

Local

UNHCR hosts Humanitarian Corporate Social Responsibility Forum in Kuwait

Under the patronage of Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs

KUWAIT: UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, held yesterday its first Humanitarian Corporate Social Responsibility Forum, under the patronage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kuwait City. The forum, which is the first of its kind to be held in Kuwait initiated by UNHCR, highlighted the critical role of the private sector in supporting humanitarian response to displacement crises globally.

The forum was attended by Ambassador Nasser Al-Sabeh, Assistant Foreign Minister for Development and International Cooperation Affairs, and leading personalities in the media, tech, telecommunications and retail sectors including Twitter, MBC, Al-Ghanim Industries, Zain telecommunication group and Al-Sayer Holdings. The forum highlighted the pioneering role of the Kuwaiti and regional private sector in humanitarian giving and addressed a range of topics including ways Islamic philanthropy and corporate zakat can help refugees and displaced people globally and how forming impactful partnerships can aid in the inclusion of refugees in development.

Unprecedented levels of forced displacement around the world, combined with protracted displacement situations require new and innovative ways to address the immediate and long terms needs of

refugees and displaced people. Proactive private sector engagement is therefore critical in humanitarian response, particularly in protracted situations, where a whole community approach is needed for sustainable impact.

Commenting on the importance of engaging the private sector in humanitarian response, Samer Haddadin, UNHCR Head of Office in Kuwait, said "UNHCR is honored to be hosting this event in Kuwait, an international Humanitarian Center as recognized by the UN. The support and commitment of the Kuwaiti government and Kuwait private sector to humanitarian causes worldwide is truly admirable, and in the footsteps of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his exemplary leadership in this field." Haddadin added, "the scale and increasingly protracted nature of global displacement requires more innovative and sustainable responses. The private sector with its strategic capabilities, assets and expertise is well positioned to enhance these efforts, and Kuwaiti entities have and can further play a leading role in this sphere."

Meanwhile, Sabeh said, "Kuwait has a long standing history of humanitarian giving. Under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad



KUWAIT: Samer Haddadin, UNHCR Head of Office in Kuwait, speaks during the forum.
— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Government of Kuwait and its people are committed to supporting humanitarian causes worldwide. The private sector in Kuwait mirrors the values of the government and have played a pioneering



Ambassador Nasser Al-Sabeh, Assistant Foreign Minister for Development and International Cooperation Affairs, delivers his speech.

role in humanitarian giving." The forum will be followed by a series of roundtables and skill sharing workshops on identifying the best pathways for engagement and fostering stronger ties with the private sector in Kuwait.

Legalese

Absconding

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed



Absconding is a legal term used in Kuwait more commonly than in other countries. Absconding from work is when an employee in Kuwait does not show up for duty at work without submitting a reason. I have provided many consultations regarding this topic and the reason for absconding differs from one employee to another. Sometimes an employee does not come to work for weeks on end because of a real-life or family death emergency.

With that said though, the law has criminalized absconding under certain circumstances. Even though this is not common in many other countries, the law in Kuwait aims to protect the employer. The country is also trying to avoid the large number of expats in Kuwait and illegal migrants.

More and more companies around the world are using technology tools to allow their employees more freedom when it comes to working hours, and therefore I do expect the dynamic of the laws to change in the near future as we develop a healthier work environment that looks at the end target instead of having the employee physically present x number of hours a day.

Here are a few questions that I have answered, which include tips on what to do if you have an emergency that is stopping you from getting to work.

Termination by law

Question: I have a family emergency and was not able to make it to work. I did not attend an entire week, and when I went seven days later, I was told I was terminated by law. Is this correct?

Fajer: Yes, under the Kuwait labor law, you are considered resigned if you do not show up to work for seven consecutive days. No matter what the emergency is, I would always call the workplace, and more importantly, email in writing that you will need to take time off. You do not have to know how much time off you need nor do you have to seek approval from your workplace if you are really dealing with an emergency. I would also email the HR office or manager, letting them know you are not attending because of an emergency.

Filing a case

Question: I filed a complaint against my sponsor at the shuoon, but he filed a case against me claiming that I absconded from work when I did not. I actually resigned. He would not give me my passport back, which he was holding illegally, so I filed a case at the shuoon. To my surprise, he had filed an absconding case against me. What can I do or what should I have done to avoid such a thing in the future? What is the punishment for absconding?

Fajer: Absconding cases are now becoming stricter in Kuwait towards the employee, and this unfortunately is being abused by violating employers who have other issues against their employees. They do not want to pay termination indemnity, so they might accuse their employees of absconding. How can you avoid this? 1) Always have your termination/resignation in writing. 2) If you do not want to go to work because your employer is violating your rights and it is not safe for you to stay there, then file a complaint first. Your employer will not be able to accuse of absconding if you have filed a case first.

The punishment for absconding in Kuwait is deportation. It is not looked into by a judge - you will be deported unfortunately.

For questions or queries, please email us at info@ftl-legal.com.

Kuwait reiterates supporting Palestinian, Syrian peoples' rights

NEW YORK: Kuwait has reiterated full support of the Palestinian and Syrian peoples in gaining their legitimate rights, guaranteed under international legitimacy resolutions, as well as their sovereignty, and natural resources. Israel has imposed arbitrary constraints and measures, on administrative and security levels, upon the Palestinian people, depriving them from the freedom of movement and ignoring all international laws and norms, including UNSC resolution 2334 (2016), noted Kuwaiti diplomatic attache Luluwa Al-Douser. She made the remarks at the UN General Assembly's Second Committee on the sidelines of discussing report on the Permanent Sovereignty of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East

Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights over their natural resources.

The "unbiased" report addresses reality of Israel's blatant violations and continued sectarian actions and policies in the occupied Palestinian territories that violate international human right laws, she said. Israeli actions such as depleting natural resources, constructing settlements, and demolishing the infrastructure in the occupied lands hinder all chances of achieving economic and social development in the Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan, said Douser. The UNSC resolution 2334 (2016) demands Israel to halt all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and fulfill its obligations as an occupying power under the Fourth Geneva Convention, she noted.

Moreover, the UNSC resolution 497 (1981) declared that the Israeli Golan Heights Law, which effectively annexed the Syrian Golan Heights, is null and void and without international legal effect, and further calls on Israel to rescind its action, said Douser. According to UNGA report, over 96 percent of Gaza's coastal groundwater has become not suitable for human con-

Kuwait continues efforts to support Africa development

NEW YORK: Kuwait affirmed it will continue efforts to achieve peace and stability in Africa, as part of having an observer membership since 2012 in the African Union (AU). The remarks were made by Kuwait's Second Secretary Abdullah Al-Rasheedi, during a discussion on the new partnership on development in Africa; part of the UN General Assembly's meetings late Tuesday. He applauded the developments in the partnership, as mentioned in the report of UN Secretary General, especially launching the African free trade zone in July this year. The free trade zone will boost the continent's economy and commerce, said Rasheedi, adding that foreign investments also saw a rise in Africa recently. Meanwhile, he affirmed Kuwait's commitment to support joint efforts between the UN and the African Union to achieve the AU's development plan 'AGENDA 2063' and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Rasheedi also hailed the efforts of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) agency to speed up the execution of key projects to achieve the 2063 vision. He noted Kuwait's prominent role in supporting the African continent through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), adding that the Fund is cooperating with over 52 African countries. KFAED's support includes construction and infrastructure, with a total of about \$10 billion. Moreover, the diplomat said that Kuwait shares strong ties with AU countries, noting that the country had hosted the 3rd Arab-African Summit in 2013 under the theme 'partners in development and investment.' He



Abdullah Al-Rasheedi

pointed to the initiative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during the summit to provide easy loans worth \$1 billion to African states.

Rasheedi also said that Kuwait announced investing \$1 billion in infrastructure in Africa, under the supervision of the NEPAD. Also, as part of Kuwait's support, His Highness the Amir launched an annual cash prize to support research on development in the fields of food, health and education in the continent. The prize is worth \$1 million under the name 'Al-Sumait Prize for African Development,' aiming to encourage economic, social and human resources development. The Kuwaiti diplomat underlined the need to end conflicts in Africa as a vital step towards achieving stability and sustainable development. In this matter, he called for implementing the 'Silencing the Guns 2020' initiative to bring peace to the continent. — KUNA

Interior Minister announces reshuffle

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah yesterday issued a number of decisions reshuffling some Interior Ministry officials. The new resolutions included appointing Maj Gen Faisal Al-Essa as special forces director and Col Osama Salmeen and Col Abdul Wahhab Al-Yaqout as his assistants. Col Mejbil bin Shouq was appointed acting border security director while Brig Marzouq Al-Marzouq and Col Hamad Al-Mudhi were transferred from the special forces to the ministry's headquarters.

Military garments

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced that its inspectors closed 11 shops specialized in tailoring military garments for violating the type of work they had been licensed for and selling epaulets and caps to unauthorized customers.

Camping season

In preparation for the new camping season from Nov 15 to March 15, Kuwait Municipality continues meeting with relevant bodies to discuss the preparations that include forming a special inquiry committee with a special inquiry hotline. The municipality also noted that co-ops will be allowed to build mini-markets and recreation centers to serve campers.

Jail term for teacher in student's death

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The criminal court yesterday sentenced an Egyptian female teacher to one year in jail with a KD 1,000 bail to suspend the sentence in a case in which she is accused of causing the death of one of her pupils. The child's parents argued that the teacher had beaten their son in class despite knowing of his health condition and that she did not rush to rescue him when he collapsed inside the classroom. But the teacher strongly denied the charges and stressed that the child was very troublesome in class, never listened or adhered to instructions and that she did not beat him. "I only shouted at him," she stressed. However, the boy's father vowed he would file an appeal so that the teacher gets the punishment "she deserves."

In other news, well-informed sources said the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs prepared a draft charter to regulate recruitment and that it would be put into practice when Minister Fahd Al-Shula signs it by December at most. The sources added that according to the new charter, hiring of non-Kuwaitis will be curbed and limited to technical and computer-related jobs. The sources added at least 50 percent of expats working evening hours in various departments would be terminated, with the exemption of bedoons with valid security IDs.

Two rescued

The coastguard rescued two Kuwaitis who were caught in the middle of a sea storm near Failaka island that caused their jet-skis to sink, which were later recovered after rescuing the two men. Police received an SOS from the two young men near Failaka, so the coastguard responded and located them.

Roommates fight

Ahmadi police broke up a fight between two Egyptians, who exchanged blows inside a 'bachelors' residence. Police received a call about the fight in Fintas, so police patrols responded and broke up the fight.

Mugging

Farwaniya detectives arrested an Asian man Indian for mugging another Asian man and stealing KD 500 from him. The victim went to the police and told them the suspect, who was familiar to him, stole KD 500 that belonged to his sponsor. The suspect was arrested and confessed to committing the act.

— Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

Local

Kuwait's Amir congratulates Tunisian President on swearing-in

Crown Prince receives state officials at Bayan Palace



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



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with President of the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences Dr Mohammad Ahmad Al-Jarallah, as well as Dr Abdullah Yousef Al-Ghunaim and Abdullah Al-Essa. — KUNA photos

Amir's envoy attends Emperor Naruhito's banquet



His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.

TOKYO: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, attended yesterday a dinner banquet hosted by Emperor Naruhito in appreciation to all heads of state and government who attended his enthronement ceremony. Meanwhile, His Highness Sheikh Nasser met with King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck on fringes of the enthronement of Japanese Emperor Naruhito in Tokyo. King Wangchuck asked about the health of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah after his recovery and returning back to homeland. In addition, he expressed sincerest wishes of good health, as well as more advancement and prosperity for the Kuwaiti people under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir. His Highness Sheikh Nasser conveyed His Highness the Amir's greeting and appreciation as well. — KUNA

ment of Japanese Emperor Naruhito in Tokyo. King Wangchuck asked about the health of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah after his recovery and returning back to homeland. In addition, he expressed sincerest wishes of good health, as well as more advancement and prosperity for the Kuwaiti people under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir. His Highness Sheikh Nasser conveyed His Highness the Amir's greeting and appreciation as well. — KUNA



BERLIN: A meeting taking place during the second round of political consultations between Kuwait and Germany. — KUNA

German, Kuwaiti officials stress deep bonds

BERLIN: German and Kuwaiti officials yesterday underlined deep relations between their countries and reiterated willingness to upgrade them to the highest levels. This came during the second round of political consultations between Kuwait and Germany at the level of senior officials of both countries' foreign ministries. Commenting on the meetings, the Kuwaiti delegation's head Waleed Al-Khubaizi said they had discussed ways of promoting bilateral cooperation on various levels, and carrying on coordination at international forums.

Khubaizi, who is Assistant Foreign Minister, said Kuwait is interest in continuing distinguished cooperation with Germany and the European Union (EU) at all levels, pointing out Germany's support to Kuwaiti citizens' Schengen visa exemptions. On bilateral trade, investment and development cooperation, the Kuwaiti diplomat spoke highly of the level of Kuwaiti-German trade and investment partnership. He underscored mutual willingness to boost trade exchange, which hit 1.8 billion euro (\$2.5 billion) last year. The investments of Kuwait Investment Authority (IA) in Germany are estimated at approximately 13.5 billion euro (\$14.7 billion), and the Kuwaiti private sector's investments there amount to 13 billion euro (\$14.5 billion), he remarked. The Kuwaiti official also commended the level of existing military cooperation between Kuwaiti and German military establishments, calling for continuing

bilateral cooperation in this vital sector. Khubaizi noted mutual willingness to promote bilateral health, cultural, scientific and academic cooperation.

Meanwhile, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany Niels Anne said his country hinges upon strategic partnership to serve mutual interests and upgrade cooperation with Kuwaiti to higher levels. Director General for Near and Middle East, Africa and Latin America at the German Foreign Ministry Philipp Ackermann lauded the second round of political consultations which came amid a very critical time in the Middle East region. He acclaimed Kuwaiti-German coordination about several regional and international challenges.

Kuwaiti Ambassador to Germany Najeeb Al-Bader said the talks were held in a positive and constructive atmosphere that reflected deep distinguished relations between both countries. A set of political, economic and consular subjects and matters were on the agenda of the talks, he noted. During the meetings, Assistant Foreign Minister Waleed Al-Khubaizi handed Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany Niels Anne a letter from Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to his German counterpart Heiko Maas regarding bilateral relations and issues of mutual interest. — KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to President Kais Saied of Tunisia, celebrating his swearing-in ceremony. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

In other news, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness

also received Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf then received President of the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences Dr Mohammad Ahmad Al-Jarallah, as well as Dr Abdullah Yousef Al-Ghunaim and Abdullah Al-Essa. — KUNA

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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Al-Seif Palace in Kuwait City. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Relations with India historic, deep-seated: Kuwaiti diplomat

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KUWAIT: Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah (center) is honored during the ceremony. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti-Indian relations are “historic and deep-seated,” said a senior Kuwaiti diplomat. “Both friendly peoples are bonded on a deep social level as well,” said Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister and Office Director of the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. His remarks came during a gala held at the Indian embassy in Kuwait Tuesday night, where many cultural and folkloric activities were presented. Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad said such performances embodied Indian authenticity and the close historic bond with Kuwait. In this regard, he pointed to the deep-rooted Indian heritage that still exists in the Kuwaiti culture. “There must be something from the Indian heritage in almost every Kuwaiti house,” he noted. Extending greetings to the Indian community in Kuwait, Sheikh Ahmad appreciated their significant contributions to the development of various fields in the country. — KUNA



Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah during the gala.



A general view of the audience.

Local

Zain's Gender Diversity Program given highest recognition at Entrepreneur Magazine's Achieving Women Awards

Brainchild of Bader Al-Kharafi, women empowerment initiative proven highly effective

DUBAI/KUWAIT: Zain Group, the leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, is the recipient of the "Best Gender Diversity Initiative in Workplace for a Corporate in MENA region for 2019" accolade for its Groupwide Women Empowerment (WE) Gender Diversity Program. The honor was bestowed on the company by Entrepreneur Magazine Middle East at its prestigious annual Achieving Women Awards gala event held in Dubai.

The publication is a globally renowned title and its annual awards ceremony is a celebration of the achievements made by women in the MENA business community, recognizing the region's female figures and activities, which are setting them apart from contemporaries.

Zain's Groupwide WE Program is premised on an initiative that was launched officially in Kuwait in November 2017, and which saw approximately 250 women from across all Zain operations gathered to set strategic targets for this important activity going forward. Two main targets established at the inaugural event were:

1. To increase female leadership positions from 14.5 percent to 25 percent by the year 2020
2. To progress through the three stages of evolution for tackling a gender diverse workforce:
 - a. Awareness: Support and resources for tackling gender diversity are nascent and typically driven by external forces
 - b. Realization: Gender diversity becomes

a topic on the board agenda

c. Motivation: The language of diversity and inclusion is aligned with the company's strategy and embedded in its culture

Commenting on winning the award, Zain Group Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Maryam Saif commented, "WE, Gender Diversity Program is the brainchild of Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi, and has become central to our development as an organization, and the overwhelming success of the initiative has meant that Zain has enjoyed direct benefits to the rising participation of women in the workforce."

Saif continued, "We are thrilled to be making the strides we are in this area, and what makes us even more enthusiastic is that we are acting as an example of how following an aggressive gender diversity program does not come at the expense of good governance and profitability, but actually has the ability to enhance key performance indicators."

Since 2017, Zain Group's WE Program has grown in activity and impact, with numerous impressive achievements having been chronicled in this period to date, including:

- Female leadership at Zain Group risen from 14.5 percent to represent 15.6 percent
- Senior female leadership roles have increased 100 percent from 6 to 12 chief of department roles
- Historic firsts have seen Zain KSA appoint two female department heads, Chief HR Officer and Chief Business Affairs

Celebrating women's achievements in MENA



DUBAI: Team members of Zain Youth graduate empowerment program, Generation Z, accept the award from Entrepreneur Magazine.

Officer, and Zain Iraq appointed a female as Chief Human Capital Officer

- Overall, female middle management has seen a 40 percent increase
- Embedded Women Empowerment into the board of director's agenda
- WE is on the scorecard of all CEOs of Operations; and in Zain Iraq particularly, Directors level and above
- Signing UN Women Empowerment Principles

- Awarded scholarships for two women to attend ESADE MBA program

Other highly successful developments under Zain's WE Program include the introduction of one of the most progressive and innovative human resources policies in the region, providing female employees who become new mothers with four months of paid maternity leave, with a flexible schedule for returning to work.

Earlier this year, Zain Group also part-

nered with and supported Women in Data Science (WiDS) Conferences held in Kuwait City and Beirut earlier this year, which were organized jointly by Kuwait's Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) and American University of Beirut (AUB) for their respective events. Both conferences are linked with the annual Global WiDS Conference held at Stanford University and an estimated 150 plus locations worldwide.

Boubyan Bank launches 'Beat Obesity' campaign

KUWAIT: In cooperation with Kuwait Obesity Association (KOA) and Novo Nordisk for the second year in a row, Boubyan Bank will organize a two-day campaign named "Beat Obesity.. It's Simple and Doable" at the Avenues during the period from 25 to 26 October 2019.

In this regard, Qutayba Saleh Al-Bassam, Executive Manager at the Corporate Communications Division of Boubyan Bank stressed that "Organizing the campaign this year is based on the success achieved last year in collaboration with KOA where the Avenues' visitors, including Boubyan customers and others, were provided with free tests, consultations and medical advice."

"The two-day campaign will be open for all, providing them with medical tests including blood pressure, blood glucose, HbA1c, BMI, cholesterol and others. Furthermore, visitors will have free access to specialists' medical consultation, and this all comes in an attempt to boost awareness about the significance and necessity of treating obesity and fighting its growth amongst various segments of the society," Bassam explained.

Bassam went on to add: "The campaign comes as a part of Boubyan Bank's social responsibility activities, namely those designed to increase public awareness about the significance of all forms of physical activities for health, especially with the growing number of diseases resulting from immobility, lack of physical exercise or even

not meeting the normal rates of walking needed for average man."

"Participation of an outstanding group of Kuwaiti youth from KOA and public health and nutrition experts is the highlight of this event", Al-Bassam elaborated as he expressed his gratitude to KOA and NOVO NORDISK International company for co-organizing this campaign to shed some light on obesity risks.

Growing obesity rates

Meanwhile, Deputy Head of KOA Dr Asrar Said Hashem expressed that she was happy for the second cooperation with Boubyan Bank in one of the most significant health awareness campaigns in Kuwait, which is the aim of KOA along with spreading constant public awareness about obesity's risks, complications and how to achieve doctor-patient communication to reach the best prevention measures and facilitate treatment.

"While the entire world is witnessing remarkable growth in obesity rates, Kuwait particularly tops international obesity rates in both adults and children, which poses a real threat and considerable burden to the Kuwaiti society," Dr Hashem warned.

Dr Hashem further added: "Many scientific studies have been done in this regard, and the Global Health Observatory statistics show that obesity rates in Kuwait amount to 33.2 percent among men and 42.7 percent among women, which places Kuwait on top



Qutayba Al-Bassam



Dr Asrar Hashem



Dr Akin Aksekili

of regional and international countries with high obesity rates. A recent study made by Dasman Diabetes Institute show that obesity rates among children are 50 percent, which is an alarming percentage that calls for immediate studies and solutions."

Further, Dr Hashem explained that the World Obesity Federation "WOF" had recently decided to postpone the World Obesity Day from October 11th to March 4th as of 2020 to allow for shedding the light on the accelerated growth of this disease and to provide media coverage that corresponds to the health and social risks associated therewith.

Also speaking on the occasion, KOA's Treasurer, Dr Amina Al-Qabandi stated: "Due to the possible obesity-related future medical risks, including 230 diseases such as Type II Diabetes caused by various genetic and environmental factors, obesity has become an irritating concern for societies in general and

health organizations in particular."

Qabandi added: "According to statistics, obesity has reached unprecedented levels in Kuwait for adults and children alike as per the statistics, and this constitutes a real threat to the health of individuals, thus, leading to chronic diseases which ultimately lead to death. Therefore, we need to boost public awareness about the significance of nutrition and physical exercise, maintain reasonable weight and body mass and focus on the best means to achieve such goals with experts' help."

Qabandi stressed that experts are currently facing various challenges towards achieving the hoped-for goals of obesity treatment. "However, continuous awareness and the right communication between patients, doctors and nutritionists will enable us to fight and solve the problem through proper healthcare and spreading enough health awareness among the com-

munity," she remarked.

In the meantime, Dr Akin Aksekili, Vice President and General Manager Novo Nordisk Gulf Emerging Markets stated: "All the segments of the society should stand together to confront the discrimination facing obese people. It is our duty in Novo Nordisk to help spread awareness about obesity, its reasons and its dangerous complications. I would like to thank our partners in Kuwait Obesity Association and Boubyan Bank for this awareness event, and we hope that such events may highlight the burden that obesity lays on the shoulders of the society."

Over 1,350 tests were made during last year's campaign for obese and healthy people wishing to check their health status, and who were able to have discussions with specialized doctors to find out the best and simplest solutions to overcome their health problems.

NBK organizes Masterclass on embracing a better tomorrow

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organized a Masterclass entitled 'Leading the Future: Having the Courage to Create A Better Future,' delivered by Peter Fisk, a professor of strategy, innovation and marketing who advises on fast-changing markets around the world. The Masterclass was attended by number of NBK officials. The Masterclass covered the fundamentals as well as the drivers of innovation and disruption in the workplace, in addition to ways to generate new ideas from inspiring figures around the world, who successfully managed to redefine their businesses in an unprecedented matter and in a short time.

He also showcased the prerequisites of an innovation-friendly environment and the factors that encourage opening up to new ideas and exploring untraditional and innovative solutions that help overcome challenges related to disruptive change in the work-



KUWAIT: A group photo on the sidelines of the Masterclass organized by National Bank of Kuwait.

place.

Fisk shed light on case studies comprising more than 250 mega businesses and startups to learn about their incredible business models that inspired innovation and disruption. He cited the world's most disruptive businesses and brands, in addition to the experiences of several international industries to develop an innovative business model.

Game changers in fields of technology and services resorted to see the world from a different perspective, and they reshaped their businesses and shook up their

markets right. He also provided the big ideas to change the game, namely, design thinking; embracing insight to understand the deeper motivations and aspirations of customers, through deep-dive immersion with individuals, connecting analytics with observation and intuition. Additionally, Fisk spoke of his book 'Gamechangers,' where he confirmed that game changers find their own space, then shape it in their own vision. Most of all they have great ideas. They outthink their competition, thinking bigger and different. They don't believe in being slightly cheaper or

slightly better.

Peter Fisk is a professor of leadership, strategy, and innovation at IE Business School. He is a bestselling author, an expert consultant and a keynote speaker, helping business leaders to develop innovative strategies for business and brands. He is also founder and CEO of GeniusWorks, a boutique consulting firm. He wrote several books including Marketing Genius and Gamechangers. It is worth mentioning that these activities came in line with the NBK's commitment to value-added development and training programs, which ben-



Boom or bust: Hanoi pollution crises expose its growth risks

As Kremlin scrambles for Africa, Putin praises ties at major summit

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WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on September 25, 2019 US President Donald Trump listens as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy speaks to the press during a meeting in New York on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly. —AFP

Testimony fuels Trump impeachment probe

Republicans must remember what they are witnessing here — a lynching: Trump

WASHINGTON: The top US diplomat in Ukraine poured fuel on Donald Trump's impeachment probe Tuesday with a detailed account of how the president pushed Kiev to discredit one of his main political rivals, withholding US military aid to exert pressure. Democrats said the congressional testimony by Bill Taylor was a stunning confirmation of their allegations that Trump abused his office by seeking foreign help to hurt Democratic candidate Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election.

"It's all there. What's there left for me to say when you have such a clear and detailed statement?" said House Democrat Tom Malinowski, a former diplomat. The White House rejected what it called a "coordinated smear campaign from far-left lawmakers and radical unelected bureaucrats." "Today was just more triple hearsay and selective leaks from the Democrats' politically-motivated, closed door, secretive hearings," the administration said in a statement. "Every day this nonsense continues more taxpayer time and money is wasted." In a 15-page opening statement quickly leaked to US media, Taylor recounted in deep detail how Ukraine's new president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, came under sustained pressure after taking office. Taylor said he was told Trump wanted Zelenskyy "to state publicly" that he would investigate Biden and his son Hunter for what he said was corruption in the ex-Soviet republic.

He said that the US ambassador to the European Union, Gordon Sondland, told him that "everything" was dependent on such an announcement, including security assistance. "Another carrot being dangled, Taylor said, was a proposed summit between Zelenskyy and Trump. Emerging from the testimony, Democratic congressman Adriano Espaillat tweeted that "what I heard today from #BillTaylor was very troubling and explosive."

"At some point we're going to have to conclude our

investigation and go forward with what we have, and what we have is incredibly damning right now," another Democratic legislator, Ted Lieu, said.

Democratic congresswoman Karen Bass told reporters that she thought the Taylor testimony "was shocking." "We still need to go through the process. It's kind of like a string of a sweater in the sense that it's just unraveling," she said. A new CNN/SSRS poll on Tuesday showed support for Trump's removal from office is now 50 percent to 43 against. However, reflecting the intensely partisan divide among voters, 87 percent of Democrats are pro-impeachment, compared to just six percent of Republicans.

Racism storm

Trump admits to asking Ukraine's government to probe what he says is corruption related to Biden. However, he denies Democrats' allegation that he tried to strong-arm the Ukrainians by linking the delivery of US military aid to his request for an investigation. Trump has already branded the impeachment proceedings a "coup," a "hoax," a "witch hunt" and a variety of swear words.

On Tuesday, he prompted an uproar by claiming he was the victim of a lynching, a word linked in the United States to the darkest days of slavery's aftermath. "All Republicans must remember what they are witnessing here — a lynching," Trump tweeted. More than 3,400 African Americans were lynched between 1882 and 1968, and congressional Democrats reacted with collective anger.

"How dare you?!" seethed congresswoman Barbara Lee on Twitter as she assailed the "disgusting and ignorant message" from Trump. The White House fought back, with spokesman Hogan Gidley insisting that Trump did not mean to compare "what's happened to him to one of the country's darkest moments." There was rare criticism from the top Republican legislator, Senator Mitch McConnell, who

said Trump had made "an unfortunate choice of words." He added, however, that Trump does have a "legitimate complaint" over a "totally unfair process." Trump will rely on McConnell to deliver an acquittal in the Senate if the lower house does go ahead with an impeachment vote.

'Crazy'

Trump did urge Zelenskyy in July to investigate Biden and his son, according to a summary of a phone call released by the White House. Seeking help from a foreign country in a domestic election is illegal in itself, but a whistleblower complaint about the call made the more serious allegation that Trump also sought to condition nearly \$400 million in military aid to Ukraine on Kiev launching a probe.

Taylor is a military veteran and career diplomat who served as US ambassador to Ukraine from 2006 to 2009, and is now charge d'affaires following the ouster of ambassador Marie Yovanovitch this year. Yovanovitch testified to Congress two weeks ago, telling House investigators she was pushed out on "false claims" that she had disparaged Trump. According to Taylor, much of the pressure he described was applied through "weird" back channels, including Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani.

Taylor had already damaged Trump's defense with a paper trail that included text messages in which he expresses alarm about having to pressure Zelenskyy's government. "Are we now saying that security assistance and WH (White House) meeting are conditioned on investigations?" Taylor asked Sondland in a September text message. Later, Taylor expressed more explicit reservations to Sondland: "I think it's crazy to withhold security assistance for help with a political campaign." On Tuesday, Taylor said in his opening statement that he stood by that characterization of the quid pro quo being "crazy." —AFP

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters yesterday that it was "absolutely meaningless to hide there are differences regarding north Syria" between Turkey and other member states. He said the defense ministers' meeting on Thursday would be useful because "the best way to address these differences is to sit together at the table and to discuss and try to find a way forward".

He was cautious on the Turkey-Russia deal worked out, saying it was "a bit early to judge the consequences". But he said NATO welcomed any efforts that de-escalated the conflict in Syria. The transatlantic alliance is not operationally active in Syria, but many of its member states are involved in the anti-IS fight there and in other countries, including in Afghanistan where NATO is deployed.

Stoltenberg said that Germany's idea of a secure zone in Syria patrolled by international force was to be discussed during the NATO ministers' meeting. However diplomats said they had no details about it, with some hinting it would get short shrift. A French source with knowledge of discussions around the idea said Tuesday the initiative was "not coordinated" with Germany's partners and in any case ran contrary to "the dynamics" on the ground in Syria. —AFP

US hails German idea of international 'safe zone' in Syria

BRUSSELS: The US ambassador to NATO yesterday welcomed an idea floated by Germany of Europe possibly contributing to a so-called "safe zone" inside Syria, but other Alliance members expressed consternation. NATO member Turkey's military operation in northern Syria is to dominate a meeting of North Atlantic Treaty Organization defense ministers in Brussels on Thursday and Friday.

The issue has become even more controversial after Turkey on Tuesday sealed a deal with Moscow for Russian forces to help clear Kurdish fighters from the "safe zone" it is creating in northern Syria and to patrol the area. US ambassador Kay Bailey Hutchison said her country hailed the idea launched by German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer of international forces creating a security zone in north-eastern Syria.

Kramp-Karrenbauer told broadcaster Deutsche Welle on Monday that European forces, including from Germany, could be part of that mission, to resume the fight against the Islamic State (IS) group and "stabilize the region". Hutchison said the idea "to put together a European group that would be part of a peacekeeping group would certainly be positive".

She added: "If the Turks ask for more help from the international community, I think the Europeans could step forward and I think the German minister along with France and the UK could answer that call and it would be a positive thing." A pull-out by US forces in northern Syria ordered early this month by President Donald Trump opened the way for Turkey to launch an offensive against Kurdish forces previously allied with the US.

'Frank' discussions

NATO diplomats said there have been "frank" discussions with Turkey on its military operation, and the country was isolated within the organization. But, they stressed, Turkey was "too strategically important" for any concrete action against it, and in any case NATO decisions are made unanimously by all 29 members states-Turkey included.

