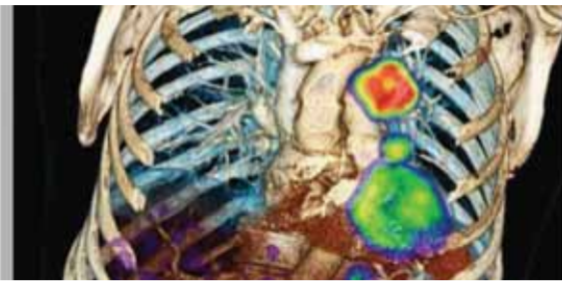




2 Nuclear medicine unit at Adan Hospital: Progressive success in patient service



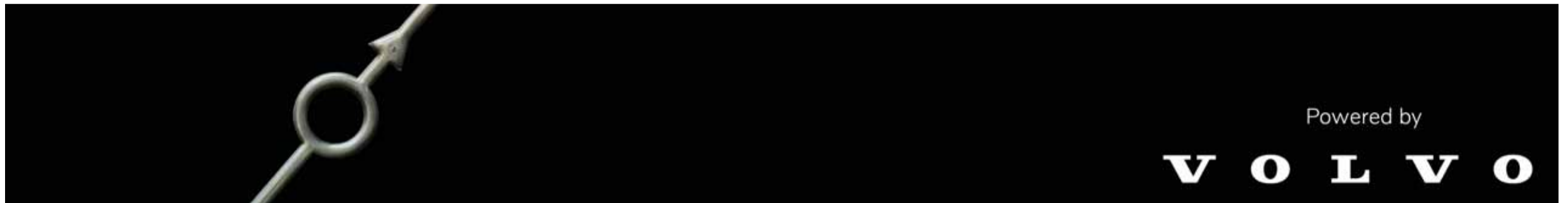
6 China's isolation grows as virus toll reaches 259



16 US diabetics turn to black market or Canada for life-saving insulin



28 Kenin in dreamland after stunning Aussie Open win



Abbas says Palestinians cutting all relations with Israel and US

Arab League rejects Trump plan • Kuwait: Palestinian cause remains perennial concern



CAIRO: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas holds a placard showing maps of (from left) historical Palestine, the 1947 United Nations partition plan of Palestine, the 1948-1967 borders between the Palestinian territories and Israel, and a current map of the Palestinian territories without Israeli-annexed areas and settlements, as he attends an Arab League emergency meeting at the league headquarters yesterday. — AFP

CAIRO: Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas announced yesterday a cut of all ties with Israel and the United States, including security cooperation, after Washington unveiled a controversial Middle East plan seen as favoring Israel. His comments came as the Arab League rejected US President Donald Trump's plan, which infuriated the Palestinians.

"We are informing you that there will be no relations with you (Israel) and the United States, including on security cooperation," Abbas said at an extraordinary meeting of the pan-Arab bloc in Cairo. The Palestinian leader said the move followed the "disavowal of signed agreements and international legitimacy" by the US and Israel. Israel will have to "bear responsibility as an occupying power" for the Palestinian territories and Palestinians will press ahead with resistance using peaceful means, he said.

Abbas also said yesterday he had refused to discuss the plan with Trump by phone, or to receive even a copy of it to study it. "Trump asked that I speak to him by phone but I said 'no', and that he wants to send me a letter ... but I refused it," Abbas said he did not want Trump to be able to say that he, Abbas, had been consulted. He reiterated his "complete" rejection of the Trump plan.

In July 2017, Abbas announced the suspension of security coordination with Israel during a major dispute over the flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem. It was resumed later that year though the chief of the Palestinian police said that even during the suspension they had maintained regular contact, with 95 percent of the activities continuing. "The only thing we stopped is we didn't meet them in the field," Hazem Atallah said at the time.

Continued on Page 24

Kuwait can't confirm remains found in Iraq belong to Kuwaitis

KUWAIT: Kuwait can't confirm immediately that the recently exhumed human remains in Iraq belong to Kuwaiti prisoners of war (POWs) or missing persons, a senior foreign ministry official said. In a press statement yesterday, Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Nasser Al-Hain stated that it is not possible to identify these human remains - photos of which were circulated on social media outlets - unless they

are sent to Kuwait and DNA tests are conducted. The General Department of Criminal Evidence of the Kuwaiti ministry of interior is the sole body responsible for conducting DNA tests on the exhumed bodies and comparing the results with the genetic profiles of families of Kuwaiti POWs and missing persons, he explained. The International Committee of the Red Cross-spearheaded Tripartite Commission, which was formed to ascertain the fate of persons who went missing during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1990 and 1991, issued a statement on Jan 30 about the discovery of this burial site. There are specific work rules and a protocol, signed by members of the Tripartite Commission, for searching for graves and handling the recovered remains, Hain stated.

Continued on Page 24

New tax rules in India budget unnerve expats

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: New taxation proposals in the 2020 Indian budget, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, yesterday sent jitters across the Indian expat community in Kuwait, as the government's new

taxation proposals seek to bring the vast Indian diaspora under the ambit of an expanding tax net.

According to the new budget proposals, a non-resident Indian (NRI) who is not taxed in a foreign country will become taxable in India. Currently, NRIs are not taxed in India, but the new income tax rules will have serious implications for many NRIs working and living in the Gulf region, which is considered as a tax haven for both citizens and residents.

According to the new budget proposals, an Indian citizen who is not liable to pay tax in any other country or territory shall be deemed to be a resident in India and their worldwide income will be taxed.

Continued on Page 24

After Brexit, UK embarks on its future outside EU

LONDON: Britain began an uncertain future outside the European Union yesterday after the country greeted the historic end to almost half a century of EU membership with a mixture of joy and sadness. There were celebrations and tears on Friday night as the EU's often reluctant member became the first to leave an organization set up to forge unity among nations after the horrors of World War II.

Little has changed yet as the UK is now in an 11-month transition period negotiated as part of the divorce. Britons will be able to work in the EU and trade freely - and vice versa - until Dec 31, although the UK will no longer be represented in the bloc's institutions. But legally, Britain is out.

Thousands of people waving Union Jack flags packed London's Parliament Square and sang the national anthem to mark that reality as Brexit became law at 11 pm (2300 GMT) - midnight in Brussels. Prime Minister Boris Johnson - whose decisive December election victory finally paved the way for Britain's long-stalled departure - held a private party in his Downing Street office, with a clock projected on the walls outside counting down the minutes to Brexit.

Continued on Page 24

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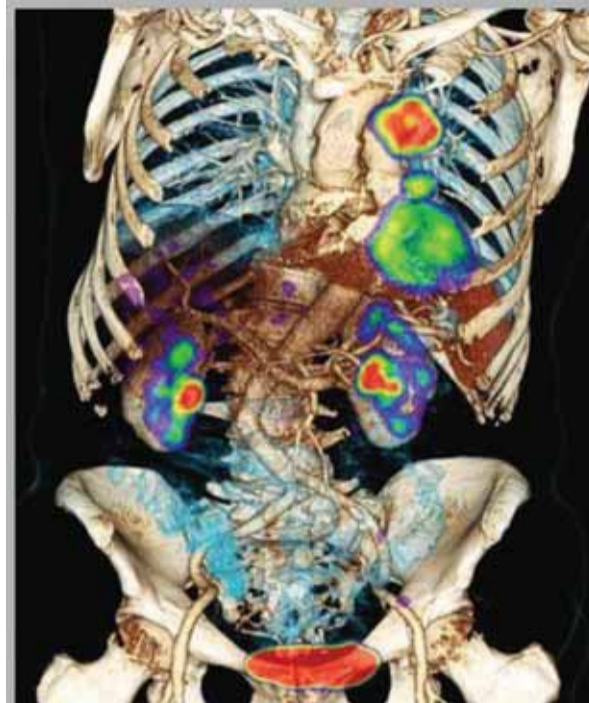
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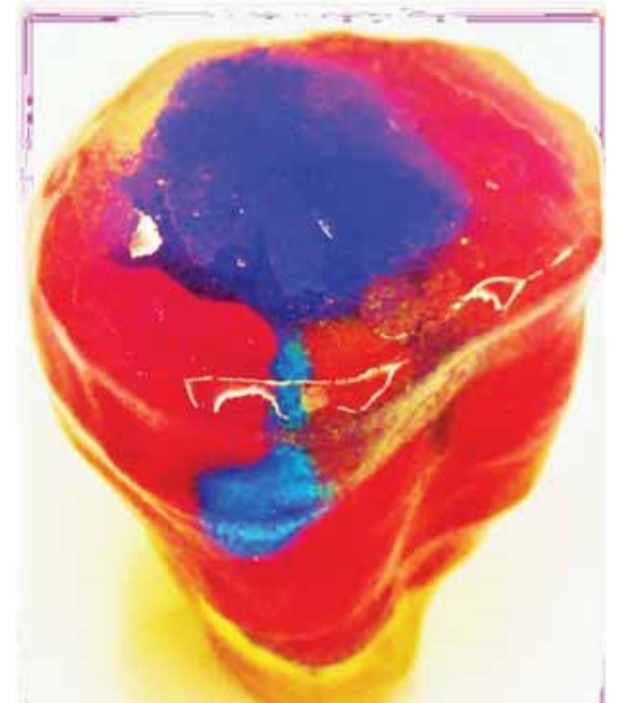
Nuclear Medicine Unit at Adan Hospital, progressive success in patients' service



3D PET/CT volume rendering of a patient scanned with F18-FDG



PET/CT Fused image of a patient scanned in NM ADAN Hospital



3D Printing Technology of a human prostate with cancer Foci - NM - ADAN

KUWAIT: Nuclear and Molecular (NM) Imaging and related science are a key component of Kuwait's portfolio since the 1970s, providing fundamental insights into the nation's health, well-being and therefore economic vitality. As such, our vision is to raise the par of NM and molecular imaging services in Kuwait to match the international standards, and for them to be a nationally recognized center of excellence with the aim to improve Kuwaiti patients' health, bearing in mind that the Adan Hospital provides health services for more than 1,300,000 inhabitants.

NM Unit in Adan Hospital has gone through noticeable changes and modernization since its handover from the private management to the Ministry of

Health (MOH) in 2015. The unit is now accommodating five state of the art SPECT and SPECT/CT cameras, a PET/CT suit, a well-equipped radiopharmacy, thyroid clinic and the associated uptake facilities and C14 test facilities. The number of NM patient tests performed over the past five years has increased. In 2019, the hospital performed a total of 5248 NM tests, including over 1,920 cardiac imaging, 1,417 C-14 tests, 415 PET scans and 465 thyroid scans and radioiodine treatment.

NM Adan is the only NM Unit in MOH that has managed to achieve prestigious UKAS double ISO 2008 and 2015 for three consecutive years. This has had great impact on overall NM service management,

facilitated on-line patient booking with a maximum of 48 hour waiting list for all NM tests and maximum of 14 days for PET scan currently. In addition, it has paved the way for the NM Unit to work towards a paperless unit in line with Kuwait's strategy moving towards digitization of health service.

NM Adan has been involved dynamically in promoting the specialty by organizing the state level conferences and workshops, including the recent events: CT workshop, Thyroid workshop, NM week. It also organized a number of in-house teaching and training for physicians (KIMS), technologists and scientific staff in collaboration with the manufacture providers through local agents, which resulted a well-trained staff.

NM Unit is progressing actively in research and development including coronary artery disease, lung cancer and biomarker, pediatric hyperinsulinism, CT dose audit, Y90 PET/CT synovectomy, and 3D Printing for medical application and in association with other specialties nationally and internationally. It has also been successful in receiving a number of research grants from Kuwait Foundation of Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and has published the outcome of the research in a number of well-respected international journals including Journal of Medicine (USA), journal of Internal of Medicine (USA), International Journal of Recent Scientific Research (USA) and many more.

local spotlight

Coronavirus



By Muna Al-Fuzal

Muna@kuwaittimes.net

In the past few weeks, everyone has followed the news of the spread of a new virus that leads to illness and death. This article is not medical or scientific, but it reflects general thoughts and concerns about the new coronavirus - a large family of viruses that causes illness.

Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.

The World Health Organization has declared the growing coronavirus outbreak in China to be a global health emergency. This announcement provoked the global community to respond quickly and galvanized resources of governments to do their best to stop the disease from spreading further across borders, which I think is needed until this virus dies out.

Although the numbers of those infected outside China are still relatively small, there is public concern that these cases hold the potential for a larger outbreak, because human-to-human transmission is a worrying matter, especially for many people who are not doctors or experts on how these viruses spread.

Various countries have implemented evacuation and quarantine plans for newcomers or nationals wanting to return from China, where the outbreak began in the city of Wuhan. Some researchers spoke to the media suggesting that if the transmission of the virus is reduced by a quarter, the outbreak's growth rate would slow. The outbreak can also end with an invention of a new vaccine.

With the increase in the number of cases, reaching nearly 10,000 on Jan 31, people around the world started to buy more facemasks. So I believe it's a fair question to wonder if we should buy a mask. Does it help? How can I protect myself from this virus that has no vaccine yet? These are legitimate questions.

There are some safety tips that were published for the public, which I believe is common sense, and people need to do it in all cases throughout the year to prevent all sorts of illnesses and not only this virus, especially in wintertime. This includes regular hand washing with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub, covering the mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing and avoiding close contact with persons with cold or flu.

I personally use a face mask throughout the day, especially during winter, dusty weather or shopping in a busy mall to avoid contact with people with flu, because I don't want to get sick. I believe that the best advice is to stay alert to updated information from reliable sources and certified medical statements and not panic or exaggerate matters.



Customs boost efforts to prevent radioactive, nuclear material smuggling

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The customs department began radiation monitoring at the Salmi land border outlet in order to protect the country from illegal trade in radioactive and nuclear material. This will enable customs to foil smuggling of such substances in cooperation with special-

ized authorities. Director General of the Customs Department Jamal Al-Jalawi thanked International Atomic Energy Agency expert Dr Thamer Al-Qoraan for following the national project and all its teams. Qoraan lauded Kuwait's keenness to implement the project and compliance with international treaties to prevent leakage of radioactive material and its trade.



Kuwait humanitarian arm reaches Rohingya in squalor

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti institutions and bodies concerned with humanitarian work continued their activities by supporting those in need during the past week especially in Iraq, aiding war-stricken people and Bangladesh where Rohingya refugees live in squalid conditions. Kuwait distributed 120 tons of food supplies to poor and needy families, besides supplying some schools in Al-Mosul, northern Iraq, with equipment offered by the Kuwaiti International Islamic Charitable Organization. Around 2,000 food parcels were distributed during the second campaign of its kind in Mosul this year, said Rizgar Obaid, Director of the Mosul office for the Barzani Charity Foundation. Kuwait had offered supplies for schools. Up to five fully equipped schools were opened with donations from the Kuwaiti organization.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Humanitarian Relief Society (HRS) Director General Khalid Al-Shamri said the HRS has executed several relief and humanitarian projects in Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, providing medical aid, winter clothes, food and other necessities.



Shamri explained that a team of volunteers participated in a relief mission to Bangladesh to assist Rohingya refugees, particularly those suffering from squalid conditions in Kutupalong camp, one of the biggest Rohingya camps in the nation — in addition to other shantytowns. More than 1,000 food portions and winter clothing were distributed to 2,000 refugees, he added. A fully equipped medical camp has been prepared in which patients and urgent cases will be treated, in light of poor health services in these camps.

Moreover, the society is securing needs for the "The Science City," an educational-teaching center for 250 refugee children. A ceremony was held for honoring 180 Quran memorizers and 15 preachers, he added. He also indicated that 250 food parcels, 432 blankets and 500 baskets containing winter clothes had been distributed to the poor of Bangladesh. Shamri has affirmed that the HRS will continue its relief projects and respond to calls for help from needy people around the world. — KUNA

Kuwait cautions against travel to China

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Friday warned its nationals against travelling to China due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) there. "Given the spread of the 2019-nCoV and out of care for the safety of Kuwaiti citizens, we advise them to cancel their plans for travel to China and urge the Kuwaitis who are still there to come back as early as possible," the Ministry said a statement this evening. It also cautioned against unnecessary travel to other countries where coronavirus cases were confirmed.

In the meantime, Kuwait's Ministry of Health on Thursday refuted reports circulated on social media regarding alleged detection of the novel coronavirus in the country. No infection case with 2019-nCoV has been detected in the State of Kuwait so far, the ministry affirmed in a press release. The statement urged the public to rely on official sources such as the Ministry of Health for news pertaining to public health. It cautioned against promulgation of unauthenticated news or rumors, warning that any cases of 'tampering with the confidence' in the Ministry's efforts would be met with a legal action. — KUNA

Kuwaiti doctors perform uterine resection on male

KUWAIT: A medical team at Sabah Al-Ahmad Urology Center, headed by the center's Director Dr Fawzi Abul and urology surgeons Shubair Al-Musawi and Ali Al-Rasheed, conducted a successful surgery - a uterine resection on a male - which is a rare operation worldwide, during which sperm is collected from the patient. Rasheed said the operation on the Kuwaiti youth was conducted using an abdomen laparoscope, which is a rare procedure.

Rasheed said the medical team was able to freeze the sperm extracted by the surgical microscope, which is considered one of the most modern techniques in treating difficult sterility cases, to be used for IVF in the future, especially since the youth was complaining of impotence for many years, with diagnosis indicating he lacked sperm. "Following the diagnosis of the case, a committee was formed to set a treatment plan, which required coordination with all departments. The operation lasted four hours," he said.

Rasheed said the external appearance of the patient is 100 percent male with complete external genitals, except for one testicle. He said this is a rare case and occurs in one out of 40 million persons. It is called Persistent Mullerian duct syndrome, a rare genetic illness that can be inherited. He said if the uterus is not removed, it can become cancerous.

Local

Schools take precautionary measures against any potential virus spread

Bridges opened to facilitate traffic flow at start of second term

By A Saleh and Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: In a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of any viruses at schools with the beginning of the second academic term today, the Ministry of Education (MoE) urged all school administrations to activate the role of the school clinic in tracking any fever case and coordinate with the school health and Ministry of Health (MoH) preventive health departments, in addition to immediately notifying the ministry in case of detecting any suspected case. MoE stressed its keenness on taking all preventive measures to safeguard the safety and health of all students, teachers and staff working in schools and other sectors.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) urged all citizens and expats to respect traffic police regulations and be careful when dropping their children or picking them up from school. MoI added that as part of traffic directorate efforts to facilitate traffic flow, several bridges have been opened, including at the intersection of Al-Ghous Street with Sixth Ring Road, Seventh Ring Road with King Fahd Expressway, First Ring Road between the Grand Mosque and Dasman Palace and Khaled ibn Al-Waleed St with First Ring Road. MoI also noted that hotline 99324092 has been allocated to

receive any complaints, suggestions, remarks or reports about any negative actions.

Inmates handed over

Kuwait handed over 19 Iranian inmates to Iranian authorities to serve their remaining time in Iranian prisons, said informed sources, noting that the process came as part of a treaty to exchange prisoners between the two countries. The sources added that likewise, Iran will hand over a number of Kuwaiti prisoners in Iran to Kuwait soon and that the Kuwaiti embassy in Iran is currently coordinating with relevant Iranian authorities in this regard. The sources stressed that the repatriated prisoners exclude those indicted in state security cases, major crimes and financial or debt cases.

Employees' replacement

Minister of Oil, Minister of Electricity and Water Khaled Al-Fadhel announced the total number of citizens appointed in the Ministry of Electricity and Water in replacement of expat employees since 2017 is 324 including 158 in the 2019-2020 budget and 166 in the 2020-2021 budget. Responding to an inquiry by MP Mohammed Al-Huwailah, Fadhel said the total number of job vacancies is 105 and that these vacancies are used for transfers from other ministries or promotions.



CAIRO: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah meets with the Arab League's Secretary General Ahmad Abul-Gheit. — KUNA

Kuwait FM meets Arab League chief

CAIRO: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah held talks yesterday with the Arab League's Secretary General Ahmad Abul-Gheit. On the sidelines of a

meeting bringing together the foreign ministers of Arab countries, the Kuwaiti minister and the Arab bloc's chief discussed the agenda for the ongoing talks. — KUNA

Sheikh Khalifa joins Reconnaissance Research

KUWAIT: Reconnaissance Research Center President Abdulaziz Al-Anjari announced that former Bahraini ambassador to Kuwait Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Khalifa joined the center's advisory board. Sheikh Khalifa is considered one of the most prominent Arab figures in promoting the concept of freedom of religions, and is known for spreading the spirit of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence, all of which compliments the strategic goals of Reconnaissance Research. "We believe in the effective role of non-governmental entities in promoting bilateral relations between the West and the East," Anjari said.



Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Khalifa

The center, since its establishment, has raised vital topics of importance through seminars, workshops and research papers with participation of diplomats and active policy influencers in the political, cultural and scientific circles. Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Khalifa has a unique set of skills, experiences and contacts that add a distinctive benefit to broadening the horizons of Reconnaissance Research to achieve its fundamental goals.

Motorist dead in Sixth Ring Road crash

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A motorist died in an accident reported on Sixth Ring Road over the weekend. Sulaibikhat fire station men rushed to the scene in response to an emergency call reporting an accident

between a sports utility vehicle (SUV) and a pickup truck. A bedoon (stateless) man was pronounced dead on the scene, and his body was transferred to the coroner after firemen freed it from the wreck. A case was filed to investigate the cause of the accident.



Ready for the Beach ??

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Guard recently carried out a fire drill at fuel depots in Sabhan, in cooperation with Kuwait National Petroleum Company, the Interior Ministry and Kuwait Fire Service Directorate.

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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A man snaps a photo of migratory birds from a beach in Kuwait City yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

‘Endangered’ porcupine re-appears in Kuwaiti natural reserve

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KUWAIT: The wild porcupine spotted in Kuwait. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Porcupine, a wild animal threatened with extinction locally, has been spotted between the regions of Al-Ratqa and Al-Shagaya, the head of the Kuwait Environment Lens team Rashed Al-Hajji said yesterday. Hajji explained that the animal had disappeared over the past years due to “desertification and excessive hunting.” Some porcupines used to exist in Kuwait and after disap-

pearing for years, they have re-appeared due to establishing natural reserves. The team has photographed the animal at night in Al-Shagaya, the country’s top natural reserve, he said. Kuwait has established natural reserves as part of efforts to safeguard the environment. It had been reported that some migrating birds settled in the country due to available food and water at the reserves. — KUNA

NBK participates in KILAW career fair

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) participated in ‘The First Career Fair,’ held by the Kuwait International Law School (KILAW) on Jan 28-29, 2020, to encourage students join the labor market, amid the bank’s continuous support of the fresh graduates in building up a career path.

