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Amir opens Assembly term with call for unity, resolving Gulf row

Assembly delays grillings, elects Audit Bureau chief, panels

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday opened the new term of the National Assembly by calling for national unity in the face of explosive regional tensions and unrest, and also urged a quick resolution to the Gulf dispute. The Amir, in his first official public appearance in about two months after travelling to the US for medical tests, thanked citizens and expatriates for their good wishes over his return to the country.

HH the Amir said the region is passing through unprecedented difficult situations, as a number of Arab countries are witnessing escalation and instability, warning of the dangerous consequences of these events on "our security, stability and the future of our next generations". In the wake of such dangerous developments, the Amir said it is no longer acceptable for the row between Qatar and its neighbors to continue and a resolution must be found quickly.

The Amir was referring to the dispute that began two and a half years ago after Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt imposed a total boycott against Qatar for allegedly supporting radical groups, a charge Qatar has denied. The Amir has been mediating to find a negotiated settlement to the crisis, which he said has greatly weakened the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. The Amir called for national unity and strongly criticized "the

deviation of social media" that have become tools to trigger and fuel divisions in the society, urging a swift and coordinated effort to end this phenomenon.

During the opening session, the National Assembly agreed to delay the debate of two grillings against the ministers of finance and public works until the next session on Nov 12. The Assembly also elected in a closed session former liberal MP Faisal Al-Shaye as the new chairman of the State Audit Bureau, which was led by Adel Al-Saraawi, another former lawmaker, in the capacity of acting chairman. Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said Shaye was elected with a big margin and praised Saraawi for leading the Audit Bureau in the past few years.

The Assembly then elected members to its main committees, most of them by unanimous vote, as pro-government MPs maintained their firm grip on key panels including the financial and economic affairs, legal and legislative, and interior and defense committees. In his speech, Ghanem called for an end to "political games" and "meaningless arguments" that could lead to the destruction of the homeland in the wake of the extremely serious developments not far from Kuwait's borders.

He warned that "internal wars" lead to catastrophic and highly destructive outcomes, adding that those who fail internally may never recover in the future.

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KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah waves upon his arrival to open the National Assembly's new term yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



BAABDA, Lebanon: Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri (right) hands President Michel Aoun his government's resignation at the Baabda presidential palace yesterday. — AFP

Hariri resigns as Lebanon crisis turns violent

BEIRUT: Saad Al-Hariri resigned as Lebanon's prime minister yesterday, declaring he had hit a "dead end" in trying to resolve a crisis unleashed by huge protests against the ruling elite and plunging the country deeper into turmoil. The move by the leading Sunni politician points to rising political tensions

that may complicate the formation of a new government able to tackle Lebanon's worst economic crisis since its 1975-90 civil war.

"It has become necessary for us to make a great shock to fix the crisis. I am going to the Baabda Palace to submit the government's resignation," said Hariri, who had already stepped down twice from the same post. He said his decision comes "in response to the will of many Lebanese who took to the streets to demand change" in protests he called "historic".

The resignation of Hariri, who has been traditionally backed by the West and Sunni Gulf Arab allies, raises the stakes and pushes

Lebanon into an unpredictable cycle. Lebanon could end up further under the sway of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah, making it even harder to attract badly-needed foreign investment.

It also defies Hezbollah, which had wanted him to stay on. Hariri is seen as the focal point for Western and Gulf Arab aid to Lebanon, which is in dire need of financial support promised by these allies. Hariri addressed the nation after a mob loyal to Hezbollah and Amal movements attacked and destroyed a protest camp set up by anti-government demonstrators in Beirut.

Continued on Page 24

Investors flock to Saudi as Aramco listing looms

RIYADH: There was standing room only in the expansive halls of Riyadh's Ritz-Carlton hotel yesterday as the world's financial royalty attended Saudi Arabia's Future Investment Initiative (FII) conference, aimed at courting global investors. Saudi Arabia said it signed more than two dozen investment deals worth \$15 billion in total, mostly in manufacturing, as the kingdom strives to show Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's diversification plan is on track after limited progress since the first FII forum in 2017.

Continued on Page 24



RIYADH: Delegates wait in line ahead of a session during the Future Investment Initiative (FII) forum at the King Abdulaziz Conference Centre yesterday. — AFP

Pink tickets as Delhi rolls out free bus travel for women

NEW DELHI: New Delhi rolled out free bus travel for women yesterday in what the Indian capital's chief minister called an "historic step" for safety and female employment. Female participation in the Indian workforce is among the lowest in the world, while violence against women in the world's second-most populous country is rife. Yesterday, women were given pink tickets entitling them to free travel, with a message from chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on the back that said he hoped the move would empower them and their families.

Continued on Page 24



NEW DELHI: A woman travelling on a Delhi Transport Corporation bus shows a pink bus ticket yesterday, allowing her to ride free. — AFP

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Kuwaiti Prime Minister hails leadership's directives to advance reform, development

Kuwait conveyed Arab, Islamic concerns at UN Security Council: Sheikh Jaber



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Cabinet ministers and National Assembly members pose for a group picture. — Photos by Amiri Diwan and Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah praised the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, which called for enhancing the spirit of solidarity amongst Kuwaitis. This came in his speech in the opening of the fourth session of the 15th legislative term yesterday. His Highness the Premier confirmed the government's keenness to strengthen the positive relationship with the National Assembly, stressing that it is committed to cooperating with MPs for the best interest of the homeland.

In this regard, His Highness the Premier said the government has referred to the National Assembly a number of draft laws that contribute to the development and consolidation of the legislative structure in the society, including a bill on Kuwait's Public Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), another on companies' authentication, competition protection, government bonds and other "achievements." He confirmed the government's commitment to cooperate with National Assembly members under its constitutional supervision. He stressed on the need to follow His Highness' footsteps, making his march a guidance for the maintenance of the country's security, stability and interests under changing regional and international conditions that require everyone to be solidly united. He recalled wisdom of His Highness the Amir and his continuous efforts have spared Kuwait numerous challenges and crises due to regional and international crises.

Joint Arab action

On the Arab level, Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak said Kuwait is keen to strengthen joint Arab action, and called to overcome Arab differences through its participation in all efforts and meetings to address the

University City, and the fiber optics project, which would strengthen communication and information infrastructure in line with the digital economy. Within the housing sector, the Prime Minister said the government is working to accomplish

become the first model healthy city in Kuwait. According to a report by the World Health organization (WHO) and the World Bank (WB), Kuwait ranked first in the Universal Health Coverage, he added.

The government seeks to complete

entered the implementation phase as a tool to enable youth across economic and community sectors to participate effectively in all community activities, he said.

Public, private partnership

On the partnership between the public and private sectors during the fiscal year 2019/2020, the government launched four projects in the sectors of real estate development, sanitation, waste management and tourism, Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak said. Moreover, many Kuwaiti youth have been able to record achievements in all intellectual, cultural and sports fields, he said, noting to permanent lift of the international ban on the Kuwaiti sports. Kuwait has reaped the fruits of tireless national efforts with the cooperation of the concerned government authorities, the private sector and civil society organizations, to improve the business environment and enhance the competitiveness of the national economy in a way that reflects His Highness the Amir's desire to achieve Kuwait Vision 2035, His Highness the Prime Minister said.

This came within the framework of achieving the objective of improving the status of Kuwait in international indicators and improving the quality of performance of services provided to citizens, he added. In a related context, the State of Kuwait has seen an improvement in its status in the Global Competitiveness Index 2019 for the World Economic Forum, where Kuwait has advanced eight places in this index to become the 46th place out of 141 countries, he said. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah gestures during the inauguration of the parliament's new term.



issues of the Arab nation. On the international level, Kuwait has sought, through its non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council, to convey the concerns of the Arab and Islamic nations, especially the Palestinian cause as the first central issue.

On infrastructural achievements, the premier said the government has completed several projects including Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad causeway, which connects Al-Subbiya with Kuwait City, the start of the operational phase of Sabah Al-Salem

infrastructure and public services in the new cities. A joint Kuwaiti-Korean company will be established to build the first smart city in South Saad Al-Abdullah district, he confirmed.

Health sector-wise, Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak said it is witnessing a paradigm shift in the direction of promoting public health by adopting the Healthy Cities Initiative, noting that Yarmouk city (district) marked its fulfillment of World Health Organization (WHO) requirements to

strategic development projects in the petroleum sector, he said, alluding to Al-Zour refinery project, the environmental fuel venture and Al-Shaqaya Renewable Energy project. In accordance with the directives of His Highness the Amir to support the youth, the premier said the government has paid special attention to Kuwait's participation in the project of enhancing human capital in coordination with international organizations. In this regard, the National Youth Policy was adopted and



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah waves at the National Assembly yesterday.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah waves as he stands between His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



Citizens cheer during the inauguration of the session.



Diplomats and senior officials cheer during the inauguration of the session.

Local

Vigilant countries meet challenges with patience, wisdom: Kuwaiti Speaker

Ghanem laments ‘calculated, organized attempts’ to damage Kuwait’s reputation

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait, like many vigilant countries, must meet challenges and conflicts with patience and wisdom, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said yesterday. Addressing the fourth ordinary session of the National Assembly’s 15th legislative term, the Kuwaiti top lawmaker indicated that current conflicts in the region seemed to reach crescendo in terms of complexity and worrying developments; however, countries with clear vision and maturity are able to sail through the sea of turmoil by cooperation between leadership and people. Speaker Ghanem took the opportunity to congratulate the people of Kuwait on the safe return of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah from medical checkups abroad, affirming that Sheikh Sabah — through his wisdom and determination — was the ultimate guide during troublesome times.

Calculated attempts

Ghanem continued his address by saying that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah’s statement, in regards to regional conflicts, heavily focused on learning from the mistakes of others to traverse safely through crises. In recent years, there were calculated and organized attempts to exaggerate issues and picture Kuwait as the hub of “international corruption,” stated Ghanem who pointed fingers at planned efforts through various media platforms to depict

the country in an awful fashion. Speaker Ghanem said that such slander was bound to fail, especially with Kuwaitis; government and people, banding together to counter such allegations and better the country on all levels. True Kuwaitis refuse to lay the blame on the government or the National Assembly, he indicated, adding that the legislative and executive branches should also deny efforts to ignite tensions between ministers and MPs. Ghanem affirmed that the Government and National Assembly are equally responsible for implementing the Constitution to achieve the welfare of the people and reach realistic goals for the country.

On the National Assembly’s responsibilities during its fourth year, Ghanem said that there were many important issues to address, including the protection of Kuwaiti identity from nationality counterfeits, the resolution of the bedoons’ (stateless people) plight, and other vital matters. The National Assembly would like to ensure the government and people of several draft legislations and laws addressing the concerns of the people, said Ghanem who thanked His Highness the Amir for renewing confidence in parliament. While the National Assembly is doing what it can to resolve issues of importance, the executive authority has an equal share in progressing the country, said the Speaker who called on the Cabinet to provide clear and transparent plans to develop Kuwaiti institutes and ministries for the

sake of serving the public.

As he reminded the government of its responsibilities, the parliament’s speaker also commended the recent achievements by the government, which propelled Kuwait in recent international reports, especially the one issued by the World Bank, which put Kuwait in the top 10 improvers, amongst 190 economies, in Doing Business 2020. This achievement and others should push the government of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah forward to add more milestones for Kuwait and its people.

Amir’s speech

In the meantime, Ghanem expressed his hope that everyone bears in mind the noble meanings mentioned in His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah’s speech at the opening of the fourth ordinary session of the Assembly’s 15th legislative term. “Everybody was so happy by His Highness the Amir’s presence, and benefited from the deep meanings of his speech,” Ghanem told reporters after conclusion of the regular session. The session discussed the session’s agenda, he said, adding it postponed the grilling of two ministers for the next session upon their request. It also approved nomination of Faisal Al-Shaya as Chair of the Audit Bureau during a closed-door session, the top lawmaker said, noting Shaya received a great majority of voting.

Ghanem noted that he would complete



KUWAIT: MPs attend the inauguration of the fourth ordinary session of the National Assembly’s 15th legislative term. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

special procedures for the State Audit Bureau chief nomination, adding the Cabinet would be informed afterwards to prepare for issuing an official decree of Shaya’s appointment. Ghanem expressed his utmost wishes of good luck to Shaya, noting the former lawmaker has a reputed expertise in such a field. He also thanked

the Bureau’s acting Chief Adel Al-Sarawie for all his efforts during the past period. He also said the parliament has appointed all its permanent committees, with the exception of legislative and legal affairs, members of which were elected, adding formation of temporary committees would be completed in next session. — KUNA

Amir congratulates new Audit Bureau chief

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday addressed a congratulatory cable to Faisal Al-Shaya on his new position as the Chairman of the State Audit Bureau. His Highness wished Shaya all the best of luck to serve his country. In addition, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to Shaya.

National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem had announced declared earlier yesterday the parliament’s approval of nominating Shaya as Chair of the State Audit Bureau. The parliament speaker said the MPs’ approval of the nomination came during the assembly’s closed-door session. Earlier, he said Article 34 of the Audit Bureau establishment 30/1964 stipulates, “The head of the Audit Bureau is appointed by an Amiri Decree on the basis of nomination by the National Assembly and its endorsement of this candidacy in an in-camera session.”

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir addressed a cable of congratulations to MP Nayef Al-Merdas on his election uncontested as supervisor of the National Assembly. His Highness the Amir wished MP Merdas success in serving the dear homeland. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister addressed similar cables to MP Merdas.

In other news, the National Assembly yesterday approved appointment of members of several committees for the fourth ordinary session of the 15th legislative term, in accordance Article 93 of the National Constitution. The parliament elected MPs Dr Khalil Abdullah, Osama Al-Shaheen, Dr Ouda Al-

Rouwiei, Safa Al-Hashem and Omar Al-Tabtabaei as members of the Committee tasked with drafting the reply to the Amiri Speech. It elected MPs Mubarak Al-Hajraf, Nayef Al-Merdas, Saad Al-Khanfour, Saud Showaier and Khaled Al-Otaibi as members of the Committee for Public Petitions and Grievances. Kuwait’s Parliament named MPs Saud Showaier, Faraj Al-Arbeed, Abdullah Al-Kandari, Saadoun Hammad and Askar Al-Enezi as members of the Committee for Internal Affairs and Defense. MPs named as members of the parliamentary health, social and labor affairs committee were Saadoun Hammad, Osama Al-Shaheen, Talal Al-Jalal, Dr Homoud Al-Khudair and Dr Mohammad Al-Huwaila.

Article 93 of the constitution stipulates, “The Assembly shall establish during the first week of its annual meeting the committees necessary for its work.” It approved members of the Parliamentary Budgets and Final Accounts Committee. They are MPs Abdullah Al-Roumi, Adnan Abdulsamad, Safa Al-Hashem, Riad Al-Adsani, Mubarak Al-Harees, Shuaib Al-Muwaizri and Dr Adel Al-Damkhi. Moreover, the Kuwaiti parliament approved members of the parliamentary committee for financial and economic affairs for the fourth regular session of the 15th legislative term, in accordance with Article 93 of the constitution. The committee included MPs Saleh Ashour, Safa Al-Hashem, Dr Ouda Al-Rouwiei, Dr Bader Al-Mulla, Khalaf Dmaitheer, Dr Mohammad Al-Huwaila and Majed Al-Mutairi. It also named members of the public utilities committee, namely MPs Mohammad Al-Hadiya, Majid Al-Mutairi, Saad Al-Rashidi, Rakan Al-Nisf, Abdullah Fahhad and Hamdan Al-Azmi Al-Humaidi Al-Subaie. — KUNA

MPs demand probe in public property violations case

KUWAIT: MPs Abdullah Al-Kandari, Mubarak Al-Harees, Abdullah Fahhad Al-Enezi, Adel Al-Damkhi and Osama Al-Shaheen yesterday demanded forming a special parliamentary committee of five lawmakers to be selected by the parliament to investigate violations on public property committed by a company that had been utilizing lands owned by Kuwait Ports Authority over the past ten years, during which “no state officials acted to protect public funds nor the state’s annual revenues.”

The proposal was made in response to a verdict issued by the Court of Appeal on June 16, 2019, mandating the concerned company to evict an area of over one million square meters it had been utilizing, and to hand the area over to Kuwait Ports Authority void of any constructions or installations. The lawmakers also demanded listing the investigation results for discussion on the agenda of the upcoming National Assembly session.



KUWAIT: A copy of the request submitted by the five lawmakers yesterday.

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Local

Kuwait calls UN Security Council to visit occupied Palestinian territories

No country has the right to refuse to implement UN resolutions: Kuwait's envoy

Jordan King visits Kuwait today

KUWAIT: Jordanian King Abdullah II and his accompanying delegation are set to arrive in Kuwait today on a visit, during which he will hold official talks with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA



King Abdullah II

NEW YORK: Kuwait reiterated its call for the UN Security Council to visit the occupied Palestinian territories to assess the effects of the occupation and its tragic consequences on the Palestinian people. This came in a speech delivered by Kuwait's Permanent Delegate to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi during a UN Security Council session on the Middle East. He emphasized the binding nature of UN Security Council resolutions, while noting that Israel trampled them underfoot in its occupation of Palestinian land. "No country has the right to refuse to implement those resolutions, but Israel defies them through its continuing practice of forcibly seizing land, settlement activities and other actions," he said.

The Kuwaiti senior diplomat went on to express appreciation for UNRWA's work and to Kuwait's support for a two-state solution to the conflict. This could be done in accordance with the agreed terms of reference, he said, pointing out to relevant UN Security Council resolutions, the principle of land-for-peace, the roadmap and the Arab peace initiative. He underlined the importance for the Palestinian people to regain its full and legitimate political rights, including the one to establish an independent state with East Jerusalem as capital. — KUNA



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Delegate to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi during a UN Security Council session on the Middle East. — KUNA

Kuwait, Croatia hold first round of political talks

KUWAIT: The first round of political talks between Kuwait and Croatia was held late Monday at the level of senior officials on the occasion of 25 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs Walid Al-Khubaizi headed the Kuwait side, while Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs Ambassador Vice Skracic headed the Croatian delegation. During the talks, both sides discussed cooperation in various fields included health, education, scientific research, and the exchange of military training courses. They also discussed latest development on the regional and international scenes and the positions of both countries toward various issues, in addition to reviewing the role of Kuwait during its non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council. As for Kuwait

investment in Croatia, estimated at \$17 million, Khubaizi stresses the need to take the trade level between the two countries into higher levels that would suit the outstanding bilateral relations. The two countries confirmed the importance of enhancing cooperation in international forums, and to continue to support efforts aims to end crises and challenges through diplomatic channels and dialogue.

Khubaizi pointed out that both sides reviewed the outcomes of the meeting between the Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during her visit to Kuwait in 2017. They also reviewed outcomes of the talks, held between His Highness the Amir with Croatian Prime Minister on the sidelines of the Arabic European summit held in Sharm el-Sheikh last April. On the other hand, Khubaizi valued the desire of Croatian officials to enhance cooperation in the tourism sector through providing the necessary facilities to attract Kuwaiti tourists. The Kuwaiti official praised the existing cooperation between Kuwait and the European Union, looking forward to further cooperation as Croatia takes over the rotating presidency of the European Union early next year. He expressed appreciation to Croatia's invitation to Kuwait to

participate in the meeting of political directors in the European Union Foreign Ministry, which will be held in the

Croatian capital, Zagreb, to review topics of interest and developments in the Middle East. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Ambassador Walid Al-Khubaizi and Ambassador Vice Skracic in a group picture with a number of officials. — KUNA

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KUWAIT: The Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Kuwait Martin Dvorak hosted a reception recently on the occasion of his country's national day. Senior officials, diplomats and media persons attended the event, which took place at Crowne Plaza Hotel. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Local

Philippine Embassy in dark over rules, guidelines on visit to work visa transfer

Agency owner warns of 'runaway maids' scenario similar to UAE

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The Philippine Embassy is in the dark about the rules and guidelines of a recent ministerial decision allowing transfer of visit visas to work visas in Kuwait. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, an embassy source said they will wait until they are notified on the matter before issuing an official statement. "We do not have official notification as yet; there are gray areas." According to him, the welfare and rights of Filipino workers is the primary role of the mission here.

Last week, Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah issued new residency by-laws allowing visit visas to be transferred to residency visas in many cases. There were only minor changes to other residency rules and regulations, especially with regards to fees. The

new regulations, which explain how the residency law should be implemented, became effective as after their publication in the official gazette Kuwait Al-Youm.

Visit visas may be transferred to residency visas for the following categories: Subject to the residency affairs' director's decision, visitors of ministries and public authorities (with government visit visas) holding university degrees; domestic helpers; dependents arriving on family or tourist visit visas; holders of valid residence who do not exceed six months out of Kuwait and

have to enter with a visit visa; those who enter for work and start procedures to get residency, but have to leave for a maximum of one month; cases subject to the residency affairs directorate's judgment.

The new by-laws introduce a tourist visa allowing tourists to stay in Kuwait for up to three months, and a multiple entry visa valid for one year for just KD 1 for each month. Foreigners whose residence is cancelled and those who resign will be given up to three months of temporary residency to leave.

Reacting on the issue, an agency owner said problems will be similar to the problems faced in the United Arab Emirates after they allowed visit visa transfers to work visas. "Based on the UAE experience, we cannot deny the fact that there have been so many issues related to that. If the move is not regulated properly and not strict enough, maybe we will see the UAE scenario of runaways and overcrowded embassy facilities. Workers will come on visit visas and will just transfer to their respective employers later. This is legal, but the Philippine government will not be able to monitor its workers fully," she said. "I hope they would be able to thrash out the problems behind the new laws. Of course, we are directly hit by this new regulation, but we are hoping they will seriously consider the rights of expat workers."



Embassy yet to receive official notification

Co-ops close pharmacies in protest of new law

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Kuwait Union for Consumer Cooperative Societies Chairman Meshaal Al-Sayyar announced co-ops had closed their pharmacies in protest over the new pharmacies law, which they deem as marginalizing the role played by co-ops. The government had released a new law in recent weeks requiring that all pharmacies operating within the vicinity of co-op

societies must be owned by Kuwaiti nationals before they could be licensed, leaving many pharmacies operated by expatriate pharmacists with the risk of closing. Speaking following a meeting with various co-op heads, Sayyar strongly condemned the new pharmacies law, saying that it had been passed for the benefit of 68 pharmacists at the expense of over 800 citizens holding shares in co-ops. Sayyar explained co-ops and pharmaceutical companies have invested in pharmacies, which used to make good revenues for co-ops and shareholders, but the new law restricts and allocates pharmacies to Kuwaiti pharmacists who will only pay rent to the co-ops.

Meanwhile, well-informed sources said a meeting will be held next week between the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and Public Authority for Manpower to discuss implementing the new degree accreditation law and preventing the employment of employees who fail to procure accredited certificates, especially since the majority of ministerial staff who had not so far presented accredited certificates are expats. The sources added that expat teachers will be given a grace period till the end of this academic year or the end of the summer vacation at most to present accredited certificates to avoid termination. "Expat doctors will be graced three months to do the same," said the sources, adding that expats working in other government bodies will have to pass special professional tests set by the CSC, otherwise they would be laid off.

In other news, a blackout hit the Ministry of Education's headquarters and a number of other government buildings in South Surra yesterday resulting from a breakdown in a main power plant. Informed sources said most computers and lifts stopped working, and the education ministry allowed its employees to leave work and head home.

20% orthodontic patients in Kuwait above 20 years

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Consultant orthodontist Dr Rashed Al-Azmi revealed that 20 percent of orthodontic patients in Kuwait are above 20 years old. He said Kuwait comes first amongst GCC states in terms of the quality of dentistry services thanks to Kuwaiti dentists holding the highest degrees from the US and Europe and the use of the latest orthodontic technologies. Speaking at a special ceremony held on the occasion of opening Dazzle Dental Center with the attendance of MP Mohammed Al-Hadiya and Bukhamseen Group Managing Director Dr Osama Bukhamseen, Azmi stressed that dentistry had greatly developed over the past few years, presenting new types of orthodontics. Azmi explained that orthodontics can be con-

ducted with patients starting from the age of seven, but stressed that the ideal age 11-12.

Failaka Island

The Capital committee at the Municipal Council is scheduled to discuss a number of issues in its meeting today, including annulment of allocation of unused lands on Failaka Island and a proposal made by members Abdullah Al-Mehri and Meshaal Al-Hamadhan on increasing the percentage of construction in the Liberation Tower's parking area. The agenda will also include a proposal made by member Hassan Kamal concerning commercial activities on the Sharq seafront and several other proposals.

Repeated violations

The Public Authority for Manpower's deputy director for manpower protection Mubarak Al-Azmi stressed the inspection campaigns conducted by the authority's teams are within the authority's duties stipulated in labor law number 6/2010 and the domestic helpers law number 68/2015 with the ultimate goal of preventing the repetition of any violation.

News in brief

6,479 Kuwaiti educators resigned in 3 years

KUWAIT: Education Minister Hamid Al-Azmi said 6,479 Kuwaiti employees resigned from the education ministry during the past three years, adding that the rare specialty allowance given to Kuwaitis and Gulf nationals of both genders reached nearly KD 2.23 million. Azmi said in an answer to MP Khalil Al-Saleh that employees who resigned between 2016 and 2018 reached 6,479 (1,780 in 2016, 2,489 in 2017 and 2,210 in 2018). He said the numbers include those who were to be referred for retirement but resigned instead. —Al-Rai

Food warehouses

KUWAIT: Informed sources said the commerce ministry is studying the establishment of a warehouse company in Salmi to store local and imported foodstuff, provided that the project is financed by investors for up to 10 years. The sources said the ministry is studying the use of open areas it owns in Salmi of over 400 sq m to build strategic warehouses as part of its activities and responsibilities, adding that the project's idea is based on encouraging manufacturers and importers to build warehouses to store both local and imported food. The ministry asked the Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company and its subsidiaries to manage and supervise the project for the benefit of the state. —Al-Rai

Smuggling

Security men at Salmi border arrested a Saudi and his son who attempted to smuggle two bedoons out of the country in exchange for a large amount of money aboard a vehicle with forged license plates. Security men became suspicious of the two, who were checked closely. The car's plates were found to be forged, then while the vehicle was being searched, the two bedoons were found. The bedoons were sent to Salmi police station, while the Saudis were sent to criminal detectives for questioning. —Al-Rai

Fight

Detectives are working to identify persons who stabbed a Saudi in the back and fled. Police received a call about a 'vicious fight' in an area south of the country, so policemen and detectives responded and found the injured Saudi with two of his friends, who said some individuals they do not know attacked them, stabbed their friend and ran away. The injured was taken to hospital, while his friends were sent to Hadiya police station for further legal action. —Al-Rai

Debauchery

A Syrian woman accused a compatriot of debauchery. She said she had gone to buy meat and gave the suspect her number to call when he gets fresh meat, but he flirted with her instead. The woman went to the police station and told police she started receiving messages late at night from him, adding she reprimanded him, but he did not stop. Police will arrest and question the suspect. —Al-Rai

Child molester arrested in Farwaniya

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Farwaniya detectives arrested an Arab man accused of molesting an Arab girl, the interior ministry's relations and security information department said yesterday. Police received a call about a fight in Farwaniya, so detectives responded and found the caller was the girl's relative, who told them the suspect had molested the girl. The suspect was identified by the victim.

Meanwhile, Mina Abdullah fire station responded to a call about a four-way vehicle collision on King Fahd Road. A trapped person was freed and handed to paramedics. An investigation was opened to reveal the circumstances behind the accident.



KUWAIT: A vehicle heavily damaged following an accident reported on King Fahd Road.

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Celebrities flee as multimillion-dollar homes burn in LA



Bursting at the seams: Inside IS prison

Many of the prisoners are all skin and bones

Some of them are teenagers and none of them have been under the sun even once in months or more. They have virtually no knowledge of what is happening outside, their days measured only by the absent-minded thumbing of beads and the five daily Muslim prayers. Their grey foam mattresses overlap to carpet the cold floor, with only one corner of the cell taken by a basic, half walled-off pit latrine. The stench is overwhelming in the nearby medical ward, where visitors are given surgical masks at the door.

Stench

Many of the prisoners there are all skin and bones. The most fortunate have a bed to lie on, but most of them just sit directly on the floor, exposing amputation stumps and bandaged wounds. The prison clinic is as crowded as the other cells. A greying man with axillary crutches painstakingly picks his way through the ghostly crowd. The condition of

It also reveals the dire conditions experienced by the final denizens of the jihadist "caliphate" when it made its last stand in Baghdad district, 200 kilometers to the south. Most of the men who have been crammed into this Hasakeh prison-detention centre and at least six others across Kurdish-held territory are those who were seen limping to surrender just months ago, starved and mutilated. "I want to leave the prison and go back home to my family," says Aseel Mathan, 22. The lank young man left his native Wales when he was still 17, to join his brother in Mosul, the northern Iraqi city where the IS "caliphate" was born. When his brother was killed, he moved across the Syrian border to Raqa, the other main hub of the now-defunct jihadist proto-state.

'No contact'

“They have absolutely no contact with the outside world,” says the prison governor, who gave his name as Serhat and asked that the exact location of the facility be withheld. Not all IS fighters were caught by Kurdish and US-led coalition forces in the dying days of the “caliphate” and the jihadist group has continued to attack its enemies

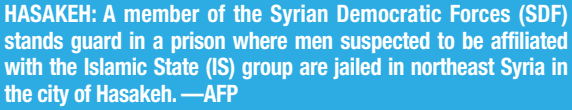
Some days, Sarhat says, fugitive jihadists “come near the prison and open fire, just as a way of telling the detainees that they are still there.” From France to Tunisia, many of the US prisoners’ countries of origins have been reluctant to repatriate them, fearing a public backlash at home. With support from their main US ally more unpredictable than ever, and under constant pressure from their archfoe Turkey, the Syrian Kurds’ autonomous administration can barely protect itself, let alone foreign detainees.

'Dangerous'

Guiding AFP journalists through the corridors of the prison, one guard is hesitant to even lift the hatch in the cell door. "These ones are dangerous," he says. Further down, one cell is reserved for what IS propaganda used to call "the cubs of the caliphate", children who were enlisted and trained as fighters. The adult staying in the same cell is an orthopaedic surgeon who stayed in the "caliphate" until it shrank to its death just over six months ago.

