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Trump confirms death of IS chief Baghdadi in US raid

Islamic State leader killed himself by igniting suicide vest, identified by DNA tests



WASHINGTON: This handout picture taken yesterday shows US President Donald Trump (center) watching in the Situation Room of the White House as US Special Operations forces close in on IS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. — AFP



BARISHA, Syria: A Syrian man clears debris at the site of an operation near this northwestern Syrian village in Idlib province yesterday. — AFP

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump yesterday said that elusive Islamic State leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi was killed, dying "like a dog" in a daring, nighttime raid by US special forces deep in northwest Syria. Trump told the nation in a televised address from the White House that US forces killed a "large number" of Islamic State militants during the raid, which culminated with Baghdadi cornered in a tunnel, where he detonated a suicide vest.

"He ignited his vest, killing himself," Trump said. "He died after running into a dead-end tunnel, whimpering and crying and screaming all the way," Trump said, adding that three of Baghdadi's children

also died in the blast.

Trump said that the raid - involving eight helicopters flying more than an hour from an undisclosed base - was accomplished with help or cooperation from Russia, Syria, Turkey and Iraq. He also thanked the Syrian Kurds "for a certain support they were able to give us".

Special forces "executed a dangerous and daring nighttime raid in northwestern Syria and accomplished their mission in grand style," he said.

Trump's national security adviser, Robert O'Brien, described the dramatic message

the president and his advisers received as they monitored the raid from the White House Situation Room. "The commander of the mission called and said, '100 percent confidence, Jackpot'" - meaning Baghdadi was dead - O'Brien said on NBC. "That was great news for us."

At its height, Islamic State controlled swaths of Iraq and Syria in a self-declared state known as a caliphate, brutally imposing a puritanical version of Islam. The group planned or inspired terrorism attacks across Europe, while using social media to lure large numbers of foreign volunteers. It took years of war, in which

Islamic State became notorious for mass executions and sickening hostage beheadings, before its final slice of territory in Syria was seized this March.

Baghdadi's death provides a big political boost for Trump, who faces an impeachment inquiry and whose abrupt decision to withdraw a small but effective deployment of US forces from Syria raised fears that it would allow Islamic State remnants to regroup. Trump took a storm of criticism, including from his own Republican Party.

News of the raid, however, drew praise from several world leaders, coupled with caution that the IS threat may not be fully

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Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi

Ghanem: Bedoon bill ready; Adasani files to grill interior minister

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said yesterday he has prepared a draft law proposing a lasting solution to the decades-old problem of stateless people or bedoons, insisting that the legislation if approved will resolve the problem in one year. Ghanem provided no details about the draft law, saying that a number of lawmakers asked to give them a

week to read the bill before officially submitting it.

Some 120,000 bedoons live in Kuwait currently and claim the right to Kuwaiti citizenship, while the government insists that a majority of them do not qualify to be considered for nationality. The speaker also said that a second draft law will be submitted to initiate a probe into Kuwaiti citizenship in order to fight forgery and wrongdoing. The government has repeatedly said that only up to 34,000 bedoons qualify for consideration for citizenship but has made no effort to naturalize them.

Bedoons have come under tremendous government pressure to force them to reveal what the government claims are their original identities. This policy has partially succeeded, but its implementation involved substantial suffering for the bedoons.

Ghanem also said opposition MP Riyadh Al-Adasani filed to grill Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah

Al-Sabah, which will be listed on the agenda of the Nov 12 session. In the grilling, Adasani accuses the minister of failing to carry out his duties and that he misused his powers. He charged the minister of not cooperating with the investigation regarding alleged financial violation in the so-called ministry hospitality spending.

Adasani held the minister responsible for what he claims is a biased police report to the prosecution in a case that the lawmaker himself is involved, saying this could happen to a large number of people. This is the third grilling to be filed so far with two days remaining for the start of the new Assembly term. MPs have already filed to grill the minister of finance and public works over alleged violations. The two grillings are expected to be debated in the new term's opening session tomorrow.

Continued on Page 24

Kuwait receives 200,000 stolen books from Iraq



KUWAIT: A truck loaded with books stolen during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is seen yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT: The Iraqi foreign ministry handed its Kuwaiti counterpart yesterday around 200,000 books belonging to the National Library and Kuwait University which were looted during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The move resulted from cooperation between the foreign ministries of the two brotherly countries, said Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah. He stressed that Kuwait is still urging the Iraqi side to hand over all the national archives and Kuwaiti properties that were looted systematically during the Iraqi invasion.

The handover process was done under the supervision of the United Nations and the UNAMI mission in Iraq, in implementation of Security Council resolution (2107) issued in 2013. Iraqi Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Ambassador Hazim Al-Yousifi said in a statement to KUNA that his country is keen to abide by relevant Security Council resolutions regarding Kuwait and to give it back what was looted during the Iraqi invasion.

He affirmed Iraq's keenness to consolidate brotherly relations between the two sides, recalling the recent visit of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Iraq and President Barham Saleh's visit to Kuwait and relevant positive and constructive results.

Continued on Page 24

Protesters form human chain across Lebanon

BEIRUT: Tens of thousands of Lebanese protesters successfully formed a human chain running north-south across the entire country yesterday to symbolize new-found national unity. Demonstrators joined hands from Tripoli to Tyre, a 170-km chain running through the capital Beirut, as part of an unprecedented cross-sectarian mobilization.

Tension has mounted in recent days between security forces and protesters, who have blocked roads and brought the country to a standstill to press their demands for a complete overhaul of the political system. Lebanon's reviled political elite has defended a belated package of economic reforms and appeared willing to reshuffle the government, but protesters who have stayed on the streets since Oct 17 want more.

On foot, by bicycle and on motorbikes, demonstrators and volunteers fanned out along the main north-south highway. "The idea behind this human chain is to show an image of a Lebanon which, from north to south, rejects any sectarian affiliation," Julie Tegho Bou Nassif, one of the organisers, told AFP. "There is no political demand today, we only want to send a message by simply holding hands under the Lebanese flag."

Continued on Page 24



BEIRUT: Lebanese protesters hold hands to form a human chain along the coast from north to south as a symbol of unity during ongoing anti-government demonstrations yesterday. — AFP

Local

Kuwait PM receives delegations to women journalists forum

Premier praises Gulf women's role in developing media



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with delegations participating in Gulf Women Journalists Forum. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday, in the presence of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri, Deputy Chairman of

Kuwait Journalists Association Adnan Al-Rashed and media delegations participating in the 3rd Gulf Women Journalists Forum 2019. His Highness the Prime Minister praised the efforts exerted by Gulf women in developing media through various means, espe-

cially spreading awareness and culture, pushing development efforts and showing the honorable image of society.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received Director General of Kuwait

Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDI-PA) Sheikh Dr. Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Prime Minister also received Head of the Business Report Team at World Bank Group Simon Jankof on the issuance of the World Bank report, which

ranked Kuwait among the ten countries that improved the most in their ease of doing business score (Doing Business 2020). Head of His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikhha Itimad Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attended both meetings. — KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Head of the Business Report Team at World Bank Group Simon Jankof.



KUWAIT: Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri in a group photo with delegations participating in Gulf Women Journalists Forum. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Women journalists gather in Kuwait to boost Gulf cooperation

KUWAIT: A gathering in Kuwait of women journalists from across the Gulf region is part of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's plan of forging better ties with regional countries, said a minister yesterday. Kuwait and its Gulf neighbors have always shared an impenetrable bond, Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri said amid the talks, organized by the Kuwaiti Journalists Association (KJA), pointing out that women have started to make a name for themselves in the field of journalism. With the bewildering advancements in technology seen in recent years, the media has taken on an increasingly significant role, added the minister, highlighting the importance of ethical journalism given the spread of fake news and misinformation. On the talks, the Kuwaiti information minister said it presents the participants with an opportunity to exchange ideas in a bid to further their journalistic careers. Such gatherings are tantamount to women's empowerment, said Adnan Al-Rashed, the secretary of the Kuwait Journalists Association, emphasizing the major progress women journalists have made in the Gulf



Adnan Al-Rashed, the secretary of the Kuwait Journalists Association, speaks during the event.



Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri delivers a speech.

region. Rabaa Al-Jumaa, a member of KJA's Board of Trustees, agreed that the talks are crucial and allow women journalists in the Gulf the chance to "create a positive change" in the field of journalism, which in turn, ensures that the local media would continue to flourish. Women are now on equal footing with men,

narrowing the gender gap in a region that remains highly patriarchal, according to KJA chief Fatma Hussein, signifying women's growing omnipresence. The talks shine light on matters dealing with the rise of women in the field of journalism, including some of the challenges they have had to encounter. —KUNA



A general view of the audience attending the event.



Prof Mauro Centritto from the Italian National Research Center's Institute for Sustainable Plant Protection speaks during an event at Kuwait University's College of Engineering.

Energy demand to increase 30% by 2030; 50% for food

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: By 2030, demand for energy and water will increase by 30 percent, while demand for food will increase by 50 percent, said Prof Mauro Centritto from the Italian National Research Center's Institute for Sustainable Plant Protection as he presented his research 'Sustainable Agriculture Water Management' at Kuwait University's College of Engineering. He also spoke about dry land and degradation neutrality, climate change and sustainable agricultural water management during a forum attended by KU students.

"The reality on the ground is that all these factors are being impacted by the force of climate change and people should do something about this. If human activity and selfishness persist, consequences such as poverty, migration and refugees will also continue, paving the way for reduced productivity, compromising global food security," Centritto said.

Centritto said sustainable development goals state that by 2030, the world's efforts in combating desertification should lead to restoring degraded land and soil, including land affected by drought and floods, in addition to striving hard to achieve a "land degradation-neutral world." Land degradation neutrality is implemented on a voluntary basis with the support of UNCCD. He said about 122 countries have already committed to their respective LDN targets.

According to Centritto, LDN proj-



Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Carlo Baldocci addresses the audience.

ects highlight a number of priorities with different target years to be considered in national plans and programs such as improvement and understanding ongoing land degradation processes and validation of land productivity and programs (2017), identification of targets and action plans in pilot areas with stakeholders (2018), implementation of measures in pilot areas (2020), improvement of awareness of land degradation causes and impacts, etc.

He said the hottest seasons on record will represent the future norm in many locations - extreme seasonal heat could become a long-term trend without sufficient investments in adaptation. The KU event was hosted by the Italian Embassy in Kuwait, attended by Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Carlo Baldocci.

Kuwait grants \$2 million to rebuild Gaza

GAZA: The final installment of a Kuwaiti grant worth \$2 million to aid reconstruction efforts in the war-ravaged Gaza Strip has been received, the Palestinian Authority said yesterday. Kuwait has transferred a sum of \$770,000 allocated for agriculture projects in Gaza, where

acres of arable land were "eroded due to the 2014 Gaza War," said Palestinian Minister of Public Works and Housing Mohammad Zyara. Some 817 people have been the beneficiaries of the latest Kuwaiti grant, added the minister, thanking the Kuwaiti government for the overwhelming support. The Palestinian Authority had previously received Kuwaiti aid worth \$260,000 to repair Gaza's dilapidated infrastructure, he revealed. Israeli forces waged a wide-scale war on the Gaza Strip in July 2014, killing at least 1,935 Palestinians and injuring over 10,000 others, leaving large swathes of Gaza's infrastructure in ruin. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait Amir receives senior state officials at Bayan Palace

Sheikh Sabah receives congratulation cable from Venezuela President

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir then received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. Later, His Highness received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh. His Highness then received Hawalli Governor Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a cable of congratulations from President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela Nicolas Maduro on his return home following successful medical checkups. In the cable, the Venezuela President wished His Highness the Amir a good health and wellness. In response, His Highness the Amir sent a cable to President Maduro, thanking him for his kind words and sentiments and wished him long healthy life. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



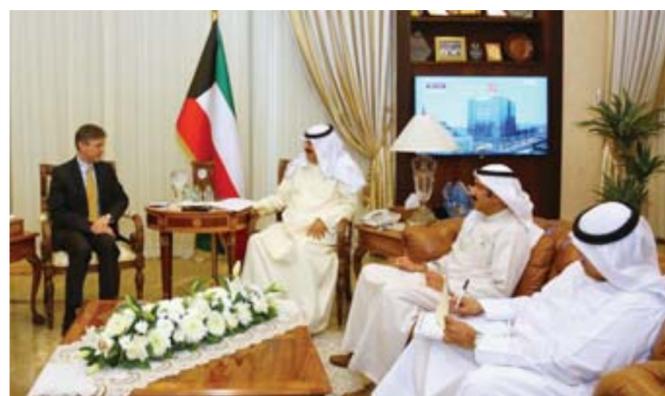
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah 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 Hawalli Governor Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Austrian Ambassador to Kuwait Sigurd Pacher. — KUNA

Deputy FM meets Austrian envoy on ties

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah yesterday received Austrian Ambassador to Kuwait Sigurd Pacher. During the encounter, they discussed cooperative relations between

Kuwait and Austria and the latest regional and international developments. The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ayham Al-Omar. — KUNA

Belgium-Kuwait ties 'flourishing'

BRUSSELS: Ambassador Walid Al-Khubaizi, Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs has praised the level of relations between Kuwait and Belgium and the remarkable development witnessed during the recent past period. This came in a statement made by Khubaizi last night after a meeting with Ambassador Anick van Calster, Director General of Bilateral Relations at the Belgian Foreign Ministry and Ambassador Raoul Delcorde, Director Middle East and North Africa Department at the Belgian Foreign Ministry in the presence Kuwait's Ambassador to Belgium Jassim Al-Budaiwi. He said the meeting provided an opportunity for both parties to discuss a number of topics of mutual interest related to bilateral relations and regional and international issues.

Khubaizi noted that both sides discussed the topics to be raised during the first meeting of the Kuwaiti-Belgian Joint Economic and Technical Committee, to be held in November 2019, in Brussels. He pointed out that Kuwaiti delegations, represented by Kuwaiti ministries and institutions, will meet with their Belgian counterparts to discuss ways of enhancing economic cooperation, as well as on all levels. Furthermore, he said a set of draft agreements and memoranda of understanding were tabled for discussion, urging the Belgian side to seek to approve these projects and show flexibility on them, and pointing out that

among these projects is a draft protocol amending the double taxation agreement; an MoU in the field of renewable energy, and activating the air services agreement signed between the two sides.

Khubaizi praised the level of cooperation in the health sector between the two countries, pointing out that the number of Kuwaiti patients sent by the Ministry of Health is increasing, which reflects Kuwait's confidence in Belgian health institutions and advanced services. Also during the meeting, Khubaizi said that he encouraged the Belgian side to urge its public and private institutions to consider the possibility of entering into projects related to the State of Kuwait's 2035 development plan, particularly with regard to drilling and deepening of waterways in the new Kuwaiti ports and in the field of cooperation between Kuwait Port Authority and various Belgian ports, especially Antwerp.

The Ambassador concluded by stressing that the two sides also discussed issues related to joint political coordination, praising its level, which is carried out through the capitals of the two countries and in the United Nations, as well as through the membership of both countries in the Security Council. He pointed out that both countries share political visions and principles that serve to promote the concept of international security and stability. The last high-level meeting between Belgium and Kuwait was held in November 2018, and was co-chaired by Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah and by the Secretary General of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bruno van der Pluijm. — KUNA



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Local

Govt meeting next week sets plan for Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh 'clean up'

Closing violating stores and deporting their workers; evicting 'all bachelors'

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Government officials plan to meet next week to set a plan for procedures to be followed on closing violating stores in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, fining homeowners who lease houses to bachelors in private residential areas as well as those owning buildings that lack safety conditions, informed sources said. The meeting will be held to prepare for implementing a government resolution on taking comprehensive measures to remove all violations in Jleeb by mid-November, said the sources, adding that the meeting will group elements from Kuwait Municipality, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Commerce and Industry as well as the Public Authority for Manpower. In addition to the fines and closure of violating stores, the plan calls for canceling the residency visas of those working in said stores and deporting them, said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "This plan will result in evicting all bachelors from Jleeb whose presence is starting to pose social and security threats as well as becoming a center for illegal residents," the sources explained.

Crisis management

Head of Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) Wejdan Al-Oqab said the society has proposed a number of suggestions to be prepared for catastrophes and crisis management, including flooding expected with the beginning of the rainy season. "The state should have a special plan for this," she said, highlighting the significance of building a national center for this purpose including ele-

ments from various government bodies and NGOs. KEPS member Dr Ra'fat Mesak said that the society warned against building flood barriers to the east of King Fahd



Grouping members from four state departments

Expressway because the collapse of any of them would lead to a sudden flow of millions of cubic meters of water to adjacent residential areas and stop traffic. "Instead, we should control rainwater movement by building smaller dams and rainwater collection reservoirs to slow the flow of floodwaters," he explained, adding that accumulated water could be used as a blessing.

Investment opportunities

The Public Authority for Housing Welfare announced that offering of investment opportunities in Sabah Al-Ahmad City for public bidding is going according to schedule and that the final assessment of the bids will be made by the end of the month to sign the contract with the



KUWAIT: Debris and vehicles parked randomly at an open square in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh in this file photo.

winning investor. In other news, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's consumer protection sector announced

closing a moneychanger in Ahmadi for making illegal remittance transactions.

Govt buildings' relocation creates traffic nightmare in South Surra

KUWAIT: It seems that moving all ministries from Mirqab to South Surra to resolve the problem of parking only shifted the problem to South Surra, said local daily Al-Qabas. The report said over 15 government bodies, including the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) with its 23,000 employees and 3,000 working in the main building, had moved to South Surra. "Those employees and hundreds of people doing transactions there daily makes it

impossible to find enough parking spaces," it said.

The area also includes the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) with over 4,000 employees working at its headquarters and the Ministry of Education (MoE) with over 5,000 employees at its headquarters, with thousands of daily visitors including teachers, employees and parents. In addition, the area houses the Jaber Hospital with over 10,000 staff members and the endless number of daily visitors that amounts to 8,000-12,000 vehicles daily as per a study made by the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART).

The area also houses the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) with its 1,500 staff members and over 500 daily visitors, the new headquarters of the expropriation department, Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects, Zakat House, the Public Institution for Social Security, three Interior Ministry departments, the Kuwait Credit Bank's new headquarters, International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) and many other charities.

None of the above buildings has enough parking for its employees and visitors, which leads to unbearable traffic congestions in the area, especially during morning and afternoon rush hours.

Academic qualifications

In other news, Al-Jarida daily reported yesterday that the replacement policy at state departments has opened the door for appointment of retirees in several unessential jobs, which raised the number of public sector employees without academic qualifications significantly during the past six months. Civil Service Commission (CSC) statistics showed the number of those working in the government who do not have academic qualifications reached 28,274 by Oct 1 (7.8 percent), 20,132 of whom are citizens. This means that their number rose by 3 percent in six months to 12,734 - 11,860 of whom are citizens of both genders.

CSC sources said the increase in the number of registered citizens comes as part of the replacement policy for

jobs that do not require high academic qualification such as guards, office boys, cleanliness supervisors and others, besides some jobs that only require reading and writing knowledge. The sources said some government departments have dropped contracts that provide expatriate labor to allow retired citizens who wish to work in simple jobs, adding that the CSC works in coordination with those departments to give priority to retirees and those holding intermediate certificates or lower to occupy available jobs in a move to end long waiting periods.

Statistics showed that the number of those who have PhDs dropped by 0.1 percent in six months to 204, as the percentage of those who have this qualification is 1.5 percent. Those who have Master's degrees make up 3.2 percent of the workforce, while the largest percentage is of those with university degrees, at 44.4 percent. Diploma holders make up 14 percent, while secondary certificate holders form 18 percent of the total number of workers in government departments.

KFSD denies receiving collapse report

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Firemen did not receive any call with regards to an incident of a man falling into a road collapse created by rain as claimed in a video clip on social media, Kuwait Fire Services Directorate (KFSD) said in a statement yesterday, adding that it did not deal with any such incident. Separately, the traffic department will auction several vehicles placed under impoundment at Kuwait Gulf Link garage in Jahra. The department had announced the auction back on Aug 26 and asked owners to refer to the auction committee. The sale will be on Wednesday, Oct 30 at 4 pm. Those desiring to participate can inspect the vehicles a day earlier.

Municipal chief inquires about deal

By Meshal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Municipal Council Chairman Osama Al-Otaibi inquired from the Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Fahad Al-Shoula about the use of having a consultancy agreement with the World Bank on managing solid waste in Kuwait. Otaibi demanded a copy of the 24-month agreement signed in May 2018 with a total value of KD 573,806 and a report of what has been so far done in this regard.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Municipality's public relations department said Ahmadi municipal cleaning division launched a wide scale inspection campaign in Mangaf. Division manager Faisal Al-Otaibi said the campaign is part of the 'Keep it Clean' campaign, adding that 180 truckloads of waste had been removed from various areas in Ahmadi, including 12 from Mangaf alone. He added 292 garbage containers had been changed.

News in brief

US State Secretary calls Kuwait FM

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received a phone call from US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo yesterday evening. In the phone conversation, they discussed firm bilateral and strategic relations between Kuwait and the US, along with close cooperation between both friendly countries. Both ministers also addressed the latest regional and international developments. — KUNA

Engineers' visas revoked

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Manpower refused to renew work permits of 4,809 expat engineers who did not pass the professional efficiency test, while it is waiting for the evaluation committee's decision regarding 1,591 others. Official spokesperson of the authority Aseel Al-Mazyad said no transfers will be made for technical and educational jobs without passing the efficiency test, which is a precondition for transfer, according to professional standards and academic qualifications. Mazyad said the authority held several workshops for 1,380 applicants for disabled teaching jobs in private schools and rehab centers - 627 teachers passed and 753 failed. — Al-Rai

Amazon eyes Kuwaiti market

KUWAIT: Amazon plans to enter the Kuwait market and expressed its wish to concerned authorities through its Amazon Web Services subsidiary that is specialized in cloud computing, informed sources said. The company wrote to the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) about its desire to have a branch in Kuwait and asked for the commercial and organizational laws of its activities, and how to get commercial licenses and necessary permits to commence work, the sources explained. — Al-Rai



Gulf capital market chiefs eye integration

MUSCAT: The Committee of Heads of GCC Capital Markets Authorities convened its 19th meeting in Muscat yesterday, focusing on Gulf market integration. CEO of the Capital Market Authority Abdullah Al-Salmi said in a keynote speech that population data and uniform house registration are

deemed major joint strategic statistical issues. The data is considered a key factor for providing a digital picture for taking development resolutions, and a crucial tool for monitoring the implementation of sustainable development goals, he said. The conferees mainly discussed the minute of the fourth meeting of a working group tasked with setting out a Gulf market integration strategy, along with a working paper on the potential for implementing the inter-licensing of investment funds in the GCC countries, he added. They also addressed the most important developments regarding the memorandum of understanding among the regulators of the GCC capital markets, he pointed out. The Kuwaiti delegation partaking in the meeting was led by Chairman of the Capital Market Authority Ahmad Al-Melhem. — KUNA

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Local

Zain embraces competent young people to open new horizons in front of them: Roudhan

Zain to renovate 'historic' NUKS UK headquarters in London

LONDON: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, participated in the opening ceremony of the 55th annual conference of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students in the United Kingdom (NUKS UK) as part of its Official and Main sponsorship of the event. The conference, held in Park Plaza Westminster Bridge London, witnessed the presence of the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the United Kingdom Khaled Al-Duwaisan, Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan, as well as a larger number of students.

Zain expressed its pride in being the main supporter of this national event once again, as it is considered one of the oldest and largest gatherings of Kuwaiti students abroad. The company's support came in line with its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards supporting the youth and education sectors, as well as its belief in the importance of connecting with the country's youth abroad.

During her speech at the opening ceremony, Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan said: "first, I would like to express my pride in being present here today amongst our students away from home, while they journey through their education. At Zain, we are always with our students, close to them, not only within the geographical boundaries of our nation, but out of them as well. Our presence today is a reflection of that belief we hold dearly in our hearts."

Roudhan explained: "we always look up to our students abroad because they represent Kuwait's humanitarian and cultural sides, as well as reflect the virtues of its good people. This gathering is considered one of the oldest and biggest Kuwaiti student gatherings that represent Kuwait abroad. The UK, unlike other countries, hosts a great number of our students, and so we are hopeful that you know the amount of responsibility asked of you."

Roudhan announced: "Zain is happy to participate here today, and I'm pleased to announce that we will be fully renovating and renewing the NUKS UK headquarters in London, which will be reopened in the upcoming months."

Roudhan further added: "we know very well that this building is a formal place for union members to gather, and a main point of contact for students from all over the kingdom to meet, as well as a place to host many gatherings, forums, student activities, and more all year round. But what makes me truly happy is not only that it is the only formal headquarters of any Kuwaiti student body abroad, but that this building was the headquar-



Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan delivers her opening speech.

ters for the Free Kuwait campaign during the Iraqi invasion of our beloved nation. This building was the main center to coordinate and organize parades inside the UK to protest against the invasion at the time."

Roudhan mentioned: "the private sector has a vital role in supporting the education community in Kuwait side by side with the country's education entities. The collaboration between the private and public sectors stems from our well-established national identity, and it embodies the true Kuwaiti values that our country was built on. Our presence today as a main supporter of this event is nothing but a reflection of such constructive collaboration."

Roudhan continued: "being a leading national company in the Kuwaiti private sector, Zain strongly believes in being a main and active partner in contributing to the achievement of the Kuwait National Development Plan (New Kuwait) that stems from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's conceptualized vision of a new Kuwait by 2035."

Roudhan continued: "though this vision centers around many key pillars, it offered wider space to focus on a "Creative Human Capital," with the aim of better preparing the youth to become competitive and productive members of the workforce."

Roudhan added: "at Zain, our strategy centers around innovation and empowering young entrepreneurs, and our sustainability programs were built on this strategy. We always embrace competent young people with the aim of opening up new horizons in front of them through our initiatives and programs. These initiatives are designed to encourage talents and



LONDON: Kuwaiti Ambassador to the UK Khaled Al-Duwaisan and Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan with Zain and NUKS officials at the conference.

develop their skills to help them become tomorrow's business leaders."

Roudhan explained: "preparing the youth to face the challenges of the new millennium is a crucial step for us to empower and push them into new levels of innovation, especially that we need to develop the skills of our young people to create more opportunities in light of the social and economic challenges our communities face."

Roudhan concluded: "I would like to take this opportunity to stress on Zain's promise and commitment to fully make our financial and human resources ready to strengthen relations with education bodies and entities in the Kuwaiti community. We will always be ready to support our students wherever they are."

Zain added a special contribution to the event by supporting its many cultural, sporting, and artistic programs, including academic seminars, recreational competitions, entertainment shows, sport activities, eco-

nomical and political panels, poetry sessions, and more. The conference also included Zain's Competitions session featuring Kuwaiti actor Dawood Hussain, a theatrical play featuring Kuwaiti actor Hassan Al-Ballam, as well as a Quran recital competition.

Zain's presence in this event conveyed its enthusiasm to interact with the future generations of Kuwaiti youth, especially those who pursue their education abroad. The NUKS UK annual conference is one of the oldest and largest gatherings of Kuwaiti students outside of Kuwait, and it appeals to students on both intellectual and social levels, serving as an open forum for them to exchange opinions and views regarding important domestic issues with the presence of distinguished national figures from the Kuwaiti society. Participating in this event affirms Zain's role as a leading national company that takes the development of young people on a serious note, with the ultimate intention to induce positive change within the Kuwaiti society.



During NUKS UK 55th annual conference

Global economy's status dictates shipping activities: KOTC



KUWAIT: The opening session of the GCC shipping companies' forum in progress. —KUNA

KUWAIT: Shipping activities and the flow of goods are dictated by the status of global economy, said a top official at Kuwait Oil Tankers Company (KOTC). Speaking on the sidelines of the GCC shipping companies' forum, opened yesterday, Acting CEO of KOTC Ali Shehab



Ali Shehab

said that a thriving global economy will boost the activities of shipping worldwide, revealing that in 2000, shipping activities saw a huge spike. With the advent of the global economic crunch a few years later, the shipping scene was heavily affected by the crisis, he added. Shipping constitutes around 90 percent of commercial cargo activities and it is intertwined with the status of global economy, reaffirmed Shehab. He indicated that the current forum is a good step to measure the latest international economic developments, adding that the event will focus also on environmental impacts of shipping. The world is aiming to reduce carbon emissions by 50 percent by 2050 with efforts also focusing on eliminating the problem by 80 years' time if possible, Shehab pointed out. The KOTC organizes the forum annually since 2013. —KUNA

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Kashmir row sparks India, Malaysia palm oil tension

Pakistan denies 'use of airspace' to Indian PM



BARISHA: Syrians gather amidst the rubble of a building at the site of helicopter gunfire which reportedly killed nine people near the northwestern Syrian village of Barisha in the Idlib province along the border with Turkey, where "groups linked to the Islamic State (IS) group" were present, according to a Britain-based war monitor with sources inside Syria. —AFP

Baghdadi: A trail of horror and death

The genocide of Yazidis illustrated the brutality of IS

BAGHDAD: Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, the Iraqi jihadist who rose from obscurity to declare himself "caliph" of all Muslims as the leader of Islamic State, has died in a raid by US special forces in northwest Syria. US President Donald Trump said in a televised address from the White House that Baghdadi killed himself during the raid by igniting a suicide vest. Test results from the aftermath of the raid had positively identified Baghdadi, he said.

Baghdadi had long been a target for US and regional security forces trying to eliminate Islamic State, even as they reclaimed most of the territory the group once held. The Islamic State or caliphate that Baghdadi declared in July 2014 over a quarter of Iraq and Syria was notable for atrocities against religious minorities and attacks on five continents in the name of a version of an ultra-fanatic Islam that horrified mainstream Muslims.

The genocide of Yazidis, adherents of one of the Middle East's oldest religions, illustrated the brutality of his rule. Thousands of men were slaughtered on their ancestral Sinjar mountain in northwestern Iraq and women were killed or taken as sex slaves. Some other religious groups suffered sexual slavery, slaughter and floggings. The group also caused global revulsion with beheadings of hostages from countries including the United States, Britain and Japan.

The United States put up a \$25 million reward for his capture, the same amount as it had offered for Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and his successor Ayman Al-Zawahiri. US air strikes had already killed most of Baghdadi's top lieutenants, including Abu Omar Al-Shishani, Abu Muslim Al-Turkmani, Abu Ali Al-Anbari, Abu Sayyaf and the group's spokesman Abu Mohammed Al-Adnani. Thousands of his fighters were also killed or captured.

Baghdadi was born Ibrahim Awad Al-Samarrai in 1971 in Tobchi, a poor area near the town of Samarra, north of the Iraqi capital Baghdad, whose name he took. His family included preachers from the ultra-conservative Salafi school of Sunni Islam, which sees many other branches of the faith as heretical and other religions as anathema. He joined the Salafi jihadist insurgency in 2003, the year of the US-led invasion of Iraq, and was captured by the Americans. They released him

about a year later, thinking he was a civilian agitator rather than a military threat. It was not until July 4, 2014, that he seized the world's attention, climbing the pulpit of Mosul's medieval Al-Nuri mosque in black clerical garb during Friday prayers to announce the restoration of the caliphate. "God ordered us to fight his enemies," he said in a video of the occasion, which presented him as "Caliph Ibrahim, commander of the faithful". Thousands of volunteers flocked into Iraq and Syria from around the world to become "Jund Al-Khilafa" - soldiers of the caliphate and join him in his fight against the Shiite-led Iraqi government and its US and Western allies.