NBK’s career fair participation underscores its efforts aimed at supporting youth and fresh graduates, providing them with job opportunities in such a key industry like the banking as well as the financial sector. NBK is keen on participating in the events tailored for promising manpower in Kuwait.

NBK’s career fair participation came within its endeavors to spread the culture of work in the private sector and to encourage Kuwaiti young competencies to join the banking industry,” stated Abdullah Al-Jassim, Head of Recruitment at NBK Group. The career fair is a significant opportunity to lure Kuwaiti ambitious young job seekers, Jassim added.

Jassim also indicated that applicants are appointed based on their qualifications and capabilities, to make the best out of these talents. These events represent a significant opportunity for fresh graduates to explore the available job opportunities in line with their ambitions and aspirations within a suitable work environment that would help them develop their skills and capabilities. On the other hand, NBK, through the fair, can find the national competent manpower to be part of its entity.

NBK human resources personnel were available at



the fair to answer the applicants’ inquiries, providing advice and guidance to students seeking assistance with their future career, in line with NBK’s commitment to encourage those graduates to join the banking industry, which plays a key role in the development of the Kuwaiti economy. NBK, a top private sector entity that supports young manpower, is committed to conduct training programs for fresh graduates to provide them with the professional as well as the academic experience they need to build a career path.

NBK’s endeavors to employ the competent talents came in line with its development and training plans to invest in Kuwaiti manpower to build a promising generation fit in the banking industry. As a leading banking institution in Kuwait, NBK strives to provide a package of professional and academic training programs.

Local

Kuwaiti diplomat underscores interest in human rights review



GENEVA: Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim with Kuwait delegation. — KUNA photos

GENEVA: Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN and International Organizations Jamal Al-Ghunaim said yesterday that his country attaches much heed to the periodic human rights review as a 'unique mechanism.' "This mechanism encompasses a review of human rights records of all United Nations (UN) member states, and it is marked by neutrality," he said. He added that Kuwait is interested in interacting with this mechanism with a view to creating more human rights improvement indexes in the country by means of drawing upon advanced countries' expertise in this regard. It is the third time Kuwait reviews its human rights record at a meeting of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group, he said. The previous two times took place in 2010 and 2015.

The Kuwaiti diplomat noted that his country positively and effectively deals with all human rights mechanisms and pursues a clear-cut and frank stance on them, thus earning it much international confidence and respect. Proceeding from its interest in human rights issues, Kuwait will strive to tap available expertise and recommendations, he added, boasting about international satisfaction with Kuwait's efforts to promote and shore up human rights just as reflected by interactive dialogue within the council's meeting. However, the Kuwaiti diplomat restated that his country remains opposed to



Kuwaiti Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel (second from left) attends the UN Human Rights Council.

anything that could run counter to Islamic law and national constitution and law.

Increasing care

Kuwaiti Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel had expressed her country's appreciation of the increasing care shown by the international community for human rights issues. Addressing a meeting by the UN Human Rights Council on Friday, she thanked the Council for endorsing Kuwait's third human rights record during Wednesday's meeting of the UPR Working Group. The State of Kuwait attaches great importance to the UPR which serves as fair and practical mecha-

nism for evaluating the human rights records of all countries, Aqeel stressed.

Kuwait appreciates all efforts being made by the HRC to promote human rights worldwide, she said, reaffirming Kuwait's commitment to studying all recommendations of the UPR carefully and specifying its stance on them in the run-up to the 44th session of the council, slated for June 2020. The universal periodic review is a unique process which involves a review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States once every five years. Kuwait has been one of 14 states which were reviewed by the UPR Working Group during its session from January 20 to 31. Kuwait's first and second UPR reviews took place in May 2010 and January 2015. — KUNA

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On 23rd of Dec, 2019 Union Trading Company, Kuwait has embarked to a higher ground by completing 70 years in service since, 1949. This great feat has been celebrated along with all its employees who are its number one assets. UTC has been playing a major role in molding the Retail market in Kuwait with a network of 10 outlets.

Union Trading Company or UTC - "Where you can afford to buy the best"
Founded by two unique visionaries late Mr. Abdul Razzaq Razooqi and late Mr. Daniel Hasso, who had pioneered and anticipated the growth of Kuwaiti Retail industry collaborating with rocketing economy back in the 1950's with its first appliances store in Ahmadi having brands as General Air Conditions, Gillette shaver.

During the get-together the veterans reflected and echoed the great experiences which they had serving at UTC, where everyone is treated as a family member. The function was attended by the current board members from the Razooqi family, Abdul Razzaq Razooqi, Mohammad Razzouqi and Alan R. Hasso who are still paving its path towards greatness along with support and Supervision of the new appointed management team.

This celebration was not only a proud moment for the company for its achievements over the last 7 decades but also to restate its core values of creating Trust, Commitment, Honesty and Respect amongst its employees, partners and loyal customers. Keeping its mission firm to deliver continuous market leadership for the global brands it represents for many more years to come.

Mr. Abdulrazzaq Razooqi (Board Member) addressed in his keynote speech, "The company was established 70 years ago with the goal of providing consumers with quality goods at affordable prices. During the past 70 years, the company has been able to foster relationships with the world's largest suppliers to enable it to fulfill that goal. Today UTC touches consumers across a host of different product categories. The company's success over the years has stemmed from the company's most valuable asset which is its employees."

Mr. Sam Rejoy, CEO addressed the following to the UTC Staff, "UTC team works together as a family and we know that you make a huge difference in delivering a great experience to our customers. We respect, trust and care for you. Our customers are our greatest asset and we need focus on retaining customer confidence and life time value. Let's retain and protect the UTC culture for the next 70 years."

Union Trading Company is a premier wholesaler, retailer and distributor locally and Internationally. Representing major global brands such as General AC, Gillette, Oral-B, Braun, Duracell, Vileda, Prestige, Parker, Yardley, Lee, Wrangler, Jockey, Hanes just to name a few. It serves in locations as: Kuwait City, Jahra, Fahaheel, Farwaniya, Salmiya and Hawally.



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The European Union: A union marked by crises

Online, jetsetting, monitored: How life in China has changed since SARS

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Page 8



BANGKOK: Specially designed labels on an empty stand for facemasks read 'China Fight' and 'Wuhan Fight' in a store in Bangkok yesterday. The World Health Organization declared a global emergency over the new coronavirus, as China reported the death toll had climbed to 259 with nearly 10,000 infections. —AFP

China isolation grows as virus toll hits 259

Governments scurrying to limit exposure as infections spread

BEIJING: China faced deepening isolation over its coronavirus epidemic yesterday as the death toll soared to 259, with the United States and Australia leading a growing list of nations to impose extraordinary Chinese travel bans. With Britain, Russia and Sweden among the countries confirming their first infections, the virus has now spread to more than two dozen nations, sending governments scurrying to limit their exposure.

China toughened its own quarantine measures at the center of the outbreak in Hubei province, a day after the United States temporarily barred entry to foreigners who had been in China within the past two weeks. "Foreign nationals, other than immediate family of US citizens and permanent residents... will be denied entry into the United States," Health Secretary Alex Azar said. Australia said it was barring entry to non-citizens arriving from China, while Australian citizens who had travelled there would be required to go into "self-isolation" for two weeks.

Vietnam suspended all flights from mainland China effective yesterday. Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan also initially appeared on the list of banned routes but were later removed. Similar expansive restrictions have been announced by countries including Italy, Singapore, and China's northern neighbor Mongolia. The United States, Japan, Britain, Germany and other nations had already advised their citizens not to travel to China. Britain said yesterday it was temporarily withdrawing some diplomatic staff and their families from across the country, a day after the US State Department ordered embassy employees to send home family members under the age of 21.

'Unkind'

Beijing insists it can contain the virus and called Washington's advice against travel to China "unkind". "Certainly it is not a gesture of goodwill," foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said. The US emergency declaration also requires Americans returning from Hubei province to be placed in mandatory 14-day quarantine, and health screening for American citizens coming from other parts of China.

The virus emerged in early December and has been traced to a market in Hubei's capital Wuhan that sold wild animals. It spread globally on the wings of a Lunar New Year holiday rush

that sees hundreds of millions of Chinese people travel domestically and overseas. The economic fallout continued Saturday as Apple announced that all its China stores would be closed until Feb 9. China's central bank said it would offer financial support to businesses hit by the public health emergency.

Mea culpa

With public anger mounting in China, Wuhan's top official admitted late Friday that authorities there had acted too slowly. "If strict control measures had been taken earlier the result would have been better than now," said Ma Guoqiang, the Communist Party chief for Wuhan. Wuhan officials have been criticized online for withholding information about the outbreak until late December despite knowing of it weeks earlier.

China finally lurched into action last week, effectively quarantining whole cities in Hubei and tens of millions of people. Unprecedented safeguards imposed nationwide include postponing the return to school, cutting bus and train routes, and tightening health screening on travellers nationwide. Yesterday, authorities in Hubei extended the new year holiday until Feb 13 and announced a suspension of marriage registrations from tomorrow to discourage public gatherings.

The city of Huanggang, east of Wuhan, said only one member of each household would be permitted to leave the house every two days to buy necessities. But the toll keeps mounting at an ever-increasing pace, with health authorities yesterday saying 46 more people had died in the preceding 24 hours, all but one in Hubei.

Another 2,102 new infections were also confirmed, bringing the total to nearly 12,000 - far higher than the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome outbreak of 2002-03. SARS, which is caused by a pathogen similar to the new coronavirus and also originated in China, killed 774 people worldwide - most of them in mainland China and Hong Kong. The World Health Organization declared the outbreak a global emergency on Thursday but later warned that closing borders was probably ineffective in halting transmission and could accelerate the virus's spread. But authorities around the world pressed ahead with preventive measures.

especially when trading thins and the humans overseeing them vanish, for instance during public holidays. That's what likely happened during the Wall Street flash crash of 2010 and dramatic but fleeting yen moves in Jan 2019. But they also offer the advantage of being able to transact at lightning speed at any hour of the day or night, with razor-sharp accuracy and lower overall costs. Being machines, they are also alien to the common human impulses of fear and greed that tend to take over. Algorithmic trading is dispassionate, said Scott Wacker, global head of fixed income, currency and commodity e-sales at JPMorgan, one bank at the forefront of the algo revolution.

"As a result, the reaction function in currency markets to even major geopolitical news has considerably shortened which enables stability to return more quickly." In short, when left-field events hit, not only can algos scan and react swiftly to newsfeed, many now can gauge the potential asset price impact. The most sophisticated can be "trained" to learn from the experience before the next shock.

How it works

One currency trader familiar with algo use said a machine reading coronavirus cases would typically buy stocks if informed of "500 new cases, 10 deaths". "If it's 3000 new cases, 200 deaths they might sell." "The point being that as soon as a headline is out, the machine-led market is trading on it," the trader said, speaking on condition of anonymity. But the machines had 'vol triggers', he said, meaning they can stop trading when the market moves beyond specified limits.

Simple first- and second-generation programs

merely broke down large buy/sell orders into chunks to minimize market impact. Now algos can be hooked up to sophisticated language processing technology, to "read and analyse" news feeds, then react accordingly, all in the space of seconds, said Antony Foster, head of GIO FX trading at Nomura. However this can "lead to overreaction in the first instance", Foster warned.

The impact in fast-moving markets can be outsized if the models rapidly push prices towards existing buy/sell order levels, trip them and trigger other orders. That's what happened when news broke of Iran's Jan 8 attack, according to a quant fund manager, who said algos had bought yen with the aim of triggering larger buy orders once a key option barrier was tripped. A plausible comparison may be the 0.6% plunge in the S&P 500 within the space of half an hour on Jan. 29. The move came after American Airlines and Lufthansa said they were suspending their China flights, but an hour later, the losses had been recouped.

Stephane Malrait, ING Bank's head of market structure and innovation, says in such instances algos are programmed to check if moves are in line with price trends. If the swings are in response to an incident, human traders can step in to smooth out the trade, Malrait added. Next, the algos may gauge the seriousness of the incident based on patterns of investor behaviour and economic consequences that followed previous such episodes. After the Iran missile attacks, the message from the specialized data-crunchers to the algos was: stand down.

One was Geoquant, a US firm which monitors geopolitical events and models the asset price impact. "We modeled our Iranian geopolitical indi-



HONG KONG: A woman wears a plastic water bottle with a cutout to cover her face on Friday as a preventative measure following a virus outbreak which began in the Chinese city of Wuhan. —AFP

'Latent racism'

Thai health officials on Friday said a taxi driver became the kingdom's first case of human-to-human transmission. Thailand joins China, Vietnam, Germany, Japan, France and the United States with confirmed domestic infections. The health crisis has dented China's international image and put Chinese nationals in difficult positions abroad, with complaints of racism.

More than 40,000 workers at a vast Chinese-controlled industrial park in Indonesia - which also employs 5,000 staff from China - were put under quarantine, the facility said on Friday. On the same day, China flew overseas Hubei residents back to the center of the outbreak in Wuhan on chartered planes from Thailand and Malaysia, citing "practical difficulties" the passengers had encountered overseas. Countries have scrambled to evacuate their nationals from Wuhan, with hundreds of US, Japanese, British, French, South Korean, Indian, Bangladeshi and Mongolian citizens evacuated so far, and more governments planning airlifts. —AFP

Private unknowns

Executives at half a dozen firms providing risk analysis for algo strategies told Reuters their services were increasingly in demand, but declined to give figures. But they acknowledged limitations. Reactions to the coronavirus for instance could be hobbled because the only meaningful precedent is the 2003 SARS epidemic which also coincided with the US invasion of Iraq. Second, the pathogen and its dangers are relatively unknown, Rosenberg said Geoquant's China Health Risk index was at record highs. That has pushed up the firm's Social Instability Risk index for China, pressuring Chinese markets. However, he said this correlation breaks down beyond short periods. "The longer-term relationship between Chinese Health Risk and equities, Chinese or global, is basically zero," he said. —Reuters

Expats in China flee as virus fears mount

SHANGHAI: Expatriates are leaving coronavirus-hit China - and not just from the outbreak epicenter in Wuhan - as worries about their children take hold and private health care facilities start turning away the feverish. Some foreigners also fear being trapped indefinitely as airlines cancel flights and countries quarantine or limit entry for people who have recently set foot in the country, according to interviews with eight people who are or were based in four Chinese cities.

A growing number of governments are urging their citizens not to travel to China and the United Kingdom said yesterday its embassy and consulates in the country will maintain only a skeleton staff. "It may be increasingly difficult for those who wish to leave China to do so, and there is a growing risk of UK nationals being unable to access medical care as hospitals become overwhelmed," the British embassy said on Saturday.

The virus, declared a global emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO) on Thursday, has killed 259 people and spread to some two dozen countries, although the vast majority of those known to be infected are in China. Expat chat-groups are alight with exchanges on the pros and cons of leaving, and tips on visas. "Wouldn't go if we didn't have kid," Russian expat Maria Arkhangelskaya, who has a 20-month-old daughter and left Shanghai for Thailand on Thursday, said via WeChat.

Meanwhile, many of the costly private clinics catering to foreigners have started to turn people with fevers away, raising concerns among the expat community they would have to rely on local facilities if they needed medical care. "I don't want to go to the local hospital with a sore throat only to catch something else," said Czech national Veronika Krubner in Tianjin, who is considering leaving the country with her 21-month-old daughter.

Private clinic Raffles in Beijing will take the temperature of patients on entry and suspected virus cases will be referred to public fever clinics, a person answering the appointments hotline said. People manning the appointment lines at private practices Parkway Health and Ferguson in Shanghai said the government had instructed them not to accept patients with a high temperature, and that they should be referred to public fever clinics.

Private clinic Jiahui Health said in a January 24 text message to patients in Shanghai that it cannot screen for the virus and those who have a fever of over 37.8 degrees Celsius should go to a public facility designated for treating fever patients. Visiting a public hospital in China can mean first waiting in line to get a ticket to see a doctor, only to wait in another hours-long queue before being seen, and language is a barrier for non-Chinese speakers. Harrowing scenes of panicked crowds in Wuhan hospitals have circulated on social media.

One US citizen who is based in Shanghai and asked not to be identified said he flew home to California last week. "I'm not worried so much about the virus as I am about being forced to go to a Chinese hospital simply for having a fever," he said. Over 900,000 foreigners were living in China last year, according to a January 2019 report in the official China Daily. —Reuters

Wars, viruses: Are robots less prone to panic?

LONDON: Widely blamed for volatile "flash crashes" in currencies and equities, high-frequency algorithms may also be why shock global events, including the current coronavirus, seem to have lost their power to spook markets for any length of time. Whether stocks, bonds, currencies or commodities, asset prices seem less prone to any selloff for very long; the US killing of an Iranian general and Iran's retaliatory missile attack are among potential catastrophes that triggered violent but surprisingly shortlived reactions just since the start of 2020.

In both cases, knee-jerk yen-buying and selling of equities faded within hours, allowing stocks to scale new record peaks. Now even as China's coronavirus threatens to throttle economic growth, global stocks are not far off all-time highs. Certainly, many factors are shaping the resilience, not least central bank money printing and rising global savings which boosted the value of world stocks by \$25 trillion in the past decade.

Yet it is hard not to link the shift in reaction by financial markets to the rise of automated trading strategies. In the past six years, the share of algorithmic trading in the \$6.6 trillion-a-day FX market has more than doubled to 27% among fund managers, a survey by Greenleaf Associates found. There is some reason to believe algos cause volatility,

International

Egypt's population nears 100 million, putting pressure on resources, jobs

Arab and African countries struggling with rising populations

CAIRO: Sitting in her sister's apartment on a noisy Cairo street, Rania Sayed one day hopes to leave a city that is becoming more congested as Egypt's population ticks up to 100 million, a milestone it will pass next month. Like many others, she wants to move to one of the new satellite settlements being built for a booming population whose rapid growth President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi has identified as one of Egypt's biggest challenges alongside terrorism.

"I want to move them (her two children) to a place where people have better mentalities, where there is education," said the 36-year-old resident of the Ard Al Lewa district, where rows of apartment blocks rise above dusty, unpaved streets. "Unfortunately, things are very difficult in places like this...so I hope to be able to live to a good social standard." Egypt's 100 millionth person is expected to be clocked up on the official statistics agency's digital counter in central Cairo in February.

The newborn will join a nation where six people in ten are under 29 years old, said Aleksandar Bodiroza, representative of the UN populations fund in Egypt. Many Arab and African countries are struggling with rising populations. But in Egypt the pressures are acute, because 97% of its people live on just 8% of its territory, crowded along the Nile, Bodiroza added. Creating new space for housing, schools and hospitals is a priority as Egypt's population grows by 2.5 million people a year, he said. In inhabited areas, 1,400 people are packed into every square kilometer.

Growth for jobs

The biggest problem is jobs. The workforce will reach 80 million within 10 years, the World Bank says. But to create enough jobs, annual economic growth

needs to be at least triple the population growth rate, said Radwa El-Swaify, head of research at Pharos, a Cairo financial firm. Based on population growth of 2.5% this would require 7.5% GDP growth, compared with the government's forecast of up to 5.9% for the current fiscal year.

In addition, Egypt's economy could be hit by water shortages caused by climate change and a Nile dam being built upstream by Ethiopia. Infrastructure, including roads and public transport, will also come under pressure as the population grows. "Thirty years ago this whole area was agricultural land," said Nabil Rawash, 60, who also lives in Ard El Lewa. "But with the overcrowding and population growth, people started coming here to build," he added, standing in a street packed with people and cars.

New cities

Officials say they have managed to bring down fertility rates thanks to a "Two is Enough" campaign challenging the tradition of large families in rural areas. This is aimed at more than 1.1 million poor families with up to three children. The Social Solidarity Ministry has trained volunteers to encourage people to have fewer children.

"During 2019, we have conducted 2,680,000 home visits," said Desiree Labib, project director at the ministry. "Among these visits 407,000 women have asked to be referred to family planning clinics." She pointed to a UN study which found the fertility rate dipped to 3.1 in 2018 from 3.5 in 2014. "If we apply more discipline, so that families have less children, we can reach fertility rates of 2.1 by 2032," said Abdelhamid Sharaf El Din, a senior statistics official. That still means the population will grow to 153 million by 2052, but if the fertility rate were 3.4 it would hit 191 million, he said.



CAIRO: A worker carries away dyed yarns at a traditional hand-dyeing workshop in the Egyptian capital Cairo's centuries old district of Darb Al-Ahmar. —AFP

Either way, the government needs to do something about congestion in Cairo, home to about one in five Egyptians. It is planning to start moving ministries as soon as June. But for many, moving there is not an option due to lack of transport and jobs, said Timothy

Kaldas, non-resident fellow at the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. "The over-centralization of Egypt's state and economy has led to this overwhelming concentration of Egyptians in one metropolis," he said. —Reuters

Syria regime on the verge of recapturing Idlib highway town

BEIRUT: Syrian regime forces were poised Friday to retake the rebel-held town of Saraqeb in the country's northwest where battles this week killed more than 400 combatants, a monitor said. Russian-backed regime forces have pressed with a double-pronged push in the Idlib region, home to some three million people, half of whom have been displaced from other parts of the country.

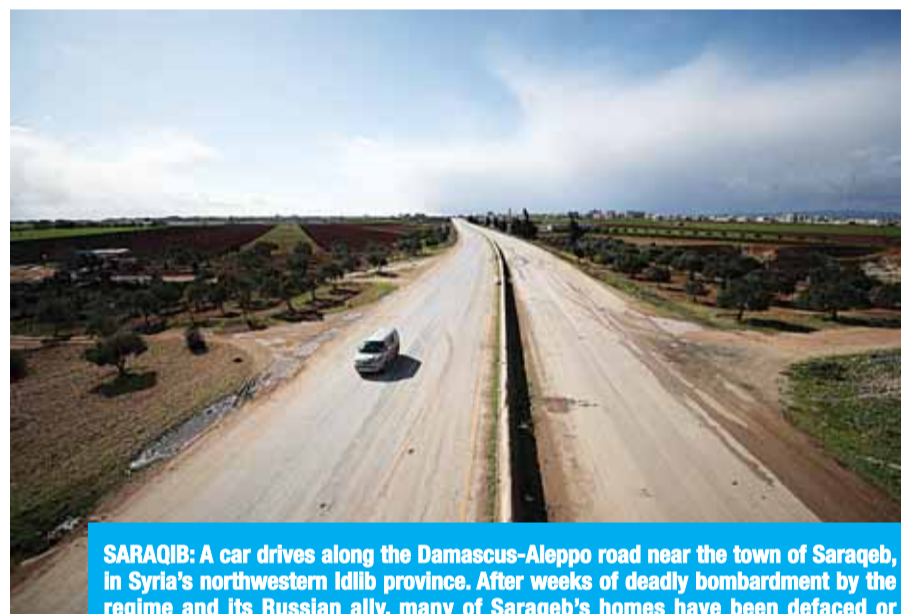
Slowly chipping away from the south and northeast, they have shrunk Syria's last major opposition bastion to just over half of Idlib province and slivers of neighboring Aleppo and Latakia. On Friday, regime forces battled jihadists and rebels on the edges of Saraqeb, which has been nearly deserted following two weeks of heightened bombardment, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The clashes were within 2 kilometers of the town which lies on the coveted M5 highway that connects the

Syrian capital Damascus to second city Aleppo, said the Britain-based Observatory.

