic.
9. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
10. Long pinkish sweet leafstalks usually eaten cooked and sweetened.
11. Of heavy boots.
12. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
13. Tropical Asian starlings.
14. The provision of money temporarily (usually at interest).
19. Large high frilly cap with a full crown.
21. Any of 12 kings of ancient Egypt between 1315 and 1090 BC.
24. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
27. The rate at which heat is produced by an individual in a resting state.
29. Hard greenish-brown wood of the lignum vitae tree and other trees of the genus Guaiacum.
31. A tree of shrub of the genus Cornus often having showy bracts resembling flowers.
33. Common Indian weaverbird.
35. A large commercial and industrial city in northeastern Texas.
36. Having a melody (as distinguished from recitative).
37. Improved or corrected by critical editing.
39. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
41. A republic in southeastern Europe on the southern part of the Balkan peninsula.
44. (plate tectonic theory) A hypothetical continent including all the landmass of the earth prior to the Triassic period when it split into Laurasia and Gondwanaland.
46. Elevated open grassland in southern Africa.
50. One related on the mother's side.
51. A cylindrical drawing bag used by sailors to hold their clothing and other gear.
53. Devoid of brightness or appeal.
57. The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.
60. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
62. One of the four countries that make up the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
64. A loud bombastic declamation expressed with strong emotion.
65. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
66. The capital of Switzerland.
67. The chief solid component of mammalian urine.
69. Not easy.
70. A French abbot.
71. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
73. Any of various dark heavy viscid substances obtained as a residue.
77. An informal term for a father.
78. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.

Yesterday's Solution

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

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You are much more rational in your decision making as well as in your dealings or communications with others than ever before. This is a time for imagination and creativity. This, coupled with the ability to put your thoughts into words, allows you to gain the attention you need for your ideas. You have insight into your emotions and drive and you can talk about your ideas with great insight. On the home scene, you should be able to push forward with the family plans to eat a light meal and become involved with games and fun interaction with one another. If there are children present, plenty of teaching games give you the opportunity to join in fun quiz games.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

There is a lot going on in the emotional sector today. This is a new birth year time for you and it is not a time to look backward. It is better to look forward and to bring your goals forward and set tentative dates for developing your goals so you can adjust as you move forward and progress. It is not what other people think of your progress; it is your own personal progress from your own eyes that matters. If there is something left undone on your life-list, now is a good time to review and add some new ones. Perhaps you can move forward to something new.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This is a great time to be with others and to work together. You may be sought after as just the person for a particular job. A mystery evolves today and you may find the answer to some office problems of late. Secrets, conspiracies and the hidden links that unite all things take on a greater importance in your life. Digging into the past for hints about the present and future uncovers a lot of answers to the questions that do not seem to go away. Ultimate answers come from far away. Your psychic abilities are strong at this time-you may receive confirmation on your hunches. Do your best not to be unnecessarily enthusiastic about expenditures. You could teach through the example you set. Someone will please you with an act of kindness this evening.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your financial forecast may begin to pick up soon. You could find it is to your best advantage to save and be more organized in your personal as well as business finances. Do not pick out that new car today-you may be tempted to overlook some very important details. You may want to use this time to plan and plot your way to your goals' successes. This afternoon is a good time for surrounding yourself with friends and young people and for having a good time-go with the flow. You appreciate your particular situation and enjoy support from those around you. Hobbies are a wonderful way to get rid of frustration.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You are at your most practical when it comes to dealing and working with others. Winning the hearts of others can be a challenge you are eager to accept. You can talk most any customer into most any product on the sales floor. A little sense of humor is your winning attraction. Ideas spur quite a lot of conversation. You may be very eloquent in communicating the positive viewpoint of most subjects to people who will listen. Marriage may be in the forecast for you or for someone close to you. Think before you leap because if love is real, it will last. Choose someone who wants some of the same things from life that you want. Discuss in detail your aims, goals and objectives. If already married, this is the time to start enjoying married life.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You will naturally have a flair for the innovative, new and different. Ideas are flowing and could come with ease. You have a real instinct for what people want now, and this can lead to outstanding success if you capitalize on it. You may have some ideas for advertising and whether you are an artist or not, you may want to go to the art department and demonstrate your ideas. If there is no art department, give a description on paper and enjoy the response. You would be wise to keep a running notebook on your ideas. Later, these ideas in your notebook could be expanded and developed with little effort-you could find yourself selling your ideas and reaping some monetary rewards. Ultimate answers are available. Romance is strong.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You could be feeling intellectually and physically competitive today. You might need a quiet area in which to think through some difficult project. Consider temporary use of an empty office or perhaps the conference room or a library. Your concentration and efforts will reap rewards and satisfaction. If you remember your priorities, this can be a very productive day. This is a good time to think seriously about your career or work. Take a few notes on where you think you might want to go in your professional life; planning is everything. Additionally, you may find it favorable this evening to voice new ideas to family members. Winning the hearts of others can be a challenge you accept eagerly. Your efforts are worthwhile.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

There could be new opportunities for you to alter the types of things you do on a job. Teaching, coaching and lecturing are just some of the many avenues opening for you now. You may be moved to involve yourself with new job identification. Some past goals come to the forefront of your thoughts and become more obtainable. A new supervisor or manager may enter your life, acting as a catalyst to help you gain your goals. Be completely supportive of yourself by finding three things each week that will help you reach your goals. There is balance in your friendships and you enjoy the communication that comes while visiting over the backyard fence this afternoon.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Someone in authority may have very different values from yours. You may have a decision to make in the next few days as you tolerate a difficult authority figure or find a different job. You might decide to stick it out for a few weeks and then transfer. In another department there may be a way to make some personal progress. This is one of your best days for money and for romance. You have a natural sense of what the public wants at this time. You go the extra mile to keep your client happy. Later this afternoon you may have an opportunity to help out in some situation. This may mean a person in a wheelchair or an animal that is lost.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You prepare for future successes, consult with advisors and work on achieving rewards. Clear decisions are not difficult to find; a mentor will help you. You could find yourself other-oriented, with many thoughts and ideas for partnership, rather than doing things alone. You promise yourself that you will begin doing some serious research to find some sort of professional group or an organization with which to become involved that shares your views. Later today you may find yourself making phone calls back and forth between friends to get some sort of team sports competition lined up for early evening-with or without the kids.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

The focus for today seems to be on research. Perhaps you are becoming caught up on world affairs, class work or technical information. The work today is more information oriented, and you may find yourself in conferences, meetings or lectures learning about new technology. You will be exercising your intellectual curiosity today. This is not a good time to make decisions about business deals so if you can delay, do so. Suggestions to hold decisions, especially if you are voting or deciding as a group, may be a good move. Do not hesitate to engage in new ideas or undertake original projects, just as long as all the facts are known.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Careful-if this is your time for professional changes, seek advice in professional places. Being practical and conscientious will take on special importance. Sort through the important things in your life and prioritize as well as simplify. Sorting things out and getting them organized will keep you quite busy. Broadening your intellectual and spiritual horizons takes on a high priority. You are intent on seeing the big picture as well as getting to the point. Travel and further education help bring goals to completion. Being in touch with ideas and people on a grand scale keeps your mind busy. Family, home and relatives take up a big percentage of your time, particularly this evening. It would be best to give plenty of time to life-changing decisions.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Oliver Twist

Find and circle all of the words and names from *Oliver Twist*. The remaining letters spell the title of the first chapter of *Oliver Twist*.

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

AGNES FLEMING	DOGGER	LIMBKINS	ORPHAN
BARNEY	DUFF	LOCKET	PICKPOCKET
BEADLE	FAGIN	LONDON	PISTOL
BLATHERS	GALLOWES	LOSBERNE	ROSE MAYLIE
BOLTER	CAMPFIELD	MAGISTRATE	SIKES
BRITTLERS	GILES	MONKS	SOWERBERRY
BROWNLOW	GRIMWIG	MR. FANG	SURGEON
BULL'S-EYE	GRUEL	MRS. BEDWIN	TOBY CRACKIT
BUMBLE	HANDKERCHIEF	MRS. CORNEY	TOM CHITLING
CHARLEY BATES	HARRY MAYLIE	MRS. MANN	TRAPS
CHARLOTTE	HOUSEBREAKER	NANCY	UNDERTAKER
COACH	INHERITANCE	NOAH	WALSTCOAT
COURT	JAIL	OLD SALLY	WILL
DICKENS	LEEFORD	OLIVER TWIST	WORKHOUSE
DOCTOR			

Old West 3

ANVIL APOTHECARY BANK BARBER BOARDING HOUSE BOUNTY HUNTER BRIDLE BUFFALO BILL CODY CATTLE CHURCH COAL MINE DALTON GANG DEPUTY DODGE CITY FRONTIER GERONIMO GOLD RUSH HAYLOFT HOLSTER HORSE TROUGH HORSESHOE JAIL JESSE JAMES KERORENE LIVERY MAYOR MERCANTILE PASTURE PIG FEED PLOW PROSPECTOR RANGE RAWHIDE SADDLEBAG SAGEBRUSH SASPARILLA SETTLERS SILVER DOLLAR STABLE STOCKADE TOWN TRAIL BOSS TRAIN STATION WAGON TRAIN WRANGLER WYATT EARP

The hidden message is:  
COURAGE IS BEING SCARED TO DEATH AND SADDLING UP ANYWAY

Daily Sudoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

# Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2019



This picture shows a Vietnamese woman collecting incense sticks in a courtyard in the village of Quang Phu Cau on the outskirts of Hanoi. — AFP

## Famed Tokyo sushi restaurant Jiro left dreaming of Michelin stars

A famed Tokyo sushi restaurant where Barack Obama is said to have enjoyed the best sushi of his life has been dropped from the latest Michelin gourmet guide after it stopped accepting reservations from the general public. Sukiyabashi Jiro, immortalized in the 2011 documentary "Jiro Dreams of Sushi", has earned three Michelin stars every year since 2007 and is considered to dish up some of the world's greatest delicacies.

But the restaurant—where the chef's selection starts at 40,000 yen (\$360)—was glaringly absent from the Michelin Guide Tokyo 2020 when it was unveiled to the media on Tuesday

because it does not accept reservations. "We recognize Sukiyabashi Jiro does not accept reservations from the general public, which makes it out of our scope," said a spokeswoman from the Japanese branch of Michelin.

"It was not true to say the restaurant lost stars but it is not subject to coverage in our guide," she told AFP. "Michelin's policy is to introduce restaurants where everybody can go to eat." To win a coveted seat at the restaurant, you either need to be a regular, have special connections, or go through the concierge of a top hotel. On its website, Sukiyabashi Jiro says it is "currently experiencing difficulties in accepting reservations" and

apologizes for "any inconvenience to our valued customers."

"Unfortunately, as our restaurant can only seat up to 10 guests at a time, this situation is likely to continue," it says. The restaurant is run by sushi maestro Jiro Ono, well into his 90s, helped by his eldest son Yoshikazu. Another branch, run by his younger son and located in the modern Roppongi Hills complex, kept its two stars as it is open to public reservations. The main, basement restaurant opened its doors in 1965 and has remained in an ageing commercial building in a corner of the Ginza district ever since.

