



Kuwait welcomes back Amir

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will return to Kuwait today. He will be returning from the United States of America where he has undergone successful medical checkups. His Highness the Amir has recovered from a health setback and is 'in a good condition now', the state news agency reported. He was admitted for a normal medical checkup.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had sent a cable to His Highness the Amir, in which he congratulated him on the successful medical checkups. His

Highness the Crown Prince also wished His Highness the Amir good health.

Last month, with a lot of pride, the people of Kuwait celebrated the fifth anniversary of the UN honoring of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a 'Humanitarian Leader' and Kuwait as a 'Humanitarian Center'.

The UN gesture came in recognition of Kuwait's outstanding and unique contributions under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir. The well-deserved international honoring was a crowning of Kuwait's long history of humanitarian,

benevolent and altruistic activities in different world countries.

On September 9, 2014, then-secretary general of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon held a special function at the UN headquarters in New York to express the UN and the international community's appreciation for His Highness the Amir and Kuwait's generosity and kindness.

The UN move came as Kuwait had shown exemplary humanitarian leadership in supporting global humanitarian and relief operations under the compassionate and passionate leadership of His Highness the Amir.



Wonderful return of His Highness

The country rejoices the return of His Highness **Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah** for his safe homecoming. May God keep him strong and in the best of health.



Welcome Home

KFH Group and its employees would like to extend their deepest and hearty congratulations to all Kuwaiti citizens and expatriates on the safe and healthy return of His Highness **The Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah** (May God bless him)
May God bless Kuwait, the Amir and the people of Kuwait



MP Hayef files to grill finance minister amid more threats

Interpellation filed over govt refusal to abolish interest on pensioner loans

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Islamist opposition MP Mohammad Hayef yesterday filed to grill Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf over refusal to abolish interest on pensioner loans amid more threats by lawmakers to grill ministers. Acting National Assembly Speaker Oudhah Al-Ruwaie, who received a copy of the grilling, said it has been listed for debate on the agenda of the opening session of the new assembly term on October 29. The debate of the grilling however can be delayed for two more weeks if the minister asks for that.

The grilling is based on allegations that the minister has violated the constitution by refusing to abolish interest rates on cash payments given by the pension agency in exchange for part of the pensioners' salary. Islamist MPs have been pressing the government to either abolish the interest rates or provide such facility in accordance with Islamic Sharia law that forbids usury.

A number of Islamist MPs have expressed their support for the grilling and demanded that the minister should change the rules to be in line with Islamic law.

MP Adel Al-Damkhi called on the minister to make the necessary changes to pave the way for all pensioners to benefit from the facility. MPs Mohammad Al-Mutair and Hamdan Al-Azmi said they will support the grilling.

But pro-government MP Ahmad Al-Fadhl criticized the grilling saying it violates the law. Hayef had grilled the finance minister over similar issues towards the end of the past assembly term but did not file a no-confidence motion.

In the meantime, MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said that he will file two grilling against the ministers of interior and finance at the start of the new assembly term and could be even before that. The grillings, based on alleged violations, are expected to be some of the largest in the assembly history, Adasani said.

MP Bader Al-Mulla said yesterday that he has agreed with MP Thamer Al-Suwait to file a joint grilling against Minister of Public Works Jenan Bushehri about roads and housing. Mulla complained that the minister of oil and the prime minister appear to have decided to ignore the issue of violations at Vietnam refinery, owned jointly by Kuwait, and renewed threats to file to grill them both.



KUWAIT: MP Mohammad Hayef arrives at the National Assembly's building yesterday before filing to grill Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh



BELGRADE: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem speaks before the 141st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. — KUNA

Kuwait's Speaker blames int'l silence for Israeli crimes

BELGRADE: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said on Monday that the Israeli occupation continues its crimes because of the international community's silence towards these violations. Ghanem made the statement before the 141st Assembly of Inter-Parliamentary Union held in Serbia's capital Belgrade. The international silence increases despair and kills hope of the region's nations mainly the Palestinian people, he said. This might lead to an explosion of the situation and no one is immunized against its repercussions and effects, he noted.

Meanwhile, Ghanem discussed with the President of the National Assembly of Serbia Maja Gojkovic yesterday means of enhancing and developing bilateral ties between both nations in various fields, especially the parliamentary one. Both sides tackled issues of common interest, as well as talking over items on the IPU assembly's agenda. Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti parliamentary caucus MP Rakan Al-Nisf, members of the caucus MPs Ali Al-Degbasi and Safaa Al-Hashim, and Kuwait's Ambassador to Serbia Yousef Abdulsamad attended the meeting. —KUNA

Govt sources deny parliament dissolution rumors

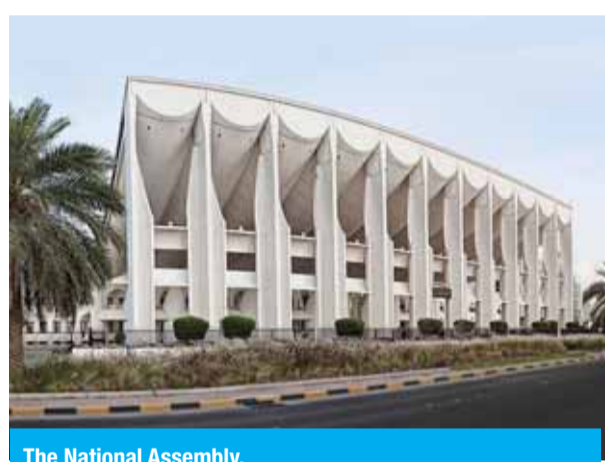
By A Saleh

KUWAIT: High-ranking official sources strongly denied what it described as rumors regarding intentions to dissolve the parliament and call for early parliamentary elections, or dismiss the cabinet and appoint a new one. "Those are mere illogical and unjustified analytical reports," the sources stressed. The sources, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, also denied allegations about disagreements amongst Cabinet members, or that each minister operates in isolation. "Such speculations are always repeated at the beginning of every parliamentary term, which mostly reflect the wish of some lawmakers or activists to run for the following parliamentary elections,"

the sources explained, noting that the government would not hesitate to resign from office if such scenario became necessary "because all ministers work for Kuwait's greater good."

The government has so far been very cooperative with lawmakers and attended various committee meetings to discuss various bills, the sources added. "The current parliament's tenure still has one term to be launched on October 29, 2019 and ends on June 30, 2020, which is a very short period that requires full cooperation to pass various bills and priorities," the sources added, noting that early elections and a new Cabinet would delay passing those bills, namely economic ones.

Commenting on a grilling motion MP Mohammad Hayef filed yesterday against Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf, as well as expectations that more interpellation requests could be filed before the new term's inaugural session, the sources said that in that case, the government is likely to request debating all grilling motions during the same session - a tactic that could "confuse lawmakers." The government will also assess the situation after the finance minister grilling's debate, said the sources, noting that if it was deemed necessary, a "limited reshuffle" that sees Hajraf



The National Assembly.

replaced with Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan could be made, especially considering that Hajraf is expected to face more grilling motions even in case he survives the debate of his upcoming interpellation.

Welcome home our beloved Amir

Kuwait Times
Established 1961

Kuwait Times management and staff extend their heartiest greetings and congratulations on the safe return home of our beloved **Amir, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah**. May God bless him and our beautiful Kuwait.

Local

One of eight women face risk of developing breast cancer: Specialist

Ministry of Health Oks generic drugs' purchase terms

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and Agencies

KUWAIT: Head of Al-Jahra Hospital's Radiology Department Dr Munira Al-Adwani said that according to international statistics, one out of eight women face the danger of developing breast cancer, while one in every 100,000 men face a similar risk. Speaking during a public awareness campaign organized by Jahra Hospital's radiology department about the significance of breast cancer preventive examinations, Adwani stressed that early detection and diagnosis facilitates treatment by simply removing the tumor without need for chemo or radiotherapy.

Adwani added that the campaign have been held annually for three days on October 15-17 nationwide with the aim of boosting women's awareness of the need to undergo testing or seek help from the breast cancer prevention program, so that they can have full examination and diagnosis. Further, Adwani stressed that X-ray breast cancer tests are mandatory after 40 years of age, whereas ultra sound tests are recommended for those younger than 40.

Generic medicines

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health adopted terms and

specifications for purchase of generic medicines in Kuwait. Generic drugs are of high quality and can be safely consumed, said Dr Abdullah Al-Badr, the ministry's assistant undersecretary for medicines and food supervision. These



KD 9 million drop in revenue from expat fees

products have the same effects as of the brand-name products, however the packaging differs in shape, drawings and coloring, he indicated. These drugs are of lower price as compared to the brand-name ones, he said, noting that they account to 9-10 percent of prescriptions in the



United States of America. However, he noted that the generic products must bear the name of the country of origin and stamp of the registration department of the ministry of health. Separately, the Municipal Council's committee for the disabled people's affairs yesterday approved a proposal made by deputy chairman Abdulah Al-Mehri on building special water closets for the disabled

in various commercial malls, public facilities and parks.

Revenue drop

In other news, a local daily reported yesterday that despite the increase of health fees for expats in recent years, the health ministry recorded a drop in revenue estimated at nearly KD 9 million from fees of services presented in public hospitals and polyclinics.

Quoting 'informed sources,' Al-Qabas reported that the fiscal year 2017-2018 saw KD 29.1 million collected from expats who received health care in health ministry facilities, whereas only KD 20 million were collected in 2018-2019, contrary to expectations of revenue growth driven by the recent increases. Sources attributed that drop in large numbers of expats going to private hospitals and clinics "where prices have become close to those of the ministry." The ministry increased entry fees on expats in 2017 to be KD 2 instead of KD 1 in polyclinics, KD 5 for hospital emergencies, and KD 10 for outpatient clinics. The fees saw another increase, reaching KD 10 for hospital emergencies, while expat women delivery fees increased from KD 50 to KD 100 for natural delivery, and to KD 150 for caesarean delivery (C-section).



KIB honors teachers with flower bouquets

KUWAIT: As a continuation of its ongoing efforts to positively impact the local community, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently celebrated Teacher's Day, which falls on October 5 every year. A team from the Bank's Corporate Communications Unit honored the bank's female customers who are teachers and surprised them with flower bouquets that were delivered to their homes.

Meanwhile, Senior Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia, congratulated all teachers on this occasion which is celebrated all over the world, recognizing the undeniable hard

work and effort made by teachers. Najia added: "As part of its leading social responsibility program, KIB is committed to participating in initiatives such as these that reflect the important role it plays in supporting various social events and activities; particularly international events and celebrations. We believe that Teacher's Day is a special event, as it not only honors teachers, but it also recognizes the importance of education as one of the loftiest occupations and the key to the nation's development."

Additionally, Najia also noted the great work and key role that teachers play in bringing up future generations. He added that they equip youth with knowledge and skills that shape their personalities and enable them to contribute to building a brighter future for their nation.

It is worth noting that KIB's leading social responsibility program aims at positively impacting the community as a whole and empowering all its members. Accordingly, the bank participates in a number of initiatives and activities that serve diverse segments of the community.



Gulf Bank partners with local hospitals to encourage check-ups

KUWAIT: This October, Gulf Bank is launching a series of initiatives that will raise awareness for breast cancer in an effort to encourage locals to get checked. Gulf Bank has partnered with Mowasat Hospital and other local hospitals to provide special offers, exclusively for Gulf Bank clients, that aim to make the process of getting checked more convenient and more accessible. Throughout Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Gulf Bank is also lighting up its head office branch in Kuwait City in pink in an effort to encourage everyone to learn more about breast cancer.

In an effort to encourage people to get themselves checked, Gulf Bank has partnered Mowasat Hospital and other reputable hospitals in Kuwait to provide special offers curated for their customers. With the Mowasat Hospital Gulf Bank clients who are over 40 years of age can now receive a 50 percent discount on mammograms, and clients of all ages can receive a 50 percent discount on ultrasounds at the hospital. The Mowasat Hospital offer is valid throughout the month of October.

Commenting on this year's breast cancer awareness initiatives, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "Gulf Bank is committed to supporting the local community with various CSR initiatives throughout the year. At Gulf Bank, we recognize that part of our role and duty is to create and shed light on initiatives that benefit our community. Early detection saves lives, and that is why we always encourage regular screening that could potentially save a whole family from suffering. We hope everyone takes this month to not only get themselves checked, but to also encourage their loved ones and other women to do the same."

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an annual campaign celebrated in countries across the world that highlights the importance of breast cancer awareness, education and research. Breast cancer is by far the most common cancer in women worldwide, and early detection is key. Every year, Gulf Bank aims to increase awareness for the early detection and treatment of breast cancer. More information regarding Gulf Bank's breast cancer awareness initiative will be shared on the Gulf Bank's various social media channels.

EQUATE sponsors KOGS 2019

KUWAIT: EQUATE Group, a global producer of petrochemicals and the world's second largest producer of Ethylene Glycol, announced its sponsorship of the Kuwait Oil and Gas Show and Conference (KOGS) 2019, supporting the objectives of the conference in a knowledge-sharing platform that gathers leaders and organizations across the oil and gas value chain to contribute to the advancement of the industry. KOGS is held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait from October 13 to 16.

Speaking of the company's support to industry conference, EQUATE's Senior Vice President Naser Al-Dousari said: "We believe in the importance of sharing knowledge and expertise amongst industry peers to positively contribute together in its growth on the long term. At EQUATE, we ensure we're part of these strategic opportunities, including KOGS which is a unique platform for the public sector, led by Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries, and the private sector to engage and share the latest solutions and advancements to industry challenges."

The parallel four-day multi-disciplinary conference program focuses on science and engineering factors facing those working in Kuwait and the region, a unique business platform showcasing services, products and expertise to over 6,000 oil and gas energy professionals across the value chain. "EQUATE's support of KOGS and its objec-



tives this year comes as a continuation to its partnership with local and international organizations and associations in an aim to drive innovation and bring technical solutions

to the challenges of the industry and the markets it serves," said EQUATE's Vice President Technical Services Nawaf Al-Khaledi.



KUWAIT: Scenes from the exhibition of productive Palestinian families yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait hosts fair for productive Palestinian families

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Social Affairs Saad Al-Kharraz affirmed that the exhibition of productive Palestinian families that kicked off yesterday was in line with the approach to attain sustainable development. The minister was speaking during the inauguration ceremony of the fair, held on sidelines of the 73rd session of Arab social affairs ministers, hosted by Kuwait. Kharraz said the exhibition was in line with the approach of attaining

the first, eighth and tenth objectives of the sustainable development that partially call for eradicating poverty. The Palestinian cause will remain the Arabs' top issue, he said, alluding to statements by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in this respect. "The world will not witness stability as long as the Palestinian cause remains unresolved," he added.

Meanwhile, Palestinian Minister of Social Development Ahmad Majdalani expressed in a statement at the ceremony gratitude to Kuwait and His Highness the Amir for holding the fair for encouraging the productive Palestinian families. The fair, involving 26 families and sponsored by the Arab League, is designed to enable the Palestinian families promote their products "The Palestinian people will never forget support by Kuwait and its people for their cause since 1948," he said, affirming the deep-rooted ties bonding the two countries. — KUNA



Dr Wafaa Al-Aradi

Kuwait marks World Mental Health Day

KUWAIT: Acting Director General of the Social Development Office (SDO) Dr Wafaa Al-Aradi said that the office is mainly concentrating on human development as part of the approach to develop the whole Kuwaiti society. In a statement on the occasion of the World Mental Health Day marked under the slogan "Suicide Prevention," Aradi stated that the World Health Organization (WHO) adopted this theme due to its serious global risks. She has also said suicide happens in different stages of life, adding that it is considered the second cause of death especially for teenagers. WHO has also focused on this topic because latest statistical records have shown that more than 800,000 people commit suicide every year, she added. Aradi stressed that all institutions should co-operate in order to limit suicide cases. Moreover, she has affirmed that the SDO is working hard through its programs for taking care of adolescents' mental health. — KUNA

KD 22 million allocated for Jleeb Al-Shyoukh renovation

Conditions in the area are unacceptable: Municipality chief during tour



KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality Director General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi is seen during a tour at Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh yesterday. Kuwait Municipality photos

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality Director General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi announced yesterday that KD 22 million (\$72.5 million) have been earmarked to renovate infrastructure at Jleeb Al-Shoyoukh. Manfouhi made that statement to reporters as he led a government team to field tour around the area yesterday. The team represents a special commission tasked with examining the area's conditions, and how government efforts can be consolidated to find suitable solutions.

Conditions in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh are "unacceptable," he said, pointing out that the area hosts unlicensed warehouses packed with food products, adding that they will be shut down and the products will be confiscated. On the issue of the bachelors, he indicated that they cannot be moved out of the area unless the "bachelors towns" have been established - alluding to cities that planned to be built to host expatriate labors. There have been grave offenses in the area such as stealing power cables, he added, affirming the high need for repairing the infrastructure in the



district. The special commission comprises members from the municipality, Ministry of Electricity and Water, Ministry of Public Works, Interior Ministry, Public Authority for Manpower, Environment Public Authority among others.



KUWAIT: Damaged cars are pictured following heavy rain in a flooded parking lot in Fahaheel, south of Kuwait City, on November 10, 2018. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Govt to discuss measures taken to repair roads after rains

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Dr Jenan Bushehri spoke during a Cabinet meeting on Monday of ongoing infrastructure reforms after heavy rains battered the country last year. The Cabinet has agreed to dedicate a future session to the aforementioned matter, where the government executives will be discussing what measures the government has taken to repair the roads affected by the deluge, in addition to progress on major housing projects.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet was informed of a Kuwait Oil Company initiative to address a sewage problem plaguing Sabah-Al-Ahmad residential area, where puddles of wastewater have accumulated. Discussing the problem, the Cabinet decided to assign various state bodies, including the Environment Public Authority and the Ministry of Public Works, with the task of remedying the issue in a month's time.

During its weekly meeting at Seif Palace

on Monday, the Kuwaiti Cabinet discussed the aftermath of an Arab League emergency ministerial meeting held a day earlier to discuss Turkey's military operation in northern Syria. The Egypt-hosted talks, attended by Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, were called to examine Turkey's ongoing military operation against Kurdish fighters in northeast Syria, he told the customary Cabinet meeting, chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

In the meantime, the Cabinet expressed profound grief after the most powerful typhoon to hit Japan in decades paralyzed the capital Tokyo, leaving millions of people evacuated and streets deserted. On the other hand, the Cabinet congratulated Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on winning the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize for his peacemaking efforts, which ended two decades of acrimony with longtime nemesis Eritrea. — KUNA

ooredoo

Welcome home to our precious Amir

Ooredoo's chairman, members of the board of directors, executive management and the entire Ooredoo team are pleased to extend their sincere wishes and congratulations on the safe arrival of His Highness the **Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah**. May God's blessings be upon him and the nation.



Years after militia raid, fear grips Darfur village

All smiles as Britain's William and Kate meet Pakistan PM



NAGANO: A woman looks at flood-damaged homes in Nagano yesterday, after Typhoon Hagibis hit Japan on October 12 unleashing high winds, torrential rain and triggered landslides and catastrophic flooding. —AFP

Rescuers scramble as Hagibis toll tops 70

PM Abe said there was no plan to slow rescue operations

TOKYO: Rescuers in Japan were working around the clock yesterday in an increasingly desperate search for survivors of a powerful weekend typhoon that killed more than 70 people and caused widespread destruction. Hagibis slammed into Japan on Saturday, unleashing fierce winds and unprecedented rain that triggered landslides and caused dozens of rivers to burst their banks.

By yesterday night, public broadcaster NHK put the toll at 72, with around a dozen people missing. The government's tally was lower, but it said it was still updating information. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said there was no plan to slow rescue operations, with around 110,000 police, coast guard, firefighters and military troops involved. "Rescue work and searches for the missing are continuing around the clock," Abe told parliament. "Where rivers flooded, work is ongoing to fix spots where banks broke, and water is being pumped out where floods occurred," he added.

His office said more than 3,000 people were rescued in the wake of the disaster, which affected 36 of the country's 47 prefectures. The defense ministry has called up several hundred reserve troops — in addition to active duty soldiers — for the first time since the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako were "deeply grieving for so many people affected", an Imperial Household Agency official said.

The royal couple "expressed their sincere condo-

lences for those who lost their lives... and heartily hope that those who are unaccounted for will be found as soon as possible," the official said. Despite the scale of the disaster, the government has no plan to delay a palace ceremony and parade to celebrate Naruhito's enthronement on October 22.

Rain prompts new warnings

Government officials warned that more rain was expected throughout the Tuesday in several parts of the country affected by the typhoon. "We ask people not to drop their guard and to remain fully alert," chief cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters.

Hagibis crashed into land packing gusts up to 216 kilometers per hour, but it was the storm's heavy rain that caused the most damage. Deaths were reported across many prefectures and included a man whose apartment was flooded, a municipal worker whose car was caught in rising waters and at least seven crew aboard a cargo ship that sank in Tokyo bay on Saturday night.

By yesterday evening, some 24,000 households were still without power, and 128,000 homes had no water. Tens of thousands of people spent Monday night in government shelters, with many unsure when they would be able to return home. "My frightened daughter can't stop shaking. We want to go home quickly," Rie Nishioka, 39, told Kyodo News agency in Miyagi prefecture.

Government pledges aid

The government pledged financial support to affected regions without specifying how much aid it would set aside. "Support for the victims of the disaster is an urgent task," Abe said. "There are concerns that the impact on daily life and economic activities may be long-lasting." Another area affected by the storm was Fukushima, where several bags containing soil and plants collected during nuclear decontamination efforts were washed away.

"Ten bags out of 2,667 were swept into a river during the typhoon, but six of them were recovered yesterday," environment ministry official Keisuke Takagi told AFP, adding that the remaining four bags had been found and would be collected soon.

"Residents must be worried about the environment, but there are no reports that the bags were broken, so there will be nothing to worry about once they have been recovered safely," he said.

Transport yesterday was largely back to normal, though some flights were cancelled and train services partially disrupted where tracks or train stock were damaged by the storm. The typhoon also caused disruption to sporting events, delaying Japanese Grand Prix qualifiers and forcing Rugby World Cup organizers to cancel three matches. A crunch fixture pitting the hosts against Scotland went ahead on Sunday night, with Japan winning its first-ever quarter final spot. —AFP

Burying their dead, Syrian Kurds blast US 'betrayal'

QAMISHLI: Burying fighters killed in a nearly week-long battle against Turkish forces in northern Syria, the country's Kurdish minority denounced a "betrayal" by US allies that paved the way for Ankara's offensive. In a graveyard in the Kurdish-majority city of Qamishli, 57-year-old Basna Amin watched as the newly fallen were laid to rest near comrades who died in the US-backed fight against the Islamic State group. "We are disappointed because (the Americans) betrayed us," she said, a black and white headscarf covering her hair. "The world wants the Kurds to always be broken," she told AFP.

At least 135 Kurdish fighters have been killed in Ankara's assault triggered by last week's US pullout from border areas in Syria's north, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Washington's move — widely interpreted as green-lighting the long-planned Turkish invasion — has sparked resentment among the Kurds who have already lost 11,000 of their fighters in anti-IS battles.

Sitting near the grave of her son who died battling jihadists in 2014, Jawahir said that sacrifices by Syria's Kurds will compensate for the blow dealt by Washington. "We have been betrayed before," she said. "All the gains we have scored are thanks to the blood of these martyrs," she added. "Their blood will not go to waste." Around her, women hunkered beside graves, their eyes red with tears. Hundreds had streamed into the graveyard to bury fighters killed in recent border battles, the portraits of 'martyrs' plastered on coffins and pinned to clothes.

'Pay with our children'

Dressed in military fatigues, a female Kurdish fighter pressed her body against a colorful casket, held up by a sea of mourners. She stroked the coffin's lid, its floral arrangement matching the pattern on her black headscarf. In the crowd below, another woman whispered inaudible words as she caressed a similar coffin, decorated with ribbons, flowers and a red sheet.

Trump, who is campaigning for re-election but faces impeachment, is keen to deliver on a promise of pulling US troops out of the Syria quagmire. More than 1,000 troops are now being withdrawn from northern Syria and the United States will keep only a residual contingent of some 150 troops in the south at the Al-Tanf base near the borders with Jordan and Iraq. "They used to break bread together, and fight terrorism together, it is a big disappointment," said Farida Bakr, speaking on Washington's decision to withdraw troops. —AFP

Delhi pollution 'action plan' comes into force

NEW DELHI: New Delhi banned the use of diesel generators yesterday as pollution levels in the Indian capital exceeded safe limits by more than four times. Every winter, New Delhi is enveloped in a noxious blanket of smog of car fumes, industrial emissions and smoke from stubble burning at farms outside the megacity of 20 million people.

The ban on generators is part of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) that entered into force yesterday. Other measures that will come into effect as smog levels rise, particularly following the Diwali festival in late October, include banning trucks and setting

up a "war room". From November 4-15, a road-rationing scheme will come into force, meaning cars with odd and even plates would be allowed on alternate days in that period. "We will hand out anti-pollution masks to schoolchildren next week but the date is yet to be decided," the official said.

Indian authorities have also sought to reduce the burning of stubble by farmers in areas surrounding Delhi. According to government data, concentrations of particles measuring less than 2.5 microns across — which can penetrate the lung barrier and enter the blood — hit 108 micrograms per cubic meter yesterday. This was more than four times the recommended World Health Organization safe daily maximum of 25. In previous years, the level has regularly exceeded 400. Last year, a UN report found 14 of the world's 15 most polluted cities were in India, with one US study saying it kills a million people prematurely every year. —AFP

Instant-noodle diet harming Asian kids

MANILA: A diet heavy on cheap, modern food like instant noodles that fills bellies but lacks key nutrients has left millions of children unhealthily thin or overweight in southeast Asia, experts say. The Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia have booming economies and rising standards of living, yet many working parents do not have the time, money or awareness to steer clear of food hurting their kids.

In those three nations, an average of 40 percent of children aged five and below are malnourished, higher than the global average of one-in-three, according to a report out Tuesday from UNICEF, the UN children's agency. "Parents believe that filling their children's stomach is the most important thing. They don't really think about an adequate intake of protein, calcium or fibre," Hasbullah Thabrany, a public health expert in Indonesia, told AFP. UNICEF said the harm done to children is both a symptom of past deprivation and a predictor of future poverty, while iron defi-

ciency impairs a child's ability to learn and raises a woman's risk of death during or shortly after childbirth. To give some sense of scale to the problem, Indonesia had 24.4 million children under five last year, while the Philippines had 11 million and Malaysia 2.6 million, UNICEF data show.

Mueni Mutunga, UNICEF Asia nutrition specialist, traced the trend back to families ditching traditional diets for affordable, accessible and easy-to-prepare "modern" meals. "Noodles are easy. Noodles are cheap. Noodles are quick and an easy substitute for what should have been a balanced diet," she told AFP. The noodles, which cost as little as 23 US cents a packet in Manila, are low on essential nutrients and micronutrients like iron and are also protein-deficient while having high fat and salt content, Mutunga added.

Indonesia was the world's second-biggest consumer of instant noodles, behind China, with 12.5 billion servings in 2018, according to the World Instant Noodles Association. The figure is more than the total consumed by India and Japan put together. Nutrient-rich fruits, vegetables, eggs, dairy, fish and meat are disappearing from diets as the rural population moves to the cities in search of jobs, the UNICEF report said. Though the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia are all considered middle-income countries by World Bank measures, tens of millions of their people struggle to make enough money to live. —AFP

International

Young Tunisians, the driving force behind Saied's presidential victory

He said he will respect the social freedoms enshrined in law in recent years

TUNIS: Behind the landslide victory of conservative political outsider Kais Saied in a runoff presidential vote were millions of young voters, who describe him as a leader worthy of their trust as Tunisia's democracy takes root. According to a poll by the Sigma polling institute, around 90 percent of voters aged 18 to 25 voted for political newcomer Saied, massively shunning his rival, business tycoon Nabil Karoui.

"In the first round, I didn't think he would win. But now that he has won I can truly believe in the transparency of our elections," 20-year-old law student Mayssa Jlassi told AFP. "We had to do everything possible to mobilize all young people like me to vote en masse" for Saied, she added. Jlassi joined a volunteer group that went door-to-door, with very modest means, to canvass for votes for her candidate. Saied, a 61-year-old retired law professor, scooped 72.71 percent of votes, official results showed.

According to Sigma's data, Tunisians were sharply divided by age group. The older the voter, the more likely his or her ballot went to Karoui, who swept up 50.8 percent of the over-60s' votes. "The main reason for (Saied's) victory was the extraordinary mobilization of young people aged 18 to 25," said Olfa Lamoum, director of the Tunis branch of the NGO International Alert, which works closely with young people. According to Sigma, 37 percent of young voters cast their ballot for Saied in the September 15 first round — twice the national average — while the disparity was magnified further in Sunday's runoff.

'Promise of real democracy'

Despite having spearheaded the Arab Spring revolt that ousted dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011, young people had largely shunned the ballot box in previous

elections in Tunisia's new democracy. This time was different. Saied "managed to win the trust of young people... not with promises but by offering answers to the failures of representative democracy", Lamoum told AFP.

The anti-establishment Saied is seen as uptight and unwavering, and beneath his austere style is a commitment to socially conservative views that many young people reject. But he has said he will respect the social freedoms enshrined in law in recent years that civil society groups have hailed as freedoms. And what his young supporters see in him above all is an honest leader who is offering them the keys to building Tunisia's future.

Saied has promised "to challenge the top-down nature of power and to change the rules of the game of politics, which are the root cause for the exclusion of young people", Lamoum said. For his acolytes, Saied represents "the promise of real democracy, dignity, and a break from a political class that is disconnected from the people and which is obsessed with power and its privileges", she added.

'Strong trust'

The incoming president has, in recent years, "established a strong relationship of trust with young people, by meeting them across the country, thus building for himself a circle of young people who ran his campaign for him", sociologist Mohamed Jouili said. French-language daily La Presse welcomed "a rekindling of interest among young people, from north to south Tunisia, in voting".

Ultimately, it was this shift that decided the vote, "and that's great", wrote M'hamed Jaibi in an editorial. Turnout was 55 percent on Sunday, while just half of voters cast their ballots in the first round. The October 6 parliamentary vote saw fewer voters still. Young people signed up to



TUNIS: Tunisian electoral officials count the ballots at a polling station in the capital Tunis, on October 13, 2019. — AFP

vote in an intense registration campaign. Those aged 18 to 35 now account for 63 percent of voters, official statistics show. The electoral commission has yet to release detailed official indicators of the turnout among young voters, but

all the signs appear to show it was higher than in any of Tunisia's previous free elections. On voting day, thousands of young people mobilized, many of them spontaneously, to organize carpools to go to polling stations. — AFP

Berlin urges 'restraint' after Turkish-Kurdish clashes in Germany

BERLIN: German authorities yesterday urged Turkish and Kurdish communities not to import their conflict, after clashes between the two groups over Ankara's offensive in northeastern Syria. Police said at least five people were injured in fights between the two communities late on Monday. "We have a responsibility to prevent the conflict in the region becoming a conflict in our society... in Germany," integration commissioner Annette Widmann-Mauz told

the Funke newspaper group. "I expect all sides, especially migrant organizations and religious communities, to take responsibility and contribute to restraint." The commission advises the government on integration and serves as a point of contact for migrants and community organizations. Around 350 people were marching through the city centre on Monday against Turkey's offensive in Kurdish-controlled areas of Syria when they were "provoked with hand signals" by people drinking at a nearby kiosk, police said in a statement. "Some of them stormed into the kiosk, attacked two people inside and injured them" as well as breaking a window, it said.