'Blood flow as rivers'

At the height of its power in 2016, Islamic State ruled over millions of people in territory running from northern Syria through towns and villages along the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys to the outskirts of Baghdad. The group claimed responsibility for or inspired attacks in dozens of cities including Paris, Nice, Orlando, Manchester, London and Berlin, and in nearby Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

In Iraq, it staged dozens of attacks on predominantly Shiite Muslim areas. A truck bomb in July 2016 killed more than 324 people in a crowded area of Baghdad, the deadliest attack since the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. The group also carried out many bombings in northeast Syria, which has been under the control of US-backed Kurdish forces.

Most of Baghdadi's speeches were distributed as audio recordings, a medium better suited to the secretive, careful character that for a long time helped him evade the surveillance and air strikes that killed more than 40 of his top commanders. That caution was matched by ruthlessness as he eliminated opponents and former allies, even within Salafi jihadist ranks. He waged war on al Qaeda's Syrian wing, the Nusra Front, breaking with the movement's global leader, Al-Zawahiri, in 2013.

But by the time of his death in the raid this weekend, his fortunes - and those of Islamic State - were in rapid decline. With the defeat of Islamic State in its stronghold Mosul, which he declared as the capital of his caliphate, in 2017 the movement

Syria. They have warned of the risk posed by holding thousands of militants in prisons, including foreigners from around the world. That warning came into sharp focus this month when US President Donald Trump announced he was withdrawing US troops from northeastern Syria, opening the way for Turkey to launch an offensive targeting Kurdish fighters near its border. Turkey says it has captured some 200 IS detainees who fled prisons in the area of its offensive and has transferred them to other prisons under the control of Turkish forces and its Syrian rebel allies. President Tayyip Erdogan has said any IS prisoners will be brought to justice. Islamic State fighters still hold some ground in Syria's remote central desert in territory otherwise held by the Damascus government.

Egypt

Egypt has killed more than 250 people. Islamic State's involvement is not always proven, but even if the link is ideological rather than operational, it is still seen as a security threat in many countries.

Iraq

After defeat by US-backed forces, Islamic State has reverted to the guerrilla tactics it was once known for. Iraqi Security Forces routinely carry out operations against remnants of the jihadist group, more than two years after its defeat. Sleeper cells have regrouped in provinces including Diyala, Salahuddin, Anbar, Kirkuk and Nineveh, where they have carried out frequent attacks, including kidnappings and bombings aimed at undermining the Baghdad government. Although cells operate mostly in rural areas, burning crops and extorting local farmers, in February, two people were killed and 24 wounded when a car bomb went off in Mosul, once the group's capital in Iraq. The Pentagon said in January that IS was regenerating faster in Iraq than in Syria. Analysts estimated earlier this year that about 2,000 active combatants now operate in Iraq.

Syria

After serious military setbacks, Islamic State slipped into the shadows, staging suicide bombings and ambushes. It has carried out bomb attacks in towns and cities in northern Syria in the past year, including targeting US forces. Syrian Kurdish forces, who crushed the jihadists across the north and east with US help, have said they believe sleeper cells mushroomed in eastern

Yemen

Islamic State militants announced a Yemeni affiliate in late

lost all the territory it once controlled in Iraq. In Syria, Islamic State lost Raqqa, its second capital and centre of operations, and eventually earlier this year its final chunk of territory there when US-backed Kurdish-led forces took back Baghouz.

Still a threat

While the destruction of the quasi-state that Baghdadi built has denied the group its recruiting tool and logistical base from which it could train fighters and plan coordinated attacks overseas, most security experts believe Islamic State remains a threat through clandestine operations or attacks. Islamic State is believed to have sleeper cells around the world, and some fighters operate from the shadows in Syria's desert and Iraq's cities, still launching hit-and-run attacks. In his most recent audio message, in September, Baghdadi put on a brave face, saying operations were taking place daily and urging followers to secure freedom for women jailed in Iraq and Syria over their alleged links to the group. "As for the worst and most important matter, the prisons, the prisons, oh soldiers of the caliphate. Your brothers and sisters: do your utmost to free them and tear down the walls restricting them," Baghdadi said. But the loss of territory in Iraq and Syria stripped him of the trappings of caliph and made him a fugitive in the desert border area between the two countries. He was forced to travel incognito in ordinary cars or farm pickup trucks between hideouts on both sides of the border, escorted only by his driver and two bodyguards. The region was familiar territory to his men. It was the hotbed of the Sunni insurgency against first the US forces in Iraq and then the Shiite-led governments that took over the country.

Fearing assassination or betrayal, he was not able to use phones and trusted only a handful of couriers to communicate with his two main Iraqi aides, Iyad Al-Obaidi, his defense minister, and Ayad Al-Jumaili, his security chief. The two had been believed to be among the likely candidates to succeed Baghdadi, but Jumaili was killed in April 2017 and Obaidi's whereabouts are unknown. In any case, their military background and lack of religious credentials mean that any of Baghdadi's deputies would struggle to inherit his claims to be caliph. —Reuters

2014 as the country descended into civil war between the Saudi-backed government of Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi and the Iran-aligned Houthi movement. However, the group has since faced a tough resistance from Al-Qaeda's local branch, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and both groups fought each other, especially in the southern province of Al-Bayda. Al Qaeda and Islamic State are also fighting Shiite Houthis, which they see as heretics. Islamic State has claimed several assassinations and bombings in south Yemen but it never held territory. Experts believe Al Qaeda, with older and deeper tribal connections, poses a bigger threat in the war-torn country.

Nigeria

Nigerian group Boko Haram has carried out attacks in northeastern Nigeria since 2009 in pursuit of an Islamic caliphate. It has killed more than 30,000 people and forced 2 million to flee their homes. The group split in 2016 and one faction pledged allegiance to IS. Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) has focused on attacking military bases in raids over the last year. It has become the dominant militant group in the region. The extent of support provided by Islamic State to ISWAP is unclear and many security experts say the relationship is mainly in name rather than direct funding and logistical support.

Afghanistan

Islamic State in Khorasan (ISIS-K), which took its name from a historical region that covered much of modern-day Afghanistan and parts of Central Asia, appeared in late 2014 in the eastern province of Nangarhar, where it retains a stronghold. It announced its formation in January 2015. The group's leadership has pledged allegiance to Baghdadi but it is not clear that ISIS-K has direct operational links with the main movement. It has claimed attacks on civilian targets in cities including Kabul and fought the Afghan Taliban for control of a number of rural districts. US commanders say its forces number fewer than 2,000. The movement is little understood and many Afghan officials in Kabul doubt the veracity of some of its claims of responsibility. —Reuters

Notorious Australian serial killer Milat dies

SYDNEY: Australia's most notorious serial killer Ivan Milat, whose murder of seven young backpackers in the 1990s terrified the country, has died in hospital, officials said yesterday. Milat was serving consecutive life sentences for the brutal killing spree that took place near Sydney between 1989 and 1992. A spokeswoman for Corrective Services New South Wales said in a statement that the 74-year-old died at Long Bay Hospital at 4:07 am yesterday.

He was diagnosed with terminal stomach and oesophagus cancer in May and had been in hospital to receive pain relief since October 11, according to national broadcaster ABC. His seven confirmed victims were Britons Caroline Clarke, 21, and Joanne Walters, 22, Australians James Gibson and Deborah Everist, both 19, and German backpackers Simone Schmidl, 21, Anja Habschied, 20, and Gabor Neugebauer, 21.

In each case, he had offered the young hitchhikers a lift, stabbed or shot them in thrill killings and buried the bodies in shallow graves in a forest in the NSW southern highlands. Milat was arrested in 1994 following one of Australia's biggest police investigations, which was sparked by the discovery of the bodies in 1992 and 1993. He was convicted of the murders in 1996, as well as of the abduction of another traveller who escaped, but denied having a role in the crimes.

Milat was also a major suspect in the murders of three other women who went missing in the state's Hunter region a decade before he began the killings for which he was jailed. Leanne Beth Goodall, Robyn Elizabeth Hickie and Amanda Therese Robinson disappeared in 1978 and 1979. Their bodies were never found. Milat admitted that he had worked as a roadman in the area during the late 1970s but denied involvement in the three murders. Australia is a popular destination for young backpackers, with more than 600,000 touring the country every year. —AFP



SYDNEY: Ivan Milat, who was sentenced to life imprisonment last July for the murders of seven backpackers, is shown in an undated photograph with a rifle and pistol and a favorite cowboy hat. —AFP

International

Vatican synod proposes ordaining married men as priests in Amazon

Conservatives oppose change, fearing slippery slope of change

VATICAN CITY: An assembly of Roman Catholic bishops from the Amazon on Saturday proposed that married men in the remote area be allowed to be ordained priests, which could lead to a landmark change in the Church's centuries-old discipline of celibacy. The proposal, made in a final document from a three-week assembly, known as a synod, passed by 128 votes in favor to 41 against. Pope Francis will consider it, along with many other proposals on issues including the environment and the role of women, in a future document of his own, known as an Apostolic Exhortation.

Separately, when he closed the synod's final working session earlier on Saturday, Francis announced that he would reconvene a commission to study the history of women deacons in the early centuries of the Catholic Church, responding to calls by women that they be allowed to take up the role today. But the issue of a married priesthood for the Amazon region was by far the most contentious item in the 120-paragraph final document.

The proposal calls for married men who are already deacons in the Church, have a stable family relationship, and are proven leaders in their communities to be ordained as priests. It said the ordination to the priesthood would have to be preceded by an "adequate formation". This solution to the shortage of priests, backed by many South American bishops, would allow Catholics in isolated areas to attend Mass and receive the sacraments more regularly. At least 85% of Amazon villages cannot attend Mass every week and some cannot do so for years.

Conservatives oppose the change, fearing it would be a slippery slope leading to a married priesthood throughout the 1.3 billion member Church. They fear that if one part of the Church was allowed to ordain married men as an exception, there would be nothing to stop other areas with a shortage of priests doing the same, even in developed countries. A CBS News poll last year said nearly 70% of American Catholics favor letting priests marry. The document said that some bishops in the synod thought the issue should be discussed on a universal basis.

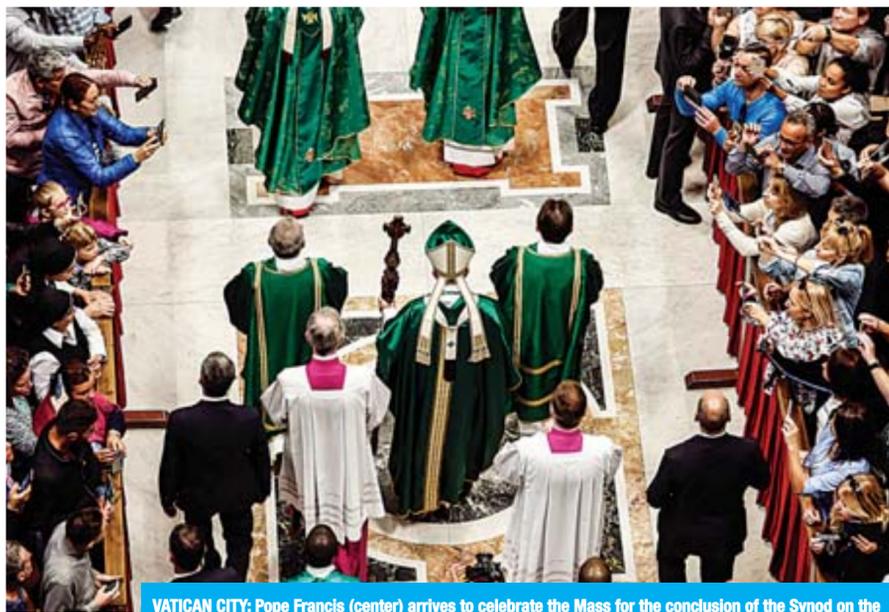
Women deacons

Conservatives are also opposed to women deacons, saying the deaconate is linked with the male priesthood. Many deacons in the Church around the world today are married men. Deacons, like priests, are ordained ministers. They may not celebrate Mass, but they may preach, teach in the name of the Church, baptize and conduct wedding, wake and funeral services and even run a parish with the permission of a bishop. In his closing comments to the synod, Francis said: "We still have not grasped the significance of women in the Church."

Bishops want discussion on married priests



Scholars have debated the precise role of women deacons in the early Church. Some say they ministered only to other women, such as at immersion rites at baptism and to inspect the bodies of women in cases where Christian men were accused of domestic violence and brought before Church tribunals. Others believe women deacons in the early Church were fully ordained and on a par with the



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis (center) arrives to celebrate the Mass for the conclusion of the Synod on the Amazonia in Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican yesterday. —AFP

male deacons at the time. The Church did away with female deacons altogether in later centuries.

A commission that handed its report to the pope this year was inconclusive. Francis, who ends the synod ceremoniously with a Mass in St Peter's Basilica yesterday, gave no details on when the new

commission would start its work. Francis and his predecessors have ruled out allowing women to become priests. But advocates of women priests see a female deaconate might eventually make it easier for a future pope to study the possibility of women priests. —Reuters

Orthodox Ethiopians criticize PM Abiy over deadly clashes

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia's influential Orthodox Church yesterday criticized Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's response to ethnic and religious clashes that have left nearly 70 people dead, saying he was failing to protect its members. Violence erupted in the capital Addis Ababa and the outlying Oromia region on Wednesday after a prominent activist accused security forces of trying to orchestrate an attack against him — a claim denied by police. A police official said Friday that 67 people had died in the clashes in Oromia.

"People are dying and questions are being raised if the government even exists. The people are losing all hope," Father Markos Gebre-Egziabher, a leader in the Orthodox Tewahedo Church, told AFP following a memorial service at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Addis Ababa. Orthodox Christians make up roughly 40 percent of Ethiopia's 110 mil-

lion people. Abiy, the winner of this year's Nobel Peace Prize, waited until Saturday night to react. He vowed to bring the perpetrators to justice and warned that instability could worsen if Ethiopians did not unite.

A church spokesman told AFP on Saturday that 52 Orthodox Ethiopians, including two church officials, had been killed - a toll that AFP could not independently verify. Fisseha Tekle, a researcher for Amnesty International, said Saturday that Orthodox churches had been attacked in at least three locations, while there was at least one report of a mosque being targeted. Church leaders met with Defence Minister Lemma Megersa and Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen, state-affiliated Fana Broadcasting Corporate reported Saturday, though it was unclear what came of the meeting.

'God is with us'

At Sunday's memorial service in Addis Ababa, hundreds of worshippers bowed their heads during a moment of silence for the victims. Father Markos said members of the church were prepared to die in defence of fellow worshippers and



ADDIS ABABA: Christian Orthodox faithful prepare to pray at the Holy Trinity Church in Addis Ababa, during the memorial service for the victims of the violence which erupted earlier in the month in the Oromia region. —AFP

church property. "If they come with machetes, we will go with crosses," he said. "God is with us." Churchgoer Esubalew Yimam called the government's response and particularly Abiy's statement "disappointing".

"The duty of the government is to

protect its citizens, more than development and other things," he said. "Currently we're not seeing that happening." Esubalew also accused Abiy of failing to stand up to the activist whose allegations against the security forces kicked off last week's unrest. —AFP

Lebanon protest teach-ins revive pre-war landmarks

BEIRUT: The Lebanese capital's iconic egg-shaped cinema looming large behind him, Jamil Mouawad lectured around 20 students on the politics of public space, as demonstrations swelled in the streets below. "It's a political act to be able to teach here," said the professor of political science at the American University of Beirut (AUB), perched on a rectangular base underpinning the bullet-ravaged and long-abandoned building.

"This is a place where knowledge and practice can meet," he said, as chants against the ruling elite echoed upwards - part of a days-long protest that has forced public access to this and other Beirut landmarks. Built in the 1960s, the Egg was to be part of a multi-use complex, before Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war damaged the building and scuppered development plans. After the conflict ended, it was threatened

by a privatized post-war reconstruction process that leveled architectural landmarks in central Beirut, replacing them with glitzy high-rises.

Solidere - the controversial company in charge of developing much of the area, including the Egg's environs - limited public access to the space, although the building briefly hosted underground festivals and parties in the 1990s. But since unprecedented, cross-sectarian protests demanding the removal of an entrenched political elite engulfed central Beirut last week, the Egg has been among several pre-war spaces occupied by academics and demonstrators.

They have organized raves and movie screenings inside, injecting new life into the once-dreary centre of the capital, which hasn't seen such a lively social scene since Solidere transformed the area into a luxury zone. "I live 200 meters away from the Egg and I had never stepped foot inside" said Bachar El-Halabi, a researcher at AUB, who moderated a lecture at the site on Friday. "The history of Beirut is inside it, and the capital's present and future are just outside, on the streets."

'Eggupation'

One recent afternoon, more than 100 people - mostly students - streamed into



BEIRUT: People walk during an open-air lecture given by Jamil Mouawad (unseen) - professor of political science at the American University of Beirut (AUB), near 'the Egg' building in the centre of the Lebanese capital Beirut. —AFP

the Egg's hollowed interior as an economist and former minister delivered a lecture on "Capitalism in Crisis," while heavy rain fell outside. "This space is more important than any university," Charbel Nahas, an AUB professor, told a cheering crowd of stu-

dents, the walls around him plastered with slogans demanding the "fall of the regime." Posters hanging from metal rails announced the "Eggupation" of the concrete edifice, as a coffee vendor walked through the crowd, clinking small cups. —AFP

Kurdish forces leave Turkish border area

BEIRUT: The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) said yesterday it had agreed to withdraw more than 30 km from the Turkish border, an announcement welcomed by Damascus which said Turkey should now end its "aggression" in northeast Syria. Turkey launched its cross-border offensive on Oct 9 targeting Kurdish YPG forces in northeast Syria after President

Donald Trump pulled US troops out of the area.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and Russia's Vladimir Putin then agreed on Oct 22 that Syrian border guards and Russian military police would clear the border area up to 30 km into Syria of YPG fighters over a six-day period that ends Tuesday. The YPG is the main component of the SDF and is viewed by Ankara as terrorists due to their links to Kurdish insurgents in southeast Turkey.

But the SDF has been a key ally of the United States in the fight against Islamic State militants. "The SDF is redeploying to new positions away from the Turkish-Syrian border across northeast Syria in accordance with the

terms of the (Erdogan-Putin) agreement in order to stop the bloodshed and to protect the inhabitants of the region from Turkish attacks," the SDF said in a statement.

It urged Russia to help ensure "a constructive dialogue" between the Kurdish-led administration in northeast Syria and the government of President Bashar Al-Assad in Damascus. Moscow is Assad's closest ally and Russian military power has proven decisive in helping him turn the tide of Syria's eight-year civil war and recover large swathes of territory. The Sochi agreement allows Assad's forces to return to parts of the northern border with Turkey for the first time in years. —Reuters

US seeks data on Iran humanitarian exports

WASHINGTON: The United States has asked foreign governments to submit detailed reports on humanitarian exports to Iran, a step observers said could have a chilling effect and cast a pall over European efforts to allow trade. President Donald Trump's administration, which has cast Tehran's clerical regime as enemy number one, announced a new "humanitarian mechanism" which it said would help the Iranian people by facilitating "legitimate" trade.

As it announced the initiative, the Treasury Department also said it was blacklisting Iran on charges of money laundering under the 2001 Patriot Act, effectively forbidding all US transactions with Iranian banks. The Trump administration has imposed sweeping sanctions on Tehran and officially makes exceptions for food, medicine and other humanitarian goods, but most companies are unwilling to do any trade with Iran for fear of repercussions in the world's largest economy.

US officials said the new mechanism will allow foreign governments and banks to reduce their risks by showing their transactions to Washington, which would certify they are in compliance with sanctions. "A new humanitarian channel will make it easier for foreign governments, financial institutions and private companies to engage in legitimate humanitarian trade on behalf of the Iranian people while reducing the risk that money ends up in the wrong hands," Brian Hook, the State Department point man on Iran, said in a statement.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the Trump administration "remains committed to the unfettered flow of humanitarian aid to the Iranian people." To seek certification, each institution will need to submit "substantial and unprecedented" information on a monthly basis, including all invoices and details on their customers—including whether they appeared on any US, EU or UN blacklists in the previous five years.

Brian O'Toole, a senior Treasury Department adviser dealing with sanctions under former president Barack Obama, said the measure looked like it was aimed more at gathering intelligence than helping ordinary Iranians and expected many foreign banks would be unable to provide the level of detail required. "I think this is going to have a chilling effect. It will have the exact opposite effect of what they're claiming it will," said O'Toole, now a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank.

'Nothing more than farce'

The National Iranian American Council said the latest actions would increase the burden for humanitarian trade, amid accounts of Iranians who have gone without vital medicine or medical products. "The Trump administration has sounded the death knell for humanitarian trade with Iran," the Iranian American group said in a statement. "Let's be clear: There is unlikely to be a single banker in the world that will accept these conditions and participate in the trade," it said.

"The Trump administration is surely aware of this fact, and its humanitarian channel should be viewed as nothing more than farce." O'Toole, the former Treasury adviser, said that the measure also looked like it was aimed at countering INSTEX, a channel set up by European powers to skirt unilateral US sanctions. "This is clearly saying-okay, we told you INSTEX is bad, this is what you should use, never mind the invasion of US government sovereignty on you," he said. —AFP

International

Police, Catalan separatists clash as day of protest ends in violence

Independence movement at risk of fragmenting

BARCELONA: Clashes between police and militant elements in a thousands-strong crowd of demonstrators transformed part of central Barcelona into a battleground late on Saturday as another day of pro-independence protests turned violent. Projectiles were fired, at least six people were hospitalized with injuries, and barricades were set alight after officers charged ranks of demonstrators - many young and masking their faces - who had amassed outside Spanish police headquarters.

The violent standoff in the city's tourist heartland offered stark evidence of the faultlines developing between hardline and conciliatory elements within the region's independence movement. It lasted several hours before protesters dispersed through the city's streets. Barcelona has witnessed daily pro-secession protests since Oct. 14.

That was when Spain's Supreme Court sentenced nine politicians and activists to up to 13 years in jail for their role in a failed independence bid in 2017, prompting widespread anger in the region and sending shockwaves through Spain's political landscape. Saturday's protest was not the first marred by violence, with unrest notably on Oct 18 having been more widespread. But it contrasted starkly with events earlier in the day, when some 350,000 Catalans had marched peacefully through the city in support of calls from civil rights groups for the jailed separatist leaders to be freed.

Bottles, balls and bullets

The later protest was organized by CDR, a pro-independence pressure group that favours direct action and has cut off railroads and roads, as well as trying to storm the regional parliament. It began around 7:30 pm and as the crowd grew to around 10,000, according to police estimates, demonstrators threw a hail of bottles, balls and rubber bullets at officers, TV footage showed.

Police carrying shields and weapons and backed by some 20 riot vans then charged the demonstrators in an attempt to disperse them, splitting the crowd in two along Via Laietana near the police HQ. Reuters TV footage showed police armed with batons forcing

their way through the crowd while demonstrators threw stones and flares. News channel 24h showed police grappling one-on-one with demonstrators, who fell back before reforming their lines.

Some projectiles were fired, with a Reuters photographer among those hospitalized after being hit in the stomach by a rubber or foam bullet. Catalan emergency services said that, in all, six people were hospitalized. The organizers of the earlier protest, grassroots groups Assemblée Nacional Catalana (ANC) and Omnium Cultural, had hoped that, with pro-secessionist parties split over what strategy to adopt, it would refocus attention in the secessionist camp by drawing the largest crowd since the court verdicts were passed.

"From the street we will keep defending all the (people's) rights but from the institutions we need political answers," ANC leader Elisenda Paluzie told the gathering, pledging to organize more protests. Local police said around 350,000 attended, compared with a daily peak of some 500,000 at the Oct. 18 protest and 600,000 at a march that took place on Catalonia's national day last month.

All those figures, however, represent only a small percentage of the region's 7.5 million population and its electorate is almost evenly split over the issue of independence. Mainstream Spanish parties, including the minority Socialist government, have consistently rejected moves towards Catalan independence and all bar left-wing Podemos are opposed to any form of referendum. They are now gearing up for a national election on Nov. 10.

'Prison is not the answer'

Both ANC and Omnium Cultural eschew violence and their then leaders were among the nine jailed on Oct 14. Many who joined their march carried Catalan pro-independence flags and banners bearing slogans that included: "Prison is not the answer," "Sit and talk" and "Freedom for political prisoners". In the front row was regional government head Quim Torra, who earlier presided over a ceremony at which hundreds of Catalan mayors endorsed a document demanding self-determination.



BARCELONA: A banner demands 'amnesty' during a separatist demonstration called by Catalan National Assembly (ANC) and Omnium Cultural organizations, against the conviction of Catalan separatist leaders for the 2017 attempted secession in Barcelona. —AFP

"We have to be capable of creating a republic of free men and woman ... and overcoming the confrontational dynamic with a constructive one," he told them. While not currently affiliated to any party, Torra belongs to the separatist political movement Junts per Catalunya. It has been in favor of maintaining confrontation with authorities in Madrid, while its leftist coalition partner Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya favors dialogue.

One marcher, 63-year-old Maria Llopart, criticized the lack of unity between the two parties. "Everything looks very bad, we are not advancing," she said. Francesc Dot, 65, said the nine leaders had been jailed in defense of "Spain's unity." His wife, Maria Dolores

Rustarazo, 63, said she should also be in prison because she voted in the 2017 referendum, which Spanish courts outlawed. "If (all separatist votes)... have to go to jail, we will go but I don't think we would all fit," she said. She condemned the violence but had understanding for young protesters being "angry at the lack of democracy". On Saturday they included Manel, a 20 year-old student with his face obscured by a cloth who said he was among those who lit barricades during last week's unrest. "We need a consistent protest: more streets and less parliamentary talk because that doesn't seem to work," he said before the CDR protest turned violent. "If we halt the economy, the Spanish government would be obliged to talk." —Reuters

Powerful winds fan flames as 'historic' US blaze spreads

HEALDSBURG: Powerful winds were fanning wildfires in northern California in "potentially historic fire" conditions, authorities said yesterday, as tens of thousands of people were ordered to evacuate and sweeping power cuts began in the US state. Gusts of 80 miles per hour were fueling the Kincadee blaze - which threatens tens of thousands of structures - causing it to burn with greater intensity in remote steep terrain north of San Francisco, the National Weather Service said.

The Sonoma County Sheriff's office yesterday issued an evacuation warning for much of the city of Santa Rosa, which has a population of some 180,000 people. Nearly 90,000 people were ordered to flee their homes on Saturday as the Sonoma county fire spread after breaking out midweek.

A total of 77 structures, including 31 residential buildings, had been destroyed by the blaze on Saturday, as more than 2,800 personnel were called to the scene, according to Jonathan Cox, spokesman for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. "Potentially historic fire weather conditions are possible" north of San Francisco, the US National Weather Service wrote in a tweet. "This is definitely an event that we're calling historic and extreme," David King, a meteorologist with the service, told The Los Angeles Times.

"What's making this event really substantial... is the amount of time that these winds are going to remain." The gusting winds, which have caused a red flag warning indicating a high risk level, will last into early Monday, meteorologists said. California's largest utility, Pacific Gas & Electric Co., said it expected to turn off power to 940,000 customers - a precautionary shutdown that local media reported would affect about two million people.

A map linked to by PG&E showed blackouts affecting large areas stretching some 250 miles to the north of San Francisco yesterday, as well as to the south and east. The company said it "will need to turn off power for safety several hours before the potentially damaging winds arrive." "Winds of this magnitude pose a higher risk of damage and sparks on the electric system and rapid wildfire spread." The Kincadee Fire, which is only 10 percent contained, has grown to 25,955 acres, Cox said. —AFP



HEALDSBURG: The Soda Rock Winery burns during the Kincadee fire as flames race through Healdsburg, California yesterday. —AFP

In South Carolina, Democrats accuse Trump of sowing racism

COLUMBIA: Democratic presidential candidates in South Carolina on Saturday accused US President Donald Trump of stoking racism as they vied for the state's black vote in its strategically important early primary. Former Vice President Joe Biden, US Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont and five other Democrats participated in a forum at historically black Benedict College a day after Trump was presented an award there for his work on criminal justice, sparking outrage among candidates and temporarily prompting Senator Kamala Harris to pull out.

Harris, a former district attorney and state attorney general in California, spoke at the event on Saturday after the 20/20 Bipartisan Justice Center, which gave Trump the award, was removed as a sponsor, according to her campaign. A spokeswoman for that nonprofit group,

which continued to be involved in organizing the event throughout the day, did not respond to a request for comment.

"I said I would not come because I just couldn't believe that Donald Trump would be given an award as it relates to criminal justice reform," Harris told the audience. "Let's be clear: This is somebody who has disrespected the voices that have been present for decades about the need for reform," she said, criticizing the president for describing an impeachment inquiry against him as a "lynching," a form of vigilante killing historically associated with white supremacists.

The event is an important showcase for Democrats ahead of South Carolina's Feb. 29 primary, the party's fourth state-nominating contest. Six in 10 Democratic voters in the state are black and Biden has a strong early lead in local political polls. In receiving the award on Friday, Trump extolled his record on race and criminal justice before a largely handpicked and appreciative audience. The award recognized Trump last year signing bipartisan legislation including easing harsh minimum sentences for nonviolent drug offenders.

Biden told the crowd on Saturday

Week of furious protests leaves Chilean leaders stunned

SANTIAGO: After a week of huge and sometimes violent protests, Chileans are showing no sign of easing the pressure on a government that seems stunned and paralyzed by a popular explosion fueled by years of socio-economic frustration. Seeking to negotiate an end to the crisis, President Sebastian Pinera on Saturday announced a sweeping reshuffling of his cabinet and said a highly controversial state of emergency could end as early as Sunday "if circumstances permit."

Whether such moves will help take the air out of the protests that have brought much of the country to a standstill remains to be seen. The public fury in Chile, one of South America's richest and most stable countries, was touched off by

a four-cent rise in ticket prices on the state-owned Metro system. That seemingly innocuous change sparked angry clashes with security forces, widespread looting, and demonstrations that culminated Friday in Santiago with the historic mobilization of nearly a million people.

The protesters, if anything, appear to be gaining energy, and their list of demands has continued to grow, reaching far beyond the price of public transportation. The demands now include decent retirement benefits, affordable health care and education, lower prescription drug prices... but also Pinera's resignation and even the scrapping and replacing of the nation's Constitution, which dates from the Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990).

Between the calls for greater social justice and the demands for political transformation, "It's hard to know which of these two dimensions will be the key to managing an exit from the crisis," said Marcelo Mella, a political scientist at the University of Santiago. But with more than a million Chileans taking to the streets nationwide - in a country of just 18 million - the protests are no longer lim-

Number of hostages 'killed' as rebels and Myanmar army clash

YANGON: A number of hostages seized by ethnic Rakhine rebels in a raid on a ferry packed with scores of Myanmar security forces have been killed, the insur-

gents and army said yesterday, blaming each other for the deaths. On Saturday rebels from the Arakan Army (AA), who are fighting for greater autonomy for Rakhine Buddhists from the state, forced a ferry to the shore taking around 50 people hostage including 14 soldiers and 29 police officers.

The army said it deployed attack helicopters in pursuit of the rebels who tried to escape with the detainees loaded onto three boats. Both sides confirmed some of the hostages were killed in a melee, but did not give a number for the dead and traded blame

for who was responsible.