When then US President Barack Obama travelled to Tokyo in 2014, he

joined a long list of Ono's celebrity guests, including French master chef Joel Robuchon and Hollywood stars Hugh Jackman and Katy Perry. As Obama and Abe thrashed out trade talks, Ono senior served them his own selection of 20 pieces as he does to every diner, according to son Yoshikazu. "He (Obama) seemed to like chu-toro (medium fatty tuna) very much because he winked when he ate it," he said. The son said the president had eaten them all and praised the way he skillfully handled the delicacies. "He said three times, 'This is the best sushi I've ever had in my life,'" he added. — AFP



This file handout photo taken and released by Japan's Cabinet Public Relations Office shows Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, 2nd right, and US President Barack Obama, right, at the Sukiyabashi Jiro restaurant in Tokyo. — AFP

## Netflix makes deal to keep one of NY's oldest theaters open

Streaming giant Netflix will use New York's historic Paris theater, which had been shuttered earlier this year, for special events and screenings of its films—the latest twist in the company's ongoing spat with the traditional film industry. The theater—the city's last single screen movie house, located in the heart of Manhattan on 57th Street, not far from Central Park and the Plaza hotel—closed in late August after 71 years in business.

It had reopened in early November for what seemed like a one-off event—a limited theatrical run for Netflix's Oscar contender "Marriage Story" by New York director Noah Baumbach. But it would seem that Netflix had bigger plans. "Now, the iconic theater will be kept open and become a home for special Netflix events, screenings, and theatrical releases," the company said Monday in a series of Twitter messages.

The details of the deal were not disclosed, but industry site Deadline Hollywood said it was a 10-year lease agreement. Netflix has been in a low-grade battle with traditional Hollywood for some time over the Oscar eligibility requirements that films in contention run in reg-

ular theaters for a certain period of time. But many major theater chains have refused to deal with Netflix unless it consents to longer runs of its films—and a longer waiting period between any film's theatrical release and its streaming debut.

Currently, the waiting period generally agreed upon by studios and the major chains is 90 days. That means Netflix has relied thus far on indie movie houses for its releases, but the leasing of the Paris Theater would seem to mark a new phase in its strategy. For months, it has reportedly been in talks to buy the historic Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood.

On Monday, Deadline Hollywood reported that Netflix had indeed acquired a majority stake in that Los Angeles venue, but Netflix has yet to confirm the deal. The Paris opened in 1948, when screen legend Marlene Dietrich cut the ribbon. It turned into one of the country's most notable art house theaters, focusing on films often ignored by multiplexes. — AFP

## Congo rape victims take to catwalk to show female strength

Raped in war and now walking tall, survivors of sexual violence take to the catwalk on Monday to model a collection of fabrics designed to show strength and solidarity in the face of abuse. The 15 Congolese women—modeling in the capital Kinshasa—joined forces with Dutch textile firm Vlisco and five African designers to mark Monday's International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

"When I was designing for them, I didn't see victims. I just see incredibly strong women who have really begun to live after what they have been through and that is what

is so powerful and what the fabrics and clothes try to represent," said British-Nigerian designer Tolu Coker, whose clothes are worn by Rihanna.

Rape has been widely documented as a weapon of war in eastern Congo, which remains largely controlled by militia groups since the end of a 1998-2003 war in which foreign armies and rebels vied for control over mineral resources. "While we know about war, I don't think many of us really understand the lasting impact it has on women," said Coker.

The central African nation was ranked

amongst the 10 most dangerous countries to be a woman by a Thomson Reuters Foundation poll in 2018. Their plight is just one case in the United Nations spotlight on Monday, with events scheduled worldwide to draw attention to rape in war, domestic violence and female abuse.

### City of joy

The models at Monday's show came from the City of Joy charity, which was set up to help survivors of sexual violence in conflict and show women there can be life after rape. "I want the collection to spread, wide and far,

the message of strength of Congolese women, in particular, and world's women in general," said Jane, 34, raped multiple times by militias. "I want it to be a tool which will raise consciousness about gender equity and about women as strong, beautiful and amazing."

City of Joy was opened in 2011 by Nobel prize-nominated gynecologist Denis Mukwege, Congolese activist Christine Schuler Deschryver and US playwright Eve Ensler, best known for her play "The Vagina Monologues". The charity—the subject of a Netflix film in September—helps survivors overcome pain and stigma and emerge as

confident leaders through trauma counseling and training. So far, more than 1,100 women have passed through its program.

The collection's five fabrics carry vibrant floral prints in bold hues, made by Vlisco and inspired by the women's own lives. "The collection aims to capture their journey from the darkest of places to a place of hope and love. It also portrays the great strength that comes from sisterhood," said Vlisco designer Gabriela Sanchez. — Reuters

## Lifestyle | Features



Tofu, center, along with other vegetarian food is viewed at a store in Washington, DC. — AFP photos



Vegan stuffed peppers



Pumpkin pies



A vendor slices a vegetarian burger at a food truck.

In US, **plant-based diet** easier than ever, even at Thanksgiving

When Elysebeth Alfano hosts a Thanksgiving dinner for 12 next week at her home in Los Angeles, the menu will be traditional—with a few key changes that were all but impossible just a decade ago. For dessert, she'll have the staples that feature on nearly every American dinner table—pumpkin and apple pie. And the huge number of vegetable side dishes are not unusual. But the "turkey"—the centerpiece of the meal—will be a vegan-stuffed breast made of chickpeas, wheat gluten, tomato paste, mushroom broth, seasonings and red wine.

Her main dish reflects a shift in eating habits in the United States: there are an increasing number of Americans choosing a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle. But they're calling it something else. While still only around three percent of Americans identify as vegan and six percent identify as vegetarians, more and more offerings are being marketed as "plant-based"—a term which food industry watchers say is more palatable to all.

"Veganism is often linked with some sort of deprivation," explains Michael Robbins, spokesman for the three-year-old Plant Based Foods Association, which represents more than 100 companies including food giants like

the Campbell Soup Company.

"Plant-based is generally associated with the general benefits of eating plants" and "has been shown in research to have a greater acceptance to a broader set of consumers," he told AFP.

Indeed, nothing is more mainstream in America than fast food, and the giants are all in—Burger King is serving meatless Impossible Whoppers, and McDonald's is test-marketing its plant-based burger. "Just as the horse and buggy gave way to the car and the typewriter gave way to the computer, we are seeing more and more people go plant-based," says Alfano, a chef, coach and lifestyle expert. "In the first half of 2019, 248 million plant-based burgers were sold, 95 percent of which were bought by meat-eaters. The meat-eaters are the largest segment incorporating plant-based."

**Diet vs lifestyle**

For decades in America, veganism has been linked to a way of life that transcends food choices. Practitioners often don't only refuse to consume any animal-based products—they also don't wear clothes made from animal products like wool or leather. Devotees of

plant-based diets are generally all about the food, but they are happy to embrace the ethical debate as well, within reason.

Chicago-based artist Tammy Kohl grew up on a dairy farm in Wisconsin but has gradually shifted her diet, which has been completely plant-based for a year. "To keep weight off by taking dairy out of my diet made sense. I did vegan cleanses and felt great and that inspired me," said Kohl, who added that anti-animal cruelty efforts made cutting out meat easier. But she noted: "I still wear leather. If you own leather, you might as well wear it."

**Holiday options**

Jean Johnson, a sales consultant from Colorado, converted to a plant-based diet for health reasons and shies away from the term "vegan," which she says conjures up an image to which she does not subscribe. On Thanksgiving, she says she'll stick to eating vegetable side dishes at a friend's home—and isn't all that worried if she happens to inadvertently consume animal products. "I'm not so OCD about it where you can't put any butter in the mashed potatoes—it's such a small portion," Johnson said.

Alfano, who splits her time between Los

Angeles and Chicago, went completely vegan in 2016. Her Thanksgiving plans are proof positive that the stigma which once surrounded non-carnivores, especially on traditional American holidays, is slowly fading away. "What we have now that we didn't have 10 years ago is good taste. We have convenience and we have price," she says.

Kohl said she will celebrate the holiday with some relatives who raise beef cattle—a profession that hardly aligns with her veganism. But another family member is a vegetarian, and everyone gets along. "I usually bring my own plate and very quietly fill it up," Kohl said. "I'm not one of those preachy vegans."

**Fad or trend here to stay?**

Johnson believes that her plant-based diet helped her beat cancer, and she identifies another benefit of plant-based diets these days—she has seen her grocery bills plummet. "Meat and dairy, that's not cheap stuff, whereas rice and beans, lentils and potatoes are cheap," Johnson said. Alfano agreed, saying it would also help Americans save money if healthier eating meant they could stop taking certain medications such as those to control cholesterol.

"It's really expensive to be sick. If you can get off the pills, you'll really be saving money," she said. Of course, meat producers are hardly on board for all this, but they're not really worried either. Hillary Makens, director of media relations for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, said vegans and vegetarians constitute a tiny portion of the US market, and her industry has bigger concerns. "The beef industry has been competing against other proteins for a long time. When you think of chicken, pork, beans, peanut butter, all types of protein, it's not really a new thing," Makens said.

However, consumer research company Mintel said the number of new US food and drink products that mentioned "plant-based" grew 268 percent between 2012 and 2018. Additionally, in a May 2019 report, Mintel said 38 percent of US consumers report trying to incorporate more plant-based items into their diet. "Rarely in life do you ever get a triple winner—where one thing positively affects your health, positively affects your wallet, positively affects the environment and the planet," Alfano says. — AFP



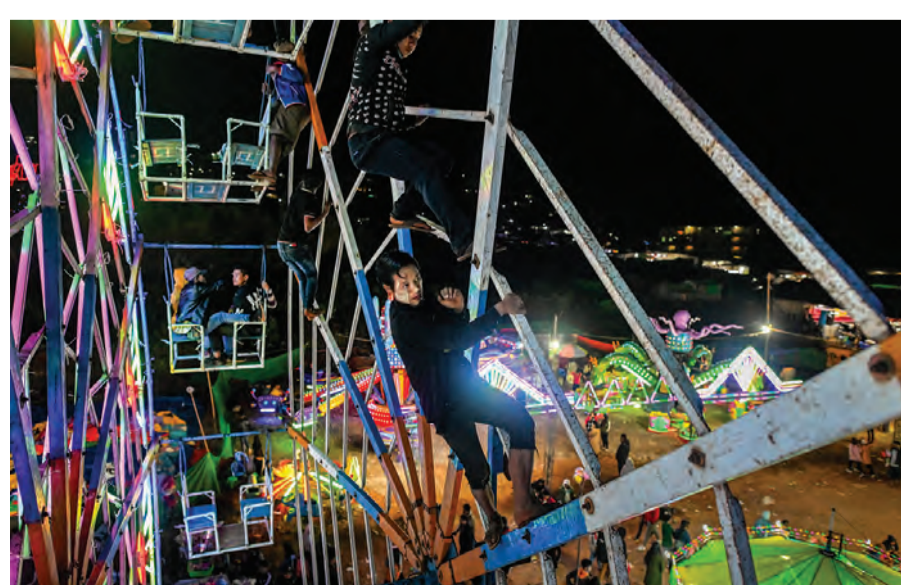
## Riding high on Myanmar's human-powered Ferris wheels

Aung careers towards the ground, hanging from one arm on the basket of one of Myanmar's human-powered Ferris wheels, reliant on gravity-defying agility and split-second coordination honed since the age of nine. Fireworks shower down onto jubilant crowds nearby from stunning, if treacherous, hot air balloons at the annual festival in Shan State's capital Taunggyi. As ear-splitting techno pumps out from the fairground, the team of lithe youngsters coax captivated onlookers onto their Ferris ride, hamster-wheeling it round to fill up the baskets.



Aung Sein Phyto, 22, blows his whistle and then scampers with his teammates up the 20-metre (60-foot) high structure. The wheel starts to turn, getting faster and faster, each worker adeptly leaping away to safety just before they crash into the ground. As the ride's kaleidoscopic neon lights become a blur and its delighted passengers cheer and scream, Aung jumps underneath—almost onto his back, like an extreme limbo—lunging up to give each basket an extra shove.