Chinese hitmen jailed for outsourced murder

BEIJING: A string of hitmen who repeatedly subcontracted a murder to each other — then failed to go through with the job — have been jailed in China. The hapless assassins kept passing on the contract — each time taking a cut of the cash — in the hope that someone lower down the chain would actually carry out the killing. But when the man with the lowest price got his marching orders, he decided instead to fake the murder — and enlisted the help of the intended victim.

The whole farcical enterprise collapsed when the would-be target simply called the cops. A court in Nanning heard how the original dispute erupted in 2013, when a businessman surnamed Wei sued real estate developer Qin Youhui. Fearing a costly and lengthy legal battle that could dent his bottom line, Qin hired assassin Xi Guangan to "take out" Wei, the court said, paying him two million yuan (\$282,000).

Xi, however, didn't fancy getting his hands dirty, and subcontracted the work to Mo Tianxiang for half the price. Mo, in turn, handed the job to another would-be killer, Yang Kangsheng, for 770,000 yuan. Yang, spotting what he thought was an easy way to make a quick buck, hired Yang Guangsheng for 700,000 yuan. Yang Guangsheng then extended the chain to a fifth hitman, Ling Xiansi, who agreed to do the job for just 100,000 yuan (\$14,000) — five percent of the original contract.

However, Ling realized the price wasn't worth a possible life sentence if he was caught, so he decided to try to fake the murder — and got in touch with his mark. Wei — the man who was by this time supposed to be well and truly dead — told the court that he met the possible assassin at a cafe and agreed to pose for a photo where he was bound and gagged. The photoshoot over, Wei trotted off to the police station, where officers set about unwinding the tangled tale of incompetent killers. All five — plus the man who originally ordered the hit — were jailed last week, for terms ranging from two years and seven months to five years. —AFP

International

United by disgust, Lebanon demos search for shared future together

Lebanon is marked by stark political and sectarian divisions

BEIRUT: Lebanon's massive street protests have made it clear what the demonstrators oppose — with the entire political class in the crosshairs — but the focus is now turning to what exactly they stand for. The almost one-week-old protests sparked by a tax on messaging services such as WhatsApp have morphed into a united condemnation of a political system seen as corrupt and beyond repair.

The movement's soundtrack has been a chorus of inventive chants calling out politicians from all sects and parties with rhyming insults. Most people want the unity government, which is supported by nearly all Lebanon's major political parties, to resign, and disgust with the status quo has been a unifying force. But what they want next often differs.

On the outskirts of another rally in Beirut, when tens of thousands again brought much of the capital to a standstill, teenager Peter Sayegh and his friend Andrew Baydoun were playing cards on a plastic table. They agreed that Prime Minister Saad Hariri has to go, but not on the future of Lebanon. "I want the people to rule and give us our rights, secure work for the country and secure my future so I won't have to emigrate," Sayegh said, leaning back on his chair while clutching a Lebanese flag. Baydoun objected. "The whole government needs to go and be replaced by a military one," he argued, calling for 84-year-old President Michel Aoun, a former army chief, to stay on.

Scuffling over the future

Lebanon is marked by stark political and sectarian divisions. Many of its political leaders today were warlords fighting along religious lines during Lebanon's brutal 1975-1990 civil conflict. The government is set up to balance power between multiple sects, which include different Christian groups, Sunni and Shiite Muslims, as well as the Druze. But it often entrenches power and influence along sectarian lines.

The protests have been overwhelmingly apolitical, with all party and religious symbols abandoned in favor of the cedar-stamped national flag. They have also been inclusive — with no specific stated goals, or leadership or management structure. But the bottom-up structure also poses risks — with fears that the momentum could slip away as people feel pressure to return to work or school.

Numbers of protesters have declined since peaking Sunday, which is weekend in Lebanon. Mass protests in 2015 ultimately failed to achieve major change and elections in 2018 ushered in the same sectarian parties. In 2016, a non-sectarian coalition called Beirut Madinati (Beirut is my city) came close but ultimately fell short in city elections. In the general election two years later, the group was part of a coalition that won only one seat.

'Demands later'

On Monday, Mona Fawaz of Beirut Madinati gave a brief speech in the centre of the capital, stressing she was not claiming to represent the entire protest movement. Yet parts of the crowd accused her group of trying to hijack the demonstrations. "Go and speak in ABC," one protester yelled, accusing the group of elitism by referring a high-end shopping mall in Beirut.

Speeches on Tuesday evening concentrated on points of agreement: calls for the government's resignation and reclaiming public funds embezzled by politicians. Nizar Hassan, 26, part of a leftwing group called Lihaqqi (for my rights), said the protest movement had to be realistic. "This is a popular uprising, you can't just say: 'These are the demands.' But a lot of people are talking about things that are actually quite achievable," he said.

For Hassan, an interim government of technocrats could stabilize the economy ahead of new elections in which the traditional parties would be obliterated. "In



ZOUK MOSBEH: Protesters take cover from the rain under an umbrella as they gather during a demonstration on the seventh day of protest against tax increases and official corruption, in Zouk Mosbeh, north of the Lebanese capital Beirut. —AFP

2015, people were talking about overthrowing the sectarian system altogether. (Now) people are much more knowledgeable of the limits," he said. Carmen Geha, an assistant professor at the American University of Beirut, said the new protests had sup-

port across economic groups and throughout the country. "Leaderless movements can dissipate and be co-opted," she warned. "There is a need to frame the demands. But right now this is a popular protest — go to the streets now and talk demands later." —AFP

Iraqi Kurds turn to Zoroastrianism as faith, identity entwine

DARBANDIKHAN: In a ceremony at an ancient, ruined temple in northern Iraq, Faiza Fuad joined a growing number of Kurds who are leaving Islam to embrace the faith of their ancestors — Zoroastrianism. Years of violence by the Islamic State jihadist group have left many disillusioned with Islam, while a much longer history of state oppression has pushed some in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region to see the millennia-old religion as a way of reasserting their identity.

"After Kurds witnessed the brutality of IS, many started to rethink their faith," said Asrawan Qadrok, the faith's top priest in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region. During Fuad's conversion ritual in Darbandikhan, near the Iranian border, a high priest and his assistants wore white clothes representing purity and recited verses from the Zoroastrian holy book, the Avesta. They knotted a cord three times around Fuad's waist to symbolize the faith's core values of good words, good thoughts and good deeds.

The newcomer raised her hand and swore to abide by those three values and to protect nature, respecting water, air, fire, earth, animals and humans. "I feel very happy and refreshed," Fuad said, adorned with her Farawahar necklace, a powerful spiritual symbol given to her by the high priest. She said she had been studying Zoroastrianism for a long time and was drawn to its philosophy, which "makes life easy". "It is all about wisdom and philosophy. It serves mankind and nature," she said.

Forced into secrecy

Zoroastrianism was founded in ancient Iran some 3,500 years ago, gaining followers as far afield as India. It was the official religion of the powerful Persian empire for a thousand years, but the assassination of the final



AKNALICH: People walk past the new Yazidi Temple in the village of Aknalich, 35 kilometers from the Armenian capital Yerevan, on October 11, 2019, which has seven domes topped with sun symbols represent the seven angels revered by the Yazidis, adherents of an ancient religion rooted in Zoroastrianism. —AFP

Zoroastrian king in 650 and the rise of Islam sent it into a long demise. However the faith did survive — often in the face of severe persecution — and famous followers include Freddie Mercury, whose Zoroastrian family were originally from Gujarat in western India.

"During (late dictator) Saddam Hussein's rule, my father practiced Zoroastrianism but kept it secret from the state, our neighbors and relatives," said Awad Tayib, who represents the faith at the regional government's ministry of religious affairs. In 2014, IS jihadists captured swathes

of northern Iraq, carrying out what may have constituted a genocide against another minority, the Yazidis.

The extremists imposed a violent version of Islamic law and sparking a three-year war that eventually left their self-proclaimed "caliphate" in tatters and the region in ruins. "Many think IS values are very odd in contrast with Kurdish values and traditions, so some have decided to abandon their faith," high priest Qadrok said, adding that he performs ceremonies every week to welcome new converts.—AFP

Chile announces social measures to stem street violence

SANTIAGO: Chilean President Sebastian Pinera announced a package of social measures Tuesday aimed at stemming days of protests over economic inequality that have swept the country and claimed 15 lives. Apologizing to the nation for failing to anticipate the outbreak of social unrest, Pinera said his government had "received with humility and clarity the message Chileans have given us."

The leader vowed to increase the universal basic pension by 20 percent, cancel a recent 9.2 percent increase in electricity bills and propose a law that would see the state cover the costs of expensive medical treatment. "I recognize this lack of vision and I apologize to my compatriots," Pinera said in an address from the presidential palace in Santiago.

Pinera also pledged a state subsidy to increase minimum wage to 350,000 pesos (\$482) a month and said the government would introduce health insurance for medication, which is among the most expensive in the region. Earlier in the day he met with the leaders of some of Chile's opposition parties as he sought a way to stem the country's worst violence in decades, initially triggered by an increase in metro fares.

The protests, which began Friday, mushroomed into a broader outcry against social and economic woes, including a yawning gap between rich and poor, in a country normally considered one of the most stable in Latin

America. Pinera quickly suspended the metro fare hike, but also declared that Chile was "at war against a powerful, implacable enemy," and imposed a state of emergency in Santiago and most of Chile's 16 regions.

Adopting a more conciliatory tone, he later called for Tuesday's meeting, which was boycotted by three of the largest opposition groups, including the powerful Socialist Party. The day's protests were mostly peaceful, particularly in the capital, although looting continued in other towns. But with the country's largest union, the Workers' United Center of Chile (CUT) alongside 18 other social organizations, calling strikes and protests for Thursday and Friday, the pressure had been on Pinera to act.

The protest violence — widespread looting, arson and clashes with the 20,000 security forces deployed on the streets — is the worst to hit Chile since the country's return to democracy after the 1973-1990 rightwing dictatorship led by General Augusto Pinochet. On Tuesday the army announced a nighttime curfew — from 8:00 pm to 5:00 am — for the fourth day in a row.

Huge wealth disparity

Before Pinera's announcement, one of Chile's largest conglomerates, Quinenco, decided to act swiftly and promised to increase its minimum salaries to 500,000 pesos a month from January 1 — 60 percent more than the current minimum wage of 301,000 pesos. Chile's big business conglomerates are one of the major factors in the huge wealth disparity that has angered protesters.

A 55-year-old man taking part in Monday's



VALPARAISO: People demonstrate outside the Carlos Van Buren Hospital. —AFP

protests, who gave his name only as Orlando, told AFP that low salaries and pensions, waiting lists at hospitals and high prices for medicine, were the true reasons for the protests. The government started naming some of the dead on Tuesday. Nine had died in fires, one was electrocuted and five were shot, four of those by the security forces. Eleven of the fatalities were in the Santiago region, while a Peruvian and an Ecuadorian were among the dead. Chile's human rights institute said more than 200 people had been taken to the hospital, almost half with gunshot wounds, while

many others suffered eye injuries from pellets. Since the unrest began, more than 2,600 people have been detained.

Tuesday saw almost none of the violence, looting or torching of public property and private businesses that marked the first few days of protest. However, television images showed looters in one town smashing a bus into a department store before ransacking it. In central Santiago, many shops and businesses that were closed on Monday reopened. Commuters and shoppers formed long lines at bus stops and supermarkets.—AFP

Paradise regained: US town obliterated by fire rises from ashes

PARADISE: It was the worst wildfire in California's history as it blasted through the small community of Paradise, killing 86 people and erasing everything in its path. But nearly one year after the inferno, the town in the northern California foothills that was home to 26,000 people is literally rising from the ashes. "We're building a whole entire town pretty much from scratch," Mayor Jody Jones told AFP in an interview as she prepared to address a recent community meeting about reconstruction.

Barely 4,000 residents live in Paradise today as the town prepares to commemorate the deadly wildfire that erupted in the early hours of November 8 last year. Nearly 19,000 structures, including 14,000 homes, were destroyed by the inferno that wiped out 90 percent of the town. Those who have come back are living in the few structures still standing or in trailers parked on empty lots cleared of debris.

"The folks here who are coming back, who are rebuilding, view themselves not as victims, not even as survivors but as pioneers," Jones said. The road to recovery, however, has been paved with many obstacles as reconstruction has been hampered by all the toxic debris that had to be removed and chemical contamination of the water supply. Still, Jones said, local officials are forging ahead and have so far approved some 280 building permits while another 100 or so are under review.

"It's not going to happen overnight," she said of the rebuilding effort. "If we're lucky enough to issue 500 building permits each year, it's going to take five to 10 years." "I think we're going to be a nice little town of about 5,000 people in a year and a half and we'll continue to grow." But the town is unlikely to ever resemble the quaint little community in the Sierra Nevada Mountains that once attracted retirees because of its affordability.

"It's not going to be the same," said Jones. "For a lot of seniors, the rebuilding process is an arduous process, so a lot of them have chosen not to come back. "Additionally, everything will be brand new," she added. "So I think it'll be attractive to young families and people who are looking for an affordable place to live."

Preventative measures

Jones, who lost her home in the flames, stressed that in order to make sure last year's calamity doesn't play out again, the town has enacted stringent regulations that go beyond standard guidelines. That includes banning wood fences running up to a home, installing fire resistant gutters, burying electricity lines, improving emergency notifications and widening evacuation routes. Crews have also been working nonstop to reduce the highly combustible vegetation that helped feed last year's fire which burned through 153,336 acres. "100,000 trees have already been cut down on the ridge," said Jones. "We still have a lot of burnt trees, we estimate about 300,000 dead trees that still need to come out."

"So it will not be the same kind of forest that it was before," she added. "We do have a long-term recovery plan that covers all this." As to what is sorely missing in the town for the 4,000 residents resilient enough to call Paradise home today? "I think they would all say they'd like to see more restaurants open," said Jones, grinning. "And that's happening, we just had a new one open just last week." —AFP

As Kremlin scrambles for Africa, Putin praises ties at major summit

Russia had written off more than \$20 billion of African debt

SOCHI: President Vladimir Putin yesterday hosted a major summit aimed at reviving Russia's influence in Africa, telling leaders from the continent he would seek to double trade in the coming years. All 54 African states were represented at the first Russia-Africa Summit in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, with Putin meeting leaders for bilateral talks throughout the day.

Trade between Russia and Africa has more than doubled in the past five years to more than \$20 billion, Putin said, adding that some consider this "a good figure". "I cannot agree," he said. "In Africa there are very many potential partners with good prospects and huge growth potential. Of course, this is not enough." He said Russia would be looking to "double this trade, at least" within the next four to five years.

Russia had written off more than \$20 billion of African debt, Putin said. Moscow was a crucial player in Africa in the Soviet era, backing independence movements and training a generation of African leaders. But its ties with Africa declined with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and in recent years China has emerged as a top foreign power on the continent, forcing Russia to play catch-up. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, among the first to meet with Putin at the summit, praised Russia's "whole effort of strengthening its relationship with the African continent".

Putin also met Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, congratulating him on his recent Nobel Peace Prize. Ahmed is set to meet Egyptian leader Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on the sidelines of the event to discuss a dam under construction on the Nile River that Cairo fears would cut its vital water share. The Russian presi-

dent also heard a request from Central African leader Faustin-Archange Touadera to extend military aid and help to overturn an international arms embargo.

Putin last year surprised the West by a string of high-profile moves that strengthened Russia's influence in the CAR, an extremely poor but strategic country that has traditionally had close ties to France, the former colonial power. The two-day event in Sochi will see more than 3,000 delegates prepare deals and discuss topics from nuclear technology to mineral extraction — though on the sidelines, stands for arms companies dominate.

China's playbook

The summit is in many ways borrowing from China's playbook. To expand its influence, Beijing in 2000 launched the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and has poured tens of billions of dollars into the continent. Russia cannot match China's economic might but, like Beijing, it is prepared to support African leaders with controversial rights records in exchange for access to the continent's riches.

The summit comes a day after Putin hosted Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for talks on Syria, as Moscow continues to push its influence in the war-torn country and the wider Middle East. Putin — who has been in power for the past 20 years — has only ever visited South Africa in sub-Saharan Africa, preferring to host leaders from the continent in Russia. Amid a stagnating economy and after five years of Western sanctions, Moscow is looking both for allies and an opportunity to boost growth.



SOCHI: Russian President Vladimir Putin meets with his Central African counterpart Faustin Archangel Touadera on the sidelines of the 2019 Russia-Africa Summit. — AFP

Russia's trade with Africa is less than half that of France with the continent, and 10 times less than that of China. Only in terms of arms sales does Russia lead the pack in Africa. To reverse the trend, Putin has promised cooperation without "political or other" interference, at a time when some in Africa are starting to express con-

cern about states' dependence on China. But Moscow still has some way to go before it can compete with China or the West. "Russia is not the Soviet Union, it lacks the resources, the ideology and the appeal of its predecessor," said Paul Stronsky of the Carnegie Center in Moscow. — AFP

Journalists urge action against Google over EU copyright dispute

PARIS: Hundreds of journalists yesterday called for European officials to take action against Google over its refusal to pay media companies for displaying their content in defiance of a strict new EU copyright law. France was the first country to ratify the law, which was passed this year and comes into force on Thursday to ensure publishers are compensated when their work is displayed online.

But Google said last month that articles, pictures and videos would be shown in search results only if media firms consent to let the tech giant use it for free. If they refuse, only a headline and a bare link to the content will appear, Google said, almost certainly resulting in a loss of visibility and potential ad revenue for the publisher. Around 800 journalists as well as photographers, filmmakers and media CEOs signed an open letter published in newspapers across Europe urging governments to ensure that Google and other tech firms comply with the new EU rule.

"The law risks being stripped of all meaning before it even comes into force," the letter said, calling Google's move "a fresh insult to national and European sovereignty". "The existing situation, in which Google enjoys most of the advertising revenue generated by the news that it takes in without any payment, is untenable and has plunged the media into a crisis that is deepening each year," it said. The presidents of the European Alliance of News Agencies and the European Newspaper Publishers' Association also signed the letter.

'Catastrophe'

Google has countered that it benefits news publishers by sending more than eight billion visits to their websites each month in Europe alone. "We don't pay for links to be included in search results" because "it would undermine the trust of users," Richard Gingras, Google's vice president in charge of news, said in Paris last month. But news publishers, including AFP, say such links to their websites are unable to help them cope with plummeting revenues as readers migrate online from traditional media outlets.

French President Emmanuel Macron has said Google will have to comply with the law, and the European Commission said it stands ready to assist member states, which must translate into domestic legislation by June 2021. The new rules create so-called neighboring rights to ensure a form of copyright protection — and compensation — for media firms when their content is used on websites such as search engines or social media platforms.

"Now that disinformation campaigns are infecting the internet and social networks, and independent journalism is under attack in several countries within the European Union, surrendering would be a catastrophe," said the open letter. "We call on the public decision-makers to fight back." — AFP

Morales likens post-election strike to 'coup'

LA PAZ: Bolivia's opposition launched a general strike yesterday over disputed election results suggesting another term for President Evo Morales, who likened the stoppage to a right wing coup. Speaking to reporters, Morales also said he will take measures to "defend" democracy and is confident he will be declared the winner of Sunday's election with no need for a runoff. Morales, a former coca farmer and Latin America's longest serving leader, is seeking a fourth straight term. The opposition has reported fraud in the counting of votes from the weekend election.

"A coup is under way. I want the people of Bolivia to know. Until now, humbly, we have put up with it in order to avoid violence and we have not entered into confrontation," Morales said in his first public remarks since the election, referring to the strike and violent anti-government protests that broke out after the election.

Partial results released Sunday night suggested Morales would face off in a second round with his main rival, the centrist Carlos Mesa. But things changed dramatically Monday when the electoral commission released new results that practically gave the win to Morales, drawing opposition complaints of fraud and triggering rioting in some cities. Mobs torched electoral offices in Sucre and Potosi, while rival supporters clashed in the capital La Paz.

Monitors from the Organization of American States said they, too, had seen a "drastic and hard to explain change" in the trend of the initial results. As of early Wednesday, with more than 95 percent of the vote counted, Morales had 46.4 percent compared to 37 percent for



LA PAZ: Supporters of Bolivia's president and candidate Evo Morales demonstrate against the main opposition candidate, former president (2003-2005) Carlos Mesa, as supporters of both groups gather outside the hotel where the Supreme Electoral Tribunal has its headquarters to count the election votes. — AFP

Mesa, just shy of the 10 point lead necessary to avoid a runoff, according to the commission.

Representatives of civil society organizations from Bolivia's six regions backed a call to extend a strike originally set for Tuesday in the country's largest city Santa Cruz. The general strike went into effect at midnight Tuesday and will "continue until democracy and the will of the citizens are respected," the organizations said.

Pro-Morales protests

Meanwhile, an umbrella organization of pro-Morales labor and farmers' unions, CONACAM, called on its

members to defend the official results. "We will go out on the streets and on the roads to firmly defend democracy and the votes of Bolivians," said the leader of the main union, Juan Carlos Guarachi, after a meeting with Morales.

Long lines formed at gas stations Tuesday amid fears of shortages. Health workers, on strike for the past month, demonstrated outside the electoral authority headquarters on Tuesday. Mesa, who served as president from 2001 to 2005, accused Morales of colluding with the Supreme Electoral Tribunal to tweak results and avoid a run-off. Spain, Argentina, Brazil and Colombia also voiced concern. — AFP

Botswana votes in rare cliffhanger election

GABORONE: Voting was underway in Botswana yesterday for a cliffhanger election set to test the decades-long dominance of the ruling party and challenge the country's image of stability. The Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), which has ruled since independence from Britain in 1966, suffered a seismic jolt in May when former president Ian Khama renounced his hand-picked successor, Mokgweetsi Masisi.

Khama stormed out after accusing his former deputy of autocracy and threw his weight behind the Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC), once his fiercest critic. "It's the toughest election we have had to fight," Masisi told reporters after voting in his native village of Moshupa, 65 kilometers east of the capital Gaborone. "But you know I enjoy a test, I enjoy the challenge," he added.

Masisi maintained that the BDP's victory was "automatic", but said he would concede and "retreat" into opposition if his party did "not make it". Botswana's founding party saw its share of the vote dip below 50 percent for the first time at the last election in 2014. That year, the two main opposition parties, which



KANYE: A woman casts her vote at the Ntebogang Community Junior School polling station. —AFP

teamed up to form the UDC, won a breakthrough 30 percent of the vote. This time, the BDP vote share could be around 44 percent of the vote, according to a pre-poll survey carried out by Afrobarometer.

Parliament battle

More than 900,000 of the country's 2.2 million people are registered to vote in the elections, which are at parliamentary and local level. The BDP, UDC and two smaller parties are vying for the 57 places in parliament, where the party with the most seats chooses the president. "These elections are too close to call because no single party is sure of the outcome, unlike before," said Tuelo Gaedingwe, 44, a civil servant queuing to cast his ballot near Moshupa. "Before this split, (the BDP) were

assured of 19 seats in parliament before we even started counting votes." Should Khama fulfil his goal, it would be the first time diamond-rich Botswana has seen a change of government in 53 years. "We may be looking at a spectacularly different future from what we had so far," said UDC leader Duma Boko after casting his vote in Gaborone. "To live to see that moment, to be part of it, to make it happen is one of the most humbling experiences," he added. "I have spotted a candidate I think is the right person and I have to get him in," said banker Chops Maswikiti, 37, who waited all night to cast his ballot in Gaborone. "He does not belong to the party I voted for in the last two terms but he represents strong sanity on our side," he told AFP. — AFP

French court inquires refusal to repatriate family from Syria

PARIS: A French court has ordered an inquiry into France's refusal to repatriate the wife and children of a jihadist fighter held in Syria, judicial sources said, increasing pressure on Paris to bring home citizens held in the war-torn region. The 30-year-old woman, identified as Estelle K., and her three children, all under 10 years old, surrendered to Kurdish forces in September 2017. They had left with her husband to join the Islamic State insurgency in 2014. The husband, who was transferred from Syria to stand trial in Iraq, was sentenced to death in June. Earlier this month, a judge opened a long-sought investigation by the woman's relatives into charges of "failure by the French authorities to put an end to an arbitrary detention," one source told AFP this week. Relatives of French citizens who went to join the jihadist group in Syria and Iraq say France has a legal and moral obligation to allow their return home to stand trial.

The death penalty is illegal in France, and critics say leaving the families of French fighters in Kurdish-held camps in Syria exposes them to inhumane treatment and psychological trauma. Their return is all the more urgent, critics say, in the wake of Turkey's offensive against the Kurds in northeast Syria, which could allow foreign IS fighters to escape, and their families fall prey to other jihadist groups. "Along with human rights violations, today there is the risk that these families are taken by the Islamic State group — France will have knowingly taken responsibility for this risk," lawyers for the mother of Estelle K, William Bourdon and Vincent Brengarth, said in a statement. — AFP

International

Boom or bust: Hanoi pollution crises expose its growth risks

One million people are reeling from a contaminated tap water crisis

HANOI: A major mercury leak, tap water contamination, and “alarming” levels of haze: several pollution crises in Hanoi have sparked public fury and accusations that communist Vietnam is putting the economy ahead of the environment. Long tapped as an investors’ paradise thanks to its low-cost labor and pro-business policies, rapidly industrializing Vietnam is one of Asia’s fastest growing economies.

Buoyed by exports of cheaply made goods from Nike shoes to Samsung phones and H&M T-shirts, growth has hummed along at more than five percent for more than a decade. But that has come at a cost, especially in major cities like Hanoi, the buzzing capital of more than eight million people — and 13 industrial zones — that has been rattled by a series of environmental disasters.

First came a lightbulb factory fire in August that saw a mercury leak and an official warning not to eat vegetables, chicken or fish from the area. Then came a spate of bad air days that briefly landed Hanoi at the top of major polluted cities list by Swiss-based monitor AirVisual. Now an estimated one million people are reeling from a contaminated tap water crisis after a brick factory was blamed for dumping oily sludge into a river that supplied several Hanoi neighborhoods.

“The government is prioritizing economic growth more than the environment,” said Do Thanh Huyen, an associate at Dezan Shira & Associates, a business consultancy firm in Hanoi. The water crisis — and the government’s slow response to it — sparked a flurry of online protest from locals, many still relying on bottled water more than 10 days after the oil dump. Residents reported pungent-smelling water coming out of taps and showerheads but it took authorities days to warn people not to drink or cook with it.

Local media reports it tested positive for styrene,

an industrial chemical linked to some cancers. Three people have been arrested in connection with the incident, but some lay blame with the government despite its promises to investigate. “Authorities here lack transparency and professionalism, that’s why we don’t trust them,” said office worker Ngo Kim Ngan, who sent her children out of her neighborhood to bathe during the crisis.

‘Another Beijing’

The mounting anger comes three years after a devastating toxic dump in 2016 that killed tonnes of fish in central Vietnam and sparked months of protests across the country. Taiwanese steel firm Formosa was blamed for releasing chemical waste into the ocean. But a Formosa executive said after the disaster Vietnam had to choose between growth and environmental safety. Industrial output has steadily risen over the past decade — fuelled in part by a rush of coal power plants — while carbon emissions have mushroomed as well.

This, along with vehicle emissions, agricultural burning and construction dust have all added to poor air quality, and Hanoi frequently sees winter months reaching above average “unhealthy” AQI levels, according to AirVisual data. Some fear Vietnam could go the way of industrialized Chinese and Indian megacities, where smoggy skies and face masks have become the norm.

“Hanoi doesn’t want to be another Beijing. We don’t want to be a paradise for people to discharge waste,” Huyen said. But Vietnam could be heading on that track. In 2016 more than 60,000 deaths were linked to air pollution, according to the World Health Organization. The city’s liveability ranking is 107 out of 140 cities on the Economist Intelligence Unit’s annual index, behind Bangkok, Manila and Kuala Lumpur. Hanoi’s standing is at “risk” because of its lack of action on environmental



HANOI: In this file photo taken on September 27, 2019, a thick blanket of smog covers the Hanoi skyline as the sun sets. — AFP

issues, said Pamela Qiu, Economist Corporate Network’s Southeast Asia director.

Business could also be hit. Dezan Shira warns in a report this month that “alarming” air pollution levels could turn off potential investors and recruiters who may find it hard to attract talent. The reputational risk could be a problem for Hanoi authorities, eager to

brand it as a cosmopolitan capital open to global leaders and world travelers, with the city’s first F1 race set for next year. But for some hazy skies, garbage-strewn rivers and polluted tap water have already rendered Hanoi unrecognizable. “Hanoi is no longer our Hanoi,” said Nguyen Vinh, a 65-year-old veteran born in the city. “It is polluted — air, water, everything.” — AFP

Kim orders demolitions at South-built resort

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has condemned a flagship tourist development with the South as an eyesore and ordered buildings there demolished, state media reported yesterday, in a stark illustration of dire relations between Pyongyang and Seoul. The Mount Kumgang tourist complex was built by Southern company Hyundai Asan in the North on one of the peninsula’s most scenic mountains, drawing hundreds of thousands of Southern visitors.

But tours came to an abrupt end in 2008 after a North Korean soldier shot dead a Southern tourist who strayed off the approved path and Seoul suspended travel. Pyongyang has long wanted to resume the lucrative visits, but they would now violate international sanctions imposed on North Korea over its nuclear and ballistic programs. Kim visited the site and lambasted the “shabby” buildings as “just a hotch-potch with no national character at all”, the North’s official KCNA news agency reported, adding “they were built like makeshift tents in a disaster-stricken area or isolation wards” and “very backward in terms of architecture”.

“He instructed to remove all the unpleasant-looking facilities of the south side,” KCNA said, “and to build new modern service facilities our own way”. The announcement is a striking repudiation of what was once one of the two biggest inter-Korean projects, along



This undated picture released from North Korea’s official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on October 23, 2019 shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (C) inspecting the Mount Kumgang tourist area. — AFP

with the now-shuttered Kaesong Industrial Complex, where Southern companies employed North Korean workers while paying Pyongyang for their services.

It came only a day after the South’s President Moon Jae-in — who has long championed engagement with the North — touted the benefits of a possible “peace economy” in a speech to Seoul’s parliament. But contact between the neighbors stalled after the collapse of a February summit between Kim and US President Donald Trump in Hanoi, and Pyongyang has since repeatedly excoriated Seoul, saying it has “nothing to talk (about) any more” with the South. Seoul’s presidential office said it would “analyze Pyongyang’s position and its plans”, with an official telling reporters it would seek to “consult with the North on areas that can be discussed”.

Kim was accompanied on his visit by his wife Ri Sol Ju, KCNA pictures showed, in his first public appearance since Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Pyongyang four months ago. While Kim said the demolitions should proceed “with an agreement with the relevant unit of the south side”, he added the view that Mount Kumgang was “a common property of the north and the south” was “a mistaken idea and a misguided understanding”. “Mt Kumgang is our land won at the cost of blood and even a cliff and a tree on it are associated with our sovereignty and dignity,” it cited him as saying. “We will always welcome our compatriots from the south if they want to come to Mt Kumgang,” he said, but it was “not desirable to let the south side undertake the tour of Mt Kumgang, our famous mountain”. — AFP

Beijing to host ‘intra-Afghan’ conference

KABUL: China has invited a Taliban delegation to attend an “intra-Afghan” conference in Beijing, a militant spokesman said yesterday, after a prospective deal between the United States and the insurgents collapsed last month. Suhail Shaheen, a Taliban political spokesman, said on Twitter that Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the group’s co-founder, had met with Chinese diplomats in Doha, where the militants have a political office.

“Both sides discussed the upcoming intra-Afghan conference in Beijing and issues related to the solution of Afghan problem,” Shaheen wrote. He later told AFP the conference would take place October 29-30. It would be separate from talks between the US and the Taliban, which spent the past year negotiating a deal that would have seen the Pentagon pull thousands of troops from Afghanistan in return for various security guarantees. President Donald Trump scrapped those talks last month amid continued Taliban violence in Afghanistan, including a bombing that killed an American soldier. The deal would have paved the way for separate talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government to search for an end to the conflict.

The Taliban have steadfastly refused to talk to the Afghan government, and Shaheen said any attendance by Afghan officials in Beijing would be on the understanding they were representing only themselves. “All participants will attend in their personal capacity and will present their personal point of view for the solution of the Afghan problem,” Shaheen wrote on Twitter. Similar talks have been held previously in Doha and in Moscow.