'Cubs of the caliphate'

One nine-year-old boy from central Asia named Khaled



Only around 300 of them can spend the night in the medical ward, among them Aballah Nooman, a 24-year-old Belgian who lifts his T-shirt to show an open wound. "My organs are spilling out," he says, explaining that he sustained the wound from a fellow jihadist who accidentally shot him while cleaning his weapon. —AFP

Nigerian pastor accused of abusing children who fled Boko Haram

His camp in Benin City claims to provide accommodation, medical care and education for 4,000 children, "most of them orphans", as well as 500 widows and missionaries, using funding from local institutions, NGOs and churches abroad. But witnesses AFP interviewed across Nigeria - children, their relatives, former missionaries and social workers - paint a far darker picture of the pastor and the treatment of those in his care. "At first he's very subtle, quiet - like somebody who wouldn't hurt a fly," one former church worker

'We don't do abuse'

“Pastor Solomon runs this camp as if it is his ‘kingdom’. He controls the movement and actions of every person in the camp through a group of ministers and specially selected children,” the team wrote in the confidential report, seen by AFP. The UNICEF investigators said what they saw, coupled with interviews with children, caregivers and NGO workers, prompted “strong concerns regarding the possibility that Pastor Solomon may be engaged in sexual activities, or at a mini-

Witnesses also told AFP that around a dozen young girls work for the pastor as his personal servants and receive preferential treatment. "A girl who refused to work for him was punished and starved. When he beat you, he wouldn't stop until you bled seriously," said Rahila, a 16-year-old girl who left the camp several months ago. "He had names that he called different girls... He would comment on the size of my butt, and he would say our chests looked like pineapples or stuff like that," she said. All the witnesses' names have been changed to protect their identities.

‘We got beaten’

Convincing people to talk about their experiences with Pastor Solomon is a painstaking task. Some have refused to speak out for 20 years. "Most of the girls were coming from poor homes. They would sleep with

Evangelical preachers draw fanatical followings across the deeply Christian south of Nigeria. Pastor Solomon's power stems greatly from his beliefs. "He says he's sent by God. To confront him is like confronting God himself," a former church worker said. Those who have served under him and lived in the camp say the pastor uses the fear of devil to keep people in line. On the church's website, in a short biography entitled "I Saw Jesus" - translated into six languages including Russian and Chinese - he claimed that he was saved from Satan by God himself.

Foreign evangelical support

Pastor Solomon's International Christian Centre for Missions has expanded hugely since he founded it in 1990 with just a dozen young female followers. In 1992, he set up the first "Home for the Needy", taking in poor children whose parents entrusted them to his

But it was the Boko Haram jihadist insurgency more than 1,000 km to the north of Benin City that caused a surge in the numbers at the camp. As the violence displaced millions of people and grabbed global attention in 2013, Pastor Solomon's group turned its attention to children in the conflict zone of northeastern Nigeria. "The pastor's people came [to Maiduguri] and convinced parents to send their children to Benin City where they would have a good education, with free food," said Rakiya, who allowed five of her six children to go. "At the camp, parents would be given bags of rice, bus fare, jerrycans of palm oil and the like. So when they returned to Maiduguri they would tell other parents 'Benin is good,'" she said. —AFP

International

Populist cleric joins Iraq protests as crisis deepens

Demonstrators unimpressed by PM’s laundry list of reforms

NAJAF: Populist Iraqi cleric Moqtada Sadr joined thousands of demonstrators in the holy city of Najaf yesterday amid a spiralling political crisis sparked by deadly anti-government protests. At least 240 people have died and 8,000 been wounded since demonstrations broke out on Oct 1 over unemployment and corruption, before evolving into calls for the government to quit. Sadr, an ex-militiaman with a cult-like following in swathes of Iraq, has spearheaded demands for Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi’s resignation and early parliamentary elections.

Yesterday, he was spotted by an AFP correspondent amid thousands of anti-government demonstrators in his native Najaf, a holy city in southern Iraq. He was seen in a white car in the city just after airport sources told AFP he had landed from neighboring Iran. Sadr himself is one of the current government’s two main sponsors, after his Saeroon bloc won the largest share of parliament’s 329 seats in a vote last year. But he tweeted in support of an initial six-day wave of protests that rocked the country early this month and resumed last week.

‘At once!’

Demonstrators have so far been unimpressed by premier Abdel Mahdi’s laundry list of reforms, which includes hiring drives and more social welfare. Instead, they have increasingly pushed for early elections, a new government and a reworked constitution. After failing to meet several times, parliament on Monday agreed to explore early polls and constitutional amendments, summoning Abdel Mahdi for questioning. They reiterated their demand yesterday, calling on him to appear at parliament headquarters “immediately”. In footage aired on local media, MPs from the largest bloc of Saeroon – tied to Sadr – could be heard chanting, “At once! At once!” The parliament is deeply

divided, with Sadr backing protests while second-largest bloc Fatah – the political branch of the Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary force – backs the government. Several Hashed offices have been torched in recent days in southern Iraq in what observers say is likely an escalation of the rivalry between Sadr and the Hashed.

Abdel Mahdi has urged Sadr to agree with Fatah chief Hadi Al-Ameri on a way forward. “If the goal of elections is to change the government, then there is a shorter way: for you to agree with Mr. Ameri to form a new government,” the premier wrote in a public letter to the cleric yesterday. “Once this agreement is reached, the prime minister can submit his resignation and the new government can receive its orders in days, if not hours,” said Abdel Mahdi. He dismissed the idea of bringing forward polls, saying, “But the fate of early elections would be unknown. Will its results be definitive?”

‘Stay home? No way!’

The chaotic protest movement is unprecedented in Iraq, both because of its apparently independent nature and the ensuing violence. The first wave of protests starting Oct 1 left 157 people dead, mostly protesters in Baghdad, according to a government probe which acknowledged “excessive force” was used. A second wave starting Thursday has left at least 83 dead. Overnight, at least one protester was killed in the Shiite holy city of Karbala, said the Iraqi Human Rights Commission. The city’s forensics chief told AFP a 24-year-old had been shot in the head, but the governor and security forces said it was “categorically false” anyone had died. Rallies escalated yesterday, with trade unions representing teachers, lawyers and dentists all declaring strikes lasting several days.

In Iraq’s southern cities of Hilla, Diwaniyah, Kut and



NAJAF: Iraqi Shiite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr drives a car as he joins anti-government demonstrators gathering in the central holy city of Najaf yesterday. Sadr, who has backed the protests, was spotted shortly after airport sources said the militiaman-turned-leader had landed in his native Najaf from Iran. —AFP

Nasiriyah, most government offices remained closed yesterday for lack of staff. Students gathered in those cities for their third day of demonstrations, ignoring orders by the higher education minister to return to class. In the

capital, protesters were massing on a key bridge linking their main gathering place in Tahrir Square to the Green Zone, where government offices and foreign embassies are based. —AFP

What’s IAEA? Global agency monitoring Iran nuclear deal

VIENNA: The UN’s nuclear watchdog, which picked Argentina’s Rafael Grossi as its new

head yesterday, is charged with monitoring the implementation of the Iran nuclear deal as part of its efforts to prevent nuclear weapons proliferation worldwide. The landmark 2015 agreement gave Iran relief from sanctions in return for curbs on its nuclear program, but it has been pushed to the verge of collapse since US President Donald Trump withdrew from it last year and proceeded to re-introduce sanctions.

In retaliation, Iran has been scaling back its commitments to limits on nuclear activities since earlier this year, putting pressure on the remaining signatories to the deal – Britain,

China, France, Germany and Russia. The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has had the delicate task of verifying the deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), through regular inspections of Iranian facilities.

What role does IAEA have?

Set up in 1957, the IAEA has 171 member states and employs some 2,500 experts. Its Board of Governors, comprising 35 states, meets five times a year. The IAEA promotes peaceful uses of atomic energy while at the

same time overseeing efforts to detect and prevent possible nuclear weapons proliferation.

Because of previous international concern over its nuclear program, Iran agreed in 2003 to allow snap IAEA inspections of its nuclear facilities. However, cooperation broke down in 2006. The IAEA referred Iran to the UN Security Council, which went on to impose sanctions, and Iran halted enhanced IAEA inspections. A renewed diplomatic push eventually led to the JCPOA in 2015, under which the IAEA is charged with regular inspections of declared facilities in Iran such

as uranium mines and centrifuge workshops for up to 25 years.

The aim is to ensure that Iran is not holding undeclared stocks of nuclear material and is not enriching uranium beyond a certain level. But Tehran has already hit back three times with countermeasures this year in response to the US withdrawal from the nuclear deal. In its latest move it fired up advanced centrifuges to boost its enriched uranium stockpiles. Iran has also broken the limits on uranium enrichment levels and the overall stockpile of enriched uranium laid down in the JCPOA. —AFP

Bahais mark bicentenary of prophet at Israel tomb

HAIFA: Bahais yesterday and today mark 200 years since the birth of their prophet with a ceremony planned at their world centre, in the northern Israeli port city of Haifa. The Bahai faith, with millions of followers worldwide, emerged in Persia in the second half of the 19th century. An offshoot of Shia Islam, it reveres Siyyid Ali Muhammad – known as “The Bab” – who foretold the coming of another messenger from God “who would usher in an age of peace and justice,” according to the Bahai website.

Yesterday, believers were to walk in procession around the Bab’s golden-domed mausoleum in the Bahai centre’s terraced gardens. “Some pilgrims will be dressed in their country’s traditional dress,” said deputy secretary general of the Bahai International Community Carmel Irandoust. The community says it currently has more than six million believers worldwide. Although it has its world headquarters on Mount Carmel, overlooking the port below, she says that there is no Bahai congregation in the Jewish state.

“This is only the spiritual and administrative centre of the Baha’i faith,” she said. The sprawling, walled site is staffed by about 650 volunteers from around 60 countries and an additional 150 local employees, Irandoust added. In addition to serving the Bahai communities of the world, they also care for the faith’s shrines in Israel. As well as the Bab’s tomb, there is the resting place, further up the coast at Acre, of Bahaullah, the prophet foreseen by the Bab.

The Bahai holy places have been named a UNESCO world heritage site and, according to the faith, welcome more than a million visitors per year. A Persian nobleman, Bahaullah was a disciple of the Bab and in 1844 proclaimed himself to be the bearer of a divine message and the one who would usher in the new age which would bring unity to all the peoples of the earth. Bahaism, which calls itself “the world’s newest monotheistic religion”, holds gender equality and the eradication of poverty among its tenets.

In modern Iran, where their numbers are estimated at 300,000, members of the faith say they are persecuted as heretics by the Shiite clerical regime. Bahais consider the Bahaullah to be a prophet from God, defying the orthodox Islamic view that Mohammed was the final prophet. In December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution calling on Iran to end human rights violations against minority religions including the Bahais, citing “harassment, intimidation, persecution, arbitrary arrests and detention” among other breaches. —AFP



TEHRAN: Photo shows an Iranian woman shopping at a pharmacy at the Nikan hospital in the Iranian capital Tehran. —AFP

US sanctions threatening Iranians’ right to health

WASHINGTON: Washington’s sanctions against Tehran have drastically constrained its ability to pay for humanitarian imports and are threatening the health rights of Iranians, Human Rights Watch said yesterday. US President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal last year and reimposed punishing sanctions as part of a stated campaign of “maximum pressure” against the Islamic republic.

Officially, the punitive measures make 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. Trump “administration officials claim they stand with the Iranian people, but the overbroad and burdensome US sanctions regime is harming Iranian’s right to health, including access to life-saving medicines”, said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at HRW.

“The comprehensive web of US sanctions has led banks and companies to pull back from humanitarian trade with Iran, leaving Iranians who have rare or complicated diseases unable to get the medicine and treatment they require,” she added. The sanctions include previously suspended nuclear-related embargoes including on Iran’s oil exports and financial transactions, with new ones added. The US Treasury said they were imposed to make Iran’s leaders “cease support for terrorism, stop proliferating ballistic missiles, end destructive regional activities, and abandon their nuclear ambitions”.

In a 47-page report, HRW documents how the US-built exemptions for humanitarian imports into its sanctions regime have failed to offset the strong reluctance of US and European companies and banks to finance humanitarian goods. Iranian patients have struggled with a foreign medicine shortage and price hikes for over a year both due to reimposed US trade sanctions as well as a battered economy with a free-falling currency. Medicine importers get subsidized currency rates from the government, yet foreign drugs and medical equipment cannot always be found in state-owned pharmacies.

Iran produces 96 percent of the drugs it uses but imports more than half the raw materials to make them, according to the Syndicate of Iranian Pharmaceutical Industries. It also has to import special medicine which patients with rare diseases require. HRW called on the US to “get serious about addressing the harm resulting from its cruel sanctions regime”. Washington must create “a viable financial channel with reasonable requirements for companies, banks and groups to provide humanitarian goods for people in Iran,” it said. —AFP

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After Boeing crashes, design rules to get tougher for all

Focus on tightening rules for plane model upgrades

BRASILIA: Planemakers worldwide face tougher scrutiny and changes in the way aircraft are certified in the aftermath of two fatal crashes of Boeing 737 MAX jets, leading regulators have said. Yesterday marks one year since the deadly crash of a Lion Air jet, which Indonesian investigators linked in part to violent seesaw movements triggered by flawed anti-stall software.

The MCAS software, activated by a single faulty sensor and omitted from training manuals, has led to calls for tighter regulation as well as improvements in the training of pilots. “The certification process will change; I think so,” the head of the US Federal Aviation Administration, Steve Dickson, told Reuters late on Monday at an airlines meeting in Brazil. Boeing 737 MAX aircraft have been grounded around the world since March following a second fatal crash, this time involving a plane operated by Ethiopian Airlines.

Speaking to airlines earlier, Dickson also emphasized a need to raise standards for airplane pilot training globally.

A recent report by international regulators, commissioned by the FAA, faulted processes at both the US regulator and Boeing. But the impact of the crisis is likely to be felt worldwide, including at Boeing’s rival Airbus and new entrants from Russia to China and Japan, as regulators step up efforts to ensure that risks are correctly identified right from the drawing board.

“We are going to make it harder,” Patrick Ky, executive director of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), told Reuters when asked about the future of certification in general, without naming countries or companies. “In the future we may ask to have a larger set of data which will be used in the certification case than today,” he added. In part, that will involve

using new technology to run simulations to spot flaws that may be missed in flight testing.

But regulators are also expected to take a close look at one of the key tenets of aviation safety, an obscure piece of regulation known as the “Changed Product Rule”. Under this rule, manufacturers revamping an old design like the 737 only need to comply with latest regulations on systems undergoing major changes, which means risks must be understood. For the rest of the aircraft, the original standards still apply, which in the case of the 737 date back to the 1960s. That is no problem when risks are small, officials say. But this month’s international regulatory panel report said the rule did not adequately address the cumulative effects of individual changes on small systems. “In general, the analysis was limited to areas that changed, re-using prior certification basis to complete the process,” former Boeing engineer Peter Lemme wrote in a blog yesterday, citing a series of flawed assumptions used in the design.

Certification process will change: FAA

Big picture

The Joint Authorities Technical Review (JATR) also found Boeing had missed the big picture by focusing on whether individual systems like MCAS complied with regulations, without also taking a top-down view of the impact on the whole aircraft. Boeing’s chief executive was due to tell a Senate committee yesterday that it made mistakes over the MAX. It has also said it is committed to working with regulators in reviewing the recommendations in the JATR report. One regulator told Reuters a review of the Changed Product Rule would be among the main changes stemming from the crisis. That could have implications for airplane design after years in which glob-



ARLINGTON: In this file photo, an Air Canada plane passes the Navy - Merchant Marine Memorial as it lands at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in Arlington, Virginia. —AFP

al planemakers have focused on upgrading existing models before tackling costlier clean-sheet designs. “There is nothing wrong with derivatives; it is just (a question of) how we certify with full confidence the way in which modifications are made from an existing type,” Ky said.

Others say regulators are likely to check each other’s homework more actively than in the past, while preserving a convention that allows the home regulator for each

planemaker to take the lead, such as the FAA for Boeing or EASA for Airbus. Safety officials don’t expect this to lead to meddling by foreign regulators on routine design changes. But post-MAX, agencies are likely to be vigilant when the risks warrant it. The JATR also broke with tradition by suggesting companies should design systems with an over-arching vision of safety in mind, not just ensure their work complied with regulations. —Reuters

News in brief

Australian shark attack

SYDNEY: A British man had his foot bitten off and another was injured in a shark attack off Australia’s northeast coast, emergency officials in Queensland state said. The pair of tourists were on a snorkelling tour near Airlie Beach in the popular Whitsunday Passage region when they were attacked. They were flown by helicopter to Mackay Base Hospital, about 950 km north of the state capital, Brisbane, in a serious but stable condition, the state rescue service known as RACQ CQ Rescue said on Twitter. “An English tourist has had his foot bitten off and another has serious lacerations to his lower leg after a shark attack in the Whitsundays today,” it said. The men told the rescue crew they were wrestling and thrashing about in the water when the attack occurred. —Reuters

Egypt kills 13 militants

CAIRO: Egyptian security forces killed 13 suspected militants in a raid in the restive North Sinai, the interior ministry said yesterday. Police raided a hideout in a deserted farm house in El-Arish, provincial capital of North Sinai, triggering a shootout, the ministry said in a statement. Weapons including explosive devices, rifles and guns were found, it said, without giving the date of the operation. Egypt has for years been fighting an insurgency in North Sinai that escalated after the military’s 2013 ouster of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi following mass protests. The military has launched a nationwide offensive since February 2018 against Islamist militants focusing on North Sinai where a local affiliate of the Islamic State group is based. Some 750 suspected jihadists and around 60 soldiers have since been killed, according to official figures. —AFP

15 Myanmar pilgrims killed

YANGON: Fifteen Buddhist pilgrims including a monk were killed after their flatbed truck plunged off a 300-metre cliff in eastern Myanmar, police said yesterday, blaming faulty brakes. The accident happened Monday evening in Shan state as the truck carrying 25 people was returning from a Buddhist festival. Police officer Myint Soe said the cause of the crash was brake failure as the vehicle rounded a turn. “Fifteen people were found dead while 10 were severely injured,” he said, adding that the steep and challenging terrain made for a risky overnight search for victims. Buddhist-majority Myanmar sees thousands of people travel widely on journeys to religious festivals and pagodas during summer. But poorly maintained vehicles are often go-to options for cheap travel and the country lags behind others in the region on road construction and safety enforcement. —AFP

Anniversary of jet crash

JAKARTA: Grieving relatives tossed flowers into the sea yesterday where an Indonesian Lion Air jet crashed a year ago, killing all 189 on board, after a final accident report pointed to plane design flaws as a key factor in the disaster. The crash on October 29 last year was followed months later by a second accident-involving the same model Boeing 737-Max aircraft-when an Ethiopian Airlines plane went down with 157 people aboard, leading to the global grounding of the US planemaker’s entire MAX fleet. Yesterday’s ceremony was closed to media, but video footage supplied by relatives showed victims’ family members praying and casting flowers into the Java Sea where the plane dived moments after takeoff from Jakarta. —AFP

Syrian, Turkish armies in deadly border clash

BEIRUT: The armies of Syria and Turkey traded deadly fire yesterday for the first time since Ankara launched an anti-Kurdish offensive in early October, as Russia announced Kurdish forces had withdrawn from the border area. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Kurdish forces had pulled back from the entire border as per a deal struck between Ankara and regime backer Moscow in Sochi earlier this month.

The Turkish military and its Syrian proxies launched an offensive against Kurdish forces in northeastern Syria on Oct 9 with the aim of creating a buffer zone

roughly 30 km deep. “The withdrawal of armed units from territory where a security corridor should be created has been completed ahead of time,” Shoigu said, as quoted by Russian news agencies. He added that Syrian border guards and Russian military police had been deployed in the area.

Earlier this month, Kurdish forces agreed to withdraw from a 120-km long, Arab-majority segment of the 440-km border zone, but clashes have been reported since. The Turkish presidency said joint Turkish-Russian patrols - also planned under the Sochi deal - would verify the Kurdish forces’ withdrawal.

But the situation was complicated by clashes between Syrian and Turkish forces yesterday. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that “heavy fighting erupted for the first time between the Syrian and Turkish armies”, adding that six Syrian soldiers were killed near the key border town of Ras al-Ain. “Turkish artillery fire killed five regime

forces in battles on the edge of the village of Assadiya,” Rami Abdel Rahman, the head of the Observatory, told AFP. He added that Syrian fighters used by Turkey as the main ground force for the invasion had executed a government soldier they had captured.

Patrols

Left in the lurch after US troops withdrew from the border area, Kurdish forces turned to the Syrian government for protection. The regime’s forces moved quickly north and are now expected to deploy along much of the border zone. Turkish-Russian patrols in a 10-km-deep strip were to start on Tuesday at 1600 GMT, but strikes near the border town of Derbasiyeh threatened that deadline, both the Observatory and Syrian state media reported. The Observatory said Turkish and Russian military units had been due to meet at a border crossing to discuss the upcoming patrols. — AFP

Celebrities flee as multimillion-dollar homes burn in LA

LOS ANGELES: A fast-moving wildfire on Monday destroyed at least five multimillion-dollar homes in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Los Angeles and forced celebrities to flee in the middle of the night. Among neighborhoods under evacuation orders was the posh area of Brentwood, a section on the west side of the city that became world famous in 1994 when former football star OJ Simpson was accused of killing his ex-wife and a waiter there. Today Brentwood is home to basketball superstar LeBron James, A-list Hollywood actors, wealthy producers and media company executives.

James, who plays for the Los Angeles Lakers, said he and his family had to drive around in the early morning hours looking for a place to stay after fleeing the home he shares with his wife and three children. “Had to emergency evacuate my house and I’ve been driving around with my family trying to get rooms,” James wrote on Twitter around 4 am. He later added that he found a place to take them in. “Crazy night man!” he said. James bought a \$23 million, eight-bedroom home in Brentwood

in late 2017, according to media reports.

On the northern edge of Brentwood, a cluster of several multimillion-dollar homes were reduced to smoldering debris along a street festooned with Halloween decorations. A fake bloody arm, part of the holiday decorations, had turned into melted plastic at one dwelling, and a giant skull replica remained in the front of another. Heavy smoke and ash filled the air as water-dropping helicopters and airplane tankers buzzed overhead.

Dark fate

Actor and former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger also said he was among the thousands who had to evacuate overnight. “If you are in an evacuation zone, don’t screw around. Get out,” Schwarzenegger wrote on Twitter. A red-carpet premiere for Schwarzenegger’s new movie, “Terminator: Dark Fate,” that had been scheduled for Monday night was canceled due to fires in the area.

The “Terminator” premiere had been scheduled to take place in Hollywood, several miles from the fire zone. Food intended for the premiere party was being donated to local American Red Cross shelters that were housing fire evacuees, Paramount Pictures said. “Agents of SHIELD” actor Clark Gregg and “Sons of Anarchy” creator Kurt Sutter also said on Twitter that they had been forced to leave their homes.



LOS ANGELES: Halloween decoration in a house on fire at N Tigtetail Road in Crestwood Hills in Los Angeles, California. A wildfire broke out early Monday near the renowned Getty Center in Los Angeles, forcing widespread evacuations as the flames destroyed several homes in hillside communities. —AFP

The streets of Brentwood became familiar to TV viewers when Simpson stood trial on charges of stabbing ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and waiter Ronald Goldman. Prosecutors alleged Simpson killed the pair at her Brentwood home and then fled to his nearby mansion. Simpson was acquitted of murder but later found liable for the deaths in a civil case. He told the Associated Press in June he now lives in Las Vegas.

Monday’s fire erupted in the hills

above where Simpson had lived and was near the Getty Center, a museum for the art collection of late oil magnate J Paul Getty that includes works by Rembrandt and Van Gogh, according to the museum’s website. The Getty fire has forced schools to close in several areas, including the public school district encompassing Santa Monica and Pacific Palisades and the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). —Reuters

Trump rips Chicago as more dangerous than Afghanistan

CHICAGO: US President Donald Trump came not to praise Chicago but to condemn it - and did he ever. In remarks to a meeting of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Trump said Chicago with its high rate of murders compared unfavorably with Afghanistan, where the United States has been at war since an invasion triggered by the Sept 11, 2001, attacks. “It’s embarrassing to us as a nation. All over the world, they’re talking about Chicago. Afghanistan is a safe place by comparison, it’s true,” said Trump.

Trump also blasted Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson, who had refused to attend the event to express opposition to the Republican president, who was making his first trip to the heavily Democratic city since taking office in early 2017. “Here’s a man that could not bother to show up

for a meeting of police chiefs - the most respected people in the country - in his hometown and with the president of the United States. And you know why? It’s because he’s not doing his job,” Trump said of Johnson.

Homicides in Chicago in 2018 numbered 561, down from 653 in 2017. The Chicago Tribune said 436 homicides had been recorded so far in 2019 in the third most-populous US city. Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, a Democrat, responded to Trump on Twitter, saying it was no surprise that Trump “brought his insulting, ignorant buffoonery to Chicago.” “Luckily, in this city, we know the truth and we will not let anyone - no matter how high the office - denigrate who we are as a people or our status as a welcoming city,” she said.

A few thousand people rallied outside of Trump Tower in Chicago, where Trump was inside raising about \$4 million for his 2020 re-election campaign and the Republican National Committee. They held signs protesting Trump and his presidency, banged on drums and blew whistles. “Impeach and convict” read one sign. ? Retired suburban teacher Claudia Feeney, 68, said Trump should be impeached. “He’s a disgrace to the presidency and a danger to the country,” she said. —Reuters



CHICAGO: Demonstrators protest President Donald Trump’s visit to Chicago outside Trump International Hotel & Tower in Chicago, Illinois. —AFP

International

EU lawmakers visit Kashmir amid stone pelting and empty streets

India complains to aviation body after Pakistan's rebuff to Modi

SRINAGAR: European Union lawmakers arrived in Srinagar yesterday, the first foreign delegation to visit Indian Kashmir's main city since New Delhi revoked the region's autonomy in August. Hours before their arrival, small protests erupted in at least 40 locations around the city, prompting security forces to fire tear gas, a police official and Reuters witnesses said, despite heavy troop deployment.

Many streets remained strewn with stones, shops were closed and roadside vendors absent as the delegation of around 20 EU lawmakers arrived in the city shortly after noon. Indian officials say the situation in Kashmir is returning to normal and hope that the EU delegation's visit will help counter international condemnation of the government's handling of the situation.

But opposition parties are angry that European lawmakers are being allowed to visit a region from which most Indian politicians have been barred since Aug. 5, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government revoked Kashmir's special status and imposed a harsh crackdown to stifle dissent.

"MPs (members of parliament) from Europe are welcome to go on a guided tour of Jammu and Kashmir while Indian MPs are banned and denied entry," Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet. "There is something very wrong with that." Indian security officials turned back several opposition politicians from Srinagar airport over the last several weeks saying the situation was not stable enough for such visits.

The EU delegation - some of them from far-right parties - was driven in a cavalcade of black SUVs, accompanied by armed troops and security jeeps, to a military cantonment in Srinagar. This was to be followed by meetings with civil society members, businessmen, two government officials said. On Monday Modi received the delegation and said their visit would give them a clear view of the development priorities of the region, the prime minister's office said.

Pakistan airspace

Meanwhile, the United Nations' aviation agency has asked Pakistan for more information about an overflight request from India, it said yesterday, after Islamabad denied permission to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to cross its airspace on an overseas tour. Tension has flared between the neighbors over the disputed Kashmir after India stripped the Himalayan region of its autonomy and severed telecoms links for months, with flights over Pakistan becoming the latest sticking-point in relations.

Modi, who flew to Saudi Arabia on Monday for an investors' summit, took a circuitous route because of Pakistan's refusal, an Indian foreign ministry source said. India had taken up the issue with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the official added. "It is a standard thing we do, we seek permission from the countries on the route," said the official, who sought anonymity because of the sensitive diplomatic situation. "It was done in this case too, and it was refused."

Pakistan's foreign minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, said Modi was being blocked because of his government's repression in the Muslim-majority territory of Kashmir. "In the context of the gross Indian atrocities in occupied Kashmir, we have decided not to allow him use our airspace," he said in a ministry statement on Sunday. India withdrew Kashmir's special status in August in order to tighten its grip over the region and clamped down on public gatherings, telecommunications and detained scores of leaders, provoking condemnation from Pakistan.

Islamabad previously refused a request in September from Modi to cross its airspace on a flight to Germany as tension runs high over Kashmir. In Montreal, ICAO spokesman Anthony Philbin said India had sent the agency a letter about Pakistan's refusal to grant overflight clearance. It is not clear, however, what action the agency could take to resolve the dispute between Islamabad and New Delhi over such clearance.

The 1944 Convention on International Civil Aviation,



KASHMIR: Members of a European lawmakers' delegation are being transported towards a hotel during a lockdown in Srinagar yesterday. — AFP

which established ICAO and promotes cooperation between countries, only applies to the operations of civilian aircraft, and not to state or military aircraft. Philbin said he believed flights carrying national leaders were considered state aircraft, and so not subject to ICAO provisions.

A similar ratcheting-up of tension led to an aerial clash between the arch foes in the skies over Kashmir this year, prompting Pakistan to shut its airspace for months to all aircraft travelling to and from India, forcing airlines to take longer routes. — Agencies

Pakistan's former PM Sharif fighting for life

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is "critically unwell", his doctor said yesterday, days after the three-time leader now serving a prison sentence for corruption suffered a minor heart attack. Sharif is currently in hospital in the eastern city of Lahore after receiving "indefinite" bail on medical grounds in one of his graft convictions, with an Islamabad court due to decide on another Tuesday.

His name remains on a stop list, meaning that he must remain in the country for the time being. "Former PM #NawazSharif, critically unwell, is fighting the battle for his health & life," his personal physician, Adnan Khan, tweeted yesterday. In addition to the minor heart attack, Sharif has a low platelet count, both of which are being further complicated by "deteriorating kidney functions" Khan added. He said poor blood sugar and blood pressure control was taking its toll, adding that "establishing a definitive diagnosis and subsequent management poses considerable risk to #NawazSharif's fragile and unstable health". The 69-year-old former premier, known as the "Lion of Punjab", was first taken to hospital last week when his blood platelet count dropped to dangerous levels.