The demonstration continued and someone threw a bottle at the marchers from a Turkish-owned cafe as they passed. "The reaction was very emotional and angry" as again several participants rushed into the cafe, breaking windows and furniture and injuring at least one person inside, as well as one of the police officers who intervened to stop the fighting. Nevertheless, "the police were able to calm the situation" and the demonstration ended as planned when the

marchers reached their destination in the centre. Among the five people hurt was the organizer of the march, who was attacked when he tried to stop the violence. Of the roughly three million people with Turkish nationality or roots living in Germany, around one million are Kurds. Politicians regularly warn of tensions between the two communities, which have been stoked by Turkey's offensive against Kurdish fighters inside Syria. Separately in Berlin, local police said a man wearing a jacket with a Turkish flag was beaten by around 15 people, leaving him with a facial injury. "According to the 30-year-old Turkish citizen, the men had assaulted him because of the jacket he was wearing which had a Turkish national flag on it," Berlin police said in a statement. The assailants spoke Arabic and German, police said. Beginning today, Turkish troops moved into the zone controlled by Kurdish militias, which had helped a Western-led coalition fight jihadists of the Islamic State (IS) group but whom Ankara accuses of terrorism. Germany, along with European allies such as France, has condemned the offensive and stopped arms exports to Turkey. — AFP

Public buses return to Tripoli after 30 years

TRIPOLI: Parked in a hangar in downtown Tripoli, some 35 buses awaited this week's launch of a new urban public transport scheme — the first in the Libyan capital in three decades. Imported from China, the brand new vehicles will make their first trips in the coming days, across a city that for six months has lived with the deadly rhythm of combat in its outer suburbs.

Since April, eastern strongman Khalifa Haftar has been battling forces loyal to the UN-recognized Government of National Accord for control of Tripoli. Equipped with wifi and air conditioning, the blue and white buses will run 20 routes, from Janzour 15 kilometers west of Tripoli to Tajoura, 12 kilometers east of the city. Another route will travel 25 kilometers south to the airport (though the facility is not operational).

Transport company Al-Sahem — whose name means arrow — wants residents to re-embrace public transport as a way to reduce congestion in this Mediterranean city where urbanization sprawls along the coast. With commutes lengthening, increasingly dilapidated private transport options aren't meeting people's needs, said Al-Sahem head Aboubakr Qormane. "We urgently need to re-establish public transport services in Tripoli, a city that has suffered in its absence," he said. The system will "prioritize workers who need public transport the most... reducing congestion during rush hour," he said.

Traffic jams

Every day, Mohamed Al-Bouzedi commutes via minibus or ancient taxi from his home in Janzour to his clothing shop in town. "There hasn't been public transport in Tripoli for decades ... this project will be really helpful to residents," said Al-Bouzedi, whose journey is often punctuated by breakdowns and traffic jams. "Modern buses should help me get to my shop in less time. I'm eager to try it," he said. Until now, those without a car have had the choice between taking a taxi or relying on rundown private minibuses — known locally as Ivecos after their manufacturer — which ply the main roads. Qormane said Al-Sahem had contracted Chinese manufacturer King Long to provide 145 vehicles over two years at a cost of \$13 million (11.8 million euros). Selecting the capital for Al-Sahem's pilot project was a logical choice, Qormane said: "A third



TRIPOLI: A picture taken on September 3, 2019 shows one of the 35 buses parked in a hangar in downtown Tripoli, ahead of the launch of a new urban public transport scheme — the first in the Libyan capital in three decades. — AFP

of Libya's population lives in Tripoli and its roads present no great challenges, beyond a general disregard for the road code." After launching its Tripoli project, Al-Sahem hopes to introduce intercity lines, in particular connecting isolated southern cities dotted across a vast desert landscape in a country of more than 1.7 million km2.

Insecurity

With fighting still imperiling certain districts around Tripoli, shopkeeper Al-Bouzedi worries for the future of a public bus project. "The situation on the outskirts of Tripoli, particularly in the southern suburbs, is bad. Rocket fire is indiscriminate and unpredictable. It would be tragic if a rocket hit a bus filled with 40 passengers," he said.

Another obstacle to the transport network is more mundane: severe traffic clogs Tripoli's roads daily. In an oil-rich country, where subsidized petrol costs about 10 cents a liter (less than bottled water), the average household owns two to three cars. In Tripoli alone, the number of privately-owned vehicles has more than tripled in less than a decade, jumping from 600,000 in 2010 to two million this year. Together with municipal vehicles, taxis and minibuses, the number rises to three million — in a city of two million inhabitants. But if buses will be a boon for most citizens, some taxi drivers worry for their future earnings. Abdel Mohayem fears he could be forced to sell his cab if his passengers prefer the bus, the driver said. "Many will be affected by this project... even if it does reduce traffic jams and travel time," he said. — AFP

Russia and the Assad regime," he told lawmakers. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg discussed the volatile situation with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson in Downing Street yesterday. Speaking after the meeting, Stoltenberg said the arms suspensions showed "many Nato allies are very critical and are condemning the military operation in northern Syria". Britain's halting of military sales to Turkey follows similar moves by key European and NATO allies, including Germany — one of Ankara's main arms suppliers — and France.

Meanwhile US President Donald Trump warned Monday that Turkey faces imminent sanctions over its actions but also signaled that Washington would avoid any armed conflict with Ankara. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said threats of sanctions and arms embargoes by Western powers will not stop the military offensive. He vowed to continue the operation targeting the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which it sees as a "terrorist" offshoot of Kurdish insurgents in its own territory, until "our objectives have been achieved". Erdogan has said he wants to establish a safe zone stretching across northern Syria, to which it can repatriate many of the 3.6 million refugees that it is hosting from the Syrian conflict. — AFP

UK suspends arms exports to Turkey over Syria offensive

LONDON: Britain yesterday said it was suspending military exports to Turkey following its incursion into northeastern Syria, as it carries out a review of arms sales to its NATO ally. "We will keep our defense exports to Turkey under very careful and continual review," Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said in a statement to parliament.

"No further export licenses to Turkey for items which might be used in military operations in Syria will be granted while we conduct that review." Ankara's assault against Kurdish forces launched last week has prompted a chorus of international condemnation. Raab said it had "seriously undermined the security and stability of the region". "This is not the action we expected from an ally, it is reckless, counterproductive, it plays straight into the hands of

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International

EU, Britain scramble to reach Brexit deal before key summit

'It is high time to turn good intentions into legal text'

LUXEMBOURG: British and EU negotiators yesterday scrambled to put together a draft text for a Brexit deal with just two days to go before a key European summit. Both sides voiced cautious optimism that an outline agreement could be reached this week, but officials admitted time is tight. And European leaders warned they would not let Britain use Northern Ireland as a back door to the single market.

EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier said a legal text must be on the table by today morning at the latest if it is to be signed off by leaders at the EU summit starting Thursday, in time for a special sitting of the British parliament on Saturday. European diplomats said London has given ground on customs rules for Northern Ireland, but must go further quickly if a deal is to be done this month — allowing Prime Minister Boris Johnson to fulfill his pledge to lead Britain out on October 31.

"The negotiating teams have made progress but it has been slow and they will have to make significant progress today if there is to be a deal that Michel Barnier can report on tomorrow to the EU capitals in advance of the leaders' summit," Irish Deputy Prime Minister Simon Coveney told reporters in Luxembourg. As he arrived in Luxembourg to brief ministers from the other 27 EU states, Barnier struck a cautiously upbeat note. "This work has been intense all along the weekend and yesterday because even if the agreement will be difficult — more and more difficult to be frank — it's still possible this week," he told reporters.

"Obviously any agreement must work for everyone — the whole of the United Kingdom and the whole of the European Union. Let me add also that it is high time to turn good intentions into legal text," Emmanuel Macron apparently shares Barnier's guarded optimism. An aide to the French president told reporters there was "positive momentum" behind the talks. Downing Street said Johnson had

called Macron and had a "constructive" and "good discussion". "We want to make progress towards securing a deal as soon as possible and we want to make progress ahead of the EU council on Thursday," a spokesman said.

But German Chancellor Angela Merkel outlined why EU officials are driving a hard bargain and hoping Britain will commit to a "level playing field" in post-Brexit trade and commerce. "One thing is clear, Britain will develop into another competitor on the doorstep of Europe," she told industrialists. "And therefore the EU will be challenged to become more competitive and to assume geopolitical responsibility."

A European diplomat told AFP the "goal" was to get a draft text of a deal ready later in the evening yesterday, but warned: "Time is running out." Officials stressed that EU and UK negotiators would have to agree a draft text by today morning if it is to be ready to go before leaders at tomorrow summit, but EU sources insisted there was no "hard deadline" and talks could go on next week. "The last moment is always a bit later than you think," one diplomat told AFP, suggesting that Brexit day would have to be postponed beyond the end of the month if talks are to succeed. "I am skeptical that we will have a full agreement tomorrow on a legal text ... the question is whether the work can be done in the next few days or whether it will take another two months."

Glimmer of hope

British Brexit Minister Stephen Barclay joined Barnier in Luxembourg in what was seen as a positive sign for the talks, and said "a deal is still very possible." More than three years after Britain's 2016 referendum vote to leave, talks remain stuck on how to avoid customs checks on the border between British-ruled Northern Ireland and EU-member Ireland.

The EU has reservations about London's proposed customs arrangements and the role for



ABERDEEN: Scottish National Party (SNP) anti-Brexit badges and memorabilia are seen at the annual SNP Conference. —AFP

Northern Ireland's Stormont assembly in giving consent to the plans. "Johnson has modified his original proposals to the effect that he has clearly stated that there will be no customs border on the Irish border. He has also moved on how consent (in Northern Ireland) can be secured, but that depends very much on the details," a European diplomat told AFP, referring to the role of the Northern Irish provincial assembly. "The UK proposal contained some steps forward, but not enough that the internal market will

be protected," Dutch Foreign Minister Stef Blok said.

With no majority in parliament, Johnson is reliant on support from other parties, particularly the small Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). Johnson held talks with his coalition partner on Monday in a bid to win them round. If no deal is reached by Saturday, Johnson will fall foul of a British law demanding he ask the EU to postpone Brexit for a third time rather than risk a potentially disastrous "no deal" departure. —AFP

Mass raids target Russian oppn chief

MOSCOW: Russian investigators raided opposition offices across the country yesterday, in the latest move to increase pressure on top Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny and his allies. The early morning raids targeted more than 100 offices and homes in 30 cities, the opposition said, including the headquarters of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) in Moscow.

An AFP journalist saw several armed interior ministry officers in black balaclavas entering the business centre hosting his offices, where agents reportedly broke through the doors to enter the premises. Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner who has emerged as President Vladimir Putin's most prominent critic, denounced the raids as an attempt to intimidate the opposition after a summer of protests and significant losses suffered by Kremlin allies in local elections in September.

"This will not stop us," he said in a post on his blog shortly after the raids began. "We are doing the right thing. And those who are against us are enemies of Russia." The raids followed similar mass searches last month and came less than a week after Navalny's foundation was declared "a foreign agent". Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement that searches were underway at FBK offices in 30 regions, as well as at residences of the group's regional employees. —AFP

French women from Syrian camp 'retrieved' by IS

PARIS: At least three French women who were being held in a Syrian Kurdish-run camp for jihadists' families have fallen into the hands of the Islamic State (IS) group, according to messages they sent to their lawyer, seen by AFP yesterday. Several French women who had travelled to Syria to join IS and were captured when the extremists suffered military defeat left a camp for the displaced in northeast Syria at the weekend, at the start of a Turkish offensive against their Kurdish captors.

The Kurdish administration in northern Syria claimed that Turkish bombardments near the camp in the northern town of Ain Issa led to 785 relatives of IS members fleeing. Turkey claimed that Kurdish forces deliberately set them free. In a message sent to a relative, which was seen by AFP, one of the women said they had been "retrieved" by IS. "We have just realized that it is the State (IS) that has retrieved us," she wrote.

One of her relatives told the families' lawyer Marie Dose in a message that the man who took charge of the women said: "We are your brothers from the Islamic State, we will take you to safety in the desert." They were also told: "You are part of the Islamic State, you're staying here," the relative added.

On Sunday, the women sent audio messages to their French families, heard by AFP, claiming that they were forced to leave the camp by their Kurdish jailers, that their tents had been set alight, and that they had found themselves wandering the desert with their young children before being offered help by an "armed Syrian." —AFP

All smiles as Britain's William and Kate meet Pakistan PM

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan gave a warm welcome in Islamabad yesterday to Britain's Prince William, the son of his late friend Princess Diana, who is on his first official trip to the country with his wife Kate. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge were greeted with handshakes by a smiling Khan, who first met William when the prince was a young boy, on the steps at the Prime Minister's House in the capital.

Pakistani media simultaneously aired archive images of Diana with Khan — then a World Cup-winning cricketer who had just launched his political career — during her own visits to Pakistan more than 20 years ago. Kate wore a traditional Pakistani dress in vibrant green and white with a dark green dupatta, or long scarf, draped over her shoulder — a change from earlier in the day, when she wore a royal blue shalwar kameez, traditional Pakistani long shirt with trousers. But the Duke opted for Western attire again — a dark suit and tie.

The couple was due to lunch with

Khan before he heads to Saudi Arabia later Tuesday, where he is expected to continue his mission to help defuse tensions in the Gulf by facilitating talks between Riyadh and Tehran. It came after a busy morning for Kate and William, the first British royals to come to Pakistan since William's father Charles visited with his wife Camilla in 2006.

The couple launched their five-day tour of the deeply patriarchal South Asian country by signaling their support for women's education with a visit to a girls school in Islamabad. They dropped in on a mathematics class, where televised images showed them sitting with some of the young students, whose blue uniforms matched the Duchess's dress. A video tweeted by a British reporter accompanying the couple showed William smiling as he was told the girls were "big fans" of his mother, who died in a car crash in 1997. "That's very sweet of you," he could be heard saying in the video. "I was a big fan of my mother too." Education official Khadija Bakhtiar told AFP that the couple helped some of the students solve problems.

Tight security

William and Kate spent roughly half an hour at the government-run school before they were waved off by smiling students. They were whisked away under heavy security to visit the Margallas, the Himalayan foothills that nestle Islamabad, where they could be seen walking with



ISLAMABAD: Britain's Prince William (2nd R), Duke of Cambridge, and his wife Catherine (R), Duchess of Cambridge, meet with school children during their visit to a government-run school. —AFP

conservationists in the sun.

William and Kate also met President Arif Alvi, and they are expected to attend a reception in their honor. Security is extremely tight for the five-day visit, during which the couple is set to visit Pakistan's second-largest city Lahore — once the capital of the Mughal Empire — as well as the mountainous north and the region near the border with Afghanistan in the west.

Meeting young people and promoting education is one of their priorities for the

trip, Kensington Palace has said. Nearly half of Pakistani school-age children — 23 million — do not attend school, UNICEF says. Girls are particularly sidelined from education in a country where women have struggled for basic rights for decades. For many in Pakistan, nostalgia for Diana has lain heavy over the trip. She first charmed Pakistanis with an official visit in 1991, and is remembered fondly for her efforts on later private visits to help Khan raise money for a charity cancer hospital. —AFP

S Africa's Zuma to appeal against corruption trial

PIETERMARITZBURG: South Africa's embattled former president Jacob Zuma will appeal against a court ruling that he stand trial on corruption charges, his lawyer said yesterday. Zuma's last-minute appeal will delay the case over bribery allegations dating back to a 1990s arms deal. He dismissed the charges as a conspiracy.

The trial would be the first time Zuma faced a court on graft charges, despite a string of accusations over his long political career. The High Court in the southeastern city of Pietermaritzburg last week rejected his request to have charges of fraud, graft and racketeering dismissed, clearing the way for the trial to start. But Zuma's lawyer Thabani Masuku told the court at the start of the trial that the ex-president would appeal, dragging on a case that has seen numerous legal twists over 15 years.

"Mr Zuma would like to exercise the full extent of his constitutional rights, which includes the right to appeal," Masuku said. Outside the court, Zuma told a small crowd of supporters that "there have been many conspirators against me." "There is no justice that will be served by continuing with this case," he told the crowd in Zulu. He was forced to resign as president last year by the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party after a nine-year reign marred by corruption allegations and dwindling popularity.

He is accused of taking bribes worth four million rand (\$270,000) before he became president from a 51-billion-rand (\$3.4-billion) 1999 arms purchase by five European firms, including French defence company Thales. Both Zuma and Thales, which is accused of paying the bribes and was also to stand trial, deny the charges. The appeal will be heard on November 22, and proceedings are scheduled to resume on the provisional date of February 4.

'Conspiracy'

Clad in the ANC's green, black and yellow, the crowd outside the court chanted Zuma's name and waved party flags as he took to the stage. Ntombizodwa Khumalo, a 65-year-old pensioner outside the court, said "we miss having Zuma as our president." "It's clear there is a vendetta against the man." State lawyer Billy Downer told the court that the prosecution believed the appeal would fail. "We don't think that there is a reasonable prospect of success" for the appeal, he said.

Downer said the prosecution wanted the trial to start as soon as possible. Legal analysts have cast doubt on whether that would have been possible given the size of the case, predicting the trial would have been delayed regardless of the appeal. The defense team of Zuma, who has claimed he is so broke he had to sell his socks to raise legal fees, maintained that the ex-president had been ready for trial for 14 years. Zuma faces 16 charges of fraud, graft and racketeering related to the purchase of fighter jets, patrol boats and military equipment when he was deputy president to the country's second black president Thabo Mbeki.



PIETERMARITZBURG: South Africa's embattled former president Jacob Zuma supporters gather outside the Pietermaritzburg High Court where he is appearing on corruption charges, in what would be the first time he faces trial for graft despite multiple accusations. —AFP

Critics have dubbed Zuma the "Teflon president" for his reputed ability to evade judicial reckoning. Analysts have warned that if Zuma goes on trial, he will drag down with him many leaders of Nelson Mandela's ANC, which has governed the country since the end of apartheid in 1994.

'King of corrupt people'

Zuma has also been accused of organizing the systematic plunder of government coffers in a scandal known as "state capture". He appeared at an inquiry into the scandal in July, putting on a defiant performance and denying all wrongdoing. "I have been vilified, alleged to be the king of

corrupt people," he said, adding that he had been the victim of "character assassination over 20 years".

High on the list of alleged benefactors is the wealthy Indian-born Gupta business family. They were accused of unfairly obtaining lucrative government contracts and even influencing Zuma's ministerial appointments. Last week the US Treasury blacklisted three Gupta brothers, calling them a "significant corruption network". Zuma's successor President Cyril Ramaphosa said earlier this week that corruption during Zuma's nine-year administration is estimated to have cost South Africa more than 500 billion rand (\$34 billion). —AFP

International

Many years after gruesome militia raid, fear still grips Darfur village

‘I was handcuffed and hung from a tree with a rope around my neck, but I survived’

SHATTAYA: Sudanese farmer Suleiman Yakub vividly remembers the day he was hung from a tree and left to die by Arab militiamen who attacked his village in Darfur, killing, looting and burning. “Villagers were executed in front of me,” said Yakub, 59, a resident of Shattaya village, which was attacked by the notorious Janjaweed militia in February 2004 when the conflict in Sudan’s western region of Darfur was at its peak.

“I was handcuffed and hung from a tree with a rope around my neck, but I survived,” he said, showing the scar on his neck. “We still don’t feel safe.” The fighting in Darfur erupted in 2003 when ethnic African rebels took up arms against Khartoum’s then Arab-dominated government of now-ousted leader Omar Al-Bashir, alleging racial discrimination, marginalization and exclusion. Khartoum responded by unleashing the Janjaweed, a group of mostly Arab-raided nomads that it recruited and armed to create a militia of gunmen who were often mounted on horses or camels.

They have been accused of applying a scorched earth policy against ethnic groups suspected of supporting the rebels, raping, killing, looting and burning villages. The campaign earned Bashir and others arrest warrants from the International Criminal Court (ICC). About 300,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million displaced in the conflict, the United Nations says. Thousands of peace-keeping troops from a joint UN-African Union mission were deployed in 2007 to curb the conflict, but their numbers have been gradually reduced since mid-2018 as the conflict has subsided.

Many Shattaya residents, like Yakub, have tentatively started to return to their homes, made of mud brick and thatch, after living in run-down camps for years. Their village was one of those that faced the brunt of the attack unleashed by the Janjaweed in the early years of the conflict. Residents say about 1,800 villagers were killed when gunmen on horses, camels and motorcycles tore through the village, firing guns and rocket-propelled grenades.

Mozambique votes in tense election after violent campaign

MAPUTO: Mozambique began voting in a general election yesterday that some fear could test the country’s fragile peace, after a heated campaign marred by violence and allegations of electoral fraud. The Frelimo party, which has ruled the impoverished southern African nation since independence from Portugal in 1975, is widely expected to again beat its former civil war foe Renamo, a rebel group turned main opposition party.

President Filipe Nyusi, who cast his ballot at a school in the capital Maputo as polls opened at 7:00 am (0500 GMT), called on voters to show “the world we stand for democracy and tolerance”. “Mozambique has chosen to move forward peacefully,” the Frelimo leader said, adding that more than 4,000 observers had been deployed in the most-watched election in the country’s history. Opinion polls predict Nyusi, 60, will win a second five-year term, despite his popularity taking a hit from chronic unrest and a financial crisis linked to alleged state corruption.

Walter Carritos Zucula, a 20-year-old student at a Maputo polling booth, said he would vote to re-elect Nyusi. “The development of our country is in our hands,” he said, adding that he wanted more jobs for young people. Around 13 million of Mozambique’s 30 million citizens are registered to vote in elections for the presidency, parliament and provincial governors. Ballotting is taking place at more than 20,000 polling stations, which close at 6:00 pm (1600 GMT). Preliminary results are expected to be announced on Thursday.

‘Test for democracy’

After 44 years at the helm, Frelimo will likely see its

Rajapakse vows to scrap Sri Lanka war crimes probe

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka’s front-running presidential candidate Gotabhaya Rajapakse vowed yesterday that if elected he will scrap Colombo’s pledge to investigate war crimes committed during his brother Mahinda’s decade in power. Gotabhaya was defence secretary during his brother’s rule, when troops were accused of killing up to 40,000 Tamil civilians while crushing the Tamil Tigers.

A later government co-sponsored a US-led resolution to appoint an independent panel to look into the actions of both sides in the final stages of Sri Lanka’s bloody separatist conflict, although it was never formed. But yesterday the 70-year-old Gotabhaya said he would not honor the commitments made to the UN Human Rights Council, saying people needed to “move on”. In response to questions by AFP about Sri Lanka’s wartime human rights record, he said: “Why are you talking all the time on the past. Ask (about) the future. “I am trying to become the president of the future Sri Lanka. So if you concentrate on the future, it is better.” He said even the Tamils were more interested in jobs, education and infrastructure than raking over the past. The Rajapakses insist no civilians were killed by government forces in the latter stages of the war, and accuse the rebels of using tens of thousands of civilians as human shields.

At least 100,000 people were killed in the conflict between 1972 and 2009. Mahinda Rajapakse’s administration was on the verge of international sanctions because of its refusal to investigate the alleged war crimes when he was defeated at the January 2015 elections. Gotabhaya Rajapakse was addressing the press yesterday for the first time since launching his bid to become president in an election scheduled for November 16. The presidential poll has attracted a record 35 candidates, with nearly 16 million people eligible to vote. — AFP

Vow to bring peace

The Hague-based ICC has charged Bashir with war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide for abuses in Darfur, including for atrocities committed in Shattaya. Bashir was ousted by his army in April after months of nationwide protests against his iron-fisted rule of three decades. But tensions remain over land ownership in Darfur, and those responsible for the war’s darkest years have not been brought to justice. Sudan’s new authorities who came to power after Bashir’s overthrow have vowed to end the conflict in Darfur as well as in the states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan. They are holding peace talks this week in Juba, the capital of South Sudan, with three rebel groups who fought Bashir’s forces in these regions. After more than 15 years, the brutality unleashed on Shattaya, whose residents are mainly from the African Fur tribe, is still evident.

Most houses in Shattaya are severely damaged and charred, with residents who have returned living in makeshift shelters, an AFP correspondent who visited the village reported. The road to Shattaya is unpaved and dusty, and riddled with pools of muddy water. Villagers complain that armed men are still in the area, and that lands confiscated by Arab pastoralists have not been returned. “We have not got back our farm,” said Mohamed Izhak, 29, who claims his family owned a lemon and orange orchard on the outskirts of the village. Izhak returned to Shattaya last year, after living in a camp for years alongside tens of thousands of people displaced by the conflict.

‘We are scared’

Izhak said his father, two brothers and three uncles were killed in the 2004 attack. “We don’t feel safe, even now... we are unable to build proper homes, we are living in small shelters made from plastic and dry grass.” Haj Abdelrahman, 63, lives in a room that survived the destruction of his home. When he returned to Shattaya, he found Arab pastoralists occupying his family’s farm.



BEIRA: A woman gets ink on her finger after voting at Amirca Cabral Primary School. — AFP

stranglehold on power loosen due to a deal with Renamo to allow voters to vote for provincial governors, who had previously been nominated by the government. Renamo is predicted to take control of three to five of Mozambique’s 10 provinces, according to analysts. “This election will be a test for democracy,” said Ericino de Salema of the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa. “For the first time, the political geography of the country may change substantially, it may even lead to confrontation.”

Renamo’s candidate Ossufo Momade, 58, called on Nyusi to respect the will of people. “If these results are manipulated we will never accept them, we do not want a return to the problems of the past,” Momade told the media after casting his vote. Momade heads a party of former anti-communist rebels who fought a brutal civil war with Frelimo from 1975-1992, devastating the economy and leaving almost one million people dead.

Renamo picked up arms again from 2013 to 2016, but tensions continued until Nyusi and Momade sealed a peace deal in August. But an armed breakaway faction of Renamo

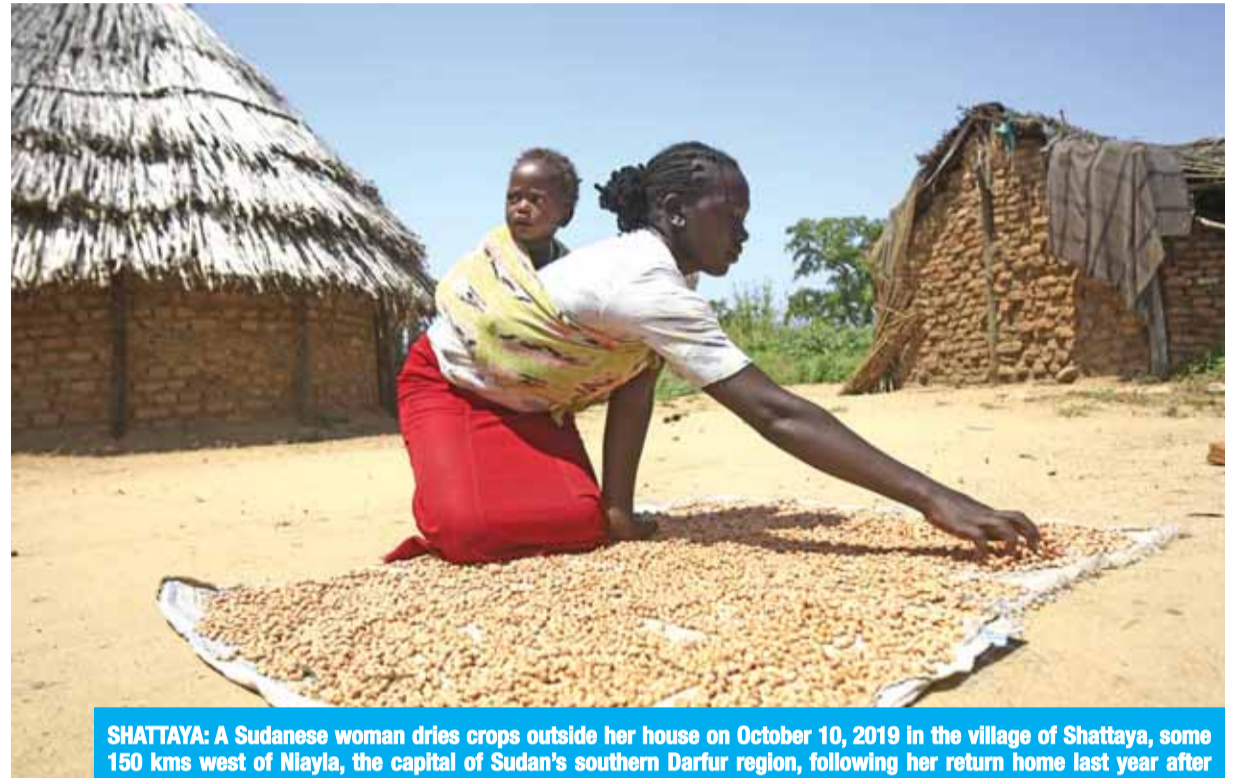
UN: 85 civilians killed during Afghan election campaign

KABUL: Hundreds of people were killed or wounded in violence related to Afghanistan’s recent presidential election season as the Taliban sought to undermine the democratic process, a UN agency said yesterday. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported that 85 people were killed and another 373 wounded in election violence during the period from June 8 to September 30.

On polling day alone, 28 civilians were killed and 249 injured. Children accounted for more than one-third of the victims. Despite the high toll, Afghan security forces said election day was a success because the Taliban failed to pull off any large-scale attacks that stole the headlines. The majority of Taliban attacks involved the use of rockets, grenades and mortars, as well as homemade bombs planted near polling centres, including schools, the report found.

On July 28, the same day as the election campaign started, militants targeted the office of Ghani’s running mate Amrullah Saleh in Kabul, killing 21 people and wounding another 50. “These attacks, along with public statements made by the Taliban, revealed a deliberate campaign intended to undermine the electoral process and deprive Afghan citizens of their right to participate in this important political process, freely and without fear,” Tadamichi Yamamoto, the UN secretary-general’s special representative for Afghanistan, said in a statement.

The casualty figures are actually a substantial improvement on the run-up to parliamentary elections held a year ago, when UNAMA tallied 226 deaths and 781 injuries. Final election turnout figures have yet to be released but it appears participation in this year’s first round presidential vote is at record low levels. Voters stayed away, wary of repeated Taliban threats to attack polling stations and also despondent about the chances of their ballots being fairly counted in a country that has seen systemic and large-scale electoral fraud.