Saraqeb also sits at the junction of the M4, which runs west-to-east across Idlib, linking the coastal regime stronghold of Latakia to Aleppo, once Syria's industrial hub. Both highways are coveted by the regime as it seeks to revive a moribund economy after nine years of war. If Saraqeb falls in the hands of the government, it would be the second strategic town in Idlib province to be recaptured by government troops this week.

On Wednesday rebels and jihadists pulled out of Maarat al-Numan, which also lies on the M5. Some 50 kilometers of the M5 remain outside regime control, mostly in the western countryside of Aleppo province, which neighbors Idlib, according to the Observatory. Rebels and jihadists have been locked in fierce battles with regime forces in western Aleppo since mid-January, in the largest escalation there since 2016.

The fighting in Idlib and in western Aleppo over the past week has killed 205 pro-government fighters and 220 anti-regime combatants, the Observatory said. A Syrian military commander who asked not to be named said that the push in the two provinces aims to secure key highways and corner



SARAQEB: A car drives along the Damascus-Aleppo road near the town of Saraqeb, in Syria's northwestern Idlib province. After weeks of deadly bombardment by the regime and its Russian ally, many of Saraqeb's homes have been defaced or pounded to smithereens. —AFP

rebels and jihadists in a shrinking pocket in central Idlib. Regime forces near Saraqeb are pushing north, while those in Aleppo are moving towards them from the south, he told AFP during a government-organized tour of Maarat al-Numan on Thursday.

The Idlib region is dominated by jihadists of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham

alliance, led by a former Al-Qaeda affiliate. Damascus which controls more than 70 per cent of Syria has repeatedly vowed to reclaim the entire country, including Idlib. The violence in the northwest has displaced more than 388,000 people, according to the United Nations, and killed more than 260 civilians, according to Observatory. —AFP

With a knock on the door, Egypt aims to turn families greener

GIZA: Suzan Mohamed recently opened her door to a surprise: a group of women volunteers intent on giving her tips on everything from proper trash disposal to how to cut water and energy consumption, plus a brief introduction to climate change. "How do you get rid of your waste?" asked Saeeda Mahmoud, a government representative and rural leader trained by the Ministry of Environment.

The resident of Meet Shammas, a neighborhood in the city of Giza, said she usually puts trash in the landfill near her home, or hands it to a garbage collector, without separating or sorting the items. "I do what all people here have been doing for years," the 38-year-old said. "Now there is a better way to get rid of the waste," Mahmoud replied, explaining about the need to sort recyclable waste into paper, plastic and cans, which could then be sold to dealers, earning the household cash while helping the environment.

Egypt has been stepping up efforts to preserve its environment and address climate change, through measures as diverse as introducing electric buses, boosting renewable energy and trying to ban plastic bags. But it is also intensifying environmental awareness campaigns, and women, who make many household decisions, are a particular target. The door-to-door visit to Mohamed's house in Giza is part of a one-year effort, launched this month by the Egyptian Ministry of Environment and the state-run National Council for Women, to raise awareness about environmental issues in Egyptian families.

With a million Egyptian pounds (\$63,000) in funding, the program aims to reach a million

women in three cities - greater Cairo, Giza and Fayoum - and could be expanded to other cities in coming years, officials say. Carried out by 400 women leaders chosen from the three project areas, it relies on women who are visited at home sharing what they've learned with others in their communities, and with younger generations.

The effort is part of a broader "Go Green" push to combat desertification and climate change by raising awareness about environmental issues and encouraging citizens to adopt greener practices. "We believe that women are the gateways to change any behavior inside the families. That is why we go to them and talk about the environment, believing that this information will get through the whole family," Minister of Environment Yasmine Fouad told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

What women do at home, and what they know, has "direct effect on the environment and climate change," she said. Samah Saleh, head of the women's unit at the Ministry of Environment, said the visits to homes help relay tips on things like cutting waste of food, water and energy, as well as information about how such changes can curb climate threats.

There are also offers of direct benefits for those willing to make the changes. Following initial visits, community volunteers working with the government go to the women's homes and collect recyclable plastics, cans and paper, offering a cash payment based on weight. The government has arranged with commercial firms including Cairo-based company Go Clean to then recycle the materials.

Volunteers who visit homes also collect used cooking oil, offering bottles of fresh oil in return. The old oil is taken by a factory which turns it into green fuel. The environment ministry also hopes to build biogas stations near some of the homes, to try to turn animal waste into energy that can help power homes cheaply and cleanly. "We are now talking about that with them before we put



CAIRO: A man parasails in the Nile river during a training session in the Egyptian capital Cairo, with the buildings overlooking the central Tahrir Square seen in the background. —AFP

that into effect," Saleh said.

The government already has had some success in using women to spur environmental change. Starting in 2014, the environment ministry approached women in the Nile Delta in an effort to curb the practice of burning rice straw, which can cause air pollution. "We educated women about the harmful effects of the phenomenon, who in their turn convinced their husbands to give the straw to the government, which turned it into fertilizers and animal fodder," Saleh said.

New ideas

Dalia Kamal, 39, another woman living in Meet Shammas, said what the visitors to her home had to say on environmental issues was brand new to her. "I have never heard about that before, either through television or from my surroundings," Kamal said. For instance, she said, "I never knew that I can use vinegar instead of detergent to wash our clothes, because excessive use of detergents can cause health problems as well as cause air

and water pollution". She said she was happy to try the suggested changes, particularly sorting her recycling and trading it for cash.

"I think it is a very good idea because we can get money in exchange for plastics and cans which we do not use and our homes will be cleaner and healthier," she said. But she said she worried whether the changes suggested in the government-backed green push would genuinely take root. "We have been accustomed to the fact that once projects are completed the practices start to get (abandoned)," she said.

She said any cleanup effort also had to focus not just within homes but on whole neighborhoods like hers, where streets remain strewn with plastic rubbish and other waste. Egypt has longstanding problems with waste disposal, with collection services and recycling still limited. "Illegal disposal of domestic and industrial waste remains a common practice," according to a 2019 paper by Egyptian researchers. But Egypt is trying to take a greener turn. —Reuters

Egypt court sentences officer-turned-militant and 36 others to death

CAIRO: An Egyptian court yesterday sentenced Hisham Al-Ashmawy, a former special forces officer turned Islamist militant, and 36 others to death after they were convicted of terrorism, court officials said. Ashmawy was captured in the eastern Libyan city of Derna in late 2018 and transferred by authorities loyal to commander Khalifa Haftar to Egypt in May last year.

He was convicted on several charges including plotting a 2014 attack that killed 22 military guards near the frontier with Libya, and involvement in an attempt to kill a former interior minister in 2013, a military statement said. Ashmawy led the Sinai-based Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, Egypt's most active militant group, before it pledged allegiance to Islamic State in 2014, it said. The other 36 defendants tried with him were also convicted of terrorism charges, the court ruled.

Their cases were referred to the Grand Mufti, Egypt's highest Islamic legal official. Egyptian law requires any capital sentence to be referred to him for an opinion before executions can take place. The court set a new session for March 2 to confirm the convictions after receiving the Mufti's non-binding opinion. In November, a military court had already sentenced Ashmawy to death in another terrorism case. Egyptian civilian and military courts had also sentenced Ashmawy to death in absentia before his extradition. —Reuters

Cold and humiliated, Syrians displaced yet again by campaign

IDLIB: Khaled Sabri and his family huddle in the makeshift shelter in northern Idlib, still shell-shocked after fleeing the sudden bombardment of their rebel-held town earlier this week. They are part of an exodus that has shaken northwest Syria, the last rebel redoubt in the country's nine-year civil war, as hundreds of thousands push toward Turkey to escape a sudden and fast-moving advance by government forces. Backed by heavy Russian airstrikes, President Bashar al-Assad's forces have recaptured dozens of towns since last Friday in a major campaign that has stoked tensions between Ankara and Moscow and raised the spectre of a new refugee crisis.

"We fled with just the clothes we were wearing because of the heavy bombing," said 55-year-old Sabri. His city Maarat al-Numan, the second biggest in Idlib, was re-captured on Tuesday in a major milestone for Assad's stated goal of reclaiming all of Syria. At the camp outside Maarat Misrin, a northern Idlib town about 20 km south of the Turkish frontier, dozens of families sheltered in plastic white tents, many unsure of where they would wind up.

Jannah, 10, said it was the second time her family had been displaced. Like many others, they had sought refuge in Idlib after being ousted from other areas earlier in the war. "I was forcibly displaced from eastern Ghouta, and then we went to Maarat al-Numan and the Syrian regime launched a military campaign on Maarat Al-Numan, so we came here." A United Nations report on Thursday estimated that 390,000 people have fled northwest Syria from Dec 1-Jan. 27, 80% of them women and children. —Reuters

International

In Calais, sadness but serenity as UK bows out of European Union

Calais emotionally and physically linked to Britain

CALAIS: In the French city of Calais, so close to Britain that you can see the white cliffs of Dover on a clear day, locals are resigned to Brexit but hopeful that the port will continue to be a linchpin in cross-Channel relations. As the main staging post for ferry and train crossings from France to Britain, Calais is emotionally and physically linked to Britain, a hub for travelers ranging from truck drivers to day-trippers in search of French wine and migrants seeking to cross to the UK.

Calais was even once part of England, from its conquest in the mid-fourteenth century by Edward III to its loss under Mary Tudor in 1558. The English queen is said to have then declared that after she died Calais would be found "in her heart". French residents of Calais, where the cold damp wind blowing on the seafront Friday seemed distinctly British, did not seem overly worried about Britain's seismic departure from the European Union. "We were always very friendly with the British and it will stay that way," said Christophe, who works in a cosmetics shop. "I go to Scotland every year with my dog, and I am just worried about him. It is my only real worry."

'Won't change much'

Taking shelter from the winter weather in a cafe, Dan Snowden, a British resident of Calais since 1999, appeared much more concerned. "When I arrived in 1999, everything was easy. Now, all of a sudden, we find out that this is not our home any more and what we took for granted is now in question." "For social security, education, pensions, accessing services: we don't know what is going to happen," he said, adding he now plans to ask for French nationality for himself and his family.

The region has also long been a magnet for people

seeking to smuggle themselves to Britain in one of the tens of thousands of trucks and cars that travel daily between the two countries on ferries and trains. "The protection measures for the borders could hardly be tougher, we don't think that will change much," said Francois Guennoc, the deputy head of a migrants shelter. "Some people hope that customs controls will create traffic jams on the roads" that could make it easier for migrants to stow themselves away.

But with Britain remaining in the EU customs union during an 11-month transitional period, there will be no border checks for now, "so it's a bit of a vain hope," Guennoc said. At a meal for migrants organized by the Salam NGO, George, a young Eritrean aged 19, said he was not even aware of Brexit. After 10 unsuccessful attempts to cross the Channel he just wanted to get to Britain.

'Calm has returned'

Meanwhile, any lingering fears that Britain's exit from the EU would trigger transport chaos came to nothing Friday, with both sides having reached an agreement in October on an orderly, phased withdrawal. Little change is expected at the Channel Tunnel during the 11-month transition period beginning Saturday, with the status quo to be maintained on trade and travel.

"From Saturday, for travelers and companies, nothing is going to change," said Gilbert Beltran, head of customs for the northern Dunkirk region. "But it is necessary that companies continue to prepare." At the end of the transition period on January 1, 2021, new smart technology on the borders will automatically scan the registration numbers of passing lorries and link them with customs declarations filled out online by exporters.



LONDON: A man waves Union flags from a BMW Isetta as he drives past Brexit supporters gathering in Parliament Square, in central London. —AFP

If there is any anomaly in the data, the trucks will be told to park for further checks. "The year 2019 was very turbulent due to the delays to Brexit. Here, calm has returned, the sea is flat and we know that Britain is leaving the European Union," said Jean-Marc

Puissesseau, head of the local ports authority. "For me, Brexit is not chaos, not a barrier. My grandchildren will know Britain as I knew it when I was young, when there were customs controls. It will be like it was then," he added. —AFP

UK's Boris Johnson: Brexit champion who delivered

LONDON: Even for a maverick politician like Boris Johnson, backing Brexit four years ago was a huge gamble. But it has paid off spectacularly with Britain's exit Friday from the European Union. The Conservative leader remains a divisive figure, hailed by many for his optimism and humor, accused by others of Trump-style populism and a blatant disregard for the truth. But his name will be written in the history books for leading the campaign for Brexit in the 2016 EU referendum, and then, as prime minister, finally making it happen. Negotiating a new trade deal with Brussels is likely to be an even greater challenge, but for now, the former London mayor is riding high.

Early ambition

For a man who as a child wanted to be "world king", this moment of triumph has been a long time coming. Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson was born in New York in 1964 into a high-achieving family. He spent his early years in Brussels, where his father worked for the EU, then attended the elite Eton school in England before studying classics at Oxford University. He first worked as a journalist for The Times, where he was sacked for making up a quote, and moved on to become Brussels correspondent for the right-wing Daily Telegraph newspaper. There he made his name by writing "Euro-myths" - exaggerated claims about the EU.

He came to public prominence in the 1990s as a guest panelist on a satirical television show, where his eccentric and self-deprecating wit made him a national figure known just as "Boris". His first few years in politics did not go smoothly - in 2004, he was sacked from the Conservatives' shadow cabinet for lying about an extra-marital affair. But in 2008 he was elected mayor of multicultural, Labor-voting London, an achievement commentators put down to his unconventional style.

Stoking controversy

Johnson is not like other politicians, with his messy blond hair, jokey style and willingness to make himself look ridiculous — notably once getting stuck on a zip wire brandishing British flags. He also differed from many of his Conservative colleagues with his pro-migration and socially liberal views, which resonated in London. However, he has faced accusations of prejudice in his news columns over the years, describing gay men as "bumboys" and black African Commonwealth citizens as "piccaninnies". As recently as 2018, he drew criticism for writing that Muslim women in the full veil looked like "letter boxes", even while he argued that they should be free to wear what they want. —AFP



LONDON: An arrangement of UK daily newspapers photographed as an illustration in London shows front page headlines reporting on the story that Britain on January 31, became the first country to formally leave the EU. —AFP

January 1973: Divided Britain joins Europe

PARIS: On the first of January 1973, Britain joined the European Economic Community in festive spirits following a decade of tough negotiations, though public opinion on membership was mixed. For around 10 days, as part of a "Fanfare for Europe" gala, 300 sports and cultural events were held nationwide showcasing the EEC countries. Membership had increased from six to nine, with Denmark and Ireland also joining alongside Britain.

The Conservative government's europhile prime minister Edward Heath described Britain's entry to the bloc as "very moving". Football players from the three new states played against a team of athletes from the six other countries. Italy loaned a Michelangelo artwork for an exhibition, the Netherlands provided a Rembrandt. Only the Louvre declined to join the fun by refusing to let the "Mona Lisa" leave Paris. Here is a look back at AFP's reporting from the time.

Hastings and Waterloo

On December 31, 1972, the eve of the big day, the British press devote their front pages to the event. A chapter of a thousand years of history is closing, says The Sunday Times. The Sunday Telegraph predicts joining would prove

The European Union: A union marked by crises

PARIS: Since it was created in 1957 to help avert another world war, the European Union has weathered numerous crises, though Britain's decision to leave might be the worst. As Brexit became reality and the bloc's membership declined for the first time on Friday here is a recap of testing times in the past.

'Empty Chair'

In 1965, in what is known as the "Empty Chair" crisis, a dispute over budget funding sees French President Charles de Gaulle recall his representative to Brussels and boycott its institutions for seven months.

Thatcher wants 'money back'

In 1979, UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher demands a rebate for Britain's contribution to the European budget, reportedly declaring: "I want my money back." After fierce negotiations, London secures an annual rebate in 1984.

Danish rejection

In 1992, Danes shock Europe when they turn down the Maastricht Treaty that establishes the EU and a future monetary union. The Danes barely approve an amended version in 1993 after Denmark is granted greater autonomy in defence, currency, citizenship matters and judicial cooperation.

as decisive for British history as the Battles of Hastings or Waterloo. "The Daily Mail above all warns its readers against the use of inappropriate common parlance that could shock the citizens of the eight other countries," writes AFP. Meanwhile the most passionate advocates against joining the EEC organise their last stand that day. Five hundred people join a torchlit procession in front of the Palace of Westminster, the seat of the British parliament.

Stink bombs

Festivities get under way on January 2, 1973, at a "European" dinner with 258 attendees hosted by the British Council at Hampton Court Palace, the former royal residence. The next day Heath, Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Prince Philip attend the first gala evening, an opera at Covent Garden in London, where they are met by stink bombs thrown by 200 protesters. Public opinion is "hesitant and (...) remains - polls say - deeply divided" over joining, AFP reports. The decision to join had been taken in 1972 by a vote in parliament and it was never put to a referendum, unlike in Denmark and Ireland.

'A fool's paradise'

AFP reporter Basile Tesselin heads to a London pub to test the mood. "We have our own government, a parliament we elect," a print worker tells him. "We do not want to be led by who knows what from Brussels. Everything we have is better than what you have." "I'm wary of you, I

Mass resignation

The entire European Commission, led by Luxembourg's Jacques Santer, resigns in 1999 after a report reveals its responsibility for fraud.

Austria sanctioned

In 2000, Austria's conservative People's Party (OeVP) picks the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) as its junior coalition partner, shocking Europe and leading to months of EU sanctions. The FPÖe again enters government in 2017, this time without stirring opposition from Brussels.

Constitution shot down

In 2005, French voters reject a draft European constitution, as do Dutch voters three days later. European leaders manage to get the Lisbon Treaty ratified in late 2009 with provisions designed to improve the functioning of the enlarged EU institutions.

Greek debt

In 2009, Greece reveals a sharp rise in its public deficit that had been under-reported in official data. It warns of a debt default the following year, putting major European banks under strain and unleashing a crisis that threatens the euro single currency. First Greece and then Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Cyprus seek aid from the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The so-called "troika" demands strict fiscal discipline in return for help, and several heads of government fall in a resulting public backlash against sharp spending cuts.



BRUSSELS: Staff members take down the United Kingdom's flag from outside the European Parliament building in Brussels on Brexit Day. —AFP

see you coming," says a taxi driver from Scotland. "You suck up to us, and then once we're in your sacred trap, your fool's paradise, you'll make us fall out with our real friends, the Americans, the Canadians, the Australians. And you'll all become communists and take us down with you."

The list of recriminations grows: fears that VAT (Value Added Tax) will increase, that the weight of trucks will become an issue, and over the free entry of Europeans. "I like going to Europe," says one truck driver from Scotland. "Particularly to France. I feel at home there. I don't trust the English." The opposition Labor Party quickly makes

clear its intention to renegotiate the accession treaty. Its leader Harold Wilson accuses the government of having "abdicated" its responsibilities to Brussels.

'Yes' then 'No'

In 1974, Labor returns to power and, after securing a renegotiation, organizes a referendum the following year on whether or not to remain in the EEC. The "Yes" vote wins by 67 percent. On June 23, 2016, 41 years later, Britons will vote by 52 percent to leave the now European Union. Brexit plunges Britain into more than three years of crisis before its departure becomes reality on January 31, 2020. —AFP



WARRINGTON: Brexit supporters wave Union flags as the time passes 11 O'Clock at a Brexit Celebration party at Woolston Social Club in Warrington, north west England. —AFP

Migration crisis

In 2015, Europe faces its most serious migration crisis since the end of World War II. More than one million people, fleeing war, mainly in Syria, arrive in the bloc via the Greek and Italian coasts. EU leaders struggle to work out a joint action plan, with several EU members refusing to take a share of refugees. More than 19,000 people have died making perilous sea crossings since 2014.

Brexit

In June 2016, Britons vote 52 percent to 48 percent in favor of leaving the EU, surprising the remaining 27 nations and

unsettling UK businesses and investors. London and Brussels engage in tough talks aimed at ensuring Britain's smooth departure on March 29, 2019, the original Brexit deadline. But the UK parliament balks at terms agreed by Theresa May, rejecting them three times and prompting successive deadline extensions aimed at averting a chaotic "no-deal" divorce. In July 2019, May is replaced as prime minister by Boris Johnson, the pro-Brexit figurehead of the 2016 poll. He reaches a new deal with Brussels and pushes it through parliament after winning a snap election, leading to Britain leaving the bloc at 23:00 GMT on Friday, January 31. —AFP

International

Asian community pushes back amid rise in xenophobic incidents in France

Nervous customers ask waiting staff if they are Chinese

PARIS: In a southeastern Paris district known as the go-to place for Asian cuisine, business is down at Pascal Corlier's Vietnamese restaurant, a side-effect of China's coronavirus health scare that has sparked panic and a rise in xenophobic incidents. Some nervous customers have begun to ask waiting staff if they are Chinese, according to Corlier, whose Vietnamese father-in-law runs the kitchen and serves up traditional dishes like pho soup.

Others are simply staying away. "There's a sort of unfounded psychosis setting in around the Asian community and Asian food," the restaurateur said, adding that his revenues were down 40% for the first few weeks of 2020 compared to the same period a year ago. The virus outbreak that began in the central Chinese city of Wuhan has infected more than 9,800 people - mostly in China but with some 130 cases in 24 countries and regions outside mainland China, including six cases in France.

It has killed 213 people in China and sparked a wave of travel curbs and other efforts to stop the spread, both inside China and abroad. As well as Chinese nationals, France's big Asian community includes many people of Cambodian and Laotian descent, and one of the largest contingents of Vietnamese overseas—a legacy of France's former colonial presence in south-east Asia.

Asians in France this week created a Twitter hashtag #Jenesuispasunvirus ("I am not a virus") to signal abuse. Racist incidents, slights and slurs have been reported from

the school playground to supermarkets, according to Laetitia Chhiv, who runs an association for young people of Chinese descent. "We had a student of Chinese origin in Strasbourg who was shouted at by a woman who told him not to touch the avocados she wanted to buy," Chhiv said. "That was after she asked him where he was from and whether he had the virus."