Sharif, Pakistan's longest serving prime minister, is a political survivor who has repeatedly roared back to the country's top office, underscoring the unpredictable nature of Pakistani politics. A hugely wealthy steel tycoon from Punjab, Pakistan's wealthiest province, he was considered strong on the economy and infrastructure, but inherited sagging finances and a stifling energy crisis when he was elected for the third time in 2013.

Seen as a pragmatist in the West, he raised eyebrows by calling for peace talks with the Pakistani Taliban, blamed for killing thousands of Pakistanis since 2002. He earned a reputation for combativeness during his two previous terms as prime minister, from 1990 to 1993 - when he was sacked, also on corruption charges-and from 1997 to 1999, when he was deposed by the powerful military.

He blames the security establishment for again targeting him in 2017, when the Supreme Court disqualified him



ISLAMABAD: Supporters of Pakistan's former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif shout anti-government slogans outside a hospital, where Nawaz was admitted after his condition deteriorated yesterday. — AFP

from politics for life over graft allegations, which he denies. He later received a seven-year jail sentence. His brother Shehbaz Sharif, formerly the chief minister of Punjab, took over the leadership of the family's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party-but failed to make a dent against World Cup-winning cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan in last year's general election. Khan has since launched a high-profile and controversial anti-corruption drive targeting several PML-N leaders.

Ramping up security

In another development, Pakistani officials have ordered additional security forces be deployed to the capital Islamabad, authorities confirmed yesterday, days ahead of the expected arrival of thousands of Islamist protesters

calling for the dissolution of the government. Islamabad police spokesperson Zia Bajwa said extra police forces from across the country were being deployed "at the main entry points" of the capital, adding that security was also being increased around main government buildings and the diplomatic enclave.

A senior law enforcement official also confirmed the deployment of reinforcements. The march represents the first major challenge to Prime Minister Imran Khan's government as his administration battles rising public anger over a faltering economy and double-digit inflation. The "Azadi (Freedom) March" is being led by Khan's long-time rival Maulana Fazlur Rehman, who heads the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JU-I-F), one of the country's largest Islamist parties. — Agencies

Earthquake kills 7 in Philippines

MINDANAO: The death toll from a strong earthquake in the southern Philippines has risen to seven, disaster and police officials said yesterday, as aftershocks continued to jolt many parts of Mindanao. The 6.6 magnitude quake hit yesterday, damaging buildings, toppling power lines and triggering landslides in the central area of the Philippines' southern island. A seven-year-old child and his 44-year old father were among those who were killed in the North Cotabato province after they were struck by a boulder, disaster officials said.

Authorities said the death toll could rise further because many injured were not immediately brought to hospitals. "It was depressing to see the damage left by the earthquake," Abril Espadera, a disaster official in North Cotabato, told Reuters, as he recalled seeing collapsed homes and demolished buildings in the province, including schools. Smaller tremors rattled nervous residents throughout the day and those who were afraid to return to their homes set up tents to shelter near school yards, Espadera said.

In Magsaysay town in Davao del Sur province, rescuers were trying to recover three bodies after landslides in two separate towns swallowed parts of agricultural areas, police said. The quake, whose magnitude was initially put at 6.7 by the European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre, was the second powerful quake to strike Mindanao in two weeks. Authorities had flagged the risk of landslides after the 6.3 quake on Oct 16 in central Mindanao that killed seven and injured more than 200.

Earthquakes are common in the Philippines, which is on the geologically active Pacific Ring of Fire. Power cables swayed in Davao city, the home town of



MAGSAYSAY: Photo shows a general view of the damaged town hall after a 6.6 magnitude earthquake hit Magsaysay, in southern island of Mindanao. — AFP

President Rodrigo Duterte, where people rushed to open spaces, and some fainted out of fear. The quake also triggered power cuts in nearby General Santos city, media said. Some schools in the area have suspended classes. Duterte's office has called for calm as it mobilized all government agencies to undertake damage assessment and to coordinate rescue and relief operations. — Reuters

UK truck deaths cast spotlight on trade in humans

LONDON: The discovery of 39 bodies in a truck in London last week cast a spotlight on the global trade in human beings and sparked debate about Britain's approach to tackling smugglers and traffickers. A British court heard on Monday that a global crime ring had been involved in smuggling the dead - many of whom appear to have come from Vietnam - as the driver of the truck faced charges of manslaughter and human trafficking.

Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc on Saturday told authorities to establish whether Vietnamese citizens were among the dead, and to probe allegations of trafficking. Unlike trafficking, which is control over a person for the purpose of exploitation, smuggling is merely illegal entry into another country - although the latter can turn into the former. About 10% of the suspected 7,000 slavery victims found in Britain last year were Vietnamese. Most are trafficked for labor such as cannabis cultivation and work in nail salons. Globally, more than 40 million people are estimated by the United Nations to be trapped in modern slavery as poverty, conflict and climate change fuel the \$150-billion-a-year trade. The Thomson Reuters Foundation asked six anti-slavery experts about how to prevent such deaths from happening again.

Sara Thornton, Britain's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner: "This is a shocking illustration of the cruel and complex issue that is human trafficking in Britain today. "Whilst we do not yet know the full details of the journeys that these individuals made, this case bears all the hallmarks of human trafficking. "As we rethink our migration policies, it is essential that the needs of vulnerable migrants are front and centre. "We need to ensure that new migration policies are stress-tested to ensure that they do not provide opportunities for the traffickers to exploit very vulnerable people."

Mimi Vu, Independent Anti-Trafficking Expert In Vietnam: "The government and businesses must look at what the root causes are, realizing that people that are less educated are more likely to take these risks because they are poor. "All the work on this has to be done before anyone leaves, as this all has to be done in-country. "When you address the root causes, you will convince the Vietnamese that this is not worth the risk. "They have to believe in very concrete meaningful ways that they have a future in Vietnam. "But we are losing our people to trafficking and slavery."

Lucia Granada, Chief Executive Of Focus On Labor Exploitation: "We must, of course, investigate and punish those who profit from the desperation of people, but to effectively prevent this from happening again we must recognize the role of Britain in driving people into these dangerous routes. "It is important to recognize that British immigration policies and border control approach have played a key part in restricting their options. "With no available regular immigration pathways and the constant threat of detention and deportation in transit and upon arrival, those seeking survival in Britain become easy prey. "This tragedy exposed one more time that prosecuting individual traffickers is not enough. We need to open safe routes of regular migration and end the hostile environment."

Justine Currell, Executive Director of Unseen: "Whether people get into the back of a lorry through their own volition or from having been forced or coerced, the ultimate penalty is death. "Even when trafficking and exploitation is not the primary factor of movement, those entering the country illegally and who lack status become increasingly vulnerable and susceptible to abuse and exploitation. "Awareness-raising in communities and specific source countries to deter people from putting their lives at risk would help to highlight the pitfalls of taking this dangerous course of action. "Increased targeted checks at the border may also help to root out such movement and any intervention subsequently made before another disaster occurs." — Reuters

World unprepared for the impact of climate change

GENEVA: The world faces increased flooding, droughts and possible conflicts due to the effects of climate change on fresh water supplies drawn from mountains but is "woefully unprepared" to tackle these risks, experts said. Mountain-sourced water supplies, which provide about half of all drinking water worldwide, is becoming more unpredictable as warmer temperatures melt glaciers and change precipitation patterns and river levels, affecting countries unevenly.

In some areas, such as the Alps, extra water from glaciers has caused flash floods while shrinking snow cover in the Andes has led to droughts in places like Chile. Scientists gathered for a "High Mountain Summit" at the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in Geneva this week are seeking better cooperation between governments, researchers and space agencies.

"We are woefully underprepared. Our infrastructure was built in the 19th and 20th centuries in the mountains and downstream of the mountains and we don't have that climate any more," said John Pomeroy, a professor at Canada's University of Saskatchewan, who is co-chairing the event. Switzerland, the host country, estimates that damage to its infrastructure, including railways, caused by climate change could cost 1 billion Swiss francs (\$1 billion) a year. But many poorer countries experiencing similar challenges are unlikely to have funds on that scale to fix problems. — Reuters

Analysis

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Colombia ex-rebels remove mines they left during war

A grenade blew off the hands of onetime FARC guerrilla Edwin Correa, but he only surrendered his rifle once a peace deal was struck nearly three years ago. Since then, the former bomb expert has joined a different sort of fighting unit - one dedicated to removing the land mines in Colombia's countryside that he once helped to plant. "I spent nearly my entire life as a rebel. (...) We placed mines that we are now eliminating ourselves," the 36-year-old Correa told AFP. Correa joined the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) when he was just 14 years old. By the age of 19, he had lost both hands. In order to fire his rifle, he would brace it against his shoulder with the remaining stump of his arm and pull the trigger with a cord. Today, he dons a bulletproof vest and a protective visor without assistance. Four other former rebels work under his command.

The group wields metal detectors as they advance on a path marked with white sticks to a wooded area believed to be booby-trapped in the countryside outside the southern town of La Montanita. They scan underneath shrubs for mines buried at the site for the purposes of their training course. They learn how to isolate the explosives by tagging them with cords and sticks painted red. Then, they gently remove them from the ground, which is currently sodden from the last tropical rainstorm. The group then retreats to a safe distance - 100 meters or so - and detonates the mines by pulling black cables attached to them. La Montanita is in the heart of the Caguan region, a former stronghold for the rebel group founded in the 1960s. It is also among the towns in Colombia with the most land mine victims.

Farming without fear

The area is also now the home base of Humanicemos DH, an organization that helps former rebels who want to become professional deminers, says director Angela Orrego, a former rebel commander herself. Some 7,000 fighters have surrendered their weapons since the November 2016 signing of a peace deal between the FARC and the government of then president Juan Manuel Santos. Correa and about 100 of their former brothers-in-arms joined Humanicemos last year. The group is funded by the United Nations and the European Union with an annual budget of \$1.2 million.

As they await full certification as deminers, they get training from experts with the UN Mine Action Service. They also get computer training, English classes and even learn about meditation. After Afghanistan, Colombia is the country worst affected by leftover land mines. They were planted in 31 of the country's 32 departments by all sides in the bloody decades-long conflict - rebels, paramilitary fighters, armed forces. Correa, who spent years laying explosive devices, says he feels "useful" by leaving locals land stripped of mines "so they can plant crops, harvest and move about easily."

Mines to protect coca plants

Since 1985, mines and other unexploded ordnance have struck more than 11,780 people. In 20 percent of those cases, the incident was fatal, according to Colombia's high commission for peace. Land mines "still affect the lives of millions of people because every hour, they claim a new victim," says the country's national center for historical memory (CNMH). The mine removal training in La Montanita is taking place near a center where about 300 ex-rebels and their loved ones live.

The location, in a strategic corridor linking eastern and western Colombia, was chosen by design. "There were many battles here involving the army, the rebels and the paramilitary fighters because of the coca," the primary ingredient in cocaine, says German Balanta of Humanicemos. In a civil conflict like the one in Colombia, mines are "an important weapon that allows small-scale forces to face larger ones," Balanta explains. Porfirio Andrade, a representative of a victims' association cited in a CNMH report, recalled that the guerrillas "said they had to use them to defend themselves". But, he added, "in reality, in a coca plantation zone, mines are used to kill." Today, mines are still used by fighters from the National Liberation Army (ELN), Colombia's last active rebel group, as well as dissident FARC fighters who rejected the peace deal and drug gangs.

Often made with whatever is available - plastic bottles, PVC pipe, other containers - and armed with a spring mechanism, the mines contain TNT, which does not degrade in the high humidity. So they can remain live for up to 15 years. In addition to their long shelf life, there is no real catalog of where the mines are placed, complicating the task of finding and removing them. Some were hastily placed in battle to slow down enemy forces. Others were buried by combatants who have since died, in places where the vegetation has changed or even in zones shifted by earthquakes. — AFP

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In this file photograph taken on Jan 27, 2019, a border police officer carries drugs seized from a passenger at Felix Eboué Airport in Matoury, French Guiana. — AFP

Daily duel between customs and drug mules

Every day they come. Drug mules from French Guiana in South America, carrying cocaine in their luggage or their stomachs, playing a cat-and-mouse game with customs officials at Paris' Orly airport. Some get caught. Some do not. The risks are high, but they have little to lose. In the customs office, 31-year-old "Henriette" waits on a plastic chair. Her name, and those of other mules in this report, have been changed to protect their identities.

Arrested on arrival in Paris, Henriette sits with her arms folded, head hanging, expressionless. Next to her, a large pink suitcase in which a scan revealed suspicious dark shapes. An agent opens the case. "There are only T-shirts... it's autumn here Madam..." she enquires. But Henriette, sporting a black T-shirt, does not reply: she does not speak a word of French, only one of a clutch of local languages used in Guiana, a French overseas department.

The agent pulls out seven packets marked as containing Asian seaweed. "This is not complicated: It should be light and soft, but it is compact and weighs more than a kilo," says an agent with a sceptical air who goes on to unwrap the packages and remove their outer layers of algae to reveal black, brick-shaped parcels. Officers had detained Henriette because her hands were trembling as she gripped the handlebar of her luggage trolley. Jean-Pierre, 21, was brought in because he had a "robotic gait" typical of people who tape cocaine bullets to their thighs or insert it into their rectums.

Shorts in winter

Other giveaways? "Some wear shorts in winter, they do not know who is fetching them at the airport, or they say they're going to Toulouse (700 km away)... by taxi," said customs official Olivier Gourdon. The Cayenne-Orly route, with two incoming flights per day, has become the most popular air passage for South American cocaine to France.

Last year, 1,349 mules in or from Guiana were arrested, double the 2017 number, police data shows.

With an estimated eight to ten smugglers per flight, the drug gangs are trying to "saturate the control capacities" of French customs, said Gourdon. Some among the mules are "sacrificed". They are given only hand luggage which means they will go through customs first, with only a bit of product, poorly disguised. Sometimes they are given up in an anonymous call - all to distract customs officials while those with the bigger hauls slip through. While Jean-Pierre puts up a fuss, shouting and swearing at officers, Henriette bats not an eyelid as a knife plunges into one of the black bricks she carried, leaving a trail of white powder. Costing about €5,000 (\$5,500) in Guiana, a kilogram of the drug is sold for seven times that in France to dealers who can double their investment by hawking to individual clients. Henriette was carrying eight kilograms.

Death is 'rapid'

Sometimes, the smugglers are made to ingest their cargo. If caught, they are brought to the Hotel-Dieu hospital in Paris where they pass, under supervision, the drug-filled bullets they swallowed. Nine rooms are reserved for this laborious and undignified task, under the watchful eye of doctors, police and lawyers. After three days and with the help of a pink laxative gel, 26-year-old Sylvain has expelled all 49 cocaine pellets he had in his body, crouched over a toilet bowl with no flush mechanism.

Long gone are the days of swallowing cocaine stuffed into condoms - today's smugglers have gone high-tech. All the Guiana pods are the same: small, black, heat-sealed capsules about three centimeters wide. As the packaging material has improved, fatal accidents from burst cocaine pods have decreased: two in France in the last 10 years. "When a pod bursts, it (death) is extremely rapid," said

Nicolas Soussy, head of the hospital's medical-judicial department.

No understanding

Those willing to risk their health, lives and future are mainly poor, unemployed Guianans in their 20s with "no understanding of the death risk," recounts a nurse who has heard many stories. Mules often talk about how hard it was to swallow the pods, with the aid of a lubricant in the throat. And for what? A few thousand euros of the potential goldmine in their bellies. At the court of Creteil outside Paris, which has jurisdiction over the Orly airport region, at least two or three smugglers appear every day. The court generally imposes a sentence of about one year per kilo of cocaine smuggled, but even this is no deterrent.

With a 22-percent unemployment rate in Guiana - rising to 44 percent among 18- to 24-year-olds, there is no shortage of replacements for captured mules. On a given day, 28-year-old tile-layer Thierry is one of three people in the dock. He was arrested with two kilos of cocaine hidden in his underwear, his shoes, his suitcase and his stomach, which contained 76 pods. "Is it the first time you did this?" asked the judge. "Yes." "You did return trips in October, November and December 2018, and in April, May and June 2019," the presiding officer continued. "I went to visit my mother." Thierry got a two-year sentence. Next in line is Henriette, wiping her eyes on the same black T-shirt she wore when she was arrested. She has never been to school and survives on state handouts. As the judge talks of the dangers of cocaine to French society, Henriette's lawyer highlights the misery of Guiana's "neglected" youth. A lenient punishment for her eight kilos: Henriette gets two years' jail time at the prison of Fresnes south of Paris, where half the inmates are female Guianan drug mules. Three months pregnant, and with eight other children in Guiana, she will give birth in prison, far from home. — AFP

The irony of cable

That's where Mery draws the line, since she doesn't want to spend her whole paycheck on subscriptions. But the streaming options are limitless. From YouTube, which has a Premium version for \$11.99 per month, to platforms for Broadway lovers or wrestling fans, to all professional sports leagues, which offer different packages for fans. The Los Angeles Times previously listed 40 streaming options, which would cost a total of \$353.43 per month, but the Deloitte survey mentioned up to 300 different streaming services. Almost half of people surveyed (47 percent) said they were "frustrated by the growing number of subscriptions and services," which make it "harder to find the content they want", the study said. "Back at the beginning, it wasn't a hard decision... to sign up for Netflix or Amazon. It was just two streamers," said Nunan. "But am I really going to sign up for six streamers or seven? As the normal consumer, I doubt it," he said.

Gene Del Vecchio, a marketing professor at the University of Southern California (USC) who specializes in entertainment, estimated that users will end up with the same complaint that currently causes them to drop cable: they spend a lot of money for a lot of programs they don't watch. "I think what may happen is that they will look for one a la carte menu," he said. "They will start to say, I just want these individual shows, and I don't want to pay for all of this other programming that I never watch." — AFP

The streaming war's first victim: Your wallet

With two young daughters, Mery Montenegro is preparing to add Disney+ to her list of streaming subscriptions, which already includes Netflix, Hulu and Amazon - and, when combined with her cable TV bill, costs her almost \$1,500 per year. Her eldest Victoria, 6, asks every day when the new platform will launch, with its impressive catalogue of films and series from all of Disney's studios. The answer is Nov 12: Mery, who works at an advertising agency in Washington, knows the date well. It's the day she'll start paying \$6.99 more per month.

Disney+, HBO Max (AT&T), Peacock (Comcast), Apple TV+ and the new short video platform Quibi are all players in a streaming war that will only grow worse at a time when more Americans prefer streaming to cable. "It's going to have a huge impact on people's budgets," said Tom Nunan, an Oscar-winning film producer and professor at the University of California, Los Angeles

(UCLA) School of Theater, Film and Television. "I don't think that there is enough room for subscription relationships with all of these streamers for a typical American."

In a Deloitte survey published in March, 69 percent of respondents said they had at least one streaming subscription, while 65 percent said they had cable. And while many households have cut the cord to go cable-free with the advent of streaming, 43 percent of those surveyed were paying for both. Mery, 36, is in the third group, and not by choice.

In her neighborhood of Alexandria, west of the US capital, she says she found no Internet-only option cheaper than her current plan, so she pays \$90 per month for a cable subscription she "hardly" uses, other than for news or the occasional baseball game. To that, she adds \$5.99 each month for Hulu - the service's cheapest plan, with commercials - and \$16 for Netflix, which she considers essential. "I use it on the subway when I go to work, to cook, to watch something at home," she explained.

Mery also pays \$12.99 per month for e-commerce giant Amazon's Prime membership, which includes its streaming service. Prime is also useful for renting movies, which Mery prefers over the cinema, curling up with a glass of wine after the girls have gone to bed. That's \$124.98 per month, soon plus \$6.99 for Disney+. Total: \$131.97 per month, or \$1,583.64 per year.

Operation ghost net

One of the world's busiest shipping lanes, the Baltic Sea has been singled out by the European Union and environmental charities as in urgent need of action over high pollution levels. Although Finnish authorities have been actively trying to address that over the years, unlike in larger Baltic states such as Sweden and Germany, Finland has not tackled ghost nets until now. "In Finland we are a bit behind," says Kotilainen, who is part of a team that recently launched the first initiative against ghost nets in waters off Finland. "Many countries already have done this before. But maybe we have woken up a bit."

With its long tradition of fishing for salmon, herring and perch, several areas off Finland's west coast were identified after months of research and testing as likely ghost net problem zones. Two fishing boats were equipped to drag the seabed using weighted-down hooks "designed to be as soft as possible" on the seafloor, Kotilainen says.

Dragging zone

Out at sea, the red and white trawler Kalkas rocks heavily in the Baltic wind. Once it reaches the day's dragging site about half an hour from Reposaari harbor, it slows to a halt. The crew starts the winch to lower the dragging equipment 14 m down to the seafloor. Slowly but surely the boat covers its three-kilometer dragging zone, or "transect", then the team winches the drag back to the

surface. This time, the hooks are empty. "We have a bit more than 300 kilometres now dragged," Kotilainen says. "In about 10 percent of the transects we've caught something." He says that the problem of ghost nets appears to be smaller in Finnish waters than in neighboring Sweden - the Finnish seas are frozen for longer so there's less fishing. Nonetheless, the team has fished out around 1,000 meters' worth of abandoned nets so far, along with many ropes, weights and other fishing gear.

Throwing money into the sea

Depending on its results, the team will recommend whether to expand the ghost net recovery. Another of its aims is to find ways to recycle all the recovered plastic including the discarded nets, large numbers of which also litter Finland's harbor sides. Markku Saiha, of the Finnish Fishermen's Association, says that people need to be made more aware of the impact of their lost nets. "We have to tell people that the risk is there all the time if they abandon their nets in the archipelago or on the coast," he tells AFP.

Nets are also a safety risk for small boats, and fishermen are losing money by discarding their nets, says Saiha. "It's money. No one wants to leave money in the sea." But, despite the dire warnings of Baltic pollution, he sees reason for optimism. "This is one starting point," Saiha says. "After 10 years, maybe it'll be a better situation, I believe that strongly." — AFP

Fishing plastic 'ghost nets' out of the Baltic

On a small fishing boat out in the Baltic Sea, Pekka Kotilainen rifles through buckets of fishing gear, mixed with rubbish and mussel shells. "We'll have something like one kilometre of nets by the end," he says, picking out old fishing nets that were abandoned or lost in the water but which still catch fish and other wildlife. "They will take fish, which will die and go rotten, but also birds and marine mammals," Kotilainen, a scientist at the Helsinki-based Finnish Environment Institute tells AFP.

Finding and plucking the plastic "ghost nets" out of the water is painstaking work as many are not visible and can be tangled on rocks or even shipwrecks on the seafloor. But the submerged plastic is gradually worn down by the sea's currents, releasing harmful microplastics into the ecosystem, says Kotilainen. The UN's environmental and food agencies have estimated that ghost nets account for one tenth of all the plastic waste in the world's oceans. And they have been known to trap animals as large as dolphins and whales, causing them slow, painful deaths.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

12 GCC real GDP growth rates lowered
led by both oil and non-oil factors



13 Cuba seeks hard currency as dollar
shops reopen after 15 years



14 Gulf Bank provides funding for major oil,
infrastructure and construction projects



NEW YORK: Sir Richard Branson, Founder of Virgin Galactic, rings a ceremonial bell on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) to promote the first day of trading of Virgin Galactic Holdings shares on Monday in New York City. — AFP

US consumer confidence slips again in Oct

Trade deficit falls in September, inventories mixed

WASHINGTON: American consumers were less optimistic about the US economy in the near term in October as confidence slipped for the third consecutive month, according to a survey published yesterday. However, despite the ongoing trade conflict with China, the key confidence measure remains at a fairly high level and remains healthy going into the year-end shopping season, according to the Conference Board.

"Consumer confidence was relatively flat in October, following a decrease in September," said Lynn Franco, the group's head of economic indicators, said in a statement. "However, confidence levels remain high and there are no indications that consumers will curtail their holiday spending." The consumer confidence index dipped to 125.9 in October from 126.3 in September, according to the survey. That reflected a drop in expectations for the coming six months, and confounded analysts who had expected an increase.

US President Donald Trump cheered the numbers despite the decline. "Consumer Confidence number very good. Housing sales in September up nicely. Economy Rocks!," Trump tweeted, also referring to an

increase in pending home sales—those under contract. A slightly bigger share of respondents expect to see fewer jobs available in the next six months, according to the Conference Board survey.

But more respondents were upbeat about the present situation and expected business conditions to improve in coming months. "We expect slowing payroll growth gradually to depress consumers' sentiment through the late fall and winter but it's hard to expect it to plunge as long as the stock market is resilient and gas prices are low," Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics said in a client note.

The cutoff date for the Conference Board survey was October 18 — a week after Trump announced a "very substantial phase one" deal with China to resolve some of the trade issues that have led to steep tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars in trade between the economic powers. That in turn has boosted stock prices to record levels in some cases.

The grinding trade conflict has undermined business confidence, crimped investment and caused consumers to worry more as well, which lead to a sharp drop in

consumer sentiment in September.

A sustained loss of confidence could erode consumer spending, which has been a primary engine of the US economy. Shepherdson noted a "sudden plunge" in the index measuring plans to buy a new vehicle, dropping to the lowest point in more than six years, which he called "an ominous development" though too early to call a trend.

Meanwhile, the US goods trade deficit fell in September as trade tensions restricted the flow of goods, but that will probably not change expectations of a further deceleration in economic growth in the third quarter.

The Commerce Department said on Monday the goods trade gap dropped 3.6 percent to \$70.4 billion last month. Exports declined 1.6 percent, pulled down by plunges in shipments of foods and feeds, as well as automobiles. Goods imports tumbled 2.3 percent amid decreases in imports of industrial supplies, capital goods, motor vehicles and consumer goods. The Commerce Department also reported retail inventories rose 0.3 percent in September after dropping 0.2 per-

cent in the prior month. Retail inventories, excluding motor vehicles and parts, the component that goes into the calculation of gross domestic product gained 0.3 percent after slipping 0.2 percent in August.

But wholesale inventories dropped 0.3 percent last month after being unchanged in August. Data this month showed a cooling in job growth in September and retail sales dropping for the first time in seven months. Manufacturing output also declined last month in part as a strike at General Motors depressed auto production. The economy is losing momentum largely because of a 15-month trade war between the United States and China, which has sapped business confidence and undermined capital expenditure. The waning stimulus from last year's \$1.5 trillion tax cut package is also constraining growth. According to a Reuters survey of economists, GDP likely increased at a 1.7 percent annualized rate in the third quarter. The economy grew at a 2.0 percent rate in the second quarter, slowing from the January-March quarter's brisk 3.1 percent pace. The government will publish its snapshot of third-quarter GDP today. — Agencies

India's IndiGo makes \$33bn mega-order of Airbus planes

PARIS: Indian airline IndiGo has placed an order for 300 A320neo family aircraft, Airbus said yesterday, in one of its largest-ever orders from a single firm, worth over \$33.2 billion at catalogue prices.

The leading Indian airline said the order would help it maintain its fast growth pace while helping it cut costs. "The fuel-efficient A320neo family aircraft will allow IndiGo to maintain its strong focus on lowering operating costs and delivering fuel efficiency with high standards of reliability," Riyaz Peermohamed, Chief Aircraft Acquisition and Financing Officer of IndiGo, said in a statement.

IndiGo is already the largest operator of Airbus's latest-generation single-aisle mod-



In this file photograph, crew members of an IndiGo Airbus A320 aircraft wave an Indian national flag at The India Aviation 2016 airshow at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad. — AFP

el, which have become a top seller as they offer airlines considerable savings in fuel, one of their biggest costs. The airline currently operates 97 of the planes. Including the 300 ordered yesterday, it has ordered a total of 730 of the medium-range models. This latest IndiGo order includes a mix of the A320neo, the larger-capacity A321neo

and the A321XLR, with a longer range.

"IndiGo has brilliantly demonstrated the relevance of the A320neo for leading low-cost operators, and the A321neo—and now the A321XLR—provide our operators with the logical next step in cost efficiency, passenger comfort and market coverage," said Airbus' chief commercial officer, Christian Scherer. —AFP

Aramco to make stock market debut on Dec 11

DUBAI: Energy giant Saudi Aramco will make its long-awaited debut on the Riyadh stock market on December 11, Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya television said yesterday. The broadcaster, citing unnamed sources, said the Saudi exchange will announce on November 3 a timetable for the initial public offering including the release on November 17 of the targeted share price.

"Aramco IPO will begin on December 4," at which point investors can subscribe to the giant offering, the sources said, adding that the shares would then start trading on the Saudi Tadawul exchange on December 11. The IPO forms the cornerstone of a reform program conceived by the kingdom's de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to wean the Saudi economy off its reliance on oil.

Aramco was expected to launch the

first part of a two-stage IPO earlier in October, but decided to push the trading date back to December or January, reportedly to factor in quarterly earnings, and also amid problems with the valuation. Saudi Arabia was hoping that the company is evaluated at \$2 trillion so its proposed sale of five percent of its share would generate the desired \$100 billion.

But reports said that the valuation came in lower than that.

Sources also told AFP in mid-September that the mammoth share offering could be delayed after an attack on Saudi oil facilities knocked out half of the output of the world's top crude exporter.

The Aramco listing is expected to be a major topic at a major investment summit that opened yesterday in Riyadh. Aramco chairman Yasir Al-Rumayyan, speaking on stage at an opening session, commented that "soon we will have more shareholders", but declined to elaborate on the company's plans. After the listing on the domestic stock exchange, Aramco is believed to be planning to sell the rest of the five percent on an international bourse. The Al-Arabiya report made no mention of those plans. —AFP

GCC real GDP growth rates lowered led by both oil and non-oil factors

IMF releases regional economic outlook

KUWAIT: Taking cues from global weakness and the rising geopolitical issues in the region, the IMF lowered its GDP growth forecasts for the MENA region. The revisions were noticeable for the GCC countries led primarily by lower oil output expectations for key oil exporters in the region. IMF projected real GDP for the GCC region to grow at 0.7 percent for 2019 down from 2 percent at 2018. Growth rate is expected to pick up in 2020 to 2.5 percent driven mainly by oil GDP for Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, according to the IMF.