"I started working on these when I was nine," he tells AFP during a break. "My parents didn't like me doing it but I did it behind their backs," he confides with a grin, acknowledging it is "dangerous" work. Aung is one of several hundred young men working Myanmar's Ferris wheels—known as 'char yabhat'—at fairgrounds and festivals across the country. For nine months a year his team of 15 are on the road and they work without a day off, earning between 70 and 100 USD a month before resting up during the monsoon season. "We have a really good team spirit," says Aung, admitting they sometimes cannot resist teasing their female passengers. "When the girls go up high and we swing the baskets, they get really scared and scream," he says smiling—although he adds the team always chivalrously help them off the ride so they leave happy. Aung says he has no regrets about forgoing an education but admits to sometimes missing his family. A more normal life would not be for him, he insists, and instead plans to ride the wheel as long as he can. "It's all I know how to do." — AFP



These photos show crew members operating a human-powered ferris wheel in Taunggyi, Shan state. — AFP photos

## Apple TV+ deploys originality of M Night Shyamalan with 'Servant'

M Night Shyamalan—who shot to fame with his supernatural hit film "The Sixth Sense"—hasn't worked much in television, but he's bringing his uncanny aesthetic to the new Apple TV+ platform with the series "Servant." The director of "Unbreakable," "Glass" and "The Village" is aiming high with the new series, the first three episodes of which will stream from Thursday.

Although only 10 episodes have so far been filmed—the remaining seven will be released one by one until January 17—Shyamalan says he hopes to shoot 60 in total, and he's already worked out an ending. "When we think of long-form shows, how many are great from the first episode to the last? Can we count 10? I'm not sure," the director told journalists in New York.

"It's because of so much content, so much speed and we don't know where the end is. 'Hey, if everybody's watching, we're going to go on forever!'" he said. "Well, no, that's not how storytelling works. We have to know where we are." As Apple TV+ tries to muscle into a crowded streaming market dominated by the abundant content of Netflix and Disney+, Shyamalan wants to set himself apart with his distinctive style of storytelling.

"There's now ubiquitous content. So how can you differentiate yourself? I'm banking on non-spectacle as the way to make the ingredients extremely excellent. I'm banking on the sushi," he said. He presents himself as an artist of the onscreen image, capable of creating every aspect of an immediately identifiable universe, as he did with "The Sixth Sense," which made him a hot global property. "That why I moved the camera at that speed, at that moment, at that lighting, at that angle—it was thought through and you inherently feel that," he said. "When you see 500 (series) but one has that kind of integrity, you'll stop."

**Buried trauma**

While Shyamalan usually writes his own screenplays, allowing him to imbue his work with his own distinctive character, "Servant" was scripted by British television writer Tony Basgallop. The show is infused with the director's trademark anxiety-inducing music, dark lighting and suffocating atmosphere. The story centers on a couple, Dorothy (Lauren Ambrose) and Sean (Toby Kebbell), who are struggling to cope with the death of their baby. The mother in particular slips into denial. Enter Leanne, who had been hired as the baby's nanny but who now joins the mother in her new alternative reality—and eventually starts to take it to new and unexpected levels. The suspense builds slowly, but viewers are drawn in by the underlying tensions and unsettling characters who are sometimes reassuring, and sometimes disturbing. Nell Tiger Free, who plays Leanne, said it was all about "finding the balance between being creepy and unnerving and also trying to be accessible. Because you want to be unnerved and you want to be freaked out by her, but you also want to care about her."

Co-star Rupert Grint—Ron of "Harry Potter" fame—chimed in: "It poses so many questions. It's so mysterious." The series is set inside a house in Philadelphia, where the India-born Shyamalan was raised, creating a self-contained world that is reminiscent of the theater. "This felt like a stage, rather than a set," said Kebbell. Basgallop said that he and Shyamalan "both like to tell stories that are a little bit uncomfortable, that don't take the easy option all the time."

"We're entertained but there's something darker underneath it," said Shyamalan. "We're really talking about some human trauma that's underneath it all." More than any other series marking the debut of Apple TV+, "Servant" could help to define the new streaming platform with a kind of originality that the tech company has always prided itself on. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Manfred Dederl poses at the 'Supercandy Pop-Up Museum Vol. 2' in Cologne, western Germany.

Instagram influencer 'Anmaykaa' is being photographed at the 'Supercandy Pop-Up Museum Vol. 2' in Cologne, western Germany. — AFP photos

# AT INSTAGRAM HOTSPOT, LOLS TRUMP LIKES

**C**rammed into a supermarket trolley, Kiki Malliora squealed with laughter as she rolled past her sister at Cologne's pop-up selfie museum, where visitors said having fun outweighs the hunt for "likes" in a changing social media landscape. "Sure, the setting is fake," said the 38-year-old office administrator, dressed in a black crop t-shirt and jeans. "But what matters to me is that the picture is real and that people can see I'm having a good time."

crying on a "difficult and not so pretty" day. Instagram is even experimenting with making the "like"-button invisible in response to concerns over its mental health impact. Critics say younger users especially report feeling anxious or self-conscious if their posts don't perform well.

### A lot of work

"When I see those elaborately staged pictures, I just think: God, that must have taken a lot of work," said Malliora. Her younger sister Nathalie, who keeps her Instagram account private for pre-approved followers only to see any uploaded photos and videos she shares, nodded in agreement. Pop-up attractions like the one in Cologne have sprung up across the globe in recent years, offering anyone armed with a smartphone a plethora of brashly colored, playful settings to liven up their social media presence.

The Supercandy Museum returned to the western German city this month after a previous six-month stint drew over 42,000 mainly female visitors, with full-price tickets costing 29 euros (\$32). The man behind Supercandy, Frank Karch, said ticket sales were "noticeably up" for the second edition, this time located in an industrial building in the city's hip Ehrenfeld district. "Eventually this craze too will run its course," he told AFP.

But the emergence of creators championing unfiltered, real-life pictures isn't a threat to his business model, he said, arguing that social media was diversifying so much there was a niche for everyone. "The overarching mega-trend will stay the same it has been since the invention of painting: wanting to have a nice picture of yourself," he said.

### Pink cash

Social media expert Klemens Skibicki, a professor at the Cologne Business School, agreed but said the gulf was widening between those who see social media as a hobby, and those who use it as a tool to promote themselves or a brand with some influencers earning enough to quit their day jobs. Eschewing "selfies", which anyone can take, influencers tend to opt more for "posies" taken by someone else, often a professional photographer, he said, to keep their posts looking polished and aspirational.

At Supercandy, German reality TV couple Ginger Costello Wollersheim and Bert Wollersheim—who have 85,000 followers between them—played with piles of pink \$100 bills as their photographer snapped away. "If you don't post good pictures for a while, you get fewer likes and people unfollow. So we're here to make beautiful, creative photos," said Ginger, 33, smiling broadly. Her long-haired husband Bert, a regular feature in Germany's tabloid press, said they weren't "fanatical" about chasing "likes".

"Coming here is fun, it changes our story up a bit and that's good for us professionally," added the 68-year-old, clad in shades and sparkly trainers. But not everyone could see the appeal of what is essentially a giant photo studio. Chatting with her friends in a busy Cologne shopping street, high school student Anna-Maria cringed at the thought of forking out money to pose against an artificial backdrop. "That's way too fake. I prefer spontaneous snapshots, where someone is laughing or in the middle of doing something," the 17-year-old said. "And I'd only post a selfie if my friends were in it too." — AFP



People pose at the 'Supercandy Pop-Up Museum Vol. 2' in Cologne, western Germany.

With its bubblegum-pink balloons, neon-colored ball pits and retro American diner as eye-popping, ready-made photographic backdrops, the Supercandy Museum is an Instagrammer's dream. But the attraction's three-month run comes as a new wave of social media users prize authenticity over staged photos, and celebrity influencers are increasingly honest about the effort that goes into keeping up a picture-perfect feed.

US singer Demi Lovato attracted almost 10 million Instagram "likes" when she posted an unedited bikini shot revealing her cellulite, while Hollywood actress Drew Barrymore showed herself



# Unmasked: Costume capers stir New York's Times Square

**B**eneath flashing billboards and sparkling skyscrapers, Maria Bega moves through Times Square's pulsating crowds, dressed as Princess Anna from animated Disney movie "Frozen." The 32-year-old Peruvian is one of dozens of men and women, mostly from Latin America, trying to eke out a living as costumed characters inside New York's beating heart. Dressed as Sesame Street fuzzballs Elmo and Cookie Monster and superheroes like Batman and Hulk, they pose for photos with tourists in exchange for tips, vying with topless women in body paint and a semi-naked guitar-playing cowboy.

For many visitors, the mascots are part of the frenetic entertainment district's charm but to some New Yorkers they symbolize a crowded neon nightmare that is best avoided. The characters are currently the subject of many complaints, proof of how much the area once known for peep shows, pornos and crack cocaine has been cleaned up in recent decades. With its bright lights and giant branded stores, the famous intersection is a symbol of the city that never sleeps and its

untold opportunities. Where dreams are made of, as the Alicia Keys and Jay-Z song goes.

But for Bega the reality is more of a nightmare. She says she sometimes makes just \$20 a day. "You come here to waste your time, to freeze to death, and sometimes you don't even earn enough to eat," Bega tells AFP in Spanish, her blue costume complete with ginger pigtails. Bega got into the work through a friend and has colleagues from Mexico, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Ecuador. Many bring their costumes from their home countries, where they can be purchased fairly cheaply, or buy them online in the United States where they commonly cost upwards of \$200. They require no permit to operate.

### Naked

"Some are a little pushy but most of them are nice. They're out here making a living like everybody else," says 62-year-old Kentucky resident Dave Duke, who took a photo of his wife with a costumed Statue of Liberty. The entertainers say making money has become

more difficult following several harassment and groping allegations that sparked articles in local tabloids about "costumed creeps."

In September, a man in an Elmo costume was arrested after being accused of groping the buttocks of a 14-year-old girl. "Because of this the police came to bother us. They're hardly letting us work," says Bega, who does a second job in the evenings in order to care for her kids aged two and ten. Jose from Mexico, a different "Elmo" to the one arrested, says one or two of the hucksters are spoiling it for everyone else.

"Children used to run to me but now they see headlines about Elmo being a child molester and they don't," he explains, declining to give his surname. Nearby, Robert Burck is having a better time of it, belting out tunes on his guitar while wearing only underpants, a cowboy hat and cowboy boots. The 48-year-old known as the "Naked Cowboy" has been a regular fixture in Times Square for 20 years and says he makes around \$150,000 a year in tips.

"I absolutely love the fact that I'm working in a den of thieves," he jokes to AFP, as

CD sellers and ticket touts hustle with tourists. Renamed Times Square from Longacre Square in 1904 after The New York Times newspaper moved its headquarters there, the area has had its problems over the years. For chunks of the 20th century it was a hotbed of vice where illegal drugs and prostitution flourished and entertainment centered on pornographic theatres and sex shows. The area, heavily policed like much of New York due to fears it could be a target of terror attacks, is much less seedy today.

### Crazy

Up to 450,000 people are estimated to cross Times Square every day but some New Yorkers try to find a way around it if they can. Under discussions such as "Why do New Yorkers dislike Times Square?" on Quora, locals cite crowds, overpriced restaurants, stores selling tourist tat, and the costumed characters. The Times Square Alliance, a non-profit that supports local businesses, wants to improve the famous intersection further by reining in the mascots. It dislikes their pack-like modus operandi where one

puts an arm around an unwitting tourist before others rush over to be in the photo and demand money.