SHATTAYA: A Sudanese woman dries crops outside her house on October 10, 2019 in the village of Shattaya, some 150 kms west of Nlayla, the capital of Sudan’s southern Darfur region, following her return home last year after more than a decade of being displaced. — AFP

“The farm is destroyed, they have cut the trees,” Abdelrahman said, adding that he was wary of talking to the pastoralists “because they are armed”. “They are not stealing our livestock anymore, but if they are not disarmed we will not feel fully secure. We also want our land back.” Many villagers are planting vegetables just outside

what is left of their houses, hoping that one day they will get their farms back. “I have my farm outside the village, but I cannot go there because I don’t feel safe,” Siddiq Youssef told AFP. “If those militiamen are not disarmed, then we can’t have peace. We are scared even now when we see them.” — AFP

has rejected Momade’s candidacy and threatened to attack campaign events, raising fears the triple polls could be marred by bloodshed. The six-week campaign was one of the most violent in the country’s turbulent history, with candidates threatened, election material destroyed, and deadly clashes breaking out between supporters.

The situation escalated last week when a prominent election observer was shot dead at the wheel of his car in the southeastern Gaza province by members of a special police unit. The opposition has already accused Frelimo of tampering with the vote, and civil society groups have estimated there are hundreds of thousands of “ghost voters” — names on the electoral roll not aligned with real, potential voters.

“We definitely have some irregularities that put stains on the whole process,” said Hermenegildo Mulhovo of election monitoring group Sala da Paz. Lutero Simango, an MP of the country’s third biggest party MDM, accused Frelimo of “using all state means, including police and secret services, to intimidate people”.

Scandals and setbacks

Frelimo suffered its worst result at the ballot box — 51.8 percent — in local elections last year and has been severely weakened in recent years. In 2016 it was revealed the government secretly borrowed \$2 billion, sparking the worst financial crisis in the country’s history and uncovering a vast corruption network with links to the regime.

The government is also battling to recover from two devastating cyclones in March which displaced nearly two million people. And a shadowy jihadist insurgency that has killed hundreds in the northernmost Cabo Delgado province has delayed development of one of the government’s biggest selling points — the discovery of vast gas reserves that is hoped to put billions in state coffers and lift millions out of poverty. The instability has already forced the National Election Commission to close 10 polling stations. — AFP



HERAT: In this photo taken on October 13, 2019, an Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) personnel sits in the back of a vehicle as he patrols during a military operation in Guzara district in Herat province. — AFP

The Independent Election Commission however insists multiple safeguards including biometric verification will make this year’s vote the cleanest yet. Preliminary results are due Saturday, though officials have suggested this date will be pushed back a few days. The race is seen as a two-horse steeplechase between President Ashraf Ghani and his top rival Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah. If no one wins a majority of more than 50 percent, the elections will go to a second round. — AFP

India blocks SMS services in Kashmir after trucker killed

SRINAGAR: Text messaging services were blocked in Indian Kashmir just hours after being restored when a truck driver was killed by suspected militants and his vehicle set ablaze, authorities said yesterday. Separately Indian officials said that a 24-year-old woman died in the latest exchange of artillery fire with Pakistan over their de-facto border dividing the blood-soaked Himalayan region.

Security sources said the decision to cut text messaging services was taken to reduce the ability of militants to communicate. Indian authorities had only restored call and text services for mobile phones on Monday, following a 72-day blackout in the restive northern territory imposed after New Delhi scrapped the region’s semi-autonomous status.

The seven million-plus people of the Kashmir Valley — the main hotbed of resistance to Indian rule — are still cut off from the internet, however. Authorities said SMS services were cut again on Monday night following the attack on the driver of a truck carrying apples in Shopian. Residents said two masked gunmen told the driver to use his truck to block the road, but it skidded and got stuck. “The gunmen then fired at the truck and set it on fire,” a witness told AFP.

Apples are a sensitive issue in Kashmir, which exports vast quantities of the fruit to markets across India. Many orchard owners say they are refusing to harvest this year to protest against the government’s move to scrap Kashmir’s autonomy. Indian authorities say that militants — backed by arch-rival Pakistan — have been intimidating farmers and businessmen.

Cross-border fire

The latest death from Pakistani artillery fire over the Line of Control (LoC) dividing Kashmir brings the number of fatalities on the Indian side to three in the past four days, the Press Trust of India reported. Two Indian soldiers were killed in two separate incidents on Friday and Sunday, PTI said. It was unclear if there were any fatalities from Indian fire on the Pakistani side.

Also yesterday, police arrested 13 women activists in Srinagar after they staged a protest calling for civil liberties and the release of detainees. The women, wearing black arm-bands, were arrested for “breaching the peace” and for a contravening a ban in place since early August on public gatherings of more than four people, police said.

They included the sister and daughter of former chief minister Farooq Abdullah, one of several hundred local politicians, lawyers and others in custody since early August, mostly without charge.

Abdullah, 81, was formally arrested in mid-September under the highly contentious Public Safety Act (PSA) that allows someone to be held for up to two years without charge, and which has been used widely in Kashmir in recent years. Rebels have been fighting for three decades some 500,000 Indian soldiers deployed in the territory, demanding independence or to join Pakistan which also controls part of the region and, like India, claims it in full. — AFP

Analysis

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India HIV-positive trans people find 'strength' in tech

Shoved, cursed and ridiculed, Nisha's hospital visits were always stressful as a transgender woman and got worse after she was diagnosed as HIV-positive. But a new app introduced as part of a drive to end an HIV epidemic in India by 2030 is providing her and the transgender community better access to doctors, lifesaving drugs - and hope - although it has raised concerns about digital privacy.

India has the world's third largest population living with HIV - 2.1 million people - according to UNAIDS, with recognition that help is needed in the transgender community where the prevalence is 3.1% compared to 0.26% among all adults. Nisha tested HIV positive last year after earning a living as a sex worker in New Delhi. On the job, she said, condoms would often break or she would not use one for more money.

"That was a bad idea. I ended up with HIV. I felt suicidal after I found out," Nisha, 29, a trans woman who goes by one name said. "It didn't help that going to the hospital was torturous. People made faces, passed lewd comments ... a doctor even kicked me out." Despite the Supreme Court recognizing India's 2 million transgender people as a third gender with equal rights in 2014, they are often kicked out by their families and denied jobs, education and healthcare, leading them to begging or sex work.

Trans women like Nisha say they face "double discrimination" and the risk of being shunned and abused - first because of their gender identity and then because of their HIV status. But a counseling program along with a new app is helping health workers track down HIV-positive transgender people, monitor their treatment and link them to doctors and antiretroviral therapy (ART) to suppress the AIDS virus.

"I have found new strength. I don't feel depressed or nervous anymore," said Nisha, who now begs at traffic lights. "The app helps keep me physically healthy and she ensures I'm mentally and emotionally (healthy)," she said, pointing to her outreach worker Samyra, an HIV-positive trans woman. The eMpower app - developed by IBM in partnership with India HIV/AIDS Alliance and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria - monitored more than 1.2 million people between January 2018 and March 2019.

'Half the battle won'

With mobile tablets in hand, HIV-positive transgender outreach workers keep a tab on others in their community living with HIV and counsel them and accompany them to see doctors. "I tell them 'I'm like you. I'm HIV-positive and I'm taking medicines too. You're not alone,'" said Samyra, who works with Vihaan, a national initiative to expand counseling, outreach and follow-up programs to people living with HIV.

"That makes a huge difference because it's coming from one of your own. Half of the HIV battle is won when you have someone to hold your hand along the way." Health experts said transgender focused initiatives like this and the launch in March of India's first HIV treatment clinic in Mumbai city run for and by LGBT+ people were pushing the country towards its target to end the epidemic by 2030.

But to achieve this target they said it was critical for patients to stick with ART. Sometimes stigma and side effects can cause them to drop out of the treatment. That is why health workers follow up with clients every few months and record information on the eMpower app, including their weight, viral load and CD4 - white blood cells that fight HIV - and advise them on everything from their diet to safe sex. They also note whether a client has faced discrimination, and arrange for partners and family members to get tested.

Sonal Mehta, head of India HIV/AIDS Alliance, said the app has helped boost Vihaan's outreach numbers as well as the confidence of trans clients and workers, who often come from poor, semi-literate backgrounds. "The trans clients definitely feel much more secure ... but the outreach workers themselves also feel very empowered. They are professional officers working on the field, talking to doctors, government officers, engaging with various organisations," she said.

While such technological advances are seen as key in the HIV/AIDS fight, health and software experts warn they can come at the cost of privacy. The eMpower app creates a profile for each client with personal information including name, biometric ID number, occupation and monthly income, and a map pinning their location. Without proper safeguards, such an app runs the risk of data breach and sharing information with third-parties, which can further ostracize an already marginalized community, said Ambika Tandon, a cyber security expert.

"The potential to monetize is definitely a risk factor," said Tandon, policy officer in gender-based research at the Bangalore-based Centre for Internet and Society. — Reuters

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Cuong Nguyen, a Vietnamese cannabis convict deported from Britain, smokes a cigarette as a tattoo that reads, 'Be tough' is seen on his forearm at a cafe in Haiphong. — AFP

Confessions of a cannabis farmer: The Vietnamese getting Brits high

Holed up alone in a suburban British house thousands of miles from home, cannabis farmer Cuong Nguyen spent months carefully nurturing his plants, one of thousands of Vietnamese migrants working in the UK's multi-billion dollar weed industry. Cuong - who is now 41 - slipped into Britain illegally, hidden under a lorry before going on to grow cannabis in homes, hotels and even a stable His dangerous journey from the poor, rough Vietnamese port town of Haiphong to Britain's illegal cannabis farms was driven by big dreams. "All I ever wanted was to make money... whether it was legal or illegal," Cuong, who is now back in Vietnam, tells AFP.

It was criminal career steered by the Vietnamese gangsters behind the UK's huge marijuana trade - which researchers value at around 2.6 billion pounds (\$3.2 billion) a year. Cuong claims he went to the UK willingly, looking for ready cash in a country with some of the highest weed prices anywhere in Europe. But many others - including children - are tricked and trafficked to work for the shadowy Vietnamese drug bosses who have become the unlikely kingpins of the UK weed game.

The story of the self-professed hustler and low-level crook offers a unique insight into the routes taken by some Vietnamese migrants. But it also turns a spotlight on the margins in Vietnam, where criminal gangs trade on poverty and lack of opportunities to recruit new footsoldiers. Cuong, a former small-time crook and drug user, was 29 when he set off for the UK. It was 2008 and the cannabis trade promised riches, he says, so he paid \$15,000 to brokers for a fraudulent passport and a spot on a tour group to Europe.

Police raids

He slipped away from the tour in France and joined a

well-worn migrant route to a camp in Calais where Vietnamese people smugglers arranged for him to cross the channel to Britain - under the belly of a lorry. "If you fall you're dead," explains Cuong, who made the overnight journey to Dover with three other Vietnamese migrants. Arriving in a new country and speaking no English, his options were limited, so Cuong again turned to the migrant network for help. He ended up in Bristol and worked for a man running several cannabis farms in suburban homes. Cuong says he had to work on his own, housebound and reliant on weekly food drops by his handlers.

"I got up early, ate rice and prepared feed for my plants... put them under lights for two hours and watered them," recalls Cuong, his mundane routine punctuated by fear of arrest. It was a common set-up: houses rented or bought in inconspicuous suburbs and converted into drug operations. Police have also busted cannabis farms in dog kennels, pubs, an abandoned hospital and an even former nuclear bunker - many run by Vietnamese cashing in on Britain's penchant for puff.

Around 12 percent of all cannabis convicts in the country are Southeast Asian, more than any other non-European nationality, a National Police Chiefs' Council shows. It took six months for cops to show up in Cuong's neighborhood. Panicked, he bundled up as many plants as he could in bin bags and made a run for it. But it wasn't long before he was back in business, growing weed in a hotel near Bristol. He had earned nearly \$19,000 - a small fortune compared to salaries back home - but accuses his boss of cheating him out of thousands more.

Forced labor

Most migrants from Vietnam come from poor central provinces. Many shoot for the UK, sending cash home

which is spent on new cars, motorbikes and home renovations. But the journey isn't cheap. Smugglers charge up to \$40,000 for travel documents and a plane ticket, usually to eastern Europe where the overland trip to the UK begins. Some fall prey to traffickers: by the time they make it across the English Channel they are thousands of dollars in debt and forced to work in brothels, nail bars or cannabis farms.

More than 3,100 Vietnamese adults and children were identified as potential trafficking victims by the UK government between 2009 and 2018, according to a report by Anti-Slavery International, ECPAT UK and Pacific Links Foundation. Cuong eventually headed to London, where he drifted for several years, selling drugs and training new weed farmers. But in 2014 he was arrested for smoking cannabis. His fingerprints tied him to the Bristol grow house. Crown Court records show he was convicted for growing cannabis and sentenced to 10 months jail. Eventually the UK Home Office deported him. He joined more than 1,600 returnees to Vietnam either by choice or by force since 2014, including at least 22 who were under the age of 14, according to Home Office data. Hundreds of other children have been identified as potential trafficking victims by the Home Office.

Some are back in Vietnam in debt and at serious risk of being re-trafficked in what amounts to a "merry-go-round" of crime and poverty, according to independent trafficking expert Mimi Vu. Adjusting to life in Vietnam has been tough for Cuong, who returned broke and now lives in a bare house in Haiphong. But he says he is reformed and hopes to open a salon to help provide for the baby he is expecting with his new girlfriend. "In the past I had to be tough and aggressive," he says. "Now I have to be soft and nice." — AFP

High crimes: UK cannabis farms

Abandoned hospital, dog kennels, abandoned warehouses, suburban homes and buried shipping containers - cannabis farms dot Britain, often staffed by Vietnamese migrants-turned-growers. Some have been smuggled in voluntarily, others trafficked against their will. Here are a few high-profile busts involving Vietnamese migrants.

Bunker turned weed farm

When police smashed through the padlocked doors of a former nuclear bunker in Wiltshire in 2017 they found three Vietnamese growers and thousands of cannabis plants. More than 20 rooms in the World War II era bunker were used to grow weed by the migrants - suspected to have been trafficked - who spoke little English and had been locked in the site. More than \$800,000 worth of electricity had been illegally siphoned off to power the massive underground factory that cops said was capable of producing nearly \$2.5 million in weed yearly. Three men were jailed for running the cannabis farm, which police were alerted to when dog-walking neighbors said they smelled something awry. The growers were later deported from Vietnam, having declined to claim asylum, according to British media reports.



In this file photo, a selection of 'Nicotine Containing Products', or 'NCP's are displayed during 'The E-Cigarette Summit' at the Royal Academy in central London. — AFP

Duffel bag of bills

A duffel bag stuffed with £75,000 (\$93,000) in cash was among the evidence police recovered when they busted a Vietnamese cannabis syndicate in Lancashire last year. They also found several houses converted into grow-ops plants valued at £80,000 and a handful of Vietnamese suspects, including ringleader Jack Nguyen, who was charged with conspiracy to produce cannabis and money laundering. Syndicate bosses posed as expectant parents to rent houses, and police unearthed cellphone video of a baby cradling wads of cash, accord-

Mismanagement

Rakotondrasoa's village of Ambohimasindray, just 20 kilometers north of the capital Antananarivo, requested access to the power grid nearly 20 years ago, he says. But the village is still waiting to hear back from Jirama, the troubled state-owned power company. Jirama told AFP that Ambohimasindray's application was "too old" to warrant comment. Madagascar's energy situation is "catastrophic", said the director general of the energy ministry, Andy Ramaroson.

"The rate of access sits at 15 percent and it has not moved in eight years," he said. According to the World Bank, Madagascar ranks 184th out of 190 countries in terms of access to electric power. One solution would be to replace the crumbling hydropower plants built during French colonial rule, which ended in 1960. But Ramaroson said presidents are reluctant to take on lengthy and costly construction projects likely to drag on beyond their five-year mandates. Meanwhile, Jirama is indebted to the tune of 400 million euros (\$438 million) and is operating at a loss of 75 million euros, according to the World Bank. It has long been accused of mismanagement, selling power at a loss and buying kilowatt hours from private suppliers at twice the price it charges consumers. Madagascar's distribution network has not been expanded in four decades. The country about the size of mainland France has only 400 kilometers of high-voltage lines and 1,000 kilometers of medium-voltage lines to distribute the 417 megawatts generated per year.

What about solar?

Jirama has little economic incentive to provide power to tiny villages like Ambohimasindray, which would require a major investment with little return. "Jirama is an operator that reasons in terms of costs and losses," Ramaroson said. Rasoahelinivo may never be able to watch the television she was given by her children in 1989. "Electricity remains a luxury product only city dwellers can afford," she says. Some, like Rasoahelinivo's neighbor Isabelle Ramadanary, have turned to solar power instead.

But her flimsy panel gave out after eight months and now has only enough power to charge mobile phones, so she is back to using candles and kerosene. Indeed, solar power is an obvious alternative in a country that enjoys some 2,800 hours of sunlight annually. The government is counting on this potential to reach its goal of providing energy to 70 percent of households by 2030, according to the World Bank.

Private sector steps in

Meanwhile, the private sector has stepped in with a major hydroelectric power project. This month, French engineering firm Colas, Norway-based SN Power, local company Jovena and the Africa50 investment platform signed an agreement to develop a hydropower plant on Madagascar's Ivondro river, 40 kilometers from the eastern city of Toamasina. The 120-megawatt plant, to be commissioned by 2023, is so far the largest private-sector investment in the electricity sector. — AFP

— AFP

Business

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WASHINGTON: Gita Gopinath, IMF Chief Economist and Director of the Research Department, speaks at a briefing during the IMF and World Bank Fall Meetings yesterday in Washington, DC. — AFP

IMF warns global outlook 'precarious'

Growth forecasts for Iran, Saudi Arabia sharply cut

Putin in Abu Dhabi seeking \$1.3 billion in investments



ABU DHABI: Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) is received by Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, during a welcome ceremony in the UAE capital's Al-Watan presidential palace yesterday. — AFP

ABU DHABI: President Vladimir Putin visited Abu Dhabi yesterday, seeking to attract over \$1.3 billion worth of investments in Russia's economy. Putin, who came to the United Arab Emirates a day after signing a key oil deal with Saudi Arabia in Riyadh, was greeted by Abu Dhabi's powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan. A dozen agreements worth more than \$1.3 billion, notably in the energy, advanced technology and sectors, are expected to be sealed during the visit, according to the Russian sovereign wealth fund.

As Putin made his way to the presidential palace, jets painted the sky white, blue and red—the colors of the Russian flag—and ceremonial can-

non salutes were fired. The streets of Abu Dhabi were lined with Emirati and Russian flags, while road signs typically displaying warnings for motorists greeted Putin in Arabic and Russian. "The United Arab Emirates welcomes the visit of the Russian president," read the signs. "Among the Gulf countries, the UAE is the leader in terms of trade with Russia," Kremlin adviser Yuri Ushakov told the press a few days ahead of the visit. In 2018, trade between the two countries had reached up to \$1.7 billion. "Relations with the Emirates are very advanced, and they are constantly improving," Russian Economy Minister Maxim Oreshkin told reporters in Riyadh on Monday. — AFP

WASHINGTON: The world economy is slowing to its weakest pace since the global financial crisis, as the US-China trade war undercuts business confidence and investment, the IMF said yesterday. It warned that the outlook is beset by risks, and urged policymakers to work to find resolutions to trade disputes, since there are limited tools to respond to a new crisis.

"With a synchronized slowdown and uncertain recovery, the global outlook remains precarious," International Monetary Fund chief economist Gita Gopinath said in her introduction to the latest forecasts. The IMF for the past year has every three months cut projected growth for 2019 as trade conflicts worsened.

In its latest World Economic Outlook it trimmed the estimate by another two-tenths, to 3.0 percent. The report also lowered the 2020 forecast by a tenth to 3.4 percent. "At three percent growth, there is no room for policy mistakes and an urgent need for policymakers to cooperatively deescalate trade and geopolitical tensions," Gopinath said.

In addition, the trade conflicts and a slowdown in auto sales worldwide means trade growth has slowed sharply, falling in the first half of the year to its weakest since 2012, with an estimated increase of just 1.1 percent this year after a 3.6 percent jump in 2018.

Gloomy regional outlook

The IMF sharply downgraded growth projections for Saudi Arabia and Iran, the two largest Mideast economies, citing the impact of US sanctions, geopolitical tensions and low oil prices. In its World Economic Outlook, the global lender cut forecasts for almost all countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as the region is buffeted by biting sanctions on Iran and nail-biting anxiety over last month's attacks on Saudi oil facilities. The IMF said Iran's economy will contract by a massive 9.5 percent this year, its worst performance since 1984 when the Islamic republic was at war with neighboring Iraq.

The figure is 3.5 percentage points lower than the IMF's April projections, reflecting a rapid deterioration in Tehran's economy after the US implemented tighter sanctions on its oil

exports, the nation's main source of income. This is the second year in a row that Iran's economy is mired in recession, after it shrank by 4.8 percent in 2018.

Iran has "been or continues to be experiencing very severe macroeconomic distress," the IMF said, adding that growth in 2020 will be flat. The forecast for Saudi Arabia, the region's largest economy, was also cut to just 0.2 percent for 2019, a substantial 1.6 percentage points lower than April's projections. The outlook is the worst since 2017 when the kingdom's economy contracted by 0.7 percent. But the IMF raised its Saudi growth forecast for next year to 2.2 percent, slightly above April's projections, on expectations that the non-oil sectors will strengthen following subsidy reforms.

The oil giant has substantially cut power and fuel subsidies as well as imposed fees on expatriate visas and a five-percent value added tax as part of a reform program to decrease its dependence on oil. Fitch Ratings in September downgraded Saudi Arabia's credit rating by one notch following the devastating attacks on key oil facilities that knocked out half its production—a strike that has been blamed on Iran.

Growth projections for the United Arab Emirates, the most diversified economy in the region, was cut sharply to 1.6 percent from 2.8 percent in April, due to weak oil growth in Abu Dhabi and a general slowdown in Dubai. The IMF also cut forecasts for other hydrocarbon exporters Qatar, Kuwait and Oman but raised the outlook for Iraq, the region's second largest crude exporter, following a 0.6 percent contraction last year.

The IMF also cut its forecast for MENA growth to a meager 0.1 percent this year, 1.2 percentage points lower than April projections, reflecting weakening economies in a region rattled by conflict. The cut to MENA growth is "largely due to the downward forecast revision for Iran and Saudi Arabia," it said. "Civil strife in some other economies, including Libya, Syria, and Yemen, weigh on the region's outlook."

The global lender said that the price of oil and gas, the main source of income for the region, dropped 13 percent between April and

October and that oil prices will continue to decline until 2023. It said the September 14 attacks on Saudi oil facilities have stoked tension and uncertainty in the region, especially following tanker attacks in the strategic Strait of Hormuz through which 20 percent of oil trade passes.

Running low on ammo

While the US economy also has been hit by uncertainty—largely created by President Donald Trump's trade offensive—the world's largest economy remains a bright spot on the global stage, the report said. After upgrading its US outlook in July, the latest WEO reversed course, and cutting the US forecast this year to 2.4 percent—still above trend, but two-tenths below the July forecast. In 2020, the IMF projects US GDP to expand by 2.1 percent, unchanged from the prior report.

"For the United States, trade related uncertainty has had negative effects on investment, but employment and consumption continue to be robust, buoyed also by policy stimulus," Gopinath said.

Major central banks have taken steps to soften the blow to growth by lowering interest rates, without which the downturn would have been worse, she said. However, she cautioned that monetary policy "cannot be the only game in town" and governments, notably in countries like Germany, should take advantage of low rates to make investments to support growth.

"With central banks having to spend limited ammunition to offset policy mistakes, they may have little left when the economy is in a tougher spot," Gopinath warned.

"To forestall such an outcome, policies should decisively aim at defusing trade tensions, reinvigorating multilateral cooperation, and providing timely support to economic activity where needed," the report said. But trade is not the only reason for the global slowdown: the report notes that in China's economy, for example, growth is moderating as intended amid slowing domestic demand. Other major economies like Brazil, India, Mexico, Russia and South Africa are slowing this year due to "idiosyncratic reasons" but are expected to recover in 2020. —AFP

Business

Trump's light sanctions are a relief for bruised Turkish lira

Volkswagen dithering on building plant in Turkey

ISTANBUL: The Turkish lira gained yesterday after Washington imposed lighter-than-expected sanctions for Turkey's military incursion into Syria, providing some relief even while traders worried that heavier repercussions would follow.

Nine days after he began pulling US troops out of northeastern Syria, US President Donald Trump imposed sanctions on Turkish government ministries and officials and demanded the NATO ally halt its attacks.

But after a week under pressure, Turkish stocks and bonds rallied, as investors noted the sanctions did not extend to Turkey's banks or to broader US-dollar financing and markets. The relief was limited, however. German carmaker Volkswagen said it was postponing a final decision on whether to build a plant in Turkey, citing concern at "current developments" after international condemnation of Turkey's incursion.

In early trade, the lira rallied as much as 0.7 percent before handing back most of those gains. It stood at 5.9000 at 1019 GMT, up 0.4 percent from a close of 5.9270 on Monday, when it tumbled on the prospect of a harsher US punishment. "The sanctions are not related to banking, so the markets will have a positive perception and we can see some movement in the opposite direction from yesterday," said Cem Tozge, an asset management director at Ata Invest.

Still, the increasingly tense US-Turkish ties would continue to cloud sentiment, he said. "The pressure will ease a bit, but the military operation continues, and as long as the international negative news flow continues we cannot expect the lira to appreciate swiftly."

Turkey's main stock exchange BIST100 was up 1.3

percent yesterday while sovereign dollar bonds, especially longer-dated assets, rallied. The costs of insuring sovereign debt also fell.

Minister stays home

Washington named Turkey's ministers of defense, energy, and the interior in its sanctions, but it did not name Treasury Minister Berat Albayrak, who is President Tayyip Erdogan's son-in-law. Two people familiar with the matter said Albayrak would not travel to Washington this week for annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

"His trip has been canceled," one of the sources said. The other said his deputy Bulent Aksu would make the trip. Trump also said steel tariffs would be re-imposed on Turkey and negotiations would be halted on a \$100 billion trade deal. "I am fully prepared to swiftly destroy Turkey's economy if Turkish leaders continue down this dangerous and destructive path," he said.

The lira, which tumbled nearly 30 percent in last year's currency crisis, has fallen nearly 5 percent so far this month. But traders told Reuters it could be worse: state banks have been intervening to cushion the currency's fall by selling billions of dollars since early last week.

One trader said some \$2 billion was spent on Monday alone, even as the lira slid to its weakest since May. The first economic casualty of the military move appears to be the central bank's planned cut in interest rates later this month. On Monday, three money market traders said swaps prices no longer predicted a cut: a reduction of 100 to 200 basis points was expected before the offensive began.

Tozge said a stronger lira rally could revive such



ISTANBUL: The lira rallied as much as 0.7 percent before handing back most of those gains. It stood at 5.9000 at 1019 GMT, up 0.4 percent from a close of 5.9270 yesterday. —AFP

expectations, "but the size of the expected cut will be less than before." Koon Chow, emerging markets strategist at UBP, said the US sanctions "did not touch

state-owned banks as some investors had worried" and will have "low or little implication for capital flows into or out of the country." —Reuters

Fix economic woes, Canada's irritated businesses urge ahead of vote

OTTAWA/TORONTO: Canada's political leaders should address the underlying problems limiting long-term economic growth and not just campaign on pocketbook issues ahead of the federal election this month, business leaders, economists and foreign investors say.

Canada's sustainable pace of economic growth, estimated by the Bank of Canada at 1.8 percent, is not much faster than the rate at which its population is increasing, meaning many Canadians are no better off financially. "None of the four parties as far as I've observed have talked at all about that side of life, how you generate actual growth, how you generate wealth, how you generate income," David Dodge, senior adviser at Bennett Jones and former governor of the Bank of Canada, told Reuters.

While the election campaign has focused on issues like cell phone bills and boutique tax credits to quell discomfort among Canadians, economists say that a long-term fix would require increased government and private investment targeted at raising productivity. Canadians vote on Oct. 21.

Canada's productivity growth, which drives higher wages, has tended to be lackluster. It rose 0.3 percent year-over-year in the second quarter, much slower than the 1.8 percent gain in the United States, the country's biggest trading partner, official data showed.

A survey by Sage, a cloud business management solutions company, in partnership with market research agency Angus Reid, found last Tuesday that two-thirds of Canadian business owners believe current federal government policies have not helped businesses grow.

Measures that would accelerate economic growth include more efficient allocation of government infrastructure spending, reduced duplication of federal, provincial and municipal regulation and increased spending on research and development that leads to greater innovation, according to Craig Alexander, chief economist at Deloitte Canada.

India's Reliance resumes Venezuela oil imports

MUMBAI: India's biggest private oil refiner Reliance Industries has resumed crude imports from crisis-hit Venezuela, using diesel exports to pay for them under a barter system that the company said yesterday complies with US sanctions.

The Mumbai-based company owned by Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani was forced to cap crude imports from the South American country in March following pressure from the United States. It also stopped exporting diluents needed to process thick Venezuelan crude to the country.

But under the terms of the barter arrangement, the energy-to-telecoms conglomerate has resumed crude imports from the Latin American country, Reliance spokesperson Tushar Pania told AFP.

The deal will help ease Venezuela's inventories after

US sanctions left its state-owned oil company PDVSA with huge volumes of unsold crude. "Reliance Industries is exporting diesel and importing crude oil from Venezuela in a barter arrangement," Pania said.

"This is in compliance with US sanctions and Reliance is confident of adhering to them," he added, declining to say when the company had resumed the shipments. Venezuela—a once-rich oil-producing nation—is in the grip of an economic crisis and a political standoff between President Nicolas Maduro's government and opposition leader Juan Guaido. The situation has worsened with successive rounds of US sanctions against Maduro's government, including steps that have severely curbed its oil exports. PetroWatch editor Madhu Nainan told AFP the barter agreement was "a win-win situation for both as Venezuela is battered with crippling sanctions while Reliance aims to boost its profitability".

"With this barter deal, Reliance can procure cheap crude... which will help their refining margins."

Refining margins are a key profitability gauge for Reliance, which operates the world's biggest refining complex in Gujarat state. India became the top importer of crude from Venezuela in February after



The company owned by Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani was forced to cap crude imports from Venezuela in March. —AFP

US faces a gauntlet of trade deadlines before year-end

WASHINGTON: Trade talks between the United States and China ended last week on a mostly uncertain note, but one thing was clear - the White House cancelled a scheduled tariff hike on \$250 billion in Chinese goods that would have gone into effect yesterday.