All GCC countries received downward revisions in real GDP growth for 2019 except Bahrain which received a 0.1 percent upward revision for 2019 to reach 2 percent compared to 1.8 percent growth in 2018. Saudi Arabia's real GDP for 2019 is forecasted to grow by 0.2 percent (-190bps) in 2019 and 3.1 percent (+20bps) in 2020 the second highest GDP growth among the GCC countries in 2020 after Oman.

Both oil GDP and non-oil GDP growth rates for almost all the GCC countries were lowered by the IMF in its latest regional economic outlook. The GCC region and even the larger MENA region has seen an increase in geopolitical events including the attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities, the trouble with oil tankers, and the conflicts in Libya and Yemen. These events have affected both oil and non-oil economic activity in the region and increased volatility of oil prices. And due to the fiscal dependence on oil revenues, these recent events have increased fiscal vulnerabilities for the region as lower oil revenues limits the ability of the countries to finance infrastructure projects.

The non-oil economy is expected to be the strongest in Qatar which is expected to

grow oil GDP by 3.4 percent in 2019 and by 3.6 percent in 2020 led by the preparations for the World Cup in 2022. A slightly slower growth is expected in the UAE at 1.6 percent and 3.0 percent in 2019 and 2020, respectively, as the country prepares to host the Expo next year. For Kuwait, higher infrastructure spending in 2019 and 2020 is expected to drive non-oil GDP growth by 2.5 percent and 3.0 percent, respectively.

Oil production growth

IMF data showed the oil production in the GCC is expected to reach a four year low of 17.34 mb/d in 2019 and gradually increase to 17.67 mb/d next year. The higher output comes on the back of higher production in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and an increase in gas production in Oman and Qatar, according to the IMF. We believe that the expected increase in oil production of more than 300 tb/d is marginal and accounts for merely 1 percent of the OPEC production. Saudi Arabia will bear the brunt of the cuts with the Kingdom representing 58 percent of the GCC's oil production in 2018. The Kingdom is expected to reduce its oil production by 5.5 percent to 9.75 mb/d in 2019 as compared to 10.31 mb/d in 2018. GCC oil exports forecast also followed a similar trend as they were lowered as compared to 2018 export figures. Estimates of oil exports from the GCC region are expected to fall from 12.9 mb/d in 2018 to 12.28 mb/d in 2019 and further decline to 12.26 mb/d in 2020. We believe that increasing production would be difficult for the producers in OPEC due to their commitment to cut production by almost 1 mb/d in order to support prices until Mar-2020 which may be extended given the current price levels. We believe that the IMF's oil GDP forecasts aptly represents the current concerns and uncertainty in the market by being conservative

Real GDP Growth	Actual		Projections		IMF Revisions	
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2019	2020
Percentage Growth						
Bahrain	3.8%	1.8%	2.0%	2.1%	0.1%	0.0%
Oil GDP	-0.7%	-1.3%	1.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Non-oil GDP	4.9%	2.5%	2.2%	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Kuwait	-3.5%	1.2%	0.6%	3.1%	-1.9%	0.1%
Oil GDP	-7.2%	1.2%	-0.8%	3.1%	-2.9%	0.6%
Non-oil GDP	2.1%	1.2%	2.5%	3.0%	-0.5%	-0.5%
Oman	0.3%	1.8%	0.0%	3.7%	-1.1%	-2.5%
Oil GDP	-2.1%	4.7%	-1.1%	5.0%	-0.5%	-5.1%
Non-oil GDP	2.4%	-0.7%	1.0%	2.5%	-1.5%	-0.5%
Qatar	1.6%	1.5%	2.0%	2.8%	-0.7%	-0.4%
Oil GDP	-0.7%	-0.3%	0.4%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Non-oil GDP	3.8%	3.2%	3.4%	3.6%	-1.2%	-0.7%
Saudi Arabia*	-0.7%	2.4%	0.2%	2.2%	-1.7%	-0.6%
Oil GDP	-3.1%	3.1%	-3.1%	1.7%	-3.8%	0.7%
Non-oil GDP	1.3%	2.2%	2.7%	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%
United Arab Emirates	0.5%	1.7%	1.6%	2.5%	-1.3%	-0.8%
Oil GDP	-2.8%	2.8%	1.5%	1.4%	-1.7%	-0.3%
Non-oil GDP	1.9%	1.3%	1.6%	3.0%	-1.1%	-1.0%
GCC Real GDP Growth	-0.3%	2.0%	0.7%	2.5%	-1.4%	-0.3%
Oil GDP	-3.0%	2.5%	-1.4%	1.9%	-2.6%	0.0%
Non-oil GDP	1.9%	1.9%	2.4%	2.8%	-0.5%	-0.6%
MENA Real GDP Growth*	1.8%	1.1%	0.1%	2.7%	-0.6%	-0.4%

Source: IMF RPO - Oct 2019, KAMCO Research, *MENA & Saudi Arabia revisions are from Jul 19

related to oil production as well as in terms of expected oil prices of \$61.78/b in 2019 and \$57.94/b in 2020.

Fiscal breakeven oil prices

In terms of the breakeven oil prices for 2019 and based on average oil prices seen in YTD-2019 (USD 64.0/bbl), only Qatar and Kuwait are expected to be in a comfortable position in terms of spending on budgeted expenditure. Qatar had the lowest fiscal breakeven oil price of \$48.8/bbl for 2019 and even lower at \$45.7/bbl for 2020. Kuwait was next with a fiscal breakeven oil price of \$54.3/bbl for 2019 and marginally higher \$54.7/bbl for 2020. As per our analysis of IMF data for 2019, the negative spread between average oil prices and budgeted breakeven oil prices is estimated to

be largest for Bahrain and Oman at around \$31.2/bbl and \$23.3/bbl, respectively. Saudi Arabia closely followed with the third highest spread of \$22.5/bbl as the Kingdom's fiscal breakeven oil price is expected to be at \$86.5/bbl for 2019. Qatar and Kuwait possess a cushion of around \$15.2/bbl and \$9.6/bbl, respectively, to balance their 2019 fiscal budgets, according to our estimates. Nevertheless, barring Oman, fiscal breakeven oil prices for all the other GCC economies were raised for 2019 as compared to May-19 estimates, which shows the impact of the expected fall in production for 2019.

GCC production

Total GCC central government net borrowing as a percent of GDP for 2019 is pro-

jected to decline marginally by 20 bps to reach -2.2 percent from -2.4 percent in 2018. GCC governments were able to finance budgets by issuing bonds at favorable rates after the decline in oil prices. These borrowing contracted slightly in 2019 on the back of stable and relatively higher oil prices as compared to levels seen in years after the oil market crisis. The IMF projects that the total GCC current account balance is estimated to go down from \$140.7 billion in 2018 to \$86.5 billion in 2019 and further decrease to \$50.7 billion in 2020. Saudi Arabia's current account balance is forecasted to have the largest decrease among the GCC countries reaching \$34.2 billion in 2019 from \$72.3 billion in 2018. In terms of current account balance as percentage of GDP, the IMF forecasts GCC current account balance as percentage of GDP to fall from 8.5 percent in 2018 to 5.3 percent in 2019 and 3.1 percent in 2020. Among the GCC countries the IMF forecasts UAE to have the largest current account balance as percentage of GDP at 9.0 percent for 2019 followed by Kuwait at 8.2 percent.

Never ending dilemma

Meanwhile, external factors have contributed even more the oil dilemma of either to produce more and sell cheap or produce less and expect an increase in prices due to the supply shortfall. These external factors primarily include the breakneck speed at which the US is increasing oil supplies from the shale sources. It also includes the expected decline in oil demand due to the global economic slowdown that is making the glut in the oil market even more pronounced. Given that there are no catalysts in the near term that could boost oil demand coupled with a number of fragile factors on the supply front, we believe that crude oil would trade in a tight range in the near term.

BP slides into quarterly loss on huge charge over sale of assets

LONDON: BP slid into a net loss during the third quarter on a huge charge linked to the sale of assets, including its Alaskan business, the British energy giant said yesterday.

The London-listed business posted a loss after tax of \$749 million (675 million euros) in the three months to September 30, compared with net profit of \$3.35 billion in the third quarter of 2018, it said in a statement. BP added that it took a hit of \$2.6 billion, having flagged a charge of \$2-3 billion earlier this month.

However, the underlying picture was somewhat rosier despite a poor performance at its upstream division, which comprises exploration and production-and being hurt by weaker oil prices in the reporting period.

Replacement cost profit, a widely-watched measure which strips out exceptional items and changes in the value of oil inventories, stood at \$2.3 billion, down from \$3.8 billion a year earlier.

"The result was impacted by significantly lower upstream earnings, resulting from lower prices, maintenance and weather impacts," BP said in Tuesday's statement.

Shares in BP dropped 1.1 percent to 506 pence in morning deals. "This was not BP's finest quarter, but



The logo of BP plc is seen at a BP petrol station in Liverpool. — AFP

overall the group remains on track," said Richard Hunter, head of markets at online trading firm Interactive investor. "An average oil price of \$62 for the quarter compared with \$75 the previous year, driven by weak demand and the political situations in the likes of Iran and Venezuela.

"While this puts an immediate strain on profit, the level is comfortably above the \$55 per barrel number which BP uses as a yardstick to break even," he added.

BP had already revealed earlier this month that it would take a major hit this quarter, largely as a result of the \$5.6-billion sale of its Alaska business to Hilcorp.

The third-quarter earnings release comes almost

one month after BP announced the exit of chief executive Bob Dudley.

Dudley, 64, who oversaw the energy giant's response to and recovery from the devastating Gulf of Mexico 2010 oil spill disaster, will leave next year.

The American will step down early next year to be succeeded by upstream division boss Bernard Looney, from Ireland. Under Dudley in 2018, BP bought mining giant BHP Billiton's US shale oil and gas operations in a landmark \$10.25-billion deal that energised the company's output. He also embarked upon a \$10-billion divestment programme in order to finance the blockbuster purchase.—AFP

Pakistani traders strike over steps to boost taxes as urged by IMF

ISLAMABAD: Markets and many businesses closed across Pakistan yesterday for a strike to protest against government measures aimed at meeting IMF demands to boost tax revenues to bolster depleted public finances. The International Monetary Fund approved a \$6 billion loan package for Pakistan in July but warned that it would require ambitious fiscal measures and a sustained commitment to mobilize tax revenue to ensure funds for development while reducing debt.

The two-day strike is the second since July called by business groups after negotiations with government on efforts to enforce the paying of sales tax and catching tax dodgers.

"This taxation system ... will bring death," Atiq Mir, president of the All Karachi Traders Alliance, which represents markets in Pakistan's biggest city, told Reuters.

All major wholesale markets in the commercial hub were closed along with most shopping centers. Traders holding banners and chanting slogans against the government held protests in cities across the country. The government of Prime Minister Imran Khan has made getting the economy back on track its main priority. The fiscal deficit has ballooned to about 7 percent of gross domestic product and a balance of payments crisis is looming.

Pakistan has long suffered from a weak tax base, with only about 1 percent of its 208 million population filing income tax returns and major industrial sectors dominated by powerful lobbies paying little or no tax.

The agricultural sector, for example, dominated by politically powerful landowners, makes up about 20 percent of the economy but accounts for only 0.22 percent of direct taxes, according to the World Bank. The general secretary of the All Pakistan Association of Traders, based in the eastern city of Lahore, said the government risked enraging voters.

"This government has increased inflation, it has raised discount rates ... it has made the life of the common man miserable because of its economic policies," Naeem Mir said. Among new measures angering traders is a rule requiring anyone buying items worth 50,000 rupees (\$315) or more to produce identity papers, a measure aimed at helping authorities track tax evaders.

Naeem Mir said traders had called for the amount to be raised to 100,000 rupees but the government has not responded. "Why won't they listen to us? We'll protest, protest and protest," he said. "The future of the trading community and their children is at stake." —Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.400
Euro	340.010
Sterling Pound	393.280
Canadian dollar	234.150
Turkish lira	55.350
Swiss Franc	307.790
US Dollar Buying	296.950

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.793
Indian Rupees	4.305
Pakistani Rupees	1.963
Srilankan Rupees	1.674
Nepali Rupees	2.677
Singapore Dollar	224.480
Hongkong Dollar	38.827
Bangladesh Taka	3.563
Philippine Peso	5.968
Thai Baht	10.098
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
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Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.878
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	32.178

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY

BUY

Europe

British Pound	0.383876
Czech Korune	0.005194
Danish Krone	0.041096
Euro	0.329925
Georgian Lari	0.102532
Hungarian 0.000936	0.001126
Norwegian Krone	0.028878
Romanian Leu	0.054018
Russian ruble	0.004762
Slovakia	0.009099
Swedish Krona	0.027241
Swiss Franc	0.299334

SELL

Europe

British Pound	0.397776
Czech Korune	0.014494
Danish Krone	0.046096
Euro	0.343625
Georgian Lari	0.102532
Hungarian 0.000936	0.001126
Norwegian Krone	0.034078
Romanian Leu	0.070868
Russian ruble	0.004762
Slovakia	0.019099
Swedish Krona	0.032241
Swiss Franc	0.310334

Australasia

Australian Dollar	0.200217
New Zealand Dollar	0.187305

America

Canadian Dollar	0.227240
US Dollars	0.300300
US Dollars Mint	0.300800

Bangladesh Taka	0.002962
Chinese Yuan	0.041762
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036734
Indian Rupee	0.003690
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017
Japanese Yen	0.002707
Korean Won	0.000251
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069446
Nepalese Rupee	0.002625
Pakistan Rupee	0.001317
Philippine Peso	0.005722
Singapore Dollar	0.217932
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001319
Taiwan	0.009851
Thai Baht	0.009736
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013

Asia

Bahraini Dinar	0.801278
Egyptian Pound	0.018636
Iranian Riyal	0.000084
Iraqi Dinar	0.000214
Jordanian Dinar	0.424432
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000151
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020832
Omani Riyal	0.785521
Qatar Riyal	0.082955
Saudi Riyal	0.080087
Syrian Pound	0.001290
Tunisian Dinar	0.103271
Turkish Lira	0.046281
UAE Dirhams	0.082244
Yemeni Riyal	0.000989

Arab

0.809332	0.003763
0.021377	0.045262
0.000086	0.039484
0.000274	0.004462
0.000023	0.000023
0.002887	0.002887
0.000266	0.002666
0.075446	0.075446
0.002965	0.002965
0.002087	0.002087
0.006022	0.006022
0.227932	0.227932
0.000899	0.000899
0.010031	0.010031
0.010286	0.010286
0.000013	0.000013

Cuba seeks hard currency as dollar shops reopen after 15 years

Govt struggles to rake in tradable currency to buy imports, pay debts

HAVANA: Cubans flocked to a dozen shops that opened in Havana on Monday selling home appliances and spare parts for cars in dollars, as the cash-strapped government struggles to rake in tradable currency to purchase imports and pay its debts. Washing machines, refrigerators, freezers, air conditioners, TVs, electric motorcycles, car batteries, tires and other goods were priced well below similar offers at other state stores, when available for sale in the government's local dollar equivalent, the convertible peso.

Cuba's inefficient state-run economy is going through a liquidity crisis due to the implosion of ally Venezuela's economy and the tightening of the decades-old US trade embargo under President Donald Trump. The country is dependent on fuel, food and other imports it must purchase for tradable international currencies it earns from exports of goods and services such as sugar, tourism and technical assistance, which are all in decline.

Shortages of everything from fuel to food and medicines have plagued the country this year.

Joel Palomino, an education professor who rents out a room in his home to tourists, said he had been waiting in line at a store in the Vedado district since dawn to buy an air conditioner.

"Cubans very much need to purchase these products at a reasonable price. The government should have done this a long time ago," Palmino said. "The prices are lower than in convertible pesos for the same products and better than those Cubans bring back from Mexico and Panama to sell on the black market," he said. The dollar circulated freely in Cuba alongside the peso after the

demise of former benefactor the Soviet Union in the early 1990s sparked a crisis in the Communist-run country. The dollar was taken out of circulation in 2004 and replaced by the convertible peso.

Two currencies, the peso and the convertible peso, which is valued at 24 pesos, circulate in Cuba. Possession of the dollar and other tradable currencies is legal, but they have previously not been deemed legal tender for purchases. The government claims the convertible peso is equal to the dollar, but imported appliances and other goods, when available, have huge mark-ups as they must be purchased in tradable currencies while the peso and convertible peso have no value abroad.

The state has a monopoly on foreign trade and retail sales, but Cubans travel to places such as Haiti, Mexico, Panama and Russia, where they collectively spend hundreds of millions of dollars to purchase goods that they then resell in the Caribbean nation.

Local economist Omar Everleny said the stores would benefit the state and consumers alike.

"The prices are competitive with the international market as they have been reduced as much as 50 percent and the state is capturing internationally exchangeable money that was circulating in Cuba but then flowing abroad to purchase goods at lower prices," he said. Everleny, like many other economists, said the stores were an admission that the convertible peso was worth less than a dollar and forecast that they marked the beginning of its end. "We are going back to before 2004 when there was only the peso and certain products were priced in dollars," he said.



Cubans who buy from the specialist stores need a dollar-denominated bank card from an account opened with tradable currencies, such as the dollar or euro. People may obtain those tradable currencies through offshore remittances or by other means such as exchanging pesos on the street, the government said. The government said a total of 77 outlets would open across the country in the coming days, but as of Monday just one had opened outside the capital, in eastern Santiago de Cuba.— Reuters

NBK Economic Report

Global markets lost steam in Q3, EMs underperformed

KUWAIT: Global equities recorded modest gains in 3Q19, but at a slower pace than in previous quarters, mainly driven by European and US stocks. Weaker-than-expected economic data, anticipated downward revisions to global growth estimates, and ongoing trade uncertainty have raised investor concerns and diminished risk appetite, with investors turning their attention increasingly to less risky holdings such as fixed income and gold. Indeed, bond yields have continued to fall and gold prices have risen to multi-year highs. This shift in sentiment was even more apparent in emerging market equities, which have underperformed their global peers by a wide margin in 3Q19. GCC markets exhibited a mixed performance, and were negative overall, impacted by adverse geopolitics and oil price volatility, in addition to being affected by the aforementioned global pressures.

International markets rose in 3Q19, lifted by European and American equities, though the gains were less pronounced than in previous quarters. The MSCI World index rose 1.1 percent q/q led by the Euro Stoxx 50 (2.8 percent) and the Nikkei 225 (2.3 percent) while the DJI and S&P 500 rose 1.2 percent. Global stock performance was however hampered by losses in emerging markets, with the MSCI EM index dropping 3 percent q/q, likely due to weakening investor confidence, giving rise to an increasingly "risk-off" attitude. Despite the downturn in emerging markets, China's Shenzhen CSI 300 was less affected, ending the

quarter almost flat.

The relatively muted equity performance in 3Q19 came amid slower global growth expectations, a prolonged US-China trade dispute, and softer US and European economic data. The softer data included a declining US ISM manufacturing PMI, which fell to a 10-year low in September on declining new orders and employment, and there is a growing concern that manufacturing weakness may spill over into the consumer sector. The eurozone economy has suffered from similar weakness, with sluggish growth and slumping manufacturing and exports. Investor concerns were additionally compounded by ongoing uncertainty surrounding Brexit. These headwinds seem to have been only partially alleviated by accommodative global central bank policies.

Regional markets

GCC equity markets generally underperformed their global peers in 3Q19. The MSCI GCC lost 6.7 percent q/q, weighed down mostly by Saudi Arabia (-8.3 percent) and to a lesser extent Kuwait (-2.6 percent) and Qatar (-1 percent). The decline came amid elevated geopolitical risks and oil price volatility, despite support (passive flows) from the S&P-Dow Jones EM inclusion of Kuwait in September, the fourth tranche of the FTSE-EM inclusion of Saudi Arabia also in September, and the second phase of the MSCI-EM inclusion of Saudi Arabia in August. Additional downward pressure likely came from profit-taking, after the



Kuwaiti and Saudi markets rallied in the first half of the year, thereby driving up valuation metrics.

Going forward, GCC markets may suffer from downward pressure on banking stocks as the recent interest rate cuts (except for Kuwait) will likely impact banks' profitability. Further, with the major index inclusions mostly complete, fresh catalysts will be needed to support the Saudi market. The MSCI EM inclusion is still pending for Kuwait, and a final decision by MSCI will be announced by the end of December 2019 (with high likelihood) for implementation in May 2020. Moreover, Boursa Kuwait may receive a boost to liquidity and market capitalization from two large IPOs scheduled for the latter part of 4Q19, (Boursa Kuwait and North Zour IWPP), with subscription now open for both future listings. It is therefore reasonable to expect the Kuwaiti market to reap some benefits in the short term from these expected developments. Further,

additional quality listings can typically be a longer term benefit to a stock exchange, as it usually promotes the scope and size of the marketplace.

Other GCC markets fared relatively well in 3Q19, with Dubai, Oman and Bahrain up by 4.6 percent, 3.4 percent and 3.1 percent q/q respectively. These markets saw weaker performance in 2018 and were relatively undervalued at the start of the year, making them attractive to investors seeking to rotate capital to markets with perceived upside potential.

The risks that we had highlighted in our 2Q19 equity brief became more visible in 3Q19. With the ongoing trade issues, geopolitical risks, oil price volatility, and now confirmed downbeat growth forecasts for the global economy and the GCC region we expect more of the same in terms of uncertainty and volatility in regional equity markets in 4Q19. Investors will then likely continue with their cautious stance globally, and more so in emerging markets.

GM earnings top expectations; forecast cut after strike

NEW YORK: General Motors reported better-than-expected quarterly earnings yesterday on strong auto sales but trimmed its full-year forecast after a lengthy strike that ended last week.

The automaker saw net income in the third-quarter drop 7.1 percent to \$2.4 billion, easily topping Wall Street estimates, as revenues dipped 0.9 percent to \$35.5 billion. Shares surged following the report.

But the company said the strike, which effectively shut down GM's US operations for 40 days and halted its production of new cars, is expected to cut about \$3 billion from 2019 earnings. The strike, which ended Friday after the United Auto Workers ratified a new contract, cut \$1 billion from operating earnings in the third quarter alone and also will hit the fourth quarter.

Company officials said they were ramping production back up but would not be able to replace all of the lost car produc-

tion in 2019. Nearly 50,000 US auto workers walked out last month while GM and the United Auto Workers bargained in negotiations that were challenged by expectations of a slowing auto market.

Workers won an \$11,000 ratification bonus, wage increases and a freeze on health care costs in exchange for agreeing to GM's plans to permanently shut four plants. GM's investor materials touted the agreement as a good compromise and said it would also permit the company to "adjust workforce in response to changing industry levels."

The contract "is foundational for improving job satisfaction, health and safety, quality and productivity, all of which will strengthen the future of this company and create shareholder value," said Chief Executive Mary Barra. "However, we have a lot of work to do in many areas as the lost profits from the work stoppage were significant."

The strike agreement follows a GM reorganization announced in November 2018 that was expected to help the company achieve \$4.5 billion in annual cost reductions. GM yesterday trimmed that outlook somewhat following the labor agreement to a range of \$4.0 to \$4.5 billion based on a decision to keep open a plant in Detroit that had been originally slated for closure.— AFP

Zimbabwe hikes fuel prices 12%

HARARE: Zimbabwe has raised the price of petrol and diesel by 12 percent, the second increase this month, the energy regulator said yesterday, piling more pressure onto consumers hit by soaring inflation. The last round of fuel price hikes on Oct. 5, saw prices rise 27 percent and was followed by a 320 percent increase in the cost of electricity, triggering a spike in the cost of basic goods such as sugar, maize meal and milk.

Petrol will now cost 16.67 Zimbabwe dollars (\$1.07) a litre while diesel will cost 17.47 Zimbabwe dollars, the Zimbabwe Energy Regulatory Agency said.

The latest hike has failed to ease nationwide shortages, with most of the fuel pumps in the capital still dry. With prices surging, economists examining the official monthly data put inflation in September at 380 percent.

Hopes that the economy would quickly rebound under President Emmerson Mnangagwa, who took over after the late Robert Mugabe was deposed in a coup in 2017, have dimmed fast as ordinary people grapple with economic hardships. The southern African nation is experiencing its worst economic crisis in a decade, seen in the triple-digit inflation, 18-hour power cuts and shortages of US dollars, medicine and fuel that have evoked the dark days of the 2008 hyperinflation under Mugabe.

Mnangagwa, who critics accuse of lacking commitment to political reforms and using his predecessor's heavy-handed tactics to stifle dissent, has pleaded for time and patience to bring the economy back from the "dead". — Reuters

Mexico's economy seen growing 0.2% in Q3

MEXICO CITY: Mexico's economy is expected to have posted marginal growth in the third quarter, underlining the challenge facing President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador as Latin America's second largest economy fails to pick up steam, a survey showed yesterday.

Gross domestic product growth in Mexico is seen at 0.2 percent in the third quarter versus the previous three-month period, in seasonally adjusted terms, according to the median forecast of 11 analysts and economists. The economy's sluggish performance has dogged Lopez Obrador since taking office in December 2018. Mexico barely escaped a recession in the first half of the year, after the economy posted no growth in the second quarter and contracted 0.3 percent in the first.

The poll forecasts no GDP growth in the third quarter versus a year earlier and when unadjusted for seasonal swings. Central bank board member Jonathan Heath said on Monday that recent weakness in Mexican exports suggests the economy likely contracted in the third quarter.

Mexico's latest trade data suggested economic activity may have shrunk in September compared with the previous month, which meant there was a "high probability that GDP in the third quarter ends up in negative territory," Heath said on Twitter.

Economic activity grew by just 0.1 percent in August from July and contracted 0.2 percent in July from June in adjusted terms, revised data showed. Investor confidence in Mexico has been shaken by some of the decisions made by Lopez Obrador, a leftist exponent of economic nationalism who has vowed to reduce chronic inequality and deliver average annual growth of 4 percent.

In particular, the president's decision to cancel a partly built, \$13 billion airport for Mexico City and his retreat from the prior government's opening of the oil and gas industry to private capital have raised doubts about his economic credentials. In his Sep. 1 state of the union address, Lopez Obrador said that income distribution would remain a priority over economic growth.

He has argued that by redistributing wealth better, his government is able to help economic development among the poor even with lower headline growth numbers. Lopez Obrador said his administration will "gradually push aside the technocratic obsession of measuring everything based simply on economic growth." The INEGI statistics agency will publish preliminary GDP data for the third quarter today.— Reuters

UK house prices edge up but Brexit drag persists

LONDON: British house prices, which have almost flat-lined ahead of Brexit, grew a bit more quickly in October, a survey from mortgage lender Nationwide showed. House prices rose by 0.4 percent on the year, Nationwide said yesterday, the 11th month in a row that annual price growth remained below 1 percent. A Reuters poll of economists had pointed to another rise of 0.2 percent, which would have matched September's eight-month low.

Nationwide's chief economist Robert Gardner said average prices rose by 800 pounds (\$1,029) over the last 12 months, a sharp slowing compared with the 12 months to October 2016, just after the Brexit referendum, when prices jumped by 9,100 pounds.

Some measures of the housing market have shown prices falling recently in London and neighboring areas. Nationwide said in October alone, British house prices rose by 0.2 percent, also slightly stronger than forecasts of no change in the Reuters poll.

Gardner said Britain's strong labor market - the silver lining of the economy before Brexit - and low borrowing costs were offsetting the drag from the uncertain economic outlook. "The question is whether this pattern will continue," he said. The European Union agreed on Monday to delay the Oct. 31 Brexit deadline by up to three months and Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he would push on with his attempt to end Britain's political paralysis with an election on Dec. 12. — Reuters

Business

Gulf Bank provides funding for major oil, infrastructure and construction projects

Bank participates in achieving 'Kuwait Vision 2035'

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank announced it has recently financed a number of vital development projects in line with the Kuwait National Development Plan stemming from His Highness the Amir's vision for the country, New Kuwait 2035. Gulf Bank has provided funding for various projects in the oil, construction and infrastructure sectors through direct financing or through partnerships with other local banks.

In the past five years, Gulf Bank has been an instrumental part of pioneering and financing several noteworthy projects in the coun-

try, including: the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway project linking Kuwait City to Sabya, and the residential city of Sabah Al-Ahmad. In addition, Gulf Bank has financed the construction of projects such as: the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC), the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center, the Farwaniya Hospital expansion, and several colleges at the Sabah Al-Salem Kuwait University City in Al-Shadadiyah. Gulf Bank has also been instrumental in financing several oil sector projects,

including the Kuwait National Petroleum Company's clean fuel project and a portion of the Al-Zour oil refinery.

Ahmad Al-Duwaisan, General Manager of Corporate Banking at Gulf Bank, said: "We are very pleased to announce our role in these instrumental projects, and we are very proud that Gulf Bank is a part of the urban, cultural and economic renaissance that Kuwait is undergoing. These are projects of great strategic importance to Kuwait, and financing them is key to our country's growth.

Nothing makes us prouder than to see Gulf Bank continue to be an integral part of Kuwait's past, present and future."

It is worth mentioning that Gulf Bank provides financing services to various companies across a variety of sectors, either directly or in partnership with other banks.

To find out more about Gulf Bank's activities, customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's 58 branches or log on to www.e-gulfbank.com. Customers can also contact the Customer Contact Center.



Ahmad Al-Duwaisan

EQUATE Group reports Q3 business results

KUWAIT: The EQUATE Group, a global producer of petrochemicals, yesterday announced its Q3 2019 unaudited earnings, reporting \$264 million in EBITDA, a 52 percent decrease from \$547 million in Q3 2018, and \$811 million in revenue, a 35 percent decrease from \$1,247 million in Q3. Net income after tax stood at \$143 million in Q3 2019, a 65 percent decrease from \$406 million in the same period last year. Commenting on the results, Dr Ramesh Ramachandran, CEO and President of the EQUATE Group, said: "We continue to see steady demand in the market but are experiencing compressed margins due to uncertainty related to tariffs notably in Asia. EQUATE's lowest cost position at all of its assets across the globe allows us to continue to run at maximum rates.