"Times Square is always a little bit crazy. It's all about capitalism," Alliance president Tim Tompkins tells AFP at the Square's northern tip between Broadway and Seventh Avenue. "But what we're objecting to here is that sometimes it's not voluntary," he adds. Since 2016 the characters' commercial activities have been restricted to specific zones but some roam outside the marked areas.

The Alliance believes better regulation of the costumed characters by city authorities would make Times Square even more family friendly. "We're trying to make the experience the best for people who have the opportunity to visit here," says Tompkins. Times Square is nicknamed "The Crossroads of the World." There, Bega finds that she is at a crossroads of her own. "The work is not sustainable. I don't know if I can continue like this," she says, before running off to join her friend dressed as Winnie the Pooh. — AFP



Two people dressed as 'Sesame Street' character Elmo, along with a man dressed as 'Batman,' greet people on 42nd Street in New York. — AFP photos

A person dressed as 'Sesame Street' character Cookie Monster poses for a photo with tourists.



## Pompeii's grand baths unveiled, with hidden tragedy

Magnificent thermal baths designed to be the jewel of Pompeii but destroyed by a volcanic eruption before they could be completed opened to visitors for the first time on Monday after a painstaking excavation. Marble pillars and blocks lie where they were abandoned when the city was submerged by a pyroclastic flow from Mount Vesuvius in the 79 AD disaster.

could afford it—most citizens, but not slaves. Recent digs at Pompeii have offered up several impressive finds, including an inscription uncovered last year that proves the city near Naples was destroyed after October 17, 79 AD, and not on August 24 as thought.

Archeologists in October discovered a vivid fresco depicting an armor-clad gladiator standing victorious as his wounded opponent gushing blood, painted in a tavern believed to have housed the fighters as well as prostitutes. Along with the baths, visitors could from Monday visit a small domus sporting a racy fresco depicting the Roman god Jupiter, disguised as a swan, impregnating the Greek mythological figure of Queen Leda. Across the cobble Via del Vesuvio, the striking House of the Golden Cupids reopened after work on its mosaic floors.

### Biggest challenge

While treasure hunters regularly pilaged Pompeii down the centuries looking for precious jewels or artifacts, whole areas have yet to be explored by modern-

day archaeologists. Each discovery helps historians understand not only what life was like in the ancient city, but also what happened in the dramatic final hours, as the skies turned to fire and ash, Osanna said. The Grand Pompeii Project, which was part funded by the EU, winds up at the end of this year, but the Italian government has earmarked 32 million euros for the digs to continue.

Violent weather events caused by climate change "are our biggest challenge," said Osanna, whose new book "Pompeii-Time Regained" describes the race to preserve the vulnerable UNESCO world heritage site. "We have 50 people—restorers, archaeologists, architects, engineers-on site permanently, who carry out inspections and intervene where necessary, and that number will rise to 70 next year," he added. The ruined city in southern Italy is the second most visited tourist site in the country, after the Colosseum in Rome, with just under four million visitors in 2019. — AFP



A general view shows Pompeii's thermal baths.

But excavators also found a victim of the disaster, the skeleton of a child who had sought shelter there in vain.

The architects "were inspired by Emperor Nero's thermal baths in Rome. The rooms here were to be bigger and lighter, with marble pools," the archaeological site's director Massimo Osanna told AFP. The Central Baths lie in an area restored under the Great Pompeii Project, launched in 2012 to save the historical site after the collapse of the 2000-year-old "House of the Gladiators", which sparked outrage worldwide.

"It was an emotionally charged dig," said Alberta Martellone, 43, the archaeologist who led a team of an anthropologist, geologist and volcanologist in studying the skeleton of the child, who died aged between eight and 10. "He or she was looking for shelter, and found death instead", she said.

### Life interrupted

The excavation "was also moving from an architectural point of view, because it is unusual to find a building so large, with such ample rooms, in this densely built up city. It transmits a sense of grandiosity," she said. The construction site with its small skeleton "is a sign of life interrupted, on more than one level," she said.

The city's original public bathhouses were smaller, darker and often overcrowded; the new complex would have provided a more luxurious setting for all those who



A general view shows the House of the Golden Cupids.



## From 'Godfather' to 'Irishman', Mafia is gift that keeps on giving

Stories about the mob have become offers that Hollywood cannot seem to refuse. "The Irishman," Martin Scorsese's new movie arriving on Netflix on Wednesday about the Bufalino crime family and famed union boss Jimmy Hoffa, marks the latest entry in a genre that has fascinated audiences and filmmakers for decades. Pop culture watchers say that is hardly surprising given the combination of crime, family, violence and the American Dream that Hollywood tales about the Mafia offer.

"It's a genre that really hits that sweet

spot between a fascination with crime and a set of relatable family dynamics," said David Schmid, editor of "Violence in American Popular Culture" and an associate professor of English at the University at Buffalo. "The Irishman," starring Robert De Niro, Al Pacino and Joe Pesci, follows offerings ranging from "Little Caesar" in 1931 to "The Godfather" and "The Sopranos" that have reaped rewards both at the box office and at awards.

After strong reviews, Scorsese's return to the kind of Italian-American territory he explored in "Goodfellas" and "Casino" is

expected to be a leading contender at next year's Oscars. "In many ways, the Mafia took over from the Western as the great American epic," said Robert Thompson, pop culture professor at Syracuse University. "It's about the settling of the urban frontier as opposed to the geographical frontier, and it's also a great immigration story," he said.

Large Italian-American families, often gathered around dinner tables heaving with pasta, give audiences strong characters to root for, even if they are on the wrong side of the law. Mafia films also give a twist to the

classic American immigrant story of arriving in a new country, having to fend for one's self and working hard to achieve goals, Thompson said. When HBO's TV series "The Sopranos" ushered in the notion of an emotionally conflicted mob boss, it deepened the morally ambiguous territory that mobsters inhabit on screen, but which helps make them so appealing.

"The reason these neurotic Mafiosi resonate with us is that we can all relate to being in a job that we don't want to do," said Schmid. Yet, while violence is a key

part of the package, there is often less blood-curdling violence than other action movies. "If you were to make a really explicitly violent Mafia movie, that wouldn't be so popular with the audience," said Schmid. "The audience would prefer to be carried away by the romance of the quintessentially immigrant narrative where a person goes from nothing to becoming a godfather." — Reuters



# 13 French troops killed in Mali helicopter collision



This combination of undated handout pictures made available yesterday by the French Army Information and Public Relations Service (SIRPA) shows the thirteen French soldiers killed in Mali in a helicopter collision on Monday. — AFP

PARIS: Thirteen French soldiers were killed in Mali when two helicopters collided during an operation against insurgents in the country's restive north, officials said yesterday, the heaviest single loss for the French military in nearly four decades. The accident occurred late Monday when three helicopters and a squadron of Mirage jets arrived to support ground troops pursuing the fighters in the Liptako region, near the borders of Burkina Faso and Niger, the defense ministry said.

The accident brought to 41 the number of French troops killed in the Sahel region since Paris intervened against Al-Qaeda-affiliated militants in Mali in 2013. It also again underscored the challenge for France of trying to control an insurgency in an area the size of Western Europe. Defense Ministry Florence Parly said Monday's operation was particularly risky because it took place in "total darkness" on a moonless night, but the exact cause of the collision

remains unknown.

Shortly after troops engaged the insurgents fleeing on motorbikes and in a pick-up truck, a Tiger attack helicopter collided with a Cougar military transport helicopter. Both aircraft crashed not far from each other, killing all on board, the ministry said. Mali has been besieged by militants carrying out deadly strikes against army bases and other targets in recent weeks, a flare-up of violence despite years of efforts to stem the attacks.

Addressing journalists in Paris, Parly said President Emmanuel Macron would lead a commemorative service for the soldiers at the Invalides military hospital and museum in Paris "in the coming days". General Francois Lecointre, speaking alongside Parly, said the "black box" flight data recorders had been recovered from both aircraft. He did not identify the insurgents, but said the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) - an affiliate of the Middle

East terror group - was the main insurgent force in the area.

One of the victims Monday was the son of French Senator Jean-Marie Bockel, a centrist former government minister who sits on the senate's armed forces committee, the father confirmed to AFP. "These 13 heroes had just one goal: To protect us. I bow my head in front of the pain of their families and comrades," President Emmanuel Macron said on Twitter. Mali's President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita said the soldiers had died for Mali and all Sahel countries, as well as for France. "The loss is heavy but the peoples of the Sahel share your bereavement," he said in a letter to Macron.

France's 4,500-member Barkhane force in Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger and Mauritania, is tasked with building up and training local security forces but also participates in operations against the insurgents. Yet French officials acknowledge that local security forces remain woefully under-

equipped and under-financed for shouldering the anti-jihadist fight despite years of French engagement.

And while Britain has provided helicopters and security personnel, and the US offers intelligence support and funding, Paris has failed to convince EU allies to contribute significant troops to the Sahel fight. Such warnings have given grist to critics who say France risks becoming bogged down in a fight it cannot win without significant new investment in soldiers and material. While most parties back the Barkhane operation, the far-left France Unbowed party called on the government yesterday to open a "serious and rational discussion to consider the ways out of this war". But Parly said Monday that "this is not the time for questioning the merit or not of this operation. It's a time for mourning."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel offered her "sincere condolences" to the soldiers' families, while Ursula von der

Leyen, the incoming EU Commission chief, said "we share the pain of all French people". "As a former Defense Minister, I know the true value and importance of the work French troops are doing to fight terrorism, for the people of Mali as much as for the people of Europe," von der Leyen said on Twitter.

The accident was the heaviest loss for the French army since the 1983 attack on the barracks of a multinational force in Beirut during Lebanon's civil war, which claimed the lives of 58 paratroopers as well as 241 Americans. It comes after France announced the death last month of Ali Maychou, a Moroccan leader of the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM), considered the top jihadist leader in Mali. Since January, more than 1,500 civilians have been killed in jihadist violence in Mali and Burkina Faso, and more than one million people have been internally displaced across the five countries, the UN said this month. — AFP

## 3 Baltimore men exonerated after 36 yrs in prison

WASHINGTON: Three Baltimore men who spent 36 years in prison were exonerated on Monday of the 1983 murder of a teenage boy who was shot dead over a jacket. Alfred Chestnut, Andrew Stewart and Ransom Watkins were serving life sentences for the shooting of DeWitt Duckett, a 14-year-old student at Harlem Park Junior High School in West Baltimore. Duckett was shot in the neck inside his school and had his Georgetown University jacket stolen. It was the first fatal shooting of a student in a Baltimore public school and drew widespread press attention at the time.

"These three men were convicted, as children, because of police and prosecutorial misconduct," Baltimore state's attorney Marilyn Mosby said after the three were formally exonerated by a city circuit court judge and released from prison. "What the state, my office, did to them is wrong," Mosby said. "They deserve so much more than an apology. We owe them real compensation - and I plan to fight for it." In a statement, the state's attorney office said "detectives targeted the three men, all 16-year-old Black boys, using coaching and coercion of other teenage witnesses to make their case".

According to the Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project (MAIP), which worked to secure the



BALTIMORE: (From left) Alfred Chestnut, Andrew Stewart and Ransom Watkins pose for a photo after their release on Monday. — AFP

release of the "Harlem Park Three," four teenage witnesses identified Chestnut, Stewart and Watkins at their trial but later recanted their testimony. The witnesses initially said one person committed the shooting but identified the three as the assailants under pressure from police, the MAIP said in a statement. Chestnut was later seen wearing a Georgetown jacket but his mother produced a receipt for the jacket of the university made popular by its basketball team.

At a press conference following the release of the three, Watkins said "this should have never happened". "Somebody's got to pay for this," he said. "You can't just leave this like this. This fight is not over," Watkins said.