Worries over the virus are reverberating across Paris in other ways too, with high-end stores that rely on Chinese tour groups hurting as the flow of visitors dries up. At some retailers, staff said French customers were also staying away, partly out of fear of mingling with Asian clients. "Racism against Asians is spreading even faster than the virus," said Sun-Lay Tan, who works in the art world and is French-born of Chinese and Cambodian descent. "I was sitting on the metro on my way to work and the person next to me edged a few centimeters away and put his scarf over his mouth. I was shocked."

Corlier, the restaurant owner, whose wife is from Vietnam, said even his children had felt stigmatized and saw people covering their faces. A Chinese teacher at a prestigious Parisian high school wrote to parents this week to explain she had not travelled to China in years, according to an email seen by Reuters. "People are panicking, so it's hard to hold it against them," Corlier said. "But they have to take a step back ... and look at the facts." — Reuters



'I am not a virus'



MAINE-ET-LOIRE: An employee controls health protection masks in a production chain of the Kolmi-Hopen company's factory in Saint-Barthelemy-d'Anjou, western France. — AFP

Online, jetsetting and monitored: How life has changed since SARS

BEIJING: A new coronavirus originating from central China has killed 259 people and infected thousands others, stirring memories of the SARS outbreak nearly two decades ago. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome - which also began in China - killed almost 800 people worldwide in 2002-03, with the Chinese government drawing condemnation for attempting to cover up the outbreak. But dramatic lifestyle changes mean this epidemic is shaping up differently. Here are five ways life in China has changed since SARS:

Travel boom

Rising incomes have turned China into the world's biggest source of outbound tourists over the past decade, according to the World Tourism Organization, and Chinese tourists are a huge source of revenue for many countries. They made almost 150 million trips abroad in 2018 - nearly ten times the 16.6 million made in 2002, according to tourism ministry figures. The travel boom has complicated efforts to control the spread of the novel coronavirus, with Chinese authorities urging citizens on Tuesday to delay trips abroad.

Social media

China's online population grew from 68 million in 2003 to 829 million in 2018, according to the country's cyberspace authority. The popularity of social media platforms Weibo and WeChat has fuelled misinformation and memes alike, with users heading online to share bogus remedies for the virus and shame inept local officials. The internet has also become a battleground between authorities keen to maintain stability and citizens alleging a cover-up. Eight people were reprimanded by Wuhan police for allegedly publishing untrue claims on WeChat that SARS had re-emerged in the city, while hundreds of other people across the country have received punishments for "spreading rumors", according to rights group Chinese Human Rights Defenders. But China's top court later admonished Wuhan for its heavy-handed response to the rumors, saying the city might have benefited from greater alarm earlier in the crisis.

Sexual assaults rise at US military academies

WASHINGTON: Incidence of sexual assault in US military academies rose again last year, the Pentagon said, despite efforts to combat the problem. During the 2018-2019 school year, there were 149 sexual assaults officially reported to authorities at three military academies—where students prepare for futures as military officers—compared to 117 during the previous school year, marking an increase of more than 25 percent, the Pentagon said in a report.

This year's count only covered sexual assault cases reported to authorities, which the Pentagon says makes it difficult to determine if the rise in cases is due to better reporting or if sexual assaults did indeed occur more frequently than the year before.

Every two years, the nearly 13,000 students at the three schools—the army's US Military Academy at West Point, New York, the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland and the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado—are also able to fill out anonymous questionnaires about sexual assaults that were not reported to authorities, including cases of sexual harassment or unwanted sexual contact. This report did not include results from the questionnaires.

West Point counted the most student cases, with 57 sexual assaults reported, and the Naval Academy counted the fewest reports at 33. There were 40 cases of sexual assault reported at the Air Force Academy. The rest of the



GERMERSHEIM: The entrance of the military base in Gernersheim, near Stuttgart in southwestern Germany, is pictured yesterday where German citizens evacuated from the Chinese city of Wuhan, epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak, will be held in quarantine. — AFP

Migrant nation

China became a majority urban country in 2011, with the country's population of internal migrants nearly doubling from 2005 to 2018 to reach more than 240 million, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. Every year the world's biggest travel rush takes place in China as workers head back home for the Lunar New Year from the cities where they work. The timing of the coronavirus outbreak around the Spring Festival period has complicated efforts to control its spread. Authorities have set up temperature checkpoints at airports and train stations across the country and extended the long holiday by two days. Millions of migrant workers are also locked out of public healthcare systems by strict urban registration rules.

Surveillance

With growing internet and smartphone use, Chinese people's everyday actions are increasingly being mined for

data by the government and corporations. Beijing has come under increasing scrutiny for high-tech surveillance - from facial recognition-enabled security cameras to apps used by police to extract personal information from smartphones at checkpoints. China's railway authority on Thursday said it had set up a dedicated team to trawl through data and track down close contacts of infected train passengers.

E-commerce

At the time of the SARS outbreak, Chinese consumers shopped almost exclusively at brick-and-mortar stores and malls, with only 0.07 percent of shopping in 2003 done online, according to the UN Industrial Development Organization. Now, e-commerce and local delivery apps have become commonplace in Chinese cities, and citizens worried about the coronavirus can choose to shop online instead of stepping foot in crowded stores. — AFP



ARLINGTON: Defense Minister Florence Parly speaks during a bi-lateral news conference with US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. — AFP

reports came from non-student cases. "This report is a reflection of what we already know," said retired Colonel Don Christensen, former Air Force prosecutor and head of the organization Protect Our Defenders. "The Pentagon has repeatedly failed to address the sexual assault crisis gripping its ranks and, as a result, the problem continues to grow."

"Year after year, military leadership has lauded a focus on prevention despite zero evidence

that preventative measures are working. In fact, the opposite is true," he said. Christensen called out the Pentagon's lack of "military justice reform" in not putting sexual assault cases "in the hands of professionals." "Their continued obstruction of reform has led to a dramatic increase in sexual assaults and harassment, not only affecting those who bravely serve in our military, but its next generation of leaders as well," he said. — AFP

Hangings of Delhi bus gang-rapists postponed

NEW DELHI: The hanging of four men scheduled for yesterday for a notorious gang-rape and murder on a Delhi bus in 2012 has been postponed "until further orders," a court ruled Friday. The brutal attack on Jyoti Singh sparked weeks of demonstrations and shone a spotlight on the alarming rates of sexual violence and the plight of women in India. Four men were convicted in 2013 and were due to be hanged simultaneously yesterday at 6:00 am in India's first execution since 2015.

A fifth, the suspected ringleader, was found dead in jail in a suspected suicide, while a 17-year-old accomplice spent three years in a juvenile detention centre. The delay was because some of the men still have legal options to appeal their sentences including "mercy petitions" with the Indian president. All are however widely expected to fail, with support for their execution appearing to be overwhelming within Indian society and among political parties. Ahead of their executions, the media have been full of gory details including that the nooses will be smeared with banana to soften them.

Hangman Pawan Kumar, whose father and grandfather were also executioners, has given multiple interviews ahead of what will be his first job. Singh, 23, was returning home from the cinema with a friend on a Sunday evening in December 2012 when they boarded a Delhi bus, thinking it would take them home. The five men and one juvenile knocked the friend unconscious and dragged Singh to the back of the bus and raped and tortured her with a metal rod.

The physiotherapy student and the friend were then dumped on the road. Singh died 13 days later in a Singapore hospital from massive internal injuries. Widespread horror sparked nationwide demonstrations and led to tougher sentences for sexual crimes. Convictions though remain rare with victims scared to come forward and cases get stuck for years in India's clogged-up criminal justice system. Singh's mother Asha Devi said Friday after the postponement that her "hopes were dashed" but that she would continue to fight for justice for her daughter. — AFP

Nigeria court orders halt to Lagos waterfront evictions

LAGOS: A court in Nigeria's economic capital Lagos has ordered the military to halt forced evictions of coastal communities after thousands of people were removed from their homes. Navy personnel last week shot in the air and bulldozed houses as they cleared a community of some 10,000 people living on an island in the bustling megacity. The military said the operation was aimed at stopping the looting of nearby oil pipelines but residents complained they were being punished for the crimes of a small minority and given no notice of the eviction.

Dozens of men, women and children from the Tarkwa Bay and Okun Ayo communities crowded the courtroom on Thursday as they launched their bid to end the clearances. The judge issued an interim injunction ordering the authorities to stop the demolitions of homes, businesses and community facilities or evicting any more inhabitants. It forbade the military and government from harassing people from the community "with shooting of guns, other violent attacks, threats of arrest or arrest". The displaced residents celebrated the ruling and some pledged to return to their communities.

"That is a huge victory for us, that we are going back to our community. We are very happy, because our students, our children, will be going back to

school," one resident Solomon told AFP.

"The government should try and give us back our homes that they demolished. We cannot afford to build another home." The interim injunction remains in force until a new hearing when the authorities can defend themselves. Activists said they would look to prolong the court order.

Lagos has in recent years seen repeated forcible evictions of poor communities living in prime locations, especially along the waterfront, as developers look to cash in by building high-end properties. Tarkwa Bay and Okun Ayo were the latest of some two dozen communities in the area that had received eviction orders as part of the broader operation by the navy, activists from the Nigerian Slum/Informal Settlement Federation said.

Tens of thousands of people have left their homes in surrounding districts since December 21 and their residences have been demolished, the organization said. Tarkwa Bay, which is accessible only by water, is one of the rare areas left largely undeveloped despite the breakneck pace of construction in one of Africa's most populous cities. Oil pipelines that supply Lagos run along beaches on the Atlantic coast in the area that is a popular escape for day-trippers from the city. — AFP

Analysis

Kuwait Times

The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

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COMMERCIAL : 24835618P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.netAfrica mobilizes
against coronavirus
as fears mount

African countries are scrambling to avert an outbreak of the rapidly spreading coronavirus strain, as health officials warn that the poorest countries are ill-equipped to combat the deadly disease. Across the continent, governments have stationed nurses at airports to check for feverish passengers and have suspended Chinese entry visas, while ordinary people grow increasingly nervous. There have been no verified infections in Africa to date, but deep trade links with China and often overstretched healthcare systems are raising concerns about the capacity to respond to an outbreak.

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Thursday declared a global emergency as coronavirus infections spread, after initially downplaying the threat. "Our greatest concern is the potential for the virus to spread to countries with weaker health systems," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. J Stephen Morrison, director of the Global Health Policy Center at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said the disease risked taking root if it reaches certain African countries. He warned that such a scenario could usher in a "global pandemic".

Several poor African states have recently suffered disastrous viral outbreaks - and they're keenly aware of the threat. The Ebola virus raged through Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea in 2014-2016, killing about 11,300 people. Mosoka Fallah, the head of Liberia's public health institute, told lawmakers this week that the rapid spread of the new coronavirus was "catastrophic". "Steps must be taken as early as possible to prevent it from entering here," he said, adding that the government had ramped up airport checks.

Anciao Fabio Paulo, an Angolan student, told AFP that "it's over" if coronavirus reaches his country. "Our health system is vulnerable and there are no good specialists. With malaria, people are already dropping like flies," he said. Coronavirus has killed more than 200 people in China - where it emerged in the central city of Wuhan - and infected thousands more.

Screenings at airports

At Senegal's Blaise Diagne International Airport, health officials peer into a small thermal camera before the passport check. "The first sign of these communicable diseases is a fever," said Barnabe Gning, in charge of sanitary control in the West African country's airports. The doctor, who previously helped prevent Ebola from reaching Senegal, said the airport installed the safety system late last week. It was only able to do so quickly because, by chance, it had held disease-outbreak training in November.

However, Gning cautioned that thermal cameras are not foolproof. Similar thermal cameras which detect feverish passengers are now going up across African capitals. These allow people with a high temperature to be identified - the camera screen shows their body heat - and then quarantined pending a lab test confirming a coronavirus infection. John Nkengasong, the director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, told reporters this week that some countries were being watched more closely than others. Egypt, Morocco, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Rwanda and Mauritius are expected to "enhance screening" because of frequent traffic with China, he said.

'Avoid Chinese shops'

Elsewhere, governments have enacted travel bans or urged people to remain indoors, adding to a sense of alarm. Fears of an outbreak were rife in Nigeria this week, for example, when authorities shut a Chinese supermarket in the capital Abuja. But they did so to remove expired products. The southern African country of Botswana announced a suspected case on Friday, also sparking fears. "The first thing is to avoid going to Chinese shops as much as possible," said Mqondisi Dube, a journalist in the capital Gabarone.

And in the West African archipelago of Cape Verde, locals are rushing to buy fennel because of false claims it heals coronavirus. In a sign of extreme caution, some governments are also asking Chinese nationals to remain indoors. Nigeria has urged any person arriving from China to "self-isolate" for at least two weeks, even if they are not ill. The Chinese embassy in Mauritania has similarly asked its recent arrivals in the West African country to remain indoors for two weeks.

In Mozambique, the government has suspended visas for Chinese citizens and forbidden its citizens from travelling there. South African authorities are checking passengers' temperatures at airports and have listed 11 hospitals that will deal with emergencies if they arise.

Though Africa is one of the few continents not to have confirmed coronavirus cases, the number of suspected cases is increasing. Several countries, including Ethiopia, Kenya, Angola, Botswana and Ivory Coast, have signalled possible infections. But confirming coronavirus can take time, as health authorities lacking expertise have to send samples to labs in countries such as South Africa. — AFP

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Schoolgirls walk past a mural in the Arab-Israeli town of Umm al-Fahm, which lies 60 km north of Tel Aviv in northern Israel, on Jan 30, 2020. — AFP

Israeli Arabs fear for future under Trump plan

In the Israeli Arab town of Umm al-Fahm residents are scared and angry over US President Donald Trump's peace plan which sees them as part of a future Palestinian state. At the same time, the "deal of the century" would give the Jewish state a green light to annex chunks of territory in the occupied West Bank, where more than 400,000 Israelis live in settlements deemed illegal under international law. In Umm al-Fahm, a hilltop town of over 50,000 people in northern Israel, locals are aghast at a clause on page 13 of the 181-page plan, which would barter their Israeli citizenship for the interests of the settlers.

As part of an "exchange" of territory, the Trump deal, entitled Peace To Prosperity, could transfer control of the Arab "triangle" - a cluster of 14 towns and villages where more than 260,000 Israeli Arabs live - from Israel to a mooted Palestinian state. "The Vision contemplates the possibility, subject to agreement of the parties, that the borders of Israel will be redrawn such that the Triangle Communities become part of the State of Palestine," reads the text published by the White House.

That idea was welcomed by former Israeli defense minister Avigdor Lieberman, head of the secular nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu party, who proposed such a swap in 2004. But triangle residents find it a bitter pill to swallow. "We don't take this lightly. This situation is very serious, and it makes me very afraid," said Rosine Zaid, sitting in an Umm al-Fahm cafe. "We're not going to let that happen," adds her friend Lubna Asali, between sips of coffee. "We are ready to defend our land. We are against this program,"

said 16-year-old Abdel. He supports a Palestinian state, but with its capital in Jerusalem, which the plan acknowledges as Israel's "undivided" capital. "If they want to get us out of Israel, we want Jerusalem to follow us," he says. In the triangle town of Baqa Al-Gharbiya, around 2,000 people marched in protest against the plan on Saturday, while Israeli police kept a low profile with no visible presence. The Baqa al-Gharbiya marchers chanted "Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine." At the rally was Israeli Arab lawmaker Ahmed Tibi. "The cry going up here is, 'We are staying here,'" he told AFP.

'Arab and Israeli'

The Trump proposal does not in fact advocate the physical relocation of triangle residents. Instead it would change the status of their communities, making them a Palestinian enclave, cut off from the neighboring West Bank by an Israeli barrier erected during the bloody second Palestinian intifada in the early 2000s. They fear that as citizens of a Palestinian state they would lose the benefits of Israel's thriving economy, its health and welfare system and the freedom to enter Israel, where many of their relatives have lived since before the creation of the Jewish state in 1948.

"We are part of the Arab minority in Israel and we live on our national land," says Yousef Jabareen, a member of the Israeli parliament and an Umm al-Fahm native. "We refuse this plan, we want to continue to exist both socially and politically. I am Arab, I am Palestinian, and I am

also a citizen of the State of Israel," he added, saying he feared that the triangle would become a "canton" land-locked in Israel.

'Racially-motivated separation'

Jabareen, who belongs to the mainly-Arab Joint List opposition alliance, says implementing the plan would shrink the Arab population of Israel and erode its influence. Arabs currently number about 1.8 million, some 20 percent of Israel's population. The Trump plan would take about 260,000 Arabs out of that total, leaving the remainder politically weaker, Israeli Arab NGO Adallah wrote on its website. "According to the plan, the residents of the earmarked communities would remain in their homes but Israel's borders would simply be redrawn to leave them outside its border," it said. If executed, it would bring about a demographic shift through "racially-motivated separation".

Jabareen's Joint List backed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's rival Benny Gantz for prime minister in a September general election. But neither man was able to muster enough votes to form a government and a new poll is scheduled for March, Israel's third within a year. Gantz backs the Trump plan and has said he will submit it to Israel's parliament for endorsement in the coming week, drawing fire from Israeli Arabs. For former MP Mohammed Barakeh, their choice at the polling booths will be clear. "It will be the Arab list against the entire Israeli political establishment," he said. — AFP

Palestinians facing
uphill battle against
Trump Mideast plan

When Palestinian leaders learned that the release of US President Donald Trump's Middle East plan was imminent, they swiftly announced a "day of rage" - a gritty, oft-used call for resistance against Israel. But few demonstrators actually took to the streets despite Palestinians' broad rejection of Trump's proposal, a gap between rhetoric and delivery that exposes the scale of the challenge their leaders face in pressuring the United States and Israel.

As in past decades, critics are branding the Palestinians as naysayers, continually rejecting offers of a settlement in the hope, so far futile, of something better to come. And domestic frustration with the Palestinian leadership has been building for years, with an ageing Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas seeking a legacy but having dwindling scope to demonstrate progress toward his people's dream of freedom.

Contrary to expectations, Trump did propose a "two-state" solution for the conflict - but with strict conditions

that would leave any future Palestinian state under near-complete Israeli security control. Trump's endorsement of Israel keeping its settlements delighted right-wingers, who immediately urged the extension of Israeli sovereignty to nearly 30 percent of the occupied West Bank, which Israel captured in a 1967 war. Palestinians say such moves would lead to apartheid. Israel rejects any comparison of its policies towards the Palestinians to South Africa's former system of legally-mandated racial segregation.

Analysts say that Palestinians face a difficult road ahead. "They don't have good options. Responding positively to the Trump peace plan is impossible for any Palestinian leader. He would be seen as having sold out the Palestinian national cause completely," said Greg Shapland, a Middle East specialist at London's Chatham House think tank. "(This) whole exercise seems to be structured in such a way that the Palestinians would have to refuse it and then the Americans can say to Israel and to the rest of the world, 'go ahead and do it' because the Palestinians are clearly not interested in peace," Shapland said.

That attack line has already been used by Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and principal architect of the plan. "We're not going to chase the Palestinians," he told reporters. "It will be very hard for them to play the victim card when they basically have a real deal on the table."

International opposition

One avenue for Abbas, 84, is to use the United Nations to drum up international opposition to Trump's plan. But Washington can veto any move in the Security Council. And even if Abbas wins support in the General Assembly it will have little more practical effect than a 2017 vote calling on Trump to drop his recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. That secured 128 of 193 votes in support of the Palestinian argument, but was only a rhetorical show of support. Abbas will also try other routes. Yesterday he traveled to Cairo for a meeting of the Arab League, where he will engage regional allies. But many Arab states rely on US military aid or financial backing. And most are led by Sunni Muslim administrations that are aligned with the United States and Israel in confronting Iran's revolutionary Shiite theocracy.

Diana Buttu, a former legal adviser to the Palestine Liberation Organization, said it was important to "hold the (Arab) states who were part of this charade to account" but that it wasn't likely to strengthen the Palestinians' hand. "A better strategy is to begin to hold Israel accountable, whether it's through sanctions or legal (moves)," she said. One such legal move is at the International Criminal Court, whose chief prosecutor is seeking an investigation into alleged war crimes in the Palestinian Territories. The court is still deciding if it has jurisdiction. Israel says the court has no jurisdiction to investigate the Palestinian Territories. — Reuters

Brexit means nailing
your colors to new
flagpole, for some

For years, he crisscrossed the globe almost weekly, travelling on a British passport without a second thought, raising funds for international non-profit organizations and working for the likes of Elton John and Nelson Mandela. But when Britain voted to leave the European Union, something changed inside Daryl Upsall, a 59-year-old businessman who has spent decades living and working in Europe. As Britain formally left the block on Friday, Upsall is also on the brink of his own "Brexit" - giving up his British citizenship to become Spanish.

It's an interesting twist for someone who grew up in the English town of Boston, known today as Britain's Brexit capital after 75 percent of its residents voted leave during the 2016 referendum. "I was always very international but also very involved in politics in the UK," said Upsall who spent a decade in London working for the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, writing speeches for former Labour leader Neil Kinnock and raising funds for Elton John's AIDS charity and Nelson Mandela's African National Congress.



Daryl Upsall

He left in 1993 and after seven years with Greenpeace in Amsterdam, he moved to Madrid setting up a string of companies serving the non-profit sector. But he never once thought about becoming Spanish. "I had all the rights to live, work here - my son and my wife are Spanish, all the companies are Spanish, and Britain was European, so thinking about Spanish nationality didn't really occur to me," he said. "Then Brexit came along."

A passport that works

By the end of 2019, there were 378,139 Britons registered as living in Spain, updated interior ministry figures show, making it the largest community in Europe. But few have opted for citizenship given the requirement to relinquish their British nationality. Since Brexit, that has changed with justice ministry figures showing applications rising from 33 in 2016 to 335 last year. For Upsall, the decision was about keeping his European identity while avoiding the travelling uncertainties created by Brexit.

"If I travel to China or India, where you need a visa...as a European, it takes a week. But who knows where things

are in (the different countries') negotiations with the UK - is it going to be a week or two weeks? I travel every week to a different country." A long and complex process, becoming Spanish is not for the fainthearted, involving a demanding study of hundreds of potential questions on Spanish history, culture and politics, from Nobel Prize winners to the colors of regional flags.

"It became a parlor game for us - we'd have people for dinner and I'd ask them when Spain's war of independence finished. We literally never found a Spanish person who could pass it without having studied," Upsall said. Prospective applicants must also take a language exam involving an oral test and a three-hour written paper. Only those who pass both tests are allowed to apply.