He added: "We are very pleased to announce the startup of the MEGlobal Oyster Creek, TX site in October, 2019, ahead of schedule and in line with budgets, once again demonstrating EQUATE's operational excellence and ability to deliver on its commitments to customers and shareholders." The EQUATE Group is a global producer of petrochemicals and the world's second largest producer of ethylene glycol (EG). The EQUATE Group owns and operates industrial complexes in Kuwait, North America and Europe that annually produce over 6 million tons of ethylene, EG, polyethylene (PE), polyethylene terephthalate (PET), styrene monomer (SM), paraxylene (PX), heavy aromatics (HA) and benzene (BZ).



Burgan Bank rewards its premier customers

KUWAIT: Ensuring its customers are met with the latest lifestyle needs, Burgan Bank premier customers can now enjoy valuable deals at the prominent luxury resort situated in the heart of Kuwait - The Palms Beach Hotel & Spa.

Providing all with an enjoyable healthy and culinary journey, premier customers will receive a 10% discount on membership at the health club. Additionally, Burgan Bank premier customers can also avail 15 percent discount at The Rooftop Sky Lounge and Restaurant, famed for its international cuisine, and a 10 percent at Al-Muhallab restaurant the Kuwaiti seafood restaurant and Moroccan delicacies at Tagine Restaurant & Cafe, respectively.

S Africa aims to finalize Eskom split around 2022

PRETORIA: The South African government unveiled the broad outlines of a plan to overhaul struggling state power firm Eskom yesterday, saying it hoped to complete a legal separation of the utility into three entities around 2022.

President Cyril Ramaphosa said in a state of the nation address in February that the government planned to split Eskom into units for generation, transmission and distribution, but there has been little detail about the timeframe. Yesterday's release of a government "special paper" on Eskom had been eagerly anticipated by investors and ratings agencies, which cite the financial and operational crisis at Eskom as one of the biggest risks to Africa's most industrialized economy.

Eskom produces more than 90% of South Africa's electricity but has been grappling with faults at its coal-fired power stations that have caused several rounds of power outages this year. It also has an unsustainable 440 billion rand (\$30 billion) debt burden. Public Enterprises Minister Pravin Gordhan said yesterday that the government would prioritize setting up the transmission unit as a separate entity within an Eskom holding company.

At a later stage the government could create two or more Eskom generation subsidiaries that could compete against each other. The paper did not address Eskom's debt in much detail, other than to say the government was looking at various mechanisms to give Eskom additional debt relief, on top of bailouts of more than 100 billion rand promised for the next two financial years.

Gordhan said the government would hopefully announce a new chief executive for Eskom next week, later than initially envisaged, after the previous CEO left his post in July. —Reuters

KFH signs agreement with Hassan Abul Co to offer exclusive benefits for customers

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has signed a cooperation agreement with Hassan Abul Company, offering financial benefits and solutions to its participating customers who wish to obtain financing for building materials. This comes as part of KFH's efforts to serve its customers and support the capabilities of national companies operating in the market, expanding its role in the field of housing and consumer finance, along with enhancing its market share as one of the largest and most important supporters in this field.

Executive Manager Personal Finance Products at KFH Adel Ahmed Al-Rashood said in a press release after signing the agreement with Hassan Abul Company. Under the agreement, KFH will provide appropriate financial services and solutions for those wishing to purchase materials and supply services from Hassan Abul Company which has a long history in this field. This will be carried out in accordance with the bank's credit controls and special sales policy through the system of installments without profits, that allows customers zero interest for the duration of the transaction.

Managing Director at Hassan Abul Company Bader Bushehri praised the cooperation with "KFH", saying that it confirms the bank's important role in stimulating the market and supporting the sales of traders. He added also that the collaboration with KFH serves the national economy, various segments of customers and meets their needs. Bushehri pointed out that "Hassan Abul Company" is happy with this cooperation, which will be the first step in a much broader cooperation in new fields and products to serve customers of KFH and Hassan Abul Company.



Adel Ahmed Al-Rashood and Bader Bushehri



Boubyan Bank adopts innovative approaches to foster staff creativity

KUWAIT: Adel Al-Hammad, the General Manager of Boubyan Bank's Human Resources Group stressed the bank's keenness on supporting and developing its human resources and adopting the latest international development plans to improve talents among its staff as the bank and its board of directors strongly believe they are the cornerstone of any development or growth.

In a press release issued by the bank, Al-Hammad added: "During the recent years, the bank has come ahead of both local banks and private sector companies in terms of implementing major initiatives aiming at developing the skills of its staff, which contributed to instilling more loyalty in our staff towards the bank belong to." Al-Hammad's statement came in a comment on the trip organized by Boubyan Bank for a number of the bank's staff to San Francisco, the US, in cooperation with Plug and Play International, where they had the chance to enjoy an immersive hands-on experience by exploring the world's best innovation tycoons, attending interactive seminars, seeing FinTechs in action and going through the full cycle of pitching to venture capital.

The Silicon Valley

The program gave Boubyan Bank's employees the opportunity to attend the Plug and Play International's event hosted at the Silicon Valley during the period from

September 30th to October 5th 2019. Furthermore, Boubyan Bank's delegation visited mega technology companies and inspected innovation and creativity activities firsthand at Google, SAP and TESLA.

Al-Hammad went on to add: "Talent management methods are constantly changing and, as a bank, we have to adopt a flexible approach. Organizing the Hackathon at Boubyan is the first step towards renovating and stimulating our staff's creativity potentials. We will continue to exert all possible efforts to provide our staff with creativity development opportunities and what we have done so far is nothing but a start."

Al-Hammad also pointed out that several of such development plans would follow, and that the bank is fully committed to acquainting its talents with leading creativity and innovation practices and visiting international companies to enrich their talents' development and equip the bank's leaders with the skills needed to lead future banking services.

Boubyan Bank had organized the first-of-its-kind Hackathon in Kuwait for its staff in collaboration with the Plug and Play International, with the aim of enhancing their innovation and creativity skills. This comes as a part of the keenness of the bank's management on upskilling the bank's employees which will positively reflect on the level of services and products provided by the bank to its customers.

The Hackathon involved attempts to solve a certain problem or to invent a new or special solution within a specific timeframe. It also gives the opportunity to people with different skills and from different backgrounds to join efforts to come up with solutions within a short period. Then, a panel evaluates the outcome of their cooperation.



Plug and Play Tech Center is a network startup accelerator and corporate innovation platform headquartered in Sunnyvale, California in the Silicon Valley.

It is considered the largest Innovation accelerator in the world. It has over 220

corporate partners and 200 venture capitalists. Silicon Valley Business Journal recently named it the "Most Active Silicon Valley Venture Capital Firm". Plug and Play was one of the first investors in Google, PayPal, Dropbox and other ventures.

VIVA organizes photoshop course for entrepreneurs

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, will organize an Advanced Photoshop Course for entrepreneurs at VIVA's headquarter building, under the #because_we_care umbrella, from 4th to 6th November 2019.

The educational course that will be conducted by the talented Kuwaiti digital artists Abdulaziz Al-Duwaisan 'bonmr' and Abdullah Hamadah, will feature

several activities bringing the registered participants together to learn more about the latest updates and tips of the Photoshop software, and help them enhance their technical skills. Moreover, they will be assigned to create digital artworks using the given tools throughout the sessions led by the instructors.

Danah Faisal Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at VIVA commented: "We believe we have a responsibility towards nurturing and supporting entrepreneurship as it is a sector that is massively growing in the local market, and is a heavy contributor to the vision of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for 'Kuwait 2035', in positioning Kuwait as a major financial and commercial hub in the region". She added: "Most if not all entrepreneurs today are highly dependent on social media channels for their business media planning. Therefore, as part of the digital transformation that VIVA is enabling today, Photoshop is a necessity required by the entrepreneurs in order to fulfill their business needs."

This advanced course falls in line with our corpo-



Danah Faisal Al-Jasem

rate social responsibility agenda at VIVA which strives to support different initiatives in the fields of health, education, sports, environment and entrepreneurship, all in benefit of our society.

What's On



Crowne Plaza & Holiday Inn going Pink for breast cancer awareness



The Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn Kuwait Al Thuraya City launched the Pink Ribbon International Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign throughout October, where the hotel was decorated with pink lights such as the entrance, lobby, pool and health club. Pink flower decorations were spread in the hotel lobby and guest rooms, dressing up and wearing pink ribbons, as well as allocating a budget to donate to breast cancer associations to support breast cancer prevention.

On this occasion, the hotel's staff has expressed their full support for these campaigns as part of the hotel's commitment to the community and its business approach. Antoine Flouty, Area General Manager, said: "we are truly honored to contribute positively to this campaign and its noble goals. I would like to thank our management, hotel staff and guests for their support and contribution to the success of this campaign". October known worldwide as the Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and receives focus from entities around the world, including governments, media as well as survivors of breast cancer.



DCK holds third annual blood drive

As a part of its corporate social responsibility, the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Department at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) organized the 3rd annual blood drive. The campaign entitled "Every Drop Matters." was held from the 15th to the 17th of October, 2019 and was sponsored by Online Institute and ACK MyPrint.

Following with the success of the previous blood drives held by ACK over the past two years, this year's blood drive was extended to 3 days to meet the popular demand. The objective of the event was to propagate the significance of blood donation in saving lives, and to generate awareness about receiving and donating blood from different blood types. In order to do so, the event was themed with "Every Drop Matters."

The event included different activities to raise awareness regarding blood donation, and these activities were organized by volunteering students under the guidance of Mariam Al-



Maraghi, Healthy and Safety Business Development Manager, at ACK. During the first activity, donors were welcomed with an interactive quiz matching each blood type with the types they could donate from and to.

The event was massively successful in attracting donors which included ACK students, staff and alumni. Overall, The Central Blood bank of Kuwait collected a total of 260 blood bags from the event; however, donors who were willing to donate before the

screening were a total of 304 people. Showing her gratitude to those who made the success of the event possible, Al-Maraghi said "The rank of humanitarian is a rank only a few can achieve, and our dear students and staff were able to achieve it through this campaign". ACK would like to thank its community for participation. The drive would not have been successful without the collaboration of departments and volunteering students who were an added value to the event.

LOYAC holds anti-bullying workshop

In collaboration with the EU Commission in Kuwait, and within its training program, LOYAC recently organized a 'Bridge' workshop for high schools students on 'Fighting Bullying' from October 20-23 at the Kuwait Sheraton hotel for speaker Dr Helena Murphy from the National Anti-Bullying

Research and Resource Centre in Ireland.

Speaking on the occasion, LOYAC director, Al-Sayyed Al-Razi Al-Bedaivi said that this cooperation aims at encouraging anti-bullying activities as part of LOYAC's role in empowering Kuwaiti youth to become model citizens. "The survey conducted in LOYAC in 2018 showed that bullying has been a barrier to academic and professional development for Kuwait youth", he said. Notably, LOYAC's training program is open for age category of 18-30 on three phases throughout the year and prepares youth to integrate in careers prior to graduation.



MMF Kuwait holds session with Dr Paul

The growing corporatization of the media in India is posing a serious challenge to the free flow of information in the country, said Dr Sebastian Paul, a well-known media critic, cultural activist and former Indian parliamentarian.

Speaking during an interactive session, hosted by Malayali Media Forum (MMF), Kuwait, Dr Paul said, profit-driven competition among the media houses has compounded over the last few

years seriously impacting the diversity and quality of the news in India. Referring to the powerful emergence of the new media, he said, the social media has given power to the people, but media activists must disseminate information with utmost caution and responsibility.

Dr Paul arrived in Kuwait to deliver a keynote speech at Prof Mundassery Memorial event organized by KALA Kuwait. MMF Kuwait General Convener Sajeev K Peter made the opening remarks while Convener Nixon George proposed a vote of thanks. MMF Convener Jalin, Executive members Sam Painummodu, Thomas Kadavil, Sathar Kunnil, TV Hikmat, Girish Ottappalam and Habbab Muttichoor participated in the session.



The dean of the diplomatic corps and Senegalese ambassador to Kuwait Abdou Lahad Mbacke organized a farewell reception for the Iraqi ambassador to Kuwait Alaa Mjid Al Hashimi on the occasion of the end of his diplomatic mission. The event was attended by diplomats and other high profile dignitaries.



A team of passionate quizzers from ICSK Amman, Caleb Kurian of Class VIII, Isaam Talhat of Class VII and Alvin Jerry of Class VI bagged the runners up trophy in exQuizit 2019-2020 - an inter-school science and Math quiz competition (SCIMA) held on Tuesday 24th October 2019 and organized by Salmiya Indian Model School. Congratulations to the winners.

Researchers move closer to new vaccine for killer TB

HYDERABAD: Scientists said yesterday they are closing in on a new game-changing vaccine for tuberculosis, the world's deadliest infectious disease that claimed some 1.5 million lives last year. A chronic lung disease that is curable, TB was one of the top 10 killers worldwide last year, particularly in developing countries.

The existing Bacille-Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine — licensed for humans in 1921 — is only proven to be effective for children under five for limited forms of tuberculosis. It does not protect against pulmonary TB, the most common form of the disease amongst adults and teens. In a trial in three African nations, GlaxoSmithKline said its vaccine had 50 percent effectiveness three years after it was given to participants who already have TB bacteria but have not fallen ill from the disease.

"These results demonstrate that for the first time in almost a century, the global community potentially has a new tool to help provide protection against TB," GSK Vaccines' chief medical officer Thomas Breuer said in a statement released at a conference on lung health in Hyderabad, India. Campaigners said the trial in Kenya, South Africa and Zambia, involving more than 3,000 adults, was a crucial step amid a push for more funding for TB research.

Initiative director Mark Hatherill said a vaccine would be "the only way in the short-term to interrupt TB transmission and get control of the epidemic." Ann Ginsberg, of the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative which has been taking part in the research, said 15 possible vaccines are at various stages of development around the world but this was the most "exciting". If successful, the vaccine could "avert tens of millions of new cases of TB and save millions of lives globally."

"We are one more cautious, but exciting, step closer to a vaccine for tuberculosis," said Paula Fujiwara, scientific director of the Paris-based International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease. The results have to be further tested in longer and larger trials across broader ranges of populations and countries, the scientists said in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, where the report was published. Breuer said it would take several years to complete the trials and get a licence for a vaccine.

About one in four people worldwide carry latent TB, meaning they are infected with the bacteria but are not sick and cannot transmit the disease. Between five to 15 percent develop active TB. Those with compromised immune systems such as people with HIV are more vulnerable to falling sick. The announcement came



HYDERABAD: English actress and ambassador for the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union), Claire Forlani (C), gestures with volunteers from Tuberculosis (TB) Alert India during her field visit to meet Tuberculosis (TB) survivors at Malakpet slum area. — AFP

as thousands of researchers, TB survivors and activists gathered in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad for a global conference on lung health. India

accounts for a quarter of the world's TB cases and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set an ambitious target of ending the epidemic by 2025 — AFP

Cannabis may not improve mental health

PARIS: People with psychiatric disorders may want to pass on the joint — at least until further research is done, a new Australian study suggests. The paper, published Monday in *The Lancet Psychiatry*, looked at 83 previous studies conducted over almost four decades on medical cannabinoids, including products from the cannabis plant, such as leaves, buds and oils.

The authors found little evidence that the products were safe and effective in treating six common disorders: depression, anxiety, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, Tourette syndrome, post-traumatic stress disorder and psychosis. Cannabis and cannabinoids are increasingly being made available for medicinal use in North America, Britain and Australia without undergoing standard testing, lead author Louisa Deegenhardt told AFP.

"One of the most striking things about the spread of legislation in multiple countries permitting cannabis/cannabinoids for medicinal purposes is that this is in many instances happening outside of the regulatory frameworks that medicine development typically occurs within," said Degenhardt, from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. — AFP

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- Referee reviewer of International Journal of Dermatology.

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Department: Heart & Vascular Center

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- Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- Member of the British Laryngological Association
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- Vocal cord augmentation.
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- Breast surgeries
- Hernia repair
- Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- Surgery for reflux disease
- Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

Dr. Hani Haider
General Surgery Consultant
<http://www.international-clinic.com>
Tel: 1886677

Scope of Clinical Practice:

- General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- Single Port Surgery
- Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
- Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistaloscope)
- Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- Stomach Balloon Insertion & removal
- Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve-Gastroectomy
- Gallstones & Abdominal Hernia Surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

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

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

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DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

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

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

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

Academic Certificates - Training

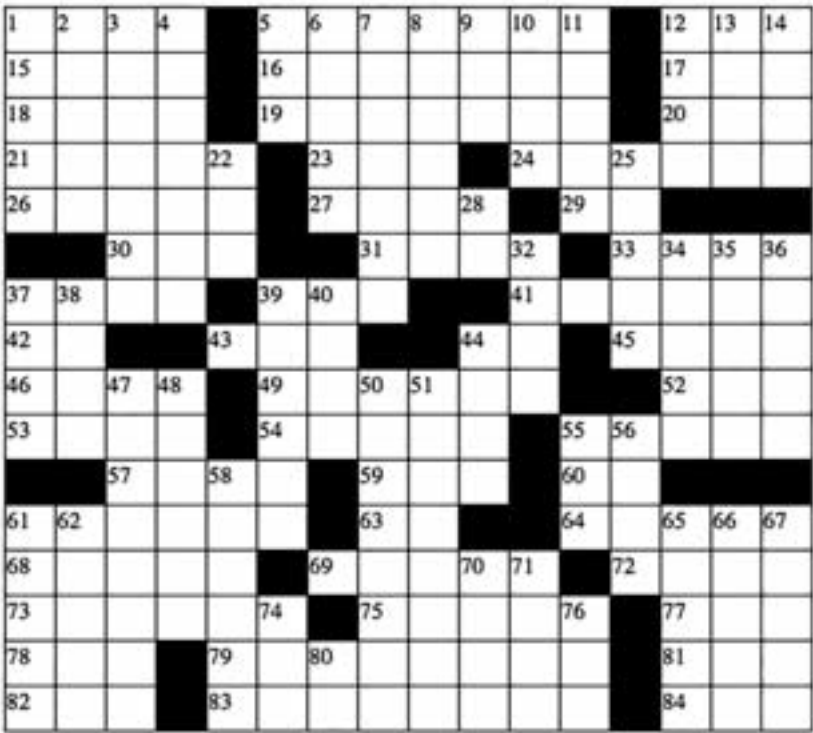
- Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- (IFSO) member .
- Faculty member of (BEST).
- Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

Scope of clinical Practice.

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

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

CROSSWORD 2346



ACROSS

1. A book of the New Testament.
5. Enchanter's nightshade.
12. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
15. A Loloish language.
16. Lacking interest or spirit or animation.
17. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
18. A European river.
19. A person who is not very bright.
20. An associate degree in applied science.
21. (archaic) Very cold.
23. The upper side of the thighs of a seated person.
24. Occurring or payable every year.
26. Either of two muscles in the shoulder region that move the shoulders and arms.
27. South American armadillo with three bands of bony plates.
29. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
30. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
31. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
33. Large genus of tropical subshrubs or herbs some of which yield fibers of mucilaginous substances.
37. A set of tags and rules (conforming to SGML) for using them in developing hypertext documents.
41. Of or relating to abasia (inability to walk).
42. A state in northwestern United States on the Pacific.
43. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
45. Made from residue of grapes or apples after pressing.
46. A large number or amount.
49. A member of an agricultural people of southern India.
52. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
53. Surpassing the ordinary especially in size or scale.
54. Of a yellow-green color similar to that of an unripe olive n l.
57. Powerful mackerel shark of the Atlantic and Pacific.
59. An anxiety disorder characterized by chronic free-floating anxiety and such symptoms as tension or sweating or trembling of light-headedness or irritability etc that has lasted for more than six months.
60. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
61. A minor match preceding the main event.
63. A heavy brittle metallic element of the platinum group.
64. The Mongol people living the the central and eastern parts of Outer Mongolia.
68. (British) A local tax on property (usually used in the plural).
69. An upright that is a member in a door or window frame.
72. A branch of the Tai languages.
73. Wild ginger.
75. Departing or being caused to depart from the true vertical or horizontal.
77. A master's degree in business.
78. Administration of a nutritionally adequate solution through a catheter into the vena cava.
79. The positive fractional part of the representation of a logarithm.
81. Tag the base runner to get him out.
82. The organ of sight ('peeper' is an informal term for 'eye').

83. Not having been heated or warmed.
84. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. At or on or to the masthead or upper rigging of a ship.
2. A small unit serving as the nucleus of a larger political movement.
3. A proposition deducible from basic postulates.
4. Characterized by fantastic imagery and incongruous juxtapositions.
5. Food of a ruminant regurgitated to be chewed again.
6. Any plant of the genus Inula.
7. A failure to maintain a higher state.
8. A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
9. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
10. Suggestive of the supernatural.
11. Type genus of the Ardeidae.
12. (botany) Of or relating to the axil.
13. Made of fir or pine.
14. Posing no difficulty.
22. The rate at which red blood cells settle out in a tube of blood under standardized conditions.
25. State in northeastern India.
28. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
32. A small cake leavened with yeast.
34. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
35. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
36. The capital and largest city of Ghana with a deep-water port.
38. A device in which something (usually an animal) can be caught and penned.
39. Small tree of dry open parts of southern Africa having erect angled branches suggesting candelabra.
40. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
44. Advanced in years.
47. Antihistamine (trade name Dimetane) used to treat hypersensitivity reactions (as rhinitis).
48. An electronic pulse counter used to count pulses that occur too rapidly to be recorded individually.
50. Resembling a finger.
51. Reprehensible acquisitiveness.
55. East Indian tree bearing a profusion of intense vermilion velvet-textured blooms and yielding a yellow dye.
56. By bad luck.
58. A port city in western Kenya on the northeastern shore of Lake Victoria.
62. Unpleasantly harsh or grating in sound.
65. A genus of Lamiidae.
66. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
67. Jordan's port.
70. A database containing an ordered array of items (names or topics).
71. Other than what is under consideration or implied.
74. An adult male person (as opposed to a woman).
76. A slight amount or degree of difference.
80. A state in New England.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You find yourself in a very practical mood and may have some serious or contemplative moments this day. Listen to your creative impulses, which may require you to spend more time working alone or drawing up plans. The desire to grow and enlarge your scope of professionalism will benefit by making a careful assessment of your past successes. Let this help guide you in any future professional choices. Your future is created in your mind. Schedule important meetings or make presentations. Your attention this afternoon is in helping a young person understand his or her school or family responsibilities. You are a revolutionary when it comes to the domestic scene.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

A meeting or planned event has been canceled and most of the day is yours. You like to become positively connected to the professional associates around you so you may find a way to share the noon meal and have a meeting at the same time. It is easy to gain support for your ideas. Close relationships take on emotional depth and importance. Nobody makes demands on your time today and life just seems to flow along very smoothly. Time involved in fun activities with your loved ones this evening is a good investment of your time: bonding. Building good memories bonds the family together.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Community concerns may come to your attention this morning and you may find yourself thinking of ways to improve conditions. After the workday is over you will make time to phone the people that can help you with this project. Others value you for your ability to make practical decisions concerning group issues. You have a natural sense of what the public wants because you are observant and you listen. Your general outlook on life is attractive and people seek you out to help them with their problems. You are an optimistic, positive guide. This afternoon you will find a social gathering enjoyable. You are at your most elegant this evening. You have a grasp for conceptual and spiritual ideas and the ability to present them to others



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You seem to be handling your financial situation much better than in the past. Make important overtures, communicating your intentions and requirements in business situations. Your direct manner and clear thinking can surprise those who are more guarded. People close to you are optimistic and have good prospects. Close relationships offer a lot of potential for growth and good advice toward future investments. A marriage or other partnership can raise high hopes and give your spirits a boost. Faith, optimism and a yearning to explore all kinds of new horizons are some of the focal points in your life. There may be many requests to consider.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Speculative ventures pay off by the end of this week. Law, politics, or perhaps religions become opportunities to write interesting novels or short stories. You can express yourself quite well. You may excessively worry about one or more of these subjects. You probably should not get into a conversation regarding these subjects unless you have done your research. Good fortune and just plain old luck surrounds you today. It is easy for you to have your needs met. Allow yourself to receive and enjoy the benefits coming your way. You are still working on your physical image this fall—have you chosen the body you wantdo not give up ... Changes that happen in little steps are more permanent. Feelings of compassion can deepen your bond of love.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Individual competitiveness does not seem to work as well as projects that have a cooperative effort. Address the need to improve working conditions. Remember that the bottom line is to increase productivity, not to cater to the whims of others. Investments are best for you at the first of next month: financial advice is a good thing. Charisma, self-transformation and the development of personal power are the things that play a big role in your life now. Remember that tiny causes can lead to big effects. There are profound changes on the personal level—psychological and perhaps physical as well—as if you are transforming into an entirely new person. Think about what a relationship means ... A relationship has some reflection on you.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

It seems as if everyone is asking for a handout today. Perhaps it is payback time or perhaps you did not realize that you had more than you really neededonce you begin to look around, you may decide that tonight is going to be a good time to set aside for getting rid of the old and making room for the new. The universe has a way of making us all create a balance; we either move to get rid of things or decide we need room for new things in our lives. Do not take chances or risks just now—be satisfied with the ordinary. Your home environment, friends and surroundings in general receive encouragement this evening. Young people study and adults dive in to contribute toward a garage sale or charity. Enjoy some fun communication with loved ones.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You have a tendency to be too strict with yourself, to insist that whatever does not contribute to security and other long-term goals is trivial. Unconventional approaches to philosophy, religion, law and politics come to play now. Developments in these fields can have a big impact on you. You may decide to join a missionary group this fall. You are ready to travel and you enjoy helping others and you enjoy learning about new places. Travel sets you apart, giving you a new, and in some sense, revolutionary perspective. This is a rewarding day—whatever you want to achieve today is yours for little effort.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You are most imaginative when it comes to anything spiritual, or psychological. Others find you entrancing and you are always able to draw them into your world of dreams. No one has any doubt that you are intuitive, complete with built-in psychic abilities and probably given to visions. Your creative side is in full swing and others may help you decide if you can pull in some money for your creative ideas. You may be learning all about art shows, exhibitions, etc. You can inspire others with spiritual insights through your art. This could involve cooking, sculpting, writing, music, etc.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

A misunderstanding with a loved one this morning needs cooling off—do not push an issue. Outside repairs and working in the yard today may bring the neighbors to your attention. There may be an opportunity to plan an outdoor meal this weekend with friends; you are in a planning mood. Obtaining and exchanging information takes on more emotional significance for you. Being more involved with neighbors or siblings satisfies a deep emotional need. A family member or relative may have an idea that you will be able to use this afternoon. Take some time to show thankfulness for another's contribution to a particular project.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You look for new avenues to improve working conditions. Your direction becomes very clear this week. Put your mind to work and take care of any details that you may have, for mental discipline should come easily. You enjoy improved productivity. You avoid wasting resources by finding ways to invest your time and energy in building a firm financial foundation for you and your family's future growth. You are extremely resourceful and can find a way to make money with practically anything. Repairs and shopping may help you feel more organized. A family member or old friend may be visiting you this evening.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Setting a reasonable pace is as important in a physical exercise routine as it is in keeping up a pace in cognitive shores. You work hurriedly now to complete tasks that are difficult to complete in one day's time. Slow down a bit and proof your work before trying to beat the clock, so to speak. Review contracts and reconsider legal actions for now. At home, you will find today a good time for meditation, whether it is a study time or whether you are thinking about future plans. You have a real appreciation for creative as well as commonsense thinking. A sporting activity later this afternoon will have positive results and help balance energies. This evening you may find yourself reading, enjoying a long conversation or writing a few letters.

Wordsearch Puzzle

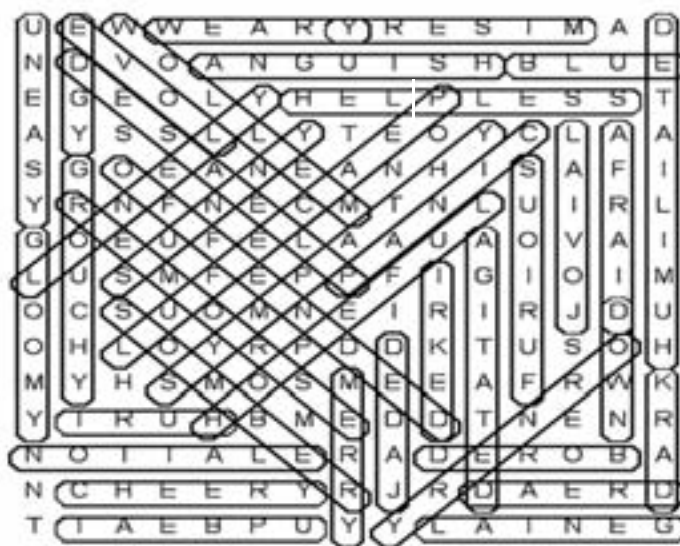
Moods & Emotions 2

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 11 letters spell an additional word.