"You all will hear from us again." The exoneration of the three men followed a joint investigation by the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Conviction Integrity Unit, MAIP and other groups.

"Everyone involved in this case - school officials, police, prosecutors, jurors, the media, and the community - rushed to judgment and allowed their tunnel vision to obscure obvious problems with the evidence," MAIP executive director Shawn Armbrust said. According to the state's attorney's office, six wrongfully convicted men have previously been released following investigations involving the Conviction Integrity Unit. — AFP

## Thai deer found with 7kg plastic in stomach

BANGKOK: A wild deer was found dead after swallowing 7 kilograms of plastic bags and other trash in Thailand, an official said yesterday, raising the alarm on waste littering the country's waters and forests. The Southeast Asian country is one of the world's largest consumers of plastic, with Thais using up to 3,000 single-use plastic bags each per year, whether for wrapping street food, takeaway coffee or packing groceries.

Marine animals like turtles and dugongs have died in its waste-choked waters, and autopsies have found that plastic in the stomach lining contributed to their deaths. Now the scourge of plastic waste is affecting Thailand's animals on land. Officials said a 10-year-old deer was found dead in a national park in Nan province, around 630 km north of capital Bangkok.

An autopsy discovered "plastic bags in the stomach, which is one of the causes of his death", said Kriangsak Thanompun, director of the protected region in the Khun Sathan National Park. The bags contained coffee



Veterinarians examine pieces of waste recovered from the stomach of a dead deer at Khun Sathan National Park in Thailand's Nan province on Monday. — AFP

grounds, instant noodle packaging, garbage bags, towels and also underwear, according to photos provided by the national park.

The discovery of the deer comes months after a sick baby dugong won hearts in Thailand as she fought for recovery, only to pass away from an infection exacerbated by plastic bits lining her stomach. The demise of Mariam in August was widely mourned on social media, reviving public debate on Thailand's urgent

need to tackle its plastic addiction.

The loss of the wild deer is "another tragedy", Kriangsak said. "It shows we have to take seriously and reduce... single-use plastic," he said, calling for "nature-friendly products" to be used instead. Several major retailers - including the operator of the ubiquitous 7-Eleven convenience stores - have pledged to stop handing out single-use plastic bags by January next year. — AFP



MUMBAI: BJP leader and Chief Minister of Maharashtra Devendra Fadnavis (left) tenders his resignation to Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari yesterday. — AFP

## BJP forced out in Maharashtra

MUMBAI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party was forced out of power yesterday in Maharashtra state, home to the country's financial capital Mumbai, following the collapse of its short-lived coalition. Hard-fought state elections last month saw Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) win the largest share of seats but not enough to form a government on its own, prompting weeks of haggling that culminated in the imposition of presidential rule on Maharashtra two weeks ago.

The BJP managed to eke out a surprise agreement with a top leader from the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) on Saturday, but victory was fleeting, after other NCP leaders denounced the deal, leading to its dissolution. BJP lawmaker Devendra Fadnavis resigned as chief minister yesterday, telling

reporters that the party could not form a government.

Although the BJP had previously governed the country's richest state in a coalition with its right-wing regional ally Shiv Sena, the alliance broke up after the October election due to a power-sharing dispute. Shiv Sena and its ideological rivals, the center-left Indian National Congress, and the NCP are expected to stake a joint claim to form a government instead.

"The fact that these parties, which have so little in common, are coming together just to keep the BJP out - this has very dangerous implications for Modi and his party," said Dhaval Kulkarni, author of a book on Shiv Sena. "After all the horse-trading last week, the BJP has basically ended up with egg on its face," he told AFP. India has been battling an economic slowdown, and the loss of power in Maharashtra, whose capital Mumbai is home to business tycoons, the stock market and the glitzy Bollywood film industry, is a big blow to Modi. — AFP

## ID excludes homeless, trans people in India

BANGKOK: Ten years after it was introduced, India's national digital identity system is becoming ubiquitous in the country, even as large numbers of homeless and transgender people are excluded and many denied essential services, a study showed. More than 1.2 billion Aadhaar IDs have been issued, according to government data. It is the world's largest biometric identity system, and

the 12-digit ID is used for everything from school enrolments to tax filings.

But an estimated 102 million people do not have Aadhaar, including 30 percent of India's homeless population and more than a quarter of its third-gender citizens, said a report published late on Monday by Dalberg, a consulting firm. Those without Aadhaar include about 90 percent of residents in the northeastern state of Assam, where nearly 2 million people were left off a list of citizens published in August.

"The most marginalized populations are less likely to have Aadhaar and more likely to have errors in their Aadhaar information," said the report. The errors could "lead to denial of welfare services, and at times exclusion," it said. — Reuters



Sports

# Win or don't eat: The Philippines' poverty-driven, world-beating pool stars

Philippines is the only country with a man and woman shooter in top five world rankings

MANILA: Pool isn't just a game in the Philippines but a way to make a living, driving a fiercely competitive scene that has produced some of the world's top players. The game played in dirt-floor pool halls with bumpy tables in thousands of little towns has provided an escape route from the grinding poverty endured by millions.

Though competition is ferocious from places like Taiwan and China, the Philippines is today the only country with a man and woman shooter in the top five of the World Pool-Billiard Association rankings.

"If you miss that shot, you might not eat," said Ted Lerner, a US-born journalist who has made a life in the Philippines, summing up the pressure they play under. It means the Philippines will be well placed for the billiards, pool, snooker and carom events at the Southeast Asian Games, starting in and around Manila this week, where 10 gold medals are on offer.

Perhaps the best example of the Philippine tradition is Efrén 'The Magician' Reyes, a former world champion in both eight- and nine-ball pool and considered one of the best to ever pick up a cue.

The eighth child in a poor family of nine siblings, he left his hometown north of Manila to live with his uncle who owned a pool hall in the capital. He started playing at eight years old, looking for a way out of poverty.

"I saw my uncle win cash after playing billiards and I realised I can earn a living from here," 65-year-old Reyes told AFP, between shots at a Manila pool hall. He rose to prominence playing for money and hustling in the United States, and was part of the so-called "Filipino invasion" that took over the sport in the 1980s.

"They call the Philippines the pool capital of the world," Marissa Guinto, sports psychologist and profes-

sor at the University of the Philippines, told AFP. "Even the Americans... have a hard time competing against Filipinos," she added.

**'MONEY FOR EVERYDAY FOOD'**

The incubator that produced these players goes back to the 1900s when American soldiers stationed in the Philippines played pool as a pastime, and fueled the game's growth.

As pool spread, so did the practice of betting on the matches. As a result, the game was picked up by Filipinos who were literally starving for a win.

"We couldn't find money for our everyday food," Carl Biado, the men's number four in WPA rankings, told AFP. "I started with just 20 peso bets (\$0.39) and I eventually made a living out of billiards," said Biado, 36.

Biado won the world nine-ball title in 2017 and broke the Philippines' seven-year championship drought in the event. The success of Filipino shooters has changed the perception of pool as a poor man's game, and helped build future world champions like Biado and Rubilen Amit, ranked the third best female player in the world, who grew up watching pool on TV. One of the watershed moments was Reyes winning the world nine-ball title in 1999, a match televised live back home. "It really opened the consciousness of Filipinos that it's a legitimate sport. A lot of Filipinos gravitated towards that," Guinto, the sports psychologist, said.

Amit started out working in her family's cargo logistics business, but when it hit the rocks financially she turned to pool. "Basketball was my first love, but I am not tall enough. So I pursued billiards," Amit told AFP, echoing the national obsession with hoops.

"Playing billiards helped my family. In 2009, I was



MANILA: In this photo taken on November 7, 2019, Filipino Efrén "The Magician" Reyes, a multiple world champion, plays pool at a billiard hall in Manila. Pool isn't just a game in the Philippines but a way to make a living, driving a fiercely competitive scene that has produced some of the world's top players. — AFP

blessed to win the world championships and be given financial blessings. That's how we recovered," Amit, 38, said. The win-or-go-hungry attitude is key, but players may also get a boost from the nation's legion of iffy pool

tables. "Players in poor communities aren't picky about table surfaces. In fact, the bumpy surfaces may have bred better cue masters," Severino Sarmenta, a professor and veteran sportswriter said. — AFP

## Kuwaiti jet ski champion feted for breaking world record



Kuwait Olympic Committee's President Sheikh Fahad Al-Sabah.



Renowned Kuwaiti jet skier Mohammad Burabie. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: Renowned Kuwaiti jet skier Mohammad Burabie has been honored by the country's Olympic committee for cracking a Guinness world record for the second time in his career, picking up 22 medals at a world championship event. The Kuwaiti athlete was handed his Guinness certificate by the Kuwaiti Olympic

Committee's president Sheikh Fahad Al-Sabah, who congratulated him on the "proud accomplishment." Burabie is an ambitious young man, whose success came with plenty of hard work and dedication, said the director general of Kuwait's Public Authority for Youth Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.

Commenting on his accolade, the Kuwaiti jet skier said he would not rest on his laurels, promising to continue stockpiling accomplishments of such magnitude. With a career spanning over a decade, Burabie is one of the world's most prolific jet skiers, having won a plethora of gold medals over the years. — KUNA

## SE Asian Games off to horror-show start for soccer players

MANILA: Soccer players sleeping on the floor or stranded at the airport, transport hiccups and handwritten fixture lists, not enough drinking water and food unfit for athletes - the Philippines' hosting of the Southeast Asian Games is off to a chaotic start.

Those in the soccer competition that started ahead of the main event beginning on Saturday have borne the brunt of the disruption. Coaches from Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar have all vented their frustration over issues ranging from traffic snarl-ups and bland food to poor training sites and drivers dropping them off at the wrong hotels.

On their arrival, Cambodia's players were stranded at the airport without transportation for three hours, then waited another eight hours for their hotel rooms to be prepared. Photographs of them napping on the floors of a hotel were shared widely on social media, among tens of thousands of postings under the hashtags #SEAGamesfail and #SeaGames2019 fail as Filipinos ridiculed the organisers of a Games that some politicians had promised would be a roaring success.

"Unfortunately, we were the recipients of bad organization", Felix Dalmas, coach of the Cambodian soccer team, told Reuters. "But it's alright, our guys are strong mentally. They performed regardless of what happened."

Their hotel issued a statement saying the team had shown up before the standard check-in time. Even the host nation's athletes have had problems, with the Philippine women's team cramming four or five players to a room designed for two people.

"Sad that we're the host team and this is how we're being treated. I cannot imagine how other countries must feel," defender Hali Long posted on Facebook. Their Vietnamese rivals complained that their meals were too small and that their hotel had told them to get written authorisation from organisers if they wanted bigger portions. In all the host city of Clark, north of Manila, and other Games venues are housing roughly 11,000 athletes and officials from 11 countries during the two-week event that officially kicks off on Saturday.

**NO EXCUSES**

"We have brought food with us from Vietnam," coach Mai Duc Chung told Vietnam News Agency, adding that traffic jams were so bad that the team had asked for a police escort. Organisers of the Games apologised on Sunday and promised to do better. They blamed the confusion on changes to teams' arrival details.

Salvador Panelo, spokesman for Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, apologised for "unintentional inconvenience suffered by our athletes-guests" and said Duterte "will not offer any excuses". Filipinos have been sharing photos of unfinished venues and posting sarcastic memes, drawing attention to a July comment by the president's closest aide, Senator Christopher Go, promising a Games that would show the world the great job Duterte is doing.

Politicians meanwhile have been trading barbs about who to blame, with a row brewing between some opposition lawmakers and members of the organising committee, chaired by Duterte's former running mate, over alleged corruption and budget delays that slowed down disbursement of Games funds. — Reuters

## UFC revises drugs policy over contaminated supplements

NEW YORK: The UFC and US Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) announced changes to the mixed martial arts organisation's drugs policy on Monday to address concerns over cases involving contaminated supplements.