'Embarrassed to be British'

"I reached a point about 18 months ago when I actually became embarrassed to be British," Upsall admitted. "I'm ashamed my country took that decision and muddled its useless way through it." But the idea of renouncing his British nationality didn't go down well back home, particularly with his mother who like most in their town had voted to leave. "When I told my mother, she burst into tears. She said: You can't do it. And I said: You're the Daily Mail reader that voted for all of this, it's the consequence of your actions." Barely a year into a three-year process, becoming Spanish is still some way off. But when he has to give up being British, he will. "It will be a sad moment," he reflects. "Kind of the end of an era." — AFP

Business

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Zain platinum sponsor of Mirzaam Expo for the second year running

Company showcases its 'Smart Home' featuring latest security solutions



Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi (third left) with Al Humaidhi and Zain's team at the company's booth at the expo.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its platinum sponsorship of Mirzaam Expo, Kuwait's biggest interior design event, for the second consecutive year. The event, held at Kuwait International Fair in Mishref, is considered the biggest and most prominent of its kind in Kuwait, and specializes in the areas of interior design, decoration, and home essentials.

The event's opening ceremony witnessed the attendance of Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Zain Kuwait's Chief Enterprise Business Officer Hamad Al-Marzouq, Zain Kuwait's Chief Commercial Officer Meshal Mohammed, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashthi, interior designer and expo organizer Farah Al-Humaidhi, as well as Zain's team and the event's organizing committee.

Zain's platinum sponsorship of the expo for the second year running came as part of its commitment towards supporting and encouraging initiatives and projects that contribute to developing creativity and enriching innova-

tion in all areas, including the fields of interior design and decoration. The company, being a leading digital service provider in Kuwait and the region, is also keen on showcasing the latest advancements of the smart homes sector, which witnesses great technological developments worldwide.

Zain participated in Mirzaam Expo through its own dedicated booth titled "Zain Smart Home". The booth, designed as a miniature house, featured the latest innovative solutions Zain offers through its Zain LIFE smart home portfolio, which includes a number of the latest and most advanced smart home and security devices. The devices, designed to provide a unique home security experience, include several surveillance solutions that monitor the home and notify the user as soon as any



The smart homes sector is one of the main elements of the digital transformation journey undertaken by telecoms around the world

unusual activity inside the home is identified, as well as other devices for detecting smoke, measuring temperature, controlling electrical appliances and lights, and more. Zain also offered an exclusive offer to visitors of its booth at the expo.

Mirzaam Expo is considered the biggest and most prominent event of its kind in Kuwait, specializing in the areas of interior design, decoration, and home essentials. The event gathered decoration experts, designers, suppliers, professional contractors, and other specialists that meet the highest international standards with the aim of offering all services and needs related to designing and decorating homes, offices, commercial projects, and more. The event also features many panel discussions, seminars, and other programs that reveal the secrets of the art of interior design and discuss the latest decoration trends.

Zain's showcasing of Zain LIFE's portfolio of innovative solutions at Mirzaam Expo came in line with its strategy to continue its transformation into an integrated digital lifestyle provider, which is centered around digital transformation leadership and empowering the community to enjoy a smarter portable lifestyle, as well as using advanced technology solutions to enable an easier and more flexible life.

The smart homes sector is one of the main elements of the digital transformation journey undertaken by telecoms around the world, particularly with respect to securing homes and protecting them against theft with the use of modern technology. Zain continues to design new plans to match these transformation processes to be included in Zain LIFE in addition to its existing portfolio of smart solutions. Zain always aspires to new levels of excellence in all the services it offers to its customers. Through the showcasing of these innovative solutions, Zain affirms its continuous efforts in meeting its customers' needs and aspirations, and deliver its promise to offering the best services and latest technologies.



Zain's executive management at the company's booth.

Business

Kamco Invest, Kamco Premier Index Fund wins 'Best Equity Fund in Kuwait'

Mena Fund Manager recognizes Kamco Invest as 'Best performing in 2019'

KUWAIT: Kamco Invest, a regional non-banking financial powerhouse with one of the largest AUMs in the region, announced that its Kamco Premier Market Index Fund was awarded the "Best Equity Fund in Kuwait" by MENA Fund Manager, one of the leaders in recognizing and rewarding the performance of MENA based funds and asset managers in the region.

The award was presented to the Company at a ceremony held in Dubai on Wednesday, 29 January 2020, with the presence of regional specialists in the fields of asset management and investments. Salah Al-Wuhaib, Senior Executive Director of Equity and Fixed Income at Kamco Invest, received the award on behalf of the Company.

During 2019, the fund achieved a return of 34.88 percent, outperforming the All-Share Market Index and

the Premier Market Index, which achieved 23.7 percent and 32.4 percent, respectively. The fund was the best performing amongst all equity funds that invest in the Kuwaiti market in 2019.

The Kamco Premier Market Index Fund has achieved a return of 463.4 percent since its inception in the year 2000, outperforming its benchmark, the Premier Market Index TR, which achieved a return of 265.7 percent by over 197.7 percent. The fund also outperformed the benchmark's three and five-year performance by achieving returns of 74.2 percent (69.2 percent for the benchmark) and 50.7 percent (37.3 percent for the benchmark), respectively.

Commenting on the award, Al-Wuhaib said, "We are proud to have received this recognition which reflects our continuous effort to provide our clients with high-

quality products and services. The fund earned this award due to its outstanding performance since inception, especially during the year 2019."

He added, "Our investment philosophy and strategic approach in fund management are key factors that have contributed towards the fund achieving returns that exceed its benchmark."

It is worth mentioning that the Kamco Premier Market Index Fund aims to grow the invested capital by investing in companies listed on Boursa Kuwait's Premier Market Index based on market capitalization, and according to their market share in the index. Al-Wuhaib concluded by thanking the Asset Management Team, whose efforts and hard work paid off with the positive performance achieved by most of Kamco Invest's funds in outperforming their benchmarks.



KUWAIT: Salah Al-Wuhaib, Senior Executive Director of Equity and Fixed Income at Kamco Invest, receives the award on behalf of the company.

Amazon highlights taxes paid in pushback against critics

WASHINGTON: Amazon said Friday it paid more than \$1 billion in US federal income taxes in 2019 as it pushed back at criticism over its corporate responsibility. A blog post by Amazon sought to highlight its investments and contributions to the US economy, in a move to fend off critics claiming it benefits from taxpayer subsidies.

"Since 2010, we've made more than \$270 billion in investments in corporate offices, customer fulfillment and cloud infrastructure, wind and solar farms, eco-friendly equipment and machinery and compensation to our teams," Amazon said. "These investments are accelerating, and we estimate that they have contributed an additional \$168 billion to the US GDP since 2010."

The tech giant, whose market valuation moved back above \$1 trillion following its earnings report Thursday, said it paid more than \$1 billion in US federal income taxes in 2019, along with \$2.4 billion in other federal taxes, including payroll taxes and customs duties.

It said it "collected and remitted nearly \$9 billion in sales and use taxes to states and localities throughout the US" last year and paid over \$1.6 billion in state and local taxes.

Amazon faced criticism over its prior annual reports which appeared to show it paid no federal income taxes in 2017 and 2018, and received some rebates after a tax reform measure passed by Congress-joining several other large corporations whose tax bill was cut by the law.

Amazon's statement Friday said it adheres to "all applicable federal and state tax laws," while noting that it takes advantage of laws that encourage economic investment and job creation.

"Over the last decade, no other US-based company has created more jobs than Amazon," the statement said. "Our investments have led to the creation of over two million jobs in the US."

It said its labor force-now 798,000 worldwide-includes some 500,000 in the United States, where it pays a wage of at least \$15 an hour, above the required minimums in most states. Amazon's statement comes amid an effort by officials from 137 countries to reform the global tax system for a more equitable distribution of revenues paid by multinationals and the largely US-based digital giants.

In December, Amazon published its French tax returns, showing it paid 250 million euros last year, after accusations of underpayment. Amazon's quarterly update showed a profit in the final three months of last year of \$3.3 billion on revenue of \$87.4 billion. For the full year it had net income of \$11.6 billion on \$280 billion in revenue. —AFP

Stocks struggle as China virus sparks fear for world economy

NEW YORK: Stocks struggled worldwide on Friday with most indices ending sharply lower amid mounting worries the coronavirus outbreak will dent global economic growth.

The Dow slid more than two percent losing more than 600 points in its worst session since August as the three largest US carriers halted all service to China.

Just after markets closed, US authorities declared a public health emergency, and starting Sunday will ban entry into the country of any foreign national who has traveled to China in the past two weeks, while quarantining Americans who have made the trip. Major European markets slid more than one percent, including London, where equities were weakened by a stronger pound in the final session before Britain was due to leave the European Union.

Asian equity markets also were gripped by virus fears in a volatile end to the week, although Japan's Nikkei finished higher. At least 213 people have died and nearly 10,000 people have been infected in China by the novel coronavirus, while fresh cases were found abroad with more than 20 countries now affected. "Unless a cure is found, this could push a fragile world economic recovery into reverse," warned Douglas McWilliams, deputy chairman at British research

group the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR). Oxford Economics analysts said the outbreak would have a large short-term impact on Chinese economic growth and possibly curb global GDP growth by 0.2 percentage points this year.

"It's increasingly apparent the disease is becoming an economic as well as a public health concern," they said. The WHO invoked a global health emergency on coronavirus-but stopped short of recommending trade and travel restrictions that could have had a bruising effect on China, a key global growth engine.

After initially applauding the WHO action, investor fear returned as Britain confirmed its first cases and Italy declared a state of emergency to fast-track efforts to prevent its spread after two cases were confirmed in Rome. Quincy Krosby, chief market strategist at Prudential Financial, said the outbreak has raised doubts about whether growth would accelerate in the aftermath of the US-China trade detente. "We expected to see global growth," she said. "What this does is perhaps slows that down and adds more uncertainties."

Krosby said the outbreak also could pose problems for companies with supply chain dependent on China. Separately, the EU's official statistics agency announced Friday that the 19-member single currency area already suffered a sharp slowdown after a turbulent year of Brexit uncertainty and trade spats with US President Donald Trump.

The eurozone economy grew 1.2 percent over the year, down from 1.8 percent in 2018 and well off the 2.7 percent seen in 2017. Losses were broad-based on Wall Street, but an exception was Amazon, which surged 7.4 percent after releasing quarterly earnings results for the holiday period that trounced market expectations. —AFP



NEW YORK, NY: Traders working on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) on Friday in New York, United States. The escalating spread of the coronavirus has weakened stock markets globally and has heightened concerns of the infections spread having an impact on economic growth. —AFP

China Central Bank sees temporary economic fallout from virus

SHANGHAI: China's central bank said it will use various monetary policy tools to ensure liquidity remains reasonably ample, and added that the broader economic impact from a fast-spreading coronavirus outbreak in the country should be temporary. In multiple statements issued yesterday afternoon, the People's Bank of China (PBOC) said that it will appropriately lower lending rates to support firms affected by virus outbreak.

It added that the impact from the epidemic on the broad economy should be temporary. So far, the virus has claimed the lives of nearly 260 people. Investors are bracing for a volatile session in Chinese markets when onshore trades resume tomorrow after a break for the Lunar New Year which was extended by the government due to the virus outbreak.

The statements from the PBOC were jointly issued with banking and insurance, securities, foreign exchange regulators and the finance ministry. The virus outbreak will have a short-term and temporary impact on the country's financial markets, said Cao Yu, vice chairman of the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission (CBIRC), in a separate statement made yesterday. He also called on banking sector to offer comprehensive credit support to listed companies that might have reasonable funding needs in the wake of disruptions caused by the epidemic.

The efforts to contain the virus have caused major disruptions and threaten to knock growth in China and globally, just when it looked like some relief was in store following the recent preliminary Sino-US trade deal to defuse their protracted tariff war. Authorities in China had already stepped up support measures last year when growth in the world's second-biggest economy slumped to a near three-decade low, as demand at home and abroad shriveled. —Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.811
Indian Rupees	4.273
Pakistani Rupees	1.969
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.665
Nepali Rupees	2.665
Singapore Dollar	225.330
Hongkong Dollar	39.239
Bangladesh Taka	3.547
Philippine Peso	5.996
Thai Baht	9.886
Malaysian Ringgit	77.916

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.294
Qatari Riyal	83.730
UAE Dirham	791.813
Bahraini Dinar	809.490
UAE Dirham	83.000

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.550
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	19.314
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.224
Tunisian Dinar	114.100
Jordanian Dinar	429.960
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.375

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.650
Euro	341.660
Sterling Pound	405.640
Canadian dollar	232.380
Turkish lira	52.260
Swiss Franc	320.010
US Dollar Buying	297.200

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.300
Canadian Dollar	231.185
Sterling Pound	397.480
Euro	336.325
Swiss Frank	298.470
Bahraini Dinar	809.245
UAE Dirhams	83.250
Qatari Riyals	84.490
Saudi Riyals	82.040
Jordanian Dinar	430.480
Egyptian Pound	19.320
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.673
Indian Rupees	4.259
Pakistani Rupees	1.967
Bangladesh Taka	3.552
Philippines Peso	5.976
Cyprus pound	18.105
Japanese Yen	3.795
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.669
Malaysian Ringgit	75.305

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.290
Thai Bhat	10.725
Turkish Lira	51.490
Singapore dollars	225.111

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.395778	0.409678
Czech Korune	0.005391	0.014691
Danish Krone	0.041117	0.046117
Euro	0.330992	0.344692
Georgian Lari	0.110527	0.110527
Hungarian	0.001148	0.001338
Norwegian Krone	0.029170	0.034370
Romanian Leu	0.065299	0.082149
Russian Ruble	0.004825	0.004825
Slovakia	0.009111	0.019111
Swedish Krona	0.027615	0.032615
Swiss Franc	0.310285	0.321285
Australia Dollar	0.196102	0.208102
New Zealand Dollar	0.190808	0.200308
Canada Dollar	0.225004	0.234004
US Dollars	0.300550	0.305100
US Dollars Mint	0.301050	0.305100
Bangladesh Taka	0.002904	0.003705

Chinese Yuan	0.042423	0.045923
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037270	0.040020
Indian Rupee	0.003663	0.004435
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002727	0.002907
Korean Won	0.000245	0.000260
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070681	0.076681
Nepalese Rupee	0.002627	0.002967
Pakistan Rupee	0.001296	0.002066
Philippine Peso	0.005864	0.006164
Singapore Dollar	0.218427	0.228427
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001320	0.001900
Taiwan	0.010134	0.010314
Thai Baht	0.009524	0.010074
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.801938	0.809998
Egyptian Pound	0.019261	0.022001
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000199	0.000259
Jordanian Dinar	0.424786	0.433785
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pounds	0.000103	0.000253
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021038	0.045038
Omani Riyal	0.786168	0.794069
Qatar Riyal	0.083024	0.083858
Saudi Riyal	0.080153	0.081453
Syrian Pound	0.001292	0.001512
Tunisian Dinar	0.103748	0.117748
Turkish Lira	0.044517	0.054362
UAE Dirhams	0.082266	0.083094
Yemeni Riyal	0.000990	0.001070

Business

India relaxes fiscal deficit, cuts taxes to spur growth

Investors unimpressed, stock markets crash

MUMBAI: India relaxed its fiscal deficit target yesterday, raising spending and slashing taxes as it seeks to attract foreign investment and increase consumption in the wake of a prolonged economic slowdown.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the changes as part of the country's annual budget in parliament, a day after official data showed that Asia's third-largest economy grew five percent last year, its slowest expansion since the 2008 global financial crisis.

In a sprawling three-hour speech peppered with references to ancient Indian history and poetry, Sitharaman said the fiscal deficit target for the current financial year was now 3.8 percent of GDP, up from an earlier 3.3 percent. It will edge down to 3.5 percent next year, she added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right-wing government has been trying desperately to revive the economy, which has lagged for several quarters, with per capita consumption falling for the first time in four decades. The finance minister said Indians earning under 1.5 million rupees (\$21,000) a year could pay lower taxes if they agreed to forego existing exemptions, with a view to raising their purchasing power.

Indian taxpayers are allowed to claim exemptions for a range of expenses, from medical insurance to vacation spending, under a labyrinthine tax regime that Sitharaman has vowed to simplify during her tenure. She also announced that companies would no longer have to pay dividend distribution tax, terming it a "bold move meant to attract foreign investors".

"Wealth creators will be respected in this country ... and this government assures taxpayers they will not be harassed," she said in her second budget speech since

Modi won a landslide re-election last May.

'All talk'

The key agriculture sector will receive a cash infusion of 2.83 trillion rupees to help farmers set up solar power units and storage facilities. Sitharaman said this would enable farmers, many of whom are burdened by crushing debts, to sell power to energy companies.

She also revealed New Delhi was seeking to shed its 100-percent stake in the country's largest insurer, Life Insurance Corporation, to generate revenue. Earlier this week, the government also announced plans to sell its 100 percent stake in debt-crippled national carrier Air India after an earlier push to sell part of the airline found no takers.

Experts say India's state-run companies, which manufacture anything from bicycles to condoms, are a major drag on the economy due to their unprofitability, barring the government-owned enterprises in the coal sector.

Prime Minister Modi said the budget would "boost income and investment. It will improve demand and consumption and help improve credit flows". "It has been created with a focus on the current situation and future requirements of the country," he added.

New Delhi has said it expects the economy to recover soon, pegging growth at 6.0 to 6.5 percent for the financial year 2020-21. But analysts and opposition politicians said the budget was too piecemeal and failed to offer a clear roadmap for a possible revival.

"There is nothing dramatic or substantially new in the budget," said Ashutosh Datar, an independent economist from Mumbai.



NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman (right) poses for photographs along with President Ram Nath Kovind (center) at Rashtrapati Bhavan - the Presidential Palace, before presenting at the Parliament the 2020 union budget, in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

"Given how constrained its finances are, government did not have fiscal legroom to manoeuvre," he told AFP. Rahul Gandhi, former leader of the opposition Congress party, told reporters the budget was devoid of "any concrete strategic ideas" to tackle unemployment, which is at a four-decade high.

"It describes the government quite well. Lot of repetition, rambling and all talk but nothing happens. The country is of course suffering and youngsters feel they don't have a future," he said. Investors also appeared unimpressed, with Mumbai's Sensex index closing around 2.5 percent down after Sitharaman's speech. — AFP

As Syria currency crisis bites, every penny counts

DAMASCUS: As Syrians feel the sting of a nosediving currency, local businesses have launched a campaign to sell goods symbolically priced at a single pound to counter a deepening economic crisis.

The central bank puts the official exchange rate at 434 Syrian pounds to the dollar-down from 48 pounds per dollar at the start of the war. On the black market, the pound has hit more than 1200 pounds against the dollar-its lowest in history.

After nearly nine years of war, the devaluation is driving up prices and exacerbating dire economic conditions that the government blames on tightening Western sanctions. To cushion the blow, a campaign labeled "our pound is our pride" was launched in January. The month-long initiative encourages businesses in Damascus to sell goods for one Syrian pound, a coin that has been out of circulation for years.

"My father used to be a bus driver and he has held on to these coins even after he stopped working several years ago," said Nadia, her father standing beside her with a bag full of coins.

"Now is the time to use them," Nadia spoke to AFP while she and her father perused stalls in a Damascus fair organized by the chamber of commerce in support of the campaign.

Everything on display was selling for a single pound, with more than 50 companies taking part in the one-day event.

Selling for pennies

Although the campaign will have no measurable economic impact, merchants participating in the fair said they believed they were helping out. Abdul Salam Ashi, a sales manager for a company selling cleaning products, said he might as well be giving his products away for free.



DAMASCUS: The Syria central bank puts the official exchange rate at 434 Syrian pounds to the dollar-down from 48 pounds per dollar at the start of the war.

His company, he said, decided to "participate in the fair to help the economy."

Nearby, Samer Darwish manned a stall selling food products. "We are losing money, but in the end, we are benefiting the economy," he said. "If the economy improves, then this will directly benefit our company." However, critics say the initiative will do little to rescue the plummeting Syrian pound.

"It is a good campaign but unfortunately it is nearly impossible to execute because the one pound coin is extinct," said Fadwa, who was attending the fair.

In the suburbs of Damascus, the owner of a cosmetics store shared a similar concern.

He offered discounts on his products instead of selling them for one pound, which he said was not practical. "Logically, I can't sell items for one pound, simply because it is not available," he said.

One of his clients agreed but said the point was to boost morale. "It's about social impact and not economic impact," she told AFP, asking not to be named to protect her identity.

Government measures

The Syrian government meanwhile is also grappling with the currency crisis. A recent

presidential decree increased the penalty for conducting transactions in foreign currencies. Two shop owners were detained for selling products in dollars, state news agency SANA reported on Thursday, the latest in a series of arrests.

Money exchange houses are also coming under scrutiny, with the Syrian government cracking down on those it accuses of price gouging. According to local media reports, the government has shut down several exchange offices accused of driving up the exchange rate on the parallel market.

Compounding the situation, the devaluation has led to a rise in the cost of basic food items, including sugar and rice whose prices have nearly doubled in recent months. To combat inflation, the Syrian government will introduce a smart-card system in February to allow residents to purchase rice, sugar and tea at a subsidized rate.

The cards, which will be valid in state-designated department stores, cap the quantities that can be purchased at a discount. Each family is allocated four kilograms of sugar, three kilograms of rice and two kilograms of tea per month, according to the ministry of internal trade and consumer protection. — AFP

CBK launches 'YOU' account for youth

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently launched its new 'YOU' account for youth, which has been created to provide youth aging 14-24 with unique benefits and privileges in terms of banking services in a way that enables them run their personal financial affairs in the best and safest manner, make decisions and achieve financial independence.

The new 'YOU' account holders who transfer their monthly social aids to Commercial Bank will get exclusive benefits including a gift of KD 50 in cash, entering monthly and annual draws for valuable prizes, pre-paid credit card for holders older than 18 free of charge for the first year and all yearlong discounts

and promotions.

In this regard, CBK's acting individual banking services general manager, Hanadi Al-Mislem said that YOU account had been designed especially to introduce youth to basic banking concepts at an early age. "We also believe the account will encourage youth to acquire patterns based on balance and responsibility with regard to saving and spending. We hope this will help them in the future," she added noting that the new account is part of the bank's comprehensive strategy to provide valuable customers with an outstanding package of banking services.

Al-Mislem added that youth could open the account with KD 10 only and get a KD 50 cash gift on transferring their social aid allowance adding that the account holders would also enter monthly draws with two chances to win KD 250. "Current customers who transfer their aid will get one chance to enter the draws and the annual draw winner will get a 2020 model Chevrolet Blazer", she explained.



Hanadi Al-Mislem

Oil market chilled by virus impact on China growth

LONDON: Oil prices have fallen victim to economic worries sparked by a deadly virus spreading from China, the world's second-biggest economy and a huge consumer of crude. The novel coronavirus first emerged in early December in the Chinese industrial city of Wuhan and has since spread to dozens of other countries. China's economy traditionally has a voracious appetite for raw materials.