Next up, the United States, the world's largest importer, faces a gauntlet of new trade tariff deadlines that it needs to enforce, postpone, or renegotiate. How US officials handle these could further affect a global economy that's already being dented by US trade policy. Deadlines are piling up. In the nearly three years of Trump's presidency, the US Trade Representative's office has rolled out punitive tariffs and shredded long-standing agreements, recalibrating its trading relationships with every one of its top 10 trading partners, based on goods-alone data from 2018.

"This war on every front means the USTR hasn't been able to focus all its resources on the most severe issue - reining in China's unfair trade practices, some trade experts say. "Significant problems with international trade have been festering for a long time and it's true that the US needed to break something," said Clete Willem, a partner with law firm Akin Gump and former Trump economic advisor. "However, we didn't need to break it all at the same time and could have been more focused on China from the start," he added.

Here is a rundown: October 18 - EU tariffs

As soon as Oct. 18, the United States could start taxing European goods including Provolone cheese and Scotch whisky by 25 percent, after the World Trade Organization ruled it has the right to tax some \$7.5 billion in goods. Under the measures Airbus planes assembled in Europe will also be hit with a tariff of 10 percent, putting pressure on the European planemaker to absorb at least part of the cost rather than see deals cancelled, industry sources said. Expect the EU to retaliate, French finance minister Bruno Le Maire said earlier this month. "If the American administration rejects the hand that has been held out by France and the European Union, we are preparing ourselves to react with sanctions," he said.

November 14 - Autos 232

A long-running US investigation into whether imported cars and auto parts pose a national security threat comes to a head on Nov. 14. That's the deadline for the Trump administration to decide whether to impose delayed "Section 232" national security tariffs of as much as 25 percent on foreign-made vehicles and parts.

The industry says these tariffs would add thousands of dollars to vehicle costs and potentially lead to hundreds of thousands of job losses throughout the US economy.

November 16/17 APEC summit

Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping will attend the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit in Santiago, Chile, and Trump has suggested they could sign a "Phase 1" trade deal there. But the two sides still need to negotiate a text that puts into writing their understandings on intellectual property, currency policy, financial services access in China and agricultural purchases.

US President Donald Trump issued a de facto ban on imports.

In addition to Reliance, Nayara Energy—a Mumbai-based company that is partly owned by Russia's Rosneft—is also a buyer of Venezuelan crude. —AFP

This would require intensive negotiations over the next month to try to finalize a text that may include additional actions on the US side to ease tariffs, or more specific purchase commitments by China.

November USMCA vote

Negotiations for the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which replaces NAFTA, resetting the rules between the United States and its neighbors to the north and south ended in September of 2018. But the US Congress has yet to approve the deal, a requirement for it to go into effect. Trump, his administration, congressional Republicans and several key business groups have been pressuring House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to take up the measure well before the Thanksgiving holiday on Nov. 28. At the end of November, the bill will compete with a "continuing resolution" budget measure to keep the government funded and running. And after that, the bill could be stuck in legislative limbo as the 2020 US presidential and congressional election campaigns begin to heat up, and an impeachment investigation moves through the House.

However, some Democrats and the head of the AFL-CIO labor union have recently expressed concerns about how labor terms will be enforced. "If there was a vote on the new #NAFTA before Thanksgiving, the agreement would be defeated," the labor union chief said Oct. 9.

December 15 new China tariffs

New tariffs on \$156 billion in Chinese goods that have previously escaped the trade war go into effect Dec. 15. These imports are almost all consumer goods, including cellphones, laptop and table computers, toys and clothing. The deadline was set to allow US firms and retailers to bring in sufficient inventories for the Christmas selling season tariff free, but they could prompt price hikes for last-minute shoppers. —Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.550
Euro	337.290
Sterling Pound	386.020
Canadian dollar	231.070
Turkish lira	52.510
Swiss Franc	307.160
US Dollar Buying	297.150

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.811
Indian Rupees	4.278
Pakistani Rupees	1.964
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.680
Nepali Rupees	2.666
Singapore Dollar	223.110
Hongkong Dollar	38.818
Bangladesh Taka	3.592
Philippine Peso	5.893
Thai Baht	10.026
Malaysian ringgit	77.890

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.268
Qatari Riyal	83.702
Omani Riyal	791.553
Bahraini Dinar	809.220
UAE Dirham	82.972

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	20.900
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Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.736
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.223
Tunisian Dinar	111.150
Jordanian Dinar	430.000
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	31.923

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.740
Canadian Dollar	230.725
Sterling Pound	375.885
Euro	333.495
Swiss Frank	307.075
Bahrain Dinar	810.415
UAE Dirhams	83.370
Qatari Riyals	84.610
Saudi Riyals	82.160
Jordanian Dinar	431.105
Egyptian Pound	18.729
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.672
Indian Rupees	4.308
Pakistani Rupees	1.949
Bangladesh Taka	3.609
Philippines Peso	5.872
Cyprus pound	18.130
Japanese Yen	3.815
Syrian Pound	1.595
Nepalese Rupees	2.697
Malaysian Ringgit	73.635

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	43.065
Thai Bhat	10.935
Turkish Lira	54.365
Singapore dollars	220.536

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.377445	0.391345
Czech Korune	0.004977	0.014277
Danish Krone	0.040876	0.045876
Euro	0.328238	0.341938
Georgian Lari	0.101895	0.101695
Hungarian 0.000920	0.001110	0.001110
Norwegian Krone	0.029381	0.034581
Romanian Leu	0.053653	0.070503
Russian ruble	0.004725	0.004725
Slovakia	0.009106	0.019106
Swedish Krona	0.026932	0.031932
Swiss Franc	0.298933	0.309933
Australian Dollar	0.197798	0.209798
New Zealand Dollar	0.185334	0.194834
Canada Dollar	0.224659	0.233659
US Dollars	0.300450	0.305750
US Dollars Mint	0.300950	0.305750
Bangladesh Taka	0.002963	0.003764

Chinese Yuan	0.041722	0.045222
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036728	0.039478
Indian Rupee	0.003707	0.004479
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002725	0.002905
Korean Won	0.000247	0.000262
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069305	0.075305
Nepalese Rupee	0.002626	0.002966
Pakistan Rupee	0.001349	0.002119
Philippine Peso	0.005717	0.006017
Singapore Dollar	0.216821	0.226821
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001319	0.001899
Taiwan	0.009823	0.010003
Thai Baht	0.009657	0.010207
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013
Bahraini Dinar	0.801674	0.809732
Egyptian Pound	0.018646	0.021387
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000214	0.000274
Jordanian Dinar	0.424644	0.436444
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000151	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020840	0.044849
Omani Riyal	0.785909	0.793808
Qatar Riyal	0.082996	0.083830
Saudi Riyal	0.080127	0.081427
Syrian Pound	0.001291	0.001511
Tunisian Dinar	0.102844	0.108444
Turkish Lira	0.044940	0.054785
UAE Dirhams	0.082285	0.083113
Yemeni Riyal	0.000990	0.001070

Business

Zain launches subscription video on demand service 'PlayVOD'

Service in partnership with Digital Virgo

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, yesterday announced the launch of a unique subscription video on demand (SVOD) service, 'PlayVOD', in partnership with Digital Virgo, a France-based specialist in telecom payments, monetization and digital marketing. The new service offers Zain Kuwait's 2.8 million customers access to a wide range of popular movies and TV series, mixing international and regional content.

PlayVOD is currently live in 12 countries and available in five languages, boasting a rich library of 3,000+

movies and TV series, including access to a wide range of movies and TV shows from MBC, one of the largest production houses in the region. Zain customers can subscribe to the premium VOD service using Direct Carrier Billing (DCB).

The inaugural launch of PlayVOD in Kuwait follows a company-wide agreement entered between Zain Group and Digital Virgo earlier this year to provide Zain's 49 million customers across eight markets with access to Digital Virgo's portfolio or premium mobile

content and mobile entertainment partners. The deal followed the system's integration with Zain Group's Application Program Interface (API) platform and the deployment of Direct Carrier Billing technology by the telco. PlayVOD is set to be rolled out to other Zain markets progressively in the near future via the Zain Group API Platform.

Modhey Al Sabah, Zain Kuwait's Chief Government Affairs and Business Development Officer said: "The launch of PlayVOD in Kuwait is another example of Zain's pioneering approach to delivering the most compelling user experiences as we transform to become a fully integrated digital lifestyle provider. Our Group-wide API program has made partnering with leading technology and over-the-top (OTT) content providers such as Digital Virgo much easier, with the result being services such as PlayVOD being brought to market much more quickly."

Guillaume Briche, Digital Virgo CEO, commented, "The launch with Zain Kuwait illustrates how we intend to strengthen our international development, particu-



larly in Africa and Middle East, teaming up with major telecom groups to increase our visibility within the digital ecosystem. In these regions, our positioning as an expert in payment, monetization and marketing is unique, and allows us to bring significant value to mobile operators and their end-users."

- The launch of SVOD on Zain's API platform in Kuwait is the first for Digital Virgo following a Group-wide framework agreement with Zain
- PlayVOD offers a rich library of over 3,000 movies and TV series, inclusive of MBC

London retains global finance throne amid Brexit chaos

LONDON: From the pinnacle of the City of London's largest skyscraper, Stuart Lipton is wagering a \$1.2 billion bet that the British capital remains a master of the international financial universe no matter what happens with Brexit. The 76-year-old property developer is not alone. Bankrolled by a host of global investors, including France's Axa, his big-ticket gamble in London's financial district is - so far - on the money.

The cataclysmic warnings during the 2016 referendum that London would lose its financial throne if it voted to leave the European Union (EU) have, so far, been proven wrong. London is still the world's banker, only bigger by some measures. "London is extraordinarily resilient and its future as a finance center is secure because what we have here is unique," Lipton told Reuters on the 61st floor of 22 Bishopsgate, set to become western Europe's second tallest skyscraper when it opens next year.

In the year to June, London has attracted more cross border commercial real estate investment than any other city. It has overtaken New York as destination for fintech investment and it has increased its dominance of the world's \$6.6 trillion daily foreign exchange market. Since the vote to leave the EU, Britain has leapfrogged the United States to become the largest centre for trading interest rate swaps, despite calls by ex-French President Francois Hollande to end London's dominance in clearing euro-denominated derivatives.

That London has expanded its influence as an international finance centre is one of the biggest riddles of the United Kingdom's tortuous three year Brexit crisis.

The city's standing ensures the United Kingdom keeps one of its last big chips at the top table of world politics just as it splits from the EU. It also means EU companies will still



LONDON: In this file photo, The skyline of buildings in The City of London is seen from Waterloo Bridge as pedestrians walk by in central London. — AFP

come to London to raise finance outside the bloc after Brexit, a fact not lost on Wall Street heavyweights such as Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan. Just a mile away from 22 Bishopsgate, Goldman opened its new 1 million square foot European headquarters - complete with mothers' rooms and wildflowers on the roof - in July, three years on from the 2016 referendum.

Largely abandoned by the British government during Brexit talks, ten senior industry officials told Reuters London's financial services sector has grown since 2016 because there is no realistic competitor in its time zone. And high-rolling bankers are too attached to its Anglo-Saxon, work-hard, play-hard culture.

The chief executive of the British division of one of Europe's largest banks said although some business will move to the EU, most senior bankers will be reluctant to leave London. He would consider taking a 20% pay cut to remain in the city.

"If you are an Italian banker, who moved out to London 20 years ago, and your kids go to private school around the corner then you are not going to move to Frankfurt," he said.

Master of the universe

A global hub for trading, lending and investing, London is the largest net exporter of financial services in the world, with the EU accounting for a quarter of the business. The 2016 refer-

endum shocked many of the masters of London's financial universe, triggering the biggest one-day fall of the pound since the era of free-floating exchange rates was introduced in the early 1970s.

But so far, most major financial institutions have opted against moving large numbers of people and activities until the loss of access to the EU's lucrative single market is confirmed. Banks, insurers and asset managers have shifted over a trillion euros of assets such as derivatives and bonds from London to the continent and opened new EU hubs as a hedge against London suddenly being cut off from the bloc if Britain exits the EU without a formal agreement.

The Bank of England estimates around 4,000 people may have moved by the time Britain has exited the EU. But the key decisions are still taken in London. Reuters contacted JP Morgan and Goldman, and rivals Citigroup, Bank of America, UBS, Morgan Stanley, Credit Suisse and Deutsche Bank, to seek details on how a 'no deal Brexit' might accelerate the transfer of resources and activities from London.

All banks said they were prepared for a no-deal Brexit, and had been since the first quarter. Earlier this year, Morgan Stanley's chief executive, James Gorman, said that he scarcely worried about Brexit. "That's not in my top 200 issues," he said. — Reuters

US oil and gas jobs fall as drilling declines

LONDON: US oil and gas employment has started to fall as the sector contracts in response to lower prices over the last year - and further job losses are likely in the next few months as the rate of well drilling declines further.

In 2017/18, the second shale-oil boom created almost 100,000 new high-paying jobs in oil and gas drilling as well as associated services such as site preparation, cementing, casing and pressure-pumping. Employment gains in the oil and gas sector also helped support tens of thousands more jobs along the supply chain including trucking, accommodation, retail and leisure services. The impact was felt intensively in some local areas - especially those overlaying the oil- and gas-rich Permian Basin in western Texas and eastern New Mexico. Non-farm employment in the Midland metropolitan area at the heart of the Permian in Texas surged at an annual rate of 15 percent in the first nine months of 2018, data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics shows.

Non-farm jobs in the Odessa metro area, another Permian boom town, were up more than 10 percent in the first three quarters of 2018 compared with a year earlier. But the persistent slump in oil prices since the start of October 2018 has brought job creation to a halt and replaced it with a gradual but steady trickle of layoffs.

Layoffs

Nationwide, the number of jobs at companies providing support services to the oil and gas industry, including site preparation and construction, has fallen progressively over the last year.

UK hiring falls by most in over four years as Brexit nears

LONDON: Britain's jobs boom has weakened in the approach to Brexit with the number of people in work unexpectedly falling by the most in over four years and unemployment rising, official data showed yesterday.

Employment fell by 56,000 to 32.69 million in the three months to August, the Office for National Statistics said. Economists polled by Reuters had expected growth of 23,000. The number of people out of work rose by 22,000 to just over 1.31 million, the ONS said. Britain's strong labor market has been the silver lining for the economy since the Brexit referendum in 2016, something many analysts attribute, in part, to firms hiring workers that they can later lay off rather than making longer-term commitments to investment.

But there were signs in yesterday's figures that employers were turning more cautious. The unemployment rate unexpectedly rose to 3.9 percent from a 3.8 percent, which had been its joint lowest since the mid-1970s, while vacancies fell to their lowest level since the three months to November 2017. "Challenging economic conditions are starting to take the shine off the UK's job boom," Tej Parikh, chief economist at the Institute of Directors, an employers group, said. "Business leaders' long-lasting drive to

expand their workforce has put the labor market in a strong position. However, firms are now increasingly coming up against uncertainty and the shrinking supply of available talent." Many employers are worried about Prime Minister Boris Johnson's pledge to take Britain out of the European Union on Oct. 31 without a transition deal to smooth the economic shock if necessary. However, lawmakers have passed legislation that they say will force him to seek a delay from Brussels. A survey published separately yesterday by Britain's main auto industry group showed jobs cuts at one in three firms in the sector, which risks being a big loser from Brexit. That was up from one in eight just under a year ago. As well as worries about Brexit, Britain's economy is feeling the drag from rising US-China trade tensions which have weighed on global growth.

The ONS labor market data showed a dip in the pace of pay growth which recently hit its fastest in more than 10 years. Total earnings growth, including bonuses, rose by an annual 3.8 percent in the three months to August, slowing from 3.9 percent in the three months to July and weaker than the median forecast of 4.0 percent in the Reuters poll. Excluding bonuses, which smoothes out some volatility, pay growth similarly slowed slightly to 3.8 percent, but was a touch ahead of the Reuters poll forecast of 3.7 percent.

The trend in pay growth is being watched closely by the Bank of England. Deputy Governor Dave Ramsden said in a newspaper interview published on Sunday that wage costs were "picking up quite significantly, which will drive domestic inflationary pressure." However, the BoE is waiting for more clarity on Brexit before any decision to resume its gradual and limited program of interest rates hikes. — Reuters

US banks report mixed earnings

NEW YORK: Large US banks reported mixed quarterly results yesterday, challenged by a shifting interest rate landscape and uncertainty about global trade but bolstered in some cases by strong consumer activity.

The biggest US bank by assets, JPMorgan Chase, scored higher profits due to robust consumer lending even as Chief Executive Jamie Dimon offered a subdued outlook on the US economy, due in part to lingering worries about an economic slowdown due to the trade war.

Earnings also rose at Citigroup, but profits fell sharply at Goldman Sachs amid a drop in key advisory services and at Wells Fargo, which was hit by higher legal costs as it continues to try to pivot from a series of scandals and regulatory issues.

JPMorgan reported profits of \$9.1 billion, up 8.4 percent from the year-ago period. Revenues were \$29.3 billion, up 7.3 percent. The increase in profits comes as large banks manage a shift in monetary policy by the US Federal Reserve that has dampened the industry's profit outlook somewhat.

Lower interest rates typically weigh on earnings at banks, which earn profits from the margin between their loans and deposits. On the upside, JPMorgan scored higher revenues in home lending as mortgage costs for consumers eased. The company also reported another increase in credit cards and auto lending.

US economic growth has "slowed slightly," Dimon said. "The consumer remains healthy



with growth in wages and spending combined with strong balance sheets and low unemployment levels," Dimon added. "This is being offset by weakening business sentiment and capital expenditures mostly driven by increasingly complex geopolitical risks, including tensions in global trade."

At Goldman Sachs, third-quarter profits were \$1.8 billion, down 26.9 percent from the year-ago period. Revenues were \$8.3 billion, down 5.6 percent.

The investment bank suffered a drop in financial advisory and equity and debt underwriting revenues but won an increase in trading businesses that have been a headwind in recent quarters.

Wells Fargo also suffered a significant drop in profits, which came in at \$4.6 billion, down 23.3 percent.

Revenues edged up slightly to \$22 billion. Results were dented by \$1.6 billion in litigation

costs connected to a fake accounts scandal that has weighed on the bank since late 2016.

Wells Fargo announced late last month that it named Charles Scharf as its new chief executive to begin later this month. At Citigroup, net income was up 6.3 percent at \$4.9 billion on a one percent rise in revenues to \$18.6 billion.

Chief Financial Officer Mark Mason described the client environment as cautious. "You look in the market and see cautious sentiment around things like capital spending, things like mergers and acquisitions and things like IPOs," Mason said on a conference call with reporters. "You certainly hear that in conversations with clients." Shares of JPMorgan rose 2.2 percent to \$118.95 in pre-market trading, while Goldman Sachs fell 2.3 percent to \$201.10. Citigroup fell 0.9 percent to \$69.62 and Wells Fargo shed 1.1 percent to \$48.73. — AFP

Business

Dhow Information Systems partners with Aseer Time

Contract to support business growth as trusted SAP partner

KUWAIT: Dhow Information Systems (www.dhow-soft.com), a subsidiary of Al-Sayer and Aseer Time, one of the fastest growing food company in Kuwait signed a digital transformation contract. The digital transformation journey will see the customer consolidate all the business entities under a single software solution giving the management insight into profitability, productivity, and growth.

As part of the contract Dhow will implement the world-class SAP S4/Hana business solution which includes financial management, sales and distribution, inventory management, point of sales system (customer checkout), in order to fuel the phenomenal growth of Aseer Time in Kuwait and the Middle East.

A contract signing ceremony was held at Al-Sayer Group Headquarters in the presence of Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer, CEO, Bengt Schultz COO of Al-Sayer Holding, Dr Hussain Qarashi, owner of Aseer Time along with their team members of this strategic implementation project.

According to Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer, "we reiterate our commitment to deliver a high-quality implementation in compliance with the latest ISO accreditation standards".

Dhow Information Systems is currently the only SAP

Gold Partner in Kuwait. Gold Partnership is achieved through continuous engagement with SAP in sales, support and quality consultants who are trained to deliver excellence.

Dr Husain Karashi said "our decision to choose SAP S4/Hana was based on technical and business assessment to ensure their investment will support their growth without any restrictions. SAP is the leading vendor in the world for Enterprise solution with a clear vision for the future of intelligent enterprise." "We congratulate Aseer Time for choosing a platform that will bring productivity, transparency and simplicity to the business operations" commented Bengt Schultz, Yasser Bourdkani SAP Territory Manager and Lutfi Ghansar SAP Partner Business Director were present during the signing ceremony to provide their support and commitment for the successful execution of the project.

In addition, Aseer Time was represented by Hisham Saadeh General Manager, Mohammad Abbas DGM-Business Development Manager and Mohammed Muharram Chief Financial Officer. Dhow Information Systems was represented by Cajetan Barretto General Manager, Ahmed Mansour Senior SAP Sales Manager, Abhijit Rai Project Manager and Ahmed Rashad Sales Executive.



KUWAIT: Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer, Bengt Schultz and Dr Hussain Qarashi along with their team members of this strategic implementation project during the contract signing ceremony at Al-Sayer Group Headquarters.

AUB offers customers exclusive discounts of up to 10% on Qatar Airways flights

KUWAIT: Continuing its commitment to provide customers with additional benefits, Ahli United Bank (AUB) announced the launch of an exclusive offer for its MasterCard holders giving them up to 10 percent discount on all Qatar Airways flights throughout September 23rd to October 22nd 2019. This offer is valid for travel until March 31st 2020.

AUB has launched this offer to reward its MasterCard holders by providing them a unique banking experience and to enhance its leadership in the banking sector through providing innovative offers to its customers in cooperation with leading companies and brands in the region.

Commenting on this offer, Ranjan Sen, General Manager of Retail Banking at AUB, said: "This offer is part of the Bank's strategy to care for its cardholders and meet their expectations. It also affirms the Bank's approach in rewarding its cardholders for their trust and loyalty to the services and products it provides by providing innovative offers that are not limited to only banking services."

Sen added: "AUB always strives to reward its customers and present them with unique offers throughout the year, including exclusive discounts for travel seasons offers that group many entities to ensure providing a variety of special offers with airlines and hotels aiming to satisfy the needs of customers during those seasons."

Malabar Gold & Diamonds launches new festive jewelry collection

KUWAIT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the largest jewelry retailers globally with a strong retail network of 250 outlets spread across the globe has revealed its latest collection of jewelry. Malabar Gold & Diamonds unveiled the versatile and sparkling jewelry collection exclusively designed for the festive season. The jewelry was unveiled in a special event held at Malabar Gold & Diamonds Fahaeel Makkah Street branch in presence of their privileged customers on 12th October, 2019. The limited edition festive collection is available at special offer prices for the customers.

The latest jewelry collection is specially designed in gold (18K and 22K), diamonds and precious gems to celebrate this festive season keeping in mind the tastes of their multicultural and multinational customers. A true shopper's pleasure, Malabar Gold & Diamonds will enthrall the customers by exhibiting eye catchy designs in gold, diamonds and precious gems from different parts of the world to flaunt at any occasion or event. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has incorporated these designs as a part of various brands presented at Malabar Gold & Diamonds' namely Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewellery, Era - Uncut Diamond Jewelry, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Divine - Indian Heritage Jewelry, Precia - Gem Jewelry and Starlet -



Kids jewelry.

Furthermore, 'A Gift of Gold' campaign announced by Malabar Gold & Diamonds earlier gives unmatched chances for the customers to win gold coins with their gold and diamond jewelry purchases. Customers can win a guaranteed gold coin or up to 50 gold coins instantly on purchase of gold jewelry worth KD 250 via 'Scratch & Win' coupons. Adding to the above, cus-

tomers also get two gram gold coin on diamond jewelry purchase of KD 500 and a one gram gold coin on purchase of diamond jewelry worth KD 250. Above offers are valid at all outlets in Kuwait until 27th October only. Also, customers will have a great opportunity to get protected from the increasing gold rate by just paying 10 percent of the entire amount on your favorite gold jewelry. This offer is valid until 25th October only.

Warba Bank holds Al-Sunbula mega draws

KUWAIT: Warba Bank, "the Best investment Bank" and "Best Corporate Bank" in Kuwait, held Al-Sunbula mega draws in a special event at the 360 mall in the presence of Ali Najem who announced the winners of the draws. The 8 winners were announced in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and bank officials.

The bank proudly announced the five winners of The Sunbula 3rd Quarter Draw: The 1st winner of the grand prize 100,000 Kuwaiti Dinar is Ali Hussain Mohammad Al-Ajmi and the 2nd to 5th winner of Toyota Land Cruiser VXR are Leena Subhi Murad, Sayer Bader Mohammad Al-Sayer, Asma Mohammad Ahmad Al-Ansari and Abdullah Hassan Ahmad Al-Seddiqi.

Warba Bank has added Sunbula Kids Account to Sunbula Draws, it's an investment Saving's account with promising competitive returns along with monthly draws with innovative prizes chosen carefully for the kids. The winners of this month are: The 1st winner of a trip to Dubai Parks is Rashed Ebrahim Mubarak Al-Khazim, the 2nd winner of a one year subscription at Flex is Khalifah Talal Shaker Khalifah and the 3rd winner of a one year subscription in one of the participated clubs is Barrak Hamad Mohammad Al-Soury.

Al-Sunbula both account and fixed deposits are the perfect choices for customers who wish to save money and achieve steady returns while at the same time have the opportunity to win cash prizes throughout the year. In line with the bank's mission to develop and differentiate its offerings, Warba Bank has enhanced its Sunbula campaign for 2019 with more cash and prizes reaching more than KD 1 million.

Warba Bank will continue its weekly draws for 5 winners of KD 1,000 each. What's new in 2019 are the "Mega Draws" which will be held every quarter to reveal five winners, the 1st winner will get KD 100,000! The four winners thereafter will each get the latest Land Cruiser VXR. Furthermore, the final Mega draw held in January 2020 will feature 2 more Land Cruiser VXRs!

Focus Softnet launches its AI platform AIFA

KUWAIT: Focus Softnet, the leading software development and enterprise applications provider, announced the launch of its Artificial Intelligence (AI) platform, AIFA (Artificially Intelligent Futuristic Applications). AIFA is an advanced, automated platform meant to enhance business, increase productivity, and reduce investment in human training.

"Businesses in the region are now ready to leverage digital technologies to improve efficiencies. Focus Softnet has developed AIFA that can be used by organizations to automate all types of functions. These could be from the front office, top executive, managerial, and back office. With CIOs and IT managers under pressure to do more with less funds, AIFA as a workforce assistant can be used across multiple departments and across multiple roles," explained Ali Hyder, Group CEO of Focus Softnet, during the launch of AIFA.

Businesses can analyze data, support their customers, or assist end-users in data entry task. As an advanced AI chatbot that uses machine learning, AIFA will understand queries and respond smartly. Businesses can get insights and predictive analysis to lower their operational

costs and improve services. AIFA also helps in marking automatic attendance of employees using AI face recognition feature and gets integrated with any Payroll & Attendance system. The Robotic Process Automation (RPA) feature in AIFA allows organizations to automate routine tasks that can be integrated with business application. Further, the face recognition feature also helps in contributing to the increase in sales by getting maximum information of walk-in customers in retail sales.

According to a recent PwC report, analysis conducted by IDC estimates that spending on cognitive and artificial intelligence systems in the Middle East and Africa region will grow from \$37.5 million in 2017 to over \$100 million by 2021, representing a growth rate of 32 percent. The UAE and Saudi Arabia, in particular, have demonstrated strong commitment towards the development and implementation of artificial intelligence technologies.

AIFA can be used in most popular languages. There is no need to employ customer service personnel, specifically for any language. It can provide analytics for questions asked. The end user company can use this to identify areas that need improvement. Focus AIFA can be reached through a phone call, mobile app, website, Alexa, Google Home, Facebook, WhatsApp and other such platforms and devices.

"We have also made significant innovations around voice recognition, allowing customers to build triggers and alerts with call to action and data embedded in them.

Victor Menezes wins KD 4,000 in Burgan Bank's value account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank yesterday announced Victor Louis Menezes as the winner of the Value Account KD 4000 draw. The winner expressed his excitement of winning the cash prize of KD 4,000.



Ali Hyder

Customers can customize these alerts as required and can create a culture of proactiveness when they are sent and heard by recipients on the move, rather than read as text or email messages at a later time, often too late for action," Mr. Hyder added.

The most defining capability of AIFA is that it is not just a work assistant but can work as a customer service executive as well. By interacting with AIFA, customers can access their data, and get answers to basic questions such as balance, limit, due date of bills, last payment, service request,

location request. Unlike humans who cannot be available during holidays or during the night, AIFA can work 24 hours, 365 days of the year. Businesses can deploy this advanced AI assistant, that has inbuilt accelerated computing for extreme performance and big data workloads. End-users can use AIFA to get information about product, bills, statements, services, status of service requests and other such information. Top executives can use AIFA as a data mining tool to get quick access to information they need, in any format such as voice, text and reports.

Dedicated to offer the best in-class services, Burgan Bank's Value Account presents customers with exceptional features which were specifically designed to suit the needs of expatriates living in Kuwait. Account holders will be able to enjoy matchless benefits that include receiving a free credit card for one year, application for a loan, in addition to a chance to enter the quarterly draw to win KD 4000 as well as other discounts from selected merchant stores.

Burgan Bank will continue presenting exclusive services and draws with an aim of exceeding customers' expectations while offering them chances to win valuable cash prizes all year round.

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is the youngest

commercial Bank and second largest by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors, as well as having a growing retail, and private bank customer base. Burgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENAT region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks which include Gulf Bank Algeria - AGB (Algeria), Bank of Baghdad - BOB (Iraq & Lebanon), Tunis International Bank - TIB (Tunisia), and fully owned Burgan Bank - Turkey, (collectively known as the 'Burgan Bank Group'). Furthermore, Burgan Bank has a present in the UAE through its corporate office (iBurgan Financial Services Limited) which had helped the bank to participate in multiple financing opportunities in the UAE.

What's On

Public schools participate in NBK, Omniya's waste collecting challenge



National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) in cooperation with Omniya's Project Management, recently held an orientation day for the schools participating in the School Waste Recycling Challenge attended by Assistant undersecretary of educational development and activities, Faisal Al-Maqseed. More than 125 public schools registered for NBK and Omniya's waste collecting challenge. The competition has kicked off officially and will be concluded in April 2020. The competition will reward the first four winners with valuable prizes that serve the schools' sustainable practices. Recycling containers were distributed during the event to be placed in the participating schools to

encourage youth to contribute in the recycling efforts. Yaqoub Al Baqer, NBK Communications Manager, attended the orientation day and appreciated the schools' effort for being a part of this challenge. "The challenge brings to life the importance of recycling and keeping plastic out of our nation's landfills. Schools will compete against each other to collect the most plastic bottles, which will eventually be recycled. NBK in partnership with Omniya is pleased to create an initiative that encourages recycling in Kuwait." Al-Baqer pointed out that NBK's cooperation with Omniya is a long-lasting partnership that involves effective campaigns and a real contribution in environmental awareness.