The changes aim to differentiate between "intentional cheaters" and athletes who "innocently test positive". The revisions will affect athletes who ingest banned substances from sources like contaminated meat, medication and nutritional products and define 'certified supplements'.

The new policy outlines concentration levels for substances that are regular contaminants and do not improve performance through the introduction of a "UFC prohibited list".

Athletes who test positive for those substances below a specific threshold and who have not exhibited other signs of doping will not be sanctioned under the new rules.

"For several years, we have pushed for change to ensure that athletes can trust the food, medications, and supplements they use without fear of

being treated like intentional, hard core cheaters," USADA CEO Travis Tygart said in a statement.

"We expect these changes to go a long way in allowing this to happen and to show athletes who compete clean that their decisions will be supported and validated."

Jeff Novitzky, the UFC's vice president of athlete health and performance, cited the "pervasiveness of low level contaminants" as well as "increased levels of testing sensitivity" as factors in changing the guidelines.

"(There's) an explicit need for decision concentration levels to ensure the program is penalizing intentional cheaters and not those athletes who have been faithfully adhering to the anti-doping policy," Novitzky said in a statement.

USADA first developed an independent anti-doping programme for the Ultimate Fighting Championship in 2015 after criticising UFC for administering its own athlete testing without involving the national anti-doping group or the World Anti-Doping Agency. — Reuters

## WCup winner Kolbe eyes Olympic gold

PARIS: World Cup winner Cheslin Kolbe said on Monday he would love to win the Olympic rugby sevens gold medal at Tokyo 2020 after he capped off an impressive year clinching the Top 14 player of the season award.

Kolbe, 26, lifted the Webb Ellis trophy with the Springboks earlier this month as well as the Rugby Championship in August after having helped his club Toulouse to the French domestic title in June.

"There are two more things I would still love to achieve and that's probably winning the European Champions Cup and hopefully the Olympics with South Africa," he said after the awards ceremony in Paris.

"I will keep on working hard and if there's a door that opens or an opportunity that comes my way I'll just make sure that I'm ready for whatever opportunities," he added. The Rio Olympic Games bronze medalist said he was yet to speak with Blitzbokke coach Neil Powell or other officials about re-joining the seven-a-side set-up.

"I haven't discussed it in person with SA Rugby. It's something I would love to

be a part of." "It's another big event. It's probably one of the biggest stages of rugby or sport. If it does it happen, it happens," he added.

He made his international debut after joining Toulouse in 2017 and scored six tries in 16 league appearances before Ugo Mola's side lifted the Bouclier de Brennus for a record-extending 20th time at the Stade de France.

"It's been a phenomenal season, not just for me but for my club and for my country, winning the Top 14, The Rugby Championship and then World Cup in one year I'm really blessed," Kolbe said.

"I couldn't have done this without all my team-mates. I give credit to all of them because if they didn't create opportunities for me as a winger to finish off I wouldn't be standing here now," he added.

Kolbe also won the award for the best Top 14 player at the World Cup, beating Fiji's Semi Radradra and France's Damian Penaud as well as winning the award for the try of the campaign.

Clermont's Penaud took the prize for the France international after 'Les Bleus' were knocked out of the World Cup in the quarter-finals. Lyon's 21-year-old centre Pierre-Louis Barassi, who made his Test debut during the tournament in Japan, won the young player of the season award.

Bayonne scrum-half Pauline Bourdon won the women's player of the season award as France beat New Zealand's Black Ferns for the first time. — AFP

## Sports

# Dallas Stars top Golden Knights for record-tying seventh straight victory

## Sharks stop Kings for third straight OT win

**DALLAS:** Alexander Radulov had two goals and an assist, and John Klingberg had three assists as the Dallas Stars tied a franchise record with their seventh straight victory, 4-2 over the visiting Vegas Golden Knights on Monday. Esa Lindell and Jason Dickinson also scored, and Tyler Sequin had two assists for Dallas, which extended its point streak to 12 games (11-0-1) for the first time since 2002-03. It was the fifth time in franchise history Dallas won seven straight games, most recently in 2008. Ben Bishop finished with 26 saves for the Stars to extend his personal win streak to six starts. Paul Stastny and Shea Theodore scored goals for Vegas, which dropped its third straight game and eighth in the past 10 (2-6-2). The Golden Knights also have lost five consecutive road games.

### DUCKS 3, ISLANDERS 0

Ryan Getzlaf and Cam Fowler had a goal and an assist apiece as host Anaheim ended New York's franchise-record, 17-game point streak. Goalie John Gibson made 26 saves for the Ducks, who returned home from a four-game road trip to end a three-game losing streak. Anaheim also snapped a five-game home losing streak. Ondrej Kase added a third-period goal for Anaheim, which had lost eight of its previous nine games (1-5-3). The Islanders lost their second consecutive game in California, but it was just their first regulation loss since Oct. 11 against the Carolina Hurricanes. The Islanders went 15-0-2 during the points streak.

### SHARKS 4, KINGS 3 (OT)

Patrick Marleau scored 2:35 into overtime, and visiting San Jose, despite blowing a three-goal lead, defeated Los Angeles. Timo Meier scored two goals, and Erik Karlsson had a goal and an assist for San Jose, which won its third consecutive game — all in overtime — and posted its ninth victory in 10 games. Labanc added two assists. Anze Kopitar and Adrian Kempe each had a goal and an assist, and Dustin Brown also scored a goal for Los Angeles. Alex Iafallo added two assists for the Kings, who lost for the third

time in four games (1-2-1).

### FLYERS 2, CANUCKS 1

Jake Voracek and Sean Couturier each had one goal and one assist to lift host Philadelphia past Vancouver. Voracek scored a goal for the second straight game. Flyers goaltender Carter Hart wasn't heavily tested but made 16 saves. J.T. Miller scored the lone goal for the Canucks, who had a short-lived, one-goal lead.

### LIGHTNING 5, SABRES 2

Cedric Paquette and Ondrej Palat netted short-handed goals 49 seconds apart on the same penalty kill in Tampa Bay's win over visiting Buffalo. The two goals broke open a 3-2 game midway through the third period and helped Tampa Bay to its third straight win and sixth in its past eight games. Palat, who added two assists, recorded his 200th assist and 300th point on Nikita Kucherov's goal that opened the game's scoring.

### RANGERS 3, WILD 2 (OT)

Tony DeAngelo scored 32 seconds into overtime for host New York, which mounted a late comeback to edge Minnesota. The Rangers won the overtime face-off and maintained control of the puck until DeAngelo weaved his way into the open slot and beat Alex Stalock from point-blank range. Brady Skjei scored in the first period and Chris Kreider forced overtime by scoring on the power play with 2:50 left for the Rangers, who have won two straight and three of four. Zach Parise and Ryan Donato scored for the Wild.

### PREDATORS 3, BLUES 2 (SO)

Daniel Carr scored the decisive shootout goal as Nashville edged visiting St. Louis, beating the Blues for the second time in three days. The Predators defeated the Blues 4-2 on Saturday night to snap their six-game winless streak. Ryan Johansen and Nick Bonino scored for the Predators, and Juuse Saros stopped 23 of 25 shots. David Perron and Brayden Schenn scored, and Jake Allen made 37 saves for the Blues, who have



**DALLAS:** Alexander Radulov #47 of the Dallas Stars scores a goal against Malcolm Subban #30 of the Vegas Golden Knights in the third period at American Airlines Center in Dallas, Texas. — AFP

earned points in 12 of their past 14 games (9-2-3).

### PENGUINS 3, FLAMES 2 (OT)

Jake Guentzel scored with 56 seconds left in overtime to give Pittsburgh the win over visiting Calgary. Alex Galchenyuk and Jared McCann each added a goal and an assist, and Dominik Kabun had two assists for Pittsburgh, which won its second straight and extended its point streak to five games (3-0-2). Penguins backup goalie Tristan Jarry, starting in consecutive games for the first time this season, made 32 saves. Dillon Dube and Sean Monahan had the Calgary goals, and David Rittich stopped 35 shots.

### BLUE JACKETS 1, SENATORS 0

Oliver Bjorkstrand's goal 21 seconds into the third period and Joonas Korpisalo's 25 saves gave Columbus the win over visiting Ottawa. Korpisalo improved to 4-0-0 with a .922 save percentage over his past four starts. The shutout was the second of Korpisalo's career, and his first since Feb. 25, 2017, against the New York Islanders. The goaltender was solid throughout but came up especially big on a pair of Ottawa scoring chances in the third period. Korpisalo stopped a Connor Brown breakaway at 9:45, then stopped a point-blank shot from Anthony Duclair with 10 seconds remaining. — Reuters

## UAE defeat Kuwait in Gulf Basketball Championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait National Basketball team lost to UAE 80-89 in its second match within the 16th Gulf Basketball Championship, as it gathered three points, while the UAE has 4 points it collected from three matches.

Meanwhile the Saudi team defeated its Qatari counterpart 73-57, in a match where the Saudis had total control. The Saudi team now tops the table with 5 points while Qatar sits last with two points. Bahrain has 4 points, and still to play in the third round.

Saudi Arabia will play Bahrain tonight followed by a match between Kuwait and Qatar.

The UAE team succeeded in controlling all four quarters, as it ended the first quarter with the score of 21-14, Kuwait team lacked concentration especially in defense, and being hasty in ending attacks.

In the second quarter coach Adel Al-Telathi sent in Hussein Al-Khabbaz and Torky Humoud in addition to Rashid Riyadh and were able to reduce the difference in points to 42-36.

In the third quarter, Kuwait team lost concentration once again, while UAE players were taking any opportunity to increase the score, as the quarter ended with the score of 65-55 in favor of UAE.

The fourth quarter saw Kuwait team reduce the difference to 3 points, but a missed three pointer gave UAE the opportunity to counter the shot and ended the match with a 9 point difference.

President of the Asian Basketball Federation Sheikh Saud bin Ali Al Thani said the Gulf Championships are characterized by



strong competition, as the technical levels are close to each other, and most players know each other.

Al-Thani, while lauding KBF's organization under the presidency of Rashid Al-

"We're chasing something right now — Super Bowl," Jackson said. "We're hungry. We're humble about it, but we're hungry. We've got the 49ers coming up next week. That's all we're worried about." It was only the second time in NFL history a player had thrown for five touchdowns and run for more than 90 yards, the other coming from Carolina's Cam Newton against the New York Giants in 2015.

But Jackson was spreading the praise among his teammates. "I just come out to play. I do what I'm supposed to do. I do my job," Jackson said. "Our offensive line did a tremendous job, receivers caught the ball, runners ran the ball — everybody just clicked."

As a result, the Rams suffered their most lopsided loss ever at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. Jackson tossed a 7-yard touchdown pass to Mark Ingram early in the third quarter to put Baltimore ahead 35-6. Willie Snead caught a 7-yard touchdown pass from Jackson early in the fourth quarter that gave the Ravens a 42-6 edge, the Ravens becoming the first NFL team this season to reach the end zone on

Enezi said Gulf federation must take interest in younger players and increase tournaments of the age groups to develop the game and enable them to compete at the international level.

their first six possessions.

Justin Tucker kicked a 34-yard field goal to create the final margin. In the first half, Jackson was 9-of-9 for 87 yards and three touchdowns passing and also ran for 80 yards. Jackson connected on a 7-yard touchdown to Snead with 12 seconds remaining in the second quarter to give Baltimore a 28-6 half-time lead.