Beijing has not confirmed the new discussions, but a foreign ministry spokeswoman said at a regular briefing Wednesday it is “willing to facilitate and help” the Afghan peace process “on the basis of respecting the wishes of all parties”. In a statement, the Afghan peace ministry said “talks are ongoing” with the Chinese government for a possible summit, which it welcomed “in principle” but it did not commit to sending anyone. “If acceptable standards are observed, a decision will be made in regard with participating in this conference,” the statement read.

Shaheen told AFP that only lower-level government officials should be allowed on the guest list. Former president Hamid Karzai’s spokesman, Mohammad Yusuf Saha, told AFP that Karzai was “prepared to attend” but said no attendee list had been finalized. The US and Europe meanwhile published a joint communique calling on Ghani and other Afghan leaders to focus on preparing Afghanistan for formal “intra-Afghan negotiations with the Taliban, including the naming of an inclusive, national negotiating team”.

The statement also called on “all parties to take immediate and necessary steps to reduce violence and civilian casualties”. Since Trump scuttled the prospective deal with the Taliban on September 7, Zalmay Khalilzad, the US special envoy who was leading negotiations, has spoken informally with senior insurgent officials in Pakistan, raising the possibility Washington is seeking to resume its talks with the group. — AFP

Thai king sacks palace officials for ‘evil actions’

BANGKOK: Thailand’s king has fired six senior palace officials for their “evil actions”, the palace announced yesterday, days after the monarch stripped his consort of all her titles for “disloyalty”. In a week of palace intrigue which has gripped the Thai public, King Maha Vajiralongkorn has stripped his consort, 34-year-old former royal bodyguard Sineenat Wongvajirapakdi, of her noble title and military ranks.

Her public fall from grace comes just three months after he bestowed on her the title, the first in nearly a century by a Thai monarch. Nicknamed “Koi”, Sineenat was condemned Monday in a royal command aired on national television for “acting against the appointment of the queen”. Yesterday six high-ranking palace officials were fired, including “a nurse at the bedroom guard service” and a veterinarian, according to two separate announcements released by palace mouthpiece the Royal Gazette. “They have severely breached disciplinary conduct for their evil actions by exploiting their official positions for their own or other people’s gain,” said the gazette. Thailand’s royal family is protected by a draconian defamation law that makes scrutiny of it, or debate over its role, almost impossible inside the kingdom. The public is often able to glean clues to the inner workings of the palace through its use of symbolic imagery and the fates of royal aides. Sineenat, who has not been seen in public since Monday, has been trending on Thai social media with the hashtag #SaveKoi. Vajiralongkorn ascended the throne in 2016 following the death of his beloved father, who was regarded by Thais as a figure of moral authority. — AFP

Indonesia prez taps election arch-rival for defense minister

JAKARTA: Indonesian President Joko Widodo yesterday named his election arch-rival — a former general accused of abuses — as defense minister, a move which dismayed human rights activists. Widodo unveiled his new cabinet at an informal presentation with more than three dozen new ministers in eye-catching batik shirts sat in front of the imposing neoclassical columns of the Merdeka Palace.

Widodo, popularly known as Jokowi, beat Prabowo Subianto in April elections to secure another term as president of the world’s third-biggest democracy. His victory followed a bitter campaign plagued by mudslinging, fake news online and claims from Subianto that the

government staged a “massive, systematic and fraudulent” election, which sparked deadly post-poll riots. At least nine people died in the unrest.

But the pair have since appeared together in public, and this week Subianto, 68, hinted that he and another member of his Gerindra opposition party were tapped for top government posts. Announcing Subianto’s new role, Jokowi said: “I believe I don’t have to tell him about his job — he knows more than I do.” Online, Subianto supporters cheered the appointment. “They used to compete but now, together, they’re going to build this country,” said one. “We appreciate Prabowo for being big-hearted enough to be willing to help Jokowi for the progress of the nation.” Amnesty International Indonesia earlier warned against appointing the former general, saying it would mark “a dark day for human rights”. Subianto, a former son-in-law of Indonesia’s late dictator Suharto, was accused of abuses — including the kidnapping and disappearance of several pro-democracy activists — in the lead up to massive street demonstrations that brought down the regime in 1998. — AFP



JAKARTA: Indonesian President Joko Widodo (R) and Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto (L) during the inauguration ceremony at the State palace. — AFP

Analysis

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El Chapo sons add brash new chapter to crime family

The mug shot-style photo of Ovidio Guzman that appeared as he was apprehended oozed defiance. Chin jutting out, eyes trained on the camera, the handsome youth bore a strong resemblance to his infamous father, jailed drug lord Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman. He had reason to be cocksure. In response to his capture in an upscale neighborhood, hundreds of heavily-armed Sinaloa Cartel henchmen, guns blazing, were pouring into Culiacan, briefly taking the modern city of about a million people near Mexico’s Pacific coast hostage.

Within hours they had pried him loose from authorities. It was like nothing Mexico had seen before, a military-style operation that outfoxed and outnumbered security forces, leaving the city shocked and smoldering. The show of strength dashed hopes the cartel was seriously weakened by the life sentence the elder Guzman received in the United States this year. Not only were the new generation of Guzmans, collectively known as Los Chapitos, keeping alive their family’s near-mythical outlaw reputation, they were doing it with a brazenness akin to open warfare.

“We’re facing a new generation of organized crime that doesn’t respect civilians,” Cristobal Castaneda, head of Sinaloa state security, told Reuters after the attacks. Four surviving sons of El Chapo were already regulars in Culiacan’s night-clubs and restaurants, despite US indictments against them, before last Thursday’s dramatic act of armed insurrection. A concrete monument in the parking lot of a Culiacan supermarket marks the spot where a fifth son was gunned down in 2008.

None of the four are older than their mid-thirties. They have already survived kidnappings, arrest attempts and cartel infighting to establish themselves as the city’s most prominent traffickers, with the support of cartel elders. Thursday’s attacks showed they were capable of taking on the Mexican army, state police and National Guard. Using a mixture of firepower, speed, discipline and the underlying threat of mass civilian deaths, they won.

Castaneda pointed to how over several hours gunmen stormed into businesses and sprayed police with bullets in crowded areas, on a scale unprecedented in the country’s long-running drug war. Remarkably, the government says just 13 people were killed, including a soldier and several cartel gunmen. Finally, a humbled Mexican government was forced to order Ovidio’s release, opting against a bloodier confrontation that officials later said could have claimed hundreds of lives.

For many, Ovidio’s newfound celebrity elevated him, along with his brothers, to the status of Sinaloa Cartel heavyweights, with Ovidio’s exploits placing just him a few notches below his father in the pantheon of bandits who outsmarted the government. A so-called narcocorrido – a style of song about the drug trade set to upbeat tuba and accordion rhythms – was released by Sunday, lionizing Ovidio as a “beast” and proclaiming that “the government was mistaken/they don’t know who they messed with.”

Despite the high profile antics, it is unclear exactly how much influence the Guzmans have over the cartel their father helped found decades ago, however. Los Chapitos control drug sales in Culiacan, the capital of Sinaloa, including a growing trade in methamphetamine, according to one official who spoke on condition of anonymity. Earlier this year, a fentanyl laboratory was found in the city, suggesting that the Guzmans also have their eye on the lucrative US opiate business.

But the cartel’s bigger interests are still believed to be handled by El Chapo’s former partner, Ismael “El Mayo” Zambada, a discrete capo in his early 70s who has never been arrested. The businesses Zambada handles move billions of dollars. US authorities say, and are diversified across many sectors in dozens of countries, including even niche markets like wildlife and timber smuggling.

Edgardo Buscaglia, an organized crime expert at Columbia University, agrees that Zambada probably still controls the cartel. He described the new generation as more reckless, but certainly not as powerful. In recent years, the relationship between the family and Zambada has been fraught, with his son testifying against El Chapo at his US trial. In turn, the defense argued Zambada was the real head of the cartel, not El Chapo. — Reuters

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



Lebanese protesters wave national flags as they attend a demonstration on the sixth day of protest against tax increases and official corruption at Nur Square in Lebanon's northern port city of Tripoli on Tuesday. — AFP

From ‘Lebanese Kandahar’ to home of protest rave

The northern seaside city of Tripoli, once perceived as a hotbed for insurgents, has emerged as the scene of Lebanon’s most festive protests, with euphoric crowds dancing deep into the night. For days, hundreds of demonstrators denouncing dire living conditions, corruption and tax hikes, have converged on Tripoli’s Al-Nour Square, with focused protests evolving into an impromptu concert after the sun sets. In unprecedented scenes for Lebanon’s relatively conservative Sunni Muslim heartland, a DJ blasted beats from a balcony as protesters in the square below turned on the torches on their mobile phones creating a sea of twinkling light.

Gathering around a huge silver sculpture of the word “God”, people distributed free lemonade and sweets, as demonstrators chanted slogans and danced to popular anthems, including the Italian hit “Bella Ciao”. Mahdi Karima, the 29 year-old DJ behind the sound of Tripoli’s uprising, said the idea of a protest rave rapidly spread across Lebanon. “It gave the Tripoli protests a civilised character and it was talked about by all the Lebanese,” he told AFP. “This revolution broke stereotypical depictions of the city,” he said.

From 2007 to 2014, Lebanon’s second city was the scene of frequent clashes between Sunni residents of

the Bab al-Tebbaneh district, and Alawite residents of neighboring Jibal Mohsen. In 2013, a twin bombing on mosques killed 45 people. The security situation has been quiet since the army deployed to the area in 2014, but Tripoli is still widely seen as a volatile militant bastion like Afghanistan’s Kandahar, spiritual birthplace of the Taliban. Hundreds of men from the Tripoli region have travelled to Syria to fight alongside militant groups.

‘Surprised everyone’

That was until the festive scenes this weekend turned that image on its head. After years of interviewing headline extremists and filming children holding guns in the city, the Lebanese media is now streaming live images of partying from its main square. “Tripoli paid a high price due to the current political system and bore the stigma of terrorism. Everyone was afraid of entering this city, seen as an extremist and Islamist place,” said Amal, a 22-year-old student. But “the residents of Tripoli surprised everyone in Lebanon and abroad with this civilized protest,” she said. “We broke their preconceptions.”

Footage from the protest-turned-rave went viral on social media networks and aired on local news broad-

casts, encouraging protesters from across northern Lebanon to join the Tripoli demonstrations, even Christians from neighboring areas. “It truly felt like a wedding,” said Mahmoud Shawak, a 50-year-old protest organizer. Like in other parts of the country, protesters in Tripoli spoke out against their traditional sectarian leaders, who are among the wealthiest men in the country.

They tore down posters of their parliamentary representatives and chanted the popular refrain of the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011: “The people demand the fall of the regime.” Marginalized for decades by the central government, Lebanon’s second city is among the most impoverished in the country. Its commercial port has been left to fall into disrepair, and an outdoor exhibition site designed by Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer lies abandoned and at risk of ruin.

According to a 2015 study by the United Nations, 57 percent of the population in Tripoli live at or below the poverty line and 26 percent suffer extreme poverty. Spillover from the conflict in neighboring Syria has only worsened the situation. “Tripoli is revolting because it is neglected and oppressed,” said Nafez Muqadam, a 60-year-old activist and doctor. “The country will be destroyed if the ruling class remains.” — AFP

Central Africa ties highlight Russian strategy in Africa

The Central African Republic is an important plank in Russia’s strategy of boosting its presence in Africa by offering security for fragile regimes in resource-rich countries, analysts say. President Vladimir Putin last year surprised the West by a string of high-profile moves that strengthened Russia’s influence in the CAR, an extremely poor but strategic country that has traditionally had close ties to France, the former colonial power. Russia sent trainers to the CAR’s beleaguered armed forces, a senior aide to advise its president and mercenaries to provide his security, and offered to mediate between the government and the country’s many rebel groups.

On the economic front, the Russian mining company Lobaye was given a license for several concessions in

the CAR, a country rich in gold and diamonds. As Putin yesterday hosted African countries at a two-day summit in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, Russia’s presence in the CAR remains an example of a long-term, quid-pro-quo strategy, say analysts. For African states, “Russia offers a security package with no financial debt, only to be repaid by the granting of certain concessions to private conglomerates,” said Arnaud Kalika, a former analyst in French military intelligence who specializes in Russian affairs.

The trading of security assistance for sought-after resources is a well-rehearsed model that Russia has also already employed in Madagascar and Sudan. The Russians came to the CAR with the goal of filling what they believed was “a geopolitical vacuum,” said Hans de Marie Heungoup, a specialist with the International Crisis Group (ICG) thinktank. “For a country that in the space of less than three years ago has managed to wield such clout with the (CAR) presidency is a low-cost geopolitical victory.” Kalika said a prime factor in Russian strategy in the CAR “is above all a media coup that will bring benefits on the home front.”

Despite these successes, the Russian vision has been clouded by several setbacks. A popular uprising in

Sudan – the CAR’s vast eastern neighbor – last June brought down longtime president Omar Al-Bashir, who also had Russian “instructors”. And within the CAR, a struggling population faces brutal violence from armed groups despite the Khartoum peace pact and promises of security from the Kremlin.

France, meanwhile, has launched a counter-offensive by promoting its activities in the CAR, notably in development, which is not “the Russian model of engagement”, said Heungoup. In fact, Western partners including the European Union (EU) still provide almost all of the financial aid given to the deeply poor, landlocked country. “The Russians are more low-key (today), it’s in their interest,” says Thierry Vircoulen, coordinator at the Southern and Central African Observatory of the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI), a thinktank based in Paris.

Heungoup said the Kremlin was playing the long game, after the loss of influence it suffered following the end of the Cold War. “Russia wants to regain a solid diplomatic base” in Africa, he said. “Apart from competition between Moscow and the West in the CAR, Moscow does not want to be overtaken by competing emerging economies, notably China and Turkey.” — AFP

Russia-Turkey deal shatters Syria Kurd dreams of self-rule

A Turkish-Russian deal signed in the Black Sea resort of Sochi that carves up northeastern Syria sounds the death knell for Kurdish autonomy, analysts say. Syria’s Kurds had hoped that the sacrifices made in the name of the international community to help crush the Islamic State group’s “caliphate” would pay off. But instead of supporting their political project, the United States is pulling out of Syria altogether, ruining the minority’s aspirations for more autonomy.

The Sochi agreement defines the contours of the debacle for the Kurdish forces, who still controlled close to a third of Syria two weeks ago and have now lost almost everything. “For the Kurds, this is the end of Rojava, of their dreams of autonomy,” is how Fabrice Balanche, a geographer specialized in Syrian affairs, summed it up. The fate of Rojava – the name Kurds give to their region – was sealed in a handshake late Tuesday between Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

Turkey was granted the right to remain fully deployed in an Arab-majority area it has dubbed a “safe zone” that was the main target of an offensive it launched on Oct 9. It stretches along 120 km and is 32 km deep, forming a zone into which Erdogan wants to send back some of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees his country hosts.

Massacre averted

The Turkish assault was made possible by a pullback of US troops deployed along the border as a buffer force between their NATO ally Turkey and the Kurdish fighters of the Syrian Democratic Forces. The withdrawal by their erstwhile ally left the Kurds completely in the lurch, forcing them to turn to the Damascus



Syrian Kurds demonstrate against the Turkish assault in northeastern Syria in the town of Qamishli yesterday. —AFP

regime for protection from an expanded Turkish assault. Government forces, who are backed by the Russian military, rushed north within days, ostensibly to pin back Turkish-backed Syrian proxies but also to reclaim control of swathes of territory that the regime started leaving in 2012.

In Sochi, the deal reached by Syria’s two main foreign brokers also requires Kurdish forces to pull back to a line 30 km from the border along its entire length (440 km). The implementation of that article, which the outgunned Kurdish forces are in no position to resist, involves relinquishing control of some of their main towns. The Sochi agreement includes an exception for Qamishli, the de facto capital of the now defunct

autonomous region. “In terms of loss of territory, they lose everything,” said Balanche. “Damascus reclaims control of everything that Turkey does not occupy.”

The only positive thing the Putin-Erdogan bargain does for the Kurds is to freeze the Turkish offensive and avert another phase of bloodletting. Dozens of civilians and more than 250 Kurdish fighters were killed in the offensive Ankara has dubbed “Operation Peace Spring”. The SDF say they have also lost 11,000 fighters in five years of ground operations under the command of the US-led coalition against IS. The head of the SDF, Mazloum Abdi, had made clear after the start of Turkey’s assault that compromises were preferable to “genocide”. — AFP

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2019

12 Oil prices edge lower in Q3; Kuwait moves up competitiveness ranking



13 Ooredoo Kuwait reports revenue of KD 470m for 9 months ended 30 Sept



14 Order book of \$3.6bn for KIPCO's seven-year \$500m bond issue



Gulf Bank records KD 37 million in net profit for first nine months of 2019

Bank's net profit accelerates to KD 13.2 million, an increase of 8% in Q3

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank K.S.C.P. announced its financial results for the first nine months of 2019. The Bank recorded a net profit of KD 37 million for the nine months ending 30 September 2019.

Over the three-month period ending 30 September 2019, the Bank's net profit accelerated to KD 13.2 million, an increase of KD 1 million or 8 percent over the previous three-month period ending 30 June 2019, mainly driven by a 17 percent reduction in credit costs and a stable operating expense base. As of 30 September 2019 and compared to the year-ago level, gross loans and advances to customers grew by 6 percent, assets increased by 3.5 percent and shareholder's equity grew by nearly 4 percent.

Commenting on the results, Omar Kutayba Alghanim, Gulf Bank's Chairman said: "Although the first nine months of 2019 have been challenging, we reached another all-time high on gross customer loans and advances at the end of September and we've seen credit costs trending down. In addition, our Consumer Banking segment continues to deliver strong loan momentum and is on track to grow its loan book at nearly two times the industry growth rate for a second straight year in a row."

"A" Credit Ratings

Gulf Bank continues to be well recognized globally in terms of its credit worthiness and financial strength by maintaining

"A" ratings from all four leading credit rating agencies.

Fitch: Long Term Issuer Default Rate of "A+" rating with a "Stable" outlook

S&P Global Ratings: Issuer Credit Rating "A-" rating with a "Stable" outlook

Moody's Investor Services: Long Term Deposits "A3" rating with a "Positive" outlook

Capital Intelligence: Long Term Foreign Currency "A+" rating with a "Stable" outlook

S&P Dow Jones Index

On the recent inflow of funds into the Kuwaiti market as a result of the inclusion in S&P Dow Jones Global Benchmark Indices with an Emerging Market classification, Alghanim commented : "We continue to witness the value of the Capital Markets Authority, Boursa Kuwait and the Kuwait Clearing Company efforts and vital role they collectively play in enhancing the investment environment of our domestic capital market. In addition to the three recent international indices inclusions, the new reforms introduced will attract professional investors, diversify the shareholder base, and enhance liquidity." It is worth mentioning that Gulf Bank is one of the Kuwaiti constituents of the S&P Dow Jones index and it is also on the initial watchlist of the May 2020 reclassified MSCI Kuwait Index. Gulf Bank is also part of the FTSE-Russell secondary emerging market Kuwait index since March 2019.

New Product Launches

As part of Gulf Bank's strategy of focusing on customer excellence and innovation, the Bank recently announced several upgrades to its online banking and mobile

application, launching two innovative services and updating existing features. The Bank introduced Selfpay, an easy and convenient way to transfer payments from individuals and groups instantly, and E-loan, a new service that allows customers to apply for loans seamlessly through the application or website.

In addition, Gulf Bank has introduced "World Elite Mastercard", a new metal credit card offered exclusively to its Private Banking customers. The card offers a range of premium benefits and concierge lifestyle management services offered by Luis Fourteen.

Sustainability

Sustainability continues to play an integral role at Gulf Bank. One of the Bank's key social strategies is "inclusion", which was demonstrated with a career fair hosted by Gulf Bank for people with disabilities in Kuwait. Today, the Bank proudly employs and leverages the skills of these talented individuals. As Alghanim emphasized at the recent Annual International Banking Conference organized by the Central Bank of Kuwait, "Stable, successful, growing economies are inclusive economies. Striving to include all those who are marginalized - including women, the financially disadvantaged and young people - is not just the right thing to do: it is vital for productivity and would add millions to our nation's bottom line. The private sector has a big role to play in this, from lending schemes and job creation to training and education programs."

Awards

Gulf Bank was recognized for its Straight-Through Processing (STP) by



Omar Kutayba Alghanim

Deutsche Bank's "Operational Excellence Award" in July 2019. The Bank has consistently achieved STP rates of over 99.7 percent year after year. This achievement demonstrates how Gulf Bank is reducing the administrative impact of payment processing and is working continually to increase efficiency and compliance with recognized standards.

Appreciation

Alghanim concluded his remarks by stating: "I would like to thank everyone who contributed to our financial results through September 2019. I would also like to thank our shareholders, the Central Bank of Kuwait, and the Capital Market Authority for their continued support. I especially want to thank our customers and employees for their loyalty and reiterate our commitment to place them at the center of everything we do."

Boeing confirms 737 MAX timetable as profits tumble

NEW YORK: Boeing yesterday reported a sharp drop in third-quarter earnings due to the 737 MAX grounding but said it still expects regulatory approval this year to return the plane to service. The company booked an additional \$900 million in costs due to the MAX as it reported much lower profits than analysts expected. The top-selling MAX has been grounded since mid-March following two deadly crashes.

However, shares advanced in pre-market trading after Boeing reiterated its timetable for MAX regulatory approval and said it expects to fully restore MAX production levels by late 2020. "Our top priority remains the safe return to service of the 737 MAX and we're making steady progress," said Chief Executive Dennis Muilenburg. Net income was \$1.2 billion, down 50.6 percent from the year-ago period.

Revenues tumbled 20.5 percent to \$20 billion, reflecting a hit from halted deliveries of the MAX. The aviation giant, which has been in crisis mode following two MAX crashes that killed 346 people, said it "has assumed that regulatory approval of the 737 MAX return to service begins in the fourth quarter of 2019."

The company, which trimmed its MAX production level, said it also expects to "gradually increase the 737 MAX production rate from 42 per month to 57 per month by late 2020."

Further delays?

Boeing has been in close contact with the Federal Aviation Administration and other global regulators on certification, which has dragged on for months beyond initial expectations. Many analysts now expect the timeframe to be



In this file photo, Southwest Airlines Boeing 737 MAX aircraft are parked on the tarmac after being grounded, at the Southern California Logistics Airport in Victorville, California. —AFP

extended further following disclosures last week of text messages between two Boeing pilots in 2016 that raised questions about whether the company was aware of problems with a flight handling system that has been blamed for both crashes.

The company said it accounted for \$900 million in additional costs due to MAX delays, lifting the total so far since the grounding to \$9.3 billion. The results came hours after Indonesian investigators briefed families of people killed in the Lion Air crash in October 2018.

In a slide-show presentation, Indonesia's National Transportation Safety Committee told relatives their report would include problems with the Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System, a flight handling mechanism, as a "contributing factor." A preliminary investigation of the deadly March 2019

Ethiopian Airlines crash has also pointed at the MCAS. Boeing's efforts to have the plane recertified have centered on upgrades to the MCAS.

Some analysts have called for Muilenburg's ouster following the accidents. He is scheduled to appear on Capitol Hill next week for the first time since the crashes. On Tuesday, Boeing replaced commercial airplane chief Kevin McAllister, the most significant departure since the MAX crisis began.

Boeing also said it would trim its output of the 787 Dreamliner plane from the 14 planes per month currently to 12 beginning in late 2020 due to global trade uncertainties. The company likewise pushed back the timeframe for the 777X, a long-range, wide-body plane, to early 2021 from late 2020. The plane's development has been slowed by issues with the engine, which is being developed by General Electric.—AFP

Berlin nominates woman economist for ECB board

FRANKFURT: The German government yesterday named respected economist Isabel Schnabel as its candidate for the European Central Bank board, replacing a previous German member who resigned.

A cabinet meeting led by Chancellor Angela Merkel signed off on the proposition from finance minister Olaf Scholz. Like other major eurozone economies France and Italy, Germany traditionally holds one of the seats on the six-person ECB board. But Sabine Lautenschlaeger quit last month in protest at the ECB's September decision to boost stimulus to the single currency bloc, the last major policy move expected under departing president Mario Draghi.

It will now be up to heads of government to confirm Schnabel's appointment at a December summit. Schnabel, 48, is a professor specializing in banking regulation and financial crises at the University of Bonn, having earlier studied at Paris' Sorbonne university. Since 2014 Schnabel he has been the only female member of the Council of Economic Experts that advises the German government.

If confirmed, she would be one of just two women on the six-strong ECB executive board alongside incoming president Christine Lagarde. The pair would also be the only female

members of the Frankfurt institution's 25-strong governing council, which includes national central bank chiefs.

Many politicians and economists in Germany and further afield welcomed Schnabel's nomination, although the small pro-business Free Democratic Party (FDP) complained.

Schnabel is "best known for her work on the banking system, financial stability and regulation, but she could take on broader responsibilities at the ECB," Pictet Wealth Management strategist Frederik Ducrozet commented. Incoming ECB head and former IMF boss Lagarde could rejig board members' roles when she takes office on November 1.

Some saw in Schnabel's nomination an olive branch from Berlin to the ECB. She told business daily Handelsblatt last month that "in Germany the ECB, one of the most important European institutions, is constantly scapegoated" for problems. "Things like that turn on you eventually," she added, pointing to Britain's 2016 vote to quit the European Union after decades of Brussels-bashing by politicians and the press. In a tweet on Tuesday, economist Christian Odendahl of the Centre for European Reform think tank praised Schnabel's "lack of fear to take on German myths about economic policy and the ECB." —AFP

NBK Economic Report

Oil prices edge lower in Q3; Kuwait moves up competitiveness ranking

Project awards soar to KD 330 million in Q3 2019

KUWAIT: The past quarter has seen rising pessimism about the global growth outlook, in particular driven by the unresolved US-China trade war, which culminated in the IMF revising down its forecast for global growth this year to a post-financial crisis low of 3.0 percent. The direct impact on Kuwait has so far been mostly felt through the price of oil, which fell in 3Q19, although remains volatile. Lower-than-expected oil production and a downward revision to our oil price forecast led us reduce our 2019-20 growth forecasts. Growth concerns also saw key central banks pivot towards policy loosening, but rates in Kuwait were left on hold as the central bank looked to balance supporting growth with maintaining the attractiveness of the dinar.

Oil prices fall in Q3

Oil prices saw a volatile quarter, with initial weakness on a combination of trade war and oversupply concerns pushing the price of Kuwait Export Crude (KEC) down to \$58/bbl in mid-August. This gave way to a spike above \$68 in mid-September after the drone attacks on Saudi oil infrastructure. Prices had subsequently fallen back to around \$60 in early October on the rapid restoration of Saudi output and also a refocus on global growth concerns, including slow growth in China. On average, prices were 8 percent lower in 3Q19 than in Q2. Meanwhile the OPEC+ group continues to over-comply with output cuts aimed at supporting prices, and which are due to be reviewed by end-March 2020. This is only partly the result of the temporary drop in Saudi output in September. Kuwait's crude production stood at 2.66 million b/d in September, leaving it 175 percent compliant with its share of targeted cuts (of 85,000 b/d), and more so than earlier in the year. In our baseline projections, we assume that Kuwait's oil output edges up only gradually next year, returning to 2.71 million b/d in 2H20 and back in line with quota targets which by then have already been extended amid continued concerns over demand weakness and a slowing global economy. The price of Brent crude averages \$60/bbl next year (\$58 for KEC) from \$64 (KEC \$63) in 2019.

Lower oil production

This soft oil production climate has a bearing on our broader economic growth forecasts. We now expect oil sector GDP growth of -2.5 percent in 2019, a larger fall than the 0.5 percent decline projected before. Next year oil GDP is projected to grow 2.0 percent, potentially given a small lift by rising gas and refined oil output - the latter the result of the coming onstream of the new Al-Zour refinery. Meanwhile, provisional quarterly data shows non-oil growth averaged 0.8 percent y/y in IH19. This data is subject to heavy revision but if unchanged would make our forecast for non-oil growth of 2.5 percent in 2019 as a whole difficult to achieve. Underlying the moderate growth outlook is a combination of expansionary fiscal policy, a strong consumer sector supported by solid employment growth, but also softer oil prices and the sluggish performance of investment including project awards. A continuation of these trends as well as cooling world growth has led us to downgrade our non-oil growth forecast for next year to 2.5 percent from 2.75 percent before. These changes generate overall GDP growth of 0 percent this year and 2.3 percent in 2020.

'Competitiveness' rankings

While the near-term growth outlook remains modest, there was some better news on structural reforms with the latest release of two influential global reports on business conditions. Kuwait jumped eight places to 46 (out of 141 countries) in the competitiveness rankings compiled by the World Economic Forum, thanks to significant improvements in sub-categories of ICT adop-

tion, health, product and labor markets. The move sees Kuwait surpass Oman and stand just behind Bahrain in the GCC rankings. Kuwait ranked joint first in the world for 'macro stability' thanks to low inflation and good debt dynamics.

Meanwhile, the World Bank named Kuwait among the top 20 'improvers' in the soon-to-be-released annual Doing Business report, reflecting reforms in areas including starting a business, getting electricity and trading across borders. The developments provide a welcome boost to the investment climate and signify some progress towards the Vision 2035 development aims.

Fiscal surplus

The government recorded a small surplus of KD 0.2 billion, equivalent to around 1 percent of GDP, in the first five months of FY2019/20 (to August). After transfers to the Reserve Fund for Future Generations, it translates into a deficit of KD 0.5 billion. The small headline surplus came despite a 13 percent y/y fall in revenues to KD 7.4 billion - mostly oil revenues - amid a drop in both oil prices and oil production over the same period. Spending, by contrast, rose by a very robust 21 percent to KD 7.1 billion, pushed up by a 25 percent rise in current spending including wages, subsidies and transfers to the social security fund.

These provisional figures however are at best a loose guide to what will happen over the full year, due to both uncertainty over oil prices and the tendency for spending to accelerate strongly in later months. Moreover, spending growth in FY19/20 so far may be being skewed upwards by an unusually weak start to last year, which was subsequently made up at year-end. The outlook is further complicated by the potential for additional government arrears payments, which added a reported KD 1.8 billion to spending last year and are likely to be repeated this fiscal year.

Based upon our assumptions, which include a KEC oil price of \$62/bbl for the fiscal year as a whole, and spending maintained at an elevated level due to further arrears payments, we expect the deficit to end up at around 8 percent of GDP in FY19/20, from a deficit of 3.1 percent last year. This translates into a post-transfers deficit of around KD 5 billion or nearly 13 percent of GDP, which will be financed from the General Reserves Fund in the absence of a new debt law. These figures exclude returns on the government's investments abroad, worth more than 10 percent of GDP per year.

Project awards edge up

According to MEED, project awards edged up to KD 330 million in 3Q19 from KD 270 million in Q2, mostly stemming from the power and water (KD 200 million) sectors. Awards so far this year have totaled KD 770 million, short of expectations, with major projects being repeatedly shifted into future quarters. Some KD 1.5 billion - including the Kabd Solid Waste Project (KD 264 million) - is provisionally scheduled for 4Q19. But based upon trends in previous quarters, we conservatively expect around KD 2 billion in awards this year, a modest improvement over 2018's KD 1.7 billion, given further potential rollovers and delays.

For next year, large awards are expected in the power, chemical and construction sectors. Major planned projects include the Dibdibah Solar Power Plant (KD 360 million) and the Khiran Power & Desalination Plant (KD 225 million) planned for 1Q20 and 2Q20 respectively. Further, the much-anticipated KD 3 billion Al-Zour petrochemical complex will expectedly be tendered 4Q20. MEED's total planned project estimate for 2020 currently stands above KD 6 billion, though we believe this figure to be optimistic and unlikely to materialize.

vintage design from the last century with a revamped look.

A number of VIP guests from the aviation industry and members of the media joined Gulf Air's executive management at the welcoming event and viewed the new aircraft with its redesigned vintage version of the Golden Falcon Lockheed TriStar livery, representing Gulf Air's iconic design from the 1970s. With the arrival of this special aircraft, Gulf Air has revealed its 70th anniversary logo which will be used in the airline's marketing and promotional campaigns in 2020.