The AA released a statement yesterday saying military attack helicopters armed with machine guns and rockets hit the group as they were being "taken for questioning to a safe place in boats." "Some detainees we took for questioning were killed, two boats were completely destroyed." The army refuted the allegation saying the AA "killed them before the fighting took place" with security forces. "They used police as human shields," Brigadier General Zaw Min Tun told AFP. "We cannot say exactly how many were killed." —AFP



MARSHALLTOWN: Democratic presidential candidate Sen Bernie Sanders (I-VT) speaks to guests during a campaign stop in Marshalltown, Iowa. —AFP

that "I don't quite understand" why Trump would get the award. "It's not just his words that have given rise to hate," he said. "His actions - his actions have failed the African American community, and all communities." Trump hopes his support for a sweeping crim-

inal justice reform law will help him pick up votes among African Americans next year after only winning 8% of the black vote in 2016. The president easily won South Carolina, where Republican voters outnumber Democrats 2-to-1, in 2016. —Reuters



SANTIAGO: Demonstrators gather in Santiago, a week after protests started. Demonstrations against a hike in metro ticket prices in Chile's capital exploded into violence on October 18, unleashing widening protests over living costs and social inequality. —AFP

ited to the demands of the country's poorest. "This social explosion includes some people who are very angry, but also — and this is unprecedented - there are

demonstrators from more affluent neighborhoods," said Genaro Cuadros, a professor of urban studies at Diego Portales University. —AFP

International

Vietnam police take DNA from relatives of UK's truck victims

Churches in northern Vietnam hold candle-lit prayers

CAN LOC: Police in Vietnam took hair and blood samples yesterday to get DNA from relatives of people feared to be among the 39 who died in the back of a truck near London last week, their family members said. The bodies were found on Wednesday in a truck container in Grays, about 32 km east of central London and British police are still trying to establish the identity of victims who in many cases lacked identity documents.

In a poor rice-growing area of northern Vietnam, communities have been plunged into mourning with their hope all but lost for relatives who had set out to seek better lives in Europe and were thought to have been aboard the truck. The hashtag #RIP39 was trending in Vietnam on widely-used Facebook. Distaught, Nguyen Dinh Gia said he feared there was very little chance he would ever again see his 20-year-old son, Nguyen Dinh Luong, who had been trying to get to Britain after first making it to France.

"Police from the Ministry of Public Security came to get DNA samples, our hair and blood," Nguyen Dinh Gia told Reuters at Can Loc in Ha Tinh province, where sympathizers gathered at the simple house amid lush rice fields to console the family. "I advised him not to go because I told him that even though our family had always had nothing and our children were always in hardship, but we brought them up just fine," Nguyen said. The father of Pham Thi Tra My, who sent a last text message to her family in the early hours of Wednesday Vietnam time, said police had also been to collect samples of blood and hair.

Vietnam's government did not respond immediately for a request for comment. Vietnam's prime minister has called for an investigation into the case. Police in Britain said on Saturday they had charged one man, 25-year-old Maurice Robinson of Craigavon in Northern Ireland, with 39 counts of manslaughter and other

offences including conspiracy to traffic people.

Yesterday, police said three people arrested in connection with the investigation had been released on bail. All three had been questioned on suspicion of manslaughter and conspiracy to traffic people. Initially, British police believed the victims were Chinese, but later sought help from the Vietnamese community. Chinese and Vietnamese officials were both working closely with British police, the countries' embassies said. A Catholic priest in the remote town of Yen Thanh in Nghe An province said on Saturday that he believed most of the dead were likely from Vietnam.

No documents

British police have said very few of the victims were carrying official identification and that they hope to identify the dead through fingerprints, dental records and DNA, as well as photos from friends and relatives. In the predominantly Catholic area of northern Vietnam from which the suspected victims came, churches held candle-lit prayers at the weekend. How the victims came to be in the truck is not yet known. Some 70% of Vietnamese trafficking cases in the United Kingdom between 2009-2016 were for labor exploitation, including cannabis production and work in nail salons, according to a British government report last year.

The families of the suspected victims were in Nghe An and Ha Tinh, two of the poorest provinces in communist Vietnam. Nghe An was identified as home to many victims of human trafficking who end up in Europe, according to a March report by the Pacific Links Foundation, a US-based anti-trafficking organization. Ha Tinh was ravaged by one of Vietnam's worst environmental disasters in 2016 when a steel mill owned by Taiwan's Formosa Plastics contaminated coastal waters, devastating local fishing and tourism industries.



NGHE AN: Le Minh Tuan, father of 30-year old Le Van Ha, who is feared to be among the 39 people found dead in a truck in Britain, cries while holding Ha's son outside their house in Vietnam's Nghe An province yesterday. —AFP

It was from Ha Tinh that Tra My set out, first to China, in the hope of making it to Britain via France. According to Human Rights Space, a civic network based in Vietnam, she sent one final apologetic message home.

"I'm sorry, mum and dad. My path abroad was not a success. I love you both so much. I can't breathe. I'm from Nghen Town, Can Loc District, Ha Tinh, Vietnam ... I am sorry, mum," the message said. —Reuters

Kashmir row sparks Malaysia and India palm oil tensions

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's mammoth palm oil sector faces a new threat after Indian traders were asked to halt purchases amid a diplomatic row over Kashmir, piling further pressure on the industry as Europe also plans cutbacks. The Southeast Asian nation is the second-biggest producer after Indonesia of the oil, used in everything from food to cosmetics, in a sector long vilified by environmentalists who blame it for fuelling deforestation.

With Western companies reducing use of the commodity as green groups ratchet up pressure, the top two growers have increasingly come to rely on demand from India, the world's biggest buyer of edible oils, and China. But a speech by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad at the United Nations General Assembly last month, in which he said New Delhi had "invaded and occupied" Kashmir, has sparked a backlash in India that could badly hit the sector. There has been sympathy in

mostly Muslim Malaysia for Kashmiris after the Hindu nationalist government in New Delhi revoked the Muslim-majority region's autonomy in August, and imposed a lockdown to quell unrest.

Kashmir has been split between India and Pakistan since 1947, and has sparked wars and numerous skirmishes between the two countries. An armed rebellion against Indian rule has raged in the valley since 1989. Mahathir's comments prompted calls for Indians to shun Malaysian products - with social media users posting angry messages alongside the hashtag #BoycottMalaysia - while rumors swirled New Delhi may hike tariffs on Malaysian palm oil.

Earlier this week, a major Indian vegetable oil trade body called on its 875 members to avoid buying palm oil from Malaysia, noting the government was mulling retaliatory measures. "In your own interest as well as a mark of solidarity with our nation, we should avoid purchases from Malaysia for the time being," said Atul Chaturvedi, president of the Solvent Extractors' Association of India.

Major market

It is a blow for Malaysia, as India was the country's third-biggest market for palm oil and palm oil products in 2018, with a value of 6.84 billion ringgit (\$1.63 billion). Teresa Kok, the minister who oversees the commodity, scrambled to



SEPANG: A worker prepares to unload palm oil fruits from a lorry at a factory in Sepang, outside Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia's mammoth palm oil sector faces a new threat after Indian traders were asked to halt purchases amid a row over Kashmir, piling further pressure on the industry as Europe also plans to cut back. —AFP

defuse tensions, describing the association's move as a "major setback" and saying Malaysia was looking at increasing imports of sugar and buffalo meat from India. The row is a further hit to the sector in Malaysia after the European Union announced plans to phase out palm oil in biofuels by 2030.

Malaysia and Indonesia have vowed to fight the move, saying it could damage the livelihoods of millions of small-

scale farmers. Despite attempts by some Malaysian officials to calm the spat, calls are growing in India for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to curb palm oil imports. Such a move would signal that "countries gaining economically from India while criticizing the country politically will not have a free run anymore", Neelam Deo, director of Mumbai-based think-tank Gateway House said. —AFP

Bored and broke, Vietnam migrants risk lives for riches in Europe

HANOI: Young, aspirational and poor Vietnamese are risking their lives to travel to Europe, taking on large debts to join well-worn trafficking routes in the hope of a better future thousands of miles from their rural homes. The dangers of illegal crossings into Europe were laid bare this week when 31 men and eight women were found dead in a refrigerated truck in Britain.

British police initially said the victims were Chinese, but it is now feared most were from Vietnam. Many Vietnamese migrants come from just a handful of central provinces, where smugglers prey on disaffected youth lured by the prospect of overseas work. Bored by village life and fed up with a lack of opportunity, the allure of overseas riches is enough to tempt many to embark on the risky trips.

Many belong to Vietnam's booming, social-media obsessed population of under 30s, often following relatives or friends to the UK, France and Germany - Facebook posts from abroad and money sent home are often proof enough that the journey is worth it. Greased by smuggling networks with links in remote Vietnamese towns and throughout eastern Europe, migrants can pay up to \$40,000 for a ticket out of poverty, borrowing from relatives or taking huge loans. "Smugglers are really saying that the UK is the 'El Dorado'," Paris-based migration expert Nadia Sebtaoui said.

They are often promised princely salaries of up to £3,000 pounds (\$3,800) a month, around three times the annual income in Vietnam's poorest provinces. But the reality is often far different. Some end up owing thousands of dollars to smugglers and money lenders who front cash for the treacherous journeys. Saddled by huge debts, many face the risk of exploitation along the way. "They really have a lack of awareness on the reality of working in Europe," said Sebtaoui, adding that many take under-the-table jobs as manicurists or cannabis farmers, or even sex workers.

Requests by Indian President Ram Nath Kovind and Modi were turned down last month. "Indian Prime Minister wanted to use our airspace but we denied permission in the perspective of black day being observed by Kashmiris today to condemn Indian occupation and ongoing grave human rights violations in Indian-occupied Kashmir," foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said in a statement. He said the Indian high commissioner (ambassador) was being informed about the decision. Qureshi did not disclose Modi's destination but a senior Pakistani official told AFP the Indian prime minister had sought permission to use Pakistan's airspace to travel to Saudi Arabia, where he is due to attend an investment summit. Pakistan had closed its airspace to Indian traffic in February after a suicide bomb attack that killed dozens of Indian troops in Kashmir, ratcheted up tensions between the two neighbours and prompted aerial dogfights. It reopened its skies for all civilian traffic in July, ending months of restrictions that had

affected major international routes. An armed rebellion against New Delhi's rule has raged in the Indian-administered portion of the territory since 1989, claiming more than 70,000 lives - mostly civilians. Meanwhile, in a video message aired yesterday by state-run and private Pakistani TV channels Prime Minister Imran Khan vowed to fight for Kashmiris' right to self-determination.

"The entire Pakistani nation stands by Kashmiris and will keep on extending them full moral, political and diplomatic support at all international fora ... and this is my solemn pledge to Kashmiris being their ambassador and spokesman", Khan said. His brief video message coincided with a "black day" observed in Pakistan and Kashmir against rights violations in Indian-administered Kashmir. Demonstrations were held in major cities with protesters waving flags of Pakistan-administered Kashmir and asking India to lift curbs on its part of the Himalayan region. —AFP

Pakistan denies use of airspace to Indian PM

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan yesterday said it denied India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi permission to fly through its airspace due to "ongoing grave human rights violations" in Indian-administered Kashmir. The decision came with tensions simmering between the two nuclear-armed arch rivals over the disputed Himalayan region. It is the third time in recent weeks that Islamabad has refused to allow Indian leaders to use its airspace.

US envoy in Kabul amid uncertainty and stalled talks

KABUL: Zalmay Khalilzad, the US envoy who led talks with the Taliban until negotiations collapsed last month, was in Kabul yesterday meeting with top Afghan officials including President Ashraf Ghani. His visit comes amid speculation the US is attempting to restart the effort to end America's longest war, after President Donald Trump last month declared talks "dead". Khalilzad's arrival in the Afghan capital coincided with the announcement that preliminary results from recent presidential elections will be delayed for nearly a month, a lengthy postponement likely to stoke political uncertainty and fraud allegations.

"Khalilzad met with the president and briefed him about his recent activities," Ghani's spokesman Sediq Seddiqi said. "His viewpoints and the stance of the Afghan government for peace were discussed." The US embassy in Kabul declined requests for comment, but officials told AFP Khalilzad may next stop in Pakistan, which he also visited earlier this month and met informally with Taliban representatives. Ahead of that visit, a senior Taliban source in Pakistan told AFP that the group had not "backtracked" from talks, suggesting the ball was in America's court for how things might proceed. Experts say the US may want to resume its quest to pull troops out of Afghanistan, but first wants to see some sort of Taliban concession - such as a reduction in violence. Ghani, whose government was cut out of negotiations, had sharply criticized the draft deal that was thought to be on the verge of completion following a year of negotiations.

Results delayed

Afghans went to the polls for a first-round vote on September 28, and initial results were supposed to have been released October 19. But more than a week after saying the Independent Election Commission would miss that deadline, commission chairwoman Hawa Alam Nuristani said the results now would not be released until November 14. "We have already apologized for missing the date, but this doesn't mean failure," Nuristani told reporters. "This (election) is a fate-determining issue in the country and we cannot accept sacrificing transparency for speed." Election officials cited several technical issues slowing the counting of ballots, including an attempt from unknown quarters to hack the central system of Dermalog, the German company that provided biometric machines designed to prevent duplicate votes. In one bizarre incident, two police officers who were purportedly escaping chilly temperatures slept inside the main election data centre, which is supposed to be sealed, prompting howls of outrage from the team of key candidate Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah.

This year's election is considered a two-horse race between him and Ghani. The two squared off in 2014, with Ghani eventually named winner after a bitter campaign that was marred by violence and allegations of systemic fraud. It was only after US involvement that Ghani and Abdullah agreed to a power-sharing setup that has only deepened their mutual contempt. Days ahead of the election, the Trump administration cut \$160 million in direct funding to Afghan authorities, citing corruption. Violence in Afghanistan has continued unabated, with the last quarter the deadliest on record for civilians. Yesterday, at least five Afghan children were killed when a landmine exploded in the northern Afghan province of Faryab, officials said. Provincial police spokesman Karim Yourish blamed the Taliban for planting the device near the provincial capital Maimana, after Afghan security forces beat back the insurgents during an overnight attack. —AFP



NGHE AN: A portrait of Bui Thi Nhung, who is feared to be among the 39 people found dead in a truck in Britain, is kept on a prayer altar at her house in Vietnam's Nghe An province yesterday. —AFP

A town transformed

Just a few provinces in central Vietnam - Nghe An, Ha Tinh and Quang Binh - supply most illegal migrants, according to a report by Anti-Slavery International, ECPAT UK and Pacific

Links Foundation. The region has been largely overlooked by Vietnam's break-neck economic growth of the past decade, and for most young people the only jobs on offer are in factories, construction or on the fields. —AFP

Analysis

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From bubble tea to disaster: How one dreamer met her fate

In Berlin she posed outside a beer garden, a beaming smile upon her face. In Brussels she sipped sugary bubble tea and posed on the steps of the old stock exchange. To anyone else, she was another tourist. But Vietnamese 19-year-old Bui Thi Nhung, whose family believe she was one of the 39 people found dead in a refrigerated truck near London on Wednesday, it was the make-or-break trip of a lifetime. "Being grown up means having to hide your sadness in the dark, and keeping a smile on your face," Nhung wrote in an Oct 21 Facebook post, days before her family lost contact with her and the news of the doomed shipping container emerged.

From interviews with her family, and a series of messages left on her social media accounts, Reuters has pieced together the last movements of one of the young Vietnamese migrants thought by relatives to be among the dead. Nhung was from Nghe An, a poor province 300 km south of Hanoi, Vietnam's rapidly developing capital. On Saturday evening, Catholic priest Anthony Dang Huu Nam led around 500 worshippers in prayers for the dead as they held lit candles in the modest, white-walled church in Yen Thanh, Nhung's hometown.

Many have made the same fateful journey. Britain's ambassador to Vietnam wrote in an opinion piece published last month by local papers that the dangers were clear. "In recent years, hundreds of potential Vietnamese victims of trafficking have been identified in the UK," Ambassador Gareth Ward wrote in the Sept 29 column. "There are cases of illegal immigrants suffering injuries when being chased. There are cases of death due to extreme cold, lack of oxygen inside lorries. Many never even set foot in the 'promised land,'" Ward wrote, referring to guarantees made by Vietnamese people smugglers to resettle migrants in Britain.

Nhung's family said she first left Nghe An on her journey overseas in August. She went to China first, before eventually making her way to Germany, then Belgium, where they believe she boarded the fated truck. Officials in Britain have not yet identified the dead. "I just want a peaceful life," Nhung wrote in a caption beneath a photo of her smiling in a green field a few weeks after leaving Vietnam. "The happiest thing in life is finding someone who doesn't abandon you during your hardest time," she said, on Aug. 27.

'Living freely'

Late on Saturday night, Nhung's family, devoid of hope, set up an altar in her memory, with her photo next to her father's. Her father died of cancer a few years ago. Her mother was unable to work because of health complications and so her loved ones clubbed together to finance a new life overseas, Nhung's family told Reuters. "Nhung didn't have the qualifications to get a good job with handsome pay. Nor do her friends and many others here," said Nhung's uncle, Hoang Binh. "Going abroad and sending back money was the only choice," he added.

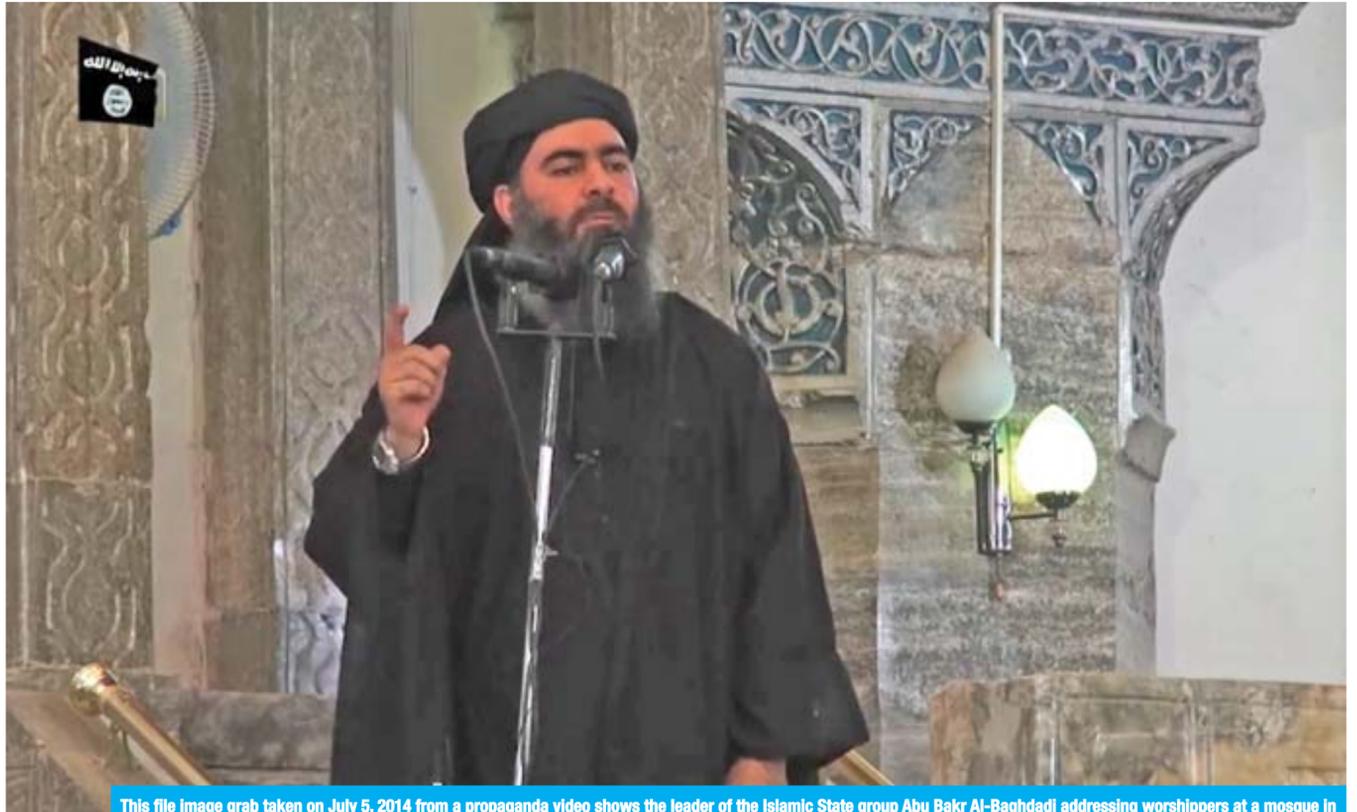
It was not clear what sort of work was lined up for Nhung. Some 70 percent of Vietnamese trafficking cases in the UK between 2009 and 2016 were for labor exploitation, including cannabis production and work in nail bars, according to a British government report last year. "Women and girls from rural areas are also considered more susceptible to trafficking," the report said. By early September, it was not clear where she was, but Nhung was already well into her trip, and reflecting on her next steps. Beside a stock image of two children flying kites at sunset, she posted: "As I grow up, I see that life is not as peaceful as I used to think. When I grow up, I want to go back to my childhood, when I lived freely."

Pink to black

In one of her first pictures more clearly taken from the start of her adventure in Europe, Nhung posed in front of a German beer garden. Days later, in late September, she posted photos of Vietnamese noodle dishes she said she had cooked for friends in Berlin. "If anyone wants to buy one, I'll ship it to you," she joked in the Facebook post. Ton Quang Tuan, one of Nhung's friends living in Berlin, said that "We went out a few times when Nhung was in Berlin" and added that "she was in a good mood, very happy," but they lost contact after she said she had to leave for Britain.

It was not clear how Nhung had travelled from the Vietnamese countryside to China and then Berlin, but the German capital has emerged in recent years as a staging ground for Vietnamese and other migrants looking to start new lives in Britain. "I feel lonely in the place I used to dream of everyday," Nhung wrote on Sept 25. It was unclear where she was - Vietnamese smugglers are said to advise their subjects to live discreetly and not to give away too many clues in order to evade detection from the authorities. — Reuters

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



This file image grab taken on July 5, 2014 from a propaganda video shows the leader of the Islamic State group Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi addressing worshippers at a mosque in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, held at the time by IS. — AFP

Danger still lurks after Baghdadi's death

The death of Islamic State group leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi is a new blow to the extremist group that once controlled swathes of Iraq and Syria but in no way marks an end to the threat posed by the militants. Analysts said that IS and the extremist movement have over the last one-and-a-half decades repeatedly shown resilience after the death of key leaders while battle-hardened militants remain in place. The group may have been ready for the death of Baghdadi and after an initial period of few readjustment could even use it as a rallying case for launching new attacks, they added.

The death of Baghdadi in a raid by US special forces in northwestern Syria was announced by President Donald Trump, who said the militant chief died by setting off a suicide vest. Jean-Pierre Filiu, a professor in Middle East studies at Sciences-Po in Paris, said that the death represented a huge setback for IS, which at the height of its success in 2014 proclaimed a new "caliphate" across parts of Iraq and Syria.

"But it is not certain that such a symbolic loss will fundamentally affect the operational direction of Daesh (IS), which has long been in the hands of seasoned professionals," he told AFP. "In this respect, his demise could in the long run have even less impact than the killing of Osama bin Laden did on Al-Qaeda."

'Re-activate operations'

Bin Laden, who masterminded the Sept 11, 2001 terror attacks on the United States, was killed in an American raid in Pakistan in May 2011. But his death did not stop Al-Qaeda affiliates staging attacks and taking part in conflicts across the world, such as the Al-Nusra front group in northern Syria, or the development of IS itself into a global extremist group. "The most likely outcome is that the death of Baghdadi leads to a moment of silence and a pause in terror attacks," Hisham Al-Hashimi, a Baghdad-based specialist on extremist movements, told AFP. This was the case after the killing in 2010 of Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi, the former head of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, from which IS emerged, he said. The Al-Qaeda group needed some four months to "re-activate its operations".

One public appearance

Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi built up the IS group from 2003 while he was jailed in the giant US-run Iraqi prison of Camp Bucca. There, he met several former army and security officials from the ousted regime of Saddam Hussein who would form the initial core of the group. The extremists he led initially worked within the framework of Al-Qaeda but then Baghdadi distanced himself from the extremist network founded by bin Laden.

He led IS to the peak of its success in 2014, when it

controlled swathes of northern Iraq and Syria, including the major Iraqi city of Mosul. He declared a "caliphate" of Islamic territory to succeed the one dissolved with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. But the territory under its control in Iraq and Syria was gradually eaten away, as anti-jihadist forces staged a comeback. The caliphate was declared defeated in Syria by a coalition of forces including Kurdish militia in March 2019. Baghdadi made his only confirmed public appearance in July 2014 at the Great Mosque of Al-Nuri in the captured Iraqi city of Mosul, urging Muslims around the world to pledge allegiance to the caliphate. He then disappeared from sight, only resurfacing in a video in April. Wearing a wiry grey and red beard and with an assault rifle at his side, he encouraged followers to "take revenge" after the group's territorial defeat.

'Operational resiliency'

"Baghdadi's death is a huge blow to ISIS (IS) and its internal network," said Rita Katz, the director of the SITE Intelligence Group which follows jihadist media. But, writing on Twitter, she pointed out that the history of the jihadist movement showed it was able to overcome the deaths of leaders such as the former chief of Al-Qaeda in Iraq Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, killed by a US air strike in 2006. "ISIS has illustrated its operational resiliency, and will definitely capitalize on Baghdadi's death for recruitment and calls for attacks," she said. — AFP

Space: Major legal void

The Internet of space is here. SpaceX founder Elon Musk tweeted this week using a connection provided by the first satellites in his high-speed Starlink constellation, which one day could include... 42,000 mini-satellites. The idea of putting tens of thousands more satellites into orbit, as compared with the roughly 2,000 that are currently active around the Earth, highlights the fact that space is a legal twilight zone.

Experts debated the subject at length this week in Washington at the 70th International Astronautical Conference. The treaties that have governed space up until now were written at a time when only a few nations were sending civilian and military satellites into orbit. Today, any university could decide to launch a mini-satellite. That could yield a legal morass. Roughly 20,000 objects in space are now big enough - the size of a fist or about 10 cm - to be catalogued. That list includes everything from upper stages and out-of-service satellites to space junk and the relatively small number of active satellites.

A disused satellite at an altitude of 1,000 km will eventually fall back into the atmosphere, but only after about 1,000 years, according to French expert Christophe Bonnal. Bonnal, who chairs the International Astronautical Federation's committee on space debris, explains that during those years, the object - traveling 30,000 km an hour -

could end up colliding with a live satellite and killing it. For now, that possibility is rare - as an example, Bonnal says there are only 15 objects bigger than a fist above France at any given time. "Space is infinitely empty - this is not like maritime pollution," he told AFP.

Jean-Yves Le Gall, the head of France's space agency and the outgoing IAF president, also downplayed the issue. "There are practically no examples of satellite problems caused by space debris," Le Gall told AFP. "But this is starting to be a more urgent concern because of the (satellite) constellation projects. It's clear that even if we only had to think about SpaceX's constellation, the issue would need to be addressed." For Le Gall, Musk's company "isn't doing anything against the rules. The problem is that there are no rules. There are air traffic controllers for planes. We will end up with something similar."

Thousands of pieces of junk

Jan Woerner, the director general of the European Space Agency, admits: "The best situation would be to have international law... but if you ask for that, it will take decades." So far, only France has stipulated in its own laws that any satellite in low orbit must be removed from orbit in 25 years. The US space agency NASA and others have adopted rules for their own satellites, but without legal constraints.

So the space agencies and industry power players are hoping that everyone will voluntarily adopt rules of good behavior, defining things like the required space between satellites, coordination and data exchanges. Various codes and standards were put down on paper from the

1990s, notably under the auspices of the United Nations. One of the most recent charters was created by the Space Safety Coalition - so far, 34 actors including Airbus, Intelsat and the OneWeb constellation project have signed on.

The problem with such charters is that one major new satellite constellation project that refuses to play along could make things difficult for everyone. "It's a very classic problem with polluters," says Carissa Christensen, the CEO of Bryce Space and Technology, an analytics and engineering firm. "This is very typical of issues where there are long-term challenges, and costs and benefits."

In addition, national space agencies would like to clean up Earth's orbits, which are now strewn with junk from 60 years of space history. Three large US rocket stages mysteriously "fragmented" last year, says Bonnal - that created 1,800 pieces of debris. The French expert says removing just a few large objects a year would help. One example would be the stages of the Soviet-era Zenit rockets, which each weigh nine tons and are nine meters long. Every month, they pass within 200 meters of one another. If two of them collide, it would double the number of objects in orbit.

But for now, no one knows how to remove these giant objects from space. In the short term, a best practices manual may be the best solution. Experts also hope that SpaceX manages to maintain control of its satellites as Starlink takes shape.

Already, of the first 60 satellites launched, three of them - five percent - stopped responding after just a month in orbit. — AFP

More than tango, Messi or Malbec

Resource-rich Argentina derived its name from the Latin for silver, but its real wealth has come from agriculture, earning it the nickname "breadbasket of the world" at the beginning of the 20th Century. Farm exports are still a driving force of Latin America's second biggest economy despite a grim economic crisis that threatens to end the presidency of Mauricio Macri in elections yesterday. The birthplace of Pope Francis, Queen Maxima of the Netherlands, Lionel Messi and Diego Maradona has long fascinated with its tango, its Messi and its Malbec.

Tango

Tango is a dance of passion, melancholy and nostalgia that emerged from poor immigrant districts of Buenos Aires at the end of the 19th Century. Decried by the Catholic Church, it gained mainstream acceptance after it became popular in European society. Stylish and elegant, tango is part of the social fabric of the nation, a link immortalized by lyricist Enrique Santos Discépolo in 1934. "That the world was and always will be filth, I already know, in the year 506 and in the year 2000 too," go the lyrics of his most famous tango, the Cambalache. Though Discépolo wasn't directly referring to the South American country, for many these tango lyrics sum up Argentina's history.

Peronism

The political movement, created during the 1940s by Juan Domingo Peron, is for some the root of all of Argentina's evils, while for others it provides a present-day solution to its problems. "Peronists are like cats: it may seem like they are fighting, but they are really reproducing," Peron famously said. And fight like cats they have. Yet the much-divided movement has come through recent divisions to unite behind opposition candidate Alberto Fernandez for the presidential election.

"Peronists are neither good nor bad, they are incorrigible," Argentine literary legend Jorge Luis Borges once wrote. Since the movement's inception in 1946, Peronist candidates - mixing centrist populism and nationalism - have won nine of 12 presidential elections they have been allowed to contest. Peronists have won five presidential elections since Argentina returned to democracy in 1983: Carlos Menem (1989-1999) twice, Nestor Kirchner 2003-2007 and Cristina Kirchner twice (2007-2015).

Asado and Malbec

Argentina's plummeting peso paved the way for a boost in meat and wine exports. Exports of Argentine beef, renowned worldwide for its quality, jumped nearly 65 percent in a year. But runaway inflation meant domestic consumption fell, leading to fewer traditional asados, where family and friends gather around a barbecue of grilled meat. Wine has suffered too. Malbec wine from the Mendoza region is exported worldwide but with the economic crisis, spending at home is down. The year 2018 was the worst in the history of wine consumption in Argentina, according to the National Institute of

Viticulture. Most Argentines have switched to cheaper drinks like beer.

Argentina power

Argentina's gilded era still catches your eyes and imagination, especially in the architecture of Buenos Aires, the most visited city in Latin America. It owes all that to the dominance of vast meat and grain exports at the end of the 19th Century, when a wave of European immigrants flooded in. Argentina and Uruguay are Latin America's two countries that while settled by Spain, later drew many people from Italy, like the pope's family. The Belle Epoque saw the emergence of buildings like the Colon Theater, the Cervantes Theater and the imposing Buenos Aires General Post Office building - now the Kirchner Cultural Institute. Repeated crises in the second half of the 20th Century brought devaluation, debt, inflation and poverty as Argentina experienced a succession of coups since 1930. The last one, in 1976, put in power a military junta that lasted seven years, leaving tens of thousands of dead and missing.