"At NBK, we are proud of these pioneering Kuwaiti talents and aspirations, such as Omnia's team. NBK aims at the development of a new Kuwait built on sustainability, a dream all Kuwaitis aspire to achieve". Al-Baqer added that NBK is constantly seeking to further enhance its investments promoting a healthy environmental culture that is positively reflected on the community. NBK has maintained its leadership as a pioneer in adopting environmental initiatives within the bank and for the benefit of the broader community. The challenge between the schools aims to protect the environment and reduce waste in line with NBK's sustainable development strategy, which is aligned with

the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Kuwait Vision 2035. It is worth mentioning that, NBK has led many eco-friendly campaigns, including recycling paper waste throughout all its departments and energy conservation efforts. NBK has also launched several environmental campaigns, such as camping sites and beach clean-up campaigns at the beginning of the summer season. Moreover, NBK has heavily invested in its new green headquarters, which 'LEED Gold' certified as an eco-friendly building. Omniya is a national environmental and cultural project aimed at spreading the culture of sorting and recycling waste in the society, creating a new industry and reducing environmental pollution.

LOYAC Lebanon celebrates its tenth anniversary

Under the patronage of Mohammed Al-Saqer, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of LOYAC, LOYAC Lebanon celebrated its tenth anniversary. The ceremony was attended by the Board of Trustees Dr Saad Al-Barrak, Fadia Al-Marzouq, Fareah Al-Saqaf in addition to the Board of Directors of LOYAC Fattouh Al-Dalali, Mona Al-Kalouti, Lara Dardian and Nadia Al-Marzouq. From LOYAC Lebanon, economist Ramzi Sabouri and Nadia Ahmed Managing Director of LOYAC Lebanon also attended the event.

The ceremony saw a number of prominent Lebanese personalities, including international artist Nadine Labaki, well-known Arab media personnel Jazeel Khoury, journalist Ricardo Karam, international music artist Khaled Mouznan, Habib Barakat, director of the National Bank of Kuwait in Lebanon, well-known businesswoman Mai Makhzoumi, Anthony Stefan, the first Board of Directors of LOYAC Lebanon, Souad Amin Former President of LOYAC Lebanon, Ghassan Sidawi, Ali Hamadeh and his wife Samar Madi. The ceremony was also attended by Fahad Abu Shaar General Manager of Sheraton Hotel in Kuwait LOYAC's partner, Zeina Muqaddam LOYAC's permanent volunteer and media partner.

At the beginning of the ceremony, Fareah Al-Saqaf welcomed the audience and gave a brief speech about the foundation of LOYAC's Lebanon, the brotherly relations shared between the two countries and the government saying: "It is natural to think of Lebanon first and before any other Arab country. The relationship between the two people is old and firm, whether economically, culturally, politically or socially. Many Kuwaitis, for example, have learned here from childhood, like me. The Lebanese journalism has played an important role in building the media and press institutions in Kuwait."

Al-Saqaf stressed in her speech about the importance of joint Arab action and linking Arab youth to joint humanitarian volunteer projects, adding: "LOYAC was launched in 2002 with a clear vision that is moving forward day by day, bearing in mind the unity of human destiny. We have gained the confidence of young people in every Arab country where we worked from Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen because we have given them opportunities that made their reality much better than they expected, and we achieved a lot with a little money and a lot of love."

LOYAC is based on a system of fair values and principles and aims to promote social responsibility in the hearts of young people. These values are clearly reflected in the programs and activities that they offer to the youth, which are keen to connect the Arab youth with each other and to inform and bring them closer to peoples and other civilizations, devoting the value of celebrating the different, not just accepting it.

She concluded by thanking all the previous Boards of Directors, praising the roles of Suad Amin, Sahar Assaf, Alexander Najjar



Fadia Al-Marzouq



Fareah Al-Saqaf delivers a speech.



Group photo of the LOYAC Lebanon volunteering team.



Mohammed Al-Saqer and Fareah Al-Saqaf pose for a group picture.



Nadia Ahmad and the organizing team.



Ramzi Al-Sabouri

and Anthony Stefan. As for Ramzi Al Sabouri, he had volunteered to serve LOYAC since 2005 where he established the IT department at LOYAC Kuwait and served for four years as a Volunteer Technical Consulting. Al-Sabouri has moved to Lebanon and helped in establishing LOYAC Lebanon. Al-Saqaf has also extended special thanks to Fahad Abushaar, who helped in providing LOYAC Lebanon with various facilities in terms of halls and training opportunities for Lebanese youth at Sheraton hotels in Lebanon.

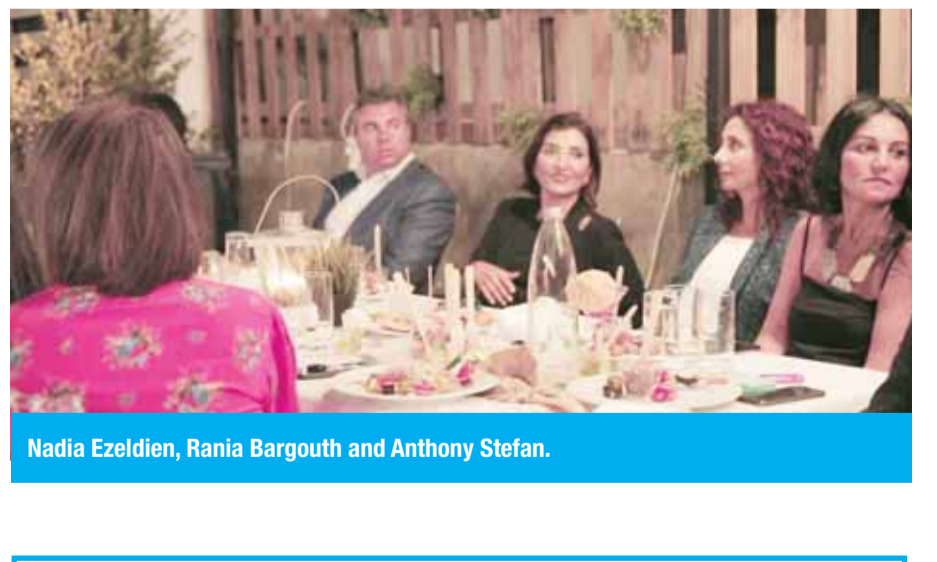
Ramzi Sabouri for his part, said that he is proud to be one of LOYAC Arab family and

that the management model in LOYAC is unique since it gives you a feeling of warmth of the family despite of its high professionalism. Al-Sabouri pointed out to the importance of the financial transparency that LOYAC has followed since its inception, which made it gain high credibility among partners and supporters and maintained them for many years.

The concert included live testimonies from youth benefiting from LOYAC programs in Lebanon in various fields. The event also included short documentary films of some projects and programs in LOYAC Lebanon such as Homes program, youth short film workshop, training programs, sports and artistic activities, which benefited thousands of young people.

The highlight of the concert was a singing performance of a the song "Tomorrow is a new day". It is worth mentioning that the Art Caravan Project, founded by LOYAC and LABA in Lebanon, benefits more than 220 children and more than 40 Syrian women, while the children are a mix of Syrians, Lebanese and Palestinians. As well as a number of young Lebanese who work as teachers and trainers in the project. LOYAC Volunteer Youth also has a mix of Arab communities which includes Yemeni and Iraqi nationalities.

After the ceremony, Mohammed Al-Saqer expressed his happiness for the achievements he witnessed. Al-Saqer said that he knew the importance of the work that LOYAC is doing in the Arab world, but he did not imagine its significant impact.



Nadia Ezeldien, Rania Bargouth and Anthony Stefan.

Notice

The TIES Center invites you to another session of our Purification and Prayer class today, at 11 am. In this class, we will learn more about some prayers that are not connected to the five obligatory prayers, their virtue, and their timings. We will discuss the pillars of worship (motivators to worship Allah), their significance,

and how to abide by them. We will also ponder the extent of Allah's happiness when someone repents, the benefits of repentance, and how its legislation is a mercy from Allah (SWT) to all his creatures. Finally, we will learn about the prostration of gratitude, its benefits, when and how to perform it, and the invocations we ought to say when we perform it. Come and learn the hows and whys of physical and spiritual purity to perfect your prayer.

Health & Science

Kuwait Images Diagnostic Center begins AI-based MRI solution to better diagnose heart disease

KUWAIT: GE Healthcare and its partner, Advanced Technology Company (ATC), marked an important milestone in the provision of advanced diagnostic services in Kuwait with the launch of the region's first Artificial Intelligence cloud-based MRI post-processing solution at Images Diagnostic Center.

Images Diagnostic Center recently became the first official GE Magnetic Resonance Imaging show site in the Middle East. With the introduction of GE Healthcare's advanced ViosWorks, powered by Arterys, Images Diagnostic Center highlights the superior breadth of its diagnostic services that are now available for patients and healthcare practitioners.

According to the World Health Organization, non-communicable diseases are estimated to account for 72% of all deaths in Kuwait. Nearly 41% of the total NCD deaths can be attributed to cardiovascular diseases. Cardiac MRI is a non-invasive medical test that allows physicians to see if the heart has been damaged from a heart attack, or if there is a lack of blood flow to the heart muscle because of narrowed or blocked arteries. The new ViosWorks extends cardiac MR assessment beyond the anatomy by providing a comprehensive cardiovascular solution in a fraction of the time of conventional cardiac scans. Providing 3D cardiac anatomy, function, and flow in 1-free breathing, the 8-minute scan with cloud-based, real-time processing of images in resolutions that were previously unattainable alters cardiac imaging dramatically with excellent diagnostic results. It is a simplified solution for patients, technologists and clinicians.

Images Diagnostic Center has always strived to be the first to offer state-of-the-art diagnostic services to patients in Kuwait. It started with the introduction of the GE Optima 450 32 channel system, a wide-bore platform enabled with noise reduction technology that improves patient experience and accessibility. Today, the Center owns four GE MR systems

with the latest platforms in 1.5T and 3.0T: SIGNA Architect, SIGNA Pioneer, SIGNA Artist, and SIGNA Voyager.

Tamer Khalaf, Marketing & Applications Director, Magnetic Resonance (MR), GE Healthcare in the Eastern Growth Markets, said: "Through our industry-leading technology we are helping redefine the patient care experience and advancing the precision of diagnostics services. The introduction of ViosWorks, a path-breaking innovation to Kuwait at the Images Diagnostics Center, will enhance cardiovascular diagnostics and enable practitioners to identify critical medical conditions at an early stage. Our aim is to deliver the MR solutions of 'tomorrow... today' and as an early adopter of cutting-edge technology, Images Diagnostic Center is setting the standard of healthcare diagnostics in Kuwait."

Dr Yahya Slaiman, owner of Images Diagnostic Center, said: "Since our inception, we have prioritized the introduction of next generation technology in our practice to ensure that our patients and the wider healthcare community can benefit from timely and accurate diagnosis. The addition of GE Healthcare's advanced MR solutions help us deliver better patient care, and we will continue to invest in advanced solutions that ensure we continue to serve as center of excellence for diagnostic care in the region."

Ghassan M Mamlouk, CEO, Advanced Technology Company added: "Images Diagnostic Center is a true healthcare pioneer in Kuwait's private sector, passionate about delivering the most timely, accurate diagnostic services to patients. It is rare to have both GE MRI with ViosWorks in one facility: it is a clear indication of the commitment of the Center to scaling up its resources and delivering high quality service." GE Healthcare has a strong history of presence in Kuwait, having delivered the range of advanced healthcare technologies including healthcare IT systems, CT and MRI devices to public and private hospitals in the country.



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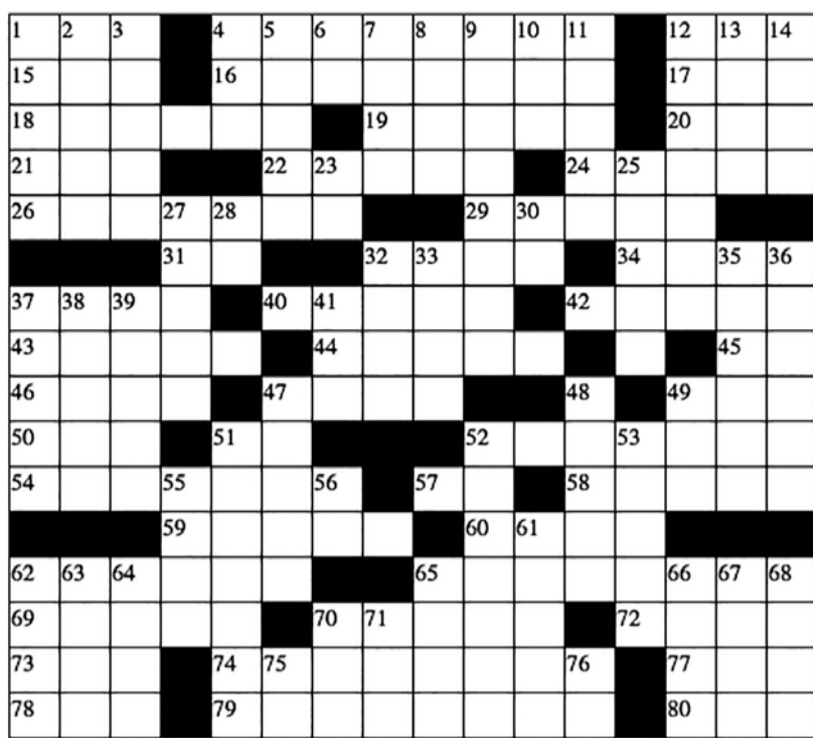
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ACROSS

1. System of measurement based on centimeters and grams and seconds.
4. The condition of being unable to perform as a consequence of physical or mental unfitness.
12. A solution containing a phosphate buffer.
15. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
16. City in central Iran.
17. The longest division of geological time.
18. Bur marigolds.
19. The brightest star in Cygnus.
20. A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
21. Hormone secreted by the posterior pituitary gland (trade name Pitressin) and also by nerve endings in the hypothalamus.
22. Squash bugs.
24. The formation of frost or ice on a surface.
26. Eye disease consisting of an opaque white spot on the cornea.
29. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
31. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali metal group.
34. Having the slant of a bevel.
37. A town and port in northwestern Israel in the eastern Mediterranean.
40. A genus of temperate and arctic evergreen trees (see spruce).
42. A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
43. A mountain peak in the Andes in Argentina (21,654 feet high).
44. The basic monetary unit in many countries.
45. Denoting a quantity consisting of six items or units.
46. A blue dye obtained from plants or made synthetically.
50. An adult male person (as opposed to a woman).
54. Regional and archaic.
57. A Mid-Atlantic state.
58. Yellow-fever mosquitoes.
59. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
60. A form of magnetic resonance imaging of the brain that registers blood flow to functioning areas of the brain.
62. The Creator.
69. Of or pertaining to hearing or the ear.
72. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
73. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
74. Of or relating to or in the manner of the playwright Henrik Ibsen.
77. A spacecraft that carries astronauts from the command module to the surface of the moon and back.
78. A workplace for the conduct of scientific research.
79. Of or relating to or designating narcotics.
80. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.

DOWN

1. A clique that seeks power usually through intrigue.
2. A vowel-like sound that serves as a consonant.
3. (Hinduism) An ascetic holy man.
4. Imperial dynasty that ruled China (most of the time) from 206 BC to 221 and expanded its boundaries and developed its bureaucracy.
5. State in northeastern India.
6. A radioactive transuranic metallic element.
7. An informal term for a father.
8. In the Roman calendar.
9. Of or relating to Canada or its people.
10. Used of a single unit or thing.
11. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
12. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
13. A city in western Germany on the Rhine River.
14. An unforeseen obstacle.
23. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
25. Tropical American tree producing cacao beans.
27. A village of huts for native Africans in southern Africa.
28. A Russian river.
30. A state in midwestern United States.
32. A unit of area (4840 square yards) used in English-speaking countries.
33. Sweet juicy gritty-textured fruit available in many varieties.
35. A tranquilizer (trade name Navane) used to treat schizophrenia.
36. Any movable possession (especially articles of clothing).
38. Valuable fiber plant of East Indies now widespread in cultivation.
39. United States abstract expressionist painter (1910-1962).
41. A United Nations agency that invest directly in companies and guarantees loans to private investors.
47. Naked freshwater or marine or parasitic protozoa that form temporary pseudopods for feeding and locomotion.
48. The locus of feelings and intuitions.
49. An authoritative direction or instruction to do something.
51. (folklore) Fairies that are somewhat mischievous.
52. The property of being an amount by which something is less than expected or required.
53. Tropical New World lizard with a long tail and large rectangular scales on the belly and a long tail.
55. A Loloish language.
56. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
61. New Zealand conifer.
63. (anatomy) A fold or wrinkle or crease.
64. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
65. Fermented juice (of grapes especially).
66. Young of domestic cattle.
67. In bed.
68. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
70. The rate at which red blood cells settle out in a tube of blood under standardized conditions.
71. The last (12th) month of the year.
75. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
76. A state in southeastern United States.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Your keyword today is responsibility. You are able to find yourself in others—a mirror or clear pool. You are a genius at bringing out others and getting them to do things for themselves or for you—you are a born strategist. You like to discuss and communicate, usually at a psychological and very personal level. Careful—some may find you a bit too intense. Your love of the spiritual and the eternal is clear to all who meet you. You could find yourself involved in long conversations while visiting with friends this afternoon. You love to solve the problems of the world, at least in words and images—and when you tell it, all are enchanted.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taking care of business is a major theme where your emotional orientation is concerned. You crave organization and practicality and you want to get things accomplished. Your hard work pays off today and much can be accomplished. You have a mind for what is practical, organized and logical. Your employer is probably happy to get you—you are a natural for any management position or in dealing with the public. Some past investment needs review and perhaps revising. You may find that now is a good time to reinvest this old investment in some other direction—there is the possibility of additional gains.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Your efforts really pay off and life seems to run smoothly. Now you have the ability for sustained work that allows you to coordinate and organize like never before. You will bring uncompleted tasks to completion. This is a nice day that should just flow along. The schedule you set for yourself today can be helpful but taxing. If you can work in some focused exercise program later today, you will find it easier to relax this evening. Children have your attention this evening and it is a good time for play. Really join in and enjoy the play that children can create. This may mean creating something out of clay or simply coloring in a book. You could feel real connections and harmony at this time for circumstances and those around you.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Taking care of business is a major theme. You desire successful organization and practicality and you want to get things accomplished. Things are happening and your career or path depends upon your own aspirations which are strong now. You are able to use good common sense and you can feel the trends and make the right moves. You will be pleased with the results of your actions. You are most persuasive with others. You have eloquent skills in speech. The circumstances are good today for self-expression. A good conversation with those you love is possible later this evening. Any misunderstandings of the past have a good opportunity to be healed.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

There is a certain amount of transition taking place. This could mean job advancement soon. You may find yourself uninterested in sidetracks—what is not essential for future advancement. You can really tune in on how to solve problems and get where you want to go when it comes to your profession. This could be a crucial time during which—depending upon your age when this takes place—you reach new highs of accomplishment. This will bring great discipline and a concentration or focus that could make or break you. You have the ability to work hard. You draw emotional sustenance and a sense of security from ideals, friends and social involvement. There is a need for change, a desire to break with outmoded patterns.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You are a very forceful speaker and communicate with great enthusiasm. There are opportunities to speak to small and large groups this day. This could be in a lecture, a work meeting, teaching, etc. Words just flow out and always demonstrate a heartfelt concern that brings them home to your listeners. You have no trouble putting your feelings into words; in fact, you may have to exercise some control over your tongue, for you can be quick to say things. You may be sought after for your advice and guidance regarding very personal and emotional issues. You will be able to be understanding and cut through the red tape to get at what is behind a problem. If you have a quest, you will find joiners. A social event this evening will find you at your most elegant.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This is a productive day. You have insight into your professional life and you are developing future plans that will be valuable. Your path is toward cooperation and union with others, even at the expense of the practical and selfish. This may mean you are working toward some goal that involves legal or psychological subjects. You enjoy the interaction with others and may find yourself in volunteer programs so as to feel useful and complete. You may often wonder if you are doing your job well and if you take a look at the results, you will be pleased to see the successes. Sometimes it is good to just reach around and pat yourself on the back for a job well done; you are getting better and better every day. Music fills the air this evening.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may appear very cool and collected today. Review contracts and reconsider legal actions during the next few days—avoid jumping into a risky opportunity that has too many unanswered questions. Also, reconsider the cost before you personally take on large expenditures. Researching a product is important—you could get into something that is not as useful as you thought. A natural transformation of your values, the way you appreciate and love yourself and others, is taking place now. You may cease to waste time and money and may develop an eye for that which is lasting and worthwhile.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

There is time this morning to complete unfinished business. This morning you will also accidentally find an item that has been missing for some time. This could be a possession that belongs to you or to someone that is close to you. Your decision-making ability in the work area shows some well-directed action is called for today. However, you must be watchful for possible moments of pride. Challenging authority and striving for success are on your agenda. Ambition is a powerful motivation and can lead you into conflict if you let it get out of control. If properly channeled, ambition results in great achievements and recognition.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You are a great doer, and can accomplish quite a lot. You will find yourself working with the public today. This could mean solving customer-relations problems. The skillful ways you handle people make you a natural for working with or for the public. You would make an excellent teacher, career counselor or financial advisor—and could enjoy performing these tasks quite well. The only problems in your career are the fears you might have toward qualifying for work with which you are not familiar. Your career is never really a problem—you have the kind of drive that others could only dream of having.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

You somehow manage to gravitate to the center of almost any happening these days. Others accept you, for they sense you are a leader and they admire your almost regal manner. You talk with someone new and find a different vision. You may decide to ask for a raise or request a loan today. Refinement and relationships are the keys to emotional satisfaction. Close personal ties to other people are focal points for your feelings; marriage and other partnerships could be key arenas for this. If you smoke, or have some other habit that is bad for your health, this is the day you will create another avenue where you can express yourself.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Working in groups affords the opportunity to strengthen a unit. You may be required to lead or lend advice. Your management abilities are good and your sense of responsibility is so well developed that you always end up managing the situations in which you become involved. You may have to be careful in this area since others could take advantage of you quite easily. You display your eagerness for your work and much can be accomplished. This is a particularly good day in that a new piece of equipment or technique is something you are already familiar with, and others could be asking for your advice. Your greatest pleasure this month is the time you are recognized for the progress you have made. You charm someone special this evening.

Wordsearch Puzzle

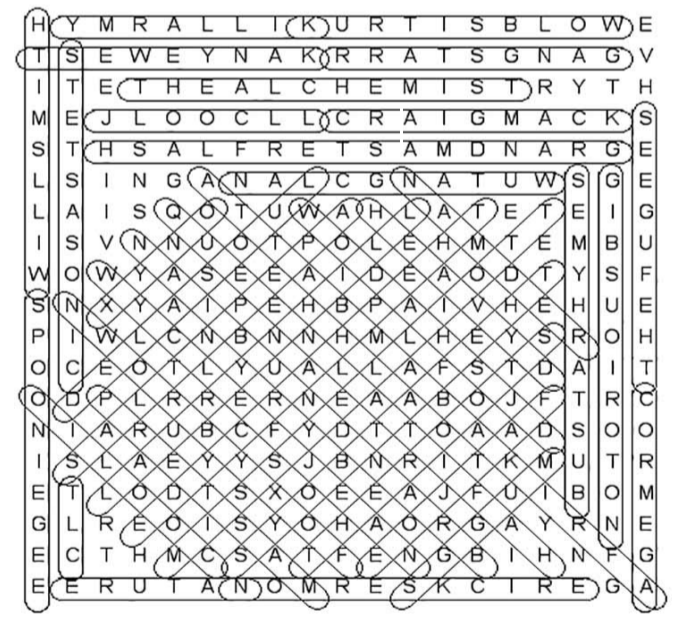
Hockey

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



- | | | | | |
|------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| ARENA | ELBOWING | ICE RINK | PENALTIES | SLAPSHOT |
| ASSIST | ENFORCER | ICING | PERIOD | SLASHING |
| BLUE LINE | FACE MASK | JERSEY | PLAYER | SLOT |
| BOARDING | FACE-OFF | KNEEING | POINT | SPEARING |
| BOARDS | FORWARD | LEAGUE | POKE CHECK | STANLEY CUP |
| BODY CHECK | FOUL | LINE CHANGE | POWER PLAY | SUSPENSION |
| BREAKAWAY | GAME | LINESMAN | TRIPPING | TIME-OUT |
| CENTER | GLOVES | MISCONDUCT | RED LINE | WHISTLE |
| CHARGING | GOALPOST | NHL | REFEREE | WINGS |
| CONTACT | GOALTENDER | OFFENSE | ROUGHING | WRIST SHOT |
| CREASE | HAT TRICK | OFFICIALS | SAVE | ZAMBONI |
| DEFENSEMEN | HELMET | OFFSIDE | SCORE | ZONES |
| DEKE | HOLDING | OVERTIME | SKATES | |
| EJECTION | HOOKING | PASS | | |

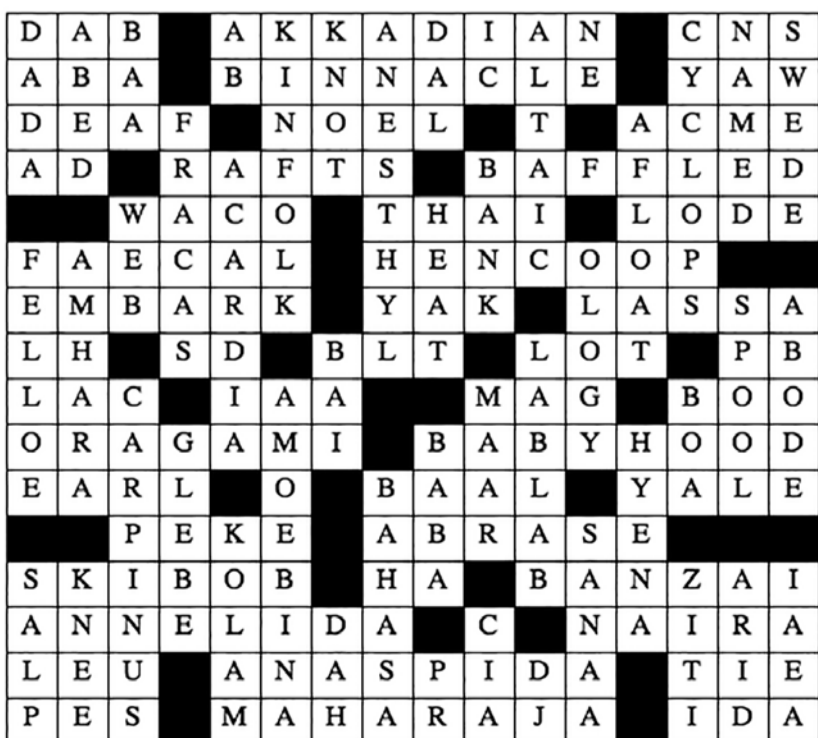
Hip-Hop Artists



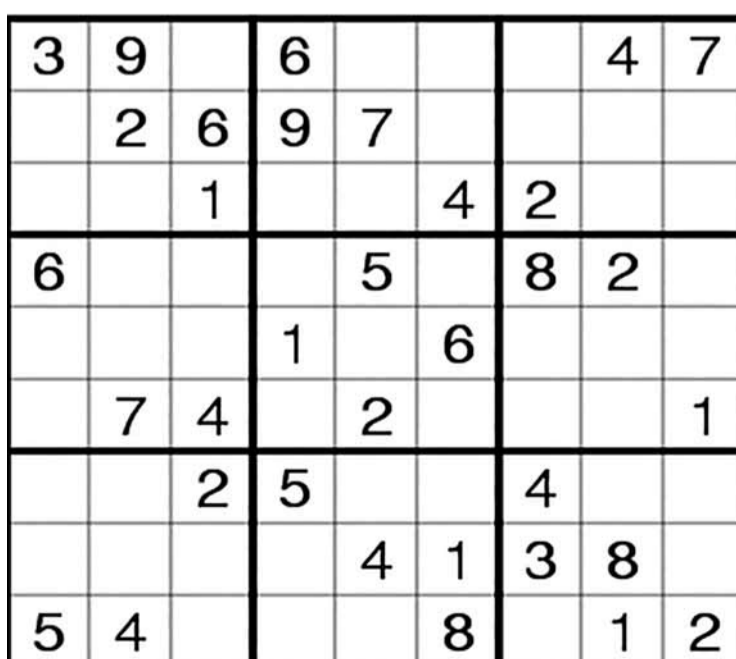
- | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------|
| AFRIKA BAMBATTA | FOXY BROWN | MISSY ELLIOTT | THE ALCHEMIST |
| BRAND NUBIAN | GANG STARR | MUGGS | THE FAT BOYS |
| BUSTA RHYMES | GRANDMASTER FLASH | NATURE | THE FUGEES |
| COOLIO | HEAVY D | NOTORIOUS B.I.G. | THE PHARCYDE |
| CORMEGA | KANYE WEST | ONVX | THE ROOTS |
| CRAIG MACK | KILLARMY | QUEEN LATIFAH | TLC |
| DE LA SOUL | KURTIS BLOW | REDMAN | WILL SMITH |
| DJ SHADOW | LAURYN HILL | SALT N PEPA | WU-TANG CLAN |
| ERICK SERMON | LL COOL J | SPOONIE GEE | WYCLEF JEAN |
| FAT JOE | MASTER P | STETSASONIC | |

The hidden sentence is: EVERYTHING IS EVERYTHING

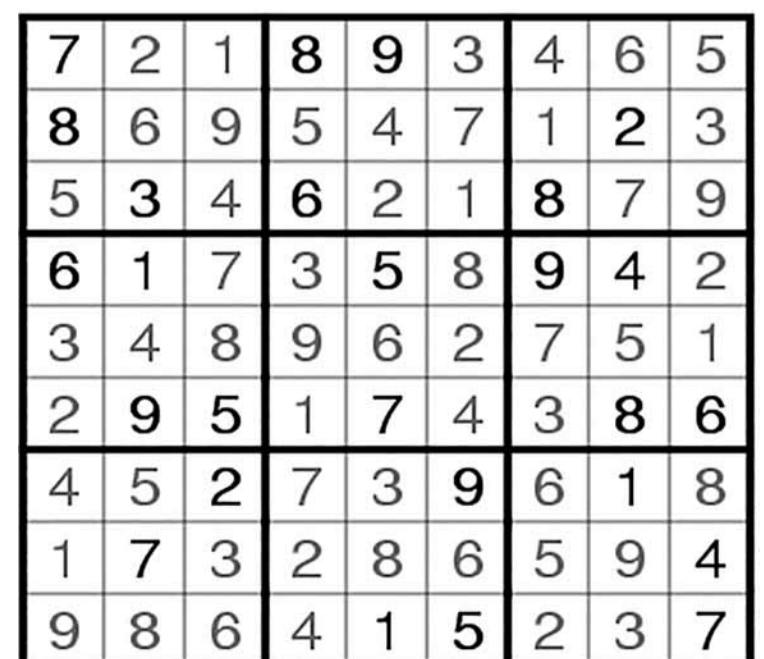
Yesterday's Solution



Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2019



Models present creations by designer Manish Arora during the Grand Finale of Lotus Make-up India Fashion Week in association with EbixCash Spring Summer 2020 in New Delhi. — AFP

Fans, celebrities mourn death of K-pop star Sulli

Fans and fellow performers yesterday mourned the death of a K-pop star who had long been the target of online bullying, some calling for greater mental health support for those working in the country's notoriously competitive show business industry. The body of Sulli, a former member of top girl group f(x), was discovered Monday by her manager at her home on the outskirts of Seoul.