The new Dreamliner will join the Gulf Air fleet on its first commercial flight on 23

October 2019 from Bahrain International Airport to London Heathrow at 1015am local time. This will increase the total number of Dreamliners operated by the airline to seven aircraft which will be followed by the delivery of three more by end of 2020.

In 2018, Gulf Air launched its new brand identity at the Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix and introduced its first Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner along with a series of new destinations. The airline also launched a new boutique strategy in early 2019. As Gulf Air moves forward with its strategy, the airline pays tribute to the past with a revamped livery signalling a new era.

Real estate sales strong in 3Q19

Real estate sales rebounded in September to a solid KD 307 million, up 53 percent y/y and more than double the sales recorded in August, which suffered from seasonal weakness. Stronger sales were driven by the residential and investment sectors, where transactions rose 85 percent and 75 percent m/m respectively. Looking back at the third quarter overall, sales totaled a solid KD 825 million, down slightly from the same quarter last year (KD 832 million) despite a rise in transaction volumes, likely due to lower investment sector prices.

Meanwhile trends in prices are mixed. Residential sector prices were stable in August and maintained strong yearly gains (19 percent land, 9 percent homes), while investment sector prices reverted to negative year-on year territory (-3 percent for buildings, -1 percent for apartments), despite a solid 7 percent rise in the apartment sub-sector in the three months to August. Investment building prices however have been on a clear downtrend, down 10 percent since May, possibly a lagged reaction to the same market pressures that previously weighed down on apartment prices, namely oversupply, persisting vacancies and declining rents.

Employment growth

According to the latest biannual release of demographic data, Kuwait's population rose 2.1 percent y/y in June 2019 to 4.7 million. The growth rate was lower than the 2.7 percent seen in 2018, mainly due to a decrease in expat growth to 2.1 percent in June versus 2.8 percent in 2018. Meanwhile, growth in the population of Kuwaiti nationals was broadly steady at 2.3 percent in June versus 2.4 percent in 2018, holding at 1.4 million.

Growth in total employment eased from 4.2 percent y/y in 2018 to 3.7 percent in June 2019, far below the rates seen in 2015-16. (Chart 5.) The decline was mainly on the back of continued declines in expat numbers in the public sector (-3.1 percent), driven by Kuwaitization efforts. While Kuwaiti jobs growth held at a firm 3.5 percent, expat employment growth slowed from 4.3 percent to 3.7 percent. Private jobs growth among expats also weakened slightly from 4.6 percent in 2018 to 4.1 percent. After factoring out domestic workers, the June 2019 figure is even softer at 2.7 percent y/y versus 5.1 percent in December. Softer private sector expat jobs growth was led by slower hiring in the construction sector.

Inflation hits 22-month high

Consumer price inflation reached a 22-month high of 1.7 percent y/y in September, from 1.2 percent in August, with rates having risen gradually since April. The rise was broad-based driven mostly by a sizeable pick-up in food (1.8 percent versus 1.1 percent in August), furnishings/household maintenance (3.3 percent from 2.6 percent), clothing and footwear (2.3 percent vs 1.7 percent) inflation, which together comprise a hefty 36 percent of the CPI basket. Meanwhile, housing rent inflation was unchanged at -0.8 percent. Core inflation (which excludes food and housing) rose sharply to 3.3 percent from 2.8 percent in August, consistent with good consumer loan growth and employment conditions.

Average inflation currently stands at 0.9 percent y/y so far this year, on track to reach our year-average forecast of 1.0 percent (with an end-year figure of around 1.5 percent). Next year, we expect inflation to edge up but remain low at around 1.5 percent, with housing rents more stable but still weighing on the headline rate. Although core inflation has risen recently, a sustained spell of much greater underlying price pressure still seems unlikely: economic growth rates are modest, credit growth moderate, the dinar is stable at a relatively strong level, and prices at the wholesale level show few



inflationary pressures in the supply pipeline. Core inflation should hold at around 2-2.5 percent next year.

CBK leaves rates on hold

After an increase of 4.8 percent y/y in 2Q19, domestic credit growth had edged down to 4.6 percent in August, but remained higher than July's reading of 4.2 percent. This slight slowdown was driven by a deceleration in lending to both businesses and households. Business credit grew 4.6 percent in August, while household credit (excluding securities lending) growth stood at 5.3 percent amid softer growth in housing loans. But growth in personal consumption loans (i.e. non-housing) - worth less than 10 percent of all household loans - recorded a very robust 31 percent in August, still benefiting from the impact of the Central Bank of Kuwait's (CBK) loosening of lending restrictions late last year. Overall credit growth should end 2019 still in the 4-5 percent range, supported by the stable macro climate, a slight pick-up in project awards and further solid employment growth.

Meanwhile, total deposit growth slowed from 1.2 percent y/y in July to 0.8 percent in August. This reflected a drop in private deposits by 0.5 percent, while government deposit growth accelerated to 8.3 percent. The CBK kept the discount rate unchanged at a level of 3.0 percent in September despite a 25 bps rate cut by the US Federal Reserve - as it did following the Fed's previous rate cut in July. This decision reflects the degree of policy flexibility provided by the dinar's peg to a basket of currencies rather than the US dollar alone, as well as a desire to reinforce the attractiveness of dinar-denominated assets.

Equity market loses steam

Kuwait equity price performance lost momentum in 3Q19, despite reaching peak year-to-date gains of 21 percent in the All-share index in early August. The subsequent escalation of trade and geopolitical tensions and volatile oil prices likely weighed on sentiment, leading to profit-taking and reduced net foreign inflows in August and September compared to earlier in the year. Quarter-on-quarter, the All-Share index was down 2.6 percent. Market capitalization also declined, to KD 33 billion as of the end of September from a peak of KD 35 billion in August. The S&P-Dow Jones EM index inclusion on September 23rd lent some support in the last week of the month, partly offsetting previous losses. Year-to-date gains (as of October 15th) however remain solid, at 13 percent, outperforming the MSCI-GCC by far (-2.4 percent). Market liquidity was solid in September, with an average daily turnover of KD 35 million, above the monthly average this year.

Looking forward, the market is expected to remain liquid and fairly stable in the near-to-medium term, supported by improved sentiment after the recent dip, two large upcoming IPOs in Q4 (Boursa Kuwait and North Al-Zour IWPP) and large expected passive and active inflows from the MSCI EM inclusion scheduled for May 2020. But downside risk is also present in the form of geopolitical and trade tensions, oil price volatility and sluggish global growth.



EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.	
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	304.250
Euro	340.000
Sterling Pound	392.790
Canadian dollar	233.050
Turkish lira	52.820
Swiss Franc	309.040
US Dollar Buying	296.700
ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.808
Indian Rupees	4.286
Pakistani Rupees	1.962
Srilankan Rupees	1.670
Nepali Rupees	2.675
Singapore Dollar	223.960
Hongkong Dollar	38.798
Bangladesh Taka	3.572
Philippine Peso	5.572
Thai Baht	10.070
Malaysian ringgit	77.813
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.187
Qatari Riyal	83.620
Omani Riyal	790.773
Bahraini Dinar	808.420
UAE Dirham	82.891
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	20.900

Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.799
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.222
Tunisian Dinar	110.640
Jordanian Dinar	429.580
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.094

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	5.572
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	0.384139	0.398039
Czech Korune	0.005208	0.014508
Danish Krone	0.041206	0.046206
Euro	0.330730	0.344430
Georgian Lari	0.102034	0.102034
Hungarian 0.000936	0.001126	
Norwegian Krone	0.029129	0.034329
Romanian Leu	0.054080	0.070930
Russian ruble	0.004760	0.004760
Slovakia	0.009092	0.019092
Swedish Krona	0.027402	0.032402
Swiss Franc	0.300849	0.311849
Australian Dollar	0.199841	0.211841
New Zealand Dollar	0.188272	0.197772
Canada Dollar	0.226700	0.235700
US Dollars	0.300150	0.305450
US Dollars Mint	0.300650	0.305450
Bangladesh Taka	0.002960	0.003761

Chinese Yuan	0.041557	0.045057
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036706	0.039456
Indian Rupee	0.003688	0.004460
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002721	0.002901
Korean Won	0.000249	0.000264
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069233	0.075233
Nepalese Rupee	0.002623	0.002963
Pakistan Rupee	0.001347	0.002117
Philippine Peso	0.005712	0.006012
Singapore Dollar	0.217650	0.227650
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001318	0.001898
Taiwan	0.009811	0.009991
Thai Baht	0.009617	0.010167
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.800884	0.808930
Egyptian Pound	0.018626	0.021367
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000214	0.000274
Jordanian Dinar	0.424220	0.433220
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000151	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020816	0.044816
Omani Riyal	0.785134	0.793022
Qatar Riyal	0.082915	0.083747
Saudi Riyal	0.080047	0.081347
Syrian Pound	0.001290	0.001510
Tunisian Dinar	0.103605	0.111605
Turkish Lira	0.045883	0.055728
UAE Dirhams	0.082203	0.083029
Yemeni Riyal	0.000989	0.001069

Ooredoo Kuwait reports revenue of KD 470m for 9 months ended 30 Sept

Net profit to NMTC increased by 45% in 9 months up to 30 Sept 2019

KUWAIT: National Mobile Telecommunications Company K.S.C.P “Ooredoo Kuwait” announced yesterday its financial results for the nine months ended 30 September 2019:

- Consolidated customer base increased by 1 percent to 26.8 million for the nine months ended 30 September 2019, compared to 26.6 million for the same period in 2018.
- In local currency terms Tunisia recorded good growth in revenue. However, revenues in KD were impacted by a 15 percent depreciation of the Tunisian dinar and the decrease in Algeria revenue mainly due to the weak economic environment, currency devaluation and price competition. Consequently, consolidated revenue decreased by 6 percent to KD 470.0 million for the nine months ended 30 September 2019, compared to KD 502.4 million for the same period in 2018.
- EBITDA increased by 8 percent for the nine months ended 30 September 2019 to KD 174.4 million, compared to KD 162.1 million for the same period in 2018, supported by the implementation of IFRS 16, a new accounting standard, in addition to operational efficiencies.
- Net profit attributable to NMTC was KD 23.5 million for the nine months ended 30 September 2019, representing a strong growth of 45 percent compared with KD 16.2 million for the same period in 2018. Net profit growth was supported by good performances in Kuwait, Tunisia and Maldives.
- The consolidated earnings per share was 47 fils for the nine months ended 30 September 2019, compared to 32 fils per share earned for the same period last year.

Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani, Chairman of the Board of Directors commented: “I am pleased to report a robust set of results for the first nine months of 2019, with net profit up 45 percent to KD 23.5 million for Ooredoo Kuwait (NMTC). Growth was driven primarily by our strong focus on operational efficiencies, benefitting from



leveraging group synergies, technology and improved resource management.

Consolidated customer base grew to 27 million at the end of the first nine months of 2019, supported by our ongoing investments to enhance customer experience and the development of innovative solutions that are tailored to the needs of a new generation of technological savvy users.

Revenues remain under pressure due to geopolitical and macroeconomic factors, including currency depreciation in Tunisia and Algeria, in addition to intense price competition in Kuwait. NMTC reported revenues of KD 470 million during the first nine months of 2019 compared to KD 502 million for the same period last year. EBITDA of the Ooredoo operation in Kuwait continued to improve, despite decreasing revenues, reflecting the success of our efficiency program.

In Tunisia we increased our customer base by 3 percent to 9.1 million, whilst also increasing EBITDA by 11 percent compared to the same period last year, despite the depreciation in the Tunisian dinar.

In Algeria, performance continues to be impacted by softening economic conditions, intense price competition and currency depreciation. In Palestine we maintained our focus on cost optimization, resulting in a 12 percent increase in EBITDA to KD 6.5 million.

Finally, in the Maldives, we reported strong results across the board, with EBITDA



Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani

increasing 11 percent to KD 16 million, supported by a 5 percent increase in customer numbers.”

Review of operations

The Group’s operational performance can be summarized as follows:

Ooredoo - Kuwait operations

Ooredoo’s customer base in Kuwait increased to 2.6 million at 9M 2019, up 13 percent compared to the same period in 2018. Revenues were KD 169.7 million at 9M 2019, compared to KD 181.7 million for the same period in 2018. EBITDA was strong, increasing 44 percent to KD 53.1 million for the nine-month period in 2019, compared to KD 36.8 million for the same period in 2018. The increase of 44 percent reflected good operational efficiencies across the business as well as a positive impact of the new IFRS 16 accounting standard.

Financial Highlights	Quarterly Analysis			Nine Months Analysis		
	Q3 2019	Q3 2018	% change	9M 2019	9M 2018	% change
Consolidated Revenue (KWD m)	159.7	161.0	-1%	470.0	502.4	-6%
EBITDA (KWD m)	58.5	54.5	7%	174.4	162.1	8%
EBITDA margin (%)	37%	34%	-	37%	32%	-
Net Profit attributable to NMTC (KWD m)	6.2	4.0	55%	23.5	16.2	45%
Consolidated Customers (m)	26.8	26.6	1%	26.8	26.6	1%

AUB reports profit of \$558.4m for nine months ending Sept 30, 2019

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank BSC (AUB) reported a net profit attributable to its equity shareholders of US\$ 558.4 million for the nine months ending Sept 30, 2019, an increase of 5.7 percent as compared to US\$ 528.3 million achieved in YTD Q3/2018. The Q3/2019 net profit of US\$ 180.9 million represents a 5.9 percent improvement over the Q3/2018 reported profit of US\$ 170.8 million. The Basic Earnings per Share in YTD Q3/2019 were US 6.2 cents (+6.9 percent), compared to US 5.8 cents in YTD Q3/2018 (EPS: US 2.1 cents in Q3/2019 versus US 2.0 cents in Q3/2018).

The improved performance for YTD Q3/2019 continues to reflect benefits arising from AUB’s diversified business model, robust risk management framework and judicious business driven operating culture.

Net interest income improved by 2.0 percent (+US\$ 14.3 million) to US\$ 722.7 million in YTD Q3/2019 compared to US\$ 708.4 million in YTD Q3/2018 driven by growth in average loans and investments. Increases in net interest income, trading and investment income resulted in a rise in operating income to US\$ 919.3 million during the first nine months of 2019 compared to US\$ 907.0 million in YTD Q3/2018 (Q3/2019: US\$ 289.2 million versus Q3/2018: US\$ 294.6 million).

Net operating income increased (+4.1 percent) from US\$ 845.2 million in YTD Q3/2018 to US\$ 880.1 million in YTD Q3/2019 (Q3/2019: US\$ 284.3 million versus Q3/2018: US\$ 275.1 million). Cost to income ratio stood at 26.7 percent (YTD Q3/2018: 26.2 percent) reflecting



Meshal Al-Othman

the consistent implementation of AUB’s structured cost discipline and intelligent spend approach.

Solid asset quality levels were also maintained with a non-performing loans ratio of 2.0 percent (31 December 2018: 1.9 percent) with specific provision coverage ratio of 85.2 percent (Dec 31, 2018: 85.5 percent) and a total provision coverage ratio of 187.0 percent (Dec 31, 2018: 214.7 percent). These provision coverage levels are calculated on a cash provision basis excluding the value of the additional significant non-cash (real estate and securities) collateral available against non-performing loans.

The Group’s total assets on Sept 30, 2019 increased by 8.8 percent to US\$ 38.6 billion (Dec 31, 2018: US\$ 35.5 billion). Return on Average Assets was at 2.2 percent for YTD Q3/2019 (YTD Q3/2018: 2.2 percent). The Group’s equity attributable to owners at 30 September 2019 increased by 4.1 percent to US\$ 4.1 billion (Dec 31, 2018: US\$ 3.9 billion). The Group’s Return on Average Equity (ROAE) achieved for YTD Q3/2019 was 18.1 percent (YTD Q3/2018: 18.4 percent).

Meshal Al-Othman, AUB Chairman, commented: “AUB sustained its core performance for the first nine months of 2019 and is looking forward to maintaining its positive growth trajectory. AUB’s continued growth is a testament to its well-managed business model based on diversification and cross border flows supported by a dynamic and focused approach to ensure the effective deployment of capital resources across the AUB Group’s markets in a prudent and profitable manner.”

of 18 economists ranging from 103 to 101. INSEE said its overall index of business confidence fell marginally to 105 points from 106 in September, comfortably above the long-term average of 100.

While industry morale plunged, the index in the service sector, which is much less exposed to the vagaries of international trade, was steady at 106. “The trade war is clearly weighing on business sentiment, and the new tariffs against some French products are a negative in that respect,” said Gilles Pradere, senior fixed income manager at Geneva-based firm RAM Active Investments.

“But there are certainly other factors at play such as the transition in the auto sector due to new regulations and a slowing Chinese economy,” he added. Despite warnings from Paris that the EU would retaliate, the United States on Friday pressed ahead with 10 percent tariffs on Airbus planes, which are one of France’s biggest exports and support a network of suppliers across the country. Washington also levied 25 percent duties on a range of products, including French wine, Scottish whisky and cheeses from across Europe.

While Germany’s industrial slump has pushed Europe’s biggest economy to the brink of recession, France’s economy has so far held up well, boosted by strong demand at home thanks to an improving job market and purchasing power gains for consumers. — Reuters

French industry morale at 4 1/2-yr low as trade tensions bite

PARIS: French industry morale fell unexpectedly in October to its lowest level since early 2015 as France and its European partners became the latest target of US trade actions, a monthly survey showed yesterday.

Until now France’s industrial sector had resisted a slowdown that has hit German industry particularly hard as it is far more dependent on exports. However, France found itself this month dragged into the middle of global trade frictions as Washington prepared to hit a range of European Union goods with tariffs after winning WTO clearance in a long-running dispute over Airbus subsidies. France’s INSEE official statistics agency said its index of industrial morale dropped to 99 points this month from 102 in September, hitting the lowest level since March 2015.

It also fell markedly short of expectations for an average reading of 102, with estimates in a Reuters poll

Financial Results Nine Months 2019

The board of directors of National Mobile Telecommunication Company K.S.C.P (Ooredoo) is pleased to announce to its shareholders that the company achieved a consolidated net profit attributable to shareholders of **KD 23.5 million**, translating to an earnings per share of **47 fils** for the nine months of 2019. The revenue for these nine months reached **KD 470.0 million**, compared with **KD 502.4 million** in the same period of 2018.

The board of directors takes this opportunity to express their gratitude and appreciation to NMTC (Ooredoo) shareholders, customers and to all our employees for their continuous efforts.

Customer Base

2019

26.8

Million Customers

Revenue

2019

470.0

KD Million

Net Profit to NMTC

2019

23.5

KD Million

ooredoo.com.kw

Business

Order book of \$3.6bn for KIPCO's seven-year \$500m bond issue

Overwhelming response reflects global investors' confidence in KIPCO: Al-Ayyar

KUWAIT: KIPCO - the Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - has announced that it has successfully completed the issuance of a seven-year \$500 million (KD 151 million) bond under its \$3 billion Euro Medium Term Note (EMTN) Program. The demand of \$3.6 billion on the order book was KIPCO's largest ever in international debt capital markets, representing a seven-fold oversubscription.

The bond was issued at a fixed rate coupon of 4.229 percent, the company's lowest ever coupon rate. KIPCO was met with strong reception by investors during roadshow across Hong Kong, Singapore, the UAE and London. The transaction will extend KIPCO's debt maturity from 4.1 years to 4.7 years. The issue will also reduce the company's annual cost of funding by \$26 million once the July 2020 notes are repaid.

Commenting on the transactions, KIPCO's Vice Chairman (Executive) Faisal Al-Ayyar said: "The order

book of \$3.6 billion reflects the great confidence that global investors have in KIPCO. We have led Kuwaiti bond issuers in the international markets since 2006, and the success of this issuance is an indication of our continued efforts to showcase the strength of the Kuwaiti market to investors around the globe, as KIPCO continues to be a role model for the MENA region's private sector through our prudent business model and sound practices."

On his part, Pinak Maitra, KIPCO's Group Chief Financial Officer said: "The success of this bond issuance reconfirms that global investors highly value regular engagement and transparency. The success of the transaction was evident in the tightening of the initial price guidance by a significant 35 basis points to the final issue price, reflecting the investors' recognition of the company's track record in a busy period of regional supply. One of KIPCO's strengths is its man-

agement of liabilities, as seen in the \$26 million reduction in annual cost of funding resulting from this bond issue, once we have repaid the July 2020 notes."

The issue attracted 270 quality investors, including leading fixed income global institutions, insurance companies and pension funds. The distribution profile was well balanced, with European and UK investors allocated 24 percent and 23 percent of the transaction respectively, and MENA investors allocated 23 percent, while Asian investors accounted for 23 percent, and US offshore and other investors were allocated 8 percent. The notes are listed on the London Stock Exchange.

The joint lead managers on the transaction were Bank ABC of Bahrain, First Abu Dhabi Bank, HSBC, JPMorgan and KAMCO Investment Company. KIPCO launched its EMTN Program in 2006. This is the eight issuance under this flexible arrangement. Since inception, KIPCO has raised over \$3.6 billion in US dollars and euros.



Faisal Al-Ayyar



Pinak Maitra

Infiniti Al-Babtain: Empower your drive with infiniti QX60's versatility

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait, encourages its customers to explore the features of the best in class crossover segment. Driven by the safety of its customers and their passengers as a top priority, the award-winning QX60 2019 starting at only KD 13,999 offers a combination of family-oriented features as well as a welcoming, carefully crafted design inside and out.

The QX60's bold features distinguish themselves with a striking balance of function and form. Inside there's the space and versatility to help you conquer whatever life brings. From every seat, the surfaces you see and touch are finely crafted from modern materials and dedicated to comfort. The QX60 holds up to seven passengers in its leather appointed seats, with up to four color options to choose from. There's abundant legroom across all three rows, and a unique sliding-tilting seat to give effortless access to the third row - even with a child seat installed.

Refined to stand out, QX60 makes a dramatic statement with prominent front and rear fascias that push styling to new heights. Stylish and functional, xenon HID headlights on QX60 emit a brighter light over halogen bulbs, while the INFINITI eye-inspired LED daytime running lights provide another level of awareness with increased visibility. Utilizing LED technology, the integrated front fog lights on QX60 run more efficiently and cut through the mist to help keep all focused on what's ahead. The all new QX60 has been created to fully meet the needs of today's premium car buyers and to deliver on their desire to own the latest masterpiece of technology. The QX60 replaces traditional gears with a transmission that constantly adjusts to the drive. With responsive acceleration and improved fuel efficiency, one will always have the optimum setting. The QX60 equips you with performance that's in tune with the ever-changing road ahead. A paragon of power and efficiency, the new 3.5-liter V6 features advanced direct injection technology to help increase power and torque while retaining its legendary smoothness and response.

The QX60 appeals to buyers who require the unique combination of interior space, power, efficiency, hand-crafted quality, and modern design, along with effortless on-road performance. All the convenience services make the most of drive time as the INFINITI InTouch goes much further, it gives access to a variety of useful in-vehicle apps as well as the ability to personalise the in-car experience by remembering the passengers seating and music preference. INFINITI InTouch integrates navigation, convenience, security and entertainment into a dash-mounted, state-of-the-art system.

Through INFINITI's voice recognition technology, Bluetooth can help keep one in touch while staying focused on the road. The system accesses cellphone contacts and lets the passenger make and answer calls, hands-free through the audio system.

Other features include the driving performance app - this unique in-vehicle app was developed by INFINITI to provide all drivers with various vehicle performance details, like vehicle and engine speed, fuel flow and fuel consumption information, cornering G and steering specifics.

The Around View Monitor elevates your parking perspective, so you can see more clearly as you maneuver in even the tightest spaces. With Moving Object Detection, you're instantly alerted if something is detected in your vehicle's surrounding area. Standard on all QX60 models is a breakthrough technology designed especially for active families - Rear Door Alert. The new Rear Door Alert system, first introduced on the 2018 QX60, can help remind customers of things that may be forgotten in the rear seat, such as pets, valuables, dry cleaning, groceries and more. Other available driver assist technologies include: Around View Monitor with Moving Object Detection; Lane Departure Warning and Lane Departure Prevention; Backup Collision Intervention; Blind Spot Intervention; and Intelligent Cruise Control (Full-Speed Range). Also offered are the advanced Predictive Forward Collision Warning system and Forward Emergency Braking with pedestrian detection.



\$92.6bn total bond and sukuk issuance since beginning of 2019 in MENA

KUWAIT: Global fixed income markets rallied in the third quarter of 2019 as major central banks across the globe were adopting more accommodative policies on the back of weakening growth and slower job creation. The US Federal Reserve Bank (Fed) cut its policy rate by 25 basis points (bp) twice this past quarter. Moreover, the Fed stopped shrinking its balance sheet over growing concerns regarding macroeconomic growth and lower inflation as well as to alleviate the impact of the ongoing trade war. Interest rate futures contracts show that markets expect another 25bp policy rate cut in October. Meanwhile in Europe, the ECB cut its policy rate further into negative territory and reintroduced "Quantitative Easing" in order to reignite economic growth. This leaves most high quality government bonds in Europe trading with a negative yield.

The increasingly accommodative monetary policies across the globe triggered rallies across major fixed income indices during the third quarter. Meanwhile, the MENA region's sovereign risk premiums tightened by a range of 5 to 20 bp in the third quarter, which allowed the regional bond market indices to outperform their global counterparts that have similar average ratings. This tightening came in spite of an uptick in regional tension, and was largely driven by a global risk-on trend and a search for higher yields. As of end of the third quarter, most central banks in the GCC, with the exception of Kuwait, reduced their policy rates in line with the Fed. This comes as a natural result of the currency pegs in place.

Issuances in MENA

In addition to sovereign borrowing, major financial institutions have been very active in the primary market this quarter. MENA entities borrowed a total amount of \$32.3 billion in Q3. Total issuances in the first three

Joyalukkas announces mega gold offer for Diwali

KUWAIT: The world's favorite jewelry, Joyalukkas, has announced a brand new collection and mega offer to make the festival celebration special for gold shoppers. The brand new collection, D'wali, has been unveiled for the festival, the new collection has been designed by a team of designers in gold, diamond and polki taking into con-

sideration the tastes and trends of the season. The designs took a painstaking 6 months period to be finalized to meet the discerning taste of the jewellery shoppers.

In addition to this Joyalukkas will give away free gold coins to shoppers during the promotion period. Joy Alukkas, Chairman & MD, Joyalukkas Group said, "Diwali is a festival of prosperity, and gold is believed to bring good luck and fortune. For this occasion we have created a special collection called D'wali under which we have crafted jewellery in gold, diamond and polki for our valued patrons. We also want to take this opportunity to reward our customers with free gold coins and make their celebration all the more special. I invite everyone to take advantage of 'Mega Gold Offer' and wish everyone a

great celebration."

During the offer period, customers will be rewarded with free 1 gram 22k gold coin on purchase of diamond, polki and pearl jewellery worth KD 250. On 25th October 2019, customers will be rewarded with free 0.200 gm 22K gold coin on purchase of gold jewellery worth KD 250. Customers can also exchange their old jewellery for the latest design jewellery under the Joyalukkas 0 percent deduction. The Diwali offer is valid from 3rd to 27th October 2019.

With the easing of gold prices, Joyalukkas mega gold offer provides shoppers more freedom to buy the jewelry of their choice and enjoy more savings, making it the right time to buy and invest in gold.



Chief Guest for the event was Mark Carson, Director representing Renault Middle East.

Al-Babtain CEO - Saleh Al-Babtain said, "Contests of such magnitude allows for our staff to hone their existing abilities and put to the test our in-house training programs aimed at raising the bar on performance every year. We believe in investing in the best talents and most hard-working personnel dedicated to bringing our customers the service they deserve. I wish the winners luck as they prepare to compete on a wider



quarters reached \$92.6 billion, a 15 percent increase on the same period of last year. Overall, books were well covered in the primary market despite increased regional tensions.

Kuwait

Burgan Bank issued a \$500 million AT1 perpetual bond with a coupon rate of 5.75 percent. Warba Bank issued a \$500 million in 5-year senior sukuk issuance with a profit rate of 2.98 percent.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Saudi Arabian Government made a debut EUR denominated bond issuance in a two-tranche deal. Total size of both tranches was EUR 3 billion. Samba Group borrowed \$1 billion in a senior bond issuance maturing in 2024 with a coupon rate of 2.75 percent.

United Arab Emirates

The Abu Dhabi Government raised \$10 billion in a three-tranche transaction. DP World raised a total of \$2.3 billion from a number of issuances with tenors ranging from 10 to 30 years. The aim of the issuances was to finance the recent acquisition of Topaz Marine and refinance a portion of the company's existing debt.

Emirates Strategic Investment Company (ESIC) borrowed \$600 million in a debut 5-year sukuk with a profit rate of 3.94 percent. Emaar borrowed \$500 million with a 10-year sukuk deal. The issuance has a profit rate of 3.88 percent. Bank of Sharjah issued a 5-year

NBK CAPITAL

\$600 million bond with a coupon rate of 4 percent. National Bank of Fujairah launched a \$350 million perpetual note to boost its additional T1 capital. The issuance has a coupon rate of 5.88 percent. TAQA borrowed \$500 million via a 30-year bond deal with a coupon rate of 4 percent.

Other issuances

The Sultanate of Oman raised \$3 billion in a two-tranche deal, with maturities at 2025 and 2029. The deals have coupon rates of 4.88 percent and 6 percent, respectively. The Kingdom of Bahrain raised \$2 billion in a two-tranche deal, through a sukuk maturing in 7.5 years and a 12-year conventional bond. The sukuk issuance carries a profit rate of 4.5 percent and the conventional bond has a coupon rate of 5.63 percent. Ahli Bank of Qatar borrowed \$500 in a 5-year bond deal. The issuance has a coupon rate of 3.13 percent.



scale and stage in Dubai."

General Manager of Automotive division, Laurent Pernet commented, "The Renault Al-Babtain contests are designed to develop the potential of its workforce and refine their skill-sets regularly. The participants from different departments exemplified outstanding professionalism and potential. The training platform addresses possible challenges to transform for the better and enable each to deliver optimal services to guarantee an all-round customer satisfaction."

What's On



THAHAB.COM and Hayatt Foundation join forces for Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign

In light of International Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Monday evening saw a special event organized by THAHAB.COM in collaboration with Hayatt Foundation. The occasion hosted survivors who came together to share their experiences of their battle with breast cancer in the hopes to uplift and create awareness around their struggle and champion their fight. The gathering included reputed ladies, gentlemen and youth from Kuwaiti society at Peristyle in Crystal Tower.

Feras Abushaar, Co-founder and CEO of THAHAB, initiated the night welcoming attendees to the event, a first by Thahab. The new luxury-tech e-commerce company in Kuwait, Thahab, provides a platform that powers physical and retail stores to become e-commerce companies and reach cus-

tomers worldwide and in the Middle East through its omni-channel model.

Through THAHAB's platform which reaches out to women around the world, they hoped to voice this campaign and create awareness about Breast Cancer. A diverse group of women shared powerful and poignant stories of their battle with the disease and gave inspiration to those in attendance.

Hayatt Foundation's Managing Partner Dr. Labiba Temmim and Chairperson Laila Al-Ghanim took to the stage to share the mission and work of the Hayatt Foundation and thank Thahab team for its initiative. They further appreciated this important cause and their notable efforts to raise awareness. The event was also graced by the Chairman of Al-Sidra Association, Sheikhha Azza Jaber Ali Al-Sabah who

spoke about her organization's work in providing moral support and professional services to support women suffering from cancer and help them cope with the trauma of the experience. She further cast light on the importance of psychological support on par with medical treatment.

Feras Abushaar returned to the stage to thank the sponsors for the event - Tanagra, Chalhoub Group, Crystal Tower and its owners the Bukhamseen Group, Intisars, Wahran Group, Husam Flayhan, Yousef Bara and attendees who joined in their support for this cause.

THAHAB is a technology platform powering the transformation of global brands and retailers into online businesses. Beyond a digital marketplace, THAHAB is a community and way of life.