Boca vs River

Football (soccer) is even more important than politics in Argentina, which has produced two World Cup winning teams. The dominant teams domestically are Buenos Aires clubs Boca Juniors and River Plate, historical archenemies. But football divides people almost as much as it unites them. Just ask anyone about Lionel Messi, who never quite delivers for the national team the way he does for Barcelona. A triple winner of the World Footballer of the Year title, he arouses as much passion as the legendary Diego Maradona did before him. — AFP

Business

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BUENOS AIRES: People queue at an exchange bureau in Buenos Aires. — AFP

Argentina's streets mirror economic crisis

Homeless talk about predicament as prices soar, unemployment spikes

BUENOS AIRES: The streets of Buenos Aires offer a glimpse at how the worst economic crisis to hit Argentina in nearly two decades—a major issue in Sunday's presidential election—is affecting everyday people. More and more people are being forced to eke out an existence in public squares or train stations, perched on blankets or under cardboard boxes. Since last year, inflation has soared in Argentina, unemployment is up and the poverty rate has skyrocketed to more than 35 percent. In July, at the start of the South American country's winter, city officials in Buenos Aires had counted more than 1,100 people living rough.

But that same month, civic groups put the number at more than 7,200, citing official data—and said more than half of them were homeless for the first time in their lives.

AFP talked to a few of them. Here are their stories:

'I eat if I'm given something'

Soledad Sanchez is a mother of seven children aged

two to 19. At 36, she is already a grandmother. She lives near the famed Teatro Colon opera house in Buenos Aires—but her life is nothing like its gilded halls. By day, she sits in front of a supermarket. At night, she tries to sleep in an enclosure housing a bank ATM.

"I eat if I'm given something. If I don't get anything, I don't eat," Sanchez says. Until February 2018, the salary of her husband—a trash sorter—combined with public assistance allowed the family to pay for lodging. When they lost their benefits, her husband took his own life.

"He killed himself because of the situation we found ourselves in. They were threatening to take our kids away if we did not leave our hotel room. So one Friday, at 3 pm, he set himself on fire," she says.

"Before that, I had enough to get by, to put a roof over my children's heads. I could bathe them and feed them. How we live now, this isn't a life," she adds, cradling her six-year-old daughter. The little girl no

longer goes to school—her supplies were stolen. Sanchez's other daughter, who is 15 and disabled, sits on the corner nearby.

The other children, Sanchez says with pride, are at school: "I send them to school so that someday they can be someone—not like me."

'Despair'

Four years ago, 37-year-old Jose Rivero arrived in Argentina's capital from Salta province in the north. He didn't have formal work, but he says he has always managed "to create a job when there wasn't one." Just three months ago, Rivero was recycling items collected at a market to scrape by. But now, he wanders around all day. At night he sleeps in a homeless shelter.

"I have nothing left," he says. Some days, he earns about \$3 selling coffee and sandwiches outside a hospital. "You can feel a lot of despair in the streets,"

Rivero says. Despite everything, he still has dreams. "I came here from Salta hoping to pick myself up. For now, I won't admit defeat."

Cold, hard reality

After more than a decade of being homeless, 60-year-old painter Francisco Niubo has given up hope. "It's time to accept this crappy reality, and no longer dream of things that one can't have," he says. During daylight hours, Niubo walks around the city with a case containing his brushes and paints.

He hopes to find work decorating a store window or making a sign—but it's rare. "Five years ago, if you didn't get invited for a coffee, you at least got a soda, beer or a sandwich. Now, people don't have anything to eat, so they are less likely to offer me work to do," Niubo says. "Before, we used to say, 'God help me' but now, it's like 'He took a vacation, because we are all starving.'" —AFP

US Fed to continue cutting as fears, uncertainty deepen

WASHINGTON: White-hot panic about global trade may have eased a bit in recent weeks but the economic outlook is no easier to call for the US Federal Reserve as it prepares for a meeting on interest rates this week. While the United States and China declared another truce and odds fell that Britain will crash out of the European Union, any improvements are as liable to be suddenly dashed as lead to success.

Amid the uncertainty, Fed policymakers appear ready to approve the third interest rate cut in a row as they grow more worried about the future, some daring even to use the dreaded word "recession."

Fed Chairman Jerome Powell this month reiterated his pledge to do what it takes to keep the US economy afloat. And his number two, Vice Chairman Richard Clarida, in a recent speech pointed to global growth estimates that "continue to be marked down."

Both are signals more help is likely on the way. And while some economists question whether another move would be necessary or effective, the two-day meeting Tuesday and Wednesday is held amid increasing signs central bankers are on edge.

In a London speech, James Bullard, the St. Louis

Fed's aggressively dovish president, displayed a forecast chart bathed in red, reflecting more downward revisions to the growth projections for the United States, the euro area, Britain and China.

"The key risk is that this slowing may be sharper than anticipated," he told a conference of central bankers. And minutes of the Fed's policy meeting last month said a "clearer picture" is emerging of how the trade war could drive the United States into a downturn.

Lost export markets, weak demand and uncertainty could lead to a drawn-out slump in business investment, threatening hiring, consumer spending and the wider economy, according to the meeting's minutes. That cautious sentiment is apparent in comments from many American businesses in the Fed's "beige book" report, and corporate earnings this month have confirmed it: Ford, Boeing, Caterpillar and 3M have all said revenues suffered from falling sales in China.

The result: Futures markets overwhelmingly predict Powell will announce another cut in the benchmark borrowing rate on Wednesday in light of the darkening economic picture.

A 'Red Bull' economy

American consumers have been the star of the show this year, bearing the economy on their shoulders like Atlas while manufacturing, agriculture, business investment and exports have all withered. But recent data have been a tad grim there too: annual consumption growth in August was the weakest in eight months, retail sales sank in September along



WASHINGTON, DC: In this file, US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell attends a "Fed Listens" event at the Federal Reserve headquarters in Washington, DC. — AFP

with consumer confidence as word of looming tariffs spread. So are we headed for a recession? Not clear, economists say.

"As I've said in the past, this is a Red Bull economy. If you're a big, strong lunk, you can take a lot of caffeine and power through," Adam Posen, president of

Peterson Institute for International Economics, told reporters. "Even if at some point you're going to crash, and even if at some point you're raising your odds of a heart attack, the odds are still small," he added.

"The US can, with bad fiscal policy and extreme measures, keep going." And some voices on the Fed also say more rate cuts are not necessary, and could create more dangers.

The normally dovish Charles Evans of the Chicago Fed said this month that interest rate policy is already "in a good place" as it is. And both Esther George of Kansas City and Eric Rosengren of Boston have resisted the last two rate cuts, warning that keeping rates low for too long comes at a cost, encouraging corporate America's dangerous debt binge, and threatening to make an eventual economic downturn even more destructive.

Meanwhile, with unemployment at half-century lows, consumers should be able to go on spending. "My own outlook for the economy does not call for a monetary policy response," George said in a speech—but she noted that her view could change if consumer spending weakens further.

Economist Joel Naroff cautioned that the Fed might not be able to do anything to counteract Trump's trade war. "The simple reality is that interest rates are not going to solve the problem that's causing the risks," he said. "If they implement a 25 percent tariff on Chinese goods, zero percent (interest rate) is not going to help," he added. "Interest rates do not solve political problems." —AFP

Business

NBK Money Markets Report

Risk sentiment on the rise amid persisting trade standoff, Brexit

KUWAIT: All eyes were on the trade developments between the US and China in addition to the seemingly never-ending Brexit situation. The economic adviser of the White House Larry Kudlow stated that tariffs scheduled for December could be withdrawn if negotiations continue to go well. The news elevated investors' overall sentiment and risk appetite which pushed 10-year US Treasury yield to a five-week high of 1.804 percent last Tuesday.

On the FX front, the US dollar rallied on the back of increased volatility due to Brexit and increased risk sentiment. The dollar index opened the week at 97.338 and reached a low of 97.140 before gaining momentum and reaching a one-week high of 97.777.

Looking at commodities, the safe-haven metal Gold was supported by uncertainties regarding Brexit though gains were limited as the markets continue to price in a relatively prompt departure. Investors also awaited the Federal Reserve meeting on October 30th, during which it is expected to cut its benchmark interest rate for a third consecutive time this year.

Mixed US data

Durable goods orders plunged by 1.1 percent on month to month basis in the US, much below the market's expectation of a 0.5 percent drop. The manufacturing PMI rebounded to a 51.5 reading in October, beating market's expectations of 50.7. However, with durable goods orders dropping, the manufacturing sector is expected to endure the costs and shrink.

ECB maintains status quo

The European Central Bank had its policy meeting last Thursday where Mario Draghi delivered his last statement as ECB President. As expected, the ECB made no changes to the monetary policy and confirmed the commitment to re-start the QE program beginning of November. When it comes to forward guidance, Draghi iterated that rates will remain at their current levels until "inflation outlook robustly converge" to the ECB's target. While inflation has been pressured, the ECB President said, it is expected to fall further before starting to pick up momentum again. He also added that there was full support from the Council on the measures taken in

September, re-launching QE and cutting deposit rates by 10 basis points.

On the FX side, the single currency opened the week at 1.1146 and continued to deteriorate to break the 1.11 level to a one week low of 1.1093 on Thursday. The dovish stance by the ECB and vague forward guidance pressured the euro lower.

Eurozone PMI pressured

Eurozone composite PMI in October had a minor change as it rose from 50.1 to 50.2 just below market consensus of 50.3. In details, service PMI remained resilient and edged up from 51.6 to 51.8. On the other hand, the manufacturing PMI remained at contractionary levels (below a reading of 50) at 45.7. That is the weakest level since October 2012.

Boris wins and loses

The Parliament in the UK backed PM Boris Johnson's Brexit deal in principle by 329 votes to 299. This win marks the first time the Parliament had approved any Brexit deal, suggesting a possibility to get the deal through. The second vote was to decide on the rushed timeline set by

Rates -27th October, 2019

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.1146	1.1073	1.1179	1.1080	1.0875	1.1175	1.1156
GBP	1.2891	1.2789	1.3013	1.2827	1.2625	1.2925	1.2890
JPY	108.46	108.25	108.77	108.67	106.60	110.65	107.95
CHF	0.9852	0.9835	0.9955	0.9945	0.9745	1.0145	0.9860

Johnson to go through the entire Brexit document in three days and make it a law. The vote did not pass and raised the market's concern of a possible no-deal scenario if the EU doesn't offer extension until January 31 2020. The PM warned officials that if the EU agreed to the extension, the prime minister will call for an election instead. The cable dropped from 1.30 and continued to deteriorate to a low of 1.2789.

After a meeting of EU diplomats last Wednesday afternoon, officials claimed there was a general agreement to extend the October 31st Brexit deadline.

European Council President Donald Tusk urged EU27 leaders to grant the UK's formal request for an extension until January 31st, with the possibility of leaving sooner if the Withdrawal Agreement is ratified by the EU and UK. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson does not want Brussels to extend the date beyond October 31st and has dismissed any consideration of an extension to pressure British MPs to push through his deal.

Kuwaiti dinar

USD/KWD opened at 0.30355 yesterday morning.

Huawei Watch GT 2: Powerful new Kirin A1 chip adds long battery life

KUWAIT: Huawei has upped the class with its latest smartwatch, the Huawei Watch GT 2, a sequel to the Huawei Watch GT and it has made a world of difference. Improvements have been made to both hardware and the software, with more functionality and smoother performance. This is made possible by the specially designed Kirin A1 chip that brings ultra-low power consumption and improved performance. We put Huawei's latest offering through its paces to see how it fared with daily use in a range of activities. The new device is a part of Huawei's Seamless AI Life strategy, which aims at creating an AI powered all-scenario intelligent lifestyle as well as an intelligent industry ecosystem based on an open platform.

Proprietary Kirin A1 chipset supports unrivalled battery life. The Huawei Watch GT 2 is the brand's first wearable powered by the Kirin A1 processor. In daily use, the Huawei Watch GT 2 46mm series can operate continuously for up to two weeks, with both the intelligent heart rate monitor and call notification functions switched on. Additionally, the battery supports weekly usage of up to 30 minutes of Bluetooth calls, up to 30 minutes of music playback, up to 90 minutes of exercise and using the scientific sleep mode at night. In the classic mode, the Huawei Watch GT 2 42mm series can operate continuously for up to one week. Both series of watches have greatly improved battery life in the GPS tracked sports mode.

The Kirin A1 chipset integrates an advanced Bluetooth processing unit, a powerful audio processing unit, an ultra-low power consumption application processor and a separate power management unit. It is the perfect combination of high performance and efficient power consumption that makes it possible for Huawei Watch GT 2 to have such a long battery life.

Huawei claims two weeks from a single charge for the 46mm version and one week for the 42mm watch. This is an amazing feature when you consider the smartwatch has a full touchscreen and is able to track heart rate. New professional sports monitoring creates a richer smartwatch experience.

The first Huawei Watch GT received great praise for its fitness tracking abilities. This sequel easily lives up to its predecessor, with a similarly precise array of sensors for detection and tracking. This watch is a capable fitness tracker.

In the sports mode, Huawei Watch GT 2 is compat-



ible with 15 sports, including eight outdoor sports (running, walking, climbing, hiking, trail running, cycling, open water, triathlon) and seven indoor sports (walking, running, cycling, swimming pool, free training, elliptical machine, rowing machine). For these 15 sports modes, the watch provides full-scale monitoring of approximately 190 types of data. The watch gives targeted pre-exercise data analysis for different sports, data recording analysis during the exercise and professional advice afterwards. It is like having a personal intelligent sports coach to make your exercise safer and better.

Comprehensive health management

Huawei has become an industry leader in health management, and it builds upon its expertise with the Huawei Watch GT 2. Unless in the sports mode, the user will be notified if their heart rate is above 100 bpm or below 50 bpm for more than 10 minutes.

Poor quality sleep has become a problem for many but with Huawei TruSleep 2.0 the device monitors sleep quality, real-time heart rate, sleep breathing quality and uses big data analysis to rate sleep quality. It combines Huawei AI technology to accurately analyze sleep problems and provides sleep improvement suggestions.

All-in-one 3D glass design

Inheriting the classic look from the previous generation, the Huawei Watch GT 2 further upgrades the aesthetics with a full-screen, borderless design. The all-in-one 3D glass surface allows for a wider look and feel. The dial of the 46mm series adopts bevelled

sculpting and gemstone processing techniques to create 3D curved glass and applies individual carving to create concave spots on the dial. Alternatively, the curved dial of the 42mm series is only 9.4mm thick and is decorated with an extremely thin, fashionable metal frame. The Huawei Watch GT 2 46mm series is also equipped with a 1.39-inch AMOLED HD precision touch screen with display resolution of 454 x 454 pixels, wider color gamut, and ultra-thin design.

Verdict

The Huawei Watch GT 2 has lived up to expectations with the subtle design aesthetic housing powerful features, such as two-week battery life. With a host of useful features, including handy workout insights that help push you beyond your limits, to stress and sleep monitors that make sure you are at your best, the Huawei Watch GT 2 is a match for anything you can throw at it. It comes highly recommended.

Al-Tijari announces winners of Al-Najma draws

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank conducted the weekly draws on Al-Najma Account and the draw on the "Salary and Cash on Top" campaign. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Abdulaziz Ashkanani.

The results of the draw were as follows:

1- Al-Najma weekly account - the prize of KD 5,000 and was for the share of Bashar Naem Al-Ktifan.

2- The "Salary & Cash on Top campaign" prize of KD 1,000 and was for the share of Zainab Ghazi Kadhem Hamdan.

The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000. Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

As regarding "Salary & Cash on Top" campaign designated for Kuwaiti and expatriate employees as well as the retirees and which is valid until 31 December 2019 and the mechanism of joining this campaign for availing its benefits, the Bank explained that Kuwaiti employees with a salary of KD 500 & above whether newly recruited or in service can transfer their salary to the Bank and avail the benefits of this campaign by getting instant cash gift of KD 250 or an interest free loan 5 times the salary up to KD 10,000, add to this they will automatically enter the weekly draw on KD 1,000.

As for the expatriate customers categorized under Premier Banking Account with a salary KD of 1,700 and above, they will get instant cash gift. The retirees with pension KD 1,000 and above will also get an instant cash gift of KD 150 when transferring their pension to the Bank and automatically enter the weekly draw on a prize of KD 1,000 and avail the benefits of this campaign designated for Kuwaiti and expatriate employees working in private & public sector as well as the retirees.

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.		BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL	
CURRENCY	BUY	BUY	SELL
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES			
US Dollar/Transfer	304.400		
Euro	340.780		
Sterling Pound	394.350		
Canadian dollar	235.240		
Turkish lira	54.070		
Swiss Franc	309.660		
US Dollar Buying	296.950		
ASIAN COUNTRIES			
Japanese Yen	2.802		
Indian Rupees	4.302		
Pakistani Rupees	1.963		
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.674		
Nepali Rupees	2.677		
Singapore Dollar	225.060		
Hongkong Dollar	38.839		
Bangladesh Taka	3.574		
Philippine Peso	5.956		
Thai Baht	10.108		
Malaysian ringgit	77.852		
GCC COUNTRIES			
Saudi Riyal	81.227		
Qatari Riyal	83.661		
Omani Riyal	791.163		
Bahraini Dinar	808.820		
UAE Dirham	82.931		
ARAB COUNTRIES			
Egyptian Pound - Cash	20.900		
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.866		
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.223		
Tunisian Dinar	111.500		
Jordanian Dinar	429.790		
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203		
Syrian Lira	0.000		
Morocco Dirham	32.189		
EUROPE			
British Pound	0.383906	0.387806	
Czech Koruna	0.005207	0.014507	
Danish Krone	0.041227	0.046227	
Euro	0.330411	0.344111	
Georgian Lari	0.121480	0.121480	
Hungarian 0.001147	0.001337		
Norwegian Krone	0.029279	0.034479	
Romanian Leu	0.065231	0.082081	
Russian ruble	0.004775	0.004775	
Slovakia	0.009099	0.019099	
Swedish Krona	0.027494	0.032494	
Swiss Franc	0.299995	0.310995	
AMERICA			
Australian Dollar	0.199883	0.211883	
New Zealand Dollar	0.187457	0.196957	
ASIA			
Bangladesh Taka	0.801280	0.003763	
Chinese Yuan	0.018636	0.045139	
Hong Kong Dollar	0.000084	0.039686	
Indian Rupee	0.000214	0.004462	
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023	
Japanese Yen	0.002719	0.002899	
Korean Won	0.000249	0.000264	
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069357	0.075357	
Nepalese Rupee	0.002625	0.002965	
Pakistan Rupee	0.001332	0.002102	
Philippine Peso	0.005715	0.006015	
Singapore Dollar	0.217981	0.227981	
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001319	0.001899	
Taiwan	0.009697	0.009877	
Thai Baht	0.009736	0.010286	
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013	
ARAB			
Bahraini Dinar	0.001280	0.809330	
Egyptian Pound	0.018636	0.021377	
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086	
Iraqi Dinar	0.000214	0.000274	
Jordanian Dinar	0.424432	0.433432	
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000	
Lebanese Pound	0.000157	0.000257	
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020832	0.044832	
Omani Riyal	0.785522	0.793413	
Qatar Riyal	0.082955	0.083789	
Saudi Riyal	0.080087	0.081387	
Syrian Pound	0.001290	0.001510	
Tunisian Dinar	0.103271	0.112171	
Turkish Lira	0.046002	0.055847	
UAE Dirhams	0.082244	0.083070	
Yemeni Riyal	0.000989	0.001069	

Fund managers see risk Fed cuts rates to zero

NEW YORK: Speculation the Federal Reserve will continue cutting interest rates well past its policy meeting next week is pushing some bond fund managers into assets ranging from short-term Treasury bills to half-paid off 15-year home mortgages. They're betting that short-term US interest rates will once again return to near zero for the first time since the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

The market is already pricing in a 93.5 percent chance the US central bank cuts short-term interest rates by at least 0.25 percent at its October 30th policy meeting, according to CME Group's FedWatch tool, continuing a rate-cutting cycle that began earlier this year and helped lead to bull markets in both bonds and equities.

The probability of such a cut was just 64.1 percent in late September. Yet fund managers and analysts from firms including First Pacific Advisors, Columbia Threadneedle, and Brandywine Global say the market is still underpricing the possibility the Fed will continue cutting rates well into next year, essentially taking short-term interest rates back to where they were before the central bank began lifting rates in 2015. — Reuters

Business

KAMCO Event Update

Saudi tops as most notable improver in the world in ease of doing business

Kuwait features in top 10: The Doing Business Report - 2020

KUWAIT: The Doing Business Report - 2020 highlighted significant improvements in developing countries as compared to developed economies that came on almost all fronts. According to the report, around 115 economies out of the 190 economies that were analyzed undertook reforms that made it easier to do business in those countries. A majority of these reforms were focused on key indicators including starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, and paying taxes. On the other hand, resolving insolvency was the least reformed area, with a lot to be done in a majority of the countries.

In terms of enablers, technology continues to be the leading priority for developed countries to comply with regulatory requirements. According to the report, the top 20 countries increasing reliance on electronic systems for uses that include online business incorporation, electronic tax filing platforms, online property transfer procedures and construction permitting. In addition, transparency was a common feature for the top performers along with sound business regulations.

The 10 top performers for the year in terms of number of improvements primarily included Asian economies with four in the Middle East region. These 10 countries implemented 59 regulatory reforms during the period 2018/19 accounting for almost a fifth of the total 294 reforms recorded during the year. These reforms were primarily centered around starting a business, dealing with construction permits and trading across borders indicators. Kuwait and Jordan were new additions to this list and featured for the first time in the list.

In terms of regional split, the Sub-Saharan Africa region remained at the bottom on the ease of doing business, increasing its score by one percentage point to an average score of 51.8 as compared to an average of 78.4 for the OECD countries, and a global average score of 63.0. Latin America and the Caribbean were also one of the weaker performing regions with not even a single country from this region appearing in the top 50 list. On the other hand, the MENA region improved its average score by 1.9 with 13 out of the 18 countries having better ranks than the previous year. The top 10 MENA countries saw overall improvement in rankings barring UAE, which saw its ranking slide 5 places. In the non-GCC MENA countries, Jordan saw the biggest gain in its ranking, scaling 29 positions to rank at 75th. Morocco and Egypt also improved their respective ranks by 7 spots and 6 spots to rank at 53rd and 114th, respectively.

The GCC region saw some of the biggest improvements in this year's rankings led by a number of regulatory reforms undertaken by the governments as they seek to diversify the economy towards the non-oil sectors. According to the report, out of the 10 best performing countries with the most notable improvements in Doing Business 2020, three were from the GCC including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait. Saudi Arabia topped this list of gainers after the Kingdom climbed 30 positions to rank 62, ranking third in the GCC, as compared to fifth in the last year's report. Bahrain was next at the 43rd position as compared to last year's 62nd, an improvement of 19 positions. Kuwait witnessed the third biggest improvement with its rank improving by 14 positions to reach the 83rd spot. On the other hand, UAE was the only country in the GCC that saw its rank sliding by five positions to reach the 16th place.

The report noted that how social, political and economic conditions in a country can affect cost that has

an impact on the ease of doing business, as tracked with the ranks on the corresponding parameter. This can be seen from the fact that more than half of the top 20 economies on the ease of doing rankings were the OECD countries and high-income economies. Nevertheless, the report also showed that despite the leading ranks, these top 20 countries undertook 464 reforms over the last 17 years as tracked using the Doing Business report. In the latest version of the report, the top 20 economies made 22 reforms as compared to the previous year, thus highlighting the ample room for improvement for the overall universe of countries.

The number of reforms undertaken by developing countries showed that these countries are fast catching up with their developed counterparts, although the gap between the two remains wide. According to the report, it still takes almost six times more to start a business in the lowest 50 ranked countries as compared to the top 20 countries. Some of the weak areas include the getting credit indicator which was the weakest in low- and middle-income countries as a result of low coverage of credit registries and bureaus. Also, time for tax filing is almost double in low income economies as compared to high income economies and tax systems tend to be difficult in these countries. Nevertheless, some of the lower ranked countries are pushing reforms and improved scores significantly in the 2020 report.

GCC highlights

The overall trend in the GCC remains positive with each economy making efforts on a number of fronts to improve their rankings. The six countries in the GCC adopted 35 reforms over the last year to improve the business climate. These reforms form a major part of the efforts of GCC economies to diversify away from oil and to have a more open and well-integrated market with the world.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia was the most improved economy in the Doing Business 2020 report and saw the biggest gain in its rank in the GCC, improving by 30 positions to rank at the 62nd spot. The Kingdom also recorded the biggest improvement in ease of doing business score in the GCC by 8.1 points to reach 71.6 points. The Kingdom implemented eight reforms during the period motivated by an aim to position the country as an open world class investment destination. These reforms also come as part of the long-term and ambitious Vision 2030 plan being implemented by the Kingdom.

In terms of indicators, Saudi Arabia made starting a business easier by forming a one-stop shop by merging a number of pre and post registration procedures. For construction permits, the Kingdom launched an online platform and enabled civil defense approval after the issuance of the building permit. The Kingdom made getting electricity easier by making operational improvements and removed the requirement of certificates of completion. For getting loans, the Kingdom introduced a secured transactions law and an insolvency law that included a number of reforms. The Kingdom made external trade easier by enhancing its electronic trade single window, enabling risk-based inspections, launched an online platform for certification of imported goods, and also upgraded infrastructure at the Jeddah Port.

The Kingdom also made several improvements for resolving insolvency, although it is still far behind in the region as well as internationally with a rank of

Comparative Rankings 2020 vs. 2019

MENA - Ease of Doing Business Ranking				Global Top 10 - Ease of Doing Business Ranking			
Country	2019	2020	Change	Country	2019	2020	Change
UAE	11	16	Declined	New Zealand	1	1	No change
Bahrain	62	43	Improved	Singapore	2	2	No change
Morocco	60	53	Improved	Hong Kong	4	3	Improved
Saudi Arabia	92	62	Improved	Denmark	3	4	Declined
Oman	78	68	Improved	Korea, Rep.	5	5	No change
Jordan	104	75	Improved	United States	8	6	Improved
Qatar	83	77	Improved	Georgia	6	7	Declined
Tunisia	80	78	Improved	United Kingdom	9	8	Improved
Kuwait	97	83	Improved	Norway	7	9	Declined
Egypt	120	114	Improved	Sweden	12	10	Improved

Source: World Bank - Doing Business Report - 2019 & 2020

168 on this key indicator.

Bahrain

Bahrain ranked 2nd in the GCC and MENA region with an overall global rank of 43. The country gained 19 spots as compared to its previous ranking and improved its score by 6.2 points to reach a total score of 76. The country implemented the highest number of regulatory reforms as per the report and improved in almost every area measured by Doing Business. A majority of the improvements were aimed at improving administrative processes, implementing online platforms and further use of technology. The country ranked the best in the GCC in terms of resolving insolvency with a rank of 60 after the country made it easier by introducing a reorganization procedure. On the other hand, the new employer funded healthcare contribution system implemented by Bahrain made paying taxes more complicated which affected its ranking on this indicator.

Kuwait

Kuwait witnessed one of the biggest improvements in its ranking in the current version of Doing Business Report. The country's rank jumped 14 positions to 83rd, after it improved on seven out of ten areas measured in the ranking process. The biggest improvement came in terms of Dealing with Construction Permits in which the country improved its rank by 63 positions to rank at 68th. With minimal taxes, Kuwait ranked sixth in the world, whereas it had the highest rank for Registering Property at the 45th position. On the other hand, areas of improvement included cross-border trading wherein the country ranked 162nd followed by Getting Credit area wherein it ranked at 119th. A majority of the reforms by Kuwait were enabled by technology wherein the country introduced online platforms.

Specific reforms by Kuwait included making starting a business easier by combining procedures to obtain a commercial license and streamlined online company registration. The country made it easier and faster to get construction permits by integrating additional authorities to its electronic permitting platform. It digitized the process of getting electricity and made operational improvements. Reforms were also made to property registration process, providing credit information and improved cross border trade process.

Oman

Oman ranked fourth in the GCC and fifth in the

MENA region on the Doing Business 2020 rankings. The Sultanate improved its ranking by 10 positions to reach the 68th position globally and improved its score by 2.8 points. Specific improvements made by the country included reforms for getting electricity, registering property and by upgrading infrastructure at Sohar Port. Oman also strengthened minority investor protection by increasing shareholder rights.

Qatar

Qatar improved its ranking by 6 positions to reach the 77th spot. The country improved its ease of doing business score by 2.8 points during the year. The improvements implemented by Qatar included online applications for new electricity connection, streamlined property registration procedure and made specific changes for reporting credit information from a telecom company. The country's relative ranking for starting a business declined from 84th position to 108th in this year's report.

United Arab Emirates

The UAE continues to top the GCC with an overall rank of 16th, sliding 5 spots as compared to the previous year's 11th position. The country's ease of business score also declined marginally by 0.4 points 80.9. UAE was the only country in the GCC to record a decline in its rank in the Doing Business 2020 report. UAE's rank dropped on four out of the ten indicators namely on starting a business, dealing with construction permits, protecting minority investors and on trading across borders. However, the country made reforms on most of these indicators and the decline was more on a relative basis rather than any negative highlights. On the other hand, the country improved its rank on paying taxes, resolving insolvency, getting credit and registering property. Reforms made by UAE included starting a business less expensive by reducing the fees for business incorporation. The country made getting construction permits easier by implementing a risk-based approach to reduce the number of inspections. UAE also strengthened minority investors protections by providing for disqualification of directors in cases of prejudicial conflicts of interest. In terms of trading across borders, the UAE reduced time to export by fully digitizing certificates of origin and lowered the cost to import by issuing certificates of conformity that cover multiple shipments.

Downfall of Britain's top fund manager

LONDON: The spectacular fall from grace of Britain's star investor Neil Woodford has tarnished the reputation of London's City finance district and hurt market confidence, according to analysts.

Few commentators imagined that Woodford Investment Management, which once boasted billions of pounds in assets under management, would spectacularly collapse this month having taken on too much risk. The group's flagship Equity Income fund was suspended in June to stop it haemorrhaging cash. Woodford was then forced to quit and liquidate the fund on October 15. One day later, Woodford quit his two other funds in what he described as a "highly painful decision"-and added that the whole business would be wound up. The news has sparked big losses for Woodford's customers who include pension funds, wealthy individuals and other fund managers.

'Shaken to core'

"We have seen the complete demise of the most famous fund manager the UK has seen for years," Adrian Lowcock, head of personal investing at brokerage Willis Owen, said in a statement. "Investors knew the scenario was bad but the indication from Woodford thus far had been that the (Equity Income) fund would reopen," Lowcock said.

"This collapse... will shake the funds industry to its core," Woodford, 59, forged his name as the nation's top stockpicker in a glittering 30-year career in the asset management business, most of which was at investment manager Invesco Perpetual. He had been regarded as a



safe pair of hands after reportedly guiding his funds away from the dotcom bubble crisis in the early 2000s, successfully backing traditional stocks like tobacco instead of technology.

The outspoken Woodford-nicknamed "Britain's Warren Buffett" by media after the legendary US investment guru-also carved out a reputation as an activist investor willing to hold company CEOs to account. In 2014, Woodford established his Woodford Investment Management in an industrial estate on the outskirts of Oxford, which earned him the new moniker the "Oracle of Oxford".