"There has been no evidence of an outsider having broken in, or any other crimes committed by another person," an official from Seongnam Sujeong Police Agency told AFP. "Suicide is among the possible causes." Authorities said the 25-year-old had been suffering from "severe depression". South Korea has one of the world's highest rates of suicide which, according to recent government figures, is among the top causes of death for those under 40.

"I wish I could hope for Sulli to be the last idol to die from suicide and mental illness," tweeted one fan. "But knowing how cruel society is, I can't help but be afraid about who's going to be the next one." Beneath the glitz and glamour, the K-pop industry is known for its cut-throat competitiveness, a lack of privacy, online bullying and relentless public pressure to maintain a wholesome image at all times and at any cost.

Mental health taboo

K-pop stars like Sulli are picked up by agencies at a young age—usually in their early- or mid-teens—and their lives then taken over by grueling singing and dancing training. Taboos about mental illness dissuade many South

Koreans from seeking help. Sulli's death echoes that of fellow K-pop star Jonghyun, who took his life in 2017 after battling with depression. Both were members of the SM Entertainment stable, one of the country's biggest talent agencies.

K-pop singer Goo Hara, a close friend of the late star, was also sent to hospital last year after a suspected suicide attempt. Goo had been abused by her ex who threatened to post her spycam sex videos online. "I hope Jin-ri is now in a place where she can do whatever she wants," Goo wrote on Instagram—using Sulli's real name and sharing photos of the two of them together. Sulli, who started her career as a child actress at age 11, made her debut in 2009 for f(x), which quickly became one of K-pop's top girl groups.

Known for behavior considered controversial in South Korea—including her refusal to wear a bra in public—she had been relentlessly bullied online throughout her career, with many sexually abusive comments. She recently hosted a TV series where celebrities discussed their experiences of online abuse. She had also candidly shared her experience struggling with panic disorder and social phobia. Her outspokenness resonated with many young South Korean women who have been leading a new wave of feminists fighting a patriarchal society obsessed with looks. "Being one of the first female artists in K-pop to talk about mental health and feminism is amazing. I love you so much Sulli - I hope in heaven you are finally free," a fan wrote in a tweet.—AFP



This undated photo released by Yonhap in Seoul shows Sulli, a former member of top South Korean girl group f(x). — AFP

Streamer Tubi says the future is free as it moves into Europe

US streaming giant Tubi—which has been dubbed "the free Netflix"—is to launch a children's network next week and expand its main service into Europe next year, it announced Monday. Tubi Kids will begin showing 1,200 hours of children's television series and films next Monday, with the world's biggest advert-supported free streaming platform set to move into the UK early in the New Year. CEO Farhad Massoudi told AFP that he was convinced that eventually "more than half of all TV will be ad-supported video on demand."

The Tubi founder said their model was based on a "very low ad level of four to five minutes per hour—even lower in Australia—which is about a quarter of the ad load of US cable networks. "If you are interrupted every two minutes with a commercial break you are not going to be happy," he added. "We have no intention of making the entertainment experience miserable. It needs to be seamless and easy. Our big appeal other than it is free, is that Tubi is personalized and easy. You just click and it works."

TV will be personalized

Massoudi said that he believes "all TV is going to become personalized" and Tubi uses machine learning to give viewers what they want, allowing them to "deep dive" into its documentary and film archive. But "unlike the social networks, Tubi does not have data that will be highly personal," he added. "The key data we collect is what you like to watch which allows us to program better. So if (South American) telenovelas do well in the UK, and nobody up to now has discovered it, we will" show them there, he joked. Massoudi said they would have gone into Europe earlier "but we really wanted to respect EU laws on user privacy, and do it right, so we put it on hold." The San Francisco-based company said that its library of children's movies include "How to Train Your Dragon", "Norm of the North", and "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows". Tubi said they would be shown alongside series like "Strawberry Shortcake", "Paddington Bear" and "The Wiggles", and many more.

"We're ramping up our international expansion with the UK launch being the first of several forthcoming territories and look forward to announcing them soon," Massoudi said at MIPCOM in Cannes, France, the world's biggest television content market. He said Tubi Kids would create "an age-appropriate viewing environment", a dig at rivals YouTube, which is watched by millions of children.—AFP

Zoe Kravitz to play Catwoman in new 'Batman' film

US actress Zoe Kravitz will play Catwoman in the new "Batman" film starring Robert Pattinson, a Warner Bros. source told AFP on Monday. Kravitz, who recently starred in HBO's hit TV drama "Big Little Lies" and is the daughter of rock musician Lenny Kravitz, will portray the whip-wielding cat burglar who is both Batman's foe and love interest in the comics. She follows A-listers such as Halle Berry, Anne Hathaway and Michelle Pfeiffer in portraying Catwoman—alter ego Selina Kyle—in "The Batman," which is due for release in 2021.

Kravitz, 30, has previously voiced Catwoman in 2017's "The Lego Batman Movie," and also appeared in Warner's "Fantastic Beasts" films, set in the Harry Potter universe. Her mother, actress Lisa Bonet, played Denise Huxtable in "The Cosby Show." The casting news follows the massive commercial success of "Joker," which provides an origin story for another notorious Batman adversary, and has broken October box office records in North American theaters.

"The Batman" will be directed by Matt Reeves, who was behind the last two "Planet of the Apes" sequels. "Twilight" star Pattinson was earlier this year announced to play Batman, also known as Bruce Wayne. Pattinson will be replacing Ben Affleck, who retired from the role after playing Wayne in 2016's "Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice" and 2017's "Justice League." Affleck had been due to direct a new standalone Batman film, but stepped down and was replaced by Reeves in 2017. Actor Jonah Hill has also been linked to the upcoming film. — AFP



In this file photo US actress Zoe Kravitz attends HBO's 'Big Little Lies' Season 2 premiere at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City. — AFP



Kylie Jenner, Travis Scott great at co-parenting

The 22-year-old make-up mogul and the 28-year-old rapper recently ended their two-and-a-half year relationship but the pair are determined to remain close for the sake of their 20-month-old daughter. A source told Entertainment Tonight: "They were still on a break but are great at co-parenting Stormi. "Since Travis has some shows and is traveling, Kylie has Stormi more [often], but Travis is always in touch with her when he's on the road. "Kylie and Travis are both young, but they are very mature and have been handling parenting post breakup really well. Kylie and Travis don't want any drama, and are on the same page of keeping Stormi happy." Meanwhile, it was recently claimed that part of the reason Travis and Kylie decided to call off their romance was over differing views on whether or not to expand their family. A source said:

"[Kylie] wanted to have a second baby [but Travis] did not." Friends of the pair are convinced they will "get back together" eventually, but for now are spending time apart as they both have "different lifestyles", and need to work out how to make things work. The insider added: "They are very, very in love, but she's 22, and her whole life is Stormi and her business and her family. She's not wanting to be a normal rapper's wife. He's still young and at the recording studio late. She usually goes to bed early. They have different lifestyles. "During the day, she is all about Stormi. Kylie is young with endless energy. She has help, but she also loves being a mom. She is very involved with Stormi. She always seems the happiest when she is with her daughter."

Justin Bieber's Instagram listing attracts offers for his home

The 25-year-old singer announced on the picture-sharing app last week that he wants to sell his 1930s Monterey Colonial house in Beverly Hills, which he bought for \$8.5 million in March, and a number of people are interested, including a billionaire, according to TMZ. The 6,100-sq ft property was renovated by production designer Charles Infante and boasts a courtyard, an infinity pool, olive trees, a fire pit, seven bathrooms, a library, a bar, a wine cellar and a home cinema. Justin shared some pictures on Instagram and wrote: "Home vibes, but I wanna sell it I think anyone interested? I think I wanna sell my home in Beverly Hills who wants it. "I'll sell it with all the furniture . MAKE AN OFFER. Whoever wants to buy my home reach out (sic)." Justin and Hailey Bieber tied the knot soon after rekindling their romance last year and before they moved to Beverly Hills, they were renting a property in the San Fernando Valley for \$100,000 a month.



Pharrell Williams wears 'what fits and looks right'

The 47-year-old producer is known for pushing the gender lines of fashion by adding gender-fluid elements to his wardrobe. He was spotted carrying a purple crocodile Birkin bag in 2007, and wearing a pastel Celine coat to a GQ shoot in 2017. Speaking to America's GQ magazine, Pharrell said: "It started with the "I can pull that off" thing. I wore a lot of Chanel, and I wore tons of Celine. Like, I got all the O.G. Celine. Because they were clothes I could fit in. "When you listen to yourself and you're comfortable in who you are, you wear what you feel like fits and looks right on you. And that's it." Pharrell created an exclusive unisex capsule range for the prestigious French label alongside its late creative director Karl Lagerfeld. However, although the 'Happy' hitmaker has been opting for womenswear before it became a 'national conversation', he has his own limits to his personal style. He added: "I can't wear no skirt. Nor am I interested in wearing a blouse. That's not my deal. But things that are made for women that I feel will look good on me - that I like - I will wear."



Lana Del Rey praises Ariana Grande for her vivid energy

The 34-year-old singer collaborated with Ariana on new track 'Don't Call Me Angel' - which also features Miley Cyrus - and has praised the fellow singer for being "very good at not thinking twice" and having the energy to go with her gut instinct. Speaking during a performance at the Grammy Museum over the weekend, she said: "She's very

good at not thinking twice. Maybe I'm wrong and she questions herself, but I'm very much in my head. She's very much in her body. You can see it in that baseline physicality. She's just super fast and on fire all the time." Lana also spoke fondly about Jack Antonoff, who helped her put together her latest album, 'Norman Rockwell'. She added: "He's as easy as I am. I don't really care if we talk all day and nothing happens. I just feel like if we're there, we're supposed to be there. Sometimes we just talk all day. It's easy in that way. He never comes in and is like, 'Let's write a hit!' Because I hate that." The duo were on the same wavelength throughout the making of her album, and Jack - who joined the 'Young and Beautiful' hitmaker at her Grammy Museum talk - said he had one of the "most prolific musical days" of his life whilst working with Lana. He said: "I think that first day when we were together that might have been like the most prolific musical day of my life. Sometimes when you're collaborating with someone, you're thinking of a jumping-off point. You're like, 'Well, I have this idea.' And she was like, 'I have this idea.' and then just did that ... To hear it come out of thin air was a really profound experience." And Lana detailed how her writing process has changed over the years, as now she writes about her future plans, instead of her past. The 'Summertime Sadness' singer said: "I used to write about what I did. And then I started writing about what I was doing. And now I only write what I'm going to do. So it's new for me. And I like to let the process reveal things to me. I have quite an LA-eclectic take on writing. I really believe it's magical."—Bang Showbiz



Elle Fanning to wear her school prom dress on red carpet

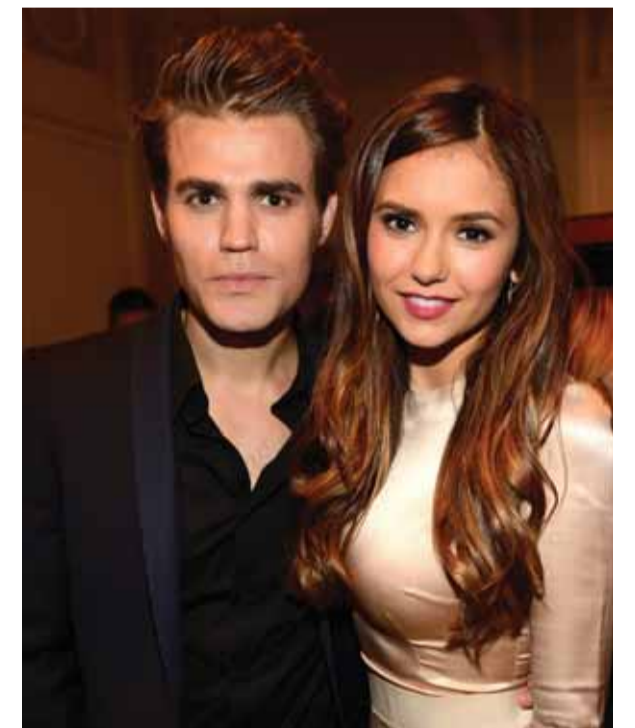
The 21-year-old actress donned a vintage John Galiano gown to her 10th grade formal and hopes she'll get the chance to wear it again sometime soon. Elle told InStyle magazine: "The first prom was in ninth grade. I wore a white Ralph Lauren dress that we found at the mall. It was long and flowy with a V-neck tank. For the second prom I went to the Paper Bag Princess and got a vintage bias-cut pink John Galiano dress." The 'Maleficent: Mistress of Evil' star explained her love for fashion prompted her career as an actress. She said: "I love dressing up and playing characters. Growing up, my sister, Dakota, and I would do scenes but just for each other. "I loved Samantha from 'Bewitched'. I would put a Brownie uniform on for some reason and make tea. That was me playing Samantha. "I also loved Alexa Chung and her '60s tomboy style." Elle - who has been a face of Miu Miu since 2014 - previously admitted she loves working with the brand because of its "quirky edge" as she has always celebrated being "different", regardless of what other people thought of her choices. She said recently: "'I remember growing up, I would experiment with my fashion and at school I would be made fun of for it a little bit, just for being different and I still am that girl. "Miu Miu is defiantly off beat and it is quirky in being feminine, but with an edge. She balances all the opposites at one time. [Miuccia Prada] knows what girls want and what women want. Her shapes are just so amazing and quite actually boyish in the way that she cuts pieces like coats ... but then they'll have something like a little chick on them. "She keeps the fun. Mrs. Prada doesn't take herself too seriously which is very important in art. Miu Miu is just the all-round perfect brand. I could wear all of it."



Harry Styles' alleged stalker found guilty

A man who camped outside the North London home of the One Direction star for several months has been found guilty of stalking the singer, a jury at Hendon Magistrates' Court found on Monday. Harry, 25, had initially offered to buy Pablo Tarazaga-Orero, 26, food after he saw him sleeping rough outside his home in March, as he said he was "sad to see someone so young sleeping rough". After purchasing him sandwiches, salads, and muffins, Harry tried to stop contacting Pablo, but the man continued to camp outside the star's home, and allegedly posted notes into Harry's letterbox. The 'Sign of the Times' singer told District Judge Nigel Deane he now locks his bedroom door every night out of fear of being stalked by Pablo, whom he said displayed "erratic and frightening" behaviour. Despite being found guilty of stalking, Pablo insists that was never his intention, and says he doesn't "have any feelings" for the singer. When asked whether he had stalked the 'Lights Up' hitmaker, the man said: "That was never my intention. In the end I just wanted the money he offered me. "I don't have any feelings for him. I'm not in love with him." Pablo will be sentenced on October 21.

Nina Dobrev claims feud with Paul Wesley was blown out of proportion



The 30-year-old actress admitted in June this year that she and Paul - who played on-screen love interests Elena Gilbert and Stefan Salvatore on 'The Vampire Diaries' - "despised" each other when they first met, despite rumors at the time of a romance between them. And despite Paul confirming the tale in August, Nina has now said the feud wasn't as bad as it sounds, and only lasted for "a very brief moment". She said: "[The] story was blown out of proportion to such a crazy degree. [It was just] a very brief moment in time [when] we did not get along. Just like any human wouldn't. If you said that you and your parents have loved each other unconditionally and your siblings from the moment you were born until the day that you die, you'd be a liar." Nina insists the only reason the pair fought was because they would spend "every waking moment together" on set, and eventually just got tired of being in one another's personal space so much. "So you see each other with makeup, without makeup, on good days, on bad days, when you're hungry, when you're thirsty, when you're tired. So, there are going to be mood swings. It was one of those things that we just - it's not that we didn't like each other. We just didn't appreciate each other as much as we do now - and that, of course, got blown [out] of proportion."



Lifestyle | Features



Palestinian Dalia al-Darawish prepares for her exam to become a truck driver, in the West Bank town of Hebron. — AFP photos

‘Braking’ boundaries: Palestinian women seek new chances

As the 30-tonne truck weaves through the crowded Palestinian streets, groups of men stop and gawk at the diminutive figure of Dalia al-Darawish in a purple headscarf seated behind the wheel. Darawish is preparing for an exam to become one of only a handful of qualified female Palestinian truck drivers, a test the 26-year-old sees as about more than just driving. “It is symbolic,” she told AFP. “It shows we can do anything—that as a woman you can work, drive a trailer or whatever.”

The mother-of-two is among several Palestinian women pushing boundaries in the traditionally conservative city of Hebron in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, amid a growing assertiveness of women’s rights. Darawish said she had faced criticism from both sexes as she trained, but the men were far more vocal. “They are some who supported, a minority,” she told AFP. “But then there are people shouting in the street. ‘No, why are you driving a trailer?!’”

“Whenever I made any mistake you would find men shouting, ‘It’s impossible (for you)’” At the driving centre, she shakes slightly as her black-mustached examiner Issam Bedawi explains the test. After briefly demonstrating her ability to detach and re-attach the trailer, the two clamber up into the carriage and drive off.

3D art

Recent months have seen protests in the West Bank after a 21-year-old woman was

allegedly killed by her family members after posting a photo with her soon-to-be fiance on Instagram. The demonstrators are demanding more protection for women, but also a more prominent political movement for women’s rights. Palestinian women still often give up their careers to care for children.

A World Bank study last year found that 58 percent of skilled women between 25 and 34 were unemployed, compared to 23 percent of men. The general unemployment rate for women (44 percent) is double that of men, according to official Palestinian statistics. Wafaa al-Adhami had long dreamt of being an artist, but didn’t have the opportunity to study growing up. But five years ago and with the kids older, she returned to her passion, studying hours of videos about artists on YouTube.

“Painting and art courses are expensive and I had no time,” she said. “So I loved educating myself.” “Every artist has their own style, and I wanted to find mine,” she said. From her living room table with an array of children passing through, she developed a specific layering technique for her work, pouring the paint onto the canvas before sculpting and manipulating it. The result is a 3D texture that she says is unique among Palestinian artists. Her inspiration ranges from Palestinian icons such as the Dome of the Rock mosque in Jerusalem to more Jackson Pollock-inspired surrealism. A recent 40-work exhibition was a big hit.

Changed a little

Elsewhere in the city, 31-year-old Asia Amer has set up what she believes is Hebron’s first women-only restaurant. The idea behind the Queen Restaurant, she said, is to give women a space to feel at home. Those who normally wear the hijab can remove the headscarf if they wish. “I felt that it was the right of women to have a place they can relax in—where there are no restrictions or people watching her,” she said. “I am proof that Palestinian women don’t just stay at home to cook and look after the children.”

Back at the driving test centre, Darawish pulls the trailer to a stop and waits nervously as Bedawi tallies up the score. “I’m happy to say she passed,” he announces. “Everything I asked of her during the test she did fantastically.” Darawish doesn’t even know if she will work as a truck driver, as right now she is still looking after her children. But she said she wanted to help drive change in attitudes. “(Society) has changed a little. There have been some developments, but not enough,” she said. “If there had been big movement, men who see a woman driving a trailer would be happy or they wouldn’t say anything at all.” — AFP



Palestinian artist Wafaa al-Adhami, 46, paints a picture at her home in the West Bank town of Hebron.



Palestinian women share a meal at the Queen Restaurant for women only near the city of Hebron in the occupied West Bank.

New TV show asks: Do you love meat enough to cook your pet?

It is one of the most shocking ultimatums ever delivered on television. Go vegetarian or we kill your pet. But a new taboo-smashing British reality TV show called “Meat the Family” goes even further. Not only will a family of unrepentant carnivores have to let an animal they have adopted and grown to love go for slaughter if they refuse to stop eating meat—they will be asked to cook and eat it. With experts saying that we have to eat less meat to stave off climate change, Channel 4 has made the dilemma stomach-churningly stark.

Four heavy meat-eating families have to take home and look after the “animal which ends up most often on their plates”. Analyst Virginia Mouseler called the show “the most transgressive” of the year at MIPCOM, the world’s biggest entertainment market in Cannes, France. “It is not sex or drugs anymore. Meat is becoming the next taboo,” the influential founder of The Wit database added.

“The question they are asking is how can you cuddle your dog while you are putting another animal in the oven?” In the first episodes of “Meat the Family”, that

involves a lamb, a pig, a chicken and a calf. “They have to treat this animal like a member of the family for three weeks,” Mouseler said. “Then in the end they have to decide whether they put it in the oven” or whether it goes to an animal sanctuary.

Putting a face on your meal

Channel 4 said the three hour-long shows will confront “the reality of an animal’s journey from field to plate.” They said the show also seriously examines “animal behavior and intelligence, the farming practices required to meet the demands of hungry consumers... and the environmental impact of the meat industry.” Daniela Neumann, head of the makers Spun Gold, defended the premise, saying it was taking on “some really timely themes of ethical eating” and well as asking difficult questions.

“Why do we find it acceptable to eat a lamb but we wouldn’t eat our pet dog? Could you go back to meat once you’ve put a name and face to a meal?” She insisted the series also contained some “heart-warming

moments”. “Meat the family” is one of a wave of new shows that deal with social responsibility and ways to heal our fractured world. They include another Channel 4 show which touches a still pricklier taboo, everyday racism. In the “Segregation Experiment”, a diverse class of British schoolchildren discover how racist ideas can slip unconsciously into the culture, and how unconscious bias can affect people’s lives.

Racist without knowing it

“Racial prejudice is tested in a class of 11- and 12-year-old kids,” Mouseler said, “through games and activities” as the program poses the question, “Could we be racist without knowing it?” A new Dutch show, “The Cocaine Trials”, and the British Channel 5 series “Doing Drugs for Fun?” both confront casual cocaine users with the consequences of their habit on the Colombian communities where the substance is illegally farmed and refined.

Mouseler said the shows confronts millennials, who say they care about the planet, with their “double stan-

dards” and bring home a few home truths about the devastation the trade causes both in South America and in Europe. Another Dutch show called “Take Over, Take Care” has celebrities move in with sick and elderly people to give their caregivers some respite and allow them to go on holiday. The show is meant to highlight how one in three people have to look after relatives or friends.

Broadcasters in Germany, Britain and Ireland are also looking at age in two similar social experiments, putting lonely elderly people living in homes that are too big for them together with cash-starved millennials who cannot afford to rent. “Lodgers” and “OAP B&B” both serve up cross-generational cultural shock which often forges genuine and quite touching friendships, an idea the Australian pilot “My 80 Year Old Flatmate” has also played with. MTV, meanwhile, has tackled the painful phenomenon of online “ghosting”, where people cut off friends without explanation, by bringing former pals together to attempt to resolve their differences.—AFP

Renowned Greek fashion designer **Sophia Kokosalaki** dies

One of Greece's most successful designers Sophia Kokosalaki, who dressed A-list stars such as Gwyneth Paltrow, Anne Hathaway and Julie Christie, has died, the culture minister said Monday. The London-based designer's clients also included Kate Hudson, Cristina Ricci, Tilda Swinton, Jennifer Connelly, Helen Mirren, Keira Knightley and Diane Kruger.

"It is extremely sad when a young person dies, a

creative spirit, a dynamic and self-made woman who starred in the harsh and competitive world of international fashion for a 20-year period," Culture Minister Lina Mendoni said. A former head designer for the Athens 2004 Olympics, Kokosalaki—who was born in 1972 — had worked for several Hollywood A-listers with clothing and jewelry that often drew inspiration from ancient Greece.

"What a great loss to the fashion world...RIP

beloved...your talent was beyond the norm," fellow designer Vassilis Zoulias wrote on Instagram. Born in Athens but of Cretan origin, Kokosalaki studied Greek and English literature at the University of Athens before moving to London, where she graduated from Central Saint Martins fashion college. Reports said the designer had battled health issues lately.—AFP



Lotus Make-up India Fashion Week

Models present creations by designer Manish Arora during the Grand Finale of Lotus Make-up India Fashion Week in association with EbixCash Spring Summer 2020 in New Delhi. — AFP photos



Save me from selfies, says drag star **RuPaul**

Television superstar RuPaul Charles gave his millions of fans a little piece of friendly advice Monday: don't stop him in the street for a selfie. "I have shit to do and I am living my life. I have no time for selfies," the presenter of the phenomenally successful "RuPaul's Drag Race" told television executives in the south of France. The American actor and singer said his new global fame meant he was even being stopped in the street by fans when he is not in drag.

RuPaul joked that his show has been such a hit that he was thinking of making spin-offs like "Drag Race Prison Break" or "Drag Race Junior," or "Drag Race: The Elder Years" as he was honored with an award at MIPCOM, the

world's biggest entertainment market in Cannes, France. The 58-year-old said he always knew he would be a star "because my mother told me I was going to be famous because a psychic told her when she was pregnant with me. So I believed it. "I was famous even before I was famous" back in Atlanta, Georgia where he was born, he added.

But the flamboyant performer confessed that when fame came it was a bit of a letdown. "I thought when I got famous the world would say unanimously, 'We love you!' and then my life would be rainbows and unicorns and it would be all fabulous. "But after a while when you have some success that's not enough, it doesn't fill that void that every human alive feels."

Combating prejudice

Instead RuPaul realized that "the reason I get up in the morning to do this is because I love the music, the colors and the creativity." He said that he had "not taken the pill" that is forced on young boys of "12 or 13 who are taught to take their emotions and tuck them away somewhere and act like a man. "Most of the violence and ill-will that our world has is linked to that moment," he added. He said his show's runaway success was because "drag is about people creating their own boxes".

"I am going to show you that we are all shapeshifters. We are born naked and the rest is drag," he added to cheers from the audience. RuPaul said his show has helped

combat prejudice and made people more tolerant with themselves and others. "All over the world it is helping people navigate all the sticky parts of being a human," he said.