- | | | | |
|---------|----------|------------|-----------|
| AMUSED | DISLIKE | HORROR | SHOCK |
| ANNOYED | DOUBT | INFATUATED | SULKY |
| ANGUISH | EMPATHY | JOYOUS | SULLEN |
| BLUE | ENVY | LEERY | TERRIFIED |
| BORED | EUPHORIA | PRIDE | TRANQUIL |
| CHEERY | GLUM | RAGE | UNCERTAIN |
| DARK | GREED | SAD | UNHAPPY |
| DOWN | GROUCHY | SATISFIED | WARY |
| DREAD | GUILT | SERENITY | |
| EDGY | HATRED | SHAME | |

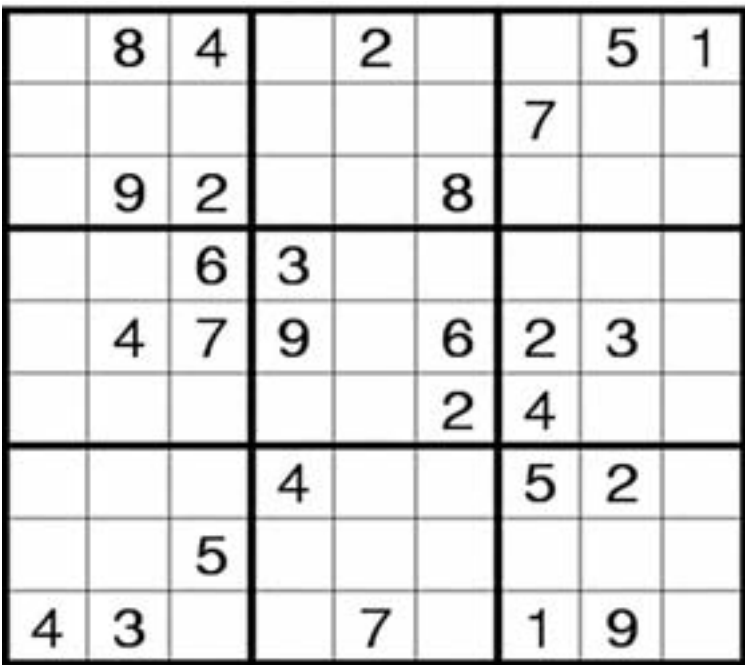
Moods & Emotions 1



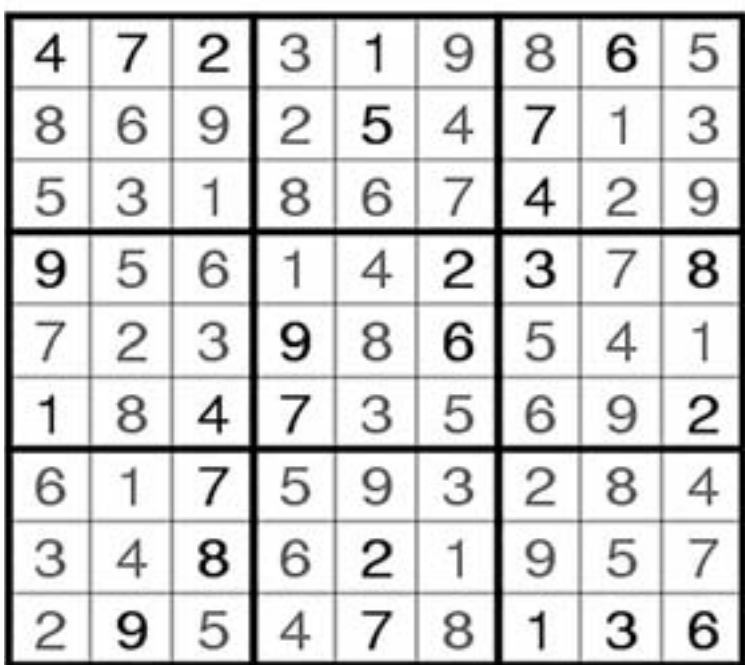
- | | | | |
|----------|------------|----------|----------|
| AFRAID | ELATION | JADED | PEACEFUL |
| AGITATED | FURIOUS | JOVIAL | PLEASED |
| ANGUISH | GENIAL | LOVELY | REMORSE |
| BLUE | GLOOMY | LOVE | SOMBER |
| BORED | GROUCHY | MELLOW | SUNNY |
| CHEERY | HELPLESS | MERRY | SYMPATHY |
| DARK | HOPEFUL | MISERY | UNEASY |
| DOWN | HUMILIATED | OFFENDED | UPBEAT |
| DREAD | HURT | ORNERY | WEARY |
| EDGY | IRKED | PANIC | |

The hidden word is: ASTONISHMENT

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Yesterday's Solution





Lucky the dog prepares to parade during the annual Haute Dog Howl'oween parade in Long Beach, California. — AFP (See Page 22)

Giant skeletons come alive in Mexico for Day of the Dead

Giant skeletons springing forth from asphalt roads are taking over streets in the Mexican capital as the city gets ready to celebrate the festive and deeply spiritual Day of the Dead. The sculptures—built out of cardboard and rocks salvaged from a construction site in Mexico City's southern Tlahuac neighborhood—were built by a group of artists ahead of the festival's climax later this week.

Day of the Dead celebrations began on Saturday with a parade of women dressed as "Catrina", a famous skeletal representation of death created by cartoonist Jose Guadalupe Posada in 1912. The Day of the Dead festival, celebrated in Mexico on the first two days of November, is believed to be when the gateway separating the living and the deceased opens, allowing people to pay their respects to those who have died.

Mexicans visit cemeteries to pay respects to their late relatives, bringing them food and drinks in a centuries-old tradition mixing pre-Hispanic and Catholic beliefs. The festival was added to UNESCO's cultural heritage register in 2008. — AFP



View of a huge cardboard skull made by artisans in a street in the Tlahuac neighborhood, in Mexico City, ahead of the Day of the Dead celebrations. — AFP photos

'Maleficent' sequel edges out 'Joker' at N American box office

Disney's dark fairy tale "Maleficent: Mistress of Evil" edged out "Joker" in a fierce battle of the supervillains this weekend, taking \$19.4 million in North American theaters, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations said Monday. The film, a sequel to the 2014 live-action hit, stars Angelina Jolie as the evil sorceress of "Sleeping Beauty" fame. This time around, Michelle Pfeiffer joins the cast as a scheming Queen Ingrith. For a second consecutive weekend it held off Warner Bros.' scariest "Joker," starring Joaquin Phoenix, which managed \$19.2 million for the Friday-to-Sunday period to finish a narrow second.

"Joker" had appeared to hold a slender lead in early box office estimates. The film, with Phoenix incarnating Batman's notorious nemesis, has now taken approximately \$850 million globally, becoming the most successful R-rated movie in history, according to Variety. With Halloween only days away, scary movies did well overall. In third spot was "The Addams Family" from United Artists, at \$12 million. The computer animation, following the spooky Addams Family and some creepy relatives, features the voices of Oscar Isaac, Charlize Theron, Snoop Dogg and Bette Midler.

In fourth, at \$11.8 million in its second week out, was Sony's "Zombieland: Double Tap," a comedy sequel starring Woody Harrelson, Emma Stone and Luke Wilson. New release "Countdown" from STX films placed fifth at \$8.9 million. The low-budget horror film tells the tale of a nurse (Elizabeth Lail) who finds an app that predicts exactly when people will die—and learns her own death is only days away. Rounding out the top 10 were:

- "Black and Blue" (\$8.4 million)
- "Gemini Man" (\$4.1 million)
- "The Lighthouse" (\$3 million)
- "The Current War: Director's Cut" (\$2.6 million)
- "Abominable" (\$2.1 million) — AFP

Hollywood mogul Robert Evans dies at 89

Legendary Hollywood movie mogul Robert Evans, who oversaw 1970s classics "The Godfather" and "Chinatown," has died aged 89. A larger-than-life figure, Evans was known in Tinseltown both for saving Paramount Pictures by greenlighting a string of hits, and for his tabloid lifestyle including cocaine addiction and seven marriages. Evans' death was confirmed to AFP Monday by his publicist, and by a second person close to the producer. No details were immediately available.

Evans took over as Paramount's head of production in 1966 aged just 36, ushering in a highly successful era for the studio including "Rosemary's Baby" (1968) with director Roman Polanski, followed by Francis Ford Coppola's "The Godfather" (1972). Coppola paid tribute Monday to Evans' "charm, good looks, enthusiasm, style, and sense of humor."

"He had strong instincts as evidenced by the long list of great films in his career," said Coppola in a statement to AFP, also praising Evans' "ultimate realization that 'The Godfather' could be 2 hours and 45 minutes in length."

Evans earned an Oscar nomination—his only Academy recognition—for personally producing "Chinatown" (1974), again with Polanski. He is survived by his only son Joshua.

Born the son of a New York dentist in 1930, Evans was a partner in a clothing company before moving to Los Angeles where he began his film acting career. He appeared in the 1957 movie version of Ernest Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises," despite the author's protests. Darryl F. Zanuck, head of 20th Century Fox at the time, reportedly insisted that the handsome Evans remain in the film by declaring "The kid stays in the picture"—later the title of Evans' autobiography and a documentary about his life.

After a string of poorly received acting roles, Evans quickly switched to producing. He left Paramount in 1975, before returning to moderate success in the 1990s. "May the kid always stay in the picture," wrote Coppola. — AFP



In this file photo, producer Robert Evans arrives at the 2nd Annual Rebels With A Cause Gala at Paramount Studios in Hollywood, California. — AFP

Nepali climber claims new record for 14 highest peaks

A Nepali mountaineer yesterday smashed the speed record for summiting the world's 14 highest peaks, racing up all "8000ers" in just six months and six days, organizers said. The previous record for the 14 mountains above 8,000 meters — completed by Nirmal Purja at 8.59 am yesterday—was almost eight years. "MISSION ACHIEVED! says @nimsdai from the summit of #Shishapangma," read a post on Purja's Facebook page, while a statement quoted the former British elite soldier as being "overwhelmed and incredibly proud" after his 189-day feat.

"It has been a grueling but humbling six months, and I hope to have proven that anything is possible with some determination, self-belief and positivity," the 36-year-old said. "We started with nothing, but look how far we've come." Starting with Italy's legendary Reinhold Messner in 1986 — who on Tuesday praised Purja's "unique mountaineering accomplishment"—around 40 climbers have climbed the Earth's 14 highest mountains, but none have come close to Purja's speed.

The late Polish climber Jerzy Kukuczka took seven years, 11 months and 14 days in 1987. South Korean Kim Chang-ho completed the challenge one month faster—although unlike Kukuczka and also Purja, he never used supplementary oxygen.

Project possible

Purja, a former member of the Gurkhas—a brigade of Nepalis in British army famous for their fearlessness—as well as the elite Special



These handout photos taken and released by Nepali climber Nirmal 'Nims' Purja and his 'Bremont Project Possible' team shows Purja standing at the summit of Nanga Parbat. — AFP photos

Boat Service, kicked off "Project Possible" in April. In the first part of his record attempt, Purja ticked off Annapurna, Dhaulagiri, Kanchenjunga, Everest, Lhotse and Makalu in just one month. He was not alone on Everest, reaching the summit on May 22 with 320 others and snapping a photo of a traffic jam of climbers on the world's highest mountain that went viral.

This season a record 885 people climbed the famous mountain. A total of 11 people died, with at least four of those deaths blamed on overcrowding. A month later, Purja headed to Pakistan for the second part,

where he first tackled the notorious Nanga Parbat at 8,125 meters. Battling sleep deprivation to meet his target, Purja said he was almost sprinting up and down five of Pakistan's highest peaks including Gasherbrum I, Gasherbrum II and K2, the second highest in the world.

Twenty-three days later he was standing atop Broad Peak, his fifth and final mountain of the second phase. Purja began his final push in September, reaching the tops of Cho Oyu and Manaslu within a week. Tuesday's summit of Shishapangma was the final hurdle. When he first told others about his new



quest, "everyone was laughing at me," Purja told AFP in a recent interview in Kathmandu as he awaited permission from the Chinese government to tackle Shishapangma.

He said then he wanted his feats to inspire the next generation of Nepali climbers to break his records. Sherpas-Nepalis who often work as guides for foreign mountaineers—are the backbone of the lucrative climbing industry, but don't attract anywhere near the same amount of attention or accolades as their international companions.

"International attention and sponsors rush easily towards foreign climbers but Nepalis

don't get such opportunities," he said. Purja's record was yet to be verified independently, although he has individual summit certificates from Nepal and Pakistan and will apply to Guinness World Records for recognition, his expedition organizers said. He also said he broke seven other records, including the fastest summit of the world's three highest mountains and climbing Everest, Lhotse and Makalu in 48 hours.—AFP



Munir Shindy, a 40-year-old Palestinian who restores old cars as a hobby, works on a 1946 Armstrong Siddeley at his workshop in Gaza City. — AFP photos



Gaza man wheels, deals to restore classic cars

Munir al-Shindi could not get parts for his classic cars in the blockaded Gaza Strip, so he decided to fashion his own solution. The 40-year-old is known in the Palestinian enclave for his obsession with old-fashioned cars, fixing them up in his workshop northeast of Gaza City. Parts for such models are hard enough to find in the countries where they were originally built, but in Gaza, cut off by an Israeli blockade, they are near impossible to obtain.

"My hobby is vintage cars but it is difficult because of the blockade." "I tried to search the internet for car parts but I couldn't find them. So I managed locally," said Shindi. He worked in car renovation in the United Arab Emirates for 12 years and has got used to improvising. He recently completed a Mercedes Gazelle from

the 1920s and is currently fixing a 1946 Armstrong Siddeley Hurricane. The Armstrong, he explained, was a British luxury car well loved by car enthusiasts.

But even during its peak in the 1940s it was not that popular, so original parts are not available. As such Shindi repurposes bits from other classic cars, often getting them from Israel. His aim is to make driving the car feel as close to the original as possible. He bought the Armstrong for around \$3,000 from a man who had owned it for more than 20 years. He estimates it will cost at least another \$10,000 to transform it into a working automobile.

"The car was empty. Slowly I am working to complete it."

Shindi dreams of travelling outside the strip to show off his cars but knows it is nearly

impossible. Israel has imposed a decade-long blockade on Gaza, which it says is necessary to isolate the strip's Islamist rulers Hamas—with whom the Jewish state has fought three wars. Critics say it amounts to collective punishment of the two million residents.

Even when the car is eventually purring, which Shindi estimates will take another couple of months, it will not be able to go far. Gaza is only 365 square kilometers, around 25 miles north to south. Hossam Ayoub, a neighbor, came to stare at the car. "It's amazing. Vintage cars like this are part of history," he said. "No one knows this kind of car here. It's something unusual."—AFP



Thinking of upgrading to a smartwatch? Keep Huawei Watch GT 2 series on your radar

Tired of wearing a traditional watch that just indicates time and calendar in more complex models? What if you could upgrade to a premium smartwatch that can do a lot more than the best of the chronographs, but without having to sacrifice the good looks of a traditional watch? Advanced AI features, innovative design and smart power consumption, are just a few reasons why the HUAWEI WATCH GT 2 should be your first choice.

Flagship wearable hardware

The Huawei Watch GT 2 packs in the Kirin AI Huawei's first self-developed wearable SoC that ensures powerful performance at peak efficiency, leading to long lasting battery life. Along with upgrading the battery, this new chipset consists of an advanced Bluetooth processing unit, an audio processing unit, an ultra-low power consumption application processor and a separate power management unit.

Thanks to the new chipset, you can make and receive calls, listen to music and even enjoy long periods of use without having to worry about recharging. The chipset also brings with it powerful sensors which can help you track accurate location details as well as monitor health functions, making it both functional and efficient.

Long battery life

One of the biggest advantages of the new Kirin AI chip is that you get a really long battery life out of a single charge. While the Watch GT 2 42mm can operate on basic use for a week, with the Watch GT 2 46mm taking it up a notch and lasting two full weeks on a single charge. The two weeks is also inclusive of using smart features, such as Bluetooth calls, music playback and exercise and sleep tracking as well. If you have the GPS tracking on constantly, the 46mm can last 30 hours, with the 42mm version lasting 15 hours. Essentially for every-day use, the Huawei Watch GT 2, needs just a quick recharge every two weeks, making it even more convenient to use without having to worry about charging yet another device every night.

Fitness and health tracker

This is where the Huawei Watch GT 2 shines. Thanks to the various sensors housed within the smartwatch, sports and fitness enthusiasts can benefit from professional sports data monitoring for 15 sports, including eight outdoor sports and seven indoor sports. So be it going for a hike, a swim or even free training at your gym,

you can trust the Huawei Watch GT 2 to give you the most accurate data and analysis, just like a having an intelligent personal sports coach.

The Huawei Watch GT 2 was designed to provide better health management using advanced algorithms and hardware. For example, the TruSeen 3.5 HR Monitoring feature can help to monitor bradycardia and heart failure, even alerting the wearer if the heart rate is above 100 bpm or below 50 bpm for more than 10 minutes. The smartwatch can also help in improving sleep quality, by using Huawei TruSleep 2.0, which monitors sleep quality, real-time heart rate and sleep breathing quality.

The Huawei AI technology then accurately analyzes sleep problems and provides sleep improvement suggestions, as well as personalized sleep services for better sleep. The Huawei Watch GT 2 can also tell if you are stressed with the Huawei TruRelax technology, which reads HRV (heart rate variability) values and sends you an alert about your stress levels, even helping you to calm down. You also get other health oriented features, such as ensuring you stand up and move around, step and calorie tracking and much more, for an all-day physical status information.

Stylish new look

The Huawei Watch GT 2 brings together the classic elegance of a traditional watch and embeds in it the modern technology of a smartwatch. The new design upgrade improves the screen aesthetics with a full-screen and borderless design, thanks to the all-in-one 3D glass design which also contributes to a wider look and feel. While the Watch GT 2 46mm uses beveled sculpting and gemstone processing techniques for a vivid and bold look, the Watch GT 2 42mm opts for a more fashionable look with an extremely thin 9.4mm display in an elegant metal frame.

The display is more than just any display, as the 1.39-inch AMOLED HD precision touch screen has a resolution of 454 x 454 pixels, a wider color gamut, and ultra-thin design, making it superior to LCD screens, achieving fuller screen color and higher contrast. The screen design also comes with a wide range of stylish, functional and interactive watch faces, making it perfect for any occasion. Be it for an outdoor experience, a fitness oriented lifestyle, a classy night out or even for everyday use, the Huawei Watch GT 2 series can be your perfect companion thanks to its premium smart features and its stylish design.





Turkey Unplugged: Explore the Country's Hidden Gems

Straddling continental limits as well as the frontier separating ancient times from modern ones, Turkey serves up a wealth of experiences. The country is home to a truly intriguing blend of well-preserved ruins, a wide selection of idyllic beaches, coastal retreats, architectural marvels and sweeping landscapes. Unsurprisingly, Turkey's hotspots tend to get a little crowded, packed with eager tourists clamoring to experience its top highlights. But you can step away from the crowds and view the country through a different lens with these hidden gems.



Take in the view from a hillside amphitheatre
Set on a lofty, isolated hill, ancient Pergamum sees much fewer tourists than the popular Ephesus, allowing visitors to enjoy its classical splendor without hectic crowds. The site is particularly famous for its hillside amphitheatre - one of the largest as well as one of the steepest Roman amphitheatres in the world. But unlike the Colosseum's amphitheatre in Rome, which is packed with endless throngs, you can have this one more to yourself. Among the Pergamum's ruins is also its library, which at one point contained over 200,000 titles, rivaling the great library in ancient Alexandria in Egypt.

Hike up the 'Mountain of Gods'
Mount Nemrut is one of the highest peaks of Mesopotamia, and its summit at 2,206 meters above the sea level contains the tomb of King Antiochus I of Commagene. The gigantic statues of gods, each weighing six tons and ten meters tall, are indicative of the effort required for the construction of the tomb. The hike to the top of Mount Nemrut is particularly rewarding, especially to catch the sunrise, with the tomb and stone statues scattered across the hilltop, adding up to a stunning view.



Visit a hanging monastery
One of Turkey's most powerful but well hidden sights, the Sumela Monastery is hewn into a cliff 1,200 meters above sea level. It was built during the height of the Roman Empire and is accessed by a path that runs through a forest packed with scenic streams and rivers. Perched in gravity-defying fashion on a cliff face near Trabzon, this is one of the oldest monasteries in the Christian world and a highlight of any trip to Turkey's Black Sea region. Legend has it that the site's founder, an Athenian monk named Barnabas, had ventured into these wild, misty mountains in a successful quest to find a wooden icon of the Virgin Mary painted by St. Luke of Biblical fame.
Over the centuries, and under successive empires, the monastery grew and prospered until the 1923 Greek-Turkey population exchange, which saw its abandonment. Though the complex eventually sprawled into 72 rooms, the two simple chambers Barnabas carved out of the rock in 385 AD to protect the icon of Mary still form its heart. This so-called "Rock Church", covered with frescoes, rivals those in Cappadocia and Istanbul. Many tourists give the monastery a miss because of its far northeast

location, but this incredible piece of architecture and the beautiful natural landscapes surrounding the nearby village of Mackaare well worth the trip.

Explore Turkey's deepest underground city
Discovered in the 1960s, Derinkuyu is the deepest underground city in Cappadocia. Located 40 kilometers from Goreme, this multi-level ancient city was built during the Byzantine era and extends hundreds of feet below the Earth's surface. Connected by a host of long tunnels, the city has over 600 entrances, multiple churches, wells, tombs, stables, schools, cellars, and can hold up to 20,000 people at simultaneously.

Visit an ancient spa city
Set just above the gleaming white travertines of Pamukkale, the ancient spa city of Hierapolis is not as crowded as other ruins listed among the UNESCO World Heritage Sites and well worth exploring after dipping your feet in Pamukkale's natural pools. The star attraction of Hierapolis is the partially restored Roman Theatre, which once held more than 12,000 spectators. Other must-see locations include the on-site museum, Cleopatra's Pool, the Temple of Apollo and the Plutonium and the Roman Baths.

Experience an untouched paradise
Turkey's 86,000 square-meter Butterfly Valley is home to roughly 100 species of butterflies, including the endemic orange, black and white Jersey Tiger. The Turkish coastline is usually packed with tourists and resorts but Butterfly Valley is surprisingly serene - the government named the valley a preservation area in 1987 disallowing the construction of permanent structures. Accessible only by boat, it features majestic waterfalls and forests that allow for unforgettable camping experiences.



Bulut Waterfall
Bulut Waterfall which is the highest waterfall in Turkey can be reached through a 2 km. pathway from Kaplıca Village Tolikco Neighborhood which is 11 km far away from Camlihemsin district of Rize and 7 km far away from Ayder Plateau. It is almost impossible to see the whole waterfall that falls in four levels from an altitude of app. 250 meters. The top of the waterfall is covered by clouds even when there is no fog. The adventurous journey of Tar Stream where Bulut Waterfall flows starts from the slopes of Kackar Mountains.

The snow waters coming from Altıparmak summit by melting forms Tar Stream by merging with different streamlets. Tar Stream named as Derebasi, Kackar and Tolikcot in higher parts moves forward rapidly in order to reach Hala Stream.
The stream that passes Upper and Lower Kackar plateaus and Lodicur Plateau enters into a valley covered with a forest composed of pine, oak, linden, chestnut trees, hornbeam and plane trees. One of the important tributaries of Tar Stream is Bulut Waterfall coming from Seyran Hill. Its water falls down from the very high cliff very loudly.
The 1800 m route which starts from Tolikcot junction (where chestnut honey sellers open a booth) has been put into service of travelers including information boards, recreation places, camping site, walking platform, waterfall lagoon and suspension bridge. This short track that gives the feeling as you are taking a trip in a tropical jungle facilitates the access to the waterfall. You can spend a pleasant time here by listening to the voice of water that would make you peaceful and by watching the water-lilies on the lagoon.

Cat village and bridge
Cat Bridge that provides the transportation from Camlihemsin settlement to the villages on Artvin and Erzurum side is on the way of the old trade route. This

tired bridge that connects the steep passes of Kackar and Vercenik Mountains was one of the touchstones of the animal and dried fruit trade route in the past. The bridge is located at the point where Cat and Elevit streams merge and is 28 km far away from Camlihemsin. According to the information received from local sources, the bridge was built by Kırkor Ustain 1901.

The bridge which is within the boundaries of Cat village and also called as Cilanc has been repaired a few times due to flood. There are stairs in its entrance part and niches on its foot. Its round arch is covered with regular face stone and its ground is covered with small-sized stream stone. Its side wings are covered with irregular rubble stone. It is one of the registered bridges in Rize province.



Head to an architectural marvel
Located in the isolated region of Dogubeyazit and atop a plateau, the Ishak Pasha Palace is a striking example of Islamic architecture. The palace has retained much of its opulence and grandeur; visitors can still look upon its windswept courtyards, extensive halls and spacious rooms, and the view from the palace is a huge bonus. And the protective glass roofing over several parts of the palace means you can visit even on a rainy day.

Explore the Northern Plateaus Gito
Gito is a wonderful plateau in the Camlihemsin of Rize, stretching out over the beautiful Fırtına River valley with wonderful views overlooking it. This is a spot where you can see the clouds dancing before you. It's been recently developed for outside visitors, and is clean with signposts for hiking and picnicking. The atmosphere is somewhat mysterious, as clouds and fog are a constant with trees and the river peeking through them at unexpected moments.

Sal Plateau
Sal plateau is 23 km far away from Camlihemsin District and has an altitude of 2002 meters. It is one of the plateaus highlighted with its traditional wooden houses, authentic structure and view. The walking distance to Pokut Plateau is 15 minutes. The plateau is used by the people of Cinciva Village in Camlihemsin and the transhumants come to the plateau as from July. It is possible to see Kafkas Mountains and Black Sea in fine weathers. Plateau houses can be used for accommodation. Camping is also available.



Pokut Plateau
It is the first of Sal-Hazindag plateau series which is located in between the valley created by Pokut, Fırtına and Hala streams which are 15 km far away from Camlihemsin. The plateau is ideal for nature-walk, photography and resting and has a rich biological diversity and a remarkable authentic architecture. Foggy views and the authentic wooden houses offer a mystic and authentic atmosphere.
There are plateau houses providing service as pensions within the plateau. You can pass to Sal Plateau from here. Transhumants come to the plateau on August and stay until October. If Samistal-Kavron-Mackun Pass route is used for reaching Pokut, a mysterious track surrounded by natural old forests and spring waters is to be followed.

Huser Plateau
The plateau is within the boundaries of Camlihemsin district. Huser Plateau is located on the mountains on the left side of the entrance of Ayder. Due to its altitude and location, it offers the opportunity of watching all the plateaus connected to Ayder and the unique view of Kackar Mountains. It is the best scenic plateau in the region and is one of the tours that visitors enjoy the most.
If the weather is sunny, you cannot take your eyes off its view. The plateau has a view starting from Kackar Altıparmak Mountains southwards and going along Kackar Kemerli, Kackar Kavrun and Kackar Vercenik Mountains. You will be able to see Palakcur, Avusor, Ceymakur and Kavrun Valleys, Black Sea coastline behind you and Hazindak and Pokut Sal ridges on the opposite side. In other words, you will be able to see everywhere in between 0 m - 4000m. It is a perfect route for a day-trip starting from Ayder.
The facilities within the plateau are doing their best to provide service for the visitors. A remarkable dynamism has been observed within the plateau in recent years due to the vehicle road built in 2007. Many tourists reach Huser through a day-trip walking tour starting from especially Ayder Plateau and enjoy the magnificent view.

The plateau can be reached through a pathway behind Bukla hotel (Ayder). The distance of a specific pathway is app. 3 km. There are directional signs at many points of this pathway which is frequently used by the residents of the plateau and tours. In order to reach the plateau by car; you have to go to Avusor Plateau road and turn left after 2 km. It is possible to reach the plateau through the vehicle road that is accompanied by a beautiful view.



PHOTO FEATURE



Haute Dog Howl'oween parade



Dogs and their owners parade during the annual Haute Dog Howl'oween parade in Long Beach, California. — AFP photos



Wednesday, October 30, 2019

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Relatively hot with light to moderate north easterly wind to variable wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.


BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy with light to moderate north easterly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h with a chance for scattered rain.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART	
KUWAIT CITY	32 °C	24 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	34 °C	24 °C		
ABDALY	32 °C	19 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	34 °C	22 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	29 °C	25 °C		
AHMADI	29 °C	26 °C		
NUWAISIB	34 °C	25 °C		
WAFRA	35 °C	22 °C		
SALMY	31 °C	18 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST							
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed	
			MAX.	MIN.			
Wednesday	10/30	Relatively hot and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	33 °C	24 °C	VRB-NE	08 - 30 km/h	
Thursday	10/31	Relatively hot	35 °C	23 °C	NW	10 - 35 km/h	
Friday	11/01	Relatively hot	32 °C	21 °C	NW	12 - 32 km/h	
Saturday	11/02	Relatively hot	34 °C	21 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 28 km/h	

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:39
Sunrise	05:59
Zuhr	11:32
Asr	14:42
Sunset	17:05
Isha	18:23

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	32 °C
MIN. Temp.	22 °C
MAX. RH	84 %
MIN. RH	53 %
MAX. Wind	NE 32 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

						Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)																	
 Flight Schedule						DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION																	
Arrival Flights on Wednesday 30/10/2019						Departure Flights on Wednesday 30/10/2019																	
Airlines	Flight	Route	Time	KAC	614	Bahrain	12:30	Airlines	Flight	Route	Time	NIA	1504	Asyut	12:30								
FEC	441	Asyut	00:05	MSR	610	Cairo	12:45	KIS	6033	Mashhad	00:05	TBZ	6606	Mashhad	12:45								
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	UAE	871	Luxembourg	12:45	AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:10	IAW	158	Al Najaf	13:00								
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	KAC	774	Riyadh	13:35	MSC	412	Asyut	00:15	RBG	554	Alexandria	13:10								
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	JZR	212	Jeddah	13:45	MSR	615	Cairo	00:30	JZR	115	Doha	13:25								
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	RBG	213	Sohag	13:55	FDB	072	Dubai	00:30	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30								
KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC	672	Dubai	14:00	BBC	044	Dhaka	00:40	MSR	611	Cairo	13:45								
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	UAE	877	Dubai	14:00	FEG	342	Sohag	01:05	THY	767	Istanbul	14:00								
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	JZR	152	Mashhad	14:05	JZR	723	Alexandria	01:05	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15								
MSR	618	Alexandria	01:35	KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	JZR	409	Delhi	01:10	CLX	7912	Hanoi	14:20								
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:15	IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10	RBG	218	Asyut	14:35								
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	SVA	504	Jeddah	14:15	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50	KNE	382	Taif	15:00								
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	THY	773	Istanbul	01:50	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:00								
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	QTR	1078	Doha	14:25	DLH	625	Frankfurt	01:50	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00								
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	364	Colombo	14:35	KAC	417	Manila	02:00	JZR	103	Bahrain	15:05								
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	286	Dhaka	14:35	KAC	285	Dhaka	02:00	FDB	060	Dubai	15:05								
KAC	414	Bangkok	02:40	KAC	304	Mumbai	14:45	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00	UAE	878	Dubai	15:30								
THY	1404	AYT	02:45	JZR	222	Riyadh	14																

Saudi hopes tourism pioneers will bring economic bonanza

RIYADH: In Riyadh's old quarter, a small group of Polish holidaymakers exploring the mud-brick Masmak Fort were making history as some of the first foreign tourists to visit Saudi Arabia since it opened its doors. Inside the small 19th century castle, their Saudi guide, wearing a white traditional dishdasha robe, described ancient customs of the ultra-conservative kingdom.