At its peak in 2017, the business had total assets of £14 billion (\$17.9 billion) under management. Yet five years later, the business model hit the rocks as a series of disastrous investments turned sour. In particular, Woodford had ploughed cash into a number of unlisted healthcare and technology companies, as well as poor stock market bets. As more and more investors started asking for their money back, Woodford encountered difficulty raising sufficient cash quickly enough.

'Investment scandal'

The Financial Times described Woodford as Europe's biggest investment scandal for a decade, labelling him the star fund manager

who fell to earth. Industry veteran Jonathan Little argued the collapse would stop the hero-worshipping of investment bigwigs like Woodford.

"If there is anything good to come out of this, it is that investors will move away from the industry's Hollywood-style culture of star worship," Little told the FT. Darius McDermott, managing director of Chelsea Investment Finance, said the sector now needed to regain trust. "The whole situation has been awful for investors... and damaging for the industry," McDermott said.

"At a time when people should be saving more, not less, and when UK equities are so out of favour, it is worrying that so much trust has been lost. "We now need to work hard to get that trust back," he added. The sector has, however, attracted fierce criticism, including from the Bank of England governor Mark Carney. "These funds are built on a lie, which is that you can have daily liquidity for assets that fundamentally aren't liquid," he told lawmakers in June.

In Britain, an estimated £9.0 trillion of assets are overseen by fund managers, making it the second biggest market after the United States. Uner Nabi, financial services associate partner at EY accountancy group, said the furore could even help the sector in the long term. — AFP

Portugal plans to boost minimum wage by 25%

LISBON: Portugal's Socialist government said it plans to increase the minimum wage by 25 percent and would close the country's last coal-fired power stations during its four-year term. The Socialist party, led by Prime Minister Antonio Costa, was re-elected on

October 6, with a campaign promise to boost disposable income while also protecting public finances.

The government's website said on Saturday night it would raise the minimum wage every year to reach a cumulative increase of 25 percent in 2023. The minimum monthly wage is currently set at 700 euros (\$775). The party also plans to reduce public debt-currently the third highest in the eurozone-from 119 percent of gross domestic product to 100 percent. The plans will be debated in Portugal's parliament on Wednesday. As well as committing to close Portugal's last two coal plants by 2023, the government said it would increase its wind and solar power capabilities. —AFP

Luxury giant LVMH makes bid for Tiffany

NEW YORK: LVMH, which owns Louis Vuitton, Dior and the champagne brands Veuve Clicquot and Moet, has made a bid for American jeweller Tiffany, known for its engagement rings and diamonds.

The French luxury giant made an offer for the US company at the start of the month, a source told AFP late on Saturday. Tiffany, whose flagship New York store is next to Trump Tower on 5th avenue, has not yet responded to the offer, which comes as the luxury industry is jittery about the possible effects of the US-China trade war. The broad anti-corruption campaign launched by Chinese president Xi Jinping has also put the brakes on extravagant gifts offered by businessmen and bureaucrats.

The months-long pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong have caused additional risks for the luxury sector. AFP's source, who asked to remain anonymous, did not say how much LVMH offered for Tiffany but was not sure the talks would result in a deal. The jeweller's stock-market capitalization was some \$11.9 billion at the end of trading on Wall Street Friday. Its sales revenue rose 6.5 percent to \$4.4 billion over the last fiscal year and it employed 14,000 people as of January 31.

Tiffany — whose growth is restricted by the strong dollar and a drop in tourist spending-has asked for advice on LVMH's offer from major banks, the source added, confirming reports by Bloomberg. LVMH did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment, while a spokesperson for Tiffany refused to comment on "rumors and speculation". The purchase of Tiffany by LVMH would be one of the largest acquisitions by the French group, which is present in several different sectors-from fashion to wine, perfumes and cosmetics. —AFP

Business

Jazeera Airways takes off to London Gatwick

Kuwait's airline becomes first LLC to operate route between GCC and UK



KUWAIT: Michael Davenport MBE, Marie Masdupuy, Stefan Mobs, Marwan Boodai and Eng Yousef Sulaiman Al-Fouzan during the ceremony to mark the launch of Jazeera Airways' first flight to London Gatwick.



Jazeera Airways launches first flight to London Gatwick

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost airline, operating regionally and internationally, yesterday took off in its first flight "J9 1" to London with its newest A320neo aircraft, becoming the first Low-Cost Carrier in the Middle East to fly to the United Kingdom. The flight also marks the first new service to the UK from Kuwait in 55 years. Jazeera Airways flights land at London Gatwick Airport South Terminal where access to the Gatwick Express train connects passengers directly to central London.

A press conference was held ahead of the takeoff at the Jazeera Terminal 5 at Kuwait International Airport and attended by Michael Davenport MBE, the British Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Marie Masdupuy, the French Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Stefan Mobs, Engineer Yousef Sulaiman Al-Fouzan, Director General of Kuwait's Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGCA).

Speaking at the conference were Michael Davenport MBE, Engineer Yousef Sulaiman Al-Fouzan, Director General of DGCA, and Jazeera Airways Chairman, Marwan Boodai. Michael Davenport MBE said: "We are proud of this new service made possible by the new Air Services Agreement signed last year between Britain and Kuwait. The launch coincides with our celebration to mark 120th anniversary of the Kuwaiti-British Treaty of Friendship.

"Britain and Kuwait are long-lasting partners, allies and friends, as we continue to broaden and deepen our relations in areas such as energy, education, healthcare and security. Trade and investment between our two countries are flourishing. The private sector in both countries have a big role to play in supporting these growing relations.

"More Kuwaitis are studying at British universities than ever before. More than 6,000 at the last count. Many of them receive visits from their friends and families in Kuwait. Britain is the most popular travel destination for residents of Kuwait. Britain, with its 28 UNESCO World Heritage sites and eight dedicated heritage cities, as well as 10 national parks, offers a vast array of places to explore. For many Kuwaitis, Britain's cities are a second home -



British Ambassador at Jazeera Airways launches first flight to London



Marwan Boodai



Eng Yousef Sulaiman Al-Fouzan

not only London, but Manchester, Cardiff, Milton Keynes, and Glasgow. Last year, we welcomed over 150,000 Kuwaitis in Britain. Attracted by Britain's world-class luxury shopping, stunning countryside, unique cities and a vibrant calendar of cultural festivals and sporting events - not just premier league.

"The UK is also a founding nation of the Airbus consortium and one of the company's four home markets. I am therefore honored to welcome here this morning my French and German colleagues. Building on a proud 100-year British aviation heritage, every wing on Airbus commercial aircraft is designed and manufactured in the UK.

"I congratulate Jazeera Airways on this landmark flight to London and welcome all passengers from Kuwait to Britain on board its new A320neo aircraft."

Engineer Yousef Sulaiman Al-Fouzan said: "We are pleased to take part of the launch of the first Jazeera Airways flight to UK. We believe in the role of the private sector in supporting the aviation sector. Flights to London is the first of six other destinations planned by Jazeera Airways, and support the DGCA's vision to increase air traffic to and from Kuwait International Airport. We wish more success to Kuwaiti airlines as the DGCA continues to pro-

vide its support to lift the position of the State of Kuwait in the aviation industry under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, his Crown Prince and the Government."

Marwan Boodai: "We are proud to mark our expansion in 2019 with flights to London, served with our new A320neo aircraft. London Gatwick will be served with four flights a week and frequency will increase to daily flights in December. We also continue to expand with flights to new underserved or never served destinations from the Middle East, including destinations in Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, KSA, UAE and more. On behalf of our airline, I take this opportunity to thank the DGCA and our partners in Kuwait and abroad for their continued support."

The new A320neo

The A320neo is a single-aisle aircraft that incorporates the CFM LEAP-1A engines and fuel-saving wingtip devices known as Sharklets. It offers savings in fuel burn, additional payload, increased range, lower operating costs and significant reduction in engine noise and CO2 emissions below the current industry standard. The new A320neo allows for an

increased range to destinations that are located 5 to 6 hours away.

Cabin configuration

With the new configuration, flights to and from London will have a Business Class that offers passengers a 33-inch seat pitch, 50 kilograms in baggage allowance, priority boarding and a complimentary inflight hot meal. This is complemented with a Premium Economy Class that is exclusively available on the flight to and from London with 40 kilograms in baggage allowance, additional legroom with a 31-inch seat pitch, a middle seat that is kept free, dedicated check-in counters, priority boarding and a complimentary inflight hot meal, while the Economy Class offers a 29-inch seat pitch and a wide choice of meals from the Jazeera Café menu.

Jazeera Terminal 5 at Kuwait International Airport

T5 provides passengers with the ease and comfort of traveling with 12 check-in counters, eight self-check-in kiosks, dedicated passport and security control procedures, duty free shops and restaurants, as well as free WiFi internet service available for passengers when boarding at the T5 gates.

Boursa Kuwait participates in meetings of Gulf CMAs in Muscat

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait participated in the second joint meeting of the Committee of Heads of Capital Markets Authorities (or their equivalent) in the GCC states and the Heads of Stock Exchanges, which took place in Muscat, Oman yesterday. Held in the periphery of the 19th Meeting of the GCC Capital Markets Authorities Chairs Committee, the meeting was organized by the Gulf Cooperation Council's Secretariat General. Boursa Kuwait was represented at the events by Chairman of the Board Hamad Meshari Al-Humaidhi and Acting CEO Mohammad Saud Al-Osaimi.

The meetings took place as part of a concentrated effort by the capital market authorities in the Gulf to coordinate and cooperate with the goal of unifying the region's capital markets and exchanging information for the benefit of each country's economy. The meetings discussed the biggest issues facing the region today and follow-up on the decisions agreed upon in the last edition of these meetings, which were also held in Muscat. The committee members also discussed the various memoranda of understanding and how to better unify the capital markets in the region.

Speaking on behalf of Boursa Kuwait, Al-Humaidhi said, "The second joint meeting of the Committee of Heads of Capital Markets Authorities (or their equivalent) in the GCC states and the Heads of Stock Exchanges aimed to advance joint action by achieving greater coordination and integration among the GCC countries in all economic and financial fields in line with the aspirations of GCC nationals. We at Boursa Kuwait are keen to actively participate in such vital regional and international meetings in

our efforts to enhance the status of the exchange and its position on the international stage, and have begun the implementation of steps and procedures derived from the strategy. The company has strengthened its infrastructure, its regulatory, operational and technical frameworks, resulting in many significant achievements in a short period of time."

The agenda for the second joint meeting of the Committee of Heads of Capital Markets Authorities (or their equivalent) in the GCC states and the Heads of Stock Exchanges included the Secretariat's memorandum on the unification of the opening time in the stock markets in the GCC, activating Passporting among the Gulf stock exchanges and the search for the best method of its application. The dual listing of the financial markets was also discussed during the meeting, as well as many issues that come up during the proceedings.

Over the last two years, Boursa Kuwait has worked valiantly to improve the local capital market and develop a liquid, reliable and sound exchange that provides issuers with efficient access to capital and investors with diverse return opportunities. The country has been upgraded to Emerging Market status by FTSE Russell in September 2017, the S&P Dow Jones Emerging Markets index has included Kuwait as of December 2018, and Kuwait has received the conditional approval to be included in the MSCI Emerging Markets index in June 2019. These efforts will further strengthen Boursa Kuwait's position both regionally and internationally. The recent achievements further demonstrate that Kuwait is developing into a safe haven in the region with imminent further upgrades.



Hamad-Al-Humaidhi

VIVA offers all-new Samsung Galaxy Fold starting at KD 55 monthly

KUWAIT: VIVA, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers and enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, and a subsidiary of STC Group, has announced the availability of the highly anticipated foldable smartphone, Galaxy Fold, with VIVA Postpaid plan starting at KD 55 monthly, available at VIVA's official website www.viva.com.kw, VIVA stores and on the VIVA App. Featuring Samsung's first 7.3-inch Infinity Flex Display, the smartphone folds into a compact device with a cover display.

Haneen Al-Fulaij, Chief Consumer Officer at VIVA said: "At VIVA, our advanced infrastructure and our strategy supporting the digital transformation, enable smartphone makers like Samsung to unleash the full potential of their world-class devices complement-

ed with our innovative and tailor made postpaid plans, to enrich our customers' experience, cater to their needs and meet their aspirations." She added: "we are confident that the new Galaxy Fold will bring to life a whole new mobile experience and provide customers with a different way to enjoy technology with us."

"We are excited to bring the new category-pioneering Galaxy Fold to fans in the Middle East," said Ali Ahmed, Head of Marketing, IT and Mobile Division at Samsung Gulf Electronics. "Featuring both a compact cover display and a large display of 7.3 inches unfolded, Galaxy Fold users can get things done one-handed while on the go and enjoy the immersive experience and ultimate productivity when unfolded. Packed with innovative new features, Galaxy Fold is the best smartphone today for those wanting to own a premium foldable device."

Galaxy Fold delivers a new kind of mobile experience allowing users to do things they couldn't do with an ordinary smartphone. Users can slip it out of their pocket for one-handed calls, texts,

and more - and open the device for endless multitasking and higher quality viewing on Samsung's largest mobile display for presentations, digital magazines, movies, and AR content.

Galaxy Fold combines users' favorite smartphone and tablet features to deliver a new kind of mobile device and a first-of-its-kind user experience - from a new form factor and materials to its unique foldable UX, versatile camera and premium performance.

The smartphone is designed to inspire new experiences: When closed, users can access their essentials on the cover display comfortably with one hand, and when opened, they can explore new ways to multitask, watch videos, play games, and more.



Haneen Al-Fulaij

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

1. Ali Ebrahim Ali Jawhar
2. Randa Sadiq Abdoulhadi
3. Zainab Ali Hussain Falah
4. Bassam Mohammad Shalabi
5. Awwad Mubarak Thewibet Alenezi

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to

maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

What's On

Lulu Hypermarket holds Diwali Celebrations 2019



Lulu Hypermarket, the leading hypermarket in the region celebrated Diwali, the Indian 'Festival of Lights', with a colorful 'Diwali Celebrations 2019' event. A large gathering of shoppers, eager to avail of the special prices and products offered on the occasion, thronged the hypermarket's Al Rai outlet where the function was held on 26 October. The festive atmosphere was enhanced with traditional dance performances that reflected the vibrancy of the Diwali celebrations. The

event was marked by exciting competitions, promotions and a delectable variety of mouthwatering Diwali sweets.

The main attraction of the day was the 'Rangoli competition', with a total of around 10 teams competing to design the best 'Rangoli' art. The first place winning team received a valuable gift worth KD100, while the second and third prize winning teams were accorded gift items worth KD75 and KD50 respectively. In addition, consolation prizes were award-

ed to the remaining teams.

A wide variety of colorful accessories, dresses and special Diwali sweets were on offer at very special prices during the festive celebrations. Lulu Hypermarket, which prides itself on providing customers with a value-driven shopping experience, has built an enviable customer base in the country through their commitment to delivering high-quality products at competitive prices, while ensuring the utmost customer satisfaction.



LAPA collaborates with Shaheed Park for 5th anniversary

In collaboration with LOYAC Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA), Shaheed Park will celebrate its fifth anniversary and host LAPA's annual festivals. LOYAC's chairperson, Fare'a Al-saqqaq said that the music festivals organized at the Shaheed park will have social, cultural and economic objectives and help achieve the vision agreed upon with the Amiri Diwan as well as

enhance Kuwaiti and Arab youth artistic opportunities. Al-Saqqaq added that this year's festival latest highlight includes hosting a Sudanese band comprising of young talented Sudanese women. On his part, the Shaheed park manager, Salman Al-Rashud stressed that the park would always remain a platform for creativity while, at the same time, maintaining Kuwaiti and gulf heritage.



St Thomas Evangelical Church of India (STECI) Kuwait parish conducted its annual family picnic at Rawda Garden Kuwait on Friday 25th October 2019. The picnic was inaugurated by parish Vicar Rev John Mathew. Various fun filled activities for all age groups added beauty to this daylong picnic. It was a day of fun and frolic, a day to mingle and interact, a day for fellowship and a blessing to all who came and participated.



SACGC honors EQUATE specialist

The Sabah Al-Ahmed Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC), one of KFAS centers, recently honored EQUATE Petrochemicals' electricity specialist, Nabil Al-Kandary for having a patent right for inventing a system to protect metal harbor bases from erosion. Speaking at the special ceremony held for the occasion, SACGC director, Abdullah Al-Jed'an hailed the fruitful cooperation with EQUATE which helped company employees get more than a patent right.

On his part, EQUATE Petrochemicals deputy CEO for technical services, Nawwaf Al-Khaldi stressed that the



company had signed a first of its kind cooperation agreement with SACGC in 2016 to exchange expertise, hold training courses and register patent rights. Also speaking on the occasion, inventor, Nabil Al-Khaldi explained that his invention involves a system to be used in various ports to protect metal from rust erosion using electricity.



Health & Science

Rare Bangladesh crocodile lays eggs in a new hope for species

DHAKA: A rare river-dwelling crocodile has started to lay eggs after being paired with an introduced male, Bangladesh conservationists said yesterday, raising hopes a successful hatching could save the critically endangered species from extinction. The South Asian nation, with its vast network of rivers, was once a key habitat for the gharial, a fish-eating crocodile distinctive for its lengthy body and long, thin snout.

But today they are virtually extinct in Bangladesh and the few which are seen likely made their way downstream from India. A male gharial, a 41-year-old named "Gorai", was brought from the capital Dhaka to a zoo in the north-western city of Rajshahi in 2017 in the hope he would mate with a 35-year-old female called "Padma".

The reptiles are named after tributaries of the Ganges river. "When we introduced them, there were fears these old gharials may have lost the urge to mate," Sarowar Alam, who heads the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Bangladesh gharial project, told AFP. The species usually only breed until the age of around 50. "But not only have they mated, she has also laid eggs," he added. Rajshahi zoo curator Farhad Uddin said two eggs found last week were rotten, damaged after the croc's enclosure was flooded during heavy rains.

But he expected the female to lay more eggs as the pair had bonded well and were mating regularly. "If we can build proper sand banks in the zoo, the female gharials will lay more eggs," Uddin told AFP. "But the most encouraging news is that the female is laying eggs." IUCN's Bangladesh country chief Raquibul Alam said his organization was trying to secure funds to build proper breeding facilities at the zoo. There has been no sighting of mature gharials in Bangladesh's two Himalayan rivers—the Ganges and



RAJSHAHI: This undated picture shows specimens of a river-dwelling crocodile, known as Gharial, in an enclosure at the Rajshahi Zoo in Bangladesh's western city of Rajshahi. — AFP

Brahmaputra—in more than a decade. The species has also all but vanished from its habitats in Pakistan and Bhutan, with fewer than 200 existing in rivers mainly in India but also Nepal. If the breeding program is a success, it is hoped the young can be released back into the wild. The Padma

and Jamuna rivers, the main tributaries of the two Himalayan rivers, have been identified as potential sanctuaries for the species should it repopulate. As part of the exchange programme, a female gharial was also moved to a Dhaka zoo to stay with the facility's three male crocodiles. — AFP

Trump takes swipe at Apple for ditching iPhone home button

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump took a swipe at Apple chief Tim Cook with a Tweet lamenting the removal of the iPhone home button. "To Tim: The Button on the iPhone was FAR better than the Swipe!" he tweeted Friday. Trump switched from an Android mobile to an iPhone in March 2017, the same year Apple dropped the physical home button from its top models.

This earlier shift seemed to be the target of presidential ire, rather Apple's latest iPhone 11 release in September. It is not the first time Trump has cast a critical eye over the tech giant's design choices. "I cannot believe that Apple didn't come out with a larger screen iPhone. Samsung is stealing their business. STEVE JOBS IS SPINNING IN GRAVE," he tweeted in September 2013. It also comes after a gaffe in March when he referred to Cook as "Tim Apple". Trump later claimed the naming was deliberate and a "time saving" measure. — AFP

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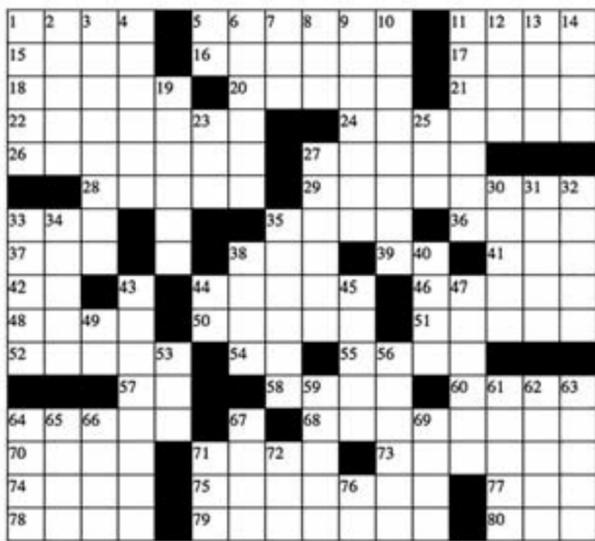
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2344



ACROSS

1. The 4th planet from the sun.
5. Any of various spiny trees or shrubs of the genus *Acacia*.
11. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
15. A blue dye obtained from plants or made synthetically.
16. A human being whose body has been taken over in whole or in part by electromechanical devices.
17. The chief solid component of mammalian urine.
18. A yellow quartz.
20. Being derived from.
21. The taste experience when a savoury condiment is taken into the mouth.
22. Give a promotion to.
24. Turkish sea power was destroyed in 1571 by a league of Christian nations organized by the Pope.
26. A republic in northwestern Africa on the coast of the Atlantic.
28. The lofty nest of a bird of prey (such as a hawk or eagle).
29. A town in southern Turkey.
33. Any of several small ungulate mammals of Africa and Asia with rodent-like incisors and feet with hooflike toes.
36. (cosmology) The original matter that (according to the big bang theory) existed before the formation of the chemical elements.
37. An associate degree in applied science.
39. Conforming to truth.
41. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
42. A hard brittle blue-white multivalent metallic element.
46. 100 groszy equal 1 zloty.
48. A South American shrub whose leaves are chewed by natives of the Andes.
50. Very large red gum tree.
51. Income from capital investment paid in a series of regular payments.
52. (Jungian psychology) The inner self (not the external persona) that is in touch with the unconscious.
54. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
55. A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
57. The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
58. Long coarse hair growing from the crest of the animal's neck.
60. An expression of open-mouthed astonishment.
64. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
68. A literary language of Chinese Turkestan (named for one of the sons of Genghis Khan).
70. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
73. Primitive fishes having thick bony scales with a shiny covering.
74. Avatar of Vishnu.
75. The residence of the Catholic Pope in the Vatican City.
77. The compass point that is midway between north and northeast.
78. A capacity unit used for measuring fresh herring.
79. Drawn into the lungs.
80. The rate at which red blood cells settle out in a tube of blood under standardized conditions.

DOWN

1. A pair of people who live together.
2. Small arboreal tropical American insectivorous lizards with the ability to change skin color.
3. The state of being ripe.
4. (British) A female domestic servant who does all kinds of menial work.
5. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
6. Great nature goddess of ancient Phrygia in Asia Minor.
7. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
8. Ratio of the adjacent side to the hypotenuse.
9. A republic consisting of 26 of 32 counties comprising the island of Ireland.
10. A genus with one species that is a rapidly growing climbing vine with tuberous roots.
11. Economic independence as a national policy.
12. Broken husks of the seeds of cereal grains that are separated from the flour by sifting.
13. A fractional monetary unit of several countries.
14. Powdery starch from certain sago palms.
19. The capital of Croatia.
23. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
25. Seed of a pea plant.
27. (South African) A camp defended by a circular formation of wagons.
30. An ancient city in Asia Minor that was the site of the Trojan War.
31. A commercial leavening agent containing yeast cells.
32. Affect with wonder.
34. American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
35. A battle in the Napoleonic campaigns (1809).
38. A small ball with a hole through the middle.
40. A cruel wicked and inhuman person.
43. Of or relating to Jamaica (the island or the country) or to its inhabitants.
44. A metric unit of length equal to 100 meters.
45. A woody climbing usually tropical plant.
47. 40th President of the United States (1911-).
49. Being one more than one hundred.
53. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring in the air.
56. Popular music originating in the West Indies.
59. A genus of Platales.
61. Make amends for.
62. An effortful attempt to attain a goal.
63. Duck of the northern hemisphere much valued for the fine soft down of the females.
65. South American armadillo with three bands of bony plates.
66. Area around the altar of a church for the clergy and choir.
67. An administrator in charge of a division of a university or college.
69. The (prehensile) extremity of the supercilium.
71. Being six more than fifty.
72. Last or greatest in an indefinitely large series.
76. Being ten more than one hundred forty.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Fun conversation surrounding your first love prevails. This may be the renewal of an old friendship or an upcoming class reunion. Whatever the case, the memories of your youth are not at all uncomfortable to recall. You may be able to enjoy and value your own life situation today. Someone may compliment you on your accomplishments. There is a yearning to boost your energies, perhaps through a health spa or group activity, even travel is likely to come into play. You now have an opportunity to rethink some of your personal goals, as well as your desires. Take some time to think about how to fit your talents into your life.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You could be frugal when it comes to possessions, always limiting your purchases to what is essential and has value. This same theme carries through in your response to people. You do not tend to lavish unnecessary affection or sentiment—short and simple. A friend may ask you for advice today on some very personal issues. You are able to cut through the red tape and get beneath and behind. If you are looking for a way to express your creative talents, look into the possibilities of working with stone. Perhaps white marble could be worked into your living surroundings.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may find yourself guiding young people this Monday—at least spending a great deal of time with young people. You may be feeling that your work world has taken away from family time and family may be where your interests are just now. A short trip to some entertainment area or a nearby park is in order. Your perception is good and will guide you accurately in making forecasts or decisions. Refinement and relationships are the keys to emotional satisfaction for you now. Neighbors may join you this evening for an evening treat and some good conversation. Close relationships are important to you and you take a little extra time to grant a wish. Making someone else's dreams come true may give you some rewarding times.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You might like to ignore responsibilities and do some socializing—realities may demand that you tend to business and forget your friends for the moment. Although you may be tempted to stay inside or just goof off from your responsibilities, you are actually in a good position to make much progress. There are breakthroughs in compassion and communion. This is a very nice day, perhaps filled with some renewed appreciation for all that is beautiful and fine. There is a sense of value and valuing that may find you lavishing affection on those near you. You may want to confer with a friend before you go on a shopping expedition.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may not appreciate some changes that are taking place in your life now. Patience is in order now—with time you may see the purpose in another person's decisions or plans—they may also see the advantage of your ideas as well. If you go with the flow, you will find that soon your own ideas can be merged into a plan. You spend a lot of money on good causes—you give away a lot of your money—perhaps you want to save the world. Check to make sure the people you are giving your money to, share your compassion. Not only that, also make sure they are good business people—getting the most for your dollars. That includes your tax dollars, too, by the way. Today, you enjoy cultivating your large vegetable garden or some other outdoor project.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Your ability to work with others and help guide them toward a more positive direction may come into play today—perhaps with young people. A friend or sibling seems disturbed over some form of family security—you have the gift of working with others. You have great insight into matters of personal freedom. You come up with brilliant ways to express, emote or act things out. New methods of lovemaking, raising kids, caring for animals are yours. You are outspoken, very dramatic, impressive and even regal. You relax with children, sports, acting, singing, etc. You really like yourself. You may enjoy eccentric friends this evening and perhaps participate in a group that has some kind of humanitarian flavor. You look for ways to better the community.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

A new cycle begins for you, signaling a greater than usual interest in relationships, social connections and the arts. Regardless of how uncomfortable you may feel about being in front of people, you may find yourself in front of the public eye, making speeches or leading a lesson. You draw emotional sustenance and a sense of security from ideals, friends and social involvement now. You may find that someone close to you is supportive. Close relationships take on more emotional depth, power and importance. This afternoon, obtaining and exchanging information takes on more emotional significance for you. Being more involved with neighbors or siblings satisfies a deep emotional need. Communicating feelings becomes important.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may be making definite moves to add to your friendship list. That rich feeling happens when you have good friendships, not just acquaintances, but really good friends. You may enjoy eccentric or unconventional friends and groups with some kind of humanitarian flavor will appeal as well. You have very original ideas for community and making shared dreams a reality. Perhaps you can lead a community project to plant or trim trees in several neighborhoods. A burning zeal for the ideal world and your need to be part of a group of likeminded souls are major factors in your makeup. You learn and grow through your efforts to help others and to make your inner vision a reality.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may have a sense of circumstances working against you or feel a lack of support and love from those around you. You could clash with young people or old habits. Your support system and your environment may feel a bit stressed. Find the cause of the problem so the whole day is not stressed—show your gratefulness for this difficulty, even though you may not be happy with it. This could be a person or a situation but it is teaching you something great. A need for psychological security and absolute truth in all matters cuts through most chitchat and settles on core material. You concentrate on deep, inner changes in yourself and in others—depth psychology.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Real insight into your own inner workings or psychology could surface today, and in a manageable form. You may be in the mood for deep conversations. You have a natural sense of what the public wants and may find yourself preparing for a conference, lecture or some sort of political speech in the near future. Your ability to coordinate events is something to be admired. Financial gain is one of the brighter prospects looming before you now, as you focus on what is most important to you at this time. There may be a tendency to emphasize the material too much, which could lead to the feeling that the things you own, own you instead.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

This is a time in your life marked by greater involvement with friends and groups who share some of your ideals about how people should live. Some of these friends or groups are likely to be a little eccentric but you enjoy being around people that are free thinking with creative and exciting new ideas. This may be a time you will become interested in political issues—perhaps to the point of becoming involved as a politician. These friends of late help you to develop new advertisement tweaks and perhaps clever business plans. Tonight you may explore a different sort of creative flash. Redecorating, remodeling or building outward may be listed at the top of your priority list.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

A future neighborhood garage sale may be on your mind today. Many people could be involved to help make the garage sale a great neighborhood effort. A circular with little squares to checkmark a suggestion would help you see where best to use the funds that come from the results. Children may need a see-through covered area to wait on a bus for school or getting house numbers painted on the curb for each home would be helpful. Maybe the homeowners will have their own suggestion. Circumstances may urge you to great effort and hard work. Things are working with rather than against you, however, so do not hold back. Everyone wants to help and this can all be very useful! A good book has your attention tonight.

Wordsearch Puzzle

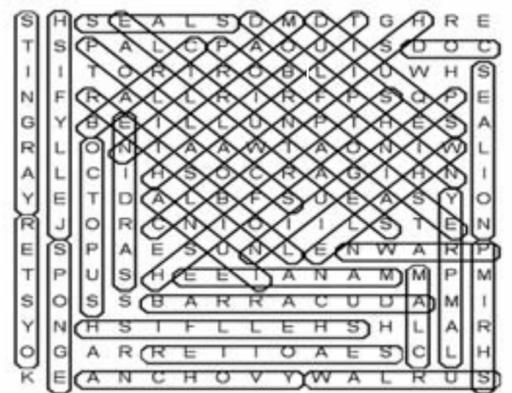
Meryl Streep Movies

Find and circle all of the Meryl Streep movies that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 40 letters spell an additional Meryl Streep movie.



- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| A CRY IN THE DARK | HEARTBURN | OUT OF AFRICA |
| ADAPTATION | IRONWEED | PLENTY |
| BEFORE AND AFTER | JULIA | PRIME |
| DANCING AT LUGHNASA | KRAMER VS. KRAMER | RENDITION |
| DARK MATTER | LIONS FOR LAMBS | SHE-DEVIL |
| DEATH BECOMES HER | MAMMA MIA | SILKWOOD |
| DEFENDING YOUR LIFE | MANHATTAN | SOPHIE'S CHOICE |
| DOUBT | MARVIN'S ROOM | STILL OF THE NIGHT |
| EVENING | MUSIC OF THE HEART | THE DEER HUNTER |
| FALLING IN LOVE | ONE TRUE THING | |

Marine Life



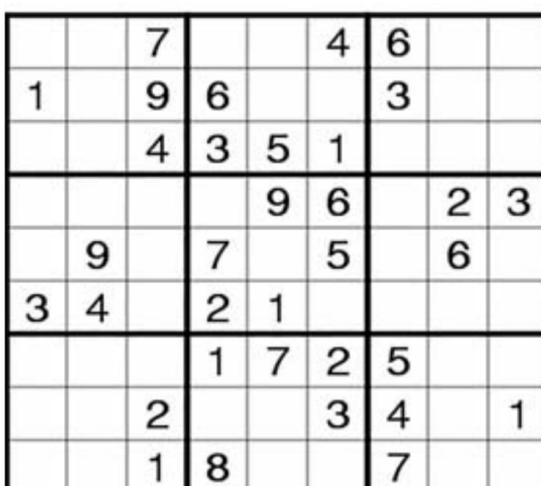
- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------------|
| ANCHOVY | MANATEE | SEA TURTLE |
| BARRACUDA | MARLIN | SEALS |
| CLAM | OCTOPUS | SHELLFISH |
| CLOWNFISH | OYSTER | SHRIMP |
| COD | PENGUIN | SPONGE |
| CRAB | PORPOISE | SQUID |
| DOLPHIN | PRAWN | STARFISH |
| HALIBUT | SARDINE | STINGRAY |
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| LOBSTER | SEA OTTER | WHALE |

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MONDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2019



Indian girls light earthen lamps on a Rangoli as they celebrate Diwali, the Festival of Lights, in Guwahati. — AFP

Streaming war begins with Apple and Disney launches

The streaming television war is set to enter a new phase as titans Apple and Disney take direct aim at market leader Netflix, vying for consumers abandoning their cable TV bundles for on-demand services. The shift away from "linear" television is likely to escalate with powerful new entrants to streaming coming this year and in early 2020.

The new landscape has important implications for longtime segment leader Netflix, which is now locked in a battle with deep-pocketed rivals for actors, directors and producers to win and keep audiences. "The Cinderella ride that Netflix has been on has some stormy weather ahead," said Wedbush Securities equity research managing director Daniel Ives. "You are talking about some of the biggest brands in technology involved in this battle."

An Apple TV+ service will launch November 1 in more than 100 countries at \$4.99 per month. Apple is spending heavily on new content and promises a "powerful and inspiring lineup of original shows, movies and documentaries." Entertainment colossus Disney will launch its own online streaming service, chock full of popular franchises such as "Star Wars" and Marvel superheroes, on November 12 in the US, Canada and the Netherlands, before rolling out worldwide.

And more competition looms on the horizon, as AT&T's WarnerMedia will launch its "HBO Max" in early 2020 after reclaiming the rights from Netflix to stream its popular television comedy "Friends." NBCUniversal's Peacock service is also launching next year. Disney chief executive Bob Iger told investors on a recent earnings call that "nothing is more important to us" than the Disney+ platform. As well as offering Disney's enormous

back catalog, including all animated films and Pixar movies within its first year, it will feature freshly commissioned shows. It will cost \$6.99 a month in the US.

Spotlighting originality

Netflix, which began streaming television to subscribers online some 12 years ago, has so far stayed ahead of Amazon Prime and Hulu, key rivals in the US market. Netflix chief executive Reed Hastings said he is unfazed by the new rivals. "Disney will be a great competitor," he told analysts recently. "Apple is just beginning but, you know, they will probably have some great shows too."

The budget for original shows at Netflix this year is \$15 billion, and the California-based company this week announced plans to issue \$2 billion in notes to have more cash for uses including creating and acquiring content. Ives said Netflix remains the leader until proven otherwise. "Netflix is on the top of the mountain and will continue to be the leader, but there are legitimate opportunities for number two and number three players with Apple, HBO, and Amazon in the running," the analyst wrote. Big-name entertainment industry talent has been recruited to make shows for the competing services, and Netflix is also showcasing local talent from countries around the world.

Cable TV obsolete?

As Disney and other major studios begin streaming directly to viewers, and keep coveted shows or films on their own services to attract subscribers, traditional cable companies "should be very concerned," according to IHS

Markit analyst Fateha Begum. "The cable service provider as a middle man bundling content is no longer needed," Begum said.

"I don't think cable TV will die, it still provides the one place for content you want, but this will push cable and pay TV services to innovate further." Cable TV companies may have to end revenue-boosting tactics such as charging monthly fees for boxes needed to access their services. Online streaming services accounted for a third of paid video subscriptions worldwide last year, with the rest going to traditional pay TV, according to IHS Markit media platforms executive director Maria Rua Aguiar.

She expected the number of streaming subscribers worldwide to grow 19 percent to 921.8 million next year, and then another 16 percent to 1.1 billion in the year 2021. "With the new flexible services threatening to convert more consumers into cord-cutters and into leaving the pay-TV ecosystem behind, besieged pay-TV providers are justifiably feeling the heat," Aguiar said. Meanwhile, the expense and complexity of accessing a variety of streaming services for shows could give rise to aggregators that bring options together in a single place, perhaps in the Amazon Prime style of mixing subscriber content with films for purchase or rent.

More than 50 streaming television services have launched or will launch in the year ahead, according to Mobilicity analyst Gerry Purdy. "Until now, it has been Netflix's world and everyone else has been paying rent," Ives said. "Over the next three to six months, we are going to see an all out battle for consumer mind-share." — AFP

Cobain's cigarette burned sweater sells for \$334,000

A quarter century after grunge's enigmatic rhapsodist took his own life, Kurt Cobain's iconic cigarette-singed cardigan worn during Nirvana's 1993 "Unplugged" performance has sold for \$334,000. The tattered, olive-green, Manhattan-brand, button-up sweater, which has never been washed since Cobain wore it, came with dark stains and a burn hole. The seller, Garrett Kletjian, owner of Forty7 Motorsports, bought it four years ago for \$137,500.



Kurt Cobain's cardigan from Nirvana's 1993 MTV Unplugged performance is on display at the Hard Rock Cafe in New York City ahead of the auction of Julien's Auctions on October 21, 2019 in New York City. — AFP

"This cardigan, it's the holy grail of any article of clothing that he ever wore," said Darren Julien, CEO and president of Julien's Auctions. "Kurt created the grunge look; he didn't wear show clothes," Julien told AFP at a New York exhibition preview. The auction house had predicted it would fetch \$200,000-300,000. The music cable channel MTV began its "Unplugged" series in 1989, recording live performances of acts that generally played their normally electrified music on sparse acoustics. Cobain's haunting "Unplugged" performance with Nirvana — recorded less than six months before his suicide at age 27 — is considered one of the most iconic shows of the series, and was released posthumously.

Already deep into an emotional, drug-addled downward spiral, the depressive but singular talent with ocean-blue eyes reportedly lamented to "Unplugged" programmer Amy Finnerty after the set that the audience seemed not to like the show. "Kurt," she told him, "they think you are Jesus Christ." Cobain's left-handed Fender Mustang guitar, which he used during the band's "In Utero" tour, sold for \$340,000. — AFP



In this file photo taken on March 25, 2019 Actors Steve Carell, Reese Witherspoon and Jennifer Aniston speak during an event launching Apple TV+ at Apple headquarters, in Cupertino, California. — AFP photos



A Disney+ streaming service sign is pictured at the D23 Expo, billed as the "largest Disney fan event in the world," at the Anaheim Convention Center in Anaheim, California.



Indigenous Anangu perform a traditional dance during a ceremony marking the permanent ban on climbing Uluru.



Indigenous Anangu children play with a camera during a ceremony marking the permanent ban on climbing Uluru, also known as Ayers Rock, at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in Australia's Northern Territory. — AFP photos



Stars trails are seen over Uluru.

Celebrations at *Uluru* after climbers permanently banned

Indigenous Australians performed songs and traditional dance as the sun set over Uluru yesterday, capping a weekend of celebrations to mark the historic ban on climbing the sacred site. The ceremony was held two days after a final surge of tourists who had flocked to central Australia scaled the giant red monolith before its closure to climbers.

A crowd gathered late Friday at the base of the site to watch rangers erect the "permanently closed" sign, in line with the long-held wishes of indigenous Australians. "No more climbing today," shouted indigenous elder Nelly Patterson. "Close it," she yelled to a loud cheer from the crowd. The ban, first announced in 2017, had long been sought by the traditional owners of the land, the Anangu, whose connection to the site dates back tens of thousands of years.

As well as respecting cultural practices, the ban is designed to protect the site from further environmental damage and ensure visitors' safety. "We are all very happy, as traditional owners, that the climb is closed now, after a long fight from handback to today," Reggie Uluru told reporters through an interpreter on Saturday. Previously known as Ayers Rock, the site was officially returned to the Anangu in 1985.

Signs at its base had implored visitors not to climb it, but they were regularly ignored by some, especially in recent months as thousands made last-minute ascents. "I think it is important that mother nature has a bit of a break," the last climber at Uluru, James Martin, said. "I would like to say to the Aboriginals that we are sorry and the world does indeed belong to every single person who was born on the planet," the Australian told reporters as

he came off the rock at sunset on Friday.

Parks Australia added extra rangers on patrol over the weekend, with fines for those who attempt to summit the rock now reaching up to Aus\$10,000 (\$6,800). "Although we expect our visitors to respect the law and the wishes of traditional owners when they visit, significant penalties can be issued," Parks Australia told national broadcaster ABC. Work is expected to begin next week to remove a chain that was used by climbers to make the steep ascent. Tourists are still being encouraged to visit the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park where they can view the monolith from its base, walk around its perimeter and learn about its indigenous heritage at the cultural centre. — AFP

Taylor Swift, Webber write new 'Cats' song for film

American singer-songwriter Taylor Swift and British composer Andrew Lloyd Webber have written a new song for the film adaptation of hit musical "Cats", which will be performed by ballerina Francesca Hayward in the highly-anticipated movie. "Beautiful Ghosts" will also be sung by Swift, who stars as Bombalurina in her first film role, over the end credits.

"Cats", which hits cinemas in December, is based on Lloyd Webber's hugely-popular stage musical and features a star-studded cast including Judi Dench, Ian McKellen, James Corden, Idris Elba, Jennifer Hudson and Rebel Wilson. Royal Ballet principal dancer Hayward plays Victoria, a role that has been further developed in the movie, where the actors' faces are seen and their bodies are covered in computer-generated fur.

"When I first read the screenplay, the first thing I said was, 'We have to have a song for Victoria,'" Lloyd Webber said in a statement, adding that the new song was an incredibly important and central part of the whole film. A behind-the-scenes video showed Swift, Lloyd Webber and Oscar winning director Tom Hooper in the recording studio, as well as snippets of Hayward in the film.

"There was an ambition and an aspiration to have an original song in the movie," Swift says in the video. "Just very much this understanding of like 'Let's write the best song we can.'" "Cats", based on poems by TS Eliot, opened in London in 1981, turning into one of the longest-running shows in the West End and Broadway. — Reuters



Taylor Swift performs onstage during the 7th Annual We Can Survive, presented by AT&T, a RADIO.COM event, at The Hollywood Bowl on October 19, 2019 in Los Angeles. — AFP



Croatian citizen Robert Sedlar poses in front of a former SunAdria Holland Fokker-100 aircraft in his garden. — AFP photos



A man prepares food near the body, wings and tail of a SunAdria Holland Fokker-100 aircraft in the garden of a Croatian citizen.

Croatian turns garden into site for plane parties

In the middle of a tiny village in north-western Croatia lies a Fokker-100 plane parked in a local resident's garden, but after 23 years of travelling the world, the aircraft will not be going anywhere. Plane enthusiast Robert Sedlar, 50, and his friends are finding a new use for the aircraft by transforming it into a tourist attraction where it will be rented out for all sorts of events and parties.

Cars slow down to view the scene that resembles an accident site in the picturesque hilly village of Srmec Stubicki. The Dutch jet, made in 1991 and retired in 2014, was used by companies in Indonesia, Mexico, Brazil and Croatia. Sedlar, a construction engineer, did not want to disclose the amount he paid for the aircraft. He said he plans to rent it for events such as weddings and children's parties.

He told AFP that "parking" a plane next to his house in the village of 760 inhabitants was an "idea from his childhood, born

out of a love for planes". The aircraft, built to carry 100 passengers, is currently stripped of all seats, engines and cockpit equipment. All that remains are the throttles. Getting the plane from Osijek airport, 340 kilometers from the village was a big operation.

"Because of its exceptional dimensions, a span of 28 meters and a length of 34.5 meters (91 by 113 feet), we had to break it down into several pieces to transport it," Sedlar said. It took six weekends to break down the plane and five days to transport it. "Now, we reconstruct it, we will repair the damaged parts of the hull, before painting it... In the cockpit, we will put two flight simulators," he said. The plane enthusiast has set March 8 as the opening date, the same day as his 51st birthday and International Women's Day. — AFP



Two women clean the body of a SunAdria Holland Fokker-100 aircraft.

Maserati ditches Taiwan film awards

Luxury Italian sports-car brand Maserati has cut sponsorship ties with Taiwan's top film awards, the latest international brand to bow to pressure from China on political issues. Maserati said on its official account on Weibo, China's Twitter-like online platform, that it had pulled out of sponsoring the upcoming Golden Horse Awards, often dubbed the "Chinese Oscars".

The car company directly linked its decision to Beijing's stance on Taiwan, a self-ruled de facto independent nation for the last seven decades that China views as its own territory that must one day be seized, by force if necessary. "Maserati has always respected China's territorial integrity, its history and culture while firmly upholding the 'one China' principle," the firm said, using Beijing's official phrase for classifying Taiwan as part of communist China.

It added the initial sponsorship deal was struck by Maserati's local office in Taiwan and did not represent the brand's "official stance". Beijing has been ramping up diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan ever since president Tsai Ing-wen was elected in 2016 because her party refuses to recognize that the island is part of "one China". As punishment, it cut official communications, stepped up military exercises and poached half a dozen diplomatic allies. Pressure is building once more as Taiwan heads towards new elections in January with Tsai seeking to defeat an opponent who favors much warmer ties with China.

'Chinese Taipei'

The Golden Horse awards got into trouble with Beijing after a Taiwanese director called for the island's independence in an acceptance speech at last year's ceremony. In August, China's national film board ordered mainland directors and stars to boycott the November 23 event and there are no mainland films in the nomination list. International brands have routinely found themselves bowing to Beijing's stance on Taiwan — a much smaller market compared to the lucrative mainland.

A growing list of international firms, including luxury brands, airlines and hotels, have been pressured to apologise to Beijing or changed Taiwan's classification on their websites to "Taiwan, China" or "Chinese Taipei" in recent years. Last week Dior apologized after a staff presentation featured a map of China without Taiwan on it. The apology sparked criticism from Taiwan's foreign minister Joseph Wu who urged brands to "stand up to the bully", a reference to Beijing.

On Thursday, US Vice President Mike Pence gave a speech exhorting brands who bow to pressure from Beijing, singling out the NBA and Nike. The National Basketball Association has been engulfed in controversy since Houston Rockets general manager Daryl Morey earlier this month tweeted "Fight for freedom, stand with Hong Kong." China, a major market for the NBA, retaliated by ending sponsorships and cancelling broadcasts of pre-season games held in the country, leading the NBA to drop all media events of the tour. Nike pulled Houston Rockets merchandise from its stores in China. — AFP



CHINA FASHION WEEK



Models display the creations from the "HONRN" collection by Tang Guanyi, "ZENGFENGFEI" collection by Zeng Fengfei, the BUSIGUI & MONGOLIA ELEMENTS, "LEAF CROWN" collection by YUKAIYU and the "DEJIN" collection by Zhou Jin during the China Fashion Week in Beijing. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Gossip



John Cena thinks Shay Shariatzadeh is 'beautiful'

The 42-year-old actor met his new partner whilst making the Andy Fickman-directed movie 'Playing with Fire', and he's admitted the film will always have a special significance for him because it allowed him to get to know the engineer, John - who has just made his red carpet debut with Shay - told 'Entertainment Tonight': "What's truly special about this one is that, no matter what projects I'm involved in the future, this one will always have a special meaning because I got to film a special project and meet someone

special." John is, of course, also part of the 'Fast and the Furious' franchise. And after rapper Cardi B recently signed up for a cameo role in the next film, John admitted to being surprised by her involvement with the money-spinning series. He said: "She was kind of a surprise." "I was also a surprise, but I think that is what's great about the franchise, their ability to always keep it entertaining for their audiences ... [Their audience] spans the globe and it's a multi-cultural franchise that always prides itself on its diversity." John admitted he doesn't know anything

about Cardi's role - but he thinks she's a smart addition to the movie's star-studded cast. The Hollywood actor - who will also appear alongside the likes of Vin Diesel, Michelle Rodriguez and Tyrese Gibson in the film - explained: "Cardi B is a wonderful add. I have no idea what she's doing. My stuff is secretive and everyone else's is as well, but I think it's a wonderful addition to the franchise. "I already know the movie is going to be really phenomenal."

Kanye West isn't planning to perform his old music again

The 'Bound 2' rapper recently unveiled his new album, 'Jesus is King', on Friday but with the new LP now out, Kanye doesn't want to sing his existing tracks. A source told TMZ that he will "never perform his old tracks in their original form again" and whilst he'll use the old beats, he'll use "more 'G' rated lyrics". Meanwhile, the 42-year-old rapper previously confessed he believes he is "unquestionably, undoubtedly, the greatest human artist of all time". He said: "Give me some other examples where someone is saying what isn't culturally what you're supposed to say ... Give me an example where someone is saying what you're not supposed to say. You don't want to say it, do you liberal? And now - I am unquestionably, undoubtedly, the

greatest human artist of all time. It's not even a question at this point. It's just a fact. For the greatest artist in human existence to put a red hat on was God's practical joke to all liberals. Like, 'No, not Kanye!'" And the 'Heartless' rapper has also said he wants to let people know "what Jesus has done" for him, after recently converting to Christianity. He added: "Now that I'm in service to Christ, my job is to spread the gospel, to let people know what Jesus has done for me. I've spread a lot of things. There was a time I was letting you know what high fashion had done for me, I was letting you know what the Hennessey had done for me, but now I'm letting you know what Jesus has done for me, and in that I'm no longer a slave, I'm a son now, a son of God. I'm free."



Selena Gomez wants to find 'real' love



The 'I Can't Get Enough' singer has been "super, super single" for two years now and can't wait to find someone on the "same wavelength" as her. She said: "I've been super, super single for two years. I want to know what that love will look like next for me. I want it to be real and I don't want it to be co-dependent or messy or lack of communication. When you get older, you find people who are actually right for you, that are actually on the same wavelength as you ... I'm chilling right now, honestly, that is so stressful." And the 27-year-old singer will be "very transparent" with love in the future. Speaking on The Zach Sang Show, she added: "I would be very transparent. I don't have room to buffer things that I need or that I want. I think girls can sometimes be scared of that, because we're viewed as crazy or needy or overthinking things or dramatic. I understand sometimes, but I love being a girl and I love having the emotions I have, falling super deep and being passionate. It's just about containing it and channeling it in the right areas. But I never want to lose the sense of love that I imagine it to be. I don't want to be jaded or bitter from anything. I believe that it exists. I'm happy waiting for that for however long it takes because we're going to be doing this forever."

Jeff Goldblum worries about leaving his children soon

The 'Jurassic Park' star has no problem being an older dad and is "feeling good", but he admits he worries about "saying goodbye to them prematurely". Asked if he worries about being an older dad, he told The Times magazine: "I take them to karate class and they have swimming lessons at our house, and I drop them off at school. I see dads who are younger. I'm feeling good. I can do everything. But it's not that it doesn't occur to me. I would not want to say goodbye to them prematurely. There would be an extra reason to be disappointed to check out earlier than I hoped." Meanwhile, the 67-year-old actor - who has Charlie, four, and River, two, with his wife Emilie Livingston - previously revealed he is "glad" he waited until later in life to have kids. He said: "I am glad I didn't have kids until now really. I don't know that I was equipped and I was busy and probably more self involved than I'm possibly capable of now, we'll see. I do enjoy my kids now ... After a couple of years during a sweet, sweet moment, she said, 'Jeez, this is going so well, what if we had a baby?' and I had flirted with the idea before and was glad that I hadn't and had confirmed to myself that I wasn't going to but because she said it, and because of what was going on between her and I, I thought, this is a serious and interesting proposition. And it wasn't until a year later when we went to my therapist and excavated and brought to the surface all of my considerations that I became clear and wildly enthusiastic about it."



Sir Elton John cancels concert due to illness

The 72-year-old star - whose mother-in-law, Gladys Furnish, recently passed away - made the announcement via Twitter, apologizing to his loyal fans in Indiana. Elton - whose statement did not mention the death of his mother-in-law - wrote on the micro-blogging platform: "To my dear fans in Indianapolis. It is with the heaviest heart that I'm forced to deliver the news that I am extremely unwell and therefore unable to perform at @TheFieldhouse tonight." "I absolutely hate to let my fans down, but I owe it to you to put on the best #EltonFarewellTour show possible and unfortunately that's simply not possible. "The date will be rearranged for March 2020, and I promise I will deliver the show you deserve. Thank you so much for your support and understanding. "Elton x (sic)" Earlier this month, mean-

while, Elton revealed that David Furnish - his husband - entered rehab for an alcohol problem after failing to cope with the pressures of fame. The filmmaker - who married Elton in 2014 - struggled to come to terms with the interest in his life, and entered himself into a rehab clinic in California around the time they tied the knot. Writing in his new autobiography, 'Me', Elton shared: "I always thought David had slipped into Elton John World with remarkable ease and confidence, but it turned out that a lot of things I was completely used to living with, that I just saw as a fact of life, made him completely anxious. "He didn't like being photographed all the time, or being under press scrutiny, or public speaking at [Elton John] AIDS Foundation events."

Mel B wants to buy a farm in the future



The 44-year-old singer recently moved back to her hometown of Leeds, West Yorkshire, in the north of England, after deciding to quit Los Angeles following her divorce from Stephen Belafonte. Mel has absolutely loved being back in the UK and she is now eyeing a move to the countryside on an actual working farm. In an interview with OK! magazine, she said: "Yorkshire is always going to feel like home for me. I was born and raised in Leeds but it's been much lovelier this time round because my sister has just had a baby. We'll all cook Sunday dinner together, make sure the kids have done their homework and on weekends we'll get out in the field surrounded by sheep. My daughter Angel's in a great school, literally around the corner from where I live, so everything's good. I do love the idea of owning a farm or having a farm at some point, but I'm just loving being there, it's

really nice and my kids love it there." Mel reunited with her younger sibling Danielle and her mother Andrea in 2017 following a near 10-year estrangement caused by Mel's ex-husband Stephen cutting her off from her family through alleged coercive control. Since they reconnected, the sisters are determined to make up for lost time and one of the best things to come out of the reconciliation is that Mel and Danielle's children have also become very close. The 'Wannabe' hitmaker - who has seven-year-old daughter Madison with Stephen and daughter Phoenix, 20, with former husband Jimmy Gulzar, and her girl Angel, 12, whose father is actor Eddie Murphy - said: "A lot of time has been lost and I'm trying to catch up but we talk about it, with my mum and Phoenix, who is 20. My mum is so happy."

— Bangshowbiz



Eva Longoria blames Hollywood for 'erasing' Latinos

The 'Desperate Housewives' star says the movie industry is "largely responsible" for the negative portrayal of Latinos on the big and small screen. She said: "What studies show is that we are being erased. This goes beyond underrepresentation. When you aren't on screen in the media, you are being erased, you don't exist. And the stories from Hollywood don't come close to representing the complexity of our community. This is a problem - the demographics of America are changing and it's changing in a very Latin way, and this cultural shift is freaking people out. We in this room have contributed to these negative portrayals and images we've seen in the media. We here in Hollywood are largely responsible for much of the unconscious bias that is against people of colour. People of colour

are depicted in very narrow ways on screen and unconscious bias come from those repeated images that come across as a threat." And the 44-year-old actress has urged Hollywood to let diversity happen naturally rather than just include underrepresented people to make up the numbers. Speaking in a keynote speech at TheWrap's Power Women Summit in Los Angeles, she added: "Hollywood has a tendency to pat itself on the back every time they have the smallest gain of diversity, they're like, 'We had TWO women direct a movie!' Even that word, 'diversity,' is so hip. It falls out of every executive's mouth ... We should see how many times that word comes up at this summit - we should make it a drinking game! ...

Classifieds

Monday, October 28, 2019

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Unstable (at times) and Cloudy to partly cloudy with moderate to fresh north easterly wind to south easterly wind, with speed of 20 - 55 km/h causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

BY NIGHT: Unstable (at times) and Partly cloudy to cloudy with moderate to fresh south easterly wind to north easterly wind, with speed of 20 - 55 km/h causing rising dust with a chance for thunder rain.

WEATHER WARNING			Thunder rain + dust	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 27/10/2019 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	31 °C	23 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	30 °C	23 °C		
ABDALY	30 °C	19 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	31 °C	22 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	30 °C	24 °C		
AHMADI	31 °C	24 °C		
NUWAISIB	32 °C	26 °C		
WAFRA	32 °C	23 °C		
SALMY	30 °C	18 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	10/28	Partly cloudy to cloudy and rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	33 °C	24 °C	E-SE	20 - 55 km/h
Tuesday	10/29	Relatively hot and Humid specially over coastal areas and some clouds will appear with	34 °C	22 °C	NE-VRB	06 - 28 km/h
Wednesday	10/30	Relatively hot and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	32 °C	24 °C	VRB-NW	06 - 32 km/h
Thursday	10/31	Relatively hot and some scattered clouds will appear	32 °C	22 °C	NW	12 - 40 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:38
Sunrise	05:58
Zuhur	11:32
Asr	14:42
Sunset	17:07
Isha	18:24

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	33 °C
MIN. Temp.	25 °C
MAX. RH	67 %
MIN. RH	29 %
MAX. Wind	NE 50 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	.7 mm

CHANGE OF NAME

I Mohammed Ishaq Mohammed Yousuf holder of Indian Passport No. R8275312 having permanent address "LIG Colony 36/4, Kurla (W), Pipe Road, Mumbai - 400070, Maharashtra." Residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Given name: Mohammed Yousuf Mohammed Ishaq. (C 5467) 28-10-2019

I, Abinesh Melapuram, Indian national (holder of Indian passport no. Z3083297 and Kuwait civil ID 285112104631) hereby change my daughter's name from Akshara Melapuram (Indian National, holder of Indian passport no. S0589124 and Kuwait civil id 317102100059) to Thejomayi Melapuram. She will be known as Thejomayi Melapuram from now on. (C 5686)

Vanpulliparambil Sankaran Radhakrishnan, vanpulliparambil house, po engandiyur. Thrissur Kerala (Holder of passport NO:J5389373) presently residing in Kuwait do here by

declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: Radhakrishnan Sankaran. Surname: vanpulliparambil. (C 5682)

I, IBRAHIM PATHAN NAZIR AHMED holder of Indian Passport No. N9725885 having permanent address at PO Mahad, Dist. Raigad, Pin. 402301, Maharashtra, India. Residing in Kuwait present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: NAZIR AHMED IBRAHIM and surname: PATHAN.

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Wataniya Airways	22 066 536	Egypt Air	22421578
Turkish Airlines	1884918	Swiss Air	22421516
American Airlines	22087425	Saudia	22426306
Jet Airways	22924455	Middle East Airlines	22423073
FlyDubai	22414400	Lufthansa	22422493
Qatar Airways	22423888	PIA	22421044
KLM	22425747	Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6	Indian Airlines	22456700
British Airways	22425635	Oman Air	22958787
Air France	22430224	Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Emirates	22921555	Aeroflot	22404838/9
Air India	22456700		

Arrival Flights on Monday 28/10/2019				Departure Flights on Monday 28/10/2019			
Airlines	Fit	Route	Time	Airlines	Fit	Route	Time
FEG	441	Asyut	00:05	JZR	123	Dubai	13:10
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	AXB	790	CNN	13:10
JZR	1338	Al Najaf	00:10	RBG	554	Alexandria	13:10
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	JZR	115	Doha	13:25
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	MSC	412	Asyut	00:15
KAC	102	London	00:50	MSR	615	Cairo	00:30
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	FEG	342	Sohag	01:05
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	KAC	677	Dubai	01:40
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	THY	773	Istanbul	01:50
RJA	642	Amman	01:20	DLH	625	Frankfurt	01:50
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	KAC	417	Manila	02:00
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	285	Dhaka	02:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	JZR	111	Doha	02:10
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	THY	765	Istanbul	02:50
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:50	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
JZR	502	Jeddah	02:55	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:10
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	UAE	854	Dubai	03:30
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00
JZR	406	Kochi	03:05	OMA	644	Muscat	04:05
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:20
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:00	ZAV	4130	BSR	05:00
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	QTR	1077	Doha	05:00
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:00
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	04:15	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10
DHX	170	Bahrain	04:25	KAC	303	Mumbai	05:15
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	JZR	101	Bahrain	05:50
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:50	IGO	1765	Delhi	06:10
IGO	1759	Delhi	05:10	THY	771	Istanbul	06:30
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	GFA	212	Bahrain	06:50
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	RJA	643	Amman	07:00
KAC	352	Kochi	05:25	KAC	167	Paris	07:15
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	JZR	121	Dubai	07:15
KAC	552	Cairo	05:45	BAW	156	London	07:40
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	KAC	173	Munich	07:45
BAW	157	London	06:10	JZR	211	Jeddah	08:00
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	IGO	1767	Mumbai	08:10
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	RBG	214	Sohag	08:15
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	KAC	163	MXP	08:35
KAC	204	Lahore	06:45	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:05	KAC	545	Cairo	08:50
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	KAC	501	Beirut	08:50
RBG	211	Luxor	07:25	MSC	561	Amman	08:55
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	402	Alexandria	09:00
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	KAC	117	New York	09:05
MSC	401	Alexandria	08:00	JZR	151	Mashhad	09:05
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	QTR	1085	Doha	09:10
IRA	601	Tehran	08:10	IRA	666	Esfahan	09:10
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:15	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:15
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	KAC	671	Dubai	09:15
ETD	9873	Tbilisi	08:25	JZR	1333	Al Najaf	09:15
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	KAC	157	Istanbul	09:35
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC	773	Riyadh	09:40
KAC	334	Trivandrum	09:00	KAC	741	Dammam	09:40
GFA	209	Bahrain	09:05	JZR	731	Cairo	09:45
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	UAE	856	Dubai	09:50
GOW	061	CNN	09:30	JZR	301	Istanbul	09:55
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	OMA	642	Muscat	10:00
SAW	703	Damascus	10:00	GFA	210	Bahrain	10:05
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	KAC	101	London	10:05
AXB	213	Bahrain	10:40	QTR	1071	Doha	10:30
AXB	395	Kozhikode	10:40	CNN	062	CNN	10:30
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	KAC	515	Tehran	10:35
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC	617	Doha	10:40
THY	1282	Trabzon	11:05	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40
NIA	1401	Sohag	11:35	ETD	9874	Abu Dhabi	10:55
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	SAW	704	Damascus	11:00
AXB	789	CNN/Bahrain	12:10	JZR	221	Riyadh	11:20
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	AXB	890	Mangalora	11:20
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:30	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	AXB	396	Kozhikode	11:50
JZR	1334	Al Najaf	12:35	MEA	405	Beirut	11:55
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	THY	1283	Trabzon	12:00
KAC	742	Dammam	12:55	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:05
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:35	QTR	1075	Doha	12:10
				JZR	1335	Al Najaf	12:30
				KAC	1502	Asyut	12:35

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Iraq students join protests, up pressure on government

BAGHDAD: Iraqi students joined anti-government protests in Baghdad yesterday, ramping up the street pressure on Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi who also faced a sit-in from parliament's largest bloc. The capital and country's south have been rocked by a second wave of demonstrations since Thursday, with protesters digging in despite tear gas, curfews and violence that has left more than 60 dead. Yesterday morning, students could be seen joining demonstrations in the capital, with activists saying about a dozen schools and universities had decided to shut their doors and take part in protests en masse.