KUWAIT: The Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Kuwait Sarmen Baghdasarian hosted a reception on the occasion of his country's national day at Crowne Plaza Hotel recently. Higher officials, diplomats, members of the Armenian community and media persons attended the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Launching its cultural and recreational season under the title of 'To Silk Road via Abu Dhabi', the Diplomatic Women Committee recently visited the Louvre Museum in Abu Dhabi to explore the history of the silk road as a route for transporting cultures and trade around the ancient world. The committee delegation was received by Sheikhah Al-Shamsi and top Abu Dhabi Women Union members.



Greetings



Many many happy returns of the day to our sweet doll Abrish Shahzad. May God bless you always and have a prosperous future ahead. Best wishes and love from Dad and Mom.

Male specimens preferred by animal collectors, says study

PARIS: Museum collections of birds and mammals may be disproportionately skewed to favor males, even if female members of the species outnumber males in the wild, according to research published yesterday. Natalie Cooper, a researcher in the department of life sciences at the Natural History Museum in London, and her colleagues analyzed the sex of almost 2.5 million specimens from five international collections, some dating back over a century.

Although as many as half of the bird specimens were not labeled by sex, of the ones that were, only 40 percent were female. Female mammals represented 48 percent of the collections identified by sex. "We suspected that some bias towards males would be found because science is done by people, and people have inherent biases towards males," Cooper told AFP. What surprised the researcher, though, was that there was no change in the ratios from collections dating back 130 years to more recent collections.

"In museums, collectors in the 19th century were mostly male, and though this is changing, it's still a male-dominated field," she added. Collection methods may be part of the problem. In some species, the males may be larger or showier, making them easier to spot and collect. "Hunters are more likely to see and target these individuals," Cooper said. "So it's important to ensure smaller female individuals are not being overlooked." When scientists disproportionately collect male deer, for example, which are larger than their female counterparts, the specimens studied represent a larger average size than in the

wild. "By ignoring females we don't get a full picture of life," said Cooper.

'Macho' collection culture

Even when female specimens were larger or showier than males, the study found the median percentage of females was still only 44.6 percent. The same trend applied for male mammals with "ornaments," such as horns, antlers or tusks. But even in species where females also have ornaments, collectors preferred males. The trend carried over to bird collections, too. Male birds that are significantly more colorful or ornamental than females — birds of paradise, for example — were preferred by collectors, the author said.

The males in these species were also more likely to be selected for exhibits. Recognizing the habits of female specimens may be useful in trapping and collecting a more balanced sex ratio, the author noted. It would be useful to identify the sex of the unknown specimens in collections. It is possible females are simply harder to identify than males — they may appear similar to juveniles, for example. "If this is the case, many of our unsexed specimens may be female," said the study, published in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*. Cooper said having more female collectors may also be beneficial. "I have hope that by acknowledging the problem and by hiring more women in the traditionally 'macho' field of collections we can make a positive change in the future," she said. — AFP

Doubt over future of Antarctic ocean sanctuary plans

SYDNEY: A push by Australia and France to create a massive ocean sanctuary in east Antarctica is in doubt as nations meet in Hobart to discuss the plans, with China and Russia opposing. The proposed East Antarctic marine park would protect one million square kilometers of ocean, but has repeatedly been struck down at meetings of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), which began Monday.

China and Russia have been key in blocking the proposal, which was first floated by Australia, France and the European Union in 2010 before being scaled down in 2017 in an attempt to win greater support. All 26 members of the organization must consent to the marine park's creation, and the proposal is now back before the CCAMLR as it convenes in Australia's southernmost city,

Hobart, for two weeks of meetings on Antarctic conservation.

It has previously established other major ocean Antarctic sanctuaries — including the world's largest spanning 1.55 million square kilometers in the Ross Sea — but governments and environmental groups say more action is needed to protect the last pristine continent. Australian Environment Minister Sussan Ley said in a statement ahead of the meeting that the east Antarctic proposal would protect the area's "distinctive deep-water reefs and feeding areas for marine mammals".

Cassandra Brooks, an assistant professor of environmental studies at the University of Colorado, told AFP the threat posed by climate change to the Antarctic — and by extension to humans — meant urgent action to protect the area was required. "There is so much definitive evidence now about climate change. About climate change affecting the poles, the ocean," she said. Daniel Bray, a senior politics lecturer at La Trobe University, said any chance of the marine park being approved would likely require a shift in position from China — which hopes to keep open the possibility of fishing in the area. — AFP

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- Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- Stomach Balloon Insertion & removal
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- Gallstones & Abdominal Hernia Surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

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- Fellow of American College of Surgery
- Canadian Board of General Surgery
- Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- American Board of Colo-Rectal Surgery
- American Board of Surgical Critical Care

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

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DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American Board in Pediatrics-Canadian Board in Pediatric Emergency

Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368
Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B

DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED
Consultant of General Surgery
Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery

Academic Certificates - Training

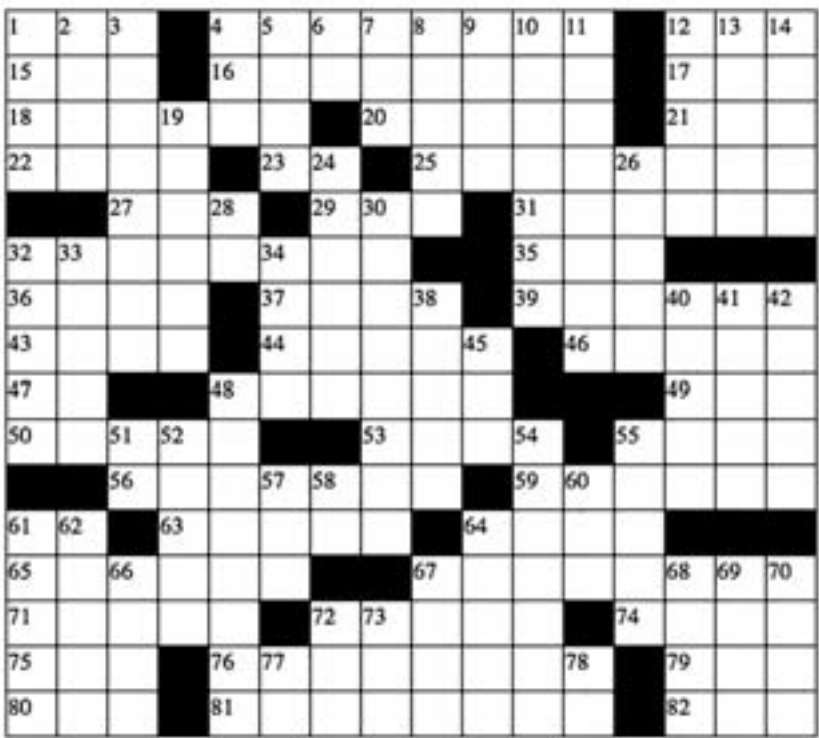
- Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- (IFSO) member .
- Faculty member of (BEST).
- Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

Scope of clinical Practice.

- Bariatric surgeries.
- Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- G.I. surgeries.
- Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- Anal surgeries.

email: wbuhaimeed@gmail.com Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228
Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 -Closer Center Mazaya Building

CROSSWORD 2341



ACROSS

- 1. A licensed medical practitioner.
- 4. A particular environment or surrounding influence.
- 12. What you can repeat immediately after perceiving it.
- 15. The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
- 16. A boat that can be launched or landed in heavy surf.
- 17. 100 pyas equal 1 kyat.
- 18. A Russian soup usually containing beet juice as a foundation.
- 20. 1 conto equals 1,000 escudos.
- 21. The administration of a strong electric current that passes through the brain to induce convulsions and coma.
- 22. The compass point that is one point east of southeast.
- 23. A metallic element of the rare earth group.
- 25. Something or someone that causes anxiety.
- 27. Used of a single unit or thing.
- 29. Electronic warfare undertaken to prevent or reduce an enemy's effective use of the electromagnetic spectrum.
- 31. Something lost (especially money lost at gambling).
- 32. Large and brightly colored handkerchief.
- 35. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
- 36. Make amends for.
- 37. A city in northern India.
- 39. A potent narcotic antagonist (trade name Narcan) especially effective with morphine.
- 43. The general activity of selling.
- 44. A genus of Ploceidae.
- 46. An African river that flows northwest into Lake Chad.
- 47. A white trivalent metallic element.
- 49. Water soaked soil.
- 50. Similar to the giraffe but smaller with much shorter neck and stripe on the legs.
- 53. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
- 56. Any of the yeastlike imperfect fungi of the genus Monilia.
- 59. The third compartment of the stomach of a ruminant.
- 61. A mouth or mouthlike opening.
- 63. An anti-inflammatory drug that does not contain steroids.
- 65. An archaic name for Easter or Passover.
- 71. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
- 74. (Old Testament) The eldest son of Isaac who would have inherited the Covenant that God made with Abraham and that Abraham passed on to Isaac.
- 75. The United Nations agency concerned with the interests of labor.
- 76. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
- 79. United States sculptor and architect whose public works include the memorial to veterans of the Vietnam War in Washington (born in 1959).
- 80. A long projecting or anterior elongation of an animal's head.
- 81. Coelenterate genus of order Madreporaria, including staghorn corals.
- 82. Large northern deer with enormous flattened antlers in the male.

DOWN

- 1. United States labor organizer who ran for President as a socialist (1855-1926).
- 2. A member of the Siouan people inhabiting the valleys of the Platte and Missouri rivers in Nebraska.
- 3. (chemistry) Relating to or containing the carbonyl group.
- 4. The residue that remains when something is burned.
- 5. An inferior dog or one of mixed breed.
- 6. A nonmetallic largely pentavalent heavy volatile corrosive dark brown liquid element belonging to the halogens.
- 7. A United Nations agency that invest directly in companies and guarantees loans to private investors.
- 8. A unit of resistance equal to a billionth of an ohm.
- 9. Not at all or in no way.
- 10. Relating to or denoting or characteristic of Catalonia or its inhabitants.
- 11. A nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (trade name Lodine).
- 12. Optical instrument consisting of a pair of lenses for correcting defective vision.
- 13. (Greek mythology) The goddess of fortune.
- 14. A pair of people who live together.
- 19. The intended recipient of a message.
- 24. A region whose eastern part is Bangladesh and western part is included in India.
- 26. The fourth month of the Hindu calendar.
- 28. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- 30. An epicycloid in which the rolling circle equals the fixed circle.
- 33. Having the wind against the forward side of the sails.
- 34. Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
- 38. (Babylonian) A demigod or first man.
- 40. Any of several plants of the genus Camassia.
- 41. (Akkadian) Mother and earth goddess in Gilgamesh epic.
- 42. Mild form of diabetes mellitus that develops gradually in adults.
- 45. Used of a single unit or thing.
- 48. The capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Congo river opposite Brazzaville.
- 51. Before noon.
- 52. A member of the Siouan people of the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
- 54. A pirate along the Barbary coast.
- 55. A spoon-shaped vessel with a long handle.
- 57. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
- 58. Being one more than fifty.
- 60. Not reflecting light.
- 62. A river that rises in central Germany and flows north to join the Elbe River.
- 64. Small donkey used as a pack animal.
- 66. A person regarded as arrogant and annoying.
- 67. A short high tone produced as a signal or warning.
- 68. A small island.
- 69. Horny plate covering and protecting part of the dorsal surface of the digits.
- 70. Any thick messy substance.
- 72. An implement used to propel or steer a boat.
- 73. In favor of (an action or proposal etc.).
- 77. A small digital computer based on a microprocessor and designed to be used by one person at a time.
- 78. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may have to repeat or clarify instructions several times this day, particularly to one individual. Write to-do lists for yourself and check all paperwork that passes through your hands, including contracts. You may feel left out or passed over just now. Your own requirements may appear to separate you from where the rest of the gang is headed. The reason for all of this delay is quite acceptable as you like your work and you know the demands of work at this time are temporary. This afternoon you draw emotional sustenance and a sense of security from friends and social involvement.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

There are extra charm and charisma in the way you come across to others this day. When faced with difficult situations or difficult people, you can be exceptionally creative. Speaking in front of a group, you may speak convincingly. You communicate with great enthusiasm. Your words just flow out and carry an emotional impact that brings your point or your ideas home to your listeners. Things are happening in your career and your future may strengthen now depending upon your drive to achieve, which is strong and works in your favor. This is a good time to get ahead in your work or personal life.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may find yourself coordinating events and communicating with new people. Your company may have decided to open another store in another area of town or some such scenario. You could be chosen to make sure everything runs smoothly. It looks as though there are requests for your services that are not included in your job identification. You might put your request in for additional pay before the action begins. Using your mind to negotiate obstacles and dilemmas is a great talent. You tend to radiate success. This afternoon is a time of concentration and working through any professional matters. You can demonstrate great understanding and sensitivity to your friends at this time. You may enjoy dinner away from the home this evening.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your instinctive orientation at this time is in taking care of business. You may take some risks today, even if you appear a bit unconventional. You will prosper through new insights, inventions and an independent point of view. Breakthroughs in your career could open up during this time, making it possible for you to solve problems and reach new levels of accomplishment. Improved solutions, insights and approaches make this a time not to be ignored. A dental checkup can be very positive this week. There is an instinctive urge to learn about better nutrition and better health at many levels. You may want to join a health spa so that there is some regular exercise in your life.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may be tempted to only focus on what you dislike today. However, you can be more fully empowered by using this time to embrace your strengths. If at work, keep a journal of date, time, event, problem and how you helped to create a good or successful outcome. If you are put in difficult situations that seem to have no ending, it may be time for a good compromise or a future change. You should be experiencing rewards for your hard work soon. There is the possibility of new visions or sudden insights into your plans—perhaps a reassessment. Breakthroughs and insights into future plans will become clearer as time moves along. Parents and friends as well as a career advisor may be quite helpful. Move to music this evening.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Ambitious schemes and the pursuit of success and status take on a high priority. This brings a focus on the practical, the successful, the realistic—whatever it takes to get you ahead in the long run. The meek may inherit the earth, but the clever will collect the rent. Ambition and achievement are qualities you hold in special regard. You look for ways to get ahead and perhaps combine business and pleasure. Seeing both sides of an issue and figuring out resolutions to opposing views take on more importance in your life. Intense focus on your career can find you mercilessly cutting back and getting down to the bare essentials regarding the path or direction you are taking with your life. You enjoy the climb as well as the rewards.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You are disciplined regarding your career. Lock those practical skills of yours into a routine and make them good habits. Your mind and decision-making abilities should be at a peak. You may be called on for your organizational and management skills. You are an aggressive prime mover, a starter—able to get things moving. Although you are not always hot on the follow-up, you will be able to tackle tasks that require real discipline. This evening is a good time for surrounding yourself with friends and young people and for having a good time. You appreciate your particular situation and enjoy support from those around you. You and a loved one can relax this evening—perhaps after a long and enjoyable bicycle ride.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You could be in the limelight, particularly with superiors or in relation to your work. You may discover that you are more comfortable in you job than usual. There is much mental busywork now. A good time, when your efforts really pay off and things seem to run smoothly. Now you have the opportunity for sustained work that allows you to coordinate and organize like never before. There is time to clean off your desk and complete any uncompleted tasks before the end of this workday. Cultivate and collect positive images of successful situations as well as relaxed settings—use these to ease tensions.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Some days are just difficult to maneuver around. It could be hard to figure out the right move. You may feel frustrated as to where you are headed in life just now. Someone older or in an authoritative position may disapprove of your decisions just now—it may be a bit hard to think. Thinking long-term, however, you will be able to come up with just the right technique, step, method or frame of words to create some positive reaction when it comes to pleasing the customer and the supervisor. An upswing in sales or in stock can be the result of some internal change that requires many people to cooperate.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You like to work with words and ideas and have a natural appreciation for anything that is literary or artistic. Your sense of discernment when it comes to matters of literary and intellectual taste is refined. You could write poetry or prose, and you put a high value on the written word. You enjoy good conversations and may be skilled at speaking and communicating. The lunch hour today could bring some fun conversations your way. This afternoon you may have to be careful not to disturb others with your urge to talk—you will do well in matters that concern proofing and editing.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

There could be change in the air with regard to your working situation. You may want to be open to the new ideas of others. This may mean moving in a different direction within the same company for which you work or taking a class to brush up on some technical skills. You are driven when it comes to fulfilling your ambitions and carving out a career. There is no lack of energy or drive here; nothing can stand in your way. Lots of energy goes into making the right moves. Most of your co-workers will find you outgoing, enthusiastic and diplomatic. Friends, group projects and community concerns could play key roles that effect your career direction.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Everything points to your taking the initiative today. Interest and success in a career requires activity, whether it is physical, mental or emotional—you need to be moving! Work and career should be a primary focus during this time. There is an opportunity to make good decisions—clear choice is yours. You are at your most practical and what happens with the remainder of this week may have a lasting effect on your life direction. Patterns, habits and new ideas will be forming. You love to tinker around and might enjoy a hobby that involves some sort of design or mechanics. After work, this hobby may be the only thing on your mind. Setting a timer that will give you time for this hobby will also remind you to stop and enjoy some time with your family.

Wordsearch Puzzle

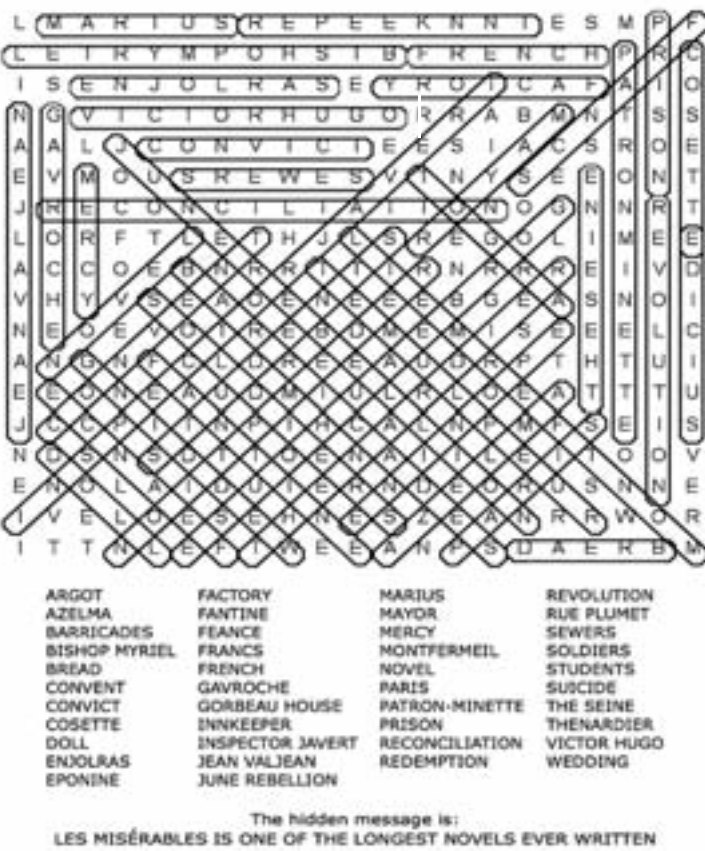
Livewire Puzzles

Find these words. They are some of the puzzles made by Livewire Puzzles since 1979. The remaining letters spell a Dutch Proverb.



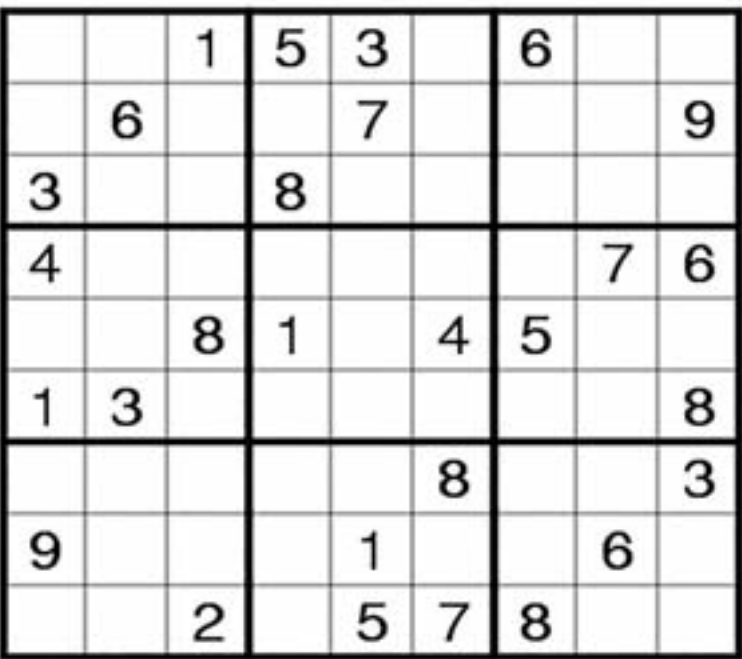
- ABRACADABRA
- ASTROKNOT
- BALL AND RING
- BEDBUG
- BRIDGE THE GAP
- CENTPEDE
- CHINESE RINGS
- CORKSCREW
- CRYSTAL CLEAR
- DEAD END
- DOUBLE VISION
- EQUALIZER
- EUREKA
- FIRECRACKER
- FLIGHT TEST
- GRAND PRIZ
- HANDCUFFS
- HAVE A HEART
- KING TUT
- MELEDA
- MOTHBALLS
- MOUSETRAP
- NUT HOUSE
- PENTANGLE
- PINETREE
- PRETZEL LOGIC
- SHOCKWAVE
- SHORT CIRCUIT
- SILENT PARTNER
- SLINGSHOT
- SLEIGHT OF HAND
- SPUTNIK
- SQUARING OFF
- THE RACK
- TOUCH WOOD
- TRAPEZE
- TRIPLE CROWN
- TRIPWIRE
- TRIPLE PLAY
- TRIPWIRE
- TROUBLE CLEF
- VRUS
- WEATHERVAIN
- WEDGE
- WOODEN OPEN

Yesterday's Solution

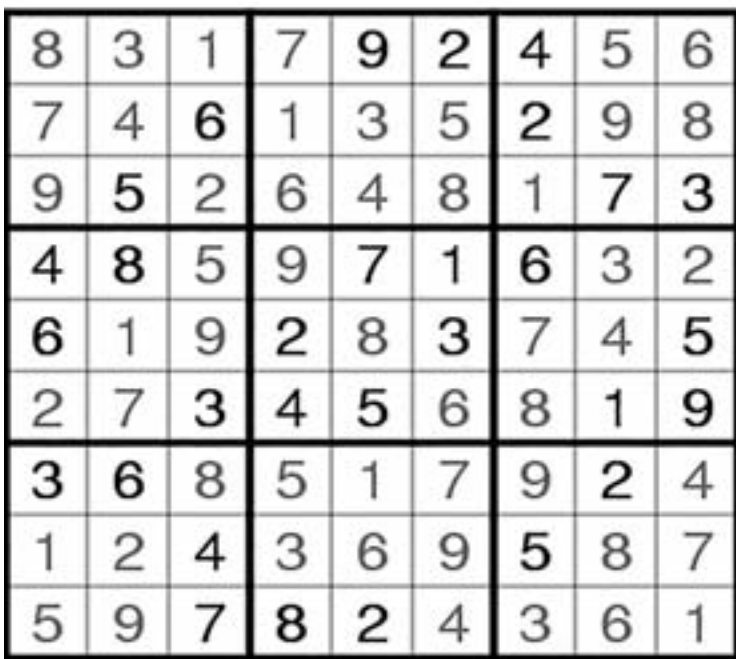


The hidden message is: LES MISÉRABLES IS ONE OF THE LONGEST NOVELS EVER WRITTEN

Daily Sudoku

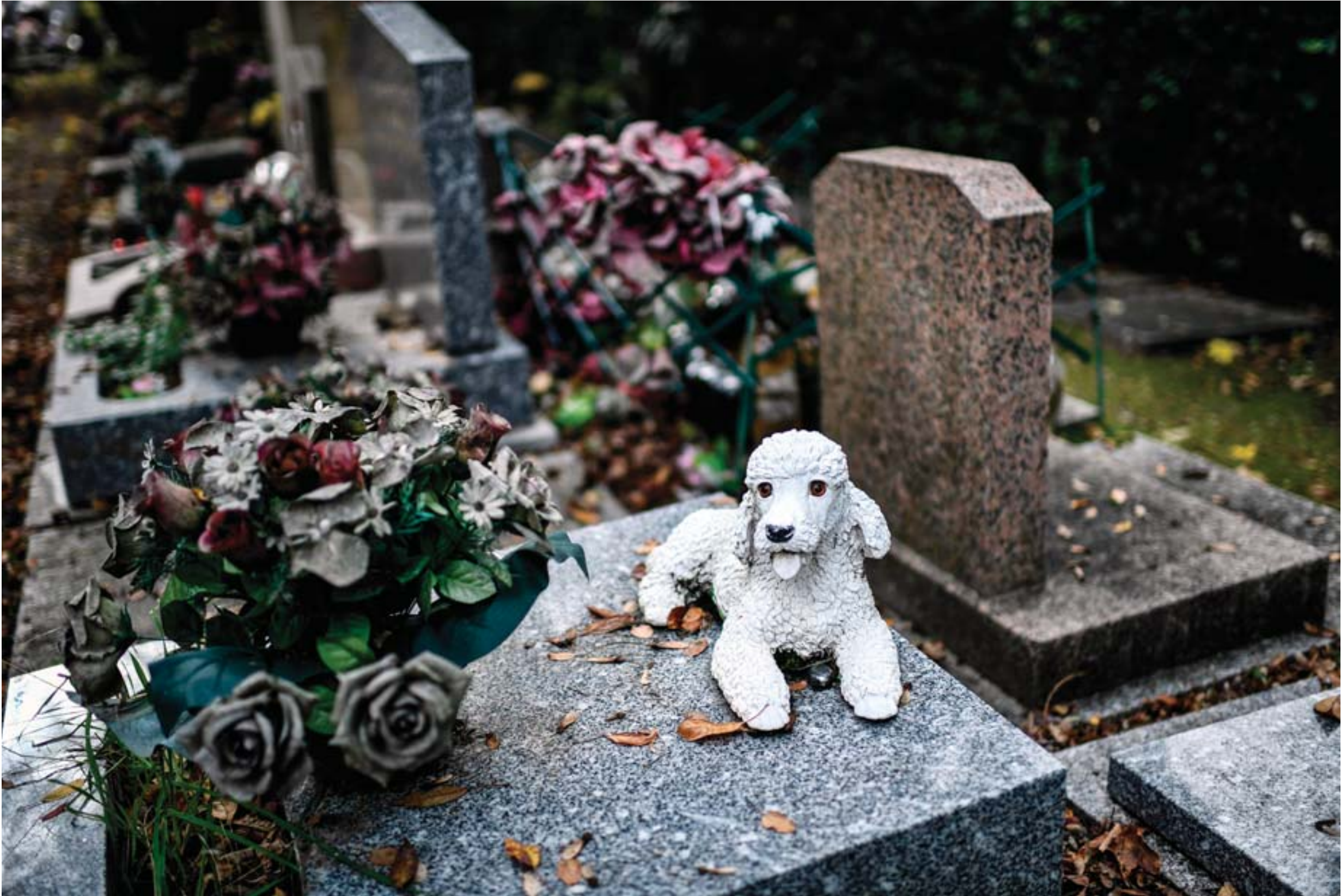


Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2019



This picture shows graves for dogs at the dog's cemetery in Asnieres-sur-Seine, northwest of Paris. — AFP

SPRINGSTEEN DIVES INTO HIS PSYCHE WITH ‘WESTERN STARS’ FILM

Though Bruce Springsteen's songs are a vibrant part of the contemporary American songbook, he regularly uses his lyrics to express his deep misgivings about the proverbial "American dream." With "Western Stars," a full-length feature film out Friday that marks the Boss's directorial debut, New Jersey's favorite son is once again looking at a question he's grappled with for decades: the struggle between transient freedom and communal life.



In this file photo US singer Bruce Springsteen performs on stage during 'The river Tour 2016' in the northern Spanish Basque city of San Sebastian.

The meditative concert film features sweeping pans over California's wide expanses—think wild horses, a muscle car on the open road and cacti bathed in a rose sunrise—interspersed with Springsteen's family home movie footage. It is effectively the 70-year-old icon's replacement for a tour to promote his latest solo effort. Springsteen plays his full "Western Stars" 13-track album in the film—it hearkens back to the 1970s-era golden age of

the Laurel Canyon music scene—with backing from band members including his wife Patti Scialfa as well as a 30-piece orchestra.

The recorded live performance, filmed in a barn on Springsteen's property in New Jersey, features sweeping crescendos of strings that project a luxurious warmth—the aural equivalent of slipping into a hot tub in the middle of the desert at dusk. But the music's hazy glow contrasts with the edge of the artist's piercing inner reflections, as Springsteen considers the demons he's repressed and the aches he's caused after nearly half a century in show business.

"It's easy to lose yourself—or never find yourself," his voiceover says in the film. "The older you get, the heavier the baggage becomes that you haven't sorted." Considering the "destructive parts" of his character, Springsteen says that in his younger life, "if I loved you, I would try to hurt you." "You run until you've left everything that you've loved and that loves you behind," he says. "I've done a lot of that kind of running."

Living in good faith

Though his fame is rooted firmly in his skills as a musician, Springsteen as auteur is not necessarily a stretch: the performer has long imbued his lyrics with a cinematic quality. The brawny superstar burst onto the international stage in 1975 with "Born to Run," taking his audiences into bleak small American towns that contained youthful desires for adventure. "Western Stars," his 19th album, marks a sharp turn from his signature hard-driving rock that recounted the mundanities of everyday life and blue-collar struggles, making him a working class hero.

But Springsteen maintains the character-driven storytelling element that has long shaped his work, centering on the tale of a lone, washed-up Western movie star adrift and in search of roots. Springsteen considers "Western Stars"—which he co-directed with Thom Zimny—the third installment in a trilogy that began with his acclaimed 2016 memoir and his wildly successful intimate show on Broadway.

The rock star has been open about his battles with depression and self-loathing, saying publicly he's been in therapy for decades and continues to aspire towards, as he puts it in the film, "living in good faith." "Lost is something

I'm good at writing," he says. "Gravitating towards pain feels more like home." "You don't know how to hold onto love but you know how to hold onto hurt." Scialfa, his wife of nearly 30 years and member of his famed E Street Band, plays guitar and sings in the film, but also is charming in home movie from the pair's honeymoon.

Springsteen reminisces about the early days of their romance spent on a park bench in front of New York's Empire Diner, where he eventually proposed. "When you're young, it's all about going where I want to go, doing what I want to do, I'm going to be who I want to be, and that's okay for your twenties," he told late night talk show host Jimmy Kimmel this week. "But somewhere in your thirties, it starts to catch up with you and your definition of freedom has to expand to include family, your civic life, you know, community that you're involved in," he continued. "If it doesn't... you get stuck out in the cold, you know? Really out in the cold."—AFP



In this file photo (From left) US singer-songwriter Bruce Springsteen, his daughter Jessica Springsteen and his wife Patti Scialfa attend the New York special screening of 'Western Stars' at Metrograph on in New York City. — AFP photos



The former mayor of the city Giannis Boutaris poses for a photograph in Thessaloniki. — AFP photos



People are at work in the Greek Archaeological Service rescue excavations of the underground railway network at the Venizelos metro station in Thessaloniki.



A picture shows the Greek Archaeological Service rescue excavations of the underground railway network at the Venizelos metro station in Thessaloniki.

Row over plans to move Greek antiquities from construction site

Opposition politicians, archaeologists and locals have denounced Greek government plans to displace the fragile remnants of an ancient city district unearthed during work on a subway tunnel in Thessaloniki. Experts say the early Byzantine site, which includes the city's main 6th-century highway, ancient buildings and hundreds of thousands of artifacts, is priceless.

But the government and the company managing the subway project in Greece's second largest city say the work, already behind schedule because of the find, has to get back on track. The plan is to move the ancient remains to a museum, to be built at a later date, reversing an earlier plan by the previous left-wing administration to put them on show where they were found. The conservative government's new plan has outraged many in Greece's second largest city.

"You won't be able to find an archaeologist

willing to degrade these antiquities," Despina Koutsoumba, spokeswoman for the Association of Greek Archaeologists, told the city council at a recent meeting. Archaeologists warn that the only way to remove the 700 tons of finds will be to break them up into at least 100 pieces, causing irreparable damage.