"The reality is that shocks to the Chinese economy always have ripple effects and the commodity markets are deeply affected by it," said AvaTrade analyst Nacem Aslam. "In simple terms, when economic engines start to grind, the demand for fuel falls." As the virus has spread, the oil price has slumped in both London and New York, collapsing by more than 20 percent since a January 8 spike which had been triggered by tensions between Iran and the United States.

'Severe'

This week, the main benchmark contracts-New York's West Texas Intermediate and London's Brent North Sea oil-plunged to three-month lows as virus-linked demand fears intensified.

On Friday, they first stabilized somewhat after the World Health Organization declared a global health emergency, sparking hopes of better international coordination to combat the disease, before resuming their downward trajectory. The price falls have however raised eyebrows at the OPEC oil exporters' cartel, whose 13 member nations pump 40 percent of global crude and are anxious to safeguard revenues. "The dramatic price slump in recent days appears to be

Growing fears

Demand was already fairly muted due to China's Lunar New Year holidays, which have been extended into next week because of the disease. "Commodity markets, already slow over Lunar New Year, are being hit by worry over the impact of the coronavirus on Chinese demand," said IHS Markit analyst William May. "Weak buying caused by the Lunar New Year holiday is now being matched against active selling tied to growing fears around the impact of the coronavirus on Chinese demand." The number of confirmed cases in the new outbreak has already surpassed that of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic in 2002-2003. — AFP

EU turns page on Brexit and moves on to trade talks

BRUSSELS: A resolute European Union sought Friday to turn the page on Brexit and move on to negotiating a looser, less favorable trading relationship with its departing British partner.

Chief EU negotiator Michel Barnier will present his draft negotiating directives to the media tomorrow as Brussels prepares to take a tough stance on defending its single market.

"We want to have the best possible relationship with the United Kingdom, but it will never be as good as membership," European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen said. "Our union has gained political impetus and has become a global economic powerhouse," she said.

Later, as the British flag came down outside the European parliament buildings in Brussels and Strasbourg, France's President Emmanuel Macron warned that Brexit was an "historic warning sign for Europe."



LONDON: Union flag-themed souvenirs are displayed for sale in a store in London yesterday, the day after Britain became the first country to formally leave the EU. — AFP

And, of ties with Britain, he added: "It won't be the same as the relationship we have had for several decades. You cannot be both in and out." For her part, Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel said: "The more Britain moves away from the conditions of the single market, the more our future relationship will have to change." British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government has made it clear that Brexit means it will be free to diverge from EU laws on goods standards, working practices and the environment.

But European Union leaders warn that the more Britain moves away from EU regulations, the less access it will have to the bloc's huge market of around 447 million consumers.

Britain is the European Union's second biggest economy, the second biggest net contributor to the European Commission budget and represents more than 15 percent of the bloc's total GDP. Nevertheless, while the messy divorce is a blow to EU prestige, the remaining 27 members remain by far the bigger commercial power. — AFP

Business

Al-Sayer wins prestigious award from Kuwait Public Relations Association

Award recognizes excellence in corporate social responsibility programs

KUWAIT: Al-Sayer Holding has won Kuwait Award for Public Relations and Customer Service for excellence in CSR programs in a remarkable event organized by Kuwait Public Relations Associations under the patronage of High Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, represented by Dr Ghadeer Mohamed Mahmoud Aseeri, Minister of Social Affairs.

The event that took place on Sunday at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Cultural Centre was attended by Abdullah Saleh Al-Shuwaie Group Manager Customer Complaints along with Nehad Ali Deputy Group Manager Corporate Excellence at Al-Sayer Holding. It is worth mentioning that Al-Sayer was the only automotive company who have won the excellence award in CSR among Kuwait automotive sector.

According to Nehad Ali "we could not have achieved this remarkable award without the continuous encouragement and support provided to us by our top management, which motivated us to conduct more competitive corporate social programs ever, covering our main four areas: Nature, Economy, Society & Wellbeing".

Al-Sayer has socially engaged in road safety seminars at schools, traffic safety events, Toyota Dream Car Contests with Ministry and Private schools for Innovative ideas contests, various awareness cam-



Abdullah Saleh Al-Shuwaie with the award



paigns at public places through "Always with You" Al-Sayer Volunteer Team as well as Al-Sayer's Partnership with KFAS, Kuwait Innovation center and Kubot Challenge.

This has created a positive change in the lives of our stakeholders and enable them to rise with the impressive growth in the number of beneficiaries of our community outreach programs. "We thank our

stakeholder for these tremendous results which would not ever happened without your continuous support and efforts," added Nehad.

AUB participates in career fair hosted by KILAW

KUWAIT: Stemming from its role in supporting and attracting distinguished national talent, Ahli United Bank (AUB) participated in the 1st Career Fair organized by Kuwait International Law School (KILAW) during the 28th and 29th of January 2020 under the patronage of His Excellency the Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf & Islamic Affairs Dr Fahad Al-Afasi.

Through taking part in this event, AUB aims to connect with students, fresh graduates and experienced professionals across various disciplines to provide them with required support, understand their capabilities and evaluate them to attract the most qualified applicants and offer them suitable job opportunities. With firm belief that Kuwaiti youth represent the nation's true wealth, AUB's participation in the fair included a booth to allow the students and other applicants to understand the Bank's work environment, receive all relevant information and take appropriate decisions.

Commenting on this participation, Naqeeb Amin, General Manager of Human Resources at AUB, said "The Bank is always seeking to better understand the aspirations of the youth and others, especially Kuwaitis, through offering them promising job opportunities within a unique work environment that will guarantee professional growth."

Amin added that the Bank's interest to participate in such fairs is an extension of its community activities aimed at supporting the various segments of society, especially youth. This is based on overall belief in the necessity of having an effective role in opening professional horizons for youth and supporting them to develop and enhance their overall qualifications.



Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf & Islamic Affairs Dr Fahad Al-Afasi at AUB booth



AUB booth at KILAW Career Fair

Gulf Bank one of the first to launch online KYC service

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank customers can now update their personal information quickly and easily as part of an already seamless online banking experience. As part of its ongoing efforts to increase security and improve its online banking experience for customers, Gulf Bank is one of the first banks in Kuwait to introduce a "Know Your Customer" (KYC) service that allows customers to update their personal information via online and mobile banking.

The new KYC measure enables Gulf Bank customers to update their personal information online through the Gulf Bank website or mobile app. By allowing customers the convenience of updating their vital information from the comfort of home, Gulf Bank is increasing security levels for customers' banking accounts, adding an extra level of security against fraud and high-risk banking transactions. An updated database of customer information also assists the Bank in identifying the needs of different consumer segments, leading to a richer and more relevant banking experience for clients.

The KYC feature allows customers to update their personal information simply by using Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking service, providing customers with a quick, easy, and secure alternative to visiting a branch in person. By simply logging into their bank accounts, Gulf Bank customers can now update their civil ID information, mobile numbers, email address, home address, work details, and more. It is worth noting that once a customer has updated or confirmed their personal information online, there is no need to visit a branch to update any more information.

Commenting on the new KYC online service, Ahmad Abul, Assistant General Manager of Digital Banking at Gulf Bank, said: "One of our main goals at Gulf Bank is to provide an unparalleled online and mobile banking experience for our customers. Our customers can now update their personal information anytime and anywhere simply by logging into their bank accounts from the ease and comfort of home. By updating their personal information online, Gulf Bank clients are contributing to a more secure banking experience that protects against fraud and high-risk transactions. As the only bank in Kuwait that currently offers its clients an online KYC service, we recognize how important it is to continue to be leaders in customer convenience, while maintaining unprecedented levels of security and protection."



Ahmad Abul

Technology remains economic driver of public sector of future

By **Havier Haddad**

KUWAIT: The world around us continues to evolve at an exponential pace due to new and emerging technologies, all of which help to improve how we work, communicate and exchange information. Increased digitization and the growing interconnectedness of people, organizations, and machines are already having a profound impact on the world's economies at both the macro and micro level.

Recognizing this potential, government strategies within the GCC are emphasizing the role of digital in accelerating economic diversification, promoting sustainability and ensuring citizen happiness. They are more motivated than others to embrace disruption and accelerate the integration and implementation of an economy fueled by technology.

For nations to succeed however, governments need to take proactive measures to adopt emerging technologies that will facilitate the growth of their services, organizations that operate within the country and the nation's economy. But what is required to drive the future of growth and how can governments help to accelerate the development of digitally advanced economies?

The first step is to build an understanding of how to use data effectively. In order to achieve heightened levels of productivity, efficiency and profitability, businesses and governments need to first operationalize data-driven discoveries. Organizations need newer and faster ways to analyze data and build a truly integrated organization. For example, a multi-cloud infrastructure has proven that it can uni-

fy the entire business by connecting mission critical applications, processes, data and services. What needs to be tapped into more is that this environment can also drive automation, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and extend the ability to manage, move and process data where and when required. In fact, as data becomes increasingly distributed, we will see a host of new cloud models emerging to support a range of apps and services that are used every day, while 5G will increase its speed accessibility and delivery. According to our recent Index, while 35 percent of organizations plan to invest in multi-cloud in the next 1-3 years, 36 percent plan to spend on AI, and 52 percent on IoT.

Governments across the region are leading the way as they place ICT at the heart of their transformation plans. With the goal of improving citizen experiences and fueling economic growth, governments in the GCC have launched ambitious initiatives with a major focus on enabling digital transformation. For example, one of Oman's national priorities is "Governance of the Administrative Apparatus, Resources and Projects" — an administrative apparatus that is flexible, innovative, future-oriented and adhere to good governance.

The second is to be prepared. We often forget that disruption is a process that plays out over time: sometimes slowly, but completely. It is imperative that organizations invest in a holistic and strategic approach to chart and respond to the pace of disruption. This investment calls for the convergence of technologies, to connect, collaborate, and ultimately create new services and experiences that will ultimately help weather disruption. Surviving and thriving in this age of constant disruption requires iron will. But it also requires the right digital technology foundation. Organizations need to train their staff as well as their processes to learn, adapt, and steer themselves along this path of this agile process. As we move forward, businesses and governments that embrace technology to re-imagine their services and encourage an ecosystem of innovation, will be the ones that will shape future digital economies. Note: Havier Haddad is General Manager - Gulf (Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman) at Dell Technologies.

EU Commission issues '5G toolbox,' allowing Huawei in 5G rollout

The European Union yesterday issued a set of guidelines, referred to as the "5G toolbox", and allowed Huawei to continue participating in Europe's 5G roll. The guidance comes just a day after the British government officially approved Huawei's

involvement in 5G networks in the United Kingdom.

In a Huawei media statement following the publication of the European Commission's 5G toolbox, Abraham Liu, Huawei Chief Representative to the EU Institutions, commented: "Huawei welcomes Europe's decision, which enables Huawei to continue participating in Europe's 5G roll-out. This non-biased and fact-based approach towards 5G security allows Europe to have a more secure and faster 5G network."

Huawei has been present in Europe for almost 20 years and has a proven track record with regard to security. We will continue to work with European governments and industry to develop common standards to strengthen the security and reliability of the network," added Liu.

Apple takes smartphone sales crown from Samsung

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple was the top smartphone seller in the final quarter of last year, seizing the crown from Samsung, according to market trackers.

Apple shipped an estimated 73.8 million iPhones during the fourth quarter, driven by the popularity of its newest models in the US and Europe and lower-priced handsets in other parts of the world, International Data Corporation reported this week.

Apple, which has been below Samsung for some time, "is recovering, due to cheaper iPhone 11 pricing and healthier demand in Asia and North America," said Neil Mawston of Strategy Analytics, whose separate survey also showed Apple on top in the past quarter.

South Korean consumer electronics giant Samsung delivered some 69.4 million handsets as it slipped to the number two position, according to IDC.

Chinese smartphone powerhouse Huawei remained a strong player in its home market, but saw sales of premium models take a hit in Western Europe in the wake of US sanctions, according to IDC analyst Melissa Chau.

"Things will continue to look challenging for Huawei given that the trade war is still not yet resolved, while new uncertainty raised around the Wuhan coronavirus could potentially have adverse effects on not just Huawei, but all players reliant on the China smartphone supply chain," Chau said.

Huawei shipped 56.2 million smartphones during the quarter, a decline of about seven percent from the same period a year earlier, IDC reported.

IHS Markit senior analyst Anna Ahrens said Huawei faces headwinds because of US sanctions which have prevented it from getting key components and software.

"In markets like Western Europe, the lack of Google services will make Huawei phones a hard sell for consumers, especially considering that the company's Mate series is positioned squarely in the premium price segment," Ahrens said. Samsung remained the top smartphone seller overall last year, and the broader market is expected to get a boost as 5G telecom networks get established and new smartphones synched to them are launched. —AFP

What's On



IWG visits HORECA exhibition

The International Women Group (IWG) visited the 2020 HORECA Exhibition at the Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref Kuwait: the Expo featured an extensive list of option for Restaurant Supplies, Hotels, hospitality, and Food industries.

IWG members were received by Mrs Nabila Al-Anjari, General Manager, Leaders Group for consulting & Development and Mohamed Najia - Executive Director and Secretary General of the Hotel Owners' Union and Mohammed Najia, Horeca Kuwait's Executive Director and Secretary General of the Hotel Owners Union.

Najia briefly explained the importance of this exhibition in the process of exchanging experience between the local and international companies concerned with the food, beverage and hospitality industries. He further added that the exhibition will also include workshops in culinary arts, performances, and many other events.

Later he accompanied the women's group while they enjoyed the chefs' competition. In addition to satisfying their sense with the aroma and taste of all kind of flavors of coffee, the group also took pleasure in having diverse dishes from various displayed stalls.

IWG members with its usual sophistication bid farewell to the HORECA exhibition and towards the end, IWG Board members presented shields and certificates of appreciation to the organizers for their efforts and hospitality.



Burgan Bank celebrates graduation of 32 employees of IBS



Burgan Bank, a sought-after career destination recently celebrated the graduation of its employees during the annual graduation ceremony of IBS that took place recently at Kuwait Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Burgan Bank is committed to creating the next generation of banking leaders in this challenging & transforming market.

The graduation ceremony was held under the patronage of H.E. Mohammad Yousef Al-Hashel, governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait and chairman of the IBS, & it was attended by certified bankers from across Kuwait, top management and the banks' leaders to show their support and encouragement to the graduate. Certificates of completion were distributed to the diligent staff who successfully completed different certificated programs as part of their induction process and Burgan Bank's L&D strategy to integrate the best in-house talents in a complex and

competitive industry.

The 2019 comprehensive training schedules included specialized programs in Certified Credit Management (CCM), Advanced Certificate in Credit Management (ACCM), Certified Bank Branch Manager (CBBM), Certified Assistant Branch Manager (CABBM) and Risk Management Certification (RMC), Certified Bank Branch Operations Manager (CBBOM), Strategic Management Performance System (SMPS) and ATD Train the Trainer certifications. The IBS certified programs are devised and characterized based on job-based design, rigorous administration and testing. 32 Burgan graduates were awarded for their earned skills and competencies, revealing a growing community of banking leader's adept in intrinsic financial knowledge.

Commenting on the performance of the 2019 batch of certified Burgan Bank staff,

Group Chief Human Resources & Development Officer at Burgan Bank - Ms. Halah El Sherbini said, "We are extremely proud of our Burganers who have successfully completed these banking certifications, demonstrating a high standard of achievement and the potential to develop further. Our graduates exemplify our Burgan brands inherent values - of excellence and commitment that drive our corporate culture, while the trust they have placed in us has been rewarded with our continued dedication to ensuring a robust career-progression. We look forward to seeing our graduates shine and prosper in our culture, and looking forward to seeing others follow their lead to developing such core banking skills and rightfully attain the certifications required to succeed in their own careers, this is part of the strategy that aims to preparing the leaders of the future".

Ooredoo Kuwait supports entrepreneurs in 'AlSouq Murouj'

Ooredoo Kuwait, the first to launch innovated digital services in Kuwait is proudly partnering with AlSouq Murouj for the fourth consecutive year to bring to you Murouj Market, a monthly weekend market for local entrepreneurs and businesses. The market, which is held at Murouj Complex, includes an Ooredoo dedicated booth, local farm produce, artisanal food products and crafts, with a 'street food' section aimed at highlighting the culinary diversity of Kuwait's local food community. The market also offers a section



Mijbil Alayoub

meeting those young enthusiastic small business owners as well as our valued customers at the market".

dedicated for children's activities. It will be held once a month on weekends, until March 2020.

Commenting on this sponsorship, Ooredoo Kuwait Senior Director of Corporate Communications Mijbil Alayoub said: "We're happy to be supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs through this engaging project. This sponsorship comes in tandem with our social responsibility strategy, which in turn is based on our core values of caring, connecting and challenging. We look forward to



Huawei and ACK sign MoU to establish ICT Academy



Huawei Technologies Kuwait, a leading global Information and Communication Technology solutions provider, recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) to increase ICT capabilities among aspiring youth. The program seeks to provide ICT industry recognized certifications in support of a subsequent career in the ICT industry or implement the new practical skills across other industries.

Based on its industry leading ICT technologies and global ICT practices, Huawei has developed a full range of ICT career certifications. Huawei Technologies Kuwait aims to train students in the latest technological developments such as Big Data, cloud computing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and pervasive technologies.

Through the course, students will absorb the knowledge and expertise required to benefit the society and develop solutions for potential challenges. Huawei aims to provide robust technological infrastructure and intellect to nurture future ICT leaders in Kuwait and the region as part of its support of Kuwait's 2035 vision to create a fully connected, smart city.

CEO of Huawei Technologies Kuwait, Rico Lin said, "Huawei as a global ICT leading Technology Company endeavors to incubate the ICT talent and facilitate the employment of youth in the ICT industry. Huawei consider the new MoU a win-win collaboration with ACK as one of our strategic partners to empower the

students with the capabilities to succeed in the market and their respective careers. We will be regularly communicating with all stakeholders to monitor and guarantee and ensure a smooth and seamless delivery performance. It is a proud moment as Huawei Kuwait and ACK further cement their long-time partnership with the launch of the ICT Academy that will raise a new generation of ICT skilled students who will fuel growth of key sectors and industries."

The President of the Australian College of Kuwait, Prof Isam Zabalawi said, "We are believers that ICT in general is reshaping the field of higher education for the present and the future. ACK is keen to make sure that we have the proper environment and the proper facilities in order to prepare our graduates for the workplace. It's a great opportunity for our students and for Huawei. As we can consider our students and our faculty as ambassadors for Huawei, not only in Kuwait but also in the region."

The Dean of the School of Engineering at the Australian College of Kuwait, Dr. Mohammed Abdul Niby, expressed his appreciation for this move and said, "This memorandum of understanding defines the guidelines of a strong cooperation with Huawei. The initial step being developing Huawei Information and Communication Technologies Academy (Huawei ICT Academy) in ACK which will reshape and enhance significantly the ICT knowledge and skills of ACK students."

Health & Science

In US, diabetics turn to black market or Canada for life-saving insulin

MINNEAPOLIS: On a frosty January morning in a Minneapolis suburb, Abigail Hansmeyer leaves her car engine running and takes out a brown paper bag carrying needles and a vial, handing it over to its recipient in an anonymous shopping center parking lot. The exchange is technically illegal, but these aren't illicit drugs.

Instead, the vial contains insulin: A medicine that has since its discovery in the 1920s transformed a diagnosis of diabetes from a swift death sentence to a manageable disease. Yet its price has sky-rocketed in the US over the past decade, creating informal networks of people who build up stockpiles and give to others what they don't need themselves.

"Thank you so much," says Annette Gentile, 52, as she takes the bag from Hansmeyer, checking the labels and doses. "I've been on a roller coaster in the last few days," she adds, because of her elevated blood sugar levels.

Gentile doesn't live in abject poverty. She receives a monthly disability allowance of \$1,200 and has public health insurance. Crucially, however, that insurance does not cover prescription medicine. The contents of the bag she just received, which will keep her going for a month, would cost her about a thousand dollars at a pharmacy. "I purely rely on donations," she says.

Her 29-year-old benefactor Hansmeyer is unemployed and has type 1 diabetes, a chronic condition that appears in childhood where the pancreas produces little or no insulin, the hormone that lets sugar enter cells to produce energy. People who have it need to inject themselves with insulin several times a day for the rest of their lives.

Both women are part of a group of diabetics who connect with each other Facebook or text messages to hand out or receive their prized medication, free of cost, sometimes using code words like "lifewater" to evade detection.

Nearly all of the stock that circulates comes from the relatives of patients who died.

For President Donald Trump's rivals in the Democratic party, who begin their primary contests tomorrow in Iowa, there are few scandals greater than the price of insulin: The epitome of pharmaceutical price-gouging that blights the US health care system.

"We're not poor," says Hansmeyer. Her husband works and has started a small business. Abigail has her own car, and the couple live in a house that pet dogs and rabbits also call home. But her husband's employer doesn't subsidize its workers health insurance. Not poor enough to qualify for state insurance, and not rich enough to buy their own, the couple gave up looking in January.

They joined the ranks of the 27.5 million Americans without coverage, praying that no calamity befell them. "My entire adult life I've gone in and out of rationing my insulin," Hansmeyer tells AFP. A few years ago, when she won a battle against her then insurer for an insulin pump, a computerized device that continuously releases the right amount of the hormone, she remembers crying with happiness.

Death of a child

Hansmeyer acts as a go-between for her community of Minneapolis area diabetics, connecting those in need with those who have. And one of her major sources is a refrigerator in the basement of a house belonging to one Nicole Smith-Holt.

Smith-Holt opens its door to reveal a treasure trove: Dozens of vials of insulin, and a large stock of syringes, test strips and other supplies. She guesses its value at around \$50,000. "It is strictly illegal," she says.

Selling or even giving away prescription medicine is

technically a minor crime. But for Smith-Holt, it's a cause that is devastatingly close to her heart. "We don't need another Alec," she says, about her late son, who died in June 2017.

Alec Raeshawn Smith was covered by his mother's insurance until he turned 26, the age up to which insurers are obliged by an Obama-era law to allow adult children to remain covered by their parent's plans. After crossing that threshold, he found himself unable to afford his own insurance on his meager salary as a restaurant worker. He died 27 days after his insurance lapsed from diabetic ketoacidosis as a result of a lack of insulin.

There was not a drop of insulin to be found in his apartment, said Smith-Holt, but there was evidence her son had tampered with his insulin pens to try squeeze out the last bit. "I think until I take my last breath I'll feel a sense of guilt in some sort of way," said Smith-Holt. "I wish he would have asked for help." The death of her son, who was himself a father, transformed Smith-Holt into an activist. One day she's on television, the next she's lobbying local politicians, or protesting outside a pharmaceutical company.