Jackson flipped a 6-yard touchdown pass to Marquise Brown as the Ravens seized a 7-0 lead just 7:13 into the contest. Jackson ran twice for 22 yards on the 55-yard march as the Ravens scored an NFL-best seventh touchdown on opening drives this season. Brown also caught an 18-yard touchdown toss over the middle from Jackson to cap Baltimore's next drive for a 14-0 edge. Greg Zuerlein's 32-yard field goal put the Rams on the scoreboard in the second quarter.

The Ravens responded with a 75-yard drive, capped by a 29-yard Jackson run to the goal line and Ingram's 1-yard touchdown run, before a 46-yard Zuerlein field goal pulled the Rams within 21-6. — AFP

## Smith to be more disciplined against Pakistan's Yasir

**ADELAIDE:** Australia batsman Steve Smith says he is determined not to be dismissed again by Pakistan spinner Yasir Shah when the teams meet in the second Test at Adelaide starting on Friday.

Smith was bowled by Yasir for four runs in the opening Test in Brisbane and the leg-spinner celebrated by holding up seven fingers to signal the number of times he had claimed the wicket of the world's top-ranked test batsman.

## England support 'emotional' Archer after racist abuse

**WELLINGTON:** England players will rally around an "emotional" Jofra Archer after the paceman was racially abused by a spectator in New Zealand, director of cricket Ashley Giles said yesterday, as local officials scoured CCTV footage to identify the culprit.

"It's a shame that sort of thing is still in society," Giles told reporters after Archer was subjected to racist comments after being dismissed late on day five of the opening Test in Mount Maunganui.

The Barbados-born bowler tweeted after the match that it was "a bit disturbing hearing racial insults today whilst battling to help save my team". The 24-year-old later told ESPNcricinfo that the abuser was a solitary New Zealand spectator making comments "about the colour of my skin". Archer has been a powerful advocate for diversity in cricket and Giles, when asked how the player was faring, replied: "The tweet, it was obviously emotional, it hurts."

"We fully support Jof, there is no place for racism in the game... you know what our team is like, they'll rally round him." The incident has overshadowed the result of the first Test ever played at Mount Maunganui's Bay Oval, which New Zealand won by an innings and 65 runs.

Black Caps captain Kane Williamson described the taunt as "horrific", while New Zealand Cricket said the culprit would be reported to the police and face a life ban if identified from the venue's CCTV footage.

Williamson said such racism was "against everything that we as Kiwis are about". "It's a horrific thing. In a country and a setting where it is very much multi-

"It gave me a bit more motivation next game to not get out to him. I'll be a little bit more disciplined against him," Smith told reporters yesterday. Smith's dismissal at the Gabba marked a rare failure for the batsman but the 30-year-old said he was not concerned by Yasir's success against him.

"A few of the times he's got me out, I've been on a few runs and been slogging," Smith added. "There's been a couple of second innings ones where I was playing some funky shots. So I'm not too worried."

"He bowled really well at the Gabba, got some good drift and a bit of a spin on a wicket that wasn't spinning much... we're going have to play him well this game (at Adelaide)." Australia won the first Test by an innings and five runs to take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series. The second test will be a day-night affair. — Reuters

cultural," he told news website stuff.co.nz. "It's something we need to put to bed quickly and hope nothing like that ever happens again."

Both Williamson and New Zealand Cricket chief executive David White apologised to Archer. White ordered extra security to ensure there was no repeat at the second Test beginning Friday in Hamilton and called on spectators to "self-police" unacceptable behaviour.

"We'll be increasing security around the areas where the players are, in particular when they're coming on and off the field, but it's quite difficult when players are on the boundary," he told Newstalk ZB.

"I'd like to think there's a bit of self-policing going on as well, we shouldn't be accepting this kind of behaviour in our society," New Zealand and England are working together to investigate the incident and Black Caps coach Gary Stead said he wanted the person responsible caught. "Hopefully, it was just one idiot in the crowd and they deal with it," he told Radio New Zealand.

Meanwhile, England paceman James Anderson will step up his recovery from a calf injury at a specialist pace bowling camp in Potchefstroom ahead of a four-test series in South Africa starting next month, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has said. <https://www.ecb.co.uk/news/1504490/anderson-and-wood-to-join-south-africa-pace-camp-as-part-of-revamped-lions-winter-programme>. Anderson, England's top test wicket-taker with 575 victims, sustained the injury playing for Lancashire in July and managed only four overs in the opening Ashes test against Australia before being ruled out of the series.

The 37-year-old was also ruled out of England's ongoing two-test series in New Zealand but is hopeful of making a comeback for the first match against South Africa starting Dec. 26. Anderson had earlier swapped the cricket nets for the facilities at the training ground of Premier League champions Manchester City to aid his recovery. — Agencies

## Jackson throws five TD passes to lead Ravens over Rams

**LOS ANGELES:** Baltimore's Lamar Jackson threw for 169 yards and five touchdowns and ran for 95 yards Monday as the Ravens beat the Los Angeles Rams 45-6 for a seventh consecutive NFL triumph.

Jackson completed 15-of-20 passes and carried eight times in directing the NFL's highest-scoring offensive unit to a lopsided romp, the Ravens improving to 9-2 while the Rams fell to 6-5. With a potential Super Bowl preview coming next week against San Francisco (10-1), Jackson made it clear on the field and after the game that the Ravens have championship aspirations.

## Sports

# Sadio Mane the main man as Liverpool close on Champions League knockouts

## Mane frightens defences with his pace, direct running and skill

LONDON: Sadio Mane has, in the words of Liverpool teammate Andy Robertson, "taken his game to another level", stepping out of Mohamed Salah's shadow to become arguably the main man at Anfield.

The Senegal international shares star billing with Salah and Roberto Firmino as part of the European champions' electrifying and fluid front three. But this year Mane is leading Liverpool's charge — his goal at Selhurst Park at the weekend was his 12th of the campaign and his 29th for the club in the calendar year.

Mane frightens defences with his pace, direct running and skill and his goal return has eased the burden on the shoulders of Salah. Liverpool defender Robertson praised Mane after his goal in the 2-1 victory against Crystal Palace, which kept Liverpool eight points clear of second-placed Leicester in the Premier League. Today he will train his sights on Napoli in the Champions League, with a win guaranteeing Liverpool top spot in the group. "He has been fantastic," said Robertson. "Even when I came he was amazing but maybe did not have as much composure as he does now in front of goal."

"Now, every time he's in front of goal you don't think he'll miss. The one he had at the start of the second half (of the Palace game), we were surprised he didn't score and that is the type of player he is. You expect him to score and that is a good thing and he's popped up with another crucial goal." "The others are pitching in as well but it's been a fantastic year for him and he's taken his game to another level," Robertson added.

Mane joined Liverpool in 2016, a year before Salah, but the Egyptian quickly became the alpha male at Anfield, scoring 44 goals in all competitions in a remarkable debut season in 2017/18.

Last season the two players shared the Premier League Golden Boot with Arsenal's Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, with the three forwards all scoring 22 goals. And Salah has pipped his teammate to the African player of the year award over the past two seasons. Both have been shortlisted again for this year's prize and Mane, who reached the final of the Africa Cup of Nations with Senegal this year, is seen as an outsider to win the Ballon d'Or.

### LIVERPOOL STRIKE FORCE

Mane has talked about how lucky he is to play alongside his two attacking comrades-in-arms. "Every single player who plays alongside them would enjoy it because they are very good players and they make everything easy, so I just enjoy playing alongside them," he told the official Liverpool magazine.

Despite those warm words, there was a rare display of emotion from the 27-year-old earlier this season when he was substituted at Burnley, furious that Salah had not passed to him when he was in a better position.

It led to suggestions that all was not harmonious between the pair, but Mane was quick to correct any impression of an underlying problem. "It can happen, he didn't see me and I was frustrated. We are really good friends," he said.

A 176-second hat-trick for Southampton in 2015 catapulted Mane to worldwide attention. He joined Liverpool the following year for £34 million (\$44 million) and was voted the club's player of the year in his debut season. Last year the Senegalese signed a new deal committing him to the club until 2023. At the time Klopp called him the "complete" attacking player and said he



LONDON: File photo shows Liverpool's Senegalese striker Sadio Mane (L) vies with Crystal Palace's German midfielder Jeffrey Schlupp (R) during the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Liverpool at Selhurst Park in south London on November 23, 2019. — AFP

had improved season by season. "The only criticism I could ever have of Sadio is that maybe at times he is the only one not to see just how good he is," said the

Liverpool boss. The question harassed defenders will be asking themselves is just how good he will be when he starts fully believing in himself. —AFP

## Conor helps Villa beat Newcastle

BIRMINGHAM: Aston Villa brushed aside recent poor results to beat Newcastle United 2-0 at home on Monday and create some breathing space above the Premier League drop zone as Conor Hourihane scored and set up another goal with a couple of clever free kicks. Ireland midfielder Hourihane put Villa ahead in the 32nd minute, tapping a dead ball to Jack Grealish and then unleashing a thumping shot which flummoxed goalkeeper Martin Dubravka. Villa soon earned another dangerous set piece and Hourihane again assumed responsibility, firing the ball into the heart of the penalty area where Anwar El Ghazi arrived to knock the ball

into the roof of the net from close range in the 36th.

El Ghazi stuck the ball into the net again later in a dominant display from the hosts but his effort was ruled offside, while Villa should have extended their lead after the interval as Jack Grealish and John McGinn both came close. Newcastle's only chance in an unambitious 45 minutes was a Federico Fernandez header which was well saved by Tom Heaton.

The Villa keeper was forced to make a couple of more saves as Newcastle showed a little more imagination after the interval but they rarely looked like getting back into the game.

The win snapped a three-game losing league run for Villa and took them up two places to 15th on 14 points from 13 games, four clear of the relegation zone. Newcastle are 14th on 15.

"It was important to get a good result because they haven't been great in the past few games," Hourihane

told reporters. "The squad doesn't have much Premier League experience so we all have a point to prove."

Newcastle coach Steve Bruce spent two years in charge of Villa and came close to leading them to promotion in the 2018 Championship playoff final but they were beaten by Fulham.

He had a sour end to his spell, though, and in his final game at home to Preston North End a cabbage was thrown at him by a fan, an incident he has called one of the lowest points of his long coaching career.

No missiles were aimed at Bruce this time but he was not happy with how his players approached the game. "In the first half we didn't do enough with or without the ball. We were harshly done by conceding the free kicks but they were well executed and that made it very hard for us," he said.

"Within a few minutes the game's gone. Overall it was a difficult evening for us." — Reuters

## Guardiola rules out assistant Arteta leaving this season

LONDON: Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola has no doubts that his assistant Mikel Arteta will be a manager one day but has ruled out the possibility of the Spaniard taking over at another club during the current season.

Arteta is among the bookmakers favourites to take over at his former club Arsenal if incumbent Unai Emery is sacked. Arsenal are eighth in the Premier League, 19 points adrift of leaders Liverpool and eight shy of the Champions League spots following their 2-2 home draw against Southampton last Saturday.

"Unai Emery is the manager of Arsenal," Guardiola told reporters. "Of course (Arteta) will be a manager sooner or later. We are going to finish the season but in the future I don't know what's going to happen."

Former Arsenal captain Arteta, who joined Guardiola's staff three years ago, was also backed for the job by Arsene Wenger before the long-serving Frenchman left the club. Guardiola, however, is in no rush to lose his right-hand man.

"I'd like him to stay with us," he added. "Manchester City has a person of incredible value to work here in the future. But professional desires are professional desires. Everyone is more than satisfied to have him here."