A unique find

"What was found at Venizelos subway station is unique," Koutsoumba told AFP. "(And) the quality of its preservation is such that you really are walking in a Byzantine-era city. It's amazing," she said. "This is truly rare and a gift for the city of Thessaloniki, a station that could become an open, archaeological space." The subway company, Attiko Metro, whose management changed hands after the July parliamentary elections, says it is overhauling the project because the earlier plans

did not offer adequate construction safety guarantees.

"Removing antiquities poses no threat and has been applied several times, even on this very subway project (elsewhere)," new company chairman Nikos Tachiaos told AFP. The move would save both time and money, he insisted. "The antiquities are in no danger," says Tachiaos, an engineer. In September, outraged residents formed a citizens' group to resist any plan to move the antiquities. They argue that the subway finds are unique "because they reconstruct the concept of Byzantine urban space."

They also revealed the layout of ancient Thessaloniki "and constitute the most readable and identifiable part of the historic centre of the city survived to this day." Integrated archaeological evidence must continue to be accessible, instructive and intact," their statement adds. Some 15,000 citizens have already

signed an online petition calling for the relics to remain in place.

Legal delays possible

The construction of the Thessaloniki subway was commissioned in 2003 and was initially expected to be completed by 2012. But the project stalled over the debate on how to best preserve the antiquities they had discovered. It is now expected to be operating in 2023. Former Thessaloniki mayor Yiannis Boutaris is a member of the movement arguing to keep the finds where they are. They are trying to mobilize support for their cause with free tours in Thessaloniki's rich, ancient heritage, much of it dating from the late Roman era.

Boutaris, who stepped down in August after eight years in office, acknowledges that an original budget setting aside 15 million euros for archaeological digs for the subway has

already ballooned to 130 million euros. But he insists that the finds need to be protected. "Roman-era finds are the city's heritage... it is our duty, but also to our benefit, to highlight them," he says. To modify the original plan, Attiko Metro must table alternative proposals to the state Central Archaeological Council, an advisory body of the culture ministry.

But even if the council does approve their proposal, opponents have threatened to take the case to court—a move that would certainly delay the project by several years. Under Greek law, "the relocation of a monument due to technical work is examined only if, after relevant scientific control, any possibility of preserving it in its environment is excluded". — AFP

The Spanish town where the old stay fit with Pokemon Go

At first, when she retired from a life-long career in nursing in her native Spain, Joanna Perez Osuna struggled with a lack of purpose. Then she found solace in a virtual world populated by "Pikachus", "Weedles" and "Smeargles". Perez started playing Pokemon Go, the augmented-reality game that encourages players to travel around looking through their mobile phone cameras so they can collect animated creatures that "appear" in front of them.

Now the 75-year-old spends up to six hours a day walking the streets of of Badalona, a quiet Spanish town to the north of Barcelona, chasing after digital ghosts, dragons and monsters. "I don't want to be stuck at home all afternoon watching television. I also don't want to sit around all day reflecting with people my age - I want to do something in the fresh air," Perez told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, chuckling.

As people live longer, the World Health Organization predicts that one in five - 2 billion people - will be aged 60 or older by 2050, double that of 2015. And ageing populations all over the world are already putting pressure on healthcare, infrastructure, housing and other social services. Finding surprising ways to keep older people mentally and physically healthy is a point of pride for Badalona, one of nearly 80 cities, towns and regions taking part in this year's European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing.

Launched by the European Commission in 2012, the partnership aims to improve the health and quality of life of older citizens, such as those suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's disease. The initiative wants to add two years to the average healthy lifespan of European Union citizens by 2020 - which currently stands at about 64 years. Anca Paduraru, the European Commission's spokeswoman for public health projects, said countries

should see ageing as "an opportunity to innovate" and modernize health systems.

Perez, who was introduced to Pokemon Go by her daughter after it first launched three years ago, said she walks between 12 and 15 km every day playing the game. Catching Pokemon is a good way of meeting people and getting to know Badalona better, she explained, because it takes her to neighborhoods she would not normally visit. And she is motivated by the health benefits of playing the game, which have helped her recover after she suffered a bout of skin cancer. "One of the main reasons I play is to not put on too much weight - that's important," she said.

Relieving isolation

Pokemon Go can be "a good way of connecting people with others so they are less isolated," said Carlos Sanchez, a social worker who works with people suffering from loneliness and other living difficulties in Badalona. "It's most useful for people that don't have anything to fill their time, like if they don't have grandchildren to pick up from school," he stressed, adding that he recommends the game to some of his clients.

Jordi Piera Jimenez, chief information and R&D officer at public healthcare provider Badalona Care Services, agreed, adding that "more and more people are coming to live in cities and isolation is becoming a huge problem". Almost 70 percent of the world's population is expected to be living in urban areas by 2050, according to the United Nations.

"Isolation and a feeling of loneliness are problems that in rural areas are less common, because people are more resilient and used to taking care of each other ... Cities tend to be more impersonal," Piera lamented. Spotting unmet demand, technology and toy companies are marketing devices such as robotic pets, like the therapeutic seal from Japanese company Paro which remembers how it has been stroked and responds to certain words.

There are also glasses from French firm Abeye that can call for help when they detect the wearer has taken a fall and artificial intelligence products like ElliQ, which initiates conversation to keep older people company. In Badalona, at least 300 residents aged 65 and over are using or have used Pokemon Go, Piera said. — Reuters



Dogs dyed black and white to mimic panda cubs are pictured at Cute Pet Games cafe in Chengdu in China's southwestern Sichuan province. — AFP photos

Bamboozled: 'Panda dog' cafe sparks China animal rights debate

A pet cafe in China where dogs are dyed black and white to look like panda cubs has triggered a heated online debate over the treatment of animals. The Cute Pet Games cafe opened last month in Chengdu, capital of southwest Sichuan province which is home to China's famous giant pandas, and features six panda-like Chow Chow dogs, according to a video posted by Hongxing News on Tuesday. Customers were shown petting the fluffy "panda dogs."

The cafe owner, only identified by his last

name Huang, told Hongxing News that he had started offering pet dyeing services after the panda dogs became an instant hit with clients. "Every time we dye it costs 1,500 yuan," Huang said. "The dye itself is very expensive." He said it takes trained staff about a day to transform a fluffy Chow Chow dog into a "panda."

The hashtag "Dye a dog into a panda for 1500 yuan" has gone viral with more than 170 million views on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform, and led to a torrent of angry comments from pet owners stressing the possible

side effects of dyeing the animals' fur. "I suggest dyeing the cafe owner black and white," said one commentator. "Dogs and cats love their human companions, regardless of how we look. Why not extend the same kindness to them?" wrote another. In the video, Huang says the dye is imported from Japan and won't harm the dogs. But vet Li Daibing told Hongxing News that dyeing the dogs "could damage the animals' fur and skin." — AFP



WITH MUSIC AND BURGER EMPIRE,

CAMEROON COUPLE LIVING ‘RUSSIAN DREAM’

Decked out in gold jewelry and high-end fashion, Walter and Cindy Tchassem descend on a Moscow fast-food joint escorted by bodyguards. Both originally from Cameroon, the couple are at the centre of a music and restaurant business empire in Russia. “People can’t understand how we did it, it’s unique,” Walter, 37, tells AFP at an outlet of the couple’s Black Star burger chain on Moscow’s Novy Arbat commercial strip.

“But I always say to them: When you believe in yourself and you work hard, anything is possible.” As President Vladimir Putin hosts African leaders this week for the first ever Russia-Africa summit, the Tchassem’s are a high-profile example of African entrepreneurial success in the country. The son of a Cameroonian diplomat in Moscow, Walter has lived in Russia

for 25 years and taken Russian citizenship. He co-founded Black Star in 2006 with two school friends, hip-hop artist Timati and businessman Pavel Kuryanov. Originally a music label, Black Star has grown into a major brand, expanding into street-wear and restaurants, with about 100 shops and burger chain outlets throughout the former Soviet Union and plans to expand into Europe. Walter says it’s hardly surprising Moscow is looking to build ties with fast-growing Africa.

“In the long-term it’s Africa that will be the winner, because Russia offers a lot of opportunities,” he says. The ex-Soviet Union can be a tricky place to do business, but Walter says he hasn’t run into any problems. “Our business is based on a lifestyle, it can go into any country because it’s not political,” he says, while still praising Russia’s Vladimir Putin as “the

best president on the planet”.

New generation of Russians

Cindy, 32, focuses on public relations for the firm, while supporting an orphanage in Cameroon’s economic capital Douala and planning to launch a charitable foundation. She moved to Moscow in 2012 to join Walter after they met and married in Paris and the couple now have two sons aged four and six. “You can build your own business in Russia by the age of 30, there is the potential for very fast success,” she says.

“You can easily get rich no matter how old you are,” Cindy says, though she admits Russia’s “very macho” culture can make it difficult for women entrepreneurs. Despite the racist attacks that for years made headlines in Russia, the couple says they have never suffered from racism. “I have never felt that; the new generation of Russians travels, they understand things,” Walter says. In fact, he says: “I think it is less difficult here than in a country that colonized Africa.”

The couple’s business success has also helped them become social media stars. Together they have more than 400,000 subscribers on Instagram, where they post glamorous pictures of trips on yachts or private jets. Walter says they hope their success can be inspiring. “We want to make other young Africans dream,” he says. “There is this idea that the African is born to suffer, but this isn’t true, you have to believe in yourself and work!” The couple are often seen in colorful outfits from top designers, and Walter admits that fashion “is kind of my drug”. “I love it, I won’t hide that I spend an enormous amount on it,” he says. His wife laughs. “He’s a fashion addict!”—AFP



Cameroonian entrepreneur couple - Walter, 37, and Cindy, 32, Tchassem - pose during an interview with AFP at an outlet of the couple's Black Star burger chain on Moscow's Novy Arbat.

Trash to treasure:

Everest garbage given new lease of life

A group of tourists sip water at a five-star hotel in Kathmandu, unaware that the green glasses in their hands were once bottles discarded on Mount Everest—left by climbers eager to make their ascent. In homes across the Nepali capital upcycled items, from pots to lamps, crafted from Everest waste products are slowly making their way as authorities and businesses look for fresh ways to tackle the damage caused by decades of commercial mountaineering.

Tonnes of trash—including empty cans and gas canisters, bottles, plastic and discarded climbing gear—litter the mountain, which has been dubbed the “highest dumpster in the world”. “Waste doesn’t need to be wasted,” Nabin Bikash Maharjan of local recycling organization Blue Waste to Value (BW2V) told AFP. “We received a mix of materials from Everest—aluminum, glass, plastic, iron—much of which could be recycled,” he explained, adding: “We need to up-cycle and add value to them.”

After heavy criticism for the condition of one of its greatest natural resources, Nepal’s government and mountaineering groups this year organized a six-week clean-up. Scaling almost 8,000 meters from base camp to the closest camp to the summit, a 14-strong team retrieved more than 10 tons of trash that was flown or driven to recycling centers in Kathmandu.

Workers there manually sorted the materials—each type following a different path to rebirth: Iron was sent to rod manufacturing firms, shredded aluminum cans to utensil makers, and discarded bottles re-fashioned into household items. “Waste is a taboo in

our society, considered as dirt,” mused Ujen Wangmo Lepcha of Moware Designs, which upcycles rubbish into light fixtures and glasses.

“When they see these kind of products they are like ‘wow’, these things can be made and it is possible,” she explained. Their products are now used in upmarket hotels, restaurants, and homes around the capital, and Lepcha says there is growing consumer interest in goods made from salvaged Everest scraps. Aanchal Malla of Hotel Yak & Yeti, a luxury five-star hotel in Kathmandu, said opting for the upcycled goods was in-line with the hotel’s move towards sustainable and environmentally friendly products.

“It is not just better for us and the environment but then it goes way bigger than that... it is encouragement of everyone who is trying to move into that direction of making the globe into a better place, reducing all the waste,” Malla said. A new waste facility—called Sagarmatha Next after the Nepali name for Everest—is also being completed in Syangboche at an altitude of nearly 3,800 meters, passed by trekkers and mountaineers on the way to the base camp. It will process garbage, and collaborate with artists and innovators to make new products in a bid to tap into this burgeoning market for Everest ‘products’.

Everest polluters must pay

But mountaineers warn that this year’s clean-up collected just a fraction of Mount Everest’s rubbish—with the higher and harder to reach camps still littered by abandoned



In this photo a worker makes flower pots from materials from a pile of waste collected from Mount Everest, in Kathmandu. — AFP photos

gear. Melting glaciers, caused by global warming, are revealing years-old waste but as the number of climbers attempting to summit soars so do the environmental challenges. Eleven climbers died in the 2019 Everest season, with industry insiders criticizing Nepal for issuing a record 381 permits—leading to high numbers on the mountain and bottlenecks to the summit.

Not all the bodies can be brought down so corpses too lie abandoned on the slopes. Water sources downstream of the 8,848-metre Himalayan peak have been contaminated by everything from human excrement to empty gas canisters. Locals say some big-spending foreign climbers—it costs at least \$30,000 to tackle Everest—pay little

attention to the ugly footprint they leave behind, even when given financial incentives.

Six years ago, Nepal implemented a \$4,000 rubbish deposit per team, to be refunded if each climber brought down at least eight kilograms of waste, but only half of them returned with their trash. In August, the Everest region municipality announced it would ban some single-use plastics and drinks in plastic bottles from the area from early 2020.

Community NGO Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee, along with BW2V and other agencies, recently launched a campaign to transport waste to recycling centers by harnessing the roughly 50,000 trekkers and their guides who visit the

region every year—not all attempt the summit but many travel to base camp.

They are each asked to carry a one kilogram pouch of processed trash to Lukla, the gateway to the Everest region, or Kathmandu for recycling. “We have to work year after year to make a real impact,” Ang Dorje Sherpa of the committee told AFP, but warned that recycling alone was not the solution. “In the long-term we need is to minimize the trash at the source, and make the polluters responsible for the cleaning.”—AFP



In these photos workers sort out materials collected as waste on Mount Everest.



In this photo customers use cups cut from glass collected as waste on Mount Everest, at a restaurant in Kathmandu.



Binyamin Storchan, center, an archaeologist with the Israel Antiquities Authority, shows an ancient church crypt in the Israeli city of Bet Shemesh. — AFP photos



Timnah Goloubin, left, an archaeologist with the Israel Antiquities Authority, shows a mosaic church floor of an Eagle symbol of the Byzantine Empire.



Timnah Goloubin, left, an archaeologist with the Israel Antiquities Authority, shows a church mosaic floor with inscription in ancient Greek.

Byzantine church of ‘glorious martyr’ uncovered in Israel

The remains of a sixth-century Byzantine church dedicated to an unnamed “glorious martyr” with elaborate mosaics, a rare crypt and a large collection of lamps were unveiled in central Israel on Wednesday. The complex, which spans over a third of an acre, was found during salvage excavations ahead of the construction of a new neighborhood for the city Bet Shemesh, west of Jerusalem.

The mosaics in the church depict themes from nature, such as leaves, birds and fruit, as well as geometrical elements, with imported capitals topping pillars, according to the Israel Antiquities Authority, which carried out the excavation. Most of the construction of the church began during the reign of Emperor Justinian, who ruled between 527-565, with a chapel added later under Emperor Tiberius II Constantine, with rare financial support from him, the IAA said in a statement.

An underground burial chamber with two separate staircases leading to and from it was found, making it one of the few churches with fully intact crypts to be

found in Israel’s limits, said Benjamin Storchan, who directed the excavation for the IAA. The church was dedicated to a “glorious martyr,” whose identity has eluded the researchers working on the find for the past three years, but the “exceptional opulence of the structure and its inscriptions indicate that this person was an important figure,” said Storchan.

Diggers also found what they believe to be “the most complete collection of Byzantine glass windows and lamps ever found at a single site in Israel.” The Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem, which is hosting a display on some of the finds, said that lighting in churches, often perceived as “the representation of the divine,” enhanced the “dramatic environment for a powerful religious experiment.” With its location near Jerusalem, the Church of the Glorious Martyr was most likely a significant pilgrimage site for Christians en route to the Holy City, the museum said. — AFP



A general view of an ancient church in the Israeli town of Bet Shemesh.

Guitar maker hopes to rock revenues with digital song-learning app

Fender Musical Instrument Co will help musicians play along with their favorite songs on their guitars with a subscription service released on Tuesday that will display chords to millions of tunes, the latest effort in the 73-year-old electric guitar maker’s digital revenue strategy. Called Fender Songs, the app taps into machine learning technology that analyzes songs streamed through Apple Music and generates chord diagrams for the songs.

Fender uses human auditors to double check the work of computers and has partnered with major record labels to ensure the accuracy of the charts and with music publishers to ensure artists are paid for the use of their lyrics. The app costs \$4.99 per month or \$41.99 per year and, in “play-along” mode will scroll the chords and lyrics across a player’s phone screen as the song streams. Fender, whose guitars have been played by musicians from Jimi Hendrix to Jack White, has released four apps over the past two years in an effort to reach new players and rekindle interest from existing ones.

Andy Mooney, Fender’s chief executive officer, told Reuters Fender spent nearly two years working out deals with recording rights holders such as Warner Music Group to ensure the accuracy of its chord guides and with music publishers Sony/ATV Music Publishing, Warner Chappell Music, Kobalt and BMG around songwriter royalties. “It was critical to us that we be 100% legal when the product launched - we want to ensure the artists get fairly compensated for the work,” Mooney said.

The Fender Songs app is starting on Apple devices, in part because the app relies on Apple Music’s existing deals with record labels to ensure payments are made for each song stream. But Ethan Kaplan, general manager of Fender Digital, said the company hopes to expand to other services in the future. Fender has staked its digital growth strategy on the premise that interest in recorded music is expanding.

“There’s 255 million people paying for streaming now,” Kaplan said. “We want to tackle the whole market.” The digital effort has helped privately held Fender’s sales grow in the “high single digit, low-double digit” percentage rate, and the company expects to end 2019 “healthily above” \$600 million in revenue, Mooney told Reuters. Fender will spend about 9 percent of that on marketing, much of it designed to lure new players who came of age when guitar-dominated music genres like rock were less popular.

The apps “brought us an incremental swath of new consumers in the market who hadn’t previously considered picking up guitar. The dealers are reporting that across the board - that new entrants to the market are coming to their stores and websites,” Mooney said. — Reuters



In this file photograph visitors take photographs in front of The Mona Lisa (La Gioconda) after it was returned to its place at the Louvre Museum in Paris. — AFP

Louvre offers virtual ‘tete-a-tete’ with the Mona Lisa

The Mona Lisa is a singular sensation at the Louvre’s upcoming retrospective of Leonardo da Vinci, starring in a virtual reality experience because she cannot appear in person. Organizers of the blockbuster show featuring 11 of the Renaissance master’s paintings decided to leave the masterpiece in its usual home, the Salle des Etats, fearing crowd-control problems. Instead, visitors can enjoy a virtual “tete-a-tete” with the 24-year-old wife of a wealthy Florentine silk merchant thanks to the immersion experience created by the Taiwanese firm HTC Vive Arts.

They should be prepared for a few surprises after putting on a headset and choosing one of several languages. For one thing, what appears today to be the young woman’s hair is actually a gossamer veil-a symbol of virtue-covering a black cap, with just two tresses hanging down on either side of her face. That explains the thin line at the top of her forehead-the front edge of the veil. A woman of Lisa del Giocondo’s social status would never let her hair down like the trollplop some said she must have been, and in the virtual reality film she puts a hand to her mouth at the thought.

The revelation comes through a deep dive into images made possible through

ultraviolet and X-ray technology, revealing details of the layers upon layers of transparent glazes that Leonardo applied to the painting, creating the illusion of three-dimensional volume and bringing his subject to life. The viewer will also be surprised to note that the young woman was quite svelte for a mother of five, a fact that is no longer apparent in the timeworn, heavily varnished painting, in which she appears somewhat plump.

The tour invites the viewer to imagine Lisa sitting on her loggia surrounded by the rugged landscape Leonardo used as the backdrop to convey unity between nature and humanity across the ages. A dreamlike final 360-degree sequence takes the spectator up in a wooden flying machine imagined by Leonardo, soaring over the mountains and valleys of the painting.

The retrospective commemorating the master painter’s death 500 years ago, titled simply “Leonardo da Vinci”, opens Thursday and runs to February 24 in the Louvre’s Hall Napoleon. A download of an extended version of the virtual reality experience can be purchased through VIVEPORT and other online platforms. — AFP

Will Louvre show include world’s priciest painting?

As the Louvre museum prepares to unveil a blockbuster exhibition of works by Leonardo da Vinci on Thursday, mystery surrounds whether the show will include the world’s most expensive painting-Salvator Mundi, attributed to the master painter. It is unlikely, but organizers have not ruled out a last-minute appearance by the painting that sold for \$450 million at a 2017 Christie’s auction.

The work, in which Jesus Christ is depicted emerging from darkness, blessing the world with one hand while holding a transparent globe in the other, has not been seen in public since its sale. The Wall Street Journal first reported that the painting was bought by Saudi prince Badr bin Abdullah, who had acted in the name of the crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, known by his initials MBS. Riyadh never confirmed or denied that report.

But the culture ministry of the United Arab Emirates said the Gulf State was the owner and that the painting was to go on display at the Louvre Abu Dhabi in September 2018. Then, to widespread surprise, the UAE said it was postponing the hanging. Kenny Schachter, a prominent London art dealer and critic, says the work is riding the waves aboard MBS’s massive yacht, the Serene, citing several sources including two involved in the sale.

Schachter claimed on the website Artnews that the painting “was whisked away in the middle of the

night on MBS’s plane” and flown to the yacht. Other rumors place the painting at a Geneva museum. The Louvre’s request to Abu Dhabi for the loan of the painting is still pending.

Debate over attribution

Adding to the mystery is uncertainty over the work’s authenticity. Many art experts are split over whether the painting is a genuine Da Vinci, with some arguing it was not painted by the Renaissance master personally but by one of the apprentices in his studio. To support this theory, they say one of Jesus’s fingers is badly executed, and note that the painting is not mentioned in any of Leonardo’s correspondence or that of his contemporaries.

But Dianne Modestini, the American restorer who rescued the work from an extremely bad condition, is categorical that the painting is authentic. Another version, somewhat larger, is in the show, among around 22 existing paintings on the theme of Jesus as the “Saviour of the World”, according to the curator, Vincent Delieuvin. The question of whether Leonardo’s Salvator Mundi makes it into the show may have broader geopolitical import. According to Schachter, the work may not find a permanent home until Saudi Arabia succeeds in transforming its northern Al-Ula region into a tourist destination. The exhibition runs until February 24. — AFP



People take pictures with mobile phone at an oil painting by Atelier Leonardo da Vinci's 'Salvator Mundi' (Version Ganay), during the opening of the exhibition 'Leonardo da Vinci', at the Louvre museum in Paris. — AFP

Classifieds

Thursday, October 24, 2019

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot and Partly cloudy with light to moderate south easterly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 10 - 35 km/h with a chance for scattered rain.

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy and Humid specially over coastal areas with light to moderate south easterly wind to variable wind, with speed of 08 - 32 km/h with a chance for mist forming over some areas.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 23/10/2019 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	41 °C	28 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	38 °C	23 °C		
ABDALY	40 °C	20 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	40 °C	24 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	33 °C	28 °C		
AHMADI	39 °C	28 °C		
NU'WAISIB	40 °C	22 °C		
WAFRA	40 °C	23 °C		
SALMY	39 °C	21 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST					
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction
			MAX.	MIN.	
Thursday	10/24	Hot and Partly cloudy	36 °C	22 °C	VRB-SE
Friday	10/25	Partly cloudy to cloudy and Relatively humid with a chance for rain that might be thunders.	34 °C	21 °C	SE-S
Saturday	10/26	A significant decrease in temperature and Humid weather and Partly cloudy with a chance for rain	32 °C	19 °C	SE-NE
Sunday	10/27	Cloudy with a chance for rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thunders at times	33 °C	20 °C	SE-VRB

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:35
Sunrise	05:54
Zuhr	11:32
Asr	14:45
Sunset	17:10
Isha	18:28

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	41 °C
MIN. Temp.	23 °C
MAX. RH	83 %
MIN. RH	09 %
MAX. Wind	S 46 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

CHANGE OF NAME

Old name: HAKIMUDDIN, new name: HAKIMUDDIN KAGZI, Passport No. T1940117, Civil ID No. 269121402091. **(C 5466)**
23-10-2019

This is to notify all that I Natalia Raj daughter of Nitesh Raj holder of Indian Passport No. N-0420190 (born in Kuwait) would like to change my name from Natalia Raj to Natalia Nitesh for all my future dealing here after. **(C 5463)**

I Mathew holder of Indian Passport No. 23829588 / Civil ID No. 278122303567 having permanent address Mankayil, Kazhuthumuttu, House No - 17/1619 D, Mundamveli Post Office, Emakulam, Kerala, India, Pin-682507. Residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Given name: Denny Joseph and Surname: Mankayil Mathew. **(C 5464)**

Old name: Kalla Mohammad Burhan, new surname: Kalla, old given name: Mohammad Ilyas, new given name: Mohammad

Burhan. Address: Esa Qutami street, street 8 block - 10, building no. 6, Salmiya. **(C 5465)**
20-10-2019

MATRIMONIAL

Goan wellknown Catholic family for a girl 38 yrs. 5.3 slim, God fearing, convent educated Bachelor of Pharmacist, she has got her own medical shop in Goa. Seek alliance from well educated & settled Catholic Bachelor below 42 yrs. Good looking clean habit teetotaler from Kuwait/India. Interested send details CV with photograph to email: tech-noarch43@gmail.com **(C 5461) 18-10-2019**

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**

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 24/10/2019										Departure Flights on Thursday 24/10/2019									
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	KAC	774	Riyadh	13:35	Jeddah	13:45	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	NIA	1506	Asyut	12:35		
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	JZR	212	Jeddah	13:45	Mashhad	13:55	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05	JZR	123	Dubai	13:10		
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	IRA	607	BSR	14:00	4133	14:00	JZR	713	Sohag	00:10	JZR	115	Doha	13:25		
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	UAE	877	Dubai	14:00	Dubai	14:00	MSC	406	Sohag	00:15	MSR	611	Cairo	13:45		
QTR	8276	ZAZ	00:20	KAC	672	Dubai	14:00	Abu Dhabi	14:00	MSR	615	Cairo	00:30	THY	767	Istanbul	14:00		
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	KAC	662	Riyadh	14:10	1758	14:10	JZR	409	Delhi	01:10	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:10		
KAC	102	London	00:50	KNE	231	Jeddah	14:15	KAC	677	THY	773	Dubai	01:50	IRA	666	Esfahan	14:15		
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:15	THY	773	DLH	625	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	673	Dubai	14:55		
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	DLH	625	QTR	8276	Frankfurt	01:50	KNE	382	Taif	15:00		
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	QTR	1078	Doha	14:25	QTR	8276	KAC	417	Doha	01:50	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:00		
RJA	642	Amman	01:20	KAC	792	Madinah	14:40	KAC	417	JZR	111	Manila	02:00	JZR	103	Bahrain	15:05		
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	KAC	304	Mumbai	14:45	JZR	111	THY	765	Doha	02:10	FDB	060	Dubai	15:05		
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	JZR	222	Riyadh	14:45	THY	765	PGT	829	Istanbul	02:50	QTR	1079	Doha	15:30		
PGT	828	Istanbul	02:00	KAC	618	Doha	14:50	ETH	621	ETH	621	Istanbul	02:59	UAE	878	Dubai	15:30		
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	562	Amman	14:55	KLM	446	UAE	854	Addis Ababa	03:05	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45		
KAC	156	Istanbul	02:35	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:00	UAE	854	ETD	306	Amsterdam	03:10	JZR	125	Dubai	15:50		
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	118	New York	15:05	OMA	644	OMA	644	Dubai	03:30	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55		
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	KAC	529	Jeddah	15:10	QTR	1087	QTR	1087	Abu Dhabi	04:00	KAC	563	Amman	16:00		
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:50	KNE	412	Muscat	15:15	MSR	613	MSR	613	Muscat	04:05	KAC	775	Riyadh	16:05		
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	KAC	303	Abu Dhabi	15:20	OMA	644	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05		
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	ETD	303	Muscat	15:35	PGT	861	PGT	861	Cairo	04:15	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:10		
JZR	406	Kochi	03:05	OMA	645	Sharjah	15:45	RBG	1550	RBG	1550	Alexandria	04:25	KAC	785	Sharjah	16:15		
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	ABY	127	Dubai	15:50	ZAV	4132	ZAV	4132	BSR	05:00	ETD	304	Jeddah	16:20		
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	UAE	857	Cairo	16:05	QTR	1077	QTR	1077	Doha	05:00	OMA	646	Abu Dhabi	16:20		
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	KAC	546	Jeddah	16:10	LMU	511	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00	KAC	619	Muscat	16:20		
RBG	1559	Alexandria	03:45	KNE	531	Dubai	16:10	OHY	351	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:00	KNE	532	Doha	16:25		
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:00	FDB	051	Cairo	16:15	IGO	1752	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10	KAC	675	Jeddah	16:55		
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	JZR	732	Doha	16:20	KAC	303	KAC	303	Mumbai	05:15	FDB	052	Dubai	17:00		
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	QTR	1072	Beirut	16:20	MSR	0517	MSR	0517	Dubai	05:25	QTR	1073	Doha	17:10		
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	502	Baku	16:45	FDB	070	FDB	070	Delhi	06:00	KAC	151	Istanbul	17:25		
DHX	170	Bahrain	04:25	KAC	198	Alexandria	17:00	IGO	1765	IGO	1765	Istanbul	06:10	KAC	503	Beirut	17:35		
MSR	0516	Cairo	04:25	FEG	241	Damascus	17:05	THY	771	THY	771	Bahrain	06:30	KAC	283	Dhaka	17:40		
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	SAW	705	Doha	17:15	GFA	212	GFA	212	Amman	06:50	UAE	858	Dubai	17:40		
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:50	JZR	116	Riyadh	17:30	RJA	643	RJA	643	Amman	07:00	FEF	242	Alexandria	17:45		
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	SVA	510	Bahrain	17:35	JZR	251	JZR	251	Amman	07:10	KAC	343	Chennai	17:50		
IGO	1759	Delhi	05:10	GFA	215	Jeddah	18:00	JZR	121	JZR	121	Dubai	07:15	KAC	381	Delhi	17:55		
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	JZR	214	Dubai	18:10	KAC	167	KAC	167	Paris	07:15	SAW	706	Damascus	18:00		
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	JZR	124	Doha	18:15	BAW	156	BAW	156	London	07:40	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:15		
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	JZR	104	Istanbul	18:20	KAC	413	KAC	413	Munich	07:45	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:20		
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	QTR	1080	Tbilisi	18:30	KAC	173	KAC	173	Bangkok	07:45	JZR	127	Dubai	18:20		
KAC	552	Cairo	05:50	KAC	158	Istanbul	18:35	JZR	211	JZR	211	Jeddah	08:00	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:25		
KAC	362	Colombo	06:05	JZR	612	Istanbul	18:40	JZR	1341	JZR	1341	Al Najaf	08:00	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:30		
BAW	157	London	06:10	JZR	302	Cairo	18:45	IGO	1767	IGO	1767	Mumbai	08:10	JZR	715	Sohag	18:35		
JZR	702	Asyut	06:10	MSR	620	Esfahan	19:00	IRA	606	IRA	606	Mashhad	08:10	JZR	733	Cairo	18:35		
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	IRA	667	Dubai	19:05	FDB	054	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35	JZR	745	Sharm el-Sheikh	18:50		
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	FDB	063	Amman	19:05	KAC	163	KAC	163	MXP	08:35	JZR	253	Amman	19:10		
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	RJA	640	Bahrain	19:05	KAC	545	KAC	545	Cairo	08:50	QTR	1081	Doha	19:20		
KAC	106	London	06:40	GFA	217	Dubai	19:20	KAC	501	KAC	501	Beirut	08:50	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30		
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	UAE	875	Sharjah	19:25	KAC	561	KAC	561	Amman	09:00	KAC	691	Muscat	19:35		
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	ABY	123	Dammam	19:30	KAC	613	KAC	613	Bahrain	09:00	FDB	064	Dubai	19:45		
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	07:05	KAC	744	Cairo	19:35	QTR	8512	QTR	8512	Doha	09:00	GFA	218	Bahrain	19:50		
IRA	601	Tehran	07:10	NIA	161	Bahrain	19:40	KAC	117	KAC	117	New York	09:05	IRA	600	Tehran	20:00		
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	KAC	616	Dubai	19:45	KAC	791	KAC	791	Madinah	09:10	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:00		
QTR	8511	Doha	07:15	KAC	674	Riyadh	19:50	QTR	1085	QTR	1085	Jeddah	09:15	KAC	357	Kochi	20:05		
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	776	Taif	20:00	KAC	787	KAC	787	Dubai	09:15	RJA	641	Amman	20:05		
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	FDB	057	Munich	20:05	KAC	671	KAC	671	Abu Dhabi	09:25	NIA	162	Cairo	20:30		
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:00	KNE	181	Muscat	20:10	KAC	661	KAC	661	Istanbul	09:35	FDB	058	Dubai	20:30		
KAC	352	Kochi	08:05	KAC	174	Asyut	20:15	KAC	157	KAC	157	Riyadh	09:40	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:30		
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	OMA	647	Beirut	20:20	KAC	173	KAC	173	Sharjah	09:40	UAE	876	Dubai	20:35		
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	NIA	1505	Dubai	20:25	KAC	126	KAC	126	Cairo	09:45	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:50		
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:30	KAC	757	KAC	757	Dubai	09:50	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50		
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	MEA	402	Beirut	20:35	KAC	1071	KAC	1071	Doha	09:55	DLH	624	Dammam	20:55		
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	JZR	126	Dubai	20:40	KAC	617	KAC	617	Doha	09:55	KAC	333	Trivandrum	21:05		
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	RBG	213	Sohag	20:45	KAC	791	KAC	791	Doha	10:00	OMA	648	Muscat	21:05		
GFA	209	Bahrain	09:05	KAC	620	Doha	20:50	KAC	671	KAC	671	Dubai	10:05	NIA	1506	Sohag	21:10		
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	QTR	8446	LGG	20:55	KAC	661	KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	10:05	RBG	214	Sohag	21:10		
GOW	061	CNN	09:30	QTR	1088	Doha	21:00	KAC	671	KAC	671	Dubai	10:10	MEA	403	Beirut	21:15		
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:05	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	301	Mumbai	21:25		
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:10	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	QTR	1089	Bahrain	21:50		
JZR	410	Delhi	09:50	UAE	859	Dubai	21:15	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
IRA	675	Lar	09:55	ALK	229	Colombo	21:20	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	KAC	168	Paris	21:25	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	10:00	THY	764	Istanbul	21:30	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	164	MXP	21:40	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	KAC	676	Dubai	21:45	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
OMS	223	Muscat	11:00	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:50	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC	564	Amman	21:55	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	QTR	1082	Doha	22:05	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
JZR	1342	Al Najaf	11:20	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
NIA	1407	Sohag	11:30	KAC	786	Jeddah	22:20	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	AIC	981	Chennai/Ahmedabad	22:25	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
AHY	119	Baku	12:05	RBG	555	Alexandria	22:30	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
JZR	252	Amman	12:20	JZR	128	Dubai	22:30	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	GEC	8486	Frankfurt	22:55	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:30	BBC	043	Dhaka	23:00	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
MSR	610	Cairo	12:45	MSC	501	Alexandria	23:10	KAC	671	KAC	671	Doha	10:10	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00		
UAE	871	Dubai																	

Lebanese protesters face off against army as demos continue

BEIRUT: A week of unprecedented Lebanese street protests against the political class showed few signs of abating yesterday, with thousands again gathering across the country, braving rain and a heavy military deployment. Protests sparked on Oct 17 by a proposed tax on calls made through WhatsApp and other messaging apps have morphed into an unprecedented cross-sectarian street mobilization against the political class.