The presenter said he never thought the show would strike such an emotional cord. "The stories our girls tell of families who put them in gay conversion therapy or parents who kick the sons out of the house... are often horrific." RuPaul paid tribute to his contestants who had the "grace to share" their experiences. He said their "stories give young people around the world some real navigation skills about their own lives." — AFP

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Wednesday, October 16, 2019



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Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

CHANGE OF NAME

I, HUSSEIN TAWAWALA, holder of Indian Passport No. Z3199912 presently residing in Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: ABBAS and Surname: TAWAWALA. (C 5460) 15-10-2019

It is to be informed to the public at large by this public notice that the original name on my Passport (No. Z1907249), Civil ID No. 272050803003, is to be corrected as ZUBAIR MUSTAFA KHAN. (C 5457)

I, Joseph Shibu George (Eruthackal House, Keekozhoor P.O, Ranny, Pathanamthitta, Kerala, Pin 689672) holder of Indian Passport No. S2349462 issued at Kuwait on 07/12/2017 presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Joseph Shibu and Surname: George. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5459)

I, Asha George (Thekkeveedu, Pathanapuram P.O, Kollam, Kerala, Pin 689695) holder of Indian Passport No. K7040391 issued at Kuwait on 29/07/2012 presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Asha and Surname: George. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5459)

I, Roy Mathew (Chirackal house, Karikolam P.O. Pathanamthitta, Kerala) holder of Indian Passport No. J4437810 issued at Kuwait on 21/12/2010 presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Roy and Surname: Mathew. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5456)

warded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5456)

I, Mariamma John (Chirackal house, Karikolam P.O. Pathanamthitta, Kerala, Pin 689682) holder of Indian Passport No. P7118425 issued at Kuwait on 10/01/2017 presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Mariamma and Surname: John. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5456)

I, Roy Mathew, Father of Ron Roy Mathew, holder of Indian Passport No. S4696329 issued at Kuwait on 21/05/2018, permanent address of Chirackal house, Karikolam P.O, Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India and presently residing at Kuwait do hereby change my son given name as: Ron Roy and Surname: Mathew. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5456)

I, Roy Mathew, Father of Riya Mariyam Roy, holder of Indian Passport No. N9722418 issued at Kuwait on 15/05/2016, permanent address of Chirackal house, Karikolam P.O, Pathanamthitta, Kerala, pin 689682, India and presently residing at Kuwait do hereby change my daughter given name as: Riya Mariyam and Surname: Roy. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5456)

I, Binu Puthozhathil Sam, (Puthozhathil House, Mekozhoor PO Pathanamthitta, Kerala Pin 689678) holder of Indian Passport No. P0724746 issued at Kuwait on 24/07/2016 presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth

my name will be read as given name: Binu Puthozhathil and surname: Sam. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5458)

I, Sheryl Kunjukunju (Puthozhathil House, Mekozhoor P.O Pthanamthitta, Kerala pin 689678) holder of Indian Passport No. T2410628 issued at Kuwait on 10/02/2019 presently residing at Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Sheryl and Surname: Kunjukunju. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5458)

I, Binu Puthozhathil Sam, Father of Jenil Binu Sam, holder of Indian Passport No. S7937650 issued at Kuwait on 30/07/2018, permanent address of Puthozhathil House, Mekozhoor P.O Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India and presently residing at Kuwait do hereby change my son given name as: Jenil Binu and Surname: Sam. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5458)

I, Binu Puthozhathil Sam, Father of Joshin Binu Sam, holder of Indian Passport No. R8270345 issued at Kuwait on 09/08/2017, permanent address of Puthozhathil House, Mekozhoor P.O Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India and presently residing at Kuwait do hereby change my son given name as: Joshin Binu and Surname: Sam. Objections if and may be forwarded to embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Safat, Arabian Gulf St, Kuwait City 13015. (C 5458) 14-10-2019

I, ABDUL YUSUF ABDUL KARIM (Old name) holder of Indian Passport No. L6661740 and Civil ID No. 279010502291 presently

residing in Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: SHAIKH YUSUF SHAIKH KARIM and Surname: QURESHI. (C 5599)

I, KUTTIKATTIL RAMDAS holder of Indian Passport No. L3857702 having permanent address Kerala, India 679105 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: RAMDAS and Surname: KUTTIKATTIL. (C 5455) 11-10-2019

I Rosamma Mathew Kallukuzhy, Kallukuzhy House, Umbidi P.O, Thottackad, Kottayam (holder of Indian Passport No. K5294494) presently residing in Kuwait do hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Rosamma Mathew, Surname: Kallukuzhy. (C 5453) 10-10-2019

MATRIMONIAL

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

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Flight Schedule

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DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 16/10/2019				Departure Flights on Wednesday 16/10/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
FEG	441	Asyut	00:05	NIA	1504	Asyut	12:30
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	KIS	6033	Mashhad	12:45
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	TBZ	6606	Mashhad	12:55
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	IAW	158	Al Najaf	13:00
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	RBG	554	Alexandria	13:10
KAC	102	London	00:50	JZR	115	Doha	13:25
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	MSR	611	Cairo	13:45
RJA	648	Amman	01:35	THY	767	Istanbul	14:00
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	CLX	7912	Hanoi	14:20
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	RBG	218	Asyut	14:35
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
KAC	414	Bangkok	02:40	JZR	103	Bahrain	15:05
THY	1404	AYT	02:45	FDB	060	Dubai	15:05
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	UAE	878	Dubai	15:30
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:50	QTR	1079	Doha	15:30
JZR	502	Lahore	02:55	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
KAC	156	Istanbul	02:55	JZR	125	Dubai	15:50
KAC	784	Amman	03:05	KNE	02:55	Jeddah	15:55
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC	130	London	15:55
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	KAC	563	Amman	16:00
NIA	1604	Luxor	03:10	JZR	405	Kochi	16:00
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	KAC	775	Riyadh	16:05
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:15
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:00	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	OMA	646	Muscat	16:20
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:20
RBG	1153	Asyut	04:10	KAC	619	Doha	16:25
ETH	3424	Bahrain	04:15	FEG	242	Alexandria	16:55
KAC	796	Madinah	04:25	MSR	576	Sharm el-Sheikh	16:55
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	SVA	505	Madinah	17:00
JZR	1738	Cairo	04:45	FDB	052	FDB	17:10
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:50	KAC	1073	Amman	17:25
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	KAC	361	Colombo	17:35
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	KAC	155	Istanbul	17:35
IGO	1759	Delhi	05:10	KAC	503	Beirut	17:40
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	UAE	858	Dubai	17:40
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	KAC	283	Dhaka	17:40
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	OMS	226	Muscat	17:50
RBG	215	Sohag	05:35	KAC	343	Chennai	17:50
UAE	873	Dubai	05:40	KAC	381	Delhi	17:55
KAC	552	Cairo	05:45	SAW	706	Damascus	18:00
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	JZR	511	Riyadh	18:10
BAW	157	London	06:10	KAC	615	Bahrain	18:10
JZR	708	Luxor	06:15	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:15
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	BAW	113	Bahrain	18:20
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	KAC	165	Rome	18:20
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	KAC	171	Frankfurt	18:25
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	JZR	211	Jeddah	18:35
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:05	BAW	156	London	19:10
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	IGO	1767	Mumbai	19:20
KAC	358	Kochi	07:25	JZR	151	Mashhad	19:30
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	FDB	054	Dubai	19:45
JZR	724	Alexandria	07:50	KAC	539	Sharm el-Sheikh	19:50
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:00	KAC	501	Beirut	19:50
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	KAC	545	Cairo	19:50
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	KAC	561	Amman	19:55
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	KAC	613	Bahrain	20:00
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	KAC	117	New York	20:05
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	KAC	511	Mashhad	20:30
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	QTR	1085	Doha	20:30
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC	787	Jeddah	20:35
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:15	KAC	671	Dubai	20:50
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	KAC	157	Istanbul	20:50
GOW	061	CNN	09:30	KAC	773	Riyadh	20:50
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	ABY	126	Sharjah	20:50
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	JZR	731	Cairo	21:00
JZR	410	Delhi	09:50	UAE	856	Dubai	21:00
SYR	341	Damascus	10:00	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	21:00
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	OMA	642	Muscat	21:10
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	101	London	21:15
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	IRA	664	Shiraz	21:15
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	GOW	062	CNN	21:20
KIS	6032	Mashhad	11:00	QTR	1071	Doha	21:30
JZR	1736	Cairo	11:05	KAC	617	Doha	21:40
JZR	114	Doha	11:10	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	21:40
IGO	1755	CNN	11:30	FDB	056	Dubai	21:40
NIA	1405	Sohag	11:30	SYR	342	Damascus	21:40
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	JZR	221	Riyadh	21:40
KIS	6032	Mashhad	11:45	AXB	890	Mangalore	21:40
IAW	157	Al Najaf	11:55	GFA	214	Bahrain	21:45
SAW	701	Damascus	12:00	JZR	305	Istanbul	21:50
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:30	MEA	405	Beirut	21:50
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	KIS	6033	Mashhad	21:55
				JZR	213	Jeddah	22:00
				QTR	1075	Doha	22:10
				IGO	1756	CNN	22:30



TAL TAMR, Syria: Syrian government forces arrive in the town of Tal Tamr, not far from the flashpoint Kurdish Syrian town of Ras Al-Ain on the border with Turkey, which has been a key target of Turkish forces and their proxies since they launched their military assault. — AFP

Sanctions fail to slow Turkey assault

Standoff looms in northern Syrian town of Manbij

MANBIJ: Turkey ignored US sanctions and pressed on with its assault on northern Syria yesterday, while the Russia-backed Syrian army roared into one of the most hotly contested cities abandoned by US forces in Donald Trump's retreat. Reuters journalists accompanied Syrian government forces who entered the centre of the city of Manbij, a flashpoint where US troops had previously conducted joint patrols with Turkey.

Russian and Syrian flags were flying from a building on the city outskirts, and from a convoy of military vehicles. US forces announced they had pulled out of the city. A week after reversing US policy and moving troops out of the way to allow Turkey to attack Washington's Syrian allies, Trump announced a package of sanctions to punish Ankara. But the measures - mainly a hike in steel tariffs and a pause in trade talks - were less robust than financial markets had expected, and Trump's critics derided them as too feeble to have an impact.

The Turkish lira, which had fallen on the expectation of tougher US measures, recovered after the sanctions were announced, as did its bond and stock markets, with traders noting that Trump had spared Turkish banks. Trump's unexpected decision to withhold protection from Syria's Kurds after a phone call with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan a week ago swiftly upended five years of US

policy in the Middle East.

The withdrawal gives a free hand to Washington's adversaries in the world's deadliest ongoing war, namely Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and his Russian and Iranian allies. The United States announced on Sunday it was withdrawing its entire force of 1,000 troops from northern Syria. Its former Kurdish allies immediately forged a new alliance with Assad's Russia-backed government, inviting the army into towns across the breadth of their territory.

Russian-backed Syrian forces moved swiftly to fill the void left by departing Americans from Manbij west of the Euphrates river, which Turkey has vowed to capture. "We are out of Manbij," said Colonel Myles B Caggins, spokesman for the US-led coalition in Syria. Troops "are executing a deliberate withdrawal from northeast Syria." A group of journalists accompanied by Syrian army personnel journeyed into Manbij city where upon their arrival a group of people gathered, waving the Syrian flag and pictures of Assad.

However the reporters left when gunfire was heard and a group of some 10 young men in Kurdish YPG uniforms began breaking cameras and yelling. Syrian state media said SDF fighters had opened fire on a march organized by the people of Manbij to welcome the army.

Trump's pullout ends joint US-Turkish patrols of the Manbij area under a deal aimed to persuade Turkey not to invade.

Syrian state television broadcast footage of what it said was government troops entering Manbij yesterday, under their new deal with the Kurds. A resident inside the city told Reuters the Syrian troops were on its outskirts. Turkey-backed Syrian fighters said they would continue their advance towards Manbij. A Reuters cameraman on the Turkish frontier reported heavy bombardment yesterday morning of the Syrian border town of Ras Al Ain, where a spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces reported a fierce battle was taking place.

Sanctions 'fall very short'

Trump has defended his reversal of US policy as part of a plan to withdraw the United States from "endless" wars in the Middle East. But his critics, including senior figures in his own Republican Party, cast it as a betrayal of the Kurds, loyal allies who lost thousands of fighters as the principal ground forces in Washington's battle against Islamic State.

The Democratic speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, said Trump's sanctions were too little, too late. "His announcement of a package of sanc-

tions against Turkey falls very short of reversing that humanitarian disaster." Turkey says it aims to defeat the Kurdish YPG militia, which it sees as terrorists for their links to separatists in Turkey, and to create a "safe zone" where millions of Syrian refugees can be resettled.

The United Nations says 160,000 people have fled their homes as Turkish forces advance. The Kurdish administration puts the number of displaced at 270,000. The UN Human Rights office said yesterday Turkey could be held responsible for war crimes by fighters under its direction, potentially including the assassination of Hevrin Khalaf, a leading Kurdish politician killed on the side of a highway on Saturday by gunmen who posted the incident on the Internet.

Turkish-backed fighters have denied blame for her murder. Erdogan, who has pledged to continue military operations come what may, said Turkey was giving the world a chance to bring peace to the region. "The international community missed its opportunity to prevent the Syrian crisis from pulling an entire region into a maelstrom of instability," he wrote in the Wall Street Journal. "The European Union - and the world - should support what Turkey is trying to do."

The Syrian army deployments into Kurdish-held territory evacuated by

Washington are a victory for President Bashar al-Assad and his most powerful ally, Russia, giving them a foothold in the biggest remaining swath of the country that had been beyond their grasp. Trump allies insisted Washington had not given its blessing to the Turkish offensive, and demanded a ceasefire.

"The United States of America simply is not going to tolerate Turkey's invasion in Syria any further," Vice President Mike Pence said. "We are calling on Turkey to stand down, end the violence and come to the negotiating table." Trump's sanctions include reimposing steel tariffs and halting talks on a trade deal. But bilateral trade between Turkey and the United States is small - around a tenth the size of Turkey's trade with Europe. Washington's most effective form of economic leverage would be to hinder Turkey's access to US financial markets, a step Trump has so far avoided.

"The sanctions are not related to banking, so the markets will have a positive perception," said Cem Tozge, asset management director at Ata Invest. In a potentially more damaging blow, German carmaker Volkswagen said it was postponing a final decision on whether to build a 1 billion euro (\$1.1 billion) plant in Turkey, citing concern over "current developments" after international condemnation of the incursion. — Reuters

Climate change driving alarming hunger levels

LONDON: Central African Republic topped an annual world hunger index yesterday as aid agencies warned that climate change was making it increasingly hard to feed the world. Aid agency Concern Worldwide, which co-compiles the Global Hunger Index, said progress towards a 2030 zero hunger target agreed by world leaders was "under threat or is being reversed".

Hunger levels in CAR, driven by violence since 2013, are "extremely alarming", while levels in Chad, Madagascar, Yemen, and Zambia are "alarming", according to the index released on the eve of World Food Day. Another 43 of the 117 countries ranked in the index had "serious" hunger levels. Declining poverty and increased funding for nutrition initiatives have helped reduce global hunger since 2000, but there was still a long way to go, the report said.

Nine countries of concern had higher scores than in 2010 - CAR, Madagascar, Venezuela, Yemen, Jordan, Malaysia, Mauritania, Lebanon and Oman. Concern CEO Dominic MacSorley said about 45 countries were unlikely to achieve low levels of hunger by 2030. "Conflict, inequality, and the effects of climate change have all con-

tributed to persistently high levels of hunger and food insecurity around the world," he said.

Worldwide, the number of undernourished people - those who lack regular access to adequate calories - rose to 822 million last year from 785 million in 2015, with the greatest increase in sub-Saharan countries affected by conflict and drought. Former Irish President Mary Robinson said the figures showed that the 2030 global development goals agreed in 2015 and the Paris climate agreement could no longer be seen as voluntary.

Both must be fully implemented "in order to secure a livable world for our children and grandchildren", she said in a foreword to the report. "This requires a change of mindset at the global political level." Concern Worldwide and German aid agency Welthungerhilfe, co-publisher of

the index, said there was a strong correlation between high hunger scores and vulnerability to climate change. The report said the number of extreme weather-related disasters had doubled since the early 1990s, reducing crop yields and contributing to food price hikes.

The index is based on four indicators: undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting and child mortality. Nine countries of concern were omitted due to lack of data, including Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan and Syria. The report called for more ambitious action to reduce climate change risks to food security as well as improving disaster preparation and response, and transforming food production and consumption, especially in high-income countries. — Reuters

Lebanon turns to neighbors for help fighting forest fires

BEIRUT: Lebanon has turned to its neighbors for help with battling forest fires that have ravaged homes and killed a volunteer firefighter in the Mediterranean country, the premier said yesterday. "We have contacted the Europeans who will send means of help," Prime Minister Saad Hariri said in comments carried by national news agency NNA.

Dozens of fires have erupted around Lebanon in the past few days, the head of civil defense Raymond Khattar told NNA, amid unusually high temperatures and strong winds. Thick smoke has been seen drifting over the outskirts of Beirut, over the mountainous Chouf region to its southeast, and the southern city of Saïda. In the Chouf, an area known for its trees, a volunteer firefighter lost his life trying to put out the flames, his family said.

In an area south of Beirut, firefighters have for two days been unable to stop the blaze, which has burnt

four homes to the ground and caused dozens to suffer from breathing difficulties, NNA said. Interior Minister Raya El-Hassan said Cyprus and Greece had responded to Lebanon's call for help. "Two Cypriot planes have been working to put out the fires since yesterday," she said on Twitter. "Greece has responded to our request and will send two planes to help us," she added, while Jordan also said it was ready to help.

NNA said the army was working together with helicopters and the Cypriot planes to fight the blaze, with access sometimes impeded by thick smoke and high-voltage power lines. UN peacekeeping force UNIFIL, whose members usually patrol the country's southern border with Israel, has also joined in the efforts, the agency said. In neighboring war-torn Syria, fires also killed two people, Syrian state media said.

Flames have ripped through parts of the coastal provinces of Latakia and Tartus, as well as the central province of Homs but most have been brought under control, state news agency SANA said. Two members of the Latakia forestry department were killed while fighting the blaze, it said. In Tartus, the fires - mostly stamped out - coincided with the olive harvest, the governor told SANA. In Homs, trees were burnt and electricity networks disrupted in mountainous areas, the agency reported. — AFP



ED DAMOUR: Photo shows vehicles lying on the side of a road, after they were burnt by fires near the town of Damour in Lebanon's Shouf mountains southeast of the capital. Flames devoured large swaths of land in several Lebanese and Syrian regions. — AFP

Sports

Qatar swims to the rescue of first beach games after San Diego pull out

Over 1,500 athletes competing in sports from beach volleyball to skateboarding

DOHA: The organisers of the inaugural World Beach Games that kicked off this week have heaped praise on Qatar for stepping in to host the event at short notice after San Diego pulled out. More than 1,500 athletes competing in sports from beach volleyball to skateboarding have descended on the tiny peninsula emirate for the event, which organisers hope will raise the profile of smaller sports.

"It's a great choice because Qatar is used to organising big sports competitions," said Gunilla Lindberg, secretary general of the Association of National Olympic Committees. "I'm absolutely sure (Qatar) was the right choice." ANOC was left to scout out alternatives to San Diego when the California coastal city pulled out in May after four years of planning, citing financial constraints. While several other cities put in a bid to host, Doha won out because of its experience staging major events and ready-made infrastructure, Lindberg told AFP.

The event, partially held at Doha's beachside Katara cultural village, has avoided the thin crowds that dogged the early days of the recent World Athletics Championships, held September 27 to October 6.

The World Beach Games were created by the world's Olympic committees and announced in 2015, with 97 countries sending competitors to the Doha event that started Friday and ends Wednesday.

A beach tennis qualifier between Chile and Portugal on Saturday saw the temporary sea-view stands filled by small but noisy contingents from each country, alongside hundreds of curious expat workers.

"It's a new event, so the stands are not so big — but

we have opened up for everyone to come," said Lindberg. Qatar has invested heavily in infrastructure for big-ticket events like the 2022 World Cup and the World Athletics Championships.

But Doha has also hosted smaller competitions, including the 2015 World Handball Championship and the 2016 cycling Road World Championships. Simon Chadwick, professor of sports enterprise at Britain's Salford University, said ahead of the athletics championships that Qatar sees sporting events as part of its national security effort.

Such events help make Qatar "visible, relevant and important" as well as deterring potential aggressors, he said. Qatar is embroiled in a bitter two-year-long dispute with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, which accuse Doha of backing Saudi regional rival Iran and radical Islamists. They have cut direct transport links, closed airspace to Qatari aircraft and restricted their citizens from visiting over the claims, which Doha denies.

French three-on-three basketball coach Yann Julien praised Qatar for preparing the games in "record time". "It's really well organised," he said, applauding the transportation and provision of air conditioned tents for athletes to cool down in. The beach games' first edition was due to take place in San Diego October 10-15. Reports said organisers were struggling to raise funds to put on the event. Qatar has "done a good job with the transportation and the setup of the venues," said Lindberg, adding that organisers had just six days to shift from the athletics championships to the beach games. "It's amazing." — AFP



DOHA: A handout picture provided by the Association of National Olympic Committees yesterday, shows athletes competing in the aquathlon race at Doha's Katara Beach, on the fourth day of the 1st ANOC World Beach Games. — AFP

US Open champ Woodland has only two weeks to nail cup spot

JEJU: US Open champion Gary Woodland admitted yesterday he has only two weeks to convince Tiger Woods that he deserves a captain's pick for the Presidents Cup. Despite winning his first major, Woodland missed out on automatic selection for the Ryder Cup-style event that will pit Team USA against the Internationals in Melbourne in December.

"I've talked to Tiger. I've spent a little time with him. He's made it clear he wants the guys out playing and he wants guys playing well," Woodland told AFP ahead of this week's \$9.75 million CJ Cup at Nine Bridges in Jeju, South Korea.

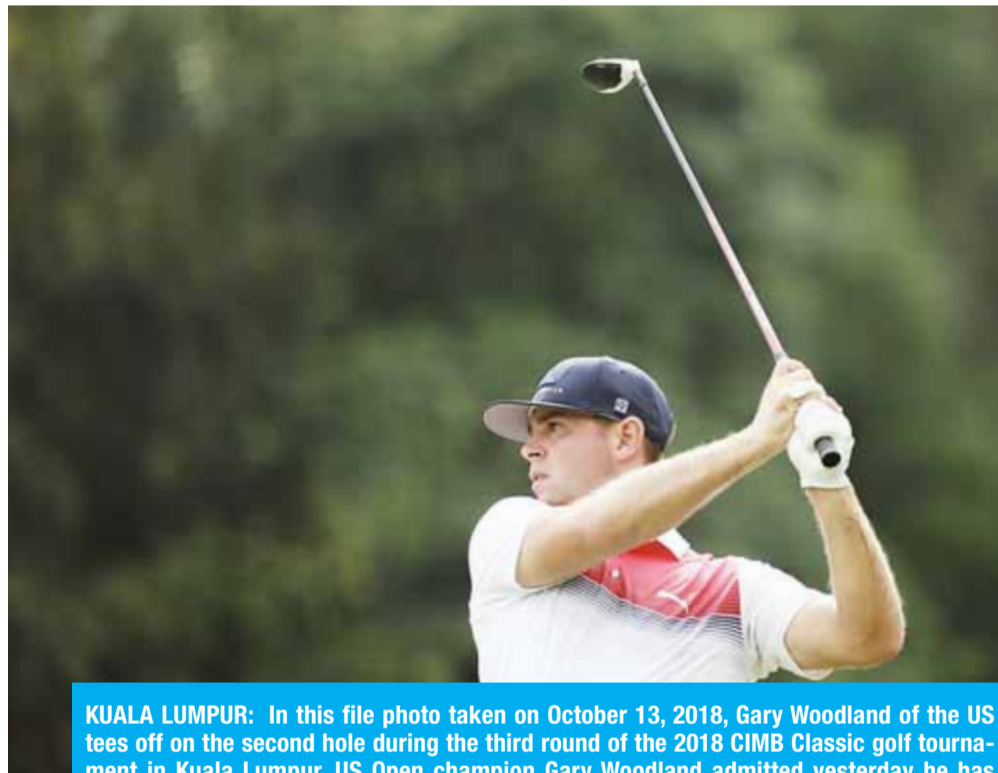
"Unfortunately, I didn't secure my own spot, so I've got to rely on a pick," said the 35-year-old, who was runner-up a year ago at Nine Bridges to world number one Brooks Koepka.

Woodland will also play in the PGA Tour's inaugural event in Japan next week, the \$9.75 million Zozo Championship. That is the second leg of a new three-week mega-money Far East swing with prize funds totalling \$29.75 million, concluding with the \$10.25 million HSBC-WGC Champions in Shanghai.

"I'm excited about the next two weeks. I've had success here, I love this golf course," he said. "I'm not going to play the HSBC, so I have two weeks left to go out and prove that my game's in a good enough spot that I deserve a pick."

'A LOT GOING ON'

US captain Woods will decide on his four captain's picks, which could include himself, straight after next week's event in Japan.



KUALA LUMPUR: In this file photo taken on October 13, 2018, Gary Woodland of the US tees off on the second hole during the third round of the 2018 CIMB Classic golf tournament in Kuala Lumpur. US Open champion Gary Woodland admitted yesterday he has only two weeks to convince Tiger Woods that he deserves a captain's pick for the Presidents Cup. — AFP

The world number 19 Woodland enjoyed an extended break after the season-ending Tour Championship and said it was just what he needed after having to cope with the hullabaloo of being a major winner.

Not only that, wife Gabby gave birth to twin girls in August, and the couple already have a two-year-old son. "Obviously winning (a major) was huge, but we had a couple of babies as well, so I had a lot going on," he smiled. "I needed that five-week break. That's as long a break as I've had in years."

Woodland brushed off the cobwebs at the Shriners Hospitals for Children Open in Las Vegas two weeks ago, finishing tied 55th. "I played a lot better than I scored," he said. "I was happy with the way I played there. I was

excited to get back to Vegas to get some of the rust off and clean some things up in the game."

His form took a dip immediately after the US Open, where he turned the tables on Koepka to win by three strokes at Pebble Beach. Woodland missed his next two cuts and has a best result only of tied 15th since his breakthrough.

"I think the biggest thing is just managing my time. I have a lot more demands now, a lot more stuff that I need to deal with off the golf course," he said. "I have a bigger family now. So it's been managing my time from the business side to my family to my golf side. "That's been an adjustment for me that I really never had to deal with too much before." — AFP

28 countries to participate in 25th Asian Bowling tourney

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: President of International and Asian Federations, President of Kuwait Bowling Club Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said 28 countries, represented by 364 athletes and administrators will participate in the 25th Asian Bowling 10 pin tournament which will be opened October 20, under the patronage of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Crowne Plaza hotel.

Al-Mohammad appreciated the patronage of HH the prime minister of the tournament during a press conference at Kuwait Bowling Center in Salmiya, and his support of athletes in general, as they are accustomed to his encouragement to make achievements.

Sheikh Mohammad said Kuwait will host two important events the World Championship for men and women in 2020 for individuals, and the teams for both genders in 2021.

He said the Kuwait Open Tournament, which is considered among the most powerful events in the world, will start on October 31st and continues until Nov 6, as soon as the 25th Asian tournament concludes.

He said Kuwait open is also the largest as far as prizes are concerned and attracts the best players at the international level. He added that the bowling club seeks to make Kuwait a center for the game through hosting the most important tournament in the world.



Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah

Sheikh Talal said there will be surprises during the opening ceremony, which normally does not have financial prizes, adding that this is the second event following the Asian youth tournament.

He said delegations will start arriving in few days and the Australian team will be the first to arrive today, and that there will be committees for receiving and transporting delegations who will stay in Holiday Inn and Millennium hotels.

Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad thanked the Public Authority for Sports for backing the organization of the tournament headed by Dr Hummoud Fulaitch and his deputies.

He hoped that Kuwait players be successful and show good levels though we "are not asking them for top places."

He said female players have special cases as most of them are students, and despite that they went to a camp in Bahrain, and we ask them to learn from being with top players from Asia and to gain experience.

Cricket prize money parity for Aussie women's T20 team

SYDNEY: Cricket Australia said yesterday it would top up the prize money for the Aussie women's team for the T20 World Cup next year to ensure parity with the men's winnings. The International Cricket Council on Monday announced a 320 percent boost in prize money for 2020 women's competition, with the winners taking home \$1 million and the runners up \$500,000.

Cricket Australia will kick in an extra share to match the equivalent prize money for the men's tournament wherever the women place, up to an additional \$600,000 for a win in the finals. "We want to continue our commitment to equality by ensuring that any prize money earned by the Australian Women's team in the T20 World Cup is the same as what is on offer in the men's side of the tournament," Cricket Australia boss Kevin Roberts said in a statement.

"While there is no doubt we are starting to see financial progress for our talented cricketers, we still have a way to go and CA will continue to play a role in driving equality for our athletes," he added.

Cricket Australia and the Australian Cricketers Association negotiated an agreement two years ago that saw all players paid the same base rate regardless of gender. The top ranked Australian women's team will be hot favourites on their home soil when the T20 World Cup kicks off in February next year.

The ICC said increased revenues in the women's sport would also see the 2021 women's World Cup prize money pool increase to \$3.5 million from \$2 million in 2017. — AFP

Paine backs Smith's return to captaincy

SYDNEY: Australian captain Tim Paine has addressed speculation over whether Steve Smith will again lead the team once a ban ends in March, saying he would be fully supportive if it happens "one day". Smith skipped the team until he was suspended for 12 months over a brazen attempt under his watch to alter the ball with sandpaper in Cape Town last year. Part of his punishment included a further year-long exile from any leadership role.

Calls have grown for Smith to take over from Paine when the ban is lifted, following batting performances that helped Australia retain the Ashes against England. Paine, who will turn 35 in December, on Monday brushed off questions surrounding the Australian side's future leadership. "I'm enjoying having the job at the moment... and I certainly hope Steve Smith does captain Australia again one day, and if he does, I'll be fully supportive of it," he told the Daily Telegraph. Paine will not play in this summer's Big Bash League, instead joining broadcaster Channel Seven's commentary team.

But he will almost certainly retain the captaincy for the home summer Test series against Pakistan and New Zealand, despite occasional criticism of his form during the Ashes. He recently ended a 13-year century drought by scoring his first ton since his maiden century as a 21-year-old in 2006. Coach Justin Langer has praised his leadership as "brilliant" and said Smith may not want to take on the "burden" of the captaincy on top of batting pressures. — AFP

Crosby kicks game winner as Packers stun Detroit Lions

LOS ANGELES: Mason Crosby booted a 23-yard field goal in the final seconds as the Green Bay Packers rallied late to shock the Detroit Lions 23-22 on Monday night. Quarterback Aaron Rodgers completed 24 of 39 passes for 283 yards and two touchdowns for the Packers, who sent a message to the rest of the NFC North that they are serious contenders this season.

"It didn't feel like a win until the end," said Rodgers. "We grinded it out. "We battled, we made some mistakes, we turned the ball over a bunch, but there is a lot of resolve in this team."

"Our defence tightened up and we had two big scoring drives down the stretch." Leading into the game the Packers and the Lions were the only two teams in the division with one loss. Green Bay improved to 5-1 while the Lions are now 2-2-1.

With star receiver Davante Adams

injured, Rodgers had to look for other offensive weapons in front of the crowd of 76,900 at Lambeau Field. He linked up with Allen Lazard for a 35 yard touchdown and Jamaal Williams for another TD strike. Lazard had just one career catch and none this season.

Williams finished with 104 yards on 14 carries and four catches for 32 yards for Green Bay, which also captured its first win in five tries against its rival. The Packers had to play without Adams, who is out with a toe injury and receiver Geronimo Allison suffered a potential concussion early in third quarter.

Matt Prater kicked field goals from 26, 22, 41, 51 and 54 yards for the Lions while quarterback Matthew Stafford finished 18 of 32 for 265 yards and was sacked three times. Prater's fifth field goal from 54 yards stretched the Lions lead to 22-13 in the fourth.

The Packers got a badly needed stop in the fourth, with safety Will Redmond and cornerback Jaire Alexander breaking up passes to Marvin Jones on consecutive plays. The Packers had one last shot, starting at their 18 with just under seven minutes remaining.

Rodgers marched the Packers methodically into scoring position with a drive highlighted by the three completions to Lazard and a 12-yard Rodgers run for a first down at midfield. — AFP

Sports

Rugby WCup quarters: A major rivalry, and a surprise package

Gatland's Wales are deservedly favourites for this clash with France in Oita

TOKYO: Defending champions New Zealand play Ireland, England face old rivals Australia, France have Wales and surprise package Japan are up against South Africa in this weekend's Rugby World Cup quarter-finals.

Here is a closer look at the match-ups, to be played Saturday and Sunday in Tokyo and Oita:

OCT 19, OITA: ENGLAND V AUSTRALIA

There's no shortage of sub-plots as one of rugby's great rivalries heads into its latest installment in Oita on Saturday. The two coaches have a long personal history — Australia's Michael Cheika and Eddie Jones, in charge of England, were team-mates at Sydney's Randwick club.

England also have a score to settle after their 33-13 defeat to the Wallabies embarrassingly sent them packing from the pool stages of the 2015 World Cup on home soil. But England beat the Wallabies in last-eight clashes at the 1995 and 2007 World Cups — and in the 2003 final, when Jones was in charge of his native Australia. Recent history very much favours England, who have won six successive games against Australia since the 2015 World Cup.

England also look like one of the form teams at the World Cup, but past results and reputations will go out of the window when they face an Australian team packed with attacking threat.

OCT 19, TOKYO: IRELAND V N ZEALAND

New Zealand have already reclaimed the world number-one ranking from Ireland and they will have a point to prove after two defeats in recent years to the Six Nations side. The Irish, stunned by Japan in Pool A, only spent two weeks on top of the rankings but they come into the match knowing they can beat the All Blacks, having won two of their last three.

Ireland won a 40-29 thriller in Chicago in 2016 and then beat the All Blacks in Dublin 16-9 during a New Zealand tour of Europe for their first-ever home win. The match in Tokyo features some intriguing matchups, not least World Player of the Year Johnny Sexton

up against Richie Mo'unga, widely considered one of the most exciting talents in the global game.

After a convincing 27-3 win over Six Nations rivals Scotland, Ireland did not exactly shine during the pool phase and have been hit by injuries to a stellar back line. But Ireland's coach Joe Schmidt, a New Zealander, should have close to a full squad to pick from for the first time in the competition.

One unknown is New Zealand's lack of serious match practice after their pool game with Italy was cancelled due to Typhoon Hagibis.

It will be a full month since they were last properly tested — in their 23-13 opening pool win against Southern Hemisphere rivals South Africa — and there are fears in some quarters they could be "undercooked".

OCT 20, OITA: WALES V FRANCE

Warren Gatland's Wales are deservedly favourites for this clash in Oita — but nobody is writing off the unpredictable French, who have a habit of springing surprises at the World Cup. Four wins out of four meant Wales, the Six Nations champions, qualified top of a competitive Pool D also including Australia and Fiji.