"... He is an incredible human being and works a lot. I said after a few months together he would be a manager. He's already a manager — he behaves like a manager." — Reuters

## Euro 2020 might be too soon for England, says Micah Richards

MUMBAI: England's impressive qualifying campaign for the European Championship has sent fans' expectations soaring but former defender Micah Richards says the side may not be the finished article when the tournament comes around next year.

Gareth Southgate's squad secured their place at next year's finals in emphatic fashion with seven victories from eight games, scoring 37 goals and conceding only six. England have never won the tournament, coming closest when they lost to Germany in the semi-finals on home soil in 1996, and Richards said it was high time they made an impression.

"We don't just want to be talking about qualification, it'd be nice if we could get to a minimum semi-final in the Euros," he told Reuters in an interview. The former Manchester City defender said the squad had gone through a transition period with youngsters coming through but that everyone seemed to be on the same page as Southgate.

"It seems as though there's a happy camp there," he added. "A lot of people seem to be enjoying the football again, and it's showing on the pitch." Richards, who was England's youngest-ever defender when he made his debut at the age of 18, said the current side would be a force to be reckoned with in the next few years.

"If you look at the team now, maybe not this competition, but like next World Cup or next Euros a lot of people will be in their peak as well," said Richards. "Maybe this time has just come a little bit too soon. But in terms of next World Cup, next Euros, if you can keep this group together ... injuries and what not, good form ... I feel like a really good chance."

The Euro 2020 finals will be played in 12 nations with the semi-finals and final to be held at Wembley Stadium, and with England reaching the semi-finals at last year's World Cup they will have a target on their backs, said Richards.

"They did well in the World Cup. Sometimes it could be good to be underdogs though," said Richards, who was in India for Manchester City's global trophy tour. "When expectation is on you it becomes a little bit more difficult. No one expected them to do well in the World Cup and they had a good tournament. So, hopefully they will take a bit of confidence from that and take it into the Euros." — Reuters

## Ancelotti's future in spotlight as troubled Napoli visit Liverpool

MILAN: Napoli head for Liverpool today for a Champions League clash which could prove crucial to coach Carlo Ancelotti's future at the troubled Italian club. The three-time Champions League winning coach's second season at the Stadio San Paolo has proved to be a complicated one, after leading them to second in Serie A in his first year.

His team's fortunes have waned after the high of opening their Champions League campaign with a 2-0 win over reigning European champions Liverpool, with dressing room unrest amid friction between the players and club management.

Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis ordered the team to be confined to a week-long training camp earlier this month after a 2-1 league defeat to rivals Roma saw them slip to seventh in Serie A.

But as Ancelotti voiced his disagreement with the lockdown, the players all returned home after a 1-1 draw against Salzburg three days later, which stalled their bid to reach the Champions League last 16.

"The relationship between the president and I is excellent and nothing changes," Ancelotti had insisted, after saying he disagreed with the 'ritiro' or training camp. Film mogul De Laurentiis threatened to sell the entire squad and take legal action against the players after the dressing room revolt. And the sanctions began to fall this week amid reports Monday the players would receive hefty fines for breaking the lockdown.

Gazzetta Dello Sport reported that players' salaries for the month of November — apart from those out injured at the time — will be cut by a quarter.

Brazilian Allan, who had an argument with Edoardo De Laurentiis, son of the Napoli president, will see his salary slashed by half, or 200,000 euros (\$220,000).

In total, players' salaries will be cut by 2.5 million euros (\$2.7 million). The club have also imposed a media silence with Ancelotti and the players refusing to speak after Saturday's 1-1 draw against AC Milan extended their winless run to six games in all competitions, and left them 15 points behind Serie A leaders Juventus, out of the European places.

However, under UEFA rules Ancelotti will be obliged to speak during a news conference at Anfield on the eve of the match, with Napoli confirming that he will be present. "We are not satisfied with the performance and the ranking, but it is also true that we deserved more points and more luck in various games," Ancelotti said earlier this month.

"The situation must be considered with a cool head." Ex-Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri, meanwhile, was seen in the stands at San Siro on Saturday, fuelling speculation he could be waiting in the wings.

Napoli are still on course to qualify for the



Carlo Ancelotti's

Champions League knockout rounds as they are second in Group E behind Liverpool, four points ahead of third-placed Salzburg with two games to play.

They will reach the last 16 if they beat Liverpool or if Salzburg do not beat Genk, having failed to advance past the group stages last season.

But they come up against a Liverpool side who have an eight-point advantage on top of the Premier League table and whose only loss this season came at the San Paolo. To add to their problems Napoli will be without captain Lorenzo Insigne, who hurt his elbow in Saturday's match.

The Italian forward has scored five times for Napoli this campaign, and also scored the last-gasp winner against Liverpool in last season's 1-0 group stage victory in Naples. Forward Arkadiusz Milik has an abdominal inflammation, joining an injury list which already includes defensive duo Kevin Malcuit and Faouzi Ghoulam. But Portuguese full-back Mario Rui and Spanish midfielder Fabian Ruiz, absent against Milan, have been named in the squad.

Ancelotti arrived in Naples boasting three Champions League trophies from his time with Milan and Real Madrid, and a Premier League trophy from his two-year tenure at Chelsea. But their hopes of ending Juventus' domestic domination have faded along with their hopes of a first Serie A title since the days of Diego Maradona, who also helped them win their only European trophy — the 1989 UEFA Cup. — AFP

Live		Matches on TV
		(Local Timings)
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE		
Valencia C.F v Chelsea FC	20:55	
beIN Sports HD 1		
Zenit St. Petersburg v Olympique Lyonnais	20:55	
beIN Sports		
FC Barcelona v BV Borussia Dortmund	23:00	
beIN Sports HD 1		
SK Slavia Prague v Internazionale Milano	23:00	
beIN Sports		
RB Leipzig v SL Benfica	23:00	
beIN Sports		
KRC Genk v Red Bull Salzburg	23:00	
beIN Sports		
LOSC Lille v Ajax Amsterdam	23:00	
beIN Sports		
Liverpool v SSC Napoli	23:00	
beIN Sports HD 2		

**25** Kuwaiti jet ski champion feted for breaking world record

**26** Stars top Knights for record tying seventh straight victory

**27** Ancelotti's future in spotlight as troubled Napoli visit Liverpool



## Gulf Cup kicks off in Qatar

Kuwait to clash against Saudi Arabia today in Group B match



DOHA: Qatar's forward Yusuf Abdurisag (L) vies for the ball with Iraq's forward Ibrahim Bayesh during the 24th Arabian Gulf Cup Group A football match between Qatar and Iraq at the Khalifa International Stadium in the Qatari capital Doha yesterday. — AFP

**DOHA:** The Arabian Gulf Cup kicked off yesterday in Qatar, with teams from its neighboring nations set to play, in a sign that relations with the host nation - which also hosts the World Cup in 2022 - may be improving after a two-year freeze.

The United Arab Emirates were in action yesterday in Doha, with Saudi Arabia and Bahrain playing today in the Qatari capital. All three countries, along with Egypt, cut political, trade and transport ties with fellow Gulf Arab state Qatar in mid-2017 over accusations that it supported terrorism. Doha denies the charge and says the embargo aims to impinge on its sovereignty.

While there has been little public discussion from authorities of the possible impact of the tournament on diplomatic ties, former Iraq forward Hussein Saeed, his country's all-time top scorer, said he had hopes for the competition.

"We hope that this tournament, being held here, brings nations together. Qatar, as we know, welcomes everyone," he said in an interview published on the official website of Qatar's World Cup organising committee. Arab media reports said the Saudi team flew directly to Doha from the kingdom - a rare direct flight between the two countries given the boycott still offi-

cially in place. The dispute led to football's governing body FIFA deciding against a possible expansion of the 2022 World Cup which could have seen some games held in neighbouring states, taking some of the hosting pressure off Qatar. The UAE, Saudis and Bahrain, did not attend the draw for the previous Gulf Cup tournament two years ago in Doha and only competed after that tournament was moved to Kuwait.

Qatar also hosts FIFA's Club World Cup later in December, with European champions Liverpool involved in what will be an early dress rehearsal for the 2022 World Cup. It is not clear whether fans from com-

peting nations will travel in numbers to Qatar. When Qatar won the continental Asian Cup held in the UAE earlier this year, hardly any Qatari fans attended. Qataris require a special permit to enter the UAE under the embargo.

The Qatari team was subjected to abuse from a crowd hurling bottles and shoes at the players when they faced the UAE in the semi-final.

The UAE's sports chief later apologised, and its football association was sanctioned by the Asian Football Confederation. Kuwait's opening Group B match against Saudi Arabia is today — Reuters

## WADA seeks four-year Russia ban

**MONTREAL:** A key World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) panel has recommended Russia be barred from all sporting competition for four years after accusing Moscow of falsifying laboratory data handed over to investigators, the global anti-doping watchdog said on Monday.

In a bombshell statement, WADA's Compliance Review Committee (CRC) called for the sanctions, which would see Russia banned from next year's Tokyo Olympics, to be approved at a meeting in Paris on December 9.

The WADA committee has also recommended Russia be barred from staging or bidding for major international sporting events for a four-year period — potentially placing Saint Petersburg's status as one of the venues for the Euro 2020 football tournament in jeopardy.

If the sanctions are approved by WADA's Executive Committee, Russia can appeal

the decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. The proposed punishments followed what WADA investigators described as "an extremely serious" case of non-compliance "with several aggravating features." The recommended four-year ban comes after WADA investigators examined data from Russia's doping-tainted Moscow laboratory, which was handed over to WADA in January.

Full disclosure of the data from the Moscow lab was a key condition of Russia's controversial reinstatement by WADA in September 2018. The Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) had been suspended for nearly three years previously over revelations of a vast state-supported doping program. However WADA said in its statement on Monday that the data handed over was beset with problems, describing it as "neither complete nor fully authentic."

It said hundreds of adverse analytical findings had been removed while underlying raw data and PDF files had been deleted. While some of the deleted findings had taken place in 2016 or 2017, when the Russian doping scandal first erupted, other information had been removed in December 2018 or January of this year — shortly before the data was delivered to WADA.

WADA also said someone in the

Moscow laboratory had planted fabricated messages in a key database — between November 2018 and January 2019 — in an attempt to support a theory that doping whistleblower Grigory Rodchenkov had dripped false entries into the system as part of an extortion plot.

The four-year sanction was one part of a range of punishments the CRC has recommended be approved by WADA's ExCo next month. As well as a ban from sporting competition, the WADA committee had recommended Russia be forbidden from hosting or bidding for any major event. For events already awarded to Russia, hosting rights must be removed unless "it is legally or practically impossible to do so," WADA said. That potentially could impact Saint Petersburg's staging of games at Euro 2020. The Russian city is due to host three group games and a quarter-final in the tournament. Russian government officials would also be barred from attending any major events.

Individual Russian athletes may still compete in events such as the Olympics, but only if they are able to prove they are not implicated in the broader doping scandal. At the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, Russian athletes who could prove they were above suspicion were able to



KATOWICE: File photo taken on November 7, 2019 the logo of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is seen in Katowice, Poland. A World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) panel has recommended Russia be hit with a four-year ban from sporting competition after falsifying laboratory data handed over to investigators, the global anti-doping watchdog said. — AFP

compete under the special designation of "Olympic Athlete from Russia", marching under the Olympic flag.

The proposed WADA sanctions are the latest chapter of a saga which first erupted in 2015, when an independent WADA commission investigating allegations of Russian doping said it had found evidence of a vast

state-sponsored system stretching back years. A 2016 report by WADA investigator Richard McLaren said more than 1,000 Russian competitors across multiple sports had benefited from the scheme between 2011 and 2015, a period which included the 2014 Winter Olympics held in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi. — AFP