"Before coming here, I was afraid about what I should wear, about local customs and strict rules, but we have been very positively surprised," said Sophia, who wore a flowing dress but not the black "abaya" cloak that was compulsory until recently. "It's normal that we should take into consideration the traditions of each country," said her husband Andrzej, a doctor, who was himself dressed in a T-shirt and jeans.

For the Polish adventurers, the main hurdle to visiting Saudi Arabia had been getting the visa they had been seeking for the past two years. "When we had the choice between Qatar, where we don't need a visa, and Saudi Arabia, we chose Qatar," Andrzej said, referring to the kingdom's neighbor currently under a Saudi-led blockade. But the pioneering Poles finally managed to enter Saudi Arabia thanks to a landmark decision enacted last month to offer tourist visas - relaxing rules that had largely restricted visits to business travellers and Muslim pilgrims. Citizens from 49 countries are now eligible for online e-visas or visas on arrival.

To encourage visitors, authorities announced they would allow unmarried foreign couples to rent hotel rooms together, and that foreign women were not obliged to wear the body-shrouding abaya that is still expected in public for Saudi women. Methaab Abdallah, the Polish group's guide, has owned a travel agency for the past decade. He welcomed the reforms, but sounded a note of caution given the fledgling state of the industry in the

kingdom. "Authorities are moving much faster than we are, and with greater resources. We must adapt to this rapid change... but we can't go that fast," he said.

Reform vision

Developing the tourism industry is a key pillar of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 reform program that aims to prepare the Arab world's largest economy, which is highly reliant on oil, for a diversified future. Glitzy promotional campaigns focus on ancient sites as well as breathtaking desert and coastal landscapes. But authorities are also banking on large cities like the capital Riyadh and the western Red Sea port of Jeddah playing their part through large-scale investments in entertainment offerings.

Despite these efforts, the capital - home to seven million people, including two million foreigners - has a sleepy air, with little of the glamour and buzz of its counterparts elsewhere in the Gulf. With its wide sidewalks and high-end shops, Al-Tahlia Street in central Riyadh is often compared with the Champs-Elysees. But it has little of the energy and style of its famous Paris counterpart. On an average weeknight, just a few families or groups of friends can be found seated on the restaurant terraces. Conversations are quiet and until recent years, music was not played inside dining venues.

In the middle of the avenue, which is punctuated by construction for the city's first metro system, a flashy facade stands out with a gigantic, luminous inscription announcing the "Soho Club". Electronic music booms from inside, as the doorman, sporting a blazer and an earpiece, welcomes a visitor inside with a smile, but also a warning: "It's a respectable club".

Inside, the atmosphere is subdued, as people enjoy meals and a cosy decor that is more reminiscent of an English pub than a nightclub. "We are in favor of tourism, but foreigners must respect our traditions



RIYADH: Polish tourists listen to a guide as they visit the King Abdulaziz museum of Masmak in the old quarter of the Saudi capital on Oct 17, 2019. — AFP

and customs in the way they dress and behave," one man firmly told an AFP reporting team, as he passed by in his traditional robe and chequered headress.

"Why would foreigners come?"

The conservative country, which forbids alcohol and is notorious for its gender segregation, may seem an unlikely destination for global tourists. Some young Saudis share those doubts. "Don't talk to me about Riyadh. I've just returned from a weekend in Dubai," said a 27-year-old telecoms

salesman, who asked to remain anonymous. "When we have holidays, we go to Dubai," said his friend, referring to the comparatively free-wheeling emirate just a two-hour flight from Riyadh. "Why would foreigners come here?"

Prince Mohammed has sought to shake off his country's ultra-conservative image - lifting a ban on cinemas and women drivers as well as allowing gender-mixed concerts and sporting extravaganzas. But the kingdom must match its reforms with a

revamp of "inadequate" infrastructure, such as roads and hotels, economic planning consultant Abdullah Al-Fayez said. And amid the rapid changes, the government must also raise awareness among Saudis about the importance of tourism for boosting the economy and employment opportunities, he added. "It is a bold experiment. But it is difficult to predict the problems it may pose to Saudi society and the extent of resistance by conservatives and radicals." — AFP

Pink tickets as Delhi rolls out free bus...

Continued from Page 1

Before, bus fares cost between 5 rupees (around seven US cents) and 25 rupees for vehicles with air conditioning, according to government data. The safety of women in the Indian capital has been under the spotlight since the 2012 gang rape and murder of a female student on a bus that sparked major protests. But Kejriwal said that from yesterday, there would be 13,000 "marshals" on buses to ensure safety for the

850,000 women who take the bus regularly in the chaotic megacity of 20 million people.

Sonia Rathore, 24, who works as an assistant at a firm in central Delhi said she was set to save around 2,000 rupees (\$30) per month. "Those women who don't earn more than 10,000 rupees or 15,000 rupees, this move will be very helpful for them," she told AFP on a bus in central Delhi. "For me, I don't end up spending a lot on buses because I only use it occasionally. But for those who go to work regularly, this will make a positive difference," said Urnila Devi, a housewife. The governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the move a gimmick ahead of state elections in Delhi due in early 2020. — AFP

Investors flock to Saudi as Aramco...

Continued from Page 1

"I have been coming to Saudi Arabia for 20 years but what I have been seeing particularly in the past two or three years is (economic) transformation," Indian tycoon Mukesh Ambani told the conference, lauding the kingdom's leaders. "As a businessman and as an investor I'm all in." The United States sent a big delegation including its energy and treasury secretaries, and senior White House advisor Jared Kushner. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro are also participating in the Oct 29-31 event, as is the head of the World Bank.

Prince Mohammed in 2016 launched a plan to transform the economy of the world's largest crude exporter by developing non-energy industries. But state oil giant Aramco remains the biggest draw for investors eager for news on its initial public offering which has had several false starts. Aramco CEO Amin Nasser was absent from the conference as he was meeting investors abroad to secure a domestic IPO on Nov 3 after a delay earlier this month, three people with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters. It could be the largest listing in history, if the \$2 trillion valuation target sought by the crown prince is met.

"There are several Russian pensions funds who are interested to invest in the Aramco IPO and we have also received indications from our Russia-China fund of some Chinese major institutions also interested," Kirill Dmitriev, head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund, said on the sidelines of the meeting.

Last year's event was overshadowed by the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi as dozens of Western leaders and executives boycotted the gathering. Yesterday, bosses of HSBC, Blackstone, BlackRock, Colony Capital and Evercore were among the crowd at the luxury hotel that less than 24 months ago served as one of the detention centers for more than 200 businessmen, ministers and princes during a corruption purge that had unnerved investors.

Amir opens Assembly term with call for...

Continued from Page 1

The speaker also called on lawmakers to upgrade their political performance in a bid to help Kuwait sail through regional turmoil.

HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah reiterated that the government will continue to strengthen its ties and cooperation with the Assembly for the benefit of the nation. He said the government recently referred to the Assembly a number of draft laws to promote development and will send more soon. He said the government recently completed strategic projects like Jaber Causeway and the new university, adding that the country will witness major improvement in its health sector.

The long hunt for Baghdadi

WASHINGTON: The operation to kill the Islamic State group's leader took months of intelligence work, required the snatching of his underwear and ended when one of the world's most sought-after men blew himself up. The hunt for Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi - whose extremists have unleashed ghastly violence on civilians across the Middle East and beyond - has been a top Western priority but was complicated by the messy divisions in war-ravaged Syria.

US Special Operation Forces who led the weekend raid relied on intelligence from Kurdish fighters, who just weeks earlier were abandoned by President Donald Trump and forced to leave their positions as Turkey tries to crush them over their links to separatists at home. Polat Can, a senior advisor to the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, said the fighters teamed up with the CIA on May 15 after Baghdadi was spotted in Idlib province.

"Our own source, who had been able to reach Al-Baghdadi, brought Al-Baghdadi's underwear to conduct a DNA test and make sure (100 percent) that the person in question was Al-Baghdadi himself," Can wrote on Twitter.

Hariri resigns as Lebanon crisis...

Continued from Page 1

It was the most serious strife on the streets of Beirut since 2008, when Hezbollah fighters seized control of the capital in a brief eruption of armed conflict with Lebanese adversaries loyal to Hariri and his allies. Lebanon has been paralyzed by the unprecedented wave of protests against the rampant corruption of the political class.

"For 13 days the Lebanese people have waited for a decision for a political solution that stops the deterioration (of the economy). And I have tried, during this period, to find a way out, through which to listen to the voice of the people," Hariri said. "To all partners in political life, our responsibility today is how we protect Lebanon and revive its economy."

President Michel Aoun, a political ally of Hezbollah, could now either accept Hariri's resignation and begin consultations towards forming a new government, or ask him to rethink. It took nine months to form the Hariri coalition cabinet that took office in January. Some demonstrators vowed to stay in the street. Protester Tarek Hijazi said the resignation was "a first step in building a patriotic democratic country, on the road to achieving the demands of the Oct. 17 uprising". The turmoil has worsened Lebanon's acute economic crisis, with financial strains leading to a scarcity of hard currency and a weakening of the pegged Lebanese pound. Lebanese government bonds tumbled on the turmoil.

On the streets of Beirut, black-clad men wielding sticks and pipes attacked the protest camp that has been the focal point of countrywide rallies against the elite. Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, head of the heavily armed, Iran-backed Hezbollah, said last week that roads closed by protesters should be reopened and suggested the demonstrators were financed by its foreign enemies and implementing their agenda.

Smoke rose as some of the protester tents were set ablaze by Hezbollah and Amal supporters, who earlier fanned out in the downtown area of the capital shouting "Shia, Shia" in reference to themselves and cursing anti-government demonstrators. "With our blood and lives we

SDF commander General Mazloum Abdi, in an interview with US network NBC, said the fighters cultivated a security advisor deep within Baghdadi's inner circle who provided them a layout of his home - including the number of guards, floor plans and tunnels.

The informant stole Baghdadi's underwear three months ago and, later, obtained a blood sample, NBC News said. The United States had DNA samples on file of Baghdadi, an Iraqi Sunni detained by US forces in 2004 in the flashpoint city of Fallujah before rising to the helm of the Islamic State group, also known as ISIS.

Like Osama bin Laden, who was killed in 2011 in the Pakistani garrison town of Abbottabad, Baghdadi defied conventional wisdom on where he would be hiding. The SDF said that Baghdadi had moved from Deir ez-Zor, the desert region where Islamic State made its last stand against a Kurdish-led assault, to a village called Barisha in Idlib, still a major battlefield.

The northwestern province is largely controlled by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham - linked to Al-Qaeda, which has a rivalry with Islamic State. Turkey has troops on the ground in Idlib, which Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime, backed by Russia, is pounding by air. Can, the SDF advisor, said Turkey's incursion this month - made possible by Trump's controversial decision to withdraw some 1,000 US troops - caused a delay in the operation against Baghdadi. — AFP

offer ourselves as a sacrifice for you Nabih!" they chanted in reference to Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, head of the Amal Movement. "We heed your call, we heed your call, Nasrallah!" they chanted.

Security forces did not initially intervene to stop the assault, in which protesters were hit with sticks and were seen appealing for help as they ran, witnesses said. Tear gas was eventually fired to disperse the crowds. Hariri did not refer to the violence in his address but urged all Lebanese to "protect civil peace and prevent economic deterioration, before anything else". France, which has supported Hariri, called on all Lebanese to help guarantee national unity.

Hundreds gathered in the northern city of Tripoli - a stronghold of the Sunni prime minister - as well as the southern city of Sidon, from where his family hails. In Tripoli - home to festive protest raves - large crowds gathered in the main Al-Nour Square waving the Lebanese flag. "This resignation is welcome but it is not enough. It is only one part of a larger list of demands," said Tima Samir, a 35-year-old mother of two. "We want the entire system to change and well stay on the streets until all our demands are met."

In Sidon's central square, people sang and danced, as stores gave away free sweets. Ahed Madi, a demonstrator, said the festive scenes in the city were especially "symbolic". "Saad Hariri is from this city and this city has always embraced him. But today, the people want change," he told AFP. Protesters have insisted on a complete overhaul of the country's sectarian-based governance and celebrated the emergence of a national civic identity.

Lebanon's allies last year pledged \$11 billion in financing to help it revive its economy, conditional on reforms that Hariri's coalition government has largely failed to implement. But there has been no sign of a rush to help. A senior US State Department official said last week this was not a situation where the Lebanese government should necessarily get a bailout, saying they should reform first. Banks were closed for a 10th day along with schools and businesses.

Hariri last week sought to defuse popular discontent through a batch of reform measures agreed with other groups in his coalition government, including Hezbollah, to - among other things - tackle corruption and long-delayed economic reforms. But with no immediate steps towards enacting these steps, they did not placate the demonstrators. — Agencies

Rockets win Westbrook’s first game against Thunder

Nuggets run past Kings, remain unbeaten

OKLAHOMA: James Harden scored a game-high 40 points, and Russell Westbrook, playing against his former team for the first time, finished an assist shy of his second consecutive triple-double, but it was the two-way prowess of PJ Tucker that led the Houston Rockets to a 116-112 win over the visiting Oklahoma City Thunder on Monday. Tucker had 17 points and nine rebounds, and he regularly assumed the challenge of defending opponents big and small. His corner 3-pointer with 54.8 seconds left provided the Rockets the six-point cushion they needed down the stretch. Westbrook finished with 21 points, 12 rebounds and nine assists while Harden added seven assists. Harden made 21 of 22 foul shots. Tucker was 5 of 7 on 3-point attempts. Clint Capela contributed 15 points for Houston. Dennis Schroder and Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 22 apiece for the Thunder while Danilo Gallinari added 17. Chris Paul posted 15 points in his return to Houston, and Nerlens Noel also scored 15.

KNICKS 105, BULLS 98
Reserve Bobby Portis hit the go-ahead 3-pointer with 1:47 remaining and scored 11 of his season-high 28 points in the fourth quarter as New York rallied from 18 points down to beat Chicago. Portis’ clutch performance was part of a game-ending 15-0 run for the Knicks, who avoided their first 0-4 start since 2005-06. The former Chicago forward shot 10 of 14 from the floor and hit all four of his 3-point shots while also grabbing 11 rebounds. Rookie RJ Barrett added 19 points and 15 rebounds for his first career double-double for the Knicks, who got 14 points from Kevin Knox and 13 points and 14 rebounds from Julius Randle. Zach LaVine scored 21 points and Wendell Carter Jr. had 20 for the 76ers.

76ERS 105, HAWKS 103
Joel Embiid scored 36 points, including the decisive two free throws with 5.3 seconds left, and Vince Carter’s potential game-winning 3-pointer at the buzzer hit the back rim as Philadelphia edged host Atlanta. Embiid showed no ill effects of the right ankle sprain that forced him to miss the last game. He shot 12-for-19 from the field, including 2-for-6 on 3-point tries,

and 10-for-10 from the foul line. He added 13 rebounds, five assists and three steals to help the Sixers improve to 3-0. Atlanta was led by Trae Young with 25 points, but only six of those came in the second half. Young also had a game-high nine assists. John Collins had 16 points before fouling out in the final minute, and De’Andre Hunter scored 14.

CLIPPERS 111, HORNETS 96
Kawhi Leonard amassed 30 points, seven rebounds, six assists and three blocks as Los Angeles posted a victory over visiting Charlotte. The Clippers won for the third time in four games this season. Lou Williams added 23 points and Montrezl Harrell scored 19 points and grabbed seven rebounds for Los Angeles. Landry Shamet scored all 16 of his points in the first half, and Ivica Zubac recorded a career-high five blocks. Terry Rozier finished with 17 points to lead six Hornets in double digits. Cody Zeller chipped in 14 points and 13 rebounds. Reserve guard Devonte’ Graham had 14 points and 12 assists for Charlotte, which took its third consecutive loss.

PISTONS 96, PACERS 94
Christian Wood scored 19 points and grabbed 12 rebounds off the bench, and Derrick Rose overcame a cold shooting night to score the go-ahead basket in the final minute as host Detroit defeated Indiana for the second time in six nights. Andre Drummond supplied 18 points and 18 rebounds, while Luke Kennard tossed in 14 points for Detroit, which had lost its previous two games. Bruce Brown added 11 points and seven rebounds, and Rose scored 10 on 4-for-16 shooting with six assists off the bench. Domantas Sabonis led the Pacers, who dropped to 0-3, with 21 points and 14 rebounds. T.J. Warren had 19 points and five steals, Myles Turner scored 16 points, and Malcolm Brogdon added 15 points and 11 assists.

SPURS 113, TRAIL BLAZERS 110
DeMar DeRozan poured in 27 points and led a huge midgame charge for San Antonio Spurs, which beat visiting Portland to complete a sweep of its season-opening, three-game homestand. The Spurs roared back



HOUSTON: Russell Westbrook #0 of the Houston Rockets dunks the ball against Steven Adams #12 of the Oklahoma City Thunder at the Toyota Center in Houston, Texas. — AFP

from a 19-point, first-quarter hole to take the lead midway through the third on the way to an 82-71 advantage heading into the final 12 minutes. San Antonio outscored the Trail Blazers 63-38 over the second and third quarters, but Portland forged its own comeback late, pulling to within 109-108 on Damian Lillard’s dunk with 1:10 to play. Lillard scored 18 of his 28 points over the game’s final 3:50, but he missed a 3-point attempt that would have tied the game with 16.3 seconds to play. After a foul and two missed free throws by DeRozan, Portland had two more chances to pull even, but Lillard missed twice from beyond the arc, with the final attempt rolling around the rim and out at the buzzer.

BUCKS 129, CAVALIERS 112
Khris Middleton led seven players in double figures with 21 points as Milwaukee gradually pulled away from visiting Cleveland. Coming off a home loss to Miami, the Bucks also got 19- and 17-point efforts off the bench from George Hill and Pat Connaughton, respectively,

while also getting double-figure scoring from starters Brook Lopez (16), Giannis Antetokounmpo (14), Eric Bledsoe (14) and Wes Matthews (14). Collin Sexton led Cleveland with 18 points.

JAZZ 96, SUNS 95
Bojan Bogdanovic hit four 3-pointers en route to 29 points, and Donovan Mitchell added 25 points and made the first of two free throws with 0.4 seconds left in the game to give Utah a narrow win over host Phoenix. Rudy Gobert contributed 15 points and 18 rebounds, and made eight consecutive free throws in the fourth quarter to help the Jazz overcome a seven-point deficit in the final nine minutes for their eighth straight win in the series. Devin Booker had 21 points despite playing through foul trouble, Kelly Oubre Jr. scored 18 points, and Ricky Rubio had 10 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists in his first game against Utah after spending the previous two seasons with the Jazz. The Suns were looking to start 3-1 for the first time since 2014-15. — Reuters

25th Asian Bowling Ten Pin Championship concludes tonight



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The 25th Asian Bowling Ten Pin Championship will come to a conclusion tonight at 7 pm which was hosted by Kuwait Bowling Center in Salmiya. The tournament enjoyed unmatched success during the past 10 days with the participation of 27 countries, under the patronage of HH the Prime Minister.

Malaysia seems to have guaranteed being on top of the standings as ten events are completed and only two left. Malaysia collected five gold, one silver and four bronze, followed by South Korea with three gold, three silver and three bronze. China has one gold, one silver and one bronze, Hong Kong has one gold, Indonesia two silver, Chinese Taipei has one silver and one bronze, Kuwait and India one silver each, while Japan has a bronze.

Malaysia is now trying to displace South Korea

from the top which controlled it for the past five championships to reclaim its place that it dominated during the eighties and nineties of the past century. This will take place if South Korea does not win more than one gold in the men’s and women’s masters rounds.

Hong Kong won its first medal when it won the teams gold medal for men by scoring 7,031 followed by Chinese Taipei with a score of 7,005 and China with 7,001.

The women’s team gold went to South Korea scoring 7,045 points followed by Malaysia with 6,825 and Taipei with 6,781.

Malaysian Timmy Tan won all events score with 5,805 points, followed by Chinese Du Jianchao who collected 5,745, while South Korean Kang Heewon was third with 5,724.

Meanwhile, in the women’s category Koreans Lee Nayoung and Baek Seungia took gold and

silver with the scores of 5,884, 5,760, leaving the bronze to Malaysia’s Sin Li Jane, who collected 5,714.

Malaysia’s team technical manager said he is happy with his country’s achievements so far, adding “we came to win one gold at least, and this was achieved by the strong start by the team, and it is possible to win more.”

He said the championship is technically strong, and the women’s competition is only between S Korea and Malaysia, while with men it is more difficult as five teams have the same level, and that makes it difficult to predict.

He said Kuwait Bowling Center is considered in the world as far as size, equipment and technological fittings. Meanwhile, Singapore’s team manager lauded the highly professional organization, and hospitality at the same time, that coupled with the participation of Asia’s best players for both genders.

right to organise the Olympic competition, and replaced with a special taskforce, after a series of problems including a major judging scandal at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Boxing is “on the verge of the crisis of elimination from the Olympics”, Morinari Watanabe, a Japanese Olympic Committee official who heads the taskforce, said yesterday. “We have to regain trust. That’s the top priority,” said the 60-year-old, who heads the International Gymnastics Federation.

Watanabe was tapped for the role after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) suspended recognition of AIBA after an investigation into mismanagement. The decision raised fears that boxing might not feature at the 2020 Games, but the IOC opted to form a taskforce headed by Watanabe to resume preparations that were frozen during its investigation into crisis-riddled AIBA.

Under the new system, judges press a button when they mark blows and their decisions will be immediately shown on a screen, providing instant

feedback and grounds for clarifying decisions. Watanabe said the taskforce is considering whether the screen should be visible by the audience as well as judges and referees.

“The most important thing is that judgements should be fair and transparent,” he said. The system will be tried out this week at the stadium, where test boxing matches got under way from today in preparation for the Games.

AIBA is the first federation to have been stripped of the right to organise its own sport at an Olympics. Formed in 1946, it oversaw decades of signature Olympic moments, notably the 1960 gold medal win in Rome by Muhammad Ali, then known as Cassius Clay.

But its reputation has been tarnished in recent years as it careened from crisis to crisis. Relations between AIBA and the IOC took a sharp downward turn following the 2016 Rio Games, when 36 officials and referees were suspended over allegations of bout fixing. — AFP

Malak Al-Enezi wins bronze for shot put

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti player at the Kuwait Disabled Sports Club Malak Hadi Al-Enezi won the bronze medal of the shot put event of the Sixth Gulf Women Championship being held in Kuwait. Malak scored 4.04 meters, as Bahrain’s Ruba Al-Omari was first with 7.42 meters, and her compatriot Bahrain’s Amal Ahmad was second with 5.30 meters. Malak Hadi said she was happy with her first achievement in the name of her country Kuwait. She added that “I wish to make better achievements in upcoming championships,” and she thanked the chairman and board members of the club for their support.



Malak Al-Enezi

Shoulder injury ends Benn’s comeback bid

LONDON: Former world boxing champion Nigel Benn has called off his bid to make a comeback to the ring 23 years after his last professional fight due to a shoulder injury. The 55-year-old had said in September he would fight Cameroon-born Australian Sakio Bika, 40, a former world champion, in Birmingham on Nov. 23.

It would have been Benn’s first professional bout since 1996 but the injury has forced the ‘Dark Destroyer’ to accept his career is over. “With a heavy heart I am sad to say I had to make the hard decision today to hang up my boxing gloves,” Benn said in a post on Instagram.

“I’d like to thank you all for supporting me throughout my career but the time is up for me. I thank you all for giving me an unbelievable career. God bless you all.” Benn held the WBO middleweight title in 1990 and the WBC super-middleweight title from 1992-96. He lost his last professional fight to Irishman Steve Collins in November 1996.

“I had to call it quits today, I wanted a hard spar, but it just wasn’t happening,” Benn added. “My shoulder started playing up and I could not throw a right hand at all. “Today’s the day I hand over the baton to my son Conor, who is going to carry on the name, but with me it comes to an end today.” British media reported earlier this month that Benn’s comeback bid had been opposed by the British Boxing Board of Control, and that the bout was sanctioned by the rival British and Irish Boxing Authority instead. — Reuters

Olympic boxing trials new judging system to ‘regain trust’

TOKYO: Olympic boxing officials will trial a new, more transparent judging system this week as the sport fights to “regain trust” after scandals that nearly saw it kicked out of the Games. The new system, where judges’ scoring is updated in real time on a screen, will be tested at the Ryogoku Kokugikan sumo stadium, where the Tokyo 2020 boxing competition will be held.

Amateur boxing body AIBA was stripped of the

Sports

Bangladesh captain Shakib banned for two years for graft: ICC

Free to resume international cricket October 29, 2020

DHAKA: Bangladesh captain and star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan was banned yesterday from all cricket for two years, with one year suspended, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said. The ban came after Shakib “accepted three charges of breaching the ICC Anti-Corruption Code”, the sport’s governing body said in a statement.

These included failing to disclose to the ICC’s Anti-Corruption Unit full details of approaches or invitations made in relation to the Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe Tri-Series in January 2018 as well as the 2018 Indian Premier League (IPL), it said.

The 32-year-old’s ban came as a blow to Bangladesh’s preparations for next month’s tour of India where the all-rounder was set to lead the team for a two-Test series and three T20 international matches.

Shakib, who has played 56 Test, 206 ODIs and 76 Twenty20 internationals, is by far Bangladesh’s best known player, having topped the ICC all-rounder rankings in all three formats several times since 2009.

He starred for the team during the recent World Cup in England, where he scored over 600 runs and picked 11 wickets. In the World Cup, he also became the fastest and only the fifth cricketer to reach 5,000 runs and 250 wickets in ODIs.

Shakib will be free to resume international cricket October 29, 2020 subject to him satisfying the conditions in respect of the suspended part of the sanction, the ICC said. “I am obviously extremely sad to have been banned from the game I love, but I completely accept my sanction for not reporting the approaches,” Shakib was quoted as saying in the ICC statement.

There was no immediate comment from the country’s cricket authorities who were expected to name the teams

for the India Tests and T20s today. But Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said that the country’s cricket board “will always be with Shakib and will help him in every way.”

She said that while match-fixers often contact players, Shakib’s “mistake is that when he was contacted he didn’t give it too much importance. He didn’t inform... the ICC.” Having grown up in a rural town west of the capital Dhaka, Shakib burst into the international scene after excelling in age-level cricket.

He is possibly Bangladesh’s most loved cricketer and only last week successfully led a brief strike by Bangladesh’s professional cricketers to press for better pay and benefits. But this is not the first time the left arm orthodox spinner and left handed batsman has faced disciplinary actions.

In 2014, Shakib was suspended by the BCB from all cricket for six months following “serious misbehaviour” with Bangladesh’s coach Chandika Hathurusingha, and for his altercation with a spectator during a ODI against India in Dhaka.

“He has a severe attitude problem, which is unprecedented in the history of Bangladesh cricket. We think that his behaviour is such that it’s directly impacting the team,” Bangladesh Cricket Board president Nazmul Hassan told reporters at that time.

Last week Bangladesh cricket authorities said they would also take legal action against Shakib for allegedly breaching his contract to sign a sponsorship deal with a top mobile phone operator.

Shakib inked the agreement with former national team sponsor Grameenphone for an undisclosed sum at a time when he was also leading the players’ strike. — AFP



DHAKA: Bangladesh national cricket team captain Shakib Al Hasan (2R) speaks with media as Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan Papon (2L) stands next to him at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka yesterday. — AFP

Test spots up for grabs with Carey to captain Australia A

SYDNEY: Australian selectors yesterday flagged a number of batting spots still up for grabs in the upcoming Test series against Pakistan, with an A side promising a run-off among a number of contenders.

Wicketkeeper Alex Carey will lead Australia A in a three-day match against Pakistan ahead of a Test series, pushing his case for Test selection.

Joe Burns, who was controversially left out of the Ashes squad, will join Marcus Harris at the top of the order, with Usman Khawaja, Travis Head, Nic Maddinson and rising star Will Pucovski rounding out the top six.

“We will closely monitor performances in this match as well as the coming rounds of the Sheffield Shield before deciding upon our squad for the two-Test series against Pakistan,” national selector Trevor Hohns said.

Former Australian captain Ricky Ponting recently declared Steve Smith, Marnus Labuschagne and, despite his poor Ashes form, David Warner the only sure starters for the upcoming Test series against Pakistan.

Carey, who is vice captain of Australia’s One-Day and T20 teams, had a strong performance with both bat and gloves in the World Cup.

The South Australian was unlucky to miss out on an Ashes berth, with captain Tim Payne the preferred wicket-keeper and Mathew Wade as back up.

“This fixture represents an opportunity to provide Alex with more leadership experience and he will be supported by two experienced vice-captains in Usman Khawaja and Travis Head,” Hohns said.

Young gun Pucovski will eye a return to the international stage after a strong first class hundred for Victoria

this month. The 21-year-old was released from a Test series against Sri Lanka last season to deal with mental health issues.

A recent double century from his Victoria teammate Maddinson has seen both batsmen thrust into international contention.

“Both are exciting batsmen whom we’ve had our eye on for some time,” Hohns said.

Exciting paceman Jhye Richardson will make his comeback from a shoulder injury after missing out on the World Cup and the Ashes series.

He will be joined in the bowling attack by Michael Nesar, Sean Abbott and Riley Meredith.

Pakistan will take on Australia A on October 31 for the three-day tour match in Sydney ahead of a two Test series against Australia in Brisbane and Adelaide in November.

Australia A squad: Alex Carey (c), Marcus Harris, Joe Burns, Usman Khawaja, Will Pucovski, Travis Head, Nic Maddinson, Michael Nesar, Jhye Richardson, Sean Abbott, Riley Meredith. — AFP

Netherlands secure T20 WCup spot, UAE have last chance

PARIS: The Netherlands became the third team, after Papua New Guinea and Ireland, to book a place at next year’s T20 World Cup after thrashing United Arab Emirates in Dubai yesterday.

UAE, who started the tournament with victory over Ireland, could only muster 80-9 in their 20 overs which the Dutch knocked off with 29 balls remaining.

The Netherlands, who face Ireland in the competition semi-final, won by eight wickets to progress to the eight-team first round of the World Cup in Australia in October 2020.