Embattled Prime Minister Saad Hariri has presented a series of reforms including cutting ministerial salaries, but the rallies have continued - crippling the capital Beirut and other major cities. Protesters have vowed to stay on the streets until the entire government resigns. Yesterday, Hariri held a series of meetings with security and military leaders, stressing the need to "maintain security and stability and to open reads and secure the movement of citizens," according to the state-run National News Agency.

A senior military official confirmed they had orders to reopen main roads and the army deployed in increased numbers in a number of spots, including the main road north of Beirut. Groups of protesters again gathered to block them, sparking fears of the kinds of clashes seen during the first two days of the demonstrations. But protesters facing the soldiers began singing the national anthem and chanting "peaceful, peaceful".

A video of one soldier seemingly in tears at the emotion of the scene was widely shared online. "We saw the tears of soldiers standing in front of us," Eli Sfeir, a 35-year-old demonstrator, said. "They are following orders and not happy about breaking up demos." The

Lebanese army is one of the most universally supported institutions in an often divided country. Fresh demonstrations began from lunchtime with thousands again taking over main squares in Beirut and other major cities, though numbers were lower than recent days, partly impacted by the arrival of a major storm front. Banks, schools and universities remain closed.

Separately yesterday, state prosecutor charged former Prime Minister Najib Mikati over corruption allegations. Mikati, 63, along with his brother, his son and a local Lebanese bank have been accused of "illicit enrichment" over allegations of wrongly receiving millions of dollars in subsidized housing loans. The former prime minister, who was last in power in 2014, denied the allegations. If convicted, he would be the first former Lebanese prime minister to be sentenced for graft.

While the allegations have been discussed for several years, the timing of the charges was seen by some as a nod to the demonstrators, who have expressed anger at the entire political class. Mikati's estimated wealth is \$2.5 billion, making him among the 1,000 richest people in the world. At one demonstration in Beirut, Michel Khairallah, a young waiter, said people would "block the country until victory". For him that meant a new government "without corrupt ministers," made up of "young and competent people" able to finally move the country forward. "They exist, they are just waiting for their turn," he said.

More than a quarter of Lebanon's population lives in poverty, according to the World Bank. The country endured a devastating civil war that ended in 1990 and many of the political leaders are those that fought, often br-



BAALBEK, Lebanon: Protesters wave a giant Lebanese national flag during a demonstration at Khalil Mutran square in this city in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley yesterday. — AFP

tally, along religious lines. The government is set up to balance power between multiple sects, which include different Christian groups, Sunni and Shiite Muslims, as well as the Druze. But in reality it often entrenches power and influence along sectarian lines.

Hariri presented a vast economic reform plan Monday, including 50 percent salary cuts for ministers, but it did little to assuage

the demonstrators. "Too little, too late?" the French-language newspaper L'Orient Le Jour wondered in a front page editorial yesterday. Lebanese media discussed a range of options for further measures including a government reshuffle and early elections. The protests, which Lebanese politicians have accepted were spontaneous, do not have a specific leader or organizer.

Lebanon's economy has been sliding closer to the abyss in recent months, with public debt soaring past 150 percent of GDP and ratings agencies grading Lebanese sovereign bonds as "junk". Fears of a default have compounded the worries of Lebanese citizens exasperated by the poor quality of public services, with residents often suffering daily electricity shortages and unclean water. — AFP

Quantum leap in computing as Google claims 'supremacy'

PARIS: Scientists claimed yesterday to have achieved a near-mythical state of computing in which a new generation of machine vastly outperforms the world's fastest super-computer, known as "quantum supremacy". A team of experts working on Google's Sycamore machine said their quantum system had executed a calculation in 200 seconds that would have taken a classic computer 10,000 years to complete. A rival team at IBM has already expressed skepticism about their claim.

But if verified and harnessed, the Google device could make even the world's most powerful supercomputers - capable of performing thousands of trillions of calculations per second - look like an early 2000s flip-phone. Regular computers, even the fastest, function in binary fashion: They carry out tasks using tiny fragments of data known as bits that are only ever either 1 or 0. But fragments of data on a quantum computer, known as qubits, can be both 1 and 0 at the same time.

This property, known as superposition, means a quantum computer, made up of several qubits, can crunch an enormous number of potential outcomes simultaneously. The computer harnesses some of the most mind-boggling aspects of quantum mechanics, including a phenomenon known as "entanglement" - in which two members of a pair of bits can exist in a single state, even if far apart. Adding extra qubits therefore leads to an exponential boost in processing power.

In a study published in Nature, the international team designed the Sycamore quantum processor, made up of 54 qubits interconnected in a lattice pattern. They used the machine to perform a task related to random-

number generation, identifying patterns amid seemingly random spools of figures. The Sycamore, just a few millimeters across, solved the task within 200 seconds, a process that on a regular machine would take 10,000 years - several hundreds of millions of times faster, in other words.

Google's CEO Sundar Pichai hailed the result as a sea change in computing. "For those of us working in science and technology, it's the 'hello world' moment we've been waiting for - the most meaningful milestone to date in the quest to make quantum computing a reality," he wrote in a blog post. "This demonstration of quantum supremacy over today's leading classical algorithms on the world's leading supercomputers is truly a remarkable achievement." William Oliver, a computer researcher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, wrote in a comment piece on the discovery.

The quest for quantum supremacy is still far from over, however. The authors themselves acknowledge the need for better hardware and more sophisticated monitoring techniques in order to truly harness the power of quantum. Some immediate applications of quantum computing could be in encryption software and AI, but its calculations could eventually lead to more efficient solar panels, drug design and even quicker and better financial transactions.

Yesterday's announcement was not without controversy. After a leaked draft of the Google lab's paper appeared online last month, chip-maker IBM, which runs its own quantum computing program, said the boasts of the Sycamore computer's feats were exaggerated. Instead of 10,000 years for an ordinary supercomputer to match Sycamore's performance, IBM scientists in a blog post claimed it would be more like two-and-a-half years using the most sophisticated traditional processors. "Because the original meaning of the term 'quantum supremacy'... was to describe the point where quantum computers can do things that classical computers can't, this threshold has not been met," they wrote. — AFP

that should call for reconciliation and pardons to overcome internal and external challenges.

But well-informed sources strongly denied that the government fully agrees with lawmakers concerning discussing the amnesty bill to acquit those indicted for breaking into the parliament and bloggers who profess political opinions. "A general amnesty is only in the hands of HH the Amir," the sources stressed, noting that passing a law to pardon certain individuals would be unconstitutional, and this is why the government refuses discussing it in parliament.

of swathes of territory that the regime started leaving in 2012. Yesterday, regime reinforcements arrived in the Raqqa and Hassakeh governorates, according to state news agency SANA. Damascus has previously accused Kurds of treason over their alliance with Washington and repeatedly said it would eventually restore government control over all parts of Syria.

The Kremlin yesterday accused Washington of betraying the Kurds by withdrawing its forces and leaving allies alone in the face of a Turkish offensive. Pentagon chief Mark Esper arrived in Baghdad for talks with his Iraqi counterpart Najah Al-Shammari as Washington pulled out troops from northern Syria through Iraq. Trump said yesterday that a "small number" of US troops will remain at Syria's oil fields, despite the broader American withdrawal.

While they are back opposing sides, Turkey and Russia have been cooperating to bring an end to Syria's devastating war. Tuesday's agreement said the two countries were determined "to combat terrorism in all forms... and to disrupt separatist agendas in Syrian territory". The deal said efforts would also be launched for the return of refugees to Syria "in a safe and voluntary manner". Ankara has said some of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees in Turkey can be rehoused inside the safe zone. —AFP

New Tunisian president vows...

Continued from Page 1

After sweeping 72.71 percent of the vote in this month's runoff, Saïed has won a clear mandate to fight corruption and promote social justice, even though his role focuses on security and diplomacy. The poll followed the death in July of Beji Caid Essebsi, Tunisia's first president freely elected by universal suffrage.

A constitutional law professor whose rigid and austere demeanor earned him the nickname "Robocop", Saïed vowed as president to "reunite" all Tunisians. Despite having spearheaded the Arab Spring revolt that ousted dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011 and gaining unprecedented freedoms along the way, Tunisians have been bitterly divided between old political classes and Islamist forces. Saïed said his countrymen were "free in their beliefs and choices" but stressed the state must be immune from "political calculations". "The people (Tunisians) have waited for so long...wanting to move from despair to hope", he added.

Honing his main talking points that distinguished him in the electoral race, Saïed promised to uphold the rule of law. He also reassured the chamber that "women's rights would not be diminished", which received a rousing round of applause from a packed parliament. He went on to stress that he would "strengthen the rights

of the Tunisian woman, especially her socioeconomic rights". Saïed has previously rejected a bid to overhaul Tunisia's inheritance law - which remains based on Islamic law, meaning that women inherit half of their male siblings' part.

An international novice with no real foreign policy experience, he emphasized Tunisia's respect for "various international agreements but also to revise them according to the interest and will of the people". The professor who up until his swearing-in yesterday lived in a middle-class Tunis neighborhood will now be moving to the presidential palace in Carthage.

Tunis, which currently chairs the Arab League, could renew diplomatic ties with Syria, severed since 2012, and play a role in the return of the war-torn country to the bloc. He has made strong statements against Israel, considering any ties with the Jewish state to be "high treason" - an Arab nationalist position that earned him praise among supporters.

While the security situation has significantly improved since a series of high-profile attacks on tourists in 2015, Tunisia has maintained a state of emergency for four years, with assaults against security forces persisting. On June 27, a suicide attack killed two people in the heart of the capital Tunis, reviving the specter of violence. During the campaign debate, Saïed said a key to fighting terrorism was education, arguing that improving primary education would "immunize" youth against extremism. Another significant task he will face is reforming the police force, which was a cog in the dictatorship toppled by the Arab Spring revolt of 2011 and which continues to be accused of human rights abuses. — AFP

Opposition figures appeal for amnesty...

Continued from Page 1

elections. Islamist opposition lawmaker Mohammad Al-Dallal yesterday called for a national reform initiative

Russian forces head for border...

Continued from Page 1

But the blast in Suluk, controlled by Ankara's rebel proxies, killed three fighters, a rebel commander there told AFP. It was unclear who was responsible.

Kurds staged angry demonstrations yesterday in their de facto capital Qamishli, which is excluded from the Sochi agreement. "This deal serves the interests of foreign powers and not the interests of the people," said official Talaat Youndes. "Turkey's objective is to kill, displace and occupy the Kurds." Turkey's Oct 9 assault was made possible by a pullback of US troops deployed along the border as a buffer force between their NATO ally Turkey and the Kurdish fighters of the SDF. The withdrawal by the erstwhile allies left the Kurds completely in the lurch, forcing them to turn to the Damascus regime for protection from an expanded Turkish offensive.

Government forces, who are backed by the Russian military, rushed north within days, ostensibly to pin back Turkish-backed rebels but also to reclaim control



GRAYS, United Kingdom: A police officer secures the cordon at the scene where a lorry containing 39 dead bodies was discovered at Waterglade Industrial Park yesterday. — AFP

Horror in UK as 39 found...

Continued from Page 1

"We have arrested the lorry driver in connection with the incident, who remains in police custody."

Police said the truck had come by ferry from the Belgian port of Zeebrugge into Purfleet, close to Grays on the River Thames estuary - a crossing that takes nine to 12 hours. They said the ferry docked at 12:30 am (2330 GMT). Police also said the truck came "from Bulgaria". But the country's Prime Minister Boyko Borisov said it had "no connection" to the country except for having Bulgarian license plates. "The truck was registered in 2017 by an Irish citizen, it left Bulgaria then and has not entered our country's territory ever since," he told national television.

Dimitar Dimitrov, executive director of the Bulgarian Chamber of Road Hauliers, told AFP many foreign hauliers registered in Bulgaria for financial reasons, and doubted whether a Bulgarian firm would employ Irish drivers. Britain's National Crime Agency said the num-

ber of migrants being smuggled into the UK in containers and trucks had risen in the last year. In May the NCA said there had been "increasing use of higher risk methods of clandestine entry" to Britain by organized immigration crime gangs.

Jackie Doyle-Price, the MP representing the local Thurrock constituency, called people trafficking a "vile and dangerous business". "To put 39 people into a locked metal container shows a contempt for human life that is evil," she said. The gruesome discovery drew comparisons to previous cases. In 2000, the bodies of 58 clandestine Chinese immigrants were discovered in a Dutch truck at the southeastern English port of Dover. Two people survived.

In 2014, some 34 Afghan Sikhs were found inside a shipping container at Tilbury port - next to Grays - suffering from severe dehydration, hypothermia and lack of air. One man was found dead, having passed away during the sea crossing from Belgium. In Aug 2015, at the peak of Europe's migration crisis, the bodies of 71 migrants including a baby girl were found piled up in the back of a poultry refrigerator lorry left in Austria. Investigations later revealed they had been transported along the Balkan migrant route and left to suffocate in the back of the truck after the driver dumped the vehicle near the Hungarian border. — AFP

Sports

Mertens, Yastremska move closer to WTA Elite Trophy semi-finals

‘Flat’ Zverev crashes out in Basel first round

ZHUHAI: Belgian sixth seed Elise Mertens beat Maria Sakkari 6-2 3-6 6-1 in their round-robin match yesterday to end the Greek's hopes of making the WTA Elite Trophy semi-finals in Zhuhai, China.

Although Mertens was let down by her serve on several occasions with eight double faults, she converted seven break points.

Her final round-robin clash with Aryna Sabalenka is now a virtual quarter-final after the Belarusian beat Sakkari in straight sets on Tuesday.

"To win this match is actually a relief to play Aryna next, because you know if you lost the match in two sets or three sets it's another situation," Mertens told reporters, referring to the rules that decide who advances to the semis. "So it's kind of a good thing that I won this match, even if it was in three sets. It actually doesn't really matter any more because Aryna won... in two sets." One player from each of the four groups of three advances to the semi-finals.

In the other group, Ukraine's 10th seed Dayana Yastremska beat Donna Vekic 7-6(6) 6-2 without dropping serve to end the Croatian's run in Zhuhai. Yastremska next faces top seed Kiki Bertens, who beat eighth seed Vekic on Tuesday, for a place in the semis.

In an all-American battle, second seed Sofia Kenin came away with a 6-4 6-4 win over seventh seed Alison Riske, who plays the Czech Republic's Karolina Muchova on Thursday in a must-win match to stay alive in the tournament.

In Basel, World number six Alexander Zverev described his 7-6 (9/7), 6-4 loss to Taylor Fritz as 'flat' as he was knocked out of the ATP Swiss Indoors on Tuesday. The German's loss to the 21-year-old American came barely a week after defeat in the Shanghai Masters final to Daniil Medvedev and puts his chance of defending his ATP Finals title at risk.

"I was completely flat for some reason," he said. "I

was tired and not focused at all. It was a weird feeling," he added. Zverev won the season-ending tournament last November, beating Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic back-to-back.

The season points race will be determined next week at the Paris Masters as the last two of the eight spots are decided. "The way I played today, in my current mental stage, I'm not going to beat anybody," Zverev, ranked seventh in the world, said.

"I'm very disappointed but it's more about myself than the result." Zverev, a semi-finalist last year in Basel, fought hard to take the opening set into a tiebreaker, but was overwhelmed in the second by his American opponent in 86 minutes.

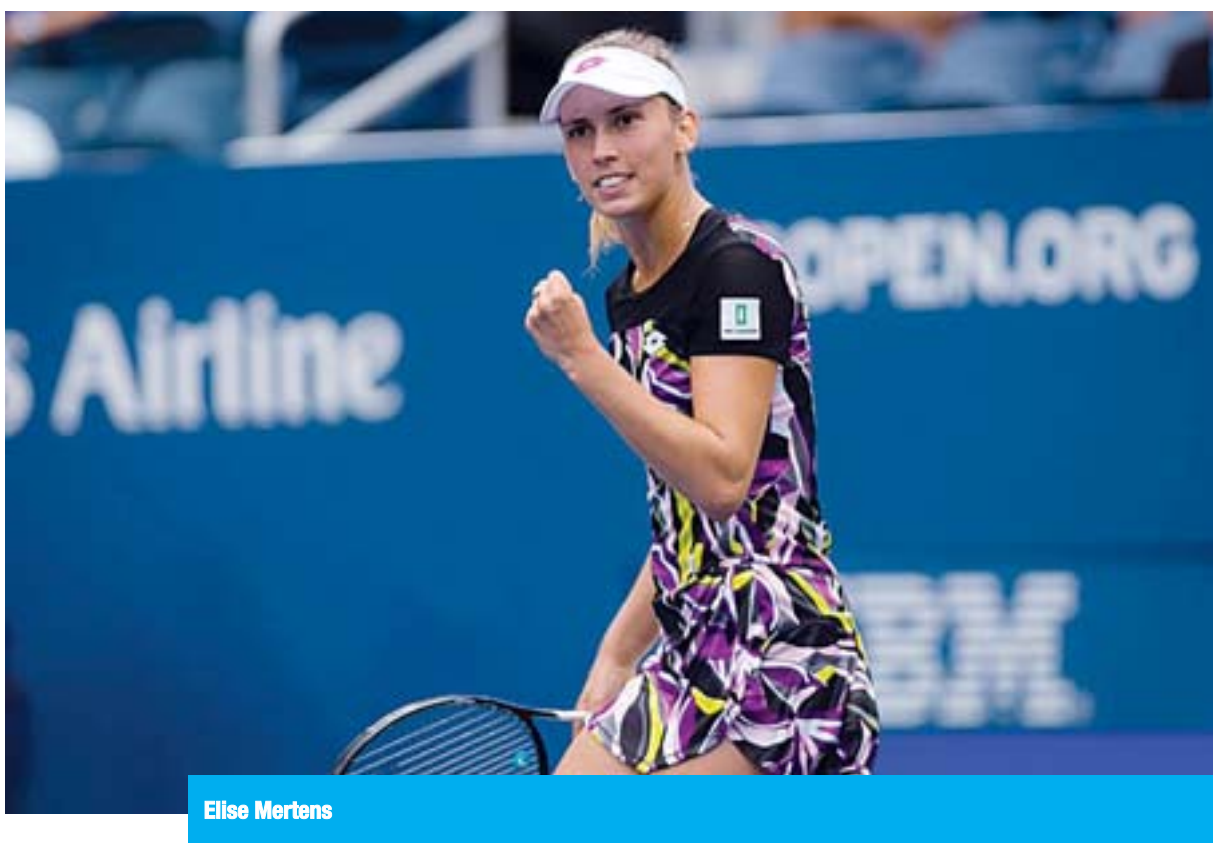
"Normally I really enjoy it on court, the tough moments, the fighting," Zverev said. "But today I was completely out of it. I may go home for a few days and clear my mind. I'll try to do well in Paris and hopefully make it to London."

Fritz, ranked 31st in the world and a winner at Eastbourne in June, saved both break points against his serve. London-bound third seed Stefanos Tsitsipas came through with a 6-3, 7-6 (8/6) win over Spaniard Albert Ramos-Vinolas.

"I knew it was going to be a difficult battle out there. He fought hard and gave me a hard time, but I'm satisfied and happy that this match didn't go longer or to three sets," Tsitsipas said. The Greek now boasts wins in eight of his last 10 matches including a final in Beijing to Dominic Thiem.

Fabio Fognini picked up his London qualifying pace with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over Australian Alexei Popyrin. The Italian winner reached the second round in 78 minutes to reinforce his year-end bid.

The Monte Carlo Masters champion stands 11th in the chase for one of the remaining eight ATP Finals spots. "If I qualify - fine. If not, then I can spend more



Elise Mertens

time with the family, that's the most important thing anyway," he said.

Moldovan Radu Albot will line up in the second round against nine-time champion Roger Federer on Wednesday after a 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 comeback over Serb Dusan Lajovic.

The US' Riley Opelka hammered 27 aces in his 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (12/10) defeat of Chile's Christian Garin and will face either sixth seed David Goffin or Marin Cilic. Two-time Basel semi-finalist Richard Gasquet advanced past Argentine Juan Ignacio Londero 6-1, 7-6 (7/4). —Agencies

Kuwait boxing season begins on Saturday

KUWAIT: The 2019-2020 boxing season will be launched on Saturday with the first juniors (under 16 & 17) championship with the participation of 12 clubs, as the championship will conclude on Tuesday at Jahra Club.

There will be 12 championships during the current season distributed over four various age groups 3 for beginners, 3 for youngsters, 3 for juniors, 2 for men and a refresher championship for all.

Secretary General of Kuwait Boxing Federation Salem Al-Azmi said all is ready for a successful season, as he thanked the clubs for their cooperation and positive participation in the federation's events.

He wished all to be successful in achieving the goals, and welcomed all suggestions and views for the general interest of Kuwait's boxing.

Al-Azmi lauded the cooperation of the Olympic Committee headed by Chairman of the Board Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad and Secretary General Hussein Al-Musallam. He also thanked Director General of Public Authority for Sports Dr Humoud Fulaiteh and his deputy Dr Saqer Al-Mulla.

He said we appreciate the interest of sports leadership and its keenness to support federations through removing obstacles.



Malaysia's Tan wins gold at 25th Asian Bowling Championship



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Malaysian Timmy Tan kept his first place title by winning the individual's gold medal of the 25th Asian Ten Pin Bowling Championship.

Tan scored 1,556 to repeat his achievement of three years earlier during the previous championship in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, India's Dhruv Sarda claimed second place with the score of

1,524 and Japan's Shusaku Asato took third place with 1,522 points.

Today, the fifth day of competition will see a fierce competition for the gold medal of the men's doubles as the first group will start at 9:10 am and will end at 12:40 pm, then the second group will start at 2:20 pm and concludes at 5:50 pm.

The Hong Kong doubles team is highly expected to keep their gold medal



—Photos by Fouad Al Shaikh

they won in the previous championship that was held in Hong Kong 2018.

Meanwhile, head of the Philippines Bowling Federation Alex Lim lauded the high level competition in the championship that is being held in a major and unique center in Asia.

Lim lauded Kuwait Bowling Center and the organization which came due to the major effort of the higher organizing committee headed by the President of

International and Asian Bowling Federations, Chairman of Kuwait Bowling Club Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad, as was evident during the opening ceremony.

He said his country has good chances to compete for top places, although it was absent for the past four championships, as the last time it won was in 2008 with two gold, one silver and a bronze.

Iran slams judo ban it says is based on 'false claims'

TEHRAN: Iran's judo federation yesterday slammed a newly imposed ban on its fighters taking part in international competitions, saying it was based on "false claims". The International Judo Federation said Tuesday it had banned Iran indefinitely over the country's refusal to allow its fighters to face Israeli opponents.

The IJF issued a provisional ban last month while probing allegations Iranian judoka Saeid Mollaei had

been ordered to lose a combat in order to avoid facing an Israeli at the World Championships in August.

The Iranian federation's chief Arash Miresmaeili denounced the decision as a "cruel and a blatant betrayal", the state news agency IRNA said. "The international federation shouldn't have taken such a measure against judo in Iran merely based on a false claim by an athlete," he was quoted as saying.

The decision, he said, would prevent teams of Iranian fighters from various age groups from being sent abroad. Mollaei, who was defending his title at the World Championships in Tokyo, had said he was ordered to throw his semi-final rather than risk facing an Israeli in the final of the -81kg class.

The Iranian, 27, was defeated in the semi-final and also went on to lose his third-place fight. He said later that he had been instructed to withdraw from the com-

petition by the presidents of Iran's judo federation and Olympics committee.

At the time, the Iranian federation rejected the charges and denied attempting to force Mollaei to withdraw from the championships. Iran does not recognise Israel and its athletes usually refrain from facing Israeli opponents, whether by giving up the match or simply not participating, and are later praised by top officials.

One of the most famous cases was Miresmaeili himself, a two-time judo world champion who showed up overweight for his bout against an Israeli at the Olympics in Athens in 2004 and was disqualified.

He was praised by Iran's then-president Mohammad Khatami and the ultraconservative media and eventually made his way to become the judo federation's chief. —AFP

Russia anti-doping boss expects lengthy Olympic ban

MOSCOW: Russia's anti-doping chief is predicting a lengthy Olympic ban for the national squad, lashing out at Moscow authorities who he says handed over falsified lab data to international investigators.

The accusations are the latest scandal to hit Russian sport after the country was banned from competing in several international competitions over state-sponsored doping. "Russia's Olympic squad will be prevented from participating fully in the Olympic Games in Tokyo... I think that this will also happen at the (Winter Olympic) Games in China," the head of Russia's RUSADA agency, Yuri Ganus, told AFP in an exclusive interview.

The best-case scenario in his view is very limited participation "by certain athletes, by invitation", as happened at the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. He expects other penalties too, including restrictions on holding international tournaments in

Russia, exclusion of Russians from international sports federations and fines.

In September, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) demanded Russia explain "inconsistencies" in electronic data it handed over which listed results of tests carried out under the laboratory's previous leadership.

The data handover was supposed to demonstrate Russia's desire for transparency after the scandalous revelations that RUSADA facilitated state-sponsored doping between 2011 and 2015.

Russian sports minister Pavel Kolobkov sent a letter of explanation to WADA about the data it queried on October 8. But Ganus — who says he has not had access to that letter — suggests the scale of the data manipulation is such that these explanations are likely to be insufficient.

On October 23, WADA's Compliance Review Committee, which has powers to recommend sanctions, is set to meet experts who have analysed the data and looked at Russia's explanations.

The walls of Ganus's office in central Moscow are covered with posters promoting clean sport and messages of support from counterparts around the world. He insists his organisation had nothing to do with the

data manipulation because it did not have access to the database in question.

He believes that high-ranking officials must have carried out the fraud since the laboratory data was "under the control of Russia's Investigative Committee." The powerful agency is leading criminal investigations into laboratory employees who were allegedly involved in state-sponsored doping.

But Ganus wonders what those investigations could hope to achieve now the credibility of authorities has been so undermined in his eyes. He hints that officials may have intervened to protect top athletes from the revelation of their use of doping.

"Whose names were in there? What was there in the data? This data was information about athletes' test samples. "Who were the people who were able to infiltrate the Investigative Committee, what state powers did they have? This is extremely serious," Ganus says. The falsifications took place "on the eve of the transfer (of the data) to WADA".

Ganus, whose appointment as head of RUSADA in 2017 was supposed to drag Russia out of a morass, now sees the country at a crossroads. "This is a blow to the current generation of athletes and to future generations as well," he says. "It's a tragedy." —AFP



South Africa’s Boks braced for ‘slippery’ Wales in Rugby World Cup semi-final

It’s going to be a massive battle in the air: De Klerk

TOKYO: Party-poopers South Africa will need to be at their very best to overturn recent history against Wales in this weekend’s World Cup semi-final, scrum-half Faf de Klerk warned yesterday.

Warren Gatland’s side represent a clear and present danger to South Africa’s title hopes, the Welsh having beaten the two-time world champions in five of their previous six meetings following years of Springboks dominance.

To avoid slipping on a potential banana skin, de Klerk promised the Boks would come out firing in Yokohama on Sunday after ending the fairytale run of hosts Japan with a 26-3 mauling of the tournament darlings last weekend.

“It’s definitely going to be a slippery one,” said the pint-sized scrum-half with the flowing blonde locks. “But as a team we’re more in tune with how they want to play. Whoever you play in a World Cup semi-final, they’re going to pose threats — not just Wales. Any team could be a bogey team on the day. We’re just going to have to be up for it.”

De Klerk added: “It’s going to be a massive battle in the air. It’s going to come down to three or four moments.” South Africa, who have failed to reach the World Cup final since lifting the Webb Ellis Cup in 2007, finished behind defending champions New Zealand in Pool B after losing 23-13 to the All Blacks in their opening game.

But assistant coach Mzwandile Stick insisted the Springboks were coming to the boil nicely after that early wake-up call. “We were guilty in that New Zealand game of not converting our opportunities into

points,” he said, promising a more clinical performance against Wales, who edged 14-man France 20-19 in their quarter-final.

“We’re expecting a tough battle against Wales, especially with their kicking game,” added Stick. “Wales are a territory-driven team and always suffocate teams — they don’t allow them to come into their half. It’s going to be key for us that when we get our opportunities, we convert them.

“If you look at (Gareth) Davies at nine and guys like (Liam) Williams and (Dan) Biggar — these are guys who’ve been around. They’ve got a lot of experience.” But Stick tipped explosive wingers Makazole Mapimpi, who has bagged 13 tries in 12 Tests, including two against Japan, and Cheslin Kolbe (seven in 13) to terrorise the Welsh, noting: “Makazole has always been one of the best finishers in the game.”