O Canada

Further to the north, diabetics can look to providers on the right side of the law but the wrong side of the border: Canadian pharmacies. Unlike the US, Canada caps the price of insulin. Every three months, alone or with others, 47-year-old Travis Paulson makes the two hour drive from Eveleth in northern Minnesota to Fort Frances in Canada's Ontario province, crossing the Rainy River to buy his insulin without prescription.

Customs agents don't bother him so long as his supply



MINNETONKA: Abigail Hansmeyer (left) gives insulin medicine to Annette Gentile on January 17, 2020 in Minnetonka, Minnesota. — AFP

is less than three months' worth. His insurance is excellent as far as doctor visits go, but only pays half the price of medicines. He pulls out two almost identical vials of insulin: one is labeled NovoLog and costs \$345 in the US, with his insurance leaving him responsible for half the bill.

The Canadian vial is sold under the brand name NovoRapid, and costs about \$25. The math isn't hard. "It's pharmaceutical greed. It's greed is all it is, simple as that," he says. A Bernie Sanders sticker on his fridge shows off Paulson's support for the self-professed democratic socialist, who has vowed to cut drug costs in half. But even that might not be enough to reduce the appeal of his Canadian road trips. — AFP

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- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
- ◆ Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

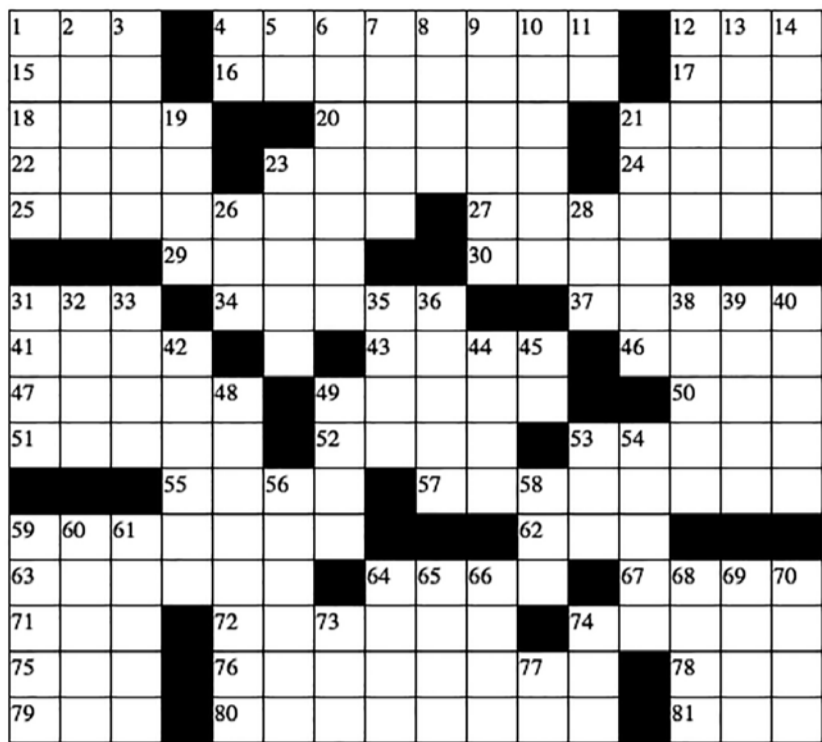
Scope of clinical Practice.

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

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

Stars

CROSSWORD 2425



ACROSS

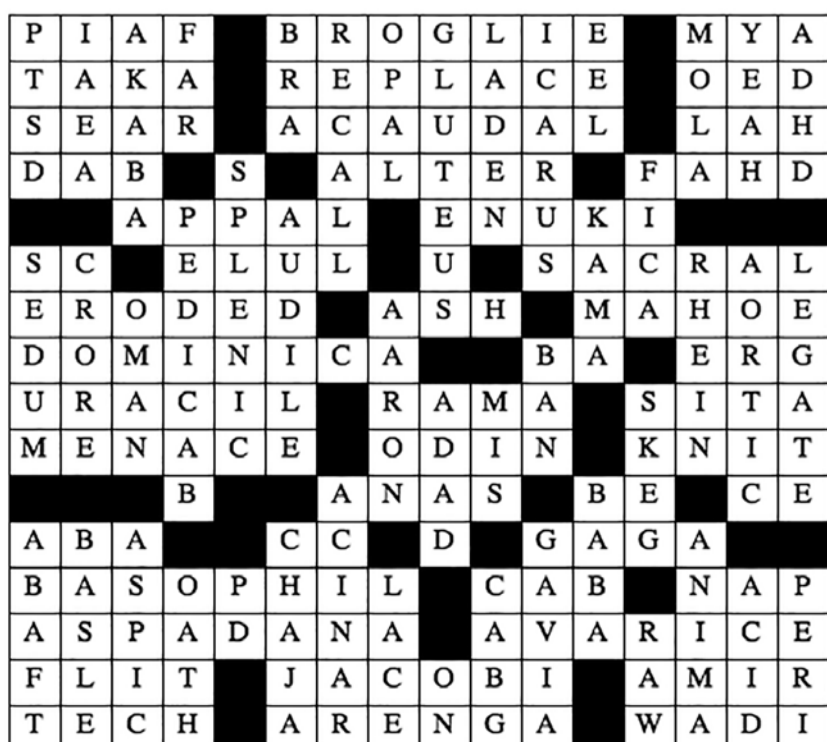
1. (Scotland) A small loaf or roll of soft bread.
4. Of a ceramic surface.
12. Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
15. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
16. Consumer goods (especially clothing) in the current mode.
17. Automatic data processing in which data acquisition and other stages or processing are integrated into a coherent system.
18. Gymnastic apparatus consisting of two parallel wooden bars supported on uprights.
20. A Spanish title of respect for a man.
22. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
24. Any competition.
25. An elaborate and systematic plan of action.
27. Small Old and New World herons.
29. A small cake leavened with yeast.
30. Having been read.
31. Having been taken in marriage.
34. The basic unit of money in Nigeria.
37. The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
41. Type genus of the Apidae.
43. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
46. A Loloish language.
47. Ratio of the hypotenuse to the opposite side.
50. Experiencing or showing sorrow or unhappiness.
51. An annual award by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for achievements in motion picture production and performance.
52. The content of cognition.
55. The compass point that is one point north of northeast.
57. Island in West Indies.
59. A doughnut-shaped chamber used in fusion research.
62. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
63. A port city in southwestern Iran.
67. A Hindu prince or king in India.
71. An emotional response that has been acquired by conditioning.
72. Refuse to acknowledge.
75. A belief (or system of beliefs) accepted as authoritative by some group or school.
76. Something or someone that causes trouble.
78. An index of the cost of all goods and services to a typical consumer.
79. A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
80. Without speaking.
81. Goddess of the dead and queen of the underworld.

DOWN

1. Wild ox.
2. Make fit for, or change to suit a new purpose.
3. A manicurist who trims the fingernails.

4. A radioactive transuranic element.
5. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
6. The slender spear of the Bantu-speaking people of Africa.
7. Requiring much chewing.
8. The basic unit of money in Papua New Guinea.
9. A close observer.
10. Put into a rage.
11. An honorary degree in science.
12. Deciduous South African tree having large odd-pinnate leaves and profuse fragrant orange-yellow flowers.
13. A legally binding command or decision entered on the court record (as if issued by a court or judge).
14. Transient cessation of respiration.
19. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
21. Of or relating to a creed.
23. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
26. Of a light yellowish-brown color n 1.
28. A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
32. A body of poetry that conveys the traditions of a society by treating some epic theme.
33. Sound recording consisting of a disc with continuous grooves.
35. A sudden short attack.
36. Metal or plastic sheath over the end of a shoelace or ribbon.
38. Covered or protected with or as if with a case.
39. A Bantu language spoken by the Chaga people in northern Tanzania.
40. Wild sheep of northern Africa.
42. The upper house of the parliament of the Republic of Ireland.
44. Perceive sound.
45. A public promotion of some product or service.
48. The remains of a dead body after cremation.
49. Utter a high-pitched cry, characteristic of pigs.
53. Used of a single unit or thing.
54. Extremely small in scale or scope or capability.
56. The capital and largest city of the Central Africa Republic.
58. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
60. Excessively fat.
61. (Hinduism and Buddhism) The effects of a person's actions that determine his destiny in his next incarnation.
64. Indian physicist who with Albert Einstein proposed statistical laws based on the indistinguishability of particles.
65. A theocratic republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
66. An appreciable consequence (especially a lessening).
68. (of persons) Highest in rank or authority or office.
69. A humorous anecdote or remark.
70. The upper angle between an axis and an offshoot such as a branch or leafstalk.
74. (formerly) A title of respect for a man in Turkey or Egypt.
77. Being ten more than one hundred forty.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Out with the old. Bring on the new, exciting and wild. What a rebel you are! If it goes against tradition you are all about it today. You crave excitement and the same old, same old, just isn't going to cut it for you. Change is in the air. A new hairstyle, a new outfit, or a visit to a new place tonight may be just what you need to add a little excitement to your life. Go have some fun!



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are focused and very goal oriented today. It is as if you are on a mission and will let nothing stand in your way. You are motivated and determined to fix all that is around you this not just as you think it should be. You want things your way and refuse to settle for less. This day reveals itself to be a perfect time to spend with a lover or someone close to you as you are feeling a desire to be needed and admired. You will find this will fulfill your needs and leave you with a sense of completion. Your most productive time today will be spent at home, Taurus.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may have been so focused lately you have been missing out on a social life. Today is a great day to get out and about. Hit the town but choose your company wisely as not to experience any conflict while doing so. Surround yourself with like-minded friends. Choose friends who are positive and share your love of life. You may find yourself experiencing a real spiritual awakening and the desire to share this with others. You should be pleasantly pleased at how receptive your friends are. A great day for you where the lines of communication open in all aspects of your world.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may find yourself becoming overly comfortable with your position in life. This could be careworn or this could be concerning a relationship. Be careful not to let things become boring. Remember the grass is not always greener on the other side. You may find today brings many options and temptations into your world. Take time to make careful choices and take all consequences into consideration before making a move. You will find comfort in knowing you are financially sound and things seem to be going your way in this aspect today. Actions have consequences. Cancer, keep this in mind today.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Out with the old and in with the new. Your focus is on ambition, security, and responsibility are areas in your life where you have placed major focus. There are big decisions in your life concerning these areas that need to be made. Knowing you have fallen short of goals in the past has you extremely determined at this point in your life. The easy way is not always the best way. You may reap great reward from your determination. Remember, you can only count on yourself to accomplish your goals. We live in a "what's in it for me" kind of world.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

No decision will be made without deep thought and research. You are well aware your actions have consequences. You are extremely focused and determined to set the stage for great success. You may find yourself accounting for every detail. You seem to be taking life very seriously now. You could find your health and career to be a major focus for you. Be sure and take some time to relax as you know what they say about "all work and no play"!



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This is a time to come back to reality. Focus on the here and now. Shed the illusions- fast. Open your eyes to what is going on in your close relationships. You will see change is needed. This may concern your living situation. Be realistic and think through every move you make now. This is not the time to sugar coat the things that are going on your world. Speak up and be heard. Make others aware that you clearly know what is going on.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

If an emotional argument is what you are seeking today may just in fact be your day. You may feel a lack of support and blocked at every turn. Use your imagination and ability to think outside of the box to find your answers. Others may see you detached or cool on a personal level today. Your tolerance levels may be low and your temper short. You are drawn now to the unique and unusual in this world. Make your ideas count. Now is a great time to try new things and visit new places. You should find today as one where you are able to make new friends and have great conversations with everyone you cross paths with.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Love would not begin to describe the feelings you are experiencing now. This is more like an obsession. You crave something that makes you feel alive. Feelings such as passion, jealousy and possession may come into play in your world. It seems as if you know exactly what/who you want and you will not let anything nor anyone stand in your way. YOU HAVE TO HAVE IT! Keep your focus and your determination will lead to you having exactly what your heart desires.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may be feeling emotionally detached from your surroundings at this time. You tend to be viewed as detached by others when you are in all reality your mind is highly focused and your wheels are turning. You are fascinated by the unusual and are finding yourself lost in your thoughts. You may find it hard to focus in the workplace today. Today may not be the best day for important decisions in the work place as you have lost yourself in your thoughts. You are quick witted and are no stranger to finding yourself having to apologize for having offended someone. Bite your tongue, keep it to yourself today as this could result in a battle of words with someone close to you. Capricorn, settle in with a book tonight and give your mind a break from reality. This will provide a much-needed escape for you.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Today may bring a sense of isolation your way. This is not always a bad thing. Time spent alone can be used in prayer or meditation. A time to truly get in touch with yourself. Spend some time working on you. Sometimes you get so caught up in caring for others you forget to give yourself the same time and attention. Embrace the silence that surrounds you today and really listen to what your mind and body are telling you. You may need rest. You need to feed your soul just as you feed your body. Spend a quiet evening of escape alone. Run a bath, light the candles, and dim the lights. Breathe in the peace that surrounds you. Curl up with a good book and turn in early. Allow only that which is peaceful and positive into your world.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your relationships have taken priority in your life. You value the love you have for others and the love you feel from them. Your emotional needs are being deeply satisfied. There is a vast difference between independence and loneliness. At this time, you seem to be becoming more of a homebody. You find more at ease staying in surrounded only by your loved ones or close friends. This is where you belong as your feelings are finding you more reflective rather than expressive. You crave new beginnings, perhaps this would be a great time for a new experience or a new hobby. Pisces, take the time to reflect and learn from your past and make plans for your future.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Christmas Around the World 1 - Word Search

Find Christmas in Various World Languages



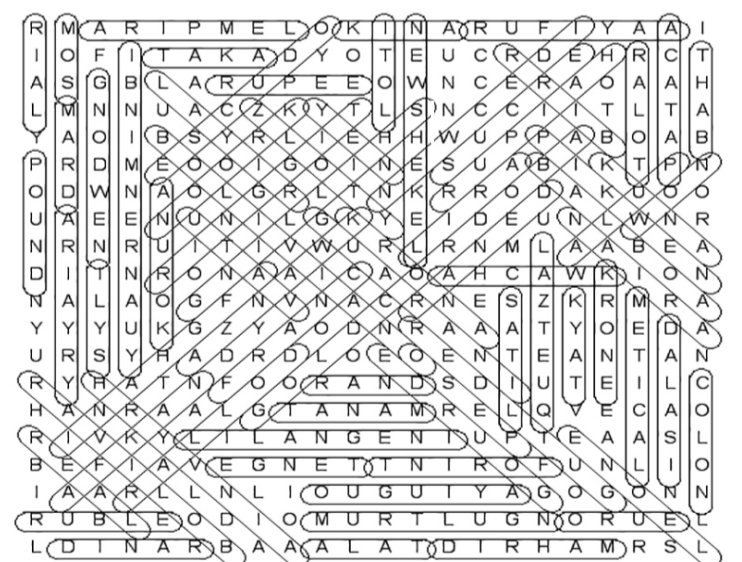
CROATIAN
Božić
FILIPINO
PASKO
FINNISH
JOULU
FRENCH
NOËL

GERMAN
WEIHNACHTEN
ICELANDIC
JÓL
GIBO
CHRISTMAS
ITALIAN
NATALE

SLOVAK
VIANOCE
SPANISH
NAVIDAD
SWAHILI
KRISMASI
SWEDISH
JUL

Friday's Solution

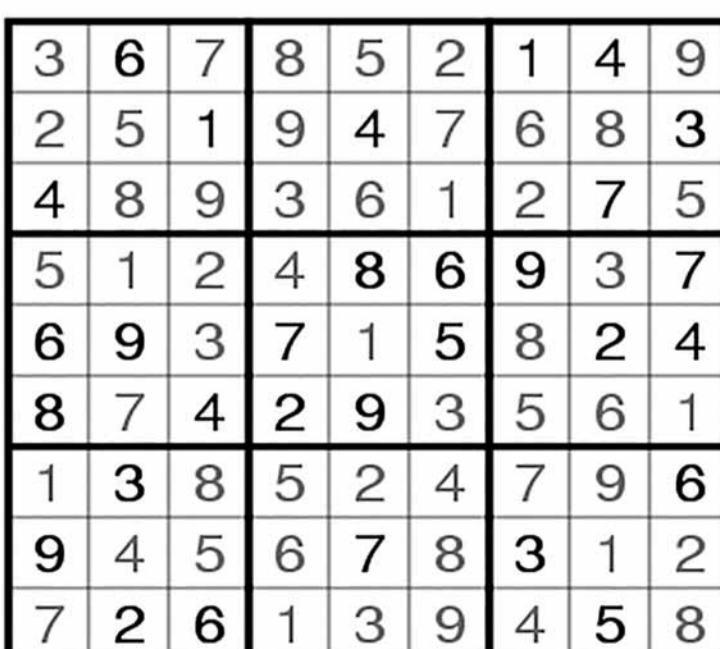
World Currencies



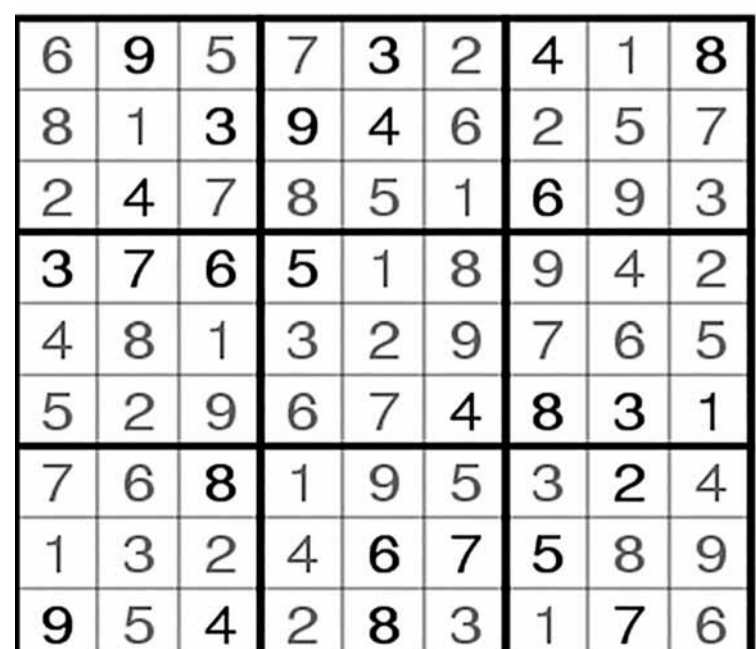
AFGHANI
ARABYRY
BAHT
BALBOA
BIRR
BOLIVAR
BOLIVIANO
COLON
DALASE
DENAR
DINAR
DIRHAM
DOLLAR
DRAM
ESCUDO
EURO
FORINT
FRANC
GOLD CORDOBA
GOURDE
GUARANI
GUILDER
KUNA
KRONA
KRONE
KROON
KUNA
KWACHA
KWANZA
KYAT
LEMPIRA
LEONE
LLANGENI
LIRA
LITAS
KINA
MANAT
METICAL
NAIRA
NAKFA
NEW CEDI
NEW DONG
NEW KIP
NEW SHEKEL
NGULTRUM
OUGUIYA
PATACA
PESO
POUND
PULA
QUETZAL
RAND
REAL
RIAL
RINGGIT
RIVAL
RUBLE
RUFYAA
RUPPEE
RUPIAH
SHILLING
SOM
SUCRE
SYLLI
TAKA
TALA
TENGE
TOLAR
VATU
WON
YEN
YUAN RENMINBI
ZLOTY

The hidden sentence is:
IF YOU CAN COUNT YOUR MONEY, YOU DON'T HAVE A BILLION DOLLARS

Daily Sudoku



Friday's Solution



Lifestyle

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2020



People stop to take pictures in front of the new mural by French artist Mr. Brainwash picturing Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gigi in Los Angeles. — AFP

PARIS GETS THE BLUES AS IT BURIES CABARET KING MICHOU

France got the blues Friday when Michou, the flamboyant king of the Parisian night, was buried in a blue coffin near the drag cabaret he ran for 60 years. Mourners clapped the nightclub owner, who always dressed in blue beneath a bouffant snow-white coiff, as his cask was carried into an Art Nouveau church in Montmartre, the picturesque neighborhood of the French capital where Michou was both “king and queen”.

Hundreds of celebrities and fans including French first lady Brigitte Macron, former prime minister Alain Juppe and Michou’s performers—who always called him “Mummy”—crowded into the chapel for the ceremony. Many wore blue as a tribute to the man who kept alive a rakish, bohemian spirit in the district, once the haunt of artists like Picasso and Toulouse-Lautrec. Even the hearse was the same shade of

electric blue as Michou’s famous suits, with the “Republic of Montmartre” band marching it from the church. Brigitte Macron had visited Michou only days before he died aged 88 last week. After his passing, the Elysee Palace issued a long lament saying “the sky above Montmartre will be a little less blue from now on”. Blue flags also hung from the windows of apartments near the church and portraits of Michou were attached to railings and a near-

by children’s merry-go-round. Michou had welcomed nighthawks, neighbors and Hollywood stars into his tiny dinner cabaret, which has stayed open every night since 1956. A champagne glass always in hand, his quick wit and sunny disposition endeared him to generations of French people. “I am lucky to be such a famous and loved gay,” said the man born Michel Georges Alfred Catty. And indeed, his final resting

place in a tiny graveyard near the Sacre Coeur basilica in Montmartre, has a fine view of Paris. In his memoirs, published three years ago, Michou said that he wanted “the cabaret to disappear with me.” “It might seem pretentious, but the club will not survive me,” he wrote.—AFP



An attendee dressed in blue walks past the car carrying the coffin of French cabaret director Michel Georges Alfred Catty.



Former French Prime Minister Alain Juppe arrives at the funerals.



French President's wife Brigitte Macron speaks to the media as she leaves after the funerals.



Attendees leave after the funerals of late French cabaret director Michel Georges Alfred Catty known as Michou at Saint-Jean de Montmartre church in Paris. — AFP photos



Pallbearers carry the coffin of French cabaret director Michel Georges Alfred Catty known as Michou.



A man carries wreath of flowers to the funerals.

'Queen of Suspense' Mary Higgins Clark dies

Best-selling American author Mary Higgins Clark, known to her fans as the "Queen of Suspense", has died aged 92, her publisher confirmed Friday. Clark was still producing a book a year at the age of 90, with her page-turners earning her a legion of fans across the world and even making her one of the top-selling fiction authors in France. "She passed away peacefully this evening at the age of 92 surrounded by family and friends," publisher Simon & Schuster said in a tweet late Friday.