In the emblematic Tahrir Square, young girls in school uniforms with rucksacks were seen trekking through streets littered with tear gas canisters. Hundreds of protesters had hunkered down in the square, defying heavy tear gas use overnight and pledging to "weed out" the political class. "We're here to bring down the whole government - to weed them all out!" one protester said, the Iraqi tricolor wrapped around his head.

The protests are unprecedented in recent Iraqi history for their ire at the entire political class, including Abdel Mahdi, parliament speaker Mohammed Al-Halbussi and even traditionally revered religious leaders. They have also been exceptionally violent, with 157 dead in the first set of rallies and 63 dead in the latest round. "We don't want a single one of them. Not Halbussi, not Abdel Mahdi. We want to bring down the regime," the protester said.

Women were also seen in larger numbers, including a young nurse who said she was protesting "for the generation that's coming". "Our generation is psychologically tired, but it's alright as long as this is for the next one," she said. Renewed protests also flooded the streets of Najaf, Hilla, Karbala and Diwaniyah in the south. In the oil-rich port city of Basra, police enforced a strict curfew and said it arrested "saboteurs" who had infiltrated the protesters.

This week's demonstrations are the sequel to six

days of anti-government rallies that erupted Oct 1. Sparked by outrage at corruption, unemployment and poor services, they evolved into demands for an overhaul of the political system and a new constitution. On Saturday, Iraqi President Barham Saleh met with the United Nations' top representative in the country Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert to discuss electoral reform and amendments to the constitution, which dates back to 2005. Abdel Mahdi has also proposed a laundry list of reforms including hiring drives, increased pensions and promises to root out corruption.

Oil-rich Iraq is the OPEC oil cartel's second biggest producer, but one in five people live in poverty and youth unemployment stands at 25 percent, according to the World Bank. Beyond the street, Abdel Mahdi also faces new pressure from parliament, whose largest bloc has been holding an open-ended sit-in since Saturday night to back the rallies. "The sit-in is ongoing and open until protester demands are met and the reforms promised by the PM are enacted," said MP Salam Al-Hadi, a member of Saeroon - an alliance between populist cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr and Iraq's Communist Party. The move has left Abdel Mahdi more squeezed than ever, as Saeroon was one of the two main sponsors of his government.

The other was Fatah, the political arm of the Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary force which said it would continue to back the central government. The onetime allies now find themselves on opposite sides of the protest movement. The Hashed was founded in 2014 to fight the Islamic State group but its factions have since been ordered to incorporate into state security services. Several of their offices have been torched in recent days in southern Iraqi cities, hinting at a new violent phase.

Dozens of protesters have died while storming or setting fire to the offices of Asaib Ahl al-Haq, the Badr Organization and others, according to medics and police. Hashed commanders have threatened revenge, and its second-in-command Abu Mahdi Al-



NAJAF: An Iraqi teenager, who lost four friends in recent protests, cries as he joins an anti-government demonstration outside the Najaf governorate headquarters yesterday. — AFP

Muhandis said yesterday his force "is ready to stand against discord".

The UN has warned "armed spoilers" could derail efforts at peaceful protests in Iraq, saying it was "tragic" to see renewed violence in the country. A government probe found "excessive force" was used to quell the first week of protests and in a noticeable change, there have been no reports of live ammunition in Baghdad in recent days. Most of those killed since

Thursday have been shot in the Shiite-majority south, but medics and protesters in the capital have reported trauma wounds from tear gas canisters.

Yesterday, security forces were positioned on the edges of Tahrir, while elite Counter-Terrorism Service troops and armored vehicles were seen in surrounding districts. The CTS said it had deployed its units to "protect vital infrastructure," and its forces were not seen in Tahrir. — AFP

WhatsApp an essential but controversial tool

NICOSIA: From organizing mass protests in Baghdad and Beirut to coordinating rescue missions amid grinding conflict in Syria, WhatsApp has become an indispensable connector for millions across the Arab world. In Lebanon, where telecommunications are highly regulated and expensive, citizens have increasingly relied on WhatsApp for free calls. When the government announced a tax on these calls on Oct 17, it sparked protests that grew to an unprecedented scale.

After more than a week of demonstrations, protesters have rejected the term "WhatsApp revolution", saying the phrase diminishes what is a demand for drastic political change. But they acknowledge the technology is instrumental in mobilizing rallies that have attracted hundreds of thousands from a population of about six million.

Yasmine Rifai, 24, a protest organizer from Tripoli in northern Lebanon who works at a local NGO, said WhatsApp was operating as a virtual "backstage for the revolution". "We are connected to all of these WhatsApp

groups - Lebanon is a small country, everyone knows someone else from another city. We are reaching out across religions and locations," she told AFP.

Over the border in Syria, WhatsApp can be the difference between life and death. Mustafa Al-Hajj Younes, who heads a group of first responders in Idlib province, said civilians use group chats to appeal for help from rescue teams. "We coordinate on these groups whenever there is a need for our services," he said. WhatsApp is especially useful because of weak telecommunications infrastructure in areas under opposition control. "People can only contact us through WhatsApp or cell phones," he said.

Across the region, digital authoritarianism is increasing, with some governments regularly blocking popular social media applications including WhatsApp, especially its free calls feature. Users in Gulf countries such as the United Arab Emirates cannot make Internet calls without a proxy server. Messages deemed offensive in court have even landed some users in jail in the UAE.

It is a similar story in Morocco, where the government banned free voice over internet protocol (VoIP) calls in 2016. A 26-year-old Moroccan journalist who relies on the app to liaise with officials and sources told AFP it was a "national drama" when the decision came into effect, provoking a swift public backlash.

In the wake of small-scale protests in Egypt, police have randomly stopped and frisked people to examine social

media content on their phones. Police arrested many on the spot after inspecting their mobiles, AFP witnessed in September. That month, the attorney-general's office said prosecutors had orders to "inspect the social media accounts and pages of those detained".

In Iraq, where nearly 200 people have died in protests during October, another battle is being waged online. When anti-corruption demonstrations broke out in many cities early this month, authorities cut Internet services in an attempt to quell unrest - a tactic they have used in the past. "We consider WhatsApp to be the most dangerous application at this stage," a well-placed security source who preferred to remain anonymous told AFP. "Cutting the connection to WhatsApp was meant to prevent these gatherings from happening", he bluntly admitted.

Yasser Al-Joubouri, an Iraqi activist who participated in the protests in Baghdad, said the app was crucial for forming activist groups to disseminate details about protests. "We created (WhatsApp) groups specifically to share information quickly and distribute it on social networks like Facebook and Twitter," he said.

This sharing of information provokes an "existential fear" for governments that were caught off-guard by the Arab Spring uprisings, said Adel Iskandar, a media studies professor at Simon Fraser University in Canada. But governments also see that such apps could be beneficial, he added. "The state sees these platforms not merely as a threat but rather

as an opportunity to supplant critical messages with supportive ones," Iskandar told AFP.

With over 1.5 billion users worldwide, WhatsApp remains the most popular social media program in terms of usage in the youthful, tech-savvy region, according to a recent survey by Northwestern University in Qatar. Aside from sharing harrowing content and connecting protesters from turbulent hotspots via in-built encrypted messages, the app is also used for everyday conversations, like elsewhere in the world.

Jordanian officials, as well as other policymakers across the region, regularly communicate with journalists in groups broadcasting statements; they even give sensitive interviews on the freely available instant messaging service. Jamila Sharaf, a mother-of-two from east Jerusalem, keeps up with activities for her children with the school's administration informing her and other parents in a group. "The application makes things easier and helps to spread information very quickly," she said.

In Iran, officials banned the more secure app Telegram, saying it was used to fuel unrest during a wave of protests in Jan 2018. This has driven many young people to WhatsApp. "The ban on Telegram has made me use WhatsApp more," said Ramin, a 26-year-old from Tehran. She described the idea of taxing social media to plug budget shortfalls as "ridiculous". "I would be prepared to help my government in that situation, but not by paying for something which is meant to be free." — AFP

Trump confirms death of IS chief...

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vanquished. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Twitter that it was "a turning point in our joint fight against terrorism". He said Turkey would "continue to support anti-terror efforts - as it has done in the past". "I am confident that a decisive struggle against terrorism, in line with the spirit of alliance, will bring peace to all of humanity," he added in a second tweet.

The Turkish defense ministry said there was "information exchange and coordination between the military authorities of both countries" before the US operation, but gave no further details. A senior Turkish official also told AFP that there had been "close coordination" and Turkey's military had "advance knowledge" of the raid.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson called the raid "an important moment in our fight against terror" but cautioned that the fight was "not yet over". But Russia raised doubts about the death claim. "The defense ministry does not have reliable information... concerning the umpteenth 'death' of Baghdadi," spokesman Igor Konashenkov said in a statement.

Baghdadi's death has been reported several times over the years. Trump said there was no doubt, however. While "there wasn't much left" of Baghdadi, field testing of his DNA confirmed his identity, the president said. And Defense Secretary Mark Esper told CNN the raiding team had both visual and DNA confirmation Baghdadi was dead.

In Washington, Democrats commended the intelligence community and military professionals involved but cautioned that the IS threat was not over, particularly after Trump's abrupt decision to pull most US troops out of Syria. House speaker Nancy Pelosi said that "the House must be briefed on this raid", adding that "the Russians, but not top congressional leadership, were notified" in advance.

A war monitor, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, had reported that US helicopters dropped forces in an area of Syria's Idlib province where "groups linked to the Islamic State group" were present. The rights group, based in Britain but with a network of sources in Syria, said the helicopters target-

ed a home and a car outside the village of Barisha in Idlib province.

The operation killed nine people including an IS senior leader called Abu Yamaan as well as a child and two women, it said. An AFP correspondent in Barisha described the targeted house as having been flattened, with nothing but light gray rubble remaining. A resident in the area who gave his name as Abdel Hameed said he rushed to the site after hearing helicopters and gunfire in the night. "The home had collapsed and next to it there was a destroyed tent and vehicle. There were two people killed inside" the car, he said.

From the outskirts of Barisha, an inhabitant of a camp for the displaced also heard what he described as helicopters and air strikes. They "were flying very low, causing great panic among the people," Ahmed Hassawi said by phone. Though other jihadists operate in the area, it is nominally under the control of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, an Al-Qaeda affiliate that runs most of the Idlib enclave. The AFP correspondent said the Hayat group had cordoned off the area. Bulldozers could be seen yesterday clearing out the rubble.

Barisha is in a mountainous area less than five kilometers from Turkey and near a main border crossing. Turkey, which has been waging an offensive against the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in north-east Syria, "knew we were going in", Trump said. A senior Turkish official told AFP that "to the best of my knowledge, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi arrived at this location 48 hours prior to the raid."

The commander-in-chief of the SDF, Mazloum Abdi, said the operation came after "joint intelligence work" with American forces. Two US soldiers received minor injuries in the raid, Esper said. The only other US casualty was a military dog sent into the tunnel with the trapped Islamic State leader.

Baghdadi - an Iraqi native believed to be around 48 years old - was rarely seen. After 2014 he disappeared from sight, only surfacing in a video in April with an assault rifle at his side, as he encouraged followers to "take revenge" after the group's territorial defeat. His reappearance was seen as a reassertion of his leadership of a group that - despite its March defeat - has spread from the Middle East to Asia and Africa and claimed several deadly attacks in Europe. The US State Department had posted a \$25 million reward for information on his whereabouts. In September, the group released an audio message said to be from Baghdadi. — Agencies

Ghanem: Bedoon bill ready; Adasani files...

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The speaker reiterated yesterday that the Assembly will complete its term and parliamentary elections will be held

Protesters form human chain...

Continued from Page 1

the 31-year-old history professor told AFP. On the Beirut seafloor, men, women and children held hands, some carrying Lebanese flags and many singing the national anthem, an AFP photographer said.

In the northern city of Tripoli, where more than half the population lives under the poverty line, some had painted the Lebanese national symbol of a cedar tree on their faces, an AFP reporter said. "We're expressing our demand for a dignified life and our dream as youth for a decent future," 30-year-old participant Tariq Fadli told AFP. In the southern city of Tyre, protesters standing in a line held the edges of a long Lebanese flag, local television showed. A young boy played with it, making it billow up and down.

The protests have been remarkable for their territorial reach and the absence of political or sectarian banners, in a country often defined by its divisions. The leaderless protest movement, driven mostly by a young generation of men and women born after the 1975-1990 civil war, has even been described by some as the birth of a Lebanese civic identity. The army has sought to re-open main roads across the country, where schools and banks have been closed for more than a week.

In one of the most serious incidents, the army opened

Kuwait receives 200,000 stolen...

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He pointed out that Iraq's foreign ministry has made great efforts to restore and collect the archives looted by the former regime. Yousefi expressed his happiness

next year, downplaying attempts to force the Assembly's dissolution.

In another development, MP Khalil Al-Saleh said yesterday that the Assembly's legal and legislative committee yesterday approved five proposals to resolve the problem of consumer loans. Some of the proposals are calling for the state to purchase the loans from citizens and to reschedule their payment. Saleh said that the proposals will now go to the financial and economic affairs committee, which will decide on the financial aspects of the proposals.

fire on Friday to confront a group of protesters blocking a road in Tripoli, wounding at least six people. But the unprecedented protest movement has been relatively incident-free, despite tensions with the armed forces and attempts by party loyalists to stage counter-demonstrations. Protesters have been demanding the removal of the entire ruling class, which has remained largely unchanged in three decades. Many of the political heavyweights are former warlords seen as representing little beyond their own sectarian or geographical community.

The protesters see them as corrupt and incompetent and have so far dismissed measures proposed by the political leadership to quell the protests. "We've had the same people in charge for 30 years," said Elie, a 40-year-old demonstrator walking in central Beirut yesterday morning with a Lebanese flag. Prime Minister Saad Hariri on Monday announced a package of economic reforms which aims to revive an economy that has been on the brink of collapse for months.

His coalition partners have supported the move and warned that a political vacuum in times of economic peril risked chaos. But the protesters have accused the political elite of desperately attempting to save their jobs and have stuck to their demands for deep, systemic change. In a now well-established routine, entire families of volunteers showed up early on the main protest sites Sunday to clean up after another night of protests and parties. After dusk, the central Martyrs' Square in Beirut and other protest hubs in Lebanon - including the relatively conservative city of Tripoli - turn into a vast, open ground where protesters dance, sing or organize political meetings. — AFP

at the positive results achieved so far, stressing Iraq's resolve to continue the approach of developing brotherly relations.

Representative of the United Nations Secretary General Resident Coordinator Dr Tarek Al-Sheikh expressed in a similar statement his aspiration to continue efforts to enhance constructive cooperation between the two countries. The Kuwaiti-Iraqi moves are in line with the principle of establishing peace and brotherhood among the countries of the world, Sheikh said. — KUNA

Sports

Verstappen stripped of Mexico pole, hands Hamilton sixth title boost

Bottas buries his Mercedes into a trackside barrier

MEXICO CITY: Max Verstappen was given a three-place grid penalty and stripped of pole position at the Mexican Grand Prix late Saturday after race stewards ruled he failed to slow for a yellow flag following a dramatic crash which saw Valtteri Bottas bury his Mercedes into a trackside barrier.

The Red Bull driver's penalty means that Charles Leclerc of Ferrari was promoted to pole position ahead of team-mate Sebastian Vettel with world champion-elect Lewis Hamilton moved up to third from fourth.

The Dutchman, who will start on the second row alongside Hamilton, was also handed two penalty points on his licence after dismissing concerns for the sport's regulations during a news conference.

Verstappen, the winner in Mexico in 2017 and 2018, was on provisional pole when Bottas crashed heavily in his Mercedes at the final corner of his last run in Q3. He had no need to improve his lap time, as his rivals had failed to beat his first attempt, but sped on.

He told reporters that he saw Bottas's crashed car at the final corner and did not back off, thus setting a new record fastest lap as he improved. Verstappen, the author of his

own downfall, said: "I think we know what we are doing otherwise we wouldn't be driving an F1 car. It's qualifying and you go for it. If they want to delete the lap, then delete the lap." The stewards said Verstappen had "admitted that he was aware that car 77 (Bottas) crashed and did see the car on the left hand side of the track, but was not aware of the waved yellow flag." "He admitted not reducing his speed in the yellow sector," the stewards added.

"Taking into account all the available evidence and the statement from the driver the stewards impose a drop of three grid positions and two penalty points." Red Bull boss Christian Horner said it was "a great shame" that the flamboyant Verstappen had been penalised. "Max put in a phenomenal performance throughout qualifying. He was quickest in Q1, second quickest in Q2 and quickest in Q3 to achieve his second pole position of the season," said Horner.

"It is a great shame that Max has lost pole position." Verstappen's demotion and Bottas's crash boosted Hamilton's hopes of clinching his sixth drivers' world title in Sunday's race by outscoring his Mercedes team-mate by 14 points. "I knew that I had to risk it in the last

run to gain positions, so I tried to squeeze everything out of the car," said Bottas. "The lap was good until the last corner where I went a bit wide on the exit on the dusty part of the track and that's where I lost it and hit the wall. I'm all okay, but I've unfortunately given the boys in the garage some extra work to do tonight. Hopefully we can avoid taking any penalties for tomorrow. It's annoying because looking at the times, I think I had a chance at qualifying third."

Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff said he feared for the implications of the crash in yesterday's shake-up. "The car took a bit of a beating," said Wolff. "We're assessing the damage at the moment and hope that we don't have to change any parts that would result in a grid penalty."

Hamilton had earlier admitted he thought third place on the grid was possible before Bottas's accident. "The last sector went to pot (when it was controlled by double yellow flags) so that was it," said the five-time champion. "Generally, I was quite happy with today. I knew it would be difficult, but I have a fighting position and I am going to give it everything." — AFP



MEXICO CITY: (L to R) Ferrari driver Sebastian Vettel, of Germany, Red Bull driver Max Verstappen, of the Netherlands, and Ferrari driver Charles Leclerc, of Monaco, attend a press conference after the F1 Mexico Grand Prix qualifying session at the Hermanos Rodriguez circuit in Mexico City. — AFP



Kuwait strikes first bowling silver medal as Malaysia excels

By Abdellatif Sharara

KUWAIT: Kuwait Bowling Team players Khalid Al-Dubyyan, Jassim Al-Saqer and Mostafa Al-Mousawi gave Kuwait its first medal in the 25th Asian Tenpin Bowling Championship, as they scored 4280 that gave them second place behind Malaysia's team Rafiq Ismail, Syafiq Ridhwan

and Ahmad Muaz who won gold with the score of 4290, a 10 point difference only ahead of Kuwait.

The other Malaysian trio of Haifz Zainuddin, Timmy Tan and Tun Hakim took third place with the score of 4246.

The Malaysian players continued their outstanding performance as the women's trio of Esther Cheah, Sin Li Jane and Shalin Zulkifli won gold after scoring 4354 points, while Korea's team of Kang Suin, Lee Yeonji and Back Seungja scored 4311 to take to Korea's second team of Lee Nayoung, Kim Moonjeong and Jung Dawun who scored 4297. President of International and Asian Bowling Federations, Chairman of Kuwait Bowling Club Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad lauded the outstanding Kuwait achievement and dedicated it to the political leadership which spares no efforts in support of Kuwait sport by all means.

Al-Mohammad said this championship gave a good opportunity for Kuwaiti players to gain experience that

will develop their skills, and hoped for more medals in the coming days.

Sheikh Talal gave all Kuwait players a financial reward for their efforts and to boost their moral forward.

Player Khalid Al-Dubyyan said the gold medal was not far from being grabbed but bad luck did not allow that at the last moment.

He said this win forms a good motive for him and fellow athletes to make another achievement, aiming at gold.

Meanwhile, Jassim Al-Saqer said winning the silver medal in this major championship is the least that players can give to Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad and promised to exert utmost effort to make up for what they missed earlier. On his part player Mustafa Al-Musawi said "we gave all efforts to get the gold medal, but bad luck during the last round kept us from making that achievement". He said he was satisfied with the performance he and his fellow players gave.



Tanak seals first World Rally Championship title in Catalonia

PARIS: Ott Tanak sealed his first World Rally title when he finished second to Thierry Neuville in the rally of Catalonia yesterday. With one race to come in Australia, from 14 to 17 November, and a maximum of 30 points to be won, Tanak can no longer be caught in the driver standings.

Tanak was ecstatic about breaking 15 years of French domination. "Feels good," said the Estonian after winning the final power stage. "It's difficult to say the pressure I felt this weekend - it was next level." Tanak's second place yesterday and his victory in the final power stage put him 36 points ahead of Belgian Thierry Neuville. "To manage all this and get through it has been the target of my life," Tanak said. "When you are on the verge of this you cannot imagine it."

"I never wanted to take risks but my mother said yesterday evening that if I want something I can make it happen. I just had to make it happen." Tanak is the first non-Frenchman to win the title since Norwegian Petter Solberg in 2003. Sebastian Loeb won it nine years straight with Sebastien Ogier winning the last six.

The battle for second and third in the championship, will continue in Australia. Neuville, who drives a Hyundai, jumped to second in the standings, ahead of six-time defending champion Sebastien Ogier who is in his first season back at Citroen.

"We did what we could this weekend," Neuville said. Neuville's victory and the third place of Spanish team-mate Dani Sordo increased Hyundai's lead over Toyota in the manufacturers' ranking from eight to 18 points. At 45, former champion Loeb finished fourth in a Hyundai in his fifth drive of the season. — AFP



Mijbil Al Ayoub honors the winners.

Ooredoo Kuwait concludes Flying Start Triathlon

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait concluded the Flying Start Triathlon sport activities last Saturday with great success, and is a reflection of Ooredoo's strategy enabling youth and supporting them in reaching their potential. The triathlon is considered to be one of the biggest races in the Middle East, and the goal today is to create a new sports culture built on ethics, discipline, and sportsmanship. During the final ceremony, the winning participants were inaugurated and awarded with valuable prizes based on their ranks in the Triathlon.

Ooredoo Corporate Communication Senior Director Mijbil Al Ayoub was also awarded during the ceremony, for Ooredoo's strategic partnership with the Flying Start Triathlon for the 3rd consecutive year, in addition to the commitment and full support given for the youth in sports and many other activities that go in tandem with the company's CSR values.

The Flying Start Triathlon activities were kick started with the Pasta Party in the Green Island, in which many famous restaurants participated in offering their delicious meals to help the athletes with their carb loading in order to help them fuel up and build more energy before the big race. The first sports activity held was the kids Duathlon which included a fun run and safe cycling race. The second and main sporting event was the Flying Start Triathlon targeting participants' ages 18 years and above, that gave hundreds of professional athletes and amateurs the chance

to join a professional running, cycling and swimming race located in the Green Island.

Commenting on this, Al Ayoub noted that Ooredoo and the Flying Start Triathlon both believe in enabling youth and supporting them in reaching their potential, which is one of the biggest pillars of the company's CSR strategy. Whereby this strategic partnership goes in tandem with our belief in supporting youth initiatives and athletes in Kuwait. He added: "We are especially proud of our sponsored Kuwaiti athlete Najlaa Al Jeraiwi that took first place in the female triathlete category in this year's Flying Start Triathlon. Al Jeraiwi was the first Arab female triathlete

representative in the 17th Asian Games, South Korea and the first GCC representative in UCI Road World Championships 2016. She is currently the national champion of Kuwait in both triathlon and cycling. She has come in the top 3 in multiple regional triathlons. Supporting youth and empowering women is among Ooredoo's top priorities through its CSR strategy. Ooredoo is continuously working with the different entities in both private and public sectors to enrich youth experience in a variety of fields. The company's commitment to supporting youth is deep-rooted within the core values in Ooredoo Kuwait.



Najlaa Al Jeraiwi takes first place in the female triathlete category in this year's Flying Start Triathlon.

Marquez wins Australian MotoGP thriller, Vinales crashes

PHILLIP ISLAND: World champion Marc Marquez secured his 11th victory of the season at the Australian MotoGP after disaster struck fellow Spaniard Maverick Vinales, who crashed on the last lap. The Monster Energy Yamaha rider had dominated all weekend at Phillip Island and was leading for much of the race until Repsol Honda's Marquez darted past in the dying stages.

In desperate bid to retake the lead, Vinales pushed too hard and skidded out to hand his gifted rival, who clinched his sixth MotoGP world title in Thailand this month, a fifth win in a row. Britain's Cal Crutchlow, who suffered career-threatening injuries at Phillip Island last year, came second on his LCR-Honda with Australian Jack Miller third on a Ducati. Italian veteran Valentino Rossi, racing in an amazing 400th Grand Prix, was eighth. "It was an incredible, incredible victory because today we were not the fastest on the racetrack," said Marquez, who became Honda's most successful ever premier class rider with his 55th win surpassing Australian great Mick Doohan.

"Maverick was fastest but I was waiting for him... and I did a strong move to pass, it was the only chance for me. The whole weekend has been crazy," he added, after qualifying was called off on Saturday due to strong winds and instead run yesterday morning.

Asked about becoming Honda's most successful ever rider, he said: "They are the biggest manufacturer in the world, so I'm happy and just enjoying the dream."

It was a crushing loss for Vinales, who won in Australia last year and started from pole, having reigned supreme through practice and qualifying. He had a terrible start, slipping to sixth as Rossi powered to the lead before disaster for exciting French rookie Fabio Quartararo in an incident-packed first lap.

Quartararo, who was second to Marquez in Japan last weekend, and Danilo Petrucci collided, crashing out at turn two. It was a sobering end for the 20-year-old, who was second on the grid after having to go through preliminary qualifying (Q1) for the first time following a nasty spill in Friday practice. By lap four Crutchlow had moved into the lead, but Vinales and Marquez were starting to apply pressure and by lap 10 Vinales was in front with his rival stalking him. They began to put the hammer down and pull clear of the field as it turned into a two-horse race, leaving the rest in a dog fight for third. — AFP



Sports

Warner's birthday T20 ton as Australia slam Sri Lanka

Australia's biggest-ever win in the format and S Lanka's heaviest T20 defeat

ADELAIDE: David Warner emphatically bounced back to form with a first-ever Twenty20 century as Australia crushed Sri Lanka by 134 runs in their opening match of the three-game series in Adelaide yesterday.

Birthday boy Warner clubbed an unbeaten 100 as he powered Australia to a massive 233 for two, aided by century stands with skipper Aaron Finch and Glenn Maxwell. Sri Lanka limped to 99 for nine from their 20 overs in a meek response, with leg-spinner Adam Zampa capturing three for 14.

It was Australia's biggest-ever win in the format and Sri Lanka's heaviest T20 defeat. Coming off a dismal Ashes campaign in England and low scores in the new domestic season, Warner plundered his ton off 56 balls with four sixes and 10 fours.

The left-handed opener scored just 95 runs in 10 innings for Australia's Ashes retention, but once he got set yesterday he pounded the Sri Lankan bowlers with beligerence, and reached his hundred off the last ball of the innings. The ton on his 33rd birthday was complemented by blistering half-centuries from Finch and Maxwell, as the Australians ripped into the Sri Lankan bowlers — with Kasun Rajitha's 0-75 off four overs proving the most expensive figures in a T20 international.

"It means a lot to contribute to the team and put us in great position," man-of-the-match Warner said. "It was a good milestone, but we got a great total on the board and it's always tough to chase a big one down in Australia."

"It's great to come out and play on nice true wickets." Sri Lanka were always struggling in reply, with Pat Cummins on a hat-trick after dismissing Danushka Gunathilaka (11) and Bhanuka Rajapaksa (2) with succes-

sive deliveries in his opening over. He finished with 2 for 27. Dasun Shanaka top scored with 17 and wicketkeeper Kusal Perera hit 16 before he was bowled by Mitchell Starc. Skipper Lasith Malinga was still there at the end with an unbeaten 13. "The bowlers didn't bowl in the right line and length. This is a good learning phase for our young bowlers," Malinga said.

"We know we are playing against a tough team, but this is an opportunity for the inexperienced players to get used to the conditions before the World Cup. "We want to compete well in the next matches. They (batsmen) are playing on drop-in pitches for the first time and didn't know how the pitch will behave. This is not an excuse. We have to adjust in the next few games."

Finch bludgeoned three sixes and eight fours in Australia's innings before holing out to Kusal Mendis at deep mid-wicket off left-arm spinner Lakshan Sandakan for 64 off 36 balls.

The Aussie skipper shared in a lively opening stand of 122 with Warner and looked in ominous scoring form before he top-edged the leg-spinner in the 11th over. Maxwell showcased a wide range of improvised shot-making for his 62 off just 28 balls, studded with three sixes and seven fours.

He partnered Warner in a 107-run stand and was dismissed, caught behind off Shanaka in the final over of the innings. It was Australia's highest T20 total at home since their 221 against England in Sydney in 2007.

Australia face the Sri Lankans in Brisbane and Melbourne before Pakistan arrive for T20s in Sydney, Canberra and Perth as they prepare to host the T20 World Cup next October. — AFP



ADELAIDE: Australian batsman David Warner (R) hits the ball as Sri Lankan wicket keeper Niroshan Dickwella (L) looks on during the first international T20 cricket match between Australia and Sri Lanka at the Adelaide Oval yesterday. — AFP

Froome survives first race since crash before heading to watch rugby

SAITAMA: Four-time Tour de France winner Chris Froome successfully completed his first competitive ride since his horror crash in June yesterday before hot-tailing his way across Tokyo to watch the Rugby World Cup semi-final.

The 34-year-old took part in a team time trial run round a single lap at the Saitama Criterium meet with 2019 Tour de France winner Egan Bernal and Ineos teammate Jonathan Castroviejo playing bodyguard.

The time trial was on the undercard for main event, the Saitama Criterium, and Japanese ace Yukiya Arashiro soaked up local adulation after winning. In the time trial, Froome led the trio out to enthusiastic applause from a Saitama public that the Briton had worked hard to win over this week with visits to schools and social events.

The PR exercise ended with Ineos rolling home second

last as local cycling team Saitama Project won the time trial in 4min 20sec. It was clear Froome's right-leg was a long way off fitness, with surgery to remove a plate on his hip set for December. The Briton is still in recovery after sustaining dreadful injuries in June when he hit a brick wall at high speed, fracturing ribs, a femur, and an elbow after taking his hands off the handlebars to blow his nose.

Froome left quickly at the end of the race without talking to the media in order to get to Yokohama around 60 kilometres away in time for the kick-off of the Rugby World Cup semi-final between Wales and South Africa.

The Kenyan-born Froome went to school and university in South Africa while his wife is a South African of Welsh origin, although he was coy about who he was supporting. After that game kicked off, Froome tweeted two photographs, under the caption "We made it."