Kolbe, who has been playing on a sore ankle since South Africa’s third pool game against Italy two weeks ago, should be fit to play, added Stick. With the winners set to face New Zealand or England in the final, Stick also weighed in on the “spy-gate” row that erupted when England coach Eddie Jones claimed team officials had spotted a hidden camera filming their training.

England assistant coach John Mitchell, a Kiwi and former New Zealand boss, suggested the secret sleuths had been sent by the All Blacks. “I find it stupid to do it,” said Stick. “You’re not only fooling yourself, or cheating the people around you. You’re cheating to the world.

“I don’t think we will ever do something like that,” he added. “It’s not part of what we stand for as South Africans.” —AFP



TOKYO: South Africa’s players take part in a training session at Fuchu Asahi Football Park in Tokyo yesterday, ahead of their Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup semi-final against Wales.—AFP

Paralympic champion Marieke Vervoort ends life by euthanasia

BRUSSELS: Belgian Paralympic champion Marieke Vervoort ended her life through euthanasia at the age of 40 on Tuesday, Belgian media reported.

Euthanasia is legal in Belgium and the spiky-haired athlete announced her intentions after the Rio Games in 2016 to follow that path if her degenerative condition worsened her suffering.

But she said at the time that sport had given her a reason to keep living. “I’m still enjoying every little moment. When the moment comes when I have more bad days than good days, then I have my euthanasia papers, but the time is not there yet,” she told a news conference during the 2016 Paralympic Games.

Vervoort suffered a degenerative muscle disease that caused constant pain, paralysis in her legs and left her barely able to sleep, and gradually her life became torture.

She was just 14 years old when diagnosed but Vervoort pursued a sporting life with passion — playing wheelchair basketball, swimming and racing in triathlons.

She won the 100m gold and 200m silver wheelchair races at the 2012 London Games, as well as the 400m silver and 100m bronze in Brazil four years later.

By then her eyesight had deteriorated and she suffered from epileptic attacks, and she said that Rio would be her last competition.

“After the Paralympic Games, when I quit, I’m going to enjoy every little moment in my life and I’m going to put more energy in my family and friends, which I couldn’t do with top sports because I had to train every day,” she said in 2016.

Vervoort signed the paperwork to be euthanised back in 2008.

She said in Rio that access to legal assisted dying had given her the courage to continue living for as long as she had, and insisted the practice should not be characterised as “murder”.

“It gives a feeling of rest to people,” she said then.

“If I hadn’t gotten those (euthanasia) papers I think I would already have committed suicide because it’s very hard to live with so much pain and suffering and this unsureness. “I know when it’s enough for me, I have those papers.” —AFP

Hamilton zooming in on sixth title in the Americas

MEXICO CITY: Lewis Hamilton looks sure to join Michael Schumacher as only the second six-times Formula One world champion but the Briton will need to do something special to achieve the feat in Mexico on Sunday.

Expect Ferrari and Red Bull, as well as Mercedes team mate Valtteri Bottas, to go flat out to make him wait at least until Texas, the following weekend, to step closer to Schumacher’s record seven titles.

Sole rival Bottas is 64 points behind and Hamilton needs to score 14 points more than the Finn.

That means a podium finish as the bare minimum if the 34-year-old is to seal the championship with three races to spare, and history suggests that will be no easy matter.

Hamilton has not finished in the top three at Formula One’s highest altitude circuit, the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez which stands at 2,285 metres above sea level, since he won there in 2016.

“I think Mexico is generally our worst race of the year because of the way our car is set up and it’s going to be a tough one for us,” he said after the Japanese Grand Prix. Team boss Toto Wolff agreed: “The four remaining races are not going to be easy and we expect Mexico to be the most difficult one for us.”

If the champions struggle in the thin air, as they have for the past two years,

then Ferrari and Red Bull can scent an opportunity. Red Bull’s Max Verstappen is chasing an unprecedented Mexican hat-trick after winning in 2017 and 2018 while Ferrari’s Sebastian Vettel and Charles Leclerc have started the last five races on pole position between them.

Since Mexico returned to the calendar in 2015, the winner has always come from the front row. Last year’s race ended without a Mercedes driver on the podium, while Hamilton was only ninth in 2017.

While Verstappen — twice a winner this year with his Honda-powered team — has been playing down his chances, sceptics will recall he also did that last year.

“I don’t think there’s one track left this season where we can do a particularly good job,” motorsport.com quoted the Dutch youngster as saying after the

Japanese Grand Prix. “If we can just finish close to the podium or on the podium every weekend, then I think that’s the maximum for us at the moment.”

Not since 1990 has a Ferrari driver triumphed in Mexico, a statistic that sounds significant only until you realise there was a 23-year gap until 2015, but the omens are looking promising. Ferrari have been faster than anyone over a single lap and on the straights.

Hamilton and Bottas, the winner in Japan, will be able to race without any team considerations now that Mercedes have clinched the constructors’ title for a sixth year in a row and an unprecedented sixth successive title double.

The last back-to-back round of the season is a sell-out for the fifth year in a row. Racing Point’s Sergio Perez is again the only Mexican on the starting grid. —Reuters

Ganguly vows corruption free BCCI

MUMBAI: Former captain Sourav Ganguly yesterday vowed to clean up Indian cricket as he was elected president of the sport’s rich and powerful but troubled national board.

Cricket’s massive popularity in India has made the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) by far the wealthiest of all the national boards, netting massive sums from sponsorship and TV deals.

But it has also been embroiled in a series of scandals, including accusations of corruption and match-fixing that tarnished the Indian Premier League (IPL) — the country’s lucrative Twenty20 extravaganza.

The appointment of the 47-year-old Ganguly — for an initial 10 months only — at a meeting in Mumbai on Wednesday ends more than two years of a committee appointed by India’s top court overseeing the board’s affairs.

“It’s an honour that I have been asked to take this role by the members when it’s a new start for the BCCI,” Ganguly, wearing his India captain’s blazer, said in his first address as BCCI chief.

“Things need to be brought back in place, reforms need to be done, huge amounts of money to be paid to state associations.

“It’s a challenge and I’ll do it the way I know. The way which I feel is best for BCCI with no compromise on credibility, corruption-free and same-for-all BCCI. That’s the way I led India and that’s the way I will take forward this organisation with whatever time I have.”

A corruption and match-fixing scandal in the sixth edition of the IPL in 2013 brought about the downfall of the board’s then-president Narayanaswami Srinivasan after his son-in-law was accused of betting on matches.

The appointment of his successor Anurag Thakur and his number two Ajay Shirke was seen as represent-



Former cricketer Sourav Ganguly (2L), newly-elected president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), poses with BCCI office bearers joint-secretary Jayesh George (L), secretary Jay Shah (2R), and treasurer Arun Singh Dhumal, after a press conference at the BCCI headquarters in Mumbai on October 23, 2019. Former India captain Sourav Ganguly is poised to take over as the president of the country’s cricket board as nominations closed Monday for elections to the sport

ing a break with the past.

But in January 2017 Thakur and Shirke were axed by the Supreme Court over their inability to enact a series of recommended reforms.

The order came after judges slapped restrictions on the BCCI’s accounts in 2016 over its failure to implement changes put forward by a panel headed by a former top judge, Rajendra Mal Lodha.

The court then appointed a top anti-corruption troubleshooter, Vinod Rai, as head of a team to oversee the running of board.

But the board’s reluctance to implement Lodha’s recommendations, which included age limits and term

limits on office-bearers, had triggered a number of legal battles. Ganguly promised to listen to national skipper Virat Kohli, the “most important man in Indian cricket”, and said he would speak to the star player today.

“Virat Kohli is the most important man in Indian cricket, we will listen to him. Mutual respect will be there, opinions will be there,” Ganguly said.

“We will support him in every possible way, whatever he wants.”

Ganguly, a left-handed opener, retired from Test cricket in 2008 having accumulated 7,212 runs including 16 centuries — his first made at Lord’s on debut. —AFP

McIlroy shrugs off Koepka verbal jab

CHIBA: Rory McIlroy has shrugged off a verbal jab from world number one Brooks Koepka, damping down talk of a special rivalry between the pair given the depth of talent at the top of the rankings.

The current PGA Tour Player of the Year played down comments by four-time major winner Koepka that appeared to set aside McIlroy’s claims as a serious rival, given he’s failed to snare a major since 2014.

“Parity in golf is something that is quite a real thing right now. Five people could put their hand up and say they’re the best player

in the world,” the Northern Irishman said yesterday. He was speaking in the wake of comments last week by Koepka in which the American was almost dismissive when giving his thoughts about McIlroy.

“I’ve been out here for, what, five years? Rory hasn’t won a major since I’ve been on the PGA Tour, so I just don’t view it as a rivalry,” Koepka said at the CJ Cup in South Korea, where he later withdrew with a knee injury.

All of which is true. McIlroy and Koepka have both won four majors, but McIlroy’s last triumph was in 2014, while Koepka’s have all come in the last three years. The American had a magnificent major campaign this year, with one victory (PGA Championship), two runner-up finishes and a fourth placing.

But McIlroy, who won the PGA Tour’s sea-

son-long points race, was nonetheless voted by his peers as Player of the Year, notwithstanding his pedestrian results in the majors. McIlroy sought to broaden the discussion on Wednesday as more than a two-man rivalry.

“I think any storyline where it’s competitive at the top is going to be good for golf,” he said on the eve of the Zozo Championship at Narashino Country Club. “It doesn’t have to be between me and Brooks. It could be between Justin Thomas and Dustin Johnson, it could be between anyone.

“I would never want to make this just between two players because I think everyone in this room knows golf is such a fickle sport and one minute you can be on the top of the world and the next minute you’re missing cuts and whatever.” —Reuters



Rory McIlroy

Sports

Sterling, Mbappe light up Champions League with hat-tricks while Spurs claim key win

Lewandowski fires Bayern to victory

PARIS: Raheem Sterling and Kylian Mbappe both scored second-half hat-tricks in UEFA Champions League action on Tuesday as Manchester City, Paris Saint-Germain and Tottenham Hotspur all recorded big victories.

Juventus, Real Madrid and Bayern Munich laboured to wins on a night which brought 30 goals in eight games, a third of which were scored by Premier League clubs. Sterling's three goals came 11 minutes apart in the second half as Pep Guardiola's City thumped Atalanta 5-1 at the Etihad Stadium to maintain their perfect record in Group C. The Italians had earlier taken the lead from Ruslan Malinovskyi's 28th-minute penalty, but they were soon overrun and remain without a point in their debut Champions League campaign.

Sergio Aguero equalised from a Sterling assist and the Argentine scored a penalty to put City ahead before the break. Sterling then took over, although City finished with 10 men as Phil Foden was sent off late on.

"I should have had four. Riyad Mahrez put me through and I was looking to put one on a plate for him. But I went through and should have finished it," Sterling admitted to BT Sport. City's will seal a place in the last 16 if they win away to Atalanta next, as nearest rivals Shakhtar Donetsk and Dinamo Zagreb played out a 2-2 draw in Ukraine earlier. Yevhen Konoplyanka and Brazilian substitute Dodo netted for Shakhtar, with Dinamo's goals coming in between from Dani Olmo and a Mislav Orsic penalty. Compared to Sterling, Mbappe took a sluggish 22 minutes to score his three goals in PSG's 5-0 romp away to former European Cup runners-up Club Brugge in Belgium in Group A.

Mauro Icardi scored twice for the French champions, who were without the injured Neymar but had Angel Di Maria in exceptional form — the Argentine set up four goals. According to sports statisticians Opta, the last

player to come off the bench and score a hat-trick in the Champions League was Spaniard Joseba Llorente for Villarreal in 2008.

"I wanted to start and I thought I was going to start, but the coach made his choice and I had to accept it. I also wanted to show that it's difficult to get by without me," Mbappe told French broadcaster RMC Sport.

PSG have a maximum nine points, are yet to concede a goal in Europe this season and will be through to the last 16 with a win at home to Club next month.

Below them, Real Madrid are up to second after claiming their first win in Europe this season. Eden Hazard set up Toni Kroos for a first-half strike that handed them a 1-0 victory over Galatasaray in Istanbul.

Meanwhile, there was a welcome win for Mauricio Pochettino's Tottenham, who crushed Red Star Belgrade 5-0 in north London, three weeks on from their 7-2 humiliation at the hands of Bayern Munich at the same venue.

Captain Harry Kane scored twice for Spurs either side of a Son Heung-min brace and an Erik Lamela goal as they moved up to second place in Group B on four points. "We know we have had a tough run of results and that was the perfect way to respond," said Kane.

They remain five points behind group leaders Bayern Munich, for whom Robert Lewandowski bagged two in a 3-2 win at Olympiakos that maintained their perfect record. The Pole has 18 goals this season and 58 career Champions League goals — only Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, Raul and Karim Benzema have more. Youssef El Arabi gave Olympiakos the lead, but Lewandowski's brace either side of half-time changed the game and Corentin Tolisso fired in a magnificent third before Guilherme pulled one back.

In Turin, Juventus needed a late Paulo Dybala pair to come from behind and beat Lokomotiv Moscow 2-1 in



Group D. Aleksei Miranchuk gave the Russians the lead on the half-hour and it took a stunning strike by Dybala to bring the Italian champions back level with 13 minutes left. Moments later the same player scored from the fol-

low-up after Alex Sandro's shot was saved. Juve are level atop Group D on seven points with Atletico Madrid, who edged out Bayer Leverkusen 1-0 thanks to Alvaro Morata's 78th-minute header. — AFP

West Brom hit back to earn Barnsley draw

LONDON: West Bromwich Albion fought back from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Barnsley as the Championship leaders maintained their advantage at the top on Tuesday. Slaven Bilic's side were stunned when Cauley Woodrow headed rock bottom Barnsley in front at The Hawthorns after 18 minutes and doubled their lead just six minutes later.

But West Brom pulled a goal back when Bambo Diaby headed a corner into his own net at the near post. Matheus Pereira grabbed the equaliser nine minutes from time. "There's no such thing as a free lunch in

life or in the Championship. That is why I think this is a fantastic point for us," Bilic said.

"The message at half-time was for everybody to calm down. We were rushing things, trying to play the killer pass too early, trying to play sexy football. "I'm very pleased that the players kept their concentration and their shape. By doing that I was always confident we would create opportunities or force errors."

Albion remain two points clear of second-placed Leeds, who drew 1-1 at Preston. Tom Barkhuizen fired Preston in front at Deepdale and Leeds were grateful to on-loan Arsenal forward Eddie Nketiah for heading the equaliser with three minutes remaining.

"After Preston's goal, we multiplied our efforts to try to score. After we scored, we could have won the match," Leeds manager Marcelo Bielsa said. "But we cannot ignore that Preston had some chances to score

again and maybe they could have won."

Sheffield yesterday's 1-0 victory over Stoke moved them into third place as Massimo Luongo pounced on an error from Liam Lindsay to score the only goal just before the interval.

Swansea fell to seventh after losing 3-0 at home to Brentford. New Millwall manager Gary Rowett watched from the stands as his side drew 2-2 with Cardiff at The Den. The visitors took the lead after 12 minutes when Danny Ward headed home from close range from Junior Hoilett's cross, but Tom Bradshaw fired in an equaliser just before half-time.

Hoilett curled in his side's second after 57 minutes but Bradshaw levelled for the second time with 13 minutes remaining. Fourth placed QPR drew 2-2 with Reading at Loftus Road, while Maxime Colin's header gave Birmingham a 1-0 win against Blackburn. — AFP

Dybala double rescues Juventus against Lokomotiv Moscow

TURIN: Maurizio Sarri praised Juventus for not losing their heads as Paulo Dybala's quick-fire second-half double rescued a come-from-behind 2-1 win over Lokomotiv Moscow in their Champions League Group D clash in Turin on Tuesday.

The Italian champions had trailed the Russians with 13 minutes to go in the Allianz Stadium after Aleksei Miranchuk had put the visitors ahead after half an hour. But Dybala pulled the hosts level on 77 minutes and added a second two minutes later to keep Juventus on course in Group D with seven points after three games.

Sarri's side had drawn with Atletico Madrid and beaten Bayer Leverkusen 3-0 in the last two games. Atletico also have seven points, after beating Leverkusen 1-0 in Spain on Tuesday, with Lokomotiv third with three points. "It became a difficult match when we conceded this goal," said former Chelsea boss Sarri.

"But we did well not to lose our heads. We knew we could get back into the match. "We had 25 shots on goal, we established a record for possession, so we played well. "It wasn't an exceptional day, we play every three days, so a less brilliant day."

Cristiano Ronaldo missed the chance for another record of scoring against a 34th different Champions League club. The Portuguese star drew a blank in Turin, firing over from a Juan Cuadrado cross early as, despite dominating possession, Juventus struggled to break down the Russians.

Lokomotiv broke through with their first clear chance. Miranchuk shrugged off Leonardo Bonucci and the Juventus defence to find on-loan Inter Milan midfielder Joao Mario whose effort was cleared by Polish keeper Wojciech Szczesny into the path of the Russian forward who finished.

"It was a tough game," said Miranchuk. "We got tired closer to the end and lost focus. Juve are a dangerous team and punished us for that." Dybala looked as if he had scored the equaliser before the break but play had stopped following Ronaldo's tackle on Lokomotiv goalkeeper Guilherme.

Dybala fired over just after the break with fellow Argentine forward Gonzalo Higuain coming on in place of Sami Khedira. Szczesny cleared a Joao Mario effort after an hour while at the other end Higuain missed two quick-fire chances before Dybala finally rifled in the equaliser.

Alex Sandro was denied two minutes later but Dybala was on hand to follow up to keep Juventus unbeaten in all competitions this season. "I'm very happy, I really needed two goals like this," said Dybala. "It was a difficult game but tonight you could really see the level of experience of our team. We always remained calm until we finally scored." The Argentine was substituted after his double to an ovation from the home crowd.

It had been a difficult start to the season for the 25-year-old who had looked set for a move away from Turin to either Tottenham or Manchester United after Higuain's return from Chelsea. "Now we won and you all say that we can play together. But if we were losing, the opinions would have been completely different," he added of the partnership with Ronaldo and Higuain.—AFP

Postponed Clasico to be played on Dec 18

MADRID: The rearranged Clasico between Barcelona and Real Madrid will be played on December 18 despite opposition from La Liga, the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) confirmed on Tuesday. Spain's most prestigious fixture, which was due to take place at Camp Nou on Saturday, was postponed last week because of violent pro-independence protests in Catalonia.

La Liga had proposed December 4 or 7 and may decide to appeal. "The decision of the Competition Committee has taken place after analysing in recent days the proposals of both clubs, who were invited to agree a date and decided on December 18," an RFEF statement read.

"It has also analysed a report from the RFEF Competitions Area as well as numerous reports submitted by La Liga, which are not binding. "At today's meeting, the Committee also analysed the latest reports from both clubs, who maintain their initial proposal to play the match on 18 December."

It means Barcelona, who insisted the original match should have gone ahead this weekend, will face a testing few weeks before Christmas. In December, they are already scheduled to play away at Atletico Madrid, Inter Milan in the Champions League and Real Sociedad, who sit fourth in La Liga. Real Madrid will play away at Club Brugge in the Champions League and then Valencia, just before travelling to Barca. But both clubs swiftly settled on Wednesday, December 18 last week, hours after being instructed to agree a new date by the RFEF.

La Liga, who originally proposed the postponement, disagreed, claiming December 18 would clash with fixtures in the Copa del Rey and harm the economic interests of the clubs involved.

"The decision to change the date of the most important La Liga match cannot be left to the decision of the two participating clubs," La Liga said on Friday, adding that they have a responsibility to "maximise income" from television rights.

La Liga initially suggested swapping the two Clasicos, with the first one being played at the Santiago Bernabeu in Madrid, and then proposed the weekend of December 7, when Barcelona and Madrid already have fixtures.

Their last proposal was Wednesday, December 4, which comes just after Barca play away at Atletico Madrid. Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde said on Tuesday he hoped the two clubs would not be drawn into a political "war" between La Liga and the RFEF, who have clashed on various issues in recent years. "I would like common sense to prevail," Valverde said. "I would like there to be a date settled and for the internal wars between La Liga and the RFEF not to involve us." Barcelona, who visit Slavia Prague in the Champions League, moved top of La Liga last weekend, one point ahead of Real Madrid. — AFP



Nationals outlast Astros to capture World Series opener

HOUSTON: Overcoming a pitcher who hadn't lost in five months, the Washington Nationals took a huge step toward delivering the US capital its first Major League Baseball crown in 95 years by edging Houston 5-4 in Tuesday's opening game of the 115th World Series.

Dominican 20-year-old leftfielder Juan Soto smacked a solo home run in the fourth inning and a two-run double in the fifth off Astros ace Gerrit Cole to ignite Washington's victory. "He likes to throw the fastball. I just sat there and waited for the fastball," Soto said. Left-handed closing reliever Sean Doolittle forced the last four outs as Washington jumped ahead 1-0 in Major League Baseball's best-of-seven championship final, which continues Wednesday in Houston.

Soto became the third-youngest "cleanup" batter — fourth in the lineup — in World Series history after Ty Cobb in 1907 and Miguel Cabrera in 2003. Soto, who turns 21 on Friday, admitted he was nervous in his World Series debut.

"In the first at bat, I'm not going to lie, I felt a little bit shaky in my legs, but I just tried to control my emotions and hit the ball," Soto said. "After the first at bat I just said it's just another baseball game. Just go out and enjoy." The Nationals have won 17 of their past 19 games, including seven in a row, and opener winners have taken 18 of the prior 22 World Series titles. Cole, this year's major league strikeout leader, had won 19 straight decisions in his past 25 starts over five months, the longest one-season win

streak in MLB history, but he also surrendered the most runs he has since last losing on May 22.

"He has been so good for so long there builds this thought of invincibility and that it's impossible to beat him," Astros manager AJ Hinch said. "So when it happens, it's a surprise to all of us because we've watched for months this guy completely dominate the opposition. It's just not easy to do what these guys do in their streaks of dominance."

The five earned runs Cole allowed matched his total from his prior eight starts combined, with Hinch calling Soto "the difference in the game." "He never really controlled Soto the whole night," Hinch said of Cole.

The Astros are chasing their second title in three seasons while the Nationals, who moved from Montreal to Washington for the 2005 season, chase their first crown and the US capital's first since the Senators captured the 1924 championship. No Washington team since 1933 had played in the Series.

"It's huge. (The club) waited a long time to get to this position. I'm super happy I'm a part of it," Nationals manager Dave Martinez said. "We're elated to be here. The city is going crazy." Washington right-hander Max Scherzer took the victory despite lasting only five innings, striking out seven while allowing five hits and three walks. Houston first baseman Yuli Gurriel smacked a two-run double off the left-field wall to put the Astros ahead 2-0.

Washington's Ryan Zimmerman answered with a solo homer in the second inning and Soto blasted a solo shot to left field in the fourth to equalize at 2-2. The Nationals seized the lead for good in the fifth when Adam Eaton singled in Kurt Suzuki from third.

After Anthony Rendon grounded into a fielder's choice, Soto blasted a two-run double off the left-field wall to lift the Nationals ahead 5-2 — the major league's best lineup at scoring with two outs in an inning producing that way once again. — AFP

25 Mertens, Yastremska move closer to WTA Elite Trophy semi-finals



26 Boks braced for 'slippery' Wales in Rugby World Cup semi-final



27 Sterling, Mbappe light up Champions League with hat-tricks, Spurs win



Horvat hat trick lifts Canucks past Wings

Golden Knights slip past Blackhawks in shootout



DETROIT: Jake Virtanen #18 of the Vancouver Canucks celebrates his third period goal with Bo Horvat #53 while playing the Detroit Red Wings at Little Caesars Arena in Detroit, Michigan. Vancouver won the game 5-2. — AFP

DETROIT: Bo Horvat had a third-period hat trick as the visiting Vancouver Canucks scored all of their goals in the final period to upend the Detroit Red Wings 5-2 on Tuesday. Horvat scored his 100th career goal against the New York Rangers in Vancouver's previous game. He scored Vancouver's first two goals on Tuesday as it rallied from a 2-0 deficit. Jake Virtanen had the go-ahead goal and Tim Schaller also scored for the Canucks. Jacob Markstrom made 31 saves. Anthony Mantha and Dennis Cholowski had the goals for the Red Wings, who have lost five straight. Jimmy Howard stopped 36 shots.

GOLDEN KNIGHTS 2, BLACKHAWKS 1 (SO)

Shea Theodore scored the decisive shootout goal to lift Vegas to a comeback win at Chicago. Jonathan Marchessault also scored during the shootout for the Golden Knights, who earned their third win in the past four games. Vegas trailed 1-0 late in the third period before Nick Holden scored the game-tying goal and helped force overtime. Theodore sealed the victory with a backhand shot that floated over the glove of Blackhawks goaltender Robin Lehner. Chicago earned one point thanks largely to a strong performance from Lehner, who stopped 33 of 34 shots during regulation and overtime.

CAPITALS 5, FLAMES 3

John Carlson scored twice, and Alex Ovechkin collected a goal and an assist as visiting Washington beat Calgary. Carlson now leads the league with 20 points and is just the fourth defenseman in NHL history to register 20 points or more in October. The others were Paul Coffey, Al MacInnis and Brian Leetch. Braden Holtby stopped 32 shots for the Capitals, who are riding a four-game winning streak. Chandler Stephenson and Tom Wilson also had goals for Washington.

SABRES 4, SHARKS 3 (OT)

Jack Eichel capped a four-point night with the winning goal at 3:13 of overtime as Buffalo improved to 19-2-1 against San Jose at home all-time. In overtime, Rasmus Ristolainen put a shot on goal during a two-on-one, and Eichel hit the loose puck on one side of goalie Martin Jones then tapped it in while falling to the ice. Eichel had two goals and two assists, Sam Reinhart and Jeff Skinner potted goals, and Ristolainen added two helpers for the Sabres, who have won their first five games at home for the first time since the 1984-85 season. Dylan Gambrell, Marc-Edouard Vlasic and Erik Karlsson scored for the Sharks.

BRUINS 4, MAPLE LEAFS 2

Brett Ritchie and Par Lindholm scored in the third peri-

od to lead host Boston past Toronto. Tuukka Rask stopped 28 shots to earn the victory in his 500th NHL game. David Pastrnak and Brad Marchand had a goal and an assist apiece as the Bruins snapped a two-game skid. Pastrnak has eight goals in his last four games amid a seven-game points streak, and Marchand extended his scoring run to eight straight (five goals, nine assists). Kasperii Kapanen and Alexander Kerfoot each had a goal and an assist for the Maple Leafs, who lost for the second straight night after an overtime defeat Monday. Michael Hutchinson made 35 saves.

PANTHERS 4, PENGUINS 2

Denis Malgin scored the go-ahead goal late in the second period and added an assist in the third, leading Florida past Pittsburgh at Sunrise, Fla. Malgin, who has three goals and three assists in his past six games, helped the Panthers earn their third win in four games. The Penguins lost their second in a row after a five-game winning streak. Panthers goalie Sergei Bobrovsky entered the game with a 4.07 goals-against average, but he made 23 saves and allowed a season-low-tying two goals for his third win.

PREDATORS 6, DUCKS 1

Pekka Rinne made 26 saves, and Nashville overwhelmed Anaheim in the opener of the Ducks' four-game road trip. Roman Josi and Viktor Arvidsson each had a goal and an assist for Nashville. Mattias Ekholm scored short-handed, and Colton Sissons, Rocco Grimaldi and Calle Jarnkrok also had goals for the Predators. Ryan Getzlaf scored for the Ducks, who had allowed just 16 goals in their first nine games.

KINGS 3, JETS 2

Anze Kopitar scored on the power play early in the third period, and visiting Los Angeles fended off Winnipeg to win consecutive games for the first time this season. Austin Wagner and Kurtis MacDermid also scored for the Kings, and Jonathan Quick made 26 saves in the victory. The Kings killed off a Jets power play over the final minute after Jeff Carter was called for tripping. Kyle Connor and Nikolaj Ehlers scored goals for the Jets, who fell to 2-4-0 at home. They have been outscored 19-13 in their own building.

COYOTES 3, RANGERS 2 (OT)

Christian Dvorak scored 1:04 into overtime as Arizona extended its winning streak to four games with a victory at New York. Lawson Crouse scored his second goal in as many games, Alex Goligoski had a goal and an assist, and Darcy Kuemper finished with 17 saves as the Coyotes improved to 5-0-1 in their past six contests. Tony DeAngelo celebrated his 100th game with New York by

scoring twice in the second period against his former team. Alexandar Georgiev turned aside 32 shots for the Rangers, who have been outscored 20-9 during their five-game losing skid (0-4-1).

WILD 3, OILERS 0

Eric Staal had two goals and an assist, and Alex Stalock and Devan Dubnyk combined to make 25 saves as Minnesota blanked Edmonton in Saint Paul, Minn. Brad

Hunt also scored a goal for Minnesota, which won its second straight game. Jordan Greenway added two assists. Stalock, taking over for injured starter Dubnyk early in the second period, finished with 16 saves. Dubnyk, starting in his 300th career game with Minnesota, had nine saves but left after landing hard on his back and hitting the back of his head on the ice when teammate Ryan Donato and Edmonton's Brandon Manning crashed into him while charging the goal. — Reuters

Leonard, Clippers outfox Lakers in 'Battle for LA'

LOS ANGELES: Kawhi Leonard and the Clippers won the opening round of Los Angeles's revitalised battle for basketball supremacy on Tuesday, defeating LeBron James and the Lakers 112-102 in a pulsating season-opening clash at the Staples Center.

Leonard, who arrived at the Clippers in the off-season after leading Toronto to the NBA title last season, wasted no time roaring back into action, leading the scoring with 30 points.

"It was great. A lot of emotions, game one," said Leonard, who grew up in Riverside, 50 miles east of Los Angeles. "I am just happy we came out and got a victory. We had great practices and some carry over from that tonight." The Clippers attacked the rim, forced easy turnovers, used a stingy defence to keep James and his new sidekick Anthony Davis in check.

Leonard also had six rebounds and five assists, reserve guard Lou Williams finished with 21 points and power forward Montrezl Harrell tallied 17 points and seven rebounds.

James shot eight-of-21 for 25 points for the Lakers who are hoping their offseason changes will boost the team's fortunes after they finished a disappointing 37-45 and failed to qualify for the postseason for the sixth season in a row. "It is the first game," said James. "It was a huge test. We have a lot of room to improve. We are a new group with a new system. We did some good things and we did some not so good things.

"We look forward to getting some film and seeing

some of the mistakes we made."

The one bright spot for the Lakers was newcomer Danny Green who scored 28 points by hitting 10 of his 14 field-goal attempts, including seven of nine from beyond the arc. Davis said he and James will need time to get used to each other on the court.

"We are both aggressive so sometimes we miss each other," Davis said. "We are still learning and just trying to figure it out. This is game one of many."

A 19-7 run to begin the fourth quarter helped the Clippers seal the win and hold off the Lakers the rest of the way. The two Los Angeles teams made some of the most significant changes but the Clippers appeared to have added more value.

Every one of their bench players reached double figures on Tuesday as they outscored the Laker reserves 60-19. Williams outscored the Lakers reserves by himself.

He said the Clippers didn't want to just win. That they are tied of playing second fiddle to the Lakers and wanted nothing more than to dominate their city rivals. "We always play with a chip on our shoulder," Williams said. "For last two months all the talk has been about the Lakers versus the Clippers.

"We hear that we are the Junior Varsity team, or little brother, or whatever. We are pros too. That's why we have a chip on our shoulder."

The Lakers roared to a 13-2 lead after a basket by Davis less than four minutes into the contest. However, the Clippers stormed back, cutting the deficit to 25-22 at the end of the quarter. Clippers outscored the Lakers 40-29 in the second quarter and led 62-54 at halftime.

Thanks to the addition of Leonard from Toronto and Paul George from Oklahoma City, the Clippers are one of the early front runners to contend for a title. "We would love to win a championship and I think we are going to compete at high level and give ourselves an opportunity," said Williams. — AFP