France, meanwhile, scraped past Argentina, beat USA and were run close by Tonga before their final pool game against England was scrapped to avoid the typhoon. However, it is unwise to read too much into France's form, as they showed in 2011 when they lost to Tonga in pool play but ended up reaching the final, where they were shaded 8-7 by New Zealand.

Along the way was a tempestuous semi-final against Wales, which Les Bleus edged 9-8 after Welsh captain Sam Warburton was sent off early on for a tip tackle. Gatland, meanwhile, who will step down after the World Cup, has built a formidable Welsh team known for its highly organised play and stifling defence.

But a number of injuries, including at fly-half where Dan Biggar is recovering from concussion, could dent the Welsh cause against the mercurial French, who have scored some of the most spectacular tries of the tournament.



URAVASU: Ireland's players take part in a training session at the Arcs Urayasu Park in Urayasu yesterday, during the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup. — AFP

OCT 20, TOKYO: JAPAN V SOUTH AFRICA

Few would have predicted this as a quarter-final line-up but Japan have smashed all expectations — and 50-1 odds — to top their pool and set up a thrilling-looking encounter in Tokyo. Comparisons will inevitably be drawn to the last time the two teams played in a World Cup — the 2015 "miracle of Brighton" when Japan pulled off a 34-32 upset widely considered the biggest shock in the sport's history.

That achievement has even sparked a movie but the sequel was less pretty, the Springboks dismantling Japan 41-7 in a World Cup warm-up match in which the Brave Blossoms barely got into the game.

But roared on by a passionate home crowd, even the mighty Springboks will be wary of Japan's giant-killing ability in Sunday's match at Tokyo Stadium. The game is likely to be played at a breakneck speed and will feature three of the most electric wingers in rugby — Cheslin Kolbe for the Springboks and Japan's Kenki Fukuoka and Kotaro Matsushima.

It would be a brave pundit to bet against the Springboks, who have looked in imposing form since an initial pool match loss to the All Blacks. But Japan have already overturned the form book against two top sides in Ireland and Scotland and miracles have been known to happen twice. — AFP

Scotland hit with misconduct charge over typhoon comments

TOKYO: Rugby World Cup organisers filed misconduct charges against Scotland yesterday over comments made about Typhoon Hagibis, after the Scots threatened legal action if their final pool game was cancelled because of the deadly storm.

Organisers said they had "issued misconduct charges against the Scottish Rugby Union in relation to recent comments made about Typhoon Hagibis and its potential impact" on Scotland's match against Japan.

Scotland faced elimination if Sunday's Pool A game was cancelled, as happened to three other matches over the weekend as the typhoon struck. In the event, it went ahead but Scotland lost 28-21 to Japan, sending them out of the competition.

Tournament director Alan Gilpin told reporters on Tuesday that "under our tournament rules, we are very careful that people behave appropriately".

"As a result of that, we've referred to an independent disputes committee the behaviour and comments of the Scottish Rugby Union," said Gilpin. Hagibis slammed into Japan on Saturday night, unleashing fierce winds and unprecedented rainfall that triggered landslides and flooding, killing nearly 70 people.

As the typhoon approached, raising doubts about the pool match on Sunday, Scottish Rugby chief executive Mark Dodson said they were considering legal action if the game did not go ahead.

Scotland would not become "collateral damage" of the typhoon, said Dodson, adding that fans were "absolutely astounded at this rigidity from World Rugby".

Scotland were desperate for the game to be played because they would have been eliminated if it were cancelled and counted as a 0-0 draw. In the end, Japan's victory saw them qualify at the top of the pool, while Scotland failed to reach the quarter-finals for only the second time in their history.

World Rugby chief executive Brett Gosper slammed the Scottish comments as "unhelpful and disappointing" and stressed organisers were not influenced by any discussions with member unions.

"We made a call based on the volume of what was in front of us. We were ready for typhoons. There is nothing exceptional about typhoons in this country. But this was an exceptional typhoon that we haven't had the likes of since the fifties," said Gosper.

"Please understand, this was an exceptional event that was thrown at this tournament and the tournament has handled it brilliantly. We knew this was coming but not on that scale," he said.

As Hagibis approached, organisers were forced into the unprecedented step of cancelling two matches — Italy v New Zealand and England v France. And as the full extent of the devastation became clear, they also scrapped Namibia v Canada in Kamaishi, a town nearly wiped off the map in the 2011 tsunami. — AFP

Adams eyes Welsh WCup record ahead of France clash

BEPPU: Josh Adams is on the verge of setting a new record for Wales at a World Cup as the wing prepares for the "biggest week of his career" culminating with a quarter-final against France.

The Cardiff Blues flyer has scored five tries in Japan, putting him one behind fellow wing Shane Williams, who achieved a Wales best of six at a World Cup during the 2007 edition. Adams only made his Wales debut in February last year but averages a try every two games in his 18 Tests.

His haul included a World Cup hat-trick in Wales's recent win over 29-17 Fiji — one of several victories that sent Warren Gatland's side into the last eight with a perfect played four, won four record from Pool D.

"I was told Shane is the record-holder for Wales at a World Cup with six," Adams said. "Fingers crossed, with three more games to go, hopefully, I can pip him. We will wait and see." Three more tries would see Adams equal the record of eight at a single World Cup shared by outstanding wings Jonah Lomu, Bryan Habana and Julian Savea.

"It wouldn't be bad to join that list, would it?" Adams added. "There are some legends there. "You could argue it's the biggest week of my career so far with playing in a World Cup quarter-final."

Swansea-born Adams, who played for English Premiership side Worcester before returning to Wales, admitted he could not quite believe he was involved at Japan 2019.

"I would never have said I would be standing here

Ireland preparing for All Blacks without banned Aki

TOKYO: Ireland are preparing to face the All Blacks on Saturday without Bunde Aki, according to assistant coach Simon Easterby, after the Kiwi-born centre received a three-match ban for a high tackle.

A judicial panel rejected Aki's attempt to overturn the red card he was shown after his shoulder crashed into the head of Samoa fly-half Ulupano Seuteni during Ireland's 47-5 win. The Irish Rugby Football Union voiced disappointment with that outcome and will decide whether to use their 48-hour window to review after they receive the committee's written report.

Asked whether that meant the Irish side preparing for New Zealand without Aki, Easterby said: "I guess at the moment we have to, partly to do with the time it could take (to appeal). "We like to have as much clarity early in the week as possible and we're now Tuesday... so we're a little bit limited with time on the pitch in terms of training."

"We're taking the course of action that Bunde potentially won't be available for us

this weekend." Aki, who has Samoan roots, had even received support from the Samoa team which urged the judicial panel to "see some sense" and spare him a ban.

And Easterby stressed that the centre was "nowhere near a dirty player." Ireland already lost him for "a large chunk of the game," noted the assistant coach, who said that Aki was "pretty upset about the decision and rightfully so."

Aki was a Super Rugby winner with the Chiefs in 2013 who signed for Irish province Connacht in April the following year and qualified for Joe Schmidt's side after three years of residency in Ireland.

"There's no better man for knowing how the Kiwis work and how they might be approaching this," acknowledged Easterby. Nevertheless, Easterby said Ireland would cope with the loss of Aki, notably with the welcome return of Robbie Henshaw after he missed the opening couple of pool matches but played a full 80 minutes against Samoa.

"Robbie coming back to fitness is great timing," he said. Neither Garry Ringrose nor Chris Farrell played against the Pacific islanders "so they're fresh." Ireland have a good recent record against the All Blacks, winning two of the last three matches.

But Easterby warned that Ireland would have to be "on their game" in Tokyo. "They have the ability across the board to hurt you," he said. "If you give them a sniff, they take those opportunities." — AFP



BEPPU: Wales' back row Josh Navidi (L) attends a training session at Noguchibaru General Sportsground in the Japanese southern city of Beppu yesterday, during the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup. — AFP

telling you that 18 months ago, but I am over the moon to be here. "Selection-dependent, hopefully I can get out there next Sunday and do everybody proud."

Wales may have won seven of their last eight Tests against France but Adams is wary of the reputation of 'Les Bleus' for rising to the big occasion. "France are renowned for being able to turn it on, and when they do, they are extremely dangerous," said Adams of France, who beat Wales in a 2011 World Cup semi-final. "They've got some quality players. At times in this competition they have looked really, really good. They defi-

nately pose a threat to us, without a doubt." Wales have never won a World Cup, with their best finish of third coming at the inaugural 1987 edition.

But while expecting a "really tough 80 minutes" against the French in Oita on Sunday, Adams said this Wales squad believed they could go all the way. "There is no reason why this group of players can't achieve something special," he insisted.

"We've got belief in each other and in the squad, and I think we are all really excited moving forwards now." — AFP

England's Mitchell expects Wallabies to stick 'Australian way'

BEPPU: England expect the Wallabies to play the "Australian way" when they face their familiar foes in a World Cup quarter-final this weekend. The Australian game has long been synonymous with running rugby and few opponents have had a longer appreciation of its qualities than England defence coach John Mitchell.

"They just love moving the ball — I think that's the Australian way as well," Mitchell told reporters at England's hotel in Beppu yesterday. "They love ball in hand and they love playing so that's to me very much their mentality, always has been and always will be."

Mitchell was the head coach of his native New Zealand when they lost a 2003 World Cup semi-final to Australia. Eddie Jones, in charge of the Wallabies back then is now Mitchell's boss in the England set-up. The much-travelled Mitchell's coaching career also includes a spell in Australian rugby with the Western Force.

Many within rugby union have long argued Australia compensates for a relatively small playing base with coaching game intelligence — an opinion endorsed by Mitchell ahead of Saturday's knockout clash in Oita. "They will be clever on the weekend. They always are."

England have won all six of their clashes against Australia under Jones — appointed after the Wallabies condemned the then hosts to a woeful first-round exit at the 2015 World Cup with a 33-13 victory at Twickenham. — AFP

Sports

Bulgaria football chief resigns as UEFA urges 'war' on racists

Kane calls for tougher punishments

SOFIA: Bulgaria's football chief resigned yesterday after racist chanting marred England's Euro 2020 qualifier in Sofia, as UEFA chief Aleksander Ceferin said the sport needed to "wage war" on abusers.

England eased to a 6-0 victory over their hosts in the Bulgarian capital on Monday but the game was blighted by offensive chants, forcing the match to be halted twice in the first half.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson condemned the "vile" racism, which included monkey noises and apparent Nazi salutes, and called for tough action from UEFA. As temperatures rose his Bulgarian counterpart, Boyko Borisov, urged the country's football union president to quit.

"I urge Borislav Mihaylov to hand in his resignation immediately!" Borisov wrote on Facebook, adding it was "inadmissible that Bulgaria... is associated with racism and xenophobia".

Hours later the Bulgarian Football Union (BFU) said in a statement on its website that Mihaylov had offered his resignation and would hand it to the members of the BFU executive committee during its meeting on Friday.

"His decision resulted from the tension created over the past days, which is detrimental to Bulgarian football and the Bulgarian Football Union," the statement said. UEFA president Ceferin stressed the commitment of the governing body of European football to root out the "disease" of racism.

"More broadly, the football family — everyone from administrators to players, coaches and fans — needs to work with governments and NGOs to wage war on the racists and to marginalise their abhorrent views to the fringes of society," he said. Earlier, a spokesman for the British prime minister said: "The racism we saw and heard last night was vile and has no place in football or anywhere else."

"The England players and management showed tremendous dignity and the prime minister commends the players who were targeted with this despicable abuse for their response."

After several English players suffered racist abuse in a qualifier away to Montenegro in March, England manager Gareth Southgate had prepared his side to follow UEFA's three-step protocol for reporting racist incidents that can lead to matches being abandoned.

England captain Harry Kane said the team made a decision to carry on playing but called for tougher punishments. "Whether the UEFA protocol is strong enough, I'm not sure," he said. "Whether any racial abuse should be allowed at any time... well it shouldn't be. The protocol at the moment allows there to be an announcement, there to be two or three steps before the players are taken off the pitch."

"It's unacceptable to be racist once so I feel there can be stronger punishment, stronger protocols but from our point of view as a team we stuck together, we showed unity and we did what we wanted to do."

British anti-racism group Kick It Out said the game should have been abandoned by officials after TV footage showed that racist abuse continued in the second half. "There can be no more pitiful fines or short stadium bans," the group said. "If UEFA care at all about tackling discrimination... then points deductions and tournament expulsion must follow."

A section of 5,000 seats at the Vasil Levski National Stadium was already closed for the game after racist incidents during games against Kosovo and the Czech Republic in June.

With England 2-0 ahead, the game was temporarily stopped and a warning played over the loudspeakers in both Bulgarian and English. That warning was not heeded and there was a second, longer stoppage of the



SOFIA: England's defender Ben Chilwell (L) and Bulgaria's midfielder Galin Ivanov fight for the ball during the Euro 2020 Group A football qualification match between Bulgaria and England due to incidents with fans, at the Vasil Levski National Stadium in Sofia. — AFP

match after Ross Barkley put England 3-0 up, with a number of Bulgarian 'ultra' fans ejected from the stadium. Ashley Young was subjected to monkey chants in Sofia during an England game in 2011. The BFU was fined 40,000 euros (\$44,000) by UEFA for "discrim-

natory" chanting and for the lighting and throwing of fireworks.

England now need just a point from their final two qualifiers against Montenegro and Kosovo next month to seal their place at next year's Euros. — AFP

No goals, no fans, no TV: Koreas draw 0-0 in blacked-out World Cup qualifier

SEOUL: North and South Korea drew 0-0 in a historic but surreal World Cup qualifier yesterday, played in front of FIFA president Gianni Infantino but an otherwise empty stadium and almost completely blocked off from the outside world.

The showdown between the two sides — whose countries are still technically at war — took place at Pyongyang's Kim Il Sung Stadium with no live broadcast, no supporters and no foreign media in attendance.

Tottenham Hotspur star Son Heung-min captained South Korea in the first competitive men's match to be played in Pyongyang. But frustrated South Korean fans who were not allowed to travel to the game, will have to wait days to see it on television — after officials bring back a recording on DVD.

"North Korea promised to provide a DVD containing full footage of the match before our delegation departs," the South's unification ministry, which handles cross-border affairs, said in a statement.

The only simple way to follow the match, which the

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) had billed as "one of the most eagerly anticipated fixtures" for years, was via the limited online text commentary posted on FIFA and AFC websites.

The minimal updates available, however, were limited to yellow cards and substitutions. Qatari referee Abdulrahman Al Jassim booked North Korea's Ri Yong Jik and Ri Un Chol, and Kim Young-gwon and Kim Min-jae from the South.

A photo posted on the website of the South's Korean Football Association (KFA) showed the match in progress with giant floodlights illuminating the empty stands. Among the tiny number of spectators was FIFA President Gianni Infantino, who flew in to Pyongyang earlier in the day, in what is thought to be his first visit to the country. "It's a great pleasure to be here," said Infantino, sporting a North Korean flag lapel pin, as he was welcomed at the airport by the head of the North Korean Football Association, Kim Jang San.

The South Korean team had arrived in Pyongyang on Monday accompanied only by their coaches and support staff.

The delegation had to leave their mobile phones at the South Korean embassy in Beijing ahead of their departure, and reaching the team in Pyongyang has been a struggle. "Nothing is guaranteed in terms of communication so we have to use whatever works at any given moment," a KFA official said, adding they were currently relying on emails.

A Monday evening press conference by South Korean coach Paulo Bento was attended by five North

Korean journalists and two KFA staff, who had to return to their hotel to get an internet connection before posting details of the briefing on the association website. AFC general secretary Windsor John said the restrictive arrangements were only to be expected. "We understand DPR Korea's situation," John told AFP, using the official name for North Korea. "We are not surprised."

The match comes in the wake of a series of North Korean missile tests that raised tensions in the region, and after the breakdown of talks with the United States over Pyongyang's weapons programmes.

Since the collapse of the Hanoi summit between leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump in February, Pyongyang has regularly excoriated Seoul, ruling out prospects of inter-Korean dialogue. It is a far cry from the cross-border warmth of last year, when South Korean President Moon Jae-in seized on the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics to broker the Pyongyang-Washington talks process and held three summits himself with Kim.

Back then, the pair discussed and agreed on further sports exchanges including a joint bid to host the 2032 Olympics. South Korean football fans were outraged over the blackout and demanded that the North be held accountable for not following international standards.

"A game that's not broadcast live is completely meaningless," a fan commented online. Another fan added: "If North Korea does not allow live broadcasts, it should be kicked out from international federations." — AFP

'I believe in Neville, he has a plan for England': Duggan

MADRID: Atletico Madrid forward Toni Duggan says England's players are still behind Phil Neville as coach and has warned against complacency and the need to improve standards in the women's game. In an exclusive interview with AFP, Duggan also talked about her burgeoning friendship with Kieran Trippier and the upcoming reunion with Manchester City today in the last 16 of the women's Champions League.

Duggan and Barcelona lost to all-conquering Lyon in the final in May and the 28-year-old admits she would still be hurting had she not left the Catalans for a fresh start at Atletico in the summer. Yet in between there was further heartache at the World Cup, where England were beaten in the semi-finals by eventual winners the United States and Neville has come under scrutiny since, during a run of one victory in six games.

"It's been a lot to take in after the World Cup, maybe this is a transition period," Duggan tells AFP from the training ground of Atletico Madrid's women's team in Madrid on Monday. "I believe in Phil, he's the coach and it can't get like the men's game where you sack the coach after three or four defeats. We have a plan and all the players are buying into it."

Neville, though, has become prickly in the face of recent pressure from the media. "Phil has a bigger profile so perhaps he gets more applause when we do well and more criticism when he does badly," Duggan continued. "That's because he's Phil Neville but our ambitions are the same and we're all pulling in the right direction."

Duggan is still regaining fitness following the thigh injury that disrupted her World Cup but has settled in fast at Atletico, with a friendly face nearby too in Trippier, who joined the club from Tottenham in July.

"One of us messaged the other when we signed and we've stayed in touch," Duggan said. "We send each other messages when the other one has a good game, to say good luck, well played or whatever. It's nice to have that."

"I was asking him about Spanish the other day and saying my teacher sometimes tells me things I don't need to know. He was saying it's difficult because (Diego) Simeone speaks so fast."

Women's football in Spain enjoyed a record-breaking year last season, most notably when a crowd of 60,739 turned out to watch Duggan score for Barcelona against Atletico at the Wanda Metropolitano in March.

But when the two sides met again a month ago, Barca's victory was not even shown on television.

"It was disappointing. Last season there were 60,000 people in the stadium and they can't even televise the game the next year," Duggan says. "If it's like that, how you do build? How do you progress?" "People talk about equality but it's not about money, no way. Get the pitches and the facilities right," Duggan said. "There's a danger people think it will just happen but if we want to bring people and sponsors in, how can you do that if you're playing on a pitch kids wouldn't play on in the park?"

Atletico have been rocked by coach Jose Luis Sanchez Vera resigning for personal reasons last week, with Pablo Lopez replacing him. "It was a blow I'm not going to lie," Duggan admits. "I knew the way the team played and that was what brought me here initially."

Duggan believes the squad's togetherness can carry them through against City, who are top of the Women's Super League but lost to Atletico last year in the Champions League. — AFP

Ayhan equaliser forces France to wait for Euro spot

PARIS: France drew 1-1 with Turkey in Euro 2020 qualifying on Monday in a match played against a backdrop of diplomatic and security tensions after Paris condemned Ankara for its military offensive against Kurdish forces in Syria.

Substitute Olivier Giroud headed in from a corner to put France ahead on 76 minutes at the Stade de France but Kaan Ayhan nodded in an equaliser six minutes later — a goal celebrated by a military salute in front of the Turkish supporters.

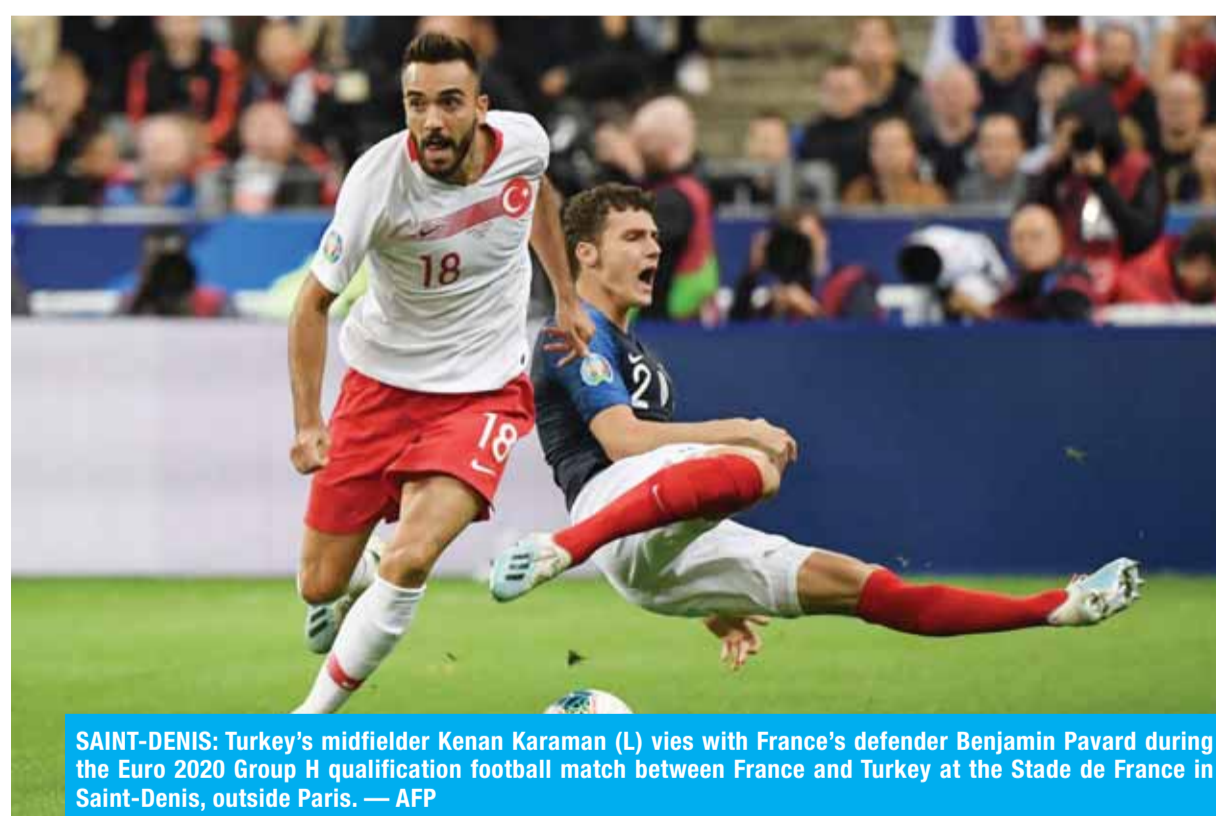
Turkey remain top of Group H above the world champions on the head-to-head rule, although France can qualify for the finals with a win at home to Moldova next month. Turkey would clinch their place by avoiding defeat against third-placed Iceland, who are four points back after beating Andorra 2-0.

"They scored a goal from a set-piece in the first match. We could have avoided it," said France coach Didier Deschamps, whose side were beaten 2-0 by Turkey in Konya in June.

"We did what we needed to win the match based on the play and number of chances. They didn't have many but put away a set-piece. "We should have been more clinical even if it's still a good point," he added. "We're still on track and need to finish to job in November."

Wissam Ben Yedder replaced Giroud, Friday's goalscorer in the 1-0 win away to Iceland, while Lucas Hernandez returned at left-back at the expense of Lucas Digne. Turkey were without injured veteran captain Emre Belozoglu, who damaged ribs during a last-gasp 1-0 victory at home to Albania last week, with Leicester defender Caglar Soyuncu starting in place of Ayhan. Police ramped up security at the Stade de France amid fears of violence, with around 3,800 Turkish fans in the designated away section but many more seated elsewhere in the ground among the 78,000 spectators.

France were deeply unhappy when Turkish supporters whistled over the French national anthem when the



SAINT-DENIS: Turkey's midfielder Kenan Karaman (L) vies with France's defender Benjamin Pavard during the Euro 2020 Group H qualification football match between France and Turkey at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, outside Paris. — AFP

two countries met in the Turkish city of Konya in June. This time 'La Marseillaise' was applauded by the away fans. While Antoine Griezmann has yet to properly settle at Barcelona this season, the forward emerged at the heart of France's best moments in the first half as Turkey were forced to absorb constant pressure.

Bayern Munich team-mates Lucas Hernandez and Kingsley Coman combined superbly to release Griezmann on the quarter-hour, but Turkey goalkeeper Mert Gunok blocked well before producing a magnificent save to repel Moussa Sissoko's follow-up effort.

Griezmann then headed a Coman cross directly at Gunok who plunged to his left moments later after a clever dummy from the striker created another opening for Sissoko. Without a goal now for France in the past six qualifiers, Griezmann again went close when he curled wide of a sprawling Gunok and the far post from the edge of the area.

Turkey coach Senol Gunes introduced Hakan Calhanoglu at the break to provide more of an attacking threat, with the AC Milan playmaker helping create the visitors' first genuine chance on the hour.

Ayhan came on in the 53rd minute for injured Zeki Celik. Seconds after a Griezmann penalty appeal was dismissed, Turkey exposed France on the counter with Calhanoglu teeing up Burak Yilmaz who drilled over with just Steve Mandanda to beat.

Deschamps turned to Giroud for the final 20 minutes and was instantly rewarded as the Chelsea striker powered in a Griezmann corner for his 38th France goal, moving him three shy of Michel Platini on the French all-time scoring list. Ayhan denied France qualification on the night as he planted a thumping header low beyond Mandanda from a Calhanoglu free-kick. Several Turkish players celebrated with a military salute that UEFA will likely investigate. — AFP

25 Qatar swims to the rescue of first beach games after San Diego pull out



26 Rugby WCup quarters: A major rivalry, and a surprise package



27 Bulgaria football chief resigns as UEFA urges 'war' on racists



Saudi, Palestine draw in landmark game

Tickets at the 8,000 stadium were given away free



WEST BANK: Saudi's defender Ziyad Al-Sahafi vies for the ball with Palestine's defender Abdelatif Bahdari during the World Cup 2022 Asian qualifying match between Palestine and Saudi Arabia in the town of Al-Ram in the Israeli occupied West Bank yesterday. — AFP

RAMALLAH: Saudi Arabia's football team played Palestine in the occupied West Bank for the first time yesterday, having previously refused to enter the territory as part of its boycott of Israel. The two met in a qualifier for the 2022 World Cup at the Palestinian national stadium in Al-Ram, playing out a 0-0 draw.

Cheered on by a packed and vociferous home stadium, Palestine frustrated their more prestigious guests and came close multiple times, but neither side were ultimately able to make the breakthrough.

With significant excitement over the match, all tickets at the 8,000 stadium were given away free on the day, with thousands in often disorderly queues to get in. Hundreds of others watched from windows or roofs of buildings overlooking the stadium, which is only a few metres from the Israeli barrier that cuts off the West Bank from Jerusalem.

Arab clubs and national teams have historically refused to play in the Palestinian territory — occupied by the Jewish state since 1967 — as it requires obtaining entry permits from Israel, a country most of them do not recognise.

The game marked a change in policy for the kingdom, which has previously played matches against Palestine in third countries, in line with a decades-long Arab boycott of Israel. However, in recent years, common concerns over Iran are widely seen as having brought the Gulf powerhouse and Israel — both staunch US allies — closer together. The Palestinian football association described the Saudi team's arrival in the Palestinian territories as a "win-win" situation. Critics see it as a step toward normalisation with Israel, and Lebanon, Syria and Egypt still refuse to play in the Palestinian territories.

But other countries such as Bahrain, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and Oman have sent their clubs

and teams to play in the West Bank.

'MEETING FIRST SAUDI'

At the stadium, large Palestinian and Saudi flags had been erected on the building behind it. "God, Palestine and Jerusalem is Arab," the fans chanted, with the stadium only a few miles from the holy city.

Israel seized control of east Jerusalem in a 1967 war, but Palestinians consider it the capital of their future state. There were no Saudi fans at the stadium but pictures of Saudi King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman were erected alongside Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas and his predecessor Yasser Arafat.

Palestinians in the West Bank have to go through Israeli checkpoints to leave and many have little experience of the wider Middle East. Wajid Waji, 20, was among a group of four young men wearing Palestinian football shirts.

"It will be the first time I have seen a Saudi person in real life," he told AFP. "We meet them all the time on (online computer game) PubG. They are always rude on PubG so we want to shout at them."

Only one of the players in the first 11 was from Gaza, the other part of the Palestinian territories under a blockade by Israel. The winners of the two cups in the West Bank and Gaza are meant to play each other annually but this year it has been delayed for months after Israel refused permits to most of the Gaza team's players. The Palestinians had the first real chance, with striker Saleh Chihadeh hitting the keeper in the 10th minute. The Saudis could have scored as well in the first half but Yahya Al-Shehri's strike was well saved. In a second half short of chances, Palestinian substitute Khaled Salem flicked a shot over the bar in the final minutes. — AFP

Seven-up Australia thrash Taiwan in WCup qualifying

TAIPEI: Australia ran riot in a 7-1 demolition of Taiwan yesterday to continue their runaway start to qualifying for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. Adam Taggart, Jackson Irvine and defender Harry Souttar all scored twice along with Jamie Maclaren's solitary strike as the Socceroos solidified their lead of Asia's Group B.

Australia, who have already had 3-0 and 5-0 wins over Kuwait and Nepal, conceded their first goal of the qualifying campaign through Chen Yi-wei's 21st-minute header. But the Aussies were already two goals to the good by then after Taggart scored in the 12th and 19th minutes — his first goals for the Socceroos in six years.

"We were looking to get crosses in the box, especially early when they weren't set, and they worked a couple of times and we got some goals in there," Taggart said after the match.

Taggart's opener was a header from Rhyan Grant's pinpoint cross, and he tapped in his second after slick work on the left from Brad Smith and Awer Mabil.

Taiwan scored with their first meaningful attack, when Chen headed only his second goal in 58 international appearances to send the sparse home crowd into a frenzy. Taiwan goalie Pan Wen-chieh came off second best in an aerial collision with Harry Souttar, and then looked dazed after Brandon Borrello ran into him head-on chasing a loose ball. Irvine then scored two in three



TAIPEI: Australia's Harry Souttar (C) celebrates scoring a goal with teammates Jamie Maclaren (L) and Jackson Irvine (R) in the World Cup Qatar 2022 qualification football match. — AFP

minutes, firstly a half-volley and then a header from Mabil's cross to make it 4-1 at half-time.

Taiwan's attempted rally in the second half faded when three players were subbed off with cramp.

The towering Souttar, who plays for Fleetwood Town in England's third tier, headed two goals to make it three in two games for the Socceroos.

Veteran striker Maclaren also got on the scoresheet after his hat-trick in last week's 5-0 drubbing of Nepal in Canberra. — AFP