One showed him grinning with South African rider Daryl Impey and the other showed the stadium with the teams on the pitch. Froome said the "loser buys the beer". After South Africa won the match 19-16, to set up a meeting with England in the final next Saturday, Froome tweeted "Beers on me" with a photo of the two cyclists raising beers. In the criterium, Arashiro won a gala-style race run over 17 3.5km fan-packed laps of tight city streets, Bernal

was second and world No.1 Primoz Roglic third, a metre or so adrift. "I'm the first Japanese rider to win so maybe they'll talk about me in 20-years. So happy. Really special," said the seven-time Tour de France competitor.

Bernal said he was looking forward to visiting more of Japan with his entourage. "We've seen Tokyo and we'll be moving on to Kyoto for three days now," Bernal told AFP. The 22-year-old Colombian said he had no space in his already bulging luggage for the large bags of local rice being given out as part of the prizes.

Also present at the race was Tour de France king of the mountains Romain Bardet, and his polka-dot jersey raised a cheer over the early laps as he made a point of charging ahead on the one notable incline.

"We had fun," said Bardet. "We fly home tonight but I hope to be back for the Olympics in July." "I rode the final part of the Olympic route, it's a good technical descent and we're looking forwards to it. There will be five of us on the French team." Winner of the green sprint jersey here, Italian puncher Matteo Trentin is still smarting after settling for silver at the recent world championships in Yorkshire. "I'm just about getting over the disappointment," he told AFP. "The rain there was ridiculous, I'm only just warming up," he said with a straight face. — AFP

Tiger on brink of PGA Tour win record as play suspended

INZAI: Tiger Woods led Hideki Matsuyama by three strokes with seven holes to play to stand on the verge of golfing history when the final round of the weather-delayed Zozo Championship in Japan was suspended due to bad light yesterday.

Victory for Woods today would see the 15-time major champion add another illustrious chapter to his astonishing career by equalling US legend Sam Snead's all-time mark of 82 PGA Tour wins. Woods, who is 17-under par, shook hands for the night with playing partners Gary Woodland and Keegan Bradley in the descending darkness after paring the 11th hole in his fourth round.

But the current US Masters champion is taking nothing for granted and said he will need to hit the ground running today morning. "Starting off on the 12th hole is not easy. It's one of the hardest par fours on the whole golf course, it's 490 yards," Woods told reporters.

"It's going to be cool tomorrow morning, so the hole's going to play really long, so it's important that I get off to a good start. "It's a hard pin tomorrow over in the top right. I've got to do my job starting out."

Japan's number one Matsuyama, in the group immediately ahead, had clung doggedly to the coat-tails of Woods throughout yesterday's third and fourth rounds, delayed because of Friday's washout at Accordia Golf Narashino Country Club.

After Woods had finished he still had time to induce one last mighty roar from the packed golf-crazy galleries hanging off every Matsuyama drive, chip and putt at the US PGA Tour's inaugural tournament in Japan.

The world number 27's snaking 25-foot birdie putt on the 12th green somehow found its way to the cup in the gloom and Matsuyama moved to 14-under par, three behind Woods with six to play when the round resumes at 7.30 am today (2230 GMT Sunday). "I am only thinking how to catch up and win the tournament," said Matsuyama. "Let's see what is going to happen in the last six holes tomorrow." Woods, who has led since his first-round six-under 64 on Thursday, earlier on Sunday shot a controlled third-round 66 to extend a two-shot lead over Woodland (68) to three over Matsuyama, who carded a 65.

Rory McIlroy was the biggest mover as he catapulted up the leaderboard with a third-round 63, equalling the low round of the week, to follow his 65 on Saturday. The FedEx Cup champion lies fifth on 11-under par with two holes to complete.

"I played great this morning," said McIlroy. "I've got a 12-footer for birdie on 17 and then I'll try to make birdie or eagle at the last and finish as high up as possible."

Tied for third on 12-under par are in-form US Open champion Woodland, third last week at the CJ Cup, and PGA Tour 2019 Rookie of the Year Im Sung-jae who had a third-round 67. The atmosphere was electric Sunday as the sellout crowds, who were shut out Saturday for safety reasons after almost 10 inches of rain fell on the course during Friday's storms, were gleefully allowed back in.

"I'm happy for the crowds, I'm happy for the people of Japan that they got to see us play a lot today," said Northern Ireland's McIlroy. "Obviously Tiger leading, Hideki chasing him down, you couldn't have written it any better for the first PGA Tour event in Japan," added the world number two. "It's been a great tournament so far and I'm sure it will be an awesome finish tomorrow." — AFP



ZHUHAI: Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus holds the trophy after winning her women's singles final match against Kiki Bertens of the Netherlands in the Zuhai Elite Trophy tennis tournament in Zuhai, in south China's Guangdong province yesterday. — AFP

Sabalenka beats Bertens to win third title

ZHUHAI: Aryna Sabalenka won her third singles title of the year — all in China — with a straight-sets victory over top seed Kiki Bertens in the Elite Trophy Zuhai final yesterday. The 21-year-old from Belarus eased to a 6-4, 6-2 victory over the Dutchwoman in southern China to end her singles season on a high.

Ranked 14th in the world, the hard-hitting Sabalenka appears to enjoy playing in China. Her other two titles

Stevenson seizes title in grudge match against his sweetheart's brother

LOS ANGELES: Shakur Stevenson won his first title on Saturday, easily beating Joet Gonzalez by a unanimous decision in a 125 pound grudge match between two undefeated fighters. The 22-year-old Stevenson claimed the vacant World Boxing Organization title and became the first boxer from the 2016 US Rio Olympic team to win a major title.

Stevenson (13-0, 7 KO) not only won on all three of the judges' scorecards, but each gave him all but one round in the 12-round featherweight fight in Reno, Nevada. The bad blood between the fighters continued afterwards with Gonzalez rejecting Stevenson's attempt in the ring to make peace with his family. Joet (23-1) is

of 2019 came at Wuhan in September — when she defeated Bertens in the last 16 — and in Shenzhen at the start of the year.

Sabalenka will compete in the coming week in doubles with the Belgian Elise Mertens at the WTA Finals in nearby Shenzhen. Zuhai was Sabalenka's fifth career WTA singles crown and the Belarusian said she was running out of space at home for her growing collection of silverware.

"I think we actually need to create a new room for the trophies," said Sabalenka. "But right now like it's no special room — my mum and my grandmother just put it wherever space they have. "But maybe (we will create) a special room and hopefully I'll win a lot of titles to put in there." Bertens, 10th in the world, is also rushing off to Shenzhen because she will be a reserve there. — AFP

the brother of Stevenson's girlfriend Jajaira, and is trained by his father. Jajaira is estranged from her family. "I have nothing but respect for Joet. It was personal for him but business for me," Stevenson said.

"I told him he is a hell of a fighter, but he didn't want to talk to me." The fighters were mostly kept apart after the final bell. The Gonzalez family has had little contact with Jajaira since she started dating her longtime boyfriend Stevenson. Joet said he is not ready to forget and forgive. "Obviously it was personal. He said a lot of things," said Joet. "It was between me and him, the disrespect he was putting out. "I don't know how he can say he has no hard feelings when the whole time he was disrespecting our family."

"It doesn't go away just like that." Stevenson and Gonzalez were never supposed to fight but Stevenson became the No. 1 contender and Gonzalez No. 2 for the vacant title. Stevenson, who is the second youngest current title holder behind 20-year-old WBC lightweight champ Devin Haney, dominated in almost every aspect, using a stingy defence to slip punches and frustrate Gonzalez. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

Full scoreboard of the first Twenty20 international between Australia and Sri Lanka in Adelaide yesterday:

Australia	
A. Finch c Mendis b Sandakan	64
D. Warner not out	100
G. Maxwell c Perera b Shanaka	62
A. Turner not out	1
Extras (nb1, w5)	6
Total (2 wickets, 20 overs)	233
Fall of wickets: 1-122 (Finch), 2-229 (Maxwell)	
Did not bat: S. Smith, A. Carey, A. Agar, P. Cummins, M. Starc, K. Richardson, A. Zampa	
Bowling: Malinga 4-0-37-0 (2w), Rajitha 4-0-75-0 (1w), Pradeep 4-0-28-0, Sandakan 4-0-41-1 (1w), Hasaranga 3-0-42-0, Shanaka 1-0-10-1 (1w)	

Sri Lanka	
D. Gunathilaka c Warner b Cummins	11
K. Mendis c Turner b Starc	0
B. Rajapaksa b Cummins	2
K. Perera b Starc	16
O. Fernando b Agar	13
D. Shanaka c Richardson b Zampa	17
W. Hasaranga run out (Maxwell)	5
L. Sandakan c Agar b Zampa	6
L. Malinga not out	13
K. Rajitha st Carey b Zampa	0
N. Pradeep not out	8
Extras (lb6, nb1, w1)	8
Total (9 wickets, 20 overs)	99
Fall of wickets: 1-1 (Mendis), 2-13 (Gunathilaka), 3-13 (Rajapaksa), 4-46 (Fernando), 5-50 (Perera), 6-71 (Hasaranga), 7-71 (Shanaka), 8-82 (Sandakan), 9-83 (Rajitha)	
Bowling: Starc 4-0-18-2, Richardson 4-0-21-0 (1w, 1nb), Cummins 4-0-27-2, Zampa 4-0-14-3, Agar 4-0-13-1	
Result: Australia won by 134 runs.	

Osaka beats Kvitova in thrilling WTA finals opener

SHENZHEN: In-form Naomi Osaka outlasted Petra Kvitova in a three-set marathon for a drought-breaking victory at the WTA Finals yesterday.

Opening the \$14 million round-robin tournament, the first in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen, the world No.3 regrouped from several lethargic stretches to win 7-6 (7/1), 4-6, 6-4 in two hours and 39 minutes.

It was the Japanese sensation's first victory at the WTA Finals after a winless campaign in her debut appearance last year and stretched her current winning streak to 11 matches having claimed titles in Osaka and Beijing.

"She started going hard at me from the beginning and I just had to adjust to it," Osaka said after the match.

In a rematch of this year's tense Australian Open final, world No.6 Kvitova came out with intent until she stuttered in the eighth game of the opening set with three double faults to squander the game.

Osaka held off two break points in the ninth game before dominating the tiebreak to draw first blood.

It seemed to shake the Czech's confidence but Kvitova, the oldest player in the draw, impressively clawed back in the second set and took advantage of an error-strewn Osaka who several times slammed her racket in frustration.

A refocused Osaka put the foot down in the deciding set but could not convert two match points in the eighth game before finally closing it out in the 10th to issue a statement to her rivals in Red Group.

The 22-year-old maintained her unbeaten record over Kvitova having won their only previous clash in a three-set classic in Melbourne.

The event's move to China, after a five-year run in Singapore, is highlighted by a record prize pool in tennis with the winner receiving up to \$4.725 million. — AFP

Sports

Dragic, Heat survive Bucks in overtime after wild rallies

Love's near triple-double leads Cavaliers over Pacers

MILWAUKEE: Reserve guard Goran Dragic had a team-high 25 points — including six in overtime — and eight assists as the Miami Heat rallied and then survived the host Milwaukee Bucks 131-126 on Saturday night. The Bucks sent the game to overtime on a put-back by Giannis Antetokounmpo just a split-second before the regulation buzzer. Antetokounmpo had rebounded an air ball by Khris Middleton to tie the score 121-121. Antetokounmpo, the NBA's reigning MVP, fouled out with 2:31 left in overtime, finishing with 29 points, 17 rebounds, nine assists, three steals and two blocks. But he also committed eight turnovers, missed all five of his 3-point attempts and fouled out for his second straight game. Earlier in the game, Milwaukee blew a 21-point third-quarter lead, as Miami seemingly took control. The Heat had a nine-point lead with 3:33 left in the fourth quarter. But Miami missed three straight free throws with 3.3 seconds left — one by Bam Adebayo and two by Justise Winslow, setting the stage for Antetokounmpo's dramatic put-back.

ROCKETS 126, PELICANS 123

Russell Westbrook surpassed Magic Johnson in career triple-doubles, and host Houston held on to beat short-handed New Orleans. Westbrook notched 28 points, 10 rebounds and 13 assists for his 139th triple-double, moving past Johnson for second place in NBA history. His two free throws with 6.1 seconds left built the lead to three. Brandon Ingram was exceptional for the Pelicans, who played without guard Jrue Holiday (knee). Ingram paired 35 points with 15 rebounds, both game-highs, and added five assists. He received support from Lonzo Ball (18 points, 10 assists) and JJ Redick (14 points).

CAVALIERS 110, PACERS 99

Kevin Love came one assist shy of a triple-double, Tristan Thompson scored 25 points, and host Cleveland held off a late rally to beat Indiana. Cleveland led almost wire-to-wire, building an advan-

tage that swelled to as many as 24 points. The front-court duo of Love and Thompson set the tone, with Love registering 21 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists, and Thompson posting a double-double with 13 rebounds. His team-high 25 points included his first career 3-pointer.

76ERS 117, PISTONS 111

Tobias Harris had 29 points and Al Horford tossed in 23 points, including a late flurry that lifted visiting Philadelphia over Detroit. Both sides were missing key players. Sixers All-Star center Joel Embiid sat out with a right ankle sprain. Pistons All-Star forward Blake Griffin (hamstring, knee) remained sidelined, and starting point guard Reggie Jackson (sore back) joined him in street clothes. Horford also contributed nine rebounds and five assists. Ben Simmons posted 13 points, 10 assists and seven steals, and Mike Scott added 17 points off the bench, including five 3-point makes. Derrick Rose carried the Pistons with 31 points off the bench.

SUNS 130, CLIPPERS 122

Devin Booker had 30 points and eight assists, and Frank Kaminsky had 18 points, eight rebounds and six assists off the bench as host Phoenix beat Los Angeles to break a 12-game losing streak in the series. Kelly Oubre Jr. had 20 points and made all nine of his free-throw attempts, and Dario Saric had 15 points and 10 rebounds for the Suns, who have split two games since center Deandre Ayton was suspended Thursday for 25 games for violating the NBA/NBPA anti-drug program. Kawhi Leonard had 27 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds, and Montrezl Harrell and Lou Williams combined for 51 points off the bench for the Clippers, who were attempting to become the first team in the league to three victories.

HAWKS 103, MAGIC 99

Trae Young had 39 points, seven rebounds and nine assists to lead Atlanta to a win against visiting

streak snapped (4-0-2 in that span). Blue Jackets goaltender Jonas Korpisalo stopped 39 shots.

PREDATORS 3, LIGHTNING 2 (OT)

Defenseman Ryan Ellis scored 3:15 into overtime as visiting Nashville continued its mastery of Tampa Bay. The Predators were unable to convert on their power play in the extra session, but Lightning defenseman Braydon Coburn's failure to clear the puck resulted in Ellis wiring a wrist shot from above the left circle that sailed past Curtis McElhinney. The goal was Ellis' second of the season and first career in overtime. Calle Jankrok and captain Roman Josi each scored a power-play goal, and Juuse Saros finished with 28 saves for Nashville, which has won three in a row overall and improved to 10-0-2 in its last 12 encounters with Tampa Bay.

JETS 2, FLAMES 1 (OT)

Bryan Little was the overtime hero as Winnipeg rallied from a third-period deficit to beat Calgary in the Heritage Classic outdoor game in Regina, Sask. Kyle Connor made a perfect pass for Little to convert on a two-on-one rush with 1:56 remaining in overtime, capping a game played amidst falling snow and before a sellout crowd of 33,518 at Mosaic Stadium, home of the Canadian Football League's Saskatchewan Roughriders. Jets goalie Connor Hellebuyck stopped 29 shots for the win in what became an entertaining goaltending battle despite the poor ice conditions. Four of Winnipeg's six victories this season have come after regulation.

PENGUINS 3, STARS 0

Goaltender Matt Murray stopped 25 shots, and Dominik



MILWAUKEE: Ersan Ilyasova #7 of the Milwaukee Bucks dribbles the ball while being guarded by Bam Adebayo #13 of the Miami Heat in the second quarter at the Fiserv Forum in Milwaukee. — AFP

Orlando. Kevin Huertler and Jabari Parker scored 10 points each off the bench, and John Collins finished with nine points and 12 rebounds for Atlanta. Evan Fournier scored 23 points, Nikola Vucevic had 16 points and 10 rebounds, D.J. Augustin scored 14 and Markelle Fultz had 12 off the bench for the Magic.

CELTICS 118, KNICKS 95

Marcus Smart scored 12 points off the bench, including a 3-pointer during an 8-0 Boston run to start the fourth quarter, and the Celtics pulled away

to defeat host New York. Kemba Walker had a game-high 32 points, a majority of them on seven made 3-pointers, as the Celtics overcame a horrible start to sweep a back-to-back sequence that began with a home win over Toronto on Friday. RJ Barrett went for 26 points for the Knicks, who lost their home opener after tipping off the season with a pair of defeats on the road. Barrett and Julius Randle combined for 12 points when the Knicks, coming off a 113-109 loss at Brooklyn on Friday night, blitzed the Celtics early with a 16-4 run to open the game. — Reuters

Bruins shut out Blues in rematch

BOSTON: Tuukka Rask stopped all 26 shots he faced, David Pastrnak extended his goal streak to five games and the Boston Bruins beat the visiting St. Louis Blues 3-0 Saturday night in a rematch of last season's Stanley Cup Final. Rask picked up his second shutout of the season as the Bruins got revenge in the same building where they lost a decisive Game 7 to the Blues in June. Pastrnak's goal was his ninth during his streak, and Anders Bjork and Brandon Carlo (empty-netter) also scored in Boston's second straight victory. Brad Marchand assisted to extend his points streak to nine games, while Pastrnak has points in eight straight. The Bruins have also scored power-play goals in six consecutive contests. Jordan Binnington had 21 saves for St. Louis, which had a two-game winning streak end.

FLYERS 7, BLUE JACKETS 4

James van Riemsdyk had two goals and one assist, and Jakub Voracek and Kevin Hayes each added a goal and two assists as host Philadelphia scored five unanswered third-period goals to rally past Columbus. Shayne Gostisbehere had one goal and one assist, while Michael Raffl and Travis Konecny each scored for the Flyers, who won their third in a row by coming back from a 4-2 deficit in the final 9:08. Philadelphia goaltender Brian Elliott made 22 saves. Boone Jenner paced the Blue Jackets with two goals, while Pierre-Luc Dubois and Josh Anderson had one goal apiece, with Anderson adding an assist. Columbus had a six-game point

Inter Milan let Juventus off the hook with draw

MILAN: Cristiano Ronaldo stayed at home as Juventus battled to a 1-1 stalemate at lowly Lecce on Saturday, but the defending champions still stay top in Serie A as nearest rivals Inter Milan drew 2-2 with Parma. Both goals in Lecce came from penalties with Paulo Dybala's strike from the spot after 50 minutes cancelled out by Marco Mancosu's six minutes later as the promoted southerners grabbed their first point at home this season.

Unbeaten Juventus have 23 points from nine games, one more than Antonio Conte's Inter, who let the champions off the hook to stay second.

Ronaldo, 34, did not make the trip to the heel of Italy after Tuesday's 2-1 Champions League win over Lokomotiv Moscow, and ahead of two Serie A matches in four days next week, and a reverse fixture against the Russians on November 6.

"Ronaldo was tired both physically and mentally, so it would not have helped to make this journey," said Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri. "When a player expresses his fatigue, it's only right to give him a rest."

"Even without him we created ten chances on goal, but weren't able to finish them off. We let ourselves be drawn into a dirty game." It was a bruising encounter in Puglia.

Argentina forward Gonzalo Higuain suffered a nasty knock to his forehead late in the game after colliding with Lecce's Brazilian goalkeeper Gabriel.

The 31-year-old sat down on the pitch after the game suffering from dizziness and was stretchered off, later receiving stitches to his forehead.

Miralem Pjanic and Rodrigo Bentancur also suffered knocks. Dybala, who scored both goals against the Russians last Wednesday, started up front alongside Higuain, with Federico Bernardeschi slotting in just behind the Argentine strike duo. Sarri rang the changes giving starts to Emre Can and Danilo with Blaise Matuidi and Juan Cuadrado both named on the bench. Higuain looked as if he had scored the opener after a quarter of an hour, finishing off Alex Sandro's cross, but the goal was ruled out for offside.

Dybala put Juventus ahead five minutes into the second half with his sixth goal in five games.

But captain Mancosu pulled his side back level from the spot six minutes later after a Matthijs De Ligt handball. "We needed to be a bit more determined and clinical after we scored," said Sarri.

"I didn't like the way we played after taking the lead — we sat back too much."

Inter, meanwhile, looked sluggish after their 2-0 Champions League win over Borussia Dortmund three days ago. Antonio Candreva added to his European goal last week with his deflected shot putting the hosts ahead after 23 minutes in front of a crowd of 67,000 in the San Siro.

But Parma were ahead seven minutes later when on-loan forward Yann Karamoh equalised and then set up Gervinho for a second on the half hour mark against his parent club.

Romelu Lukaku grabbed a point for Inter after 51 minutes with the goal, his sixth in nine games, confirmed after long consultation with VAR.

Inter coach Conte said he was concerned by his lack of back-up with key players including forward Alexis Sanchez and midfielder Stefano Sensi out injured.

"This was our third match in six days and practically the same players have taken to the pitch," said the former Chelsea and Juventus boss. — AFP

Jonny strikes to earn Wolves draw at Newcastle

LONDON: Wolverhampton Wanderers battled back from a below-par first-half display to draw 1-1 against Newcastle thanks to Jonny's leveller at St James' Park yesterday.

Nuno Espirito Santo's side are unbeaten in the Premier League since mid-September but will be disappointed not to have taken all three points after dominating the second period against Geordies.

Hosts Newcastle took the lead in the 37th minute through captain Jamaal Lascelles, who got on the end of a fine cross from Federico Fernandez to power a header past Rui Patrício.

Wolves looked a changed side in the second half, pinning Newcastle back and creating a series of chances, with Diogo Jota heading over just after the hour mark before forcing goalkeeper Martin Dubravka into a fine save shortly afterwards.

The visitors scored a deserved equaliser in the 73rd minute when Dubravka could only paw a cross from the right into the path of Jonny, who lashed home.

Newcastle responded brightly but their task was made harder when Sean Longstaff was shown a straight red card with eight minutes to go after flying into Ruben Neves.

Defender Matt Doherty nearly sealed a win for the visitors late on but his glancing header from a Raul Jimenez cross flashed past the far post. — AFP



KELOWNA: Alexandra Trusova of Russia skates her short program at the 2019 Skate Canada International ISU Grand Prix event in Kelowna, Canada. — AFP

Teenager Trusova, Japan's Hanyu win Skate Canada crowns

OTTAWA: Russian teenager Alexandra Trusova capitalised on errors by her rivals to win her first senior Grand Prix victory on Saturday at Skate Canada.

The 15-year-old from Moscow took the title after nailing three quadruple jumps in her winning routine. That was good enough to lift her over short program leader Rika Kihira of Japan and South Korea's Yu Young.

Both Kihira and Yu were left counting the cost of mistakes as they attempted triple Axels. Skate Canada is the second event of the International Skating Union's Grand Prix season, and is taking place in Kelowna in western Canada. Trusova, who fell on her first quad, meanwhile posted the highest scores of the season after earning 166.62 points for the free skate for a total of 241.02.

Kihira, 17, was 10.68 points behind for silver while Yu ended with bronze in her first senior outing on the Grand Prix circuit. Trusova is the youngest winner of a Grand Prix event since 2015 world champion Elizaveta

Tuktamysheva won on the circuit in 2011.

Two-time Olympic champion Yuzuru Hanyu of Japan roared to victory in the free skate to claim gold in the men's category. Crowd favourite Nam Nguyen of Canada rose to the occasion to take the silver medal and Japan's Keiji Tanaka pulled up to claim the bronze.

Skating to "Art on Ice" Hanyu raised the roof with his dazzling performance, that included four quadruple jumps to rack up an overall score of 322.59.

Earlier Saturday, Canada's Piper Gilles and Paul Poirier upset two-time World Ice Dance medallists Madison Hubbell and Zachary Donohue of the United States to win their first Grand Prix gold. British duo Lilah Fear and Lewis Gibson took bronze to claim the first Grand Prix medal of their career. Gilles and Poirier scooped gold after a routine set to Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides Now", impressing with a combination spin, combination lift, straight line lift, twizzle and one foot step sequence.

"We've worked really hard for this moment," Gilles said. "I think we really trusted our training and knew exactly what we needed to do when we came here."

"We just went for it and skated today's program and that's all that we can do," Gilles added. In the pairs, the Russian duo of Aleksandra Boikova and Dmitri Kozlovskii claimed their first Grand Prix gold medal while Canadians Kirsten Moore-Towers and Michael Marinaro skated to the silver. — AFP

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Springboks reach third WCup final

Pollard breaks Welsh hearts with late penalty



YOKOHAMA: Wales' wing Joshua Adams (bottom R) holds onto the ball during the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup semi-final match between Wales and South Africa at the International Stadium Yokohama in Yokohama yesterday. — AFP

YOKOHAMA: Springboks flyhalf Handre Pollard kicked a penalty four minutes from time to send South Africa into their third Rugby World Cup final with a 19-16 victory over Wales in a semi-final dogfight yesterday. The South Africans will return to Yokohama next weekend to bid for a third World Cup triumph against an England side who ran defending champions New Zealand out of the tournament with a breathtaking display of rugby on Saturday. This was the other side of the game, a largely grim clash dominated by the boot - there were a total of 81 kicks from hand, effectively one a minute, during the match - and which was appropriately settled by a three-pointer from the kicking tee. Man of the Match Pollard nervelessly potted all five of his shots at goal, including three other penalties and a conversion, while centre Damian de Allende crossed for the game's first try in the 57th minute.

Wales, who will depart heartbroken at having now lost all three of their World Cup semi-finals, levelled the scores at 16-16 with 15 minutes remaining when winger Josh Adams crossed for his sixth try of the tournament. South Africa would not be denied, however, and secured their passage to a rematch of the 2007 World Cup final when Pollard calmly slotted the ball through the posts from about 30 metres out wide to the left. "It was nerve-racking at the end and I must say that, losing the previous four matches against them, it could have gone their way again," said Springboks coach Rassie Erasmus. "We are only halfway there."

"We would love to win the World Cup. We play a class England team in the final now but we've really got a chance and we might go all the way, you never know." South Africa won both their previous finals in 1995 and 2007 but no side has ever lifted the Webb Ellis Cup after losing a game at the tournament, as the Springboks did in their pool opener against the All Blacks. "It was a tough, physical match, congratulations to South Africa, they deserved to win today," said Warren Gatland, whose 12-year tenure as Wales coach comes to an end after the tournament. "I take my hat off to them, they were very good up front, defended exceptionally well. But I'm really proud of our guys, we

never gave up ... It was a real arm wrestle, a really tough encounter."

AERIAL CONTEST

A chilly autumn wind had blown away the last remains of a balmy day soon after kickoff but that did not deter both sides from going aerial from the start. South Africa's set piece looked steadier but Wales were getting past the Springboks' rush defence on the left wing and looked more likely to cross.

In the absence of any other enterprise, Pollard and Dan Biggar reprised their flyhalf penalty-kicking duel of the 2015 quarter-final, with the South African coming out on top - as he did four years ago - to send his side into halftime 9-6 ahead. Biggar stepped up to kick his third penalty to tie the scores six minutes into the second half but the biggest cheer from the crowd until that point came when Springboks scrumhalf Faf de Klerk squared up to towering Wales lock Jake Ball.

South African fans finally had something to shout about approaching the hour mark when Pollard for once eschewed the kick and cut through the defensive line and into the Welsh 22. With the referee playing advantage, the ball came out to the 16-stone de Allende, who brushed off two tacklers and reached over to touch down in the grasp of a third. Wales, who will face the All Blacks in the third-place playoff on Friday, hit straight back and camped on the South African line for a good five minutes, trying to smash their way over.

When they finally won a penalty, they elected to take a five-metre scrum and quickly moved the ball out to the wing for Adams to dive over untouched. Fullback Leigh Halfpenny split the uprights from wide out to level up the scores but South Africa's pack had been reinforced by fresh bodies from the bench and they did enough to ensure Pollard had his chance to win it. "Today we fell short, but hopefully we will get another opportunity," said Wales captain Alun Wyn Jones, a veteran of the 2011 semi-final loss to France who was playing his 142nd test. "It wasn't our day but I'm still proud to pull this jersey on and represent all the people in red in the stadium." — Reuters

Astros rout Nats in Game 4, level World Series 2-2

WASHINGTON: The Houston Astros opened the 2019 World Series with Gerrit Cole on the mound, followed by Justin Verlander and Zack Greinke. But the first starter to earn a victory in the quest for a championship was rookie Jose Urquidy. What the right-hander lacked in star power, he made up in grit and creativity during Game 4 on Saturday, mixing his pitches well to keep the Washington Nationals off balance as the visiting Astros earned an 8-1 victory.

Urquidy, with just a handful of major league outings to his credit, eased the burden of a bullpen game, dominating over five scoreless innings in Game 4, leveling the series at 2-2 with Game 5 set for Sunday in Washington.

"(Urquidy) was working really hard there to mix it up," Astros second baseman Jose Altuve said on MLB Network after collecting his third consecutive multi-hit game in the series. "The fastball and changeup played really good today. I'm happy he threw five innings the way he did it, because obviously we needed that."

Robinson Chirinos hit a home run for the second consecutive game, and Alex Bregman hit a grand slam and drove in five runs as the Astros picked up their second straight victory after losing the first two. Bregman and Michael Brantley each had three hits.

A team meeting after the Astros lost the first two games of the series has done the club wonders. "It was (a meeting) about bringing the guys back to what we have been doing all year," Chirinos said on MLB Network. "... It was about reminding the guys of what kind of team we are. It was a short meeting, it was a really good meeting, and I feel like it was a perfect time to do that meeting after the second loss."

The Astros planned on stringing together appear-

ances from their relievers in Game 4, using the 24-year-old Urquidy to kick things off. Instead, the right-hander gave his team some length, allowing just two hits and no walks while striking out four. Five more relievers finished off the final four innings.

After four World Series games, no team has won at home. The last time the road team won the first four games of a World Series was in 1996, when the Atlanta Braves faced the New York Yankees, who won the final two games of the series.

The Astros' victory Saturday ensures the series will head back to Houston for a Game 6 on Tuesday. Game 7, if necessary, would be Wednesday in Houston. After sitting at 19-31 on May 23 and coming all this way, the Nationals insist they won't fret about a losing two consecutive World Series games.

"We've been here pretty much all year," Nationals manager Dave Martinez said. "We have two of our big horses (Max Scherzer and Stephen Strasburg) going in the next two games. We haven't hit in the last couple of days, but I have confidence we'll bounce back. ... I just told the boys, 'Hey, we're in the World Series, about to play Game 5 tied 2-2. Who would have thought that in the beginning?'" Bregman drove in his first run of the game in the first inning on a single to center field, Houston's third straight single. Yuli Gurriel made it four in a row with an infield single for a 2-0 lead. Chirinos hit a two-run home run to left off Nationals left-hander Patrick Corbin for a 4-0 lead in the fourth.

Corbin (1-3 this postseason) gave up four runs on seven hits over six innings, with two walks and five strikeouts. Nationals starters have gone at least five innings in each of the team's 14 postseason games. Juan Soto put the Nationals on the scoreboard in the sixth inning with a run-scoring groundout before Bregman crushed his grand slam to left field in the seventh off right-hander Fernando Rodney. Urquidy (1-0), the third Mexican-born pitcher ever to start a World Series game, had just nine career appearances and two victories before the playoffs started. His five innings Saturday were more than the 4 1/3 innings he pitched in his two previous playoff appearances combined.—Reuters