UAE have a final chance to reach the tournament when they face Scotland in a qualifying playoff today.

UAE won the toss and chose to bat, but were quickly in trouble as Rohan Mustafa fell to Fred Klaasen in the first over. Things turned from bad to worse as UAE lost their first five wickets for just nine runs.

Waheed Ahmed and Mohammad Boota went some way toward repairing the damage with a sixth-wicket partnership of 45 before both fell in the same over to Johannesburg-born Brandon Glover, whose 4-12 earned him the Player of the Match award.

Ahmed Raza top-scored with 22 from 24 balls, but a target of 81 was never likely to stretch the Dutch. Max O’Dowd fell early but Ben Cooper, with 41 not out, guided the Dutch to a victory that sends them to Australia as well as to the qualifying tournament semifinals. — AFP

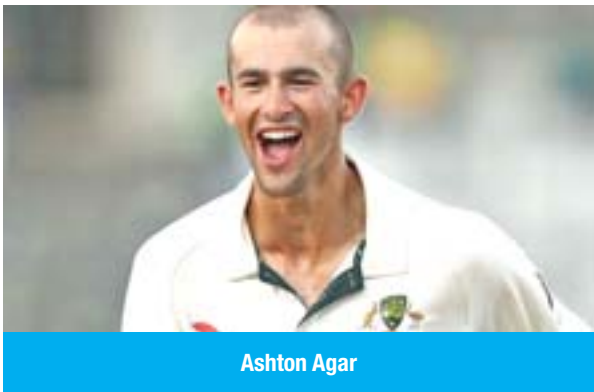
Australia skipper Finch backing Agar to become T20 ‘finisher’

MELBOURNE: Australia captain Aaron Finch is hoping spin bowler Ashton Agar can blossom into a swashbuckling “finisher” in the batting lineup to give the team more flexibility ahead of next year’s T20 World Cup.

Left-arm spinner Agar, who has averaged 13.66 with the bat from 16 T20Is, was named at seven in the batting order in the series-opener against Sri Lanka on Sunday but went unused as Australia’s top order dominated in the 134-run victory.

While Agar is some way short of all-rounder status, Finch said the 26-year-old was working hard to get there. “His batting’s still developing,” Finch told reporters in Brisbane yesterday.

“Something that he’s been working on is becoming that



real finisher towards the back end of an innings in T20 and in one-day games. “So if he can keep developing that, it’ll give you a lot of options to play that second spinner or go with four quicks, or if there’s another all-rounder that comes in.” On Sunday, hard-hitting all-rounder Glenn Maxwell was sent in ahead of number three Steve Smith and smashed 62 off 28 balls after David Warner (100 not out) and Finch (64) set up a 122-run opening partnership.

The captain’s call denied former skipper Smith a chance

to bat in his first full international on home soil since serving a 12-month ball-tampering ban. Finch said he wanted his batsmen to be ready to play anywhere in the order according to match situations, to make the team more competitive when they host the T20 World Cup.

“I think at all times, you’ll see four or five guys in the sheds with their pads on,” said Finch. “To be really flexible as a middle order, prepared to go in at any stage, is important to catch teams off guard.

“If you’ve got left and right-hand combinations, there’s a few options there, so it’s a nicely balanced side at the moment.” With the T20 World Cup the only major piece of silverware missing in Australia’s bursting trophy cabinet, Cricket Australia have scheduled a glut of T20 matches to help the world’s fifth-ranked team build.

“It’s a really great time to be playing T20 cricket for Australia because you’re getting enough game time to start to develop that squad mentality,” said Finch. “Now we’ve got a specific date in mind, which is the start of the World Cup, to really build that 12-month foundation of a really solid T20 side that can beat the best and sustain that for a long period of time.”

Australia will look to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match T20 series against Sri Lanka at the Gabba tomorrow. — Reuters

Tokyo unveils 2020 venue inspired by traditional Japanese techniques

TOKYO: A custom-built \$188 million gymnastics venue inspired by traditional Japanese building techniques and using wood from around the country was unveiled by organisers of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics yesterday.

The futuristic-looking Ariake Gymnastics Centre in central Tokyo uses 2,300 cubic metres of wood and is intended to hark back to methods that predate the use of modern construction materials in Japan.

The structure features a gently undulating roof, with external walls constructed from lengths of cedar wood. Supporting rods allow the building to look from a distance as though it is suspended in the air. Organisers said it was intended to look like a “a wooden bowl, floating in the bay area”.

The building, one of a handful custom-built for the Games, “symbolises Japan’s wood culture and viewers can feel its simple beauty”, the organisers said. “We’re using a lot of wood,” venue general manager Koichi Fukui told reporters. “We can smell wood and feel the warmth of wood,” he said.

Built at a cost of 20.5 billion yen, the venue features a domed ceiling constructed from Japanese larch with no steel framework and is among the largest of its kind in the world. The venue can seat 12,000 spectators on long benches, and will host Olympic artistic, rhythmic and trampolining events, as well as Paralympic boccia.

The main Olympic stadium designed by renowned Japanese architect Kengo Kuma also heavily features the use of wood in a nod to traditional techniques. The gymnastics venue is a temporary site, which is expected to be converted into an exhibition centre after the Games.

Organisers say they plan to repurpose some of the wood from the site, including the benches, in the exhibition centre and other sites including schools. To save money, organisers will use 25 existing sites in hosting the 2020 Games, building just eight new permanent venues and 10 temporary venues. — AFP



Abdulaziz Al-Shatti

prides itself in supporting the skills and talents of all its students, inside and outside the classroom, for a truly well-rounded educational experience.

Follow us and Abdulaziz on this journey to the Olympics on our social media channels @gust_official.

India, Bangladesh to play first day-night Test in Kolkata

KOLKATA: India will take on Bangladesh in both nations’ first ever day-night test match, to be played at Eden Gardens in Kolkata from Nov. 22 to 26 as the second game of a two-match series. Newly appointed Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Sourav Ganguly, a long-time supporter of day-night tests, first proposed the idea to home side captain Virat Kohli before speaking with Bangladesh Cricket Board officials.

“Day-night test cricket is a huge step forward and we believe it will bring back the crowd into stadiums and a whole lot of young children to the sport,” Ganguly said in a statement yesterday. Bangladesh will be without their all-rounder captain Shakib Al Hasan, who was banned from all cricket for at least a year yesterday after he was found to have breached the International Cricket Council’s Anti-Corruption code. Ganguly said the match would help support test cricket, the longest format of the game, which has seen dwindling audiences in recent years.

“Test cricket is of utmost priority, and we at BCCI will leave no stone unturned to bring this format back to its feet,” the former India captain said.

India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Ireland are the only teams among the 12 test-playing nations to have not yet played day-night Tests. One of the major concerns for Bangladesh will be the lack of match practice with the pink balls used in day-night games, having only played one first class match with them in the country in February 2013. — AFP

GUST sponsors alumni Abdulaziz Al-Shatti to Tokyo Olympics

KUWAIT: Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) officially announced this week its sponsorship of GUST alum and fencing champion, Abdulaziz Al-Shatti, in his efforts to qualify for the Olympics in 2020.

Renowned fencer, Al-Shatti is taking part in many tournaments over the next year in order to qualify for the international tournament taking place in Tokyo.

GUST alumni and athlete, Abdulaziz Al-Shatti, said, “This isn’t the first time GUST supports me on my journey. The university really embraced my passion and skill in the sport, even while I was a student. They took into consideration my local and international tournament commitments, and always helped me in making it work with my academic load and schedule without sacrificing my educational goals.”

Al-Shatti is the first Kuwaiti fencer since 2002 to qualify to the Olympics in Rio, in 2016, by winning the Qualification Zone Championships. His individual fencing career has seen him win a total of 101 medals in different categories and competitions, including: 50 medals in Kuwait League Championships, 14 medals in Kuwait Local Open Championships, 7 medals in International Open Championships, 13 medals in Gulf Championships, 15 medals in Arab Championships, and 2 medals in Asian Championships, not to mention all the championships and titles won with his local club, or the Kuwait National Team. Al-Shatti has been training hard with Kuwait Fencing Federation coach in preparation for this journey to the Olympics in 2020.

As part of GUST’s new goals and values, it is keen to focus more on impact within the community and so, it was an easy decision to embark on this journey with one of its model students and athletes. The university

Sports

Vunipola backs England to ‘brutalise’ South Africa

England’s run to their fourth World Cup final

TOKYO: Billy Vunipola has promised England will “come out firing” in the World Cup final against South Africa, revealing he has been getting rugby tips from his auntie ahead of the biggest game of his life.

The 26-year-old called for a rampant England to go again on Saturday in Yokohama after stunning defending champions New Zealand 19-7 to move one win from a second world title. “We’ve got to back up what we did last week — it can’t be a fluke,” Vunipola said yesterday, predicting a titanic clash up front against South Africa’s hulking pack.

“The challenge has been laid out by South Africa. You saw them take Japan apart, then Wales,” the number eight added before a repeat of the 2007 final, which South Africa won 15-6 with current England coach Eddie Jones working as a technical advisor to the Springboks. “Obviously they’re big, big people, but then we’ve got a few big blokes on our team. They’ve already come out and said they’re going to fight fire with fire. “I guess we return serve by saying: ‘Bring it on!’ It’s a final — you have to front up.”

England’s run to their fourth World Cup final has firmly banished the demons of their 2015 flop and the humiliation of becoming the first host nation to exit at the pool stage, under Stuart Lancaster.

They are a different animal under Jones, who was Australia coach when England beat the Wallabies in the 2003 final thanks to Jonny Wilkinson’s famous extra-time drop goal. “We want to peak at the end of the tournament,” insisted Vunipola, one of those who remembers the 2015 World Cup only too well. “The All Blacks have been

the best in the world forever — obviously we want to be the best in the world.”

England defence coach John Mitchell has spoken of the need for England to be “brutal” in the tackle, as they were against New Zealand, whose players were on the end of some monster hits from the likes of Maro Itoje, Sam Underhill and Tom Curry.

“What we are going to witness are the two most powerful rugby teams in the world,” said former All Blacks coach Mitchell. “The gain line is going to be huge. Going back to our DNA, we feel it’s really important to us. We feel there is more to bring out.”

Vunipola noted how those huge tackles on the All Blacks had sent the adrenaline surging through the players’ veins. “It’s something you probably can’t measure,” he said. “But the best way to explain it is it’s quite contagious.

“It shows everyone that it can be done — so everyone else just tries to follow in the slipstream of Unders, Curry and Maro,” added the England back-row star, who has opposite number Duane Vermeulen in his cross-hairs after underlining the importance of winning personal battles.

“It’s easy to sit here and say we want to be brutal, but you have to back those words up.” But as England prepare to face two-time champs South Africa, Vunipola admits he and older brother Mako are struggling to find tickets for their “massive” family — and that some relatives have had a little too much to say this week. “They can be a distraction,” he smiled. “Trying to give you pointers on how to play rugby. My auntie’s always great for that, trying to tell me how to play number eight — and to my brother as well.” — AFP



TOKYO: England’s lock Maro Itoje (2nd,R) and England’s prop Joe Marler (2nd,L) in a training session at the Fuchu Asahi Football Park yesterday, during the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup. — AFP

Zidane dismisses speculation over Bale’s future

MADRID: Zinedine Zidane insists Gareth Bale was given permission by Real Madrid to travel to London on Monday, and claims the Welshman never talks about leaving the club. Bale has not played since injuring his calf during a game for Wales on October 13 and his trip to England has prompted speculation he will seek an exit from Madrid in January.

But Zidane insists Bale had permission to be absent yesterday morning and that he is not aware the 30-year-old wants to be sold. It was a personal issue and he had permission yesterday to go,” Zidane said in a press conference yesterday.

“It was a personal issue and he went, that’s it, no story. He also went because he’s not available to play. “But I don’t think he ever speaks about leaving. When he is available he plays, that’s all there is to it.”

Bale came close to a move to Chinese club Jiangsu Suning last summer after Zidane said it would be “best for everyone” if he left Real Madrid. But the deal fell through at the last minute due to a disagreement over the transfer fee and Zidane is not expecting any fresh offers in January.

“I don’t think there will be an offer and I haven’t thought about it either. Gareth is a Real Madrid player,” said Zidane. “What happened in the summer was the situation at the time and in the end Gareth stayed and all the better for everyone.

“It’s true what was said didn’t help but for me the result is the most important thing. He’s an important player and it’s important he plays and he plays well. “If in January he says he’ll stay, there will be talk about the transfer window in the summer. Unfortunately people will always speak about these things but he’s here and

everyone is happy he’s here.”

Zidane claimed he has a “good relationship” with Bale but sources have told AFP the forward remains on bad terms with the Frenchman. Bale was particularly unimpressed by his omission from Madrid’s squad to face Club Brugge in the Champions League earlier this month.

After the match, Zidane put his absence down to a fitness issue but those close to Bale insist he was fully fit. “I spoke to him and I spoke to James (Rodriguez). Both of them weren’t available to play against Brugge and they didn’t play,” said Zidane. “There’s nothing else to say about that.”

Bale will miss Madrid’s La Liga game at home to Leganes today, along with Nacho, who has a knee problem, and Marco Asensio, who is recovering from a anterior cruciate ligament injury. James Rodriguez is also unlikely to be involved as he missed training on Tuesday due to the birth of his child.

Real Madrid are sixth in the table but only two points off the top, with a game in hand. — AFP

Springboks lean on inside knowledge of England players

TOKYO: Star Springbok scrum-half Faf de Klerk and flanker Francois Louw will come up against players they know all too well in the World Cup final — England’s “kamikaze kids” Tom Curry and Sam Underhill. De Klerk moved to Sale in 2017 alongside Curry, while Louw is entering his ninth season with English Premiership rivals Bath where he packs down with Underhill. The English duo have been the stand-out back-row performers at the World Cup, powerful over the ball and both capable of the dominating style of tackle coaches so like.

Insider knowledge on the two flankers was invaluable, according to Bok coach Rassie Erasmus. “The knowledge of our players playing with those guys at the clubs is definitely going to be a bit of a benefit to us,” he said.

“But on the flip side for them, playing with our players nullifies that a little bit.” De Klerk and Louw aside, other Boks playing in England include hooker Schalk Brits and prop Vincent Koch, both based at Saracens — a club that has seven players with England. Lock Franco Mostert plies his trade at Gloucester, while full-back Willie Le Roux is at Wasps and scrum-half Cobus Reinach Northampton.

“Tom has been absolutely amazing for England this year,” de Klerk said of 21-year-old Sale teammate Curry. “I don’t think he’s missed one minute for them. He’s always willing to work hard and always up there with most of the stats.

“I know him pretty well now and I’ve got some stuff I can share with the group so that’s always a positive,” Louw said his first impressions of Underhill, 23, were that he was a softly-spoken, quiet person.

“He loves a beer and I’ve joined him for many of those!” he added. “He’s massively developed as a player. He’s refined elements of his game that definitely came through in last week’s game, especially on defence. His ability to stop momentum in the tackle, his presence at the breakdown with poaching and jackalling the ball and just discovering what rugby’s all about. “He’s got a massive hunger to learn and grow as a player.”

England full-back Elliot Daly contested, however, that while it was good to speak to the likes of Curry about de Klerk, “when you get into these games, you are not thinking about that”. “It gives us a little insight but it probably gives them an insight into us as well,” said Daly, who added that he loved playing with Le Roux at Wasps. “He is very excitable on the pitch and when something is on he gets very excited and wants the ball in his hands,” Daly said.

“He is definitely a threat in the back field and has a kicking game as well.” Erasmus said the tactical differences of the Premiership compared to Super Rugby had also rounded out players such as de Klerk. “At scrum-half in Super Rugby, it’s definitely a more flowing game,” he said. “In the northern hemisphere, with the conditions there, a guy like Faf can’t just always play a running, fast X-factor game.

“A nine has to control kicking, the pace of the game, getting the forwards into the game, deciding when to kick when to run, when to speed it up and when to slow it down. “Cheslin Kolbe has also learned that in France. A lot of those things you don’t always learn in Super Rugby so that’s some of the knowledge they bring into our team.”

De Klerk admitted his game understanding changed in England. “It’s a lot more tactical on how you want to play and also the conditions that come with it,” he said. Louw described his time in England as a “fantastic experience”.

“All credit to my development over there. I’ve been exposed to a different outlook to the game, played under various coaches and alongside some fantastic players and especially now. “Whatever happens we’ll have a good time off the field, but there’s no doubt all of us will be fighting for glory on the field this weekend.” — AFP

Live Matches on TV (Local Timings)		
ENGLISH LEAGUE CUP		
Liverpool v Arsenal FC		22:30
beIN SPORTS HD 2		
Aston Villa v Wolverhampton Wanderers FC		22:45
beIN SPORTS		
Chelsea FC v Manchester United		23:05
beIN SPORTS HD 1		
SPANISH LEAGUE		
Real Sociedad v Levante		21:00
beIN SPORTS		
Valencia C.F v Sevilla FC		21:00
beIN SPORTS		
Athletic de Bilbao v RCD Espanyol		22:00
beIN SPORTS		
Real Betis v Celta de Vigo		23:00
beIN SPORTS		
Real Madrid CF v CD Leganes		23:15
beIN SPORTS HD 3		
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE		
SSC Napoli v Atalanta		21:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4		
Juventus FC v Genoa CFC		23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4		
SS Lazio v Torino FC		23:00
beIN SPORTS		
Udinese Calcio v AS Roma		23:00
beIN SPORTS		
UC Sampdoria v US Lecce		23:00
beIN SPORTS		
Cagliari Calcio v Bologna FC		23:00
beIN SPORTS		
US Sassuolo Calcio v ACF Fiorentina		23:00
beIN SPORTS		

United’s results have hurt, admits Solskjaer

LONDON: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer’s relief at Manchester United securing their first Premier League away win in eight months over struggling Norwich has been tempered by the “hurt” he has felt over their results this season, he told the BBC.

The 46-year-old Norwegian has enjoyed a rare week of good results beginning with a draw against Premier League leaders Liverpool — the first side to take points from the Champions League holders in the league this season. They subsequently beat modest Serbian outfit

Partizan Belgrade away in the Europa League and then rounded it off with the 3-1 victory over hapless Norwich on Sunday. Victory saw them rise from a lowly 15th in the standings to seventh, albeit 15 points off Liverpool and nine adrift of city rivals and champions Manchester City, who are second. Solskjaer made a bright start as caretaker manager when he replaced the sacked Jose Mourinho last December but since being given the job permanently has seen the results and performances fall away.

However, he claimed he had not read the increasingly critical press about him. “The ones that need to trust me and the ones that matter, they don’t mind,” he told the BBC following the Norwich match.

“I have been hurt by the results, I don’t know what has been said. “I do not care about that, anyone can have their opinion and that is none of my business to comment on, I



OITA: File photo shows, referee Jerome Garces gestures during the Japan 2019 Rugby World Cup quarter-final match between England and Australia at the Oita Stadium in Oita. — AFP

‘Dream’ farewell as Frenchman Garces to referee Rugby World Cup final

TOKYO: French referee Jerome Garces will take charge of Saturday’s Rugby World Cup final between England and South Africa, the first time a Frenchman has officiated the sport’s top match. World Rugby announced the appointment yesterday of the 46-year-old, who has refereed 55 Tests, including 11 World Cup games. The Springboks will hope there is no omen in the fact that Garces was in charge for their most embarrassing defeat — the famous “Miracle of Brighton” loss to Japan at the 2015 World Cup.

Another Frenchman, Romain Poite, and Ben O’Keefe from New Zealand were appointed as assistant referees while Ben Skeen, also from New Zealand, will be the television match official for Saturday’s final.

Meanwhile South Africa’s Jaco Peyper, who had to apologise when he was snapped re-enacting a red-card

incident after Wales’s quarter-final win over France, was named as a touch judge for Friday’s third-place play-off.

The final will be the last match with the whistle for Garces, who is stepping down at the end of the tournament to take charge of France’s governing body for referees. “I am honoured and delighted to be appointed to referee the Rugby World Cup 2019 final. It is a dream as a referee,” said Garces, who also took charge of the blockbuster South Africa v New Zealand pool match on the opening weekend.

At Japan 2019, he has also refereed Ireland v Russia and Wales v Fiji at the pool stage, as well as the quarter-final between England and Australia and the semi-final where South Africa narrowly beat Wales.

Garces has enjoyed a glittering final year of his career after he refereed the European Champions Cup final between Leinster and Saracens in May, as well as the French Top 14 final between Toulouse and Clermont in June. During the World Cup, he has brandished a total of six yellow cards — two against Russia when they were playing Ireland, and two to each team in the physical Wales v Fiji pool match. Despite a number of red cards at this World Cup, mostly for high tackles, he has not sent anyone off. In both of the Springbok games he has refereed, he has penalised the South Africans nine times. He blew up against England eight times in their match against Australia.—AFP

am not hurting because of what someone says about me.”

Solskjaer was especially pleased to have Frenchman Anthony Martial back in the side — he scored and missed a penalty, one of two United squandered — saying he was pivotal to the style he wanted the team to play.

“This had been a good week for us,” said Solskjaer. “It started with a decent performance against Liverpool and now two wins away from home. It gives the players confidence and momentum.

“We have missed Anthony, he is a very important player for us, the way we play and today Marcus Rashford was excellent down the sides and in the middle. “A great response to missing the penalty, chasing back and scoring.

“The third was a very good goal and a class finish. “It is great for Martial to score a goal like that. We could and should have had a few more goals.” — AFP

25 Rockets win Westbrook's first game against Thunder



26 Bangladesh captain Shakib banned for two years for graft: ICC



27 'Dream' farewell as Garces to referee Rugby WCup final



Bertens stuns Barty in WTA Finals

Federer withdraws from Paris Masters as Cilic, Tsonga progress



SHENZHEN: Kiki Bertens of the Netherlands hits a return against Ashleigh Barty of Australia during their women's singles match in the WTA Finals tennis tournament in Shenzhen yesterday.— AFP

SHENZHEN: Late entry Kiki Bertens stunned world number one Ashleigh Barty with a comeback three-set victory to shake-up the season-ending WTA Finals in Shenzhen yesterday. All four players can still qualify from Red Group after Belinda Bencic's three-set victory over Petra Kvitova in the later match.

Bertens looked in deep trouble at a set and break down, but turned the tide with ruthless returning and aggressive play at the net to overwhelm a deflated Barty, who could have sealed a spot in the semi-finals with victory.

The world No.10 won 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 in two hours and nine minutes in a see-saw match featuring 12 breaks of serve. "Of course you're always ready to play, but I did not see it coming today," Bertens said of her late call-up. "In the beginning I was struggling. As the match continued, I felt better and better."

Bertens was a late replacement for world No.3 Naomi Osaka, who earlier in the day withdrew from the round-robin tournament due to a shoulder injury.

She appeared nervous under the bright lights dropping her first three service games and Barty, who has locked up the year-end No.1 ranking, pounced to run away with the

first set. Barty then endured her own service woes against an increasingly aggressive Bertens, who showcased a soft touch at the net. A slumping Barty had her serve broken five times through the second and third sets as Bertens stormed to her first victory over the Australian.

Barty lamented letting slip her early lead. "I wasn't able to execute as cleanly when I was up in the score line," she said. Bertens, who made the semi-finals of last year's edition, continued her strong form after making the finals in Zhuhai last week and the semi-finals of the China Open earlier in the month, when she lost a three-set thriller to Barty. In the later match, Bencic fought back from a second set spiral to beat Petra Kvitova 6-3, 1-6, 6-4 in one hour and 47 minutes. It kept her tournament hopes alive after she had lost her opening match to Barty.

"I was proud that I was able to block away her big shots," Bencic said. "I was happy that at the end I was able to keep calm."

Kvitova's serve went off the boil as she fell away badly in the first set to lose five straight games. A double fault was a fitting way for the Czech to hand Bencic the first set.

But the match flipped in the second set with Kvitova,

the 2011 WTA Finals champion, rediscovering her lethal serve to force a decider.

The twists continued in the third set with Bencic breaking in the third game as a flustered Kvitova slammed her racquet on the ground. The Swiss failed to capitalise in the next game but grabbed the decisive break in the ninth before confidently closing it out on serve.

Winless Kvitova plays Barty tomorrow and Bencic meets Bertens to determine the winners from Red Group.

Meanwhile in Paris, Roger Federer withdrew from the Paris Masters in order to "pace" himself for the next year, while Marin Cilic and Jo-Wilfried Tsonga reached the second round.

World number three Federer claimed his 10th Basel title on Sunday but decided to skip the final Masters event of the season at Bercy Arena. "I am extremely disappointed to have to pull out of the Paris Masters," he said in a statement. "I have to pace myself since I want to play as long as possible on the ATP Tour."

"I am sorry for my French fans who I will see next year at Roland Garros." Tournament director Guy Forget said he was "disappointed" with Federer's late decision to with-

draw. The 38-year-old Federer had warned on Sunday after beating Alex de Minaur at the Swiss Indoors that he may skip the trip to the French capital.

"My fitness is fine, I'm happy with how I feel," he said. "I just don't know if I should play next week. I'll figure it out with the team." The 20-time Grand Slam champion returned to the Paris Masters last year for the first time since 2015 and reached the semi-finals where he lost a three-set thriller to Novak Djokovic, who is top seed ahead of Rafael Nadal in the French capital this year.

Former US Open champion Cilic was one of the first unseeded players to book his spot in the last 32 with a 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 win over Poland's Hubert Hurkacz. Croatian Cilic, who has failed to reach a final this season and has slipped to 24th in the world rankings, will next face three-time Grand Slam title-winner Stan Wawrinka. Tsonga, who was the last Frenchman to win the Paris Masters title in 2008, battled back from a set down to defeat in-form Russian Andrey Rublev 4-6, 7-5, 6-4. The 34-year-old, who has risen to world number 35 after ending an injury-plagued 2018 at 239th, saved four break points in a dramatic deciding set in front of a partisan crowd. — AFP

Astros one win from World Series title

HOUSTON: On the verge of a historic World Series fightback, the Houston Astros returned home Monday planning to lean on resilience and experience to capture a second title in three seasons. The Astros own a 3-2 lead in Major League Baseball's best-of-seven final and if they beat Washington in game six today they will become only the fourth team to take the crown after dropping the first two games at home.

"We took a pretty heavy punch in the gut when it came to the first two games," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said.

"We know how quickly momentum can shift. We're not going to take anything for granted, but our confidence level is good."

It should be after three wins in Washington where the Nationals hit only .175 and scored just once in each game. But Washington defied the odds all season just to get this far after a 19-31 start to the campaign.

"The guys feel good. They're all upbeat,"

Nationals manager Dave Martinez said. "This is way far from over."

The Astros won an MLB-best 107 games in the regular season, then needed a one-game winner-take-all victory over Tampa Bay to advance and then bounced back from losing an American League final opener against the New York Yankees.

"Resiliency," Hinch said. "This is not a magic carpet ride of a season. We've been successful. We had a lot of wins. But there's still been this sense of we have to keep proving it. And that's resiliency." Astros pitcher Gerrit Cole, the MLB season strikeout leader, used the same term to sum up the Astros' year. "Resiliency is a great word," Cole said. "We just put one foot in front of the next, respond to the challenges that come our way, shower off the mistakes and celebrate the amazing plays."

Not since the 1996 New York Yankees rallied to beat Atlanta has a club overcome losing the first two at home to capture the title.

Houston's 2017 World Series victory over the Los Angeles Dodgers has provided confidence the Astros can fight through any challenge. "The confidence comes from the success we've had," Hinch said.

"Any experience pays off at this time. We've been there, done that. I've made big decisions in these type of games before. So there's a comfort and belief in myself and the process I

have as a manager. "When you do play the experience card is when you're under the most stress. And I would tell you game six and game seven in the World Series is high stress. This is where you lean on experience."

For Hinch, that has meant keeping his cool when falling behind 0-2 in a World Series where his club was a heavy favorite.

"When something doesn't go your way, there's an immediate overreaction. 'What's going on? What's wrong with your team?'" Hinch said.

"And my message is always that we're the same team. We're the same talent. We have the same vibe. We have the same preparation. It's like you get defensive on your team when you get doubted." A players-only meeting helped the Astros regain their poise. Since then they've outscored the Nationals 19-3.

"The leadership in that room is impressive," Hinch said. "We started to bring our personality back. We started to bring our run production back. We started playing from ahead. That was key for us. Nothing has really changed other than the pressure we've been able to apply." The Nationals lost star pitcher Max Scherzer to neck muscle spasms and his status remained uncertain for a possible game-seven start. "There won't be a game seven if we can't win a game six so our focus is winning and go from there," Martinez said. —AFP

Saudi Tour adds cycling to its sports portfolio

PARIS: The company that runs the Tour de France (ASO) is helping launch a four-day race in Saudi Arabia in February dubbed the Saudi Tour. "This initiative is perfectly in line with Saudi Arabia's ambition to promote the kingdom beyond its borders through sport and more particularly cycling," said Saudi Federation President Sabah Al-Kraidees.

The race is the latest event to join Saudi Arabia's suddenly busy sporting calendar, seen by some critics as 'sports-washing' its image. The Saudis have faced intense diplomatic fallout over the murder of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi which took place in the conservative kingdom's consulate in Istanbul in 2018.

Saudi rulers, also under fire for the war in neighbouring Yemen, have utilised sport as a tool to try and soften their international image and to provide a showcase, they claim, for reforms inside

the oil-rich state. In February, the Saudis hosted a first European Tour golf event. In July, British boxer Amir Khan won the WBC international welterweight title with a fourth-round stoppage of Australian Billy Dib in Jeddah.

The Dakar Rally, also run by ASO, will be raced in Saudi Arabia in January. Former heavyweight boxing champion Tyson Fury will launch his wrestling career at the WWE 'Crown Jewel' in Riyadh tomorrow.

When the December heavyweight title fight between Anthony Joshua and Andy Ruiz Jr in Riyadh was announced in August, it brought accusations of "sportswashing" from the human rights organisation Amnesty. "If Anthony Joshua fights Andy Ruiz Jr in Saudi Arabia, it's likely to be yet another opportunity for the Saudi authorities to try to 'sportswash' their severely tarnished image," said Felix Jakens, Amnesty UK's head of campaigns.—AFP