With sales of more than 100 million thrillers in the United States alone, she achieved success in her 40s after a series of personal tragedies. Clark's books have been translated into 35 languages and more than 20 have been adapted for television and cinema. Throughout her career she received a number of awards, including France's Grand Prix de Littérature Policière in 1980, as well as being made Grand Master of the Edgar Allan Poe Awards by the Mystery Writers of America in 2000.

Scary situations

"She was unique. Nobody ever bonded more completely with her readers than Mary did; she understood them as if they were members of her own family," her long-time editor Michael Korda said in a statement. "She



In this file photo authors Mary Higgins Clark (left) and Carol Higgins Clark attend the 16th Annual Los Angeles Times Festival of Books - Day 2 at USC on May 1, 2011 in Los Angeles, California.

was always absolutely sure of what they wanted to read-and, perhaps more important, what they didn't want to read-and yet she managed to surprise them with every book. She was the Queen of Suspense." In an interview with National Public Radio in 2017, Clark said the greatest compliment was "when someone will say to me, 'I read your darn book till four in the morning.'" "She creates

characters that readers can identify with then puts them in scary situations. Fans love it," NPR said.

Born in the Bronx, New York, on December 24, 1927 to an Irish immigrant family, Clark wrote from an early age. Her father died from a heart attack when she was 11 and, with her mother struggling with three children, Clark was obliged to work from 15. She started as a hotel telephone operator and was then a typist, while still dreaming of becoming a writer. She would window-shop on New York's 5th Avenue for the clothes she would buy when success arrived. Clark often reminisced in interviews in later years.

In 1949 she became a Pan Am air hostess, quitting after a year to marry her neighbor, Warren Clark, and raise a family. She established a routine of writing in her kitchen from 5am to 7am before getting her five children ready for school. But when her husband died suddenly of a heart attack when she was just 35, this life was shattered. To support her family, Clark touted her short stories-receiving 40 rejection letters-and sold radio scripts.

Criminally successful

But when Clark turned to suspense novels she finally achieved the success she had dreamt of. Her first in 1975 — titled "Where are the Children?" about a woman going



In this file photo author Mary Higgins Clark arrives at Third Annual Quill Awards, honoring this year's finest books and authors on 22 October 2007, in New York.

through a recurring nightmare of losing her two children-was reprinted 75 times. She became a millionaire after her second thriller, "A Stranger is Watching", was released in 1978.

From then on most of her thrillers were bestsellers, including "Before I say Goodbye"



In this file photo US author Mary Higgins Clark poses during the 17th MIPCOM (Marche internationale des films et des programmes pour la télévision, la vidéo, le câble et le satellite) in Cannes, France. — AFP photos

(2000) and "On the Street Where You Live" (2001) which topped the New York Times bestseller lists. — AFP

'American Dirt' novel on migrants, ignites literary controversy

Hailed by luminaries such as Stephen King and Oprah Winfrey, "American Dirt" was touted as the next "great American novel," bought for a seven-figure advance, backed by aggressive marketing and launched last week to great fanfare in both English and Spanish. Instead of glory, however, author Jeanine Cummins finds herself at the heart of a cultural maelstrom, accused by some of exploiting the tragedy of Mexican migrants in a US election year and of validating stereotypes such as those used by President Donald Trump to fuel his anti-immigration rhetoric.

"But in a time of widespread misinformation, fear mongering, and white-supremacist propaganda related to immigration and to our border, in a time when adults and children are dying in US immigration cages, we believe that a novel blundering so badly in its depiction of marginalized, oppressed people should not be lifted up," the letter went on to say. Mexican actress Salma Hayek put out a selfie of herself with the book, unaware of the controversy erupting around it, then quickly apologized for promoting it. Photos that Cummins herself posted of a lobster luncheon for the book launch, featuring floral arrangements wreathed with barbed wire-a nod to the book's cover-did little to help. "Border chic," said Gurba on Twitter. "Cruel" and "insensitive," said the authors in their letter to Oprah.

'Ignorance and negligence'

"This is a book that oversimplifies Mexico, uses bad Spanish, and in which the protagonist, a Mexican woman, does things that don't make any sense for a Mexican," said Ignacio Sanchez Prado, a professor of Latin American studies at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. An expert on Mexico, he told AFP he did not believe that only Mexicans can write about the Mexican experience but said that Cummins "did it badly." He also laid the most blame on the "editorial process," lashing out at Flatiron's "ignorance and negligence." The author of the book, who describes herself as white but also "Latinx" because she has a Puerto Rican grandmother, has not alluded to the controversy in her posts on social media but told The New York Times "there is a danger sometimes of going too far toward silencing people."

"No one intends to censor Ms Cummins," said Daniel Olivas, author of a collection of poems about the US-Mexico border, and one of the signatories of the protest letter sent to Oprah. "But the promotion of this book as the 'Great American Novel' and 'a dazzling accomplishment' of John Steinbeck proportions is simply galling when so many brilliant Latinx writers are given a mere fraction of such attention and monetary compensation," he said.

Flatiron did not respond to an AFP request for comment on the controversy and an interview with the author. The publishers said in a statement they were "proud" of the book, but Miller acknowledged that the controversy "has exposed deep inadequacies in how we at Flatiron Books address issues of representation." "We made serious mistakes in the way we rolled out this book," Miller admitted. "The concerns that have been raised, including the question of who gets to tell which stories, are valid ones in relation to literature and we welcome the conversation," his statement said. — AFP

'Exploitative'

Horror supreme King described the book as "marvelous" and author Don Winslow compared it to the Steinbeck classic "The Grapes of Wrath". It is already being adapted for Hollywood. But more than 120 writers, including Mexico's leading novelist Valeria Luiselli and chicana author Myriam Gurba, whose withering review sparked the debate, have signed a letter calling on Oprah not to feature "American Dirt" in her book club, which has historically been a gateway to massive sales. "This is not a letter calling for silencing, nor censoring," said the writers, who called the novel "exploitative."



Swiss-born Brazilian photographer Claudia Andujar gestures as she offers an interview to AFP in Sao Paulo, Brazil.



Photographer Claudia Andujar looks at pictures on a book during an interview with AFP. — AFP photos

Fight for survival: Photographer Claudia Andujar defends Brazil's Yanomami

Swiss-born photographer Claudia Andujar has spent five decades fighting to protect the rights of Brazil's Yanomami tribe. But the feisty octogenarian says her battle is not over. Andujar began documenting the Yanomami in 1971 after visiting members of the group deep inside the Amazon rainforest in the northwestern state of Roraima, near the Venezuelan border. She hopes a major retrospective of her work opening in Paris on January 30 will call attention to the renewed threats they face under President Jair Bolsonaro, who is pushing to legalize mining and farming in protected native territory.

"The Yanomami are my relatives, they are part of my family and I want to defend my family," Andujar, 88, tells AFP at her Sao Paulo apartment. Spending weeks at a time with the Yanomami, whose territory in Brazil covers some 37,000 square miles—an area bigger than Portugal—Andujar battled stifling heat and malaria to capture fragments of their daily life, such as hunting trips or shamanistic rituals. "I tried to follow their way of living... I just tried to make them understand that I'm looking for friendship," Andujar says of her first few weeks with the tribe.

"They had never been photographed so they didn't understand what I was doing and I didn't want to invade them." By experimenting with infrared film, flashes and even vaseline smeared on the camera lens, Andujar created distorted images that offer an interpretation of the Yanomami's complex spiritual world. "She tried to convey and to represent things that were invisible to Western eyes," says Thyago Nogueira from the Moreira Salles Institute in Brazil and curator of the exhibition for the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain in the French capital.

Featuring some 300 mostly black and white photos taken largely in the 1970s and 1980s,

"The Yanomami Struggle" marks Andujar's biggest temporary exhibition. A smaller version was on display for much of 2019 in Sao Paulo and then Rio de Janeiro, catching the eye of the Fondation Cartier. "She was not just a journalist trying to narrate a story or an anthropologist documenting a society," Nogueira tells AFP. "She completely immersed herself in the subject and she felt free to experiment."

Growing threats

The exhibition charts Andujar's transition from photographer to activist as the Yanomami—whose population in Brazil is around 26,000—faced increasing threats to their survival. Some 11,000 Yanomami live in Venezuela. Brazil's military rulers began constructing highways across the Amazon in the 1970s to open up the rainforest to development. The Yanomami and other tribes were devastated by diseases introduced by non-indigenous Brazilians settling in the remote region.

They also confronted deadly invasions by gold miners seeking to exploit reserves of the precious metal on their land. Andujar was expelled from the region in 1977 after becoming a thorn in the side of authorities. She then joined Yanomami shaman and spokesman Davi Kopenawa in a campaign for the legal demarcation of the tribe's territory, which was granted in 1992.

Using her camera as a political weapon, Andujar "avoided a genocide," says Nogueira. But the hard-won rights remain under threat, says Andujar. "The government, if they decide they want to go and extract gold or other minerals, they will go and try to do it," she says. These fears have intensified under Bolsonaro, who took power in January 2019 promising to open up more of the mineral-rich Amazon to development. The far-right leader presided over an 85 percent surge in deforestation last year,

official figures show.

He also has dismantled environmental protections that activists say have made tribes increasingly vulnerable to invasions by illegal miners and loggers. His government is expected to send a bill to Congress soon that would legalize mining on indigenous land. In recent months, three indigenous people have been killed in two separate incidents in the northeastern state of Maranhão. One of them died after being ambushed by loggers. The others were killed in a drive-by shooting. "Bolsonaro has no experience at all with indigenous people," Andujar says derisively. "I always worry about their future."

'Right to live'

After fleeing Europe during World War II, Andujar lived in New York before joining her Swiss mother in Brazil in 1955. The loss of her Hungarian Jewish father and his relatives in Nazi death camps in Germany and Poland has fuelled Andujar's determination to protect the Yanomami. "It's something that in the Second World War I was not able to do," Andujar explains. Even now, as she struggles to walk and spends much of her time at home, Andujar continues to devote herself to their survival.

She last visited the Yanomami two years ago and does not know if she will return. "I'm getting older," she says chuckling. Andujar plans to attend the opening of her exhibition in Paris where she hopes to meet with political leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, and raise her concerns. "These people have the right to live," she says of the Yanomami. "They have to decide what they want and not the government." — AFP

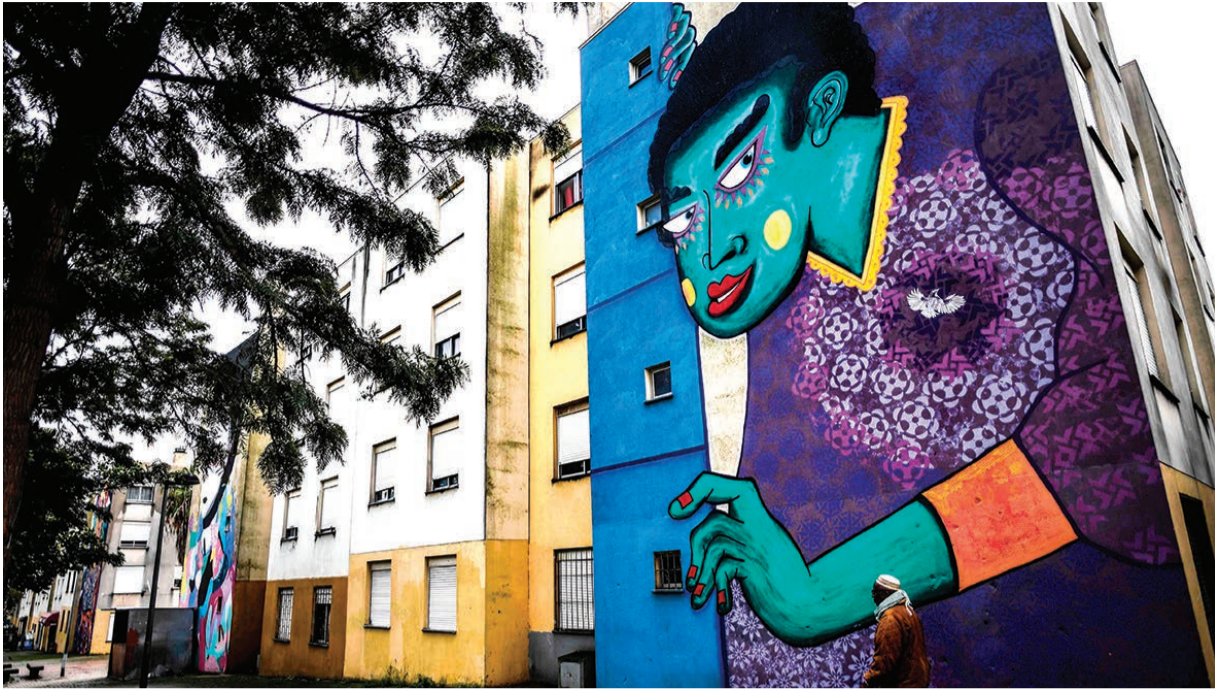
Relative of extinct tortoise located in Galapagos

A scientific expedition to the Galapagos Islands has discovered a tortoise with a "strong" genetic link to a presumed-extinct subspecies made famous by the popular Lonesome George, national park officials said Friday. George, the last known member of the *Chelonoidis nigra abingdonii* Pinta tortoise species, died in 2012 in captivity aged over 100 after refusing to provide any offspring. The Galapagos National Parks (PNG) said the expedition had discovered a young, female specimen deemed "a high-importance find because it has a strong genetic component of the species 'Chelonoidis abingdonii.'"

She "could be a direct descendant of a pure individual, which could still be alive somewhere," the park said. Park rangers and scientists from PNG and the

Galapagos Conservancy found an additional 29 tortoises — 11 males and 18 females—that share part of their genetic makeup with the *Chelonoidis nigra floreana* subspecies, also thought to be extinct. Researchers chose Wolf Volcano for their expedition because whalers and pirates who would eat the animals were thought to have dumped some of the tortoises there in the past to lighten their ships' loads. The Galapagos Islands, located 620 miles (1,000 kilometers) off the coast of Ecuador in the Pacific Ocean, were made famous by Charles Darwin's studies of their breathtaking biodiversity. The park says there are 10,000 to 12,000 tortoises on the volcano. — AFP





A resident of Quinta do Mocho neighborhood walk past a mural by French artist Stew, in Sacavem, outskirts of Lisbon. — AFP photos



Visitors watch a mural by Portuguese artist Nomen during a guided visit to Quinta do Mocho neighborhood in Sacavem.

STREET ART creates a splash of new life for Lisbon barrio



Portuguese artist Acer poses with his dog in front of his mural.



A woman hangs up her laundry close to a mural by Portuguese artist Bordalo II in Quinta do Mocho neighborhood.



A resident of Quinta do Mocho neighborhood looks from her window next to a mural by artists Brothers of Light, in Sacavem.



A woman walks past a building entrance decorated with a graffiti.

In a poor neighborhood north of Lisbon, tourists contemplate a huge mural of a black woman pulling off a white mask—a potent symbol in a “no-go” neighborhood that has been transformed by art. The painting by Angolan-Portuguese artist Nomen is undoubtedly “the most important one” for people who live in the Quinta do Mocho housing project, because “it sums up our history,” guide Emanuela Kalemba says during a visit of the neighborhood. “She symbolizes the social mask that neighborhood residents must put on outside. To apply for work, or get into school, we often have to give a fake address to avoid saying where we come from,” the 30-something woman tells a group of around 50 visitors, including many pensioners decked out in rain gear.

The complex of four-storey buildings was built around the turn of the century between the airport and city center to house 3,000 people, mostly from former Portuguese colonies in Africa. Unemployment, crime and a lack of public transportation led to the district being considered a “no-go” zone that taxi drivers refused to enter. In 2014, local officials decided to improve the district’s image, and invited Portuguese and foreign artists to paint murals for what they



A resident of Quinta do Mocho neighborhood walks past murals by Liberian artist Arcy (left) and Portuguese artist Huari.

now call “the biggest open-air art gallery in Europe”.

The works include a dove in rainbow colors, an African woman in a multi-coloured turban, and a monochrome portrait of reggae icon Bob Marley. The

painters are from Angola, Brazil, France, Israel, Liberia, Peru, Portugal, Russia, Salvador, Spain and Uruguay and their works now attract hundreds of visitors. Pensioner Celso Rodrigues marveled that they “have succeeded in transforming a deteriorating and fairly sad neighborhood,” while remarking that “the result is spectacular!” “We won’t solve all the problems by covering the walls with paint,” but the project has helped changed some minds, giving residents “a little self-esteem” by “showing the outside world that the neighborhood is changing,” Kalemba says. Since the murals went up, a bus line has begun to serve the area, cultural events have multiplied, and the crime rate has fallen, local officials say. — AFP



Visitors watch a mural by Uruguayan artist Maria Noe.



Visitors watch a mural by Portuguese artist Odeith depicting Jamaican singer Bob Marley.



A group of residents gather next to a mural by Spanish artist Werens Plug.

Ten sculptures by Dali nabbed in Stockholm break in

Ten sculptures by surrealist artist Salvador Dali were stolen from a Stockholm gallery in a dawn break in on Thursday, the gallery’s owner told AFP. The thieves smashed the glass door of the Couleur gallery in the upscale neighborhood of Ostermalm in Stockholm and nabbed the sculptures, valued at between 20,000 and 50,000 euros (\$22,000 to \$55,000) each, before fleeing the scene in a car according to witnesses.

The stolen sculptures include bronze models of the artist’s recognizable molten clocks, of which there are about 350 around the world. They were on loan and came from a Swiss collection. Peder Enstrom, the owner of the gallery thought there must have been several thieves because of the mess they left behind, adding that “they were probably working together”. Despite the value of the works, Enstrom said the thieves would likely struggle

to cash in on their score. “They didn’t get the certificates, which is very good because that will give them some big problems trying to sell the sculptures,” he said. — AFP

The Couleur gallery is pictured behind a police tape after exhibited Salvador Dali sculptures were stolen, according to the Police. — AFP



Vegan meals and old tuxedos: Hollywood red carpets go green

From glitzy all-vegan galas to recycled red carpet outfits, Hollywood has stepped up efforts to reduce its carbon footprint this awards season, which will soon wrap up with the Oscars. But while some scientists have welcomed A-listers' renewed zeal on climate change, others have questioned whether Tinseltown's jet-set elite are any sort of example to follow. The Golden Globes, Screen Actors Guild and Critics' Choice Awards galas this month all served plant-based menus, instead of the steak dinners typical of celebrity-packed events. Oscar nominees were offered roasted maitake mushrooms and vegan cheese at their annual luncheon this week, and will be served a "70 percent plant-based" menu at the February 9 show.

The "brave and compassionate" moves have drawn glowing praise from actor Joaquin Phoenix, who said it was the first time he'd ever eaten at the Globes, as well as environmental actor-activist stalwarts Leonardo DiCaprio and Mark Ruffalo. Inside the star-studded events, few had any complaints—even if comedian Seth Meyers wryly observed it was lucky that "food critics" weren't invited to the Critics' Choice Awards. Climate scientists and activists have also welcomed the trend. Brenda Ekwurzel, of the Union of Concerned Scientists, said it was "really important for Hollywood" to make an effort and "very exciting to me as a climate scientist."

Convincing people to change their food choices is one of the best ways to immediately



In this file photo US actor Joaquin Phoenix poses in the press room at The Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

reduce carbon emissions, she added. Switching the diet of 1,500 guests at the Globes would have reduced the event's footprint roughly tenfold—saving 10 to 15 tons of CO2 equivalents—according to climate scientist Peter Kalmus. By contrast, an average person in Bangladesh generates about one ton per year. The "ripple effects" of even one famous attendee taking up climate activism as a result could have far greater benefits, influencing public awareness and even policy, Kalmus added.

'Walk the talk'

The highly publicized steps taken by Hollywood have not however drawn universal praise. Few winners and presenters



In this file photo British host Ricky Gervais arrives for the 77th annual Golden Globe Awards at The Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California.

approached the mic at the Globes without offering "thoughts and prayers" expressed for those suffering in Australia's wildfires, while singer Lizzo recently helped pack food hampers for those affected during her world tour. But accusations of hypocrisy have been leveled at many showbiz stars, with the movie industry as a whole decamping each year to a string of globe-trotting festivals spanning the globe from Cannes to Venice to Toronto to Park City, Utah.

"It is problematic to speak out on the climate emergency if you're flying on private jets" and have a huge overall climate footprint, said Kalmus. While anyone—with or without a celebrity platform—raising awareness about climate issues should be welcomed, it is those

who "walk the talk" who have the biggest impact, he added. Kalmus singled out for praise Australian actress Yael Stone ("Orange is the New Black"), who this month pledged to give up her US acting career because "it's unethical for us to set up a life in two countries, knowing what we know."

"It's not about keeping those direct emissions from those flights out of the atmosphere," said Kalmus, estimating two first-class round trips per year at between 12-24 tons of CO2. "Putting the planet above your career" makes a highly public statement that climate change "is indeed an emergency," he added.

Lost in the wash

According to Ekwurzel, celebrity actors would be most effective if they were to insist on reducing the carbon footprints of gas-guzzling movie productions. "People who have resources, like those at the Golden Globes, have the most economic power to reduce their high emissions," she noted. Ekwurzel pointed to renewable electricity usage on film sets as one way to improve the status quo, while singling out transportation and packaging used in movie catering as problematic. Ultimately, the measures available to Hollywood celebrities are very different to those facing the public.

"When there are thousands of ways we individually can reduce emissions, picking one and getting on a pulpit saying 'this is the way everyone has to do it' will never work," she said. And however well-meaning, some of



This file photo taken shows the vegan entree at the 73rd Golden Globes Menu Preview at The Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California.

those celebrities' efforts may simply be lost in the wash. Fashion designer Stella McCartney tweeted her delight at Phoenix's decision to wear the same tuxedo—one of hers—"for the entire award season to reduce waste."

The move drew a mocking response from some, including Globes host Ricky Gervais, who responded: "That's nothing. I darn my own socks and you should see the state of my... underpants." Asked to quantify the carbon emissions impact of Phoenix's thrifty wardrobe, Kalmus admitted it was "tough for a T-shirt-and-jeans-wearing scientist" but concluded: "I'm going to go with zero." — AFP



Pastry chef Kamel Guechida poses with chocolate Oscars during the 92nd Annual Academy Awards Governors Ball press preview. — AFP photos



Chocolate Oscars are displayed at the 92nd Annual Academy Awards Governors Ball press preview.



A chocolate sculpture is displayed.



Mini beef burgers are displayed.



Hors d'oeuvres are displayed.



A vegetable platter is displayed.



US-Austrian chef Wolfgang Puck (center) and his son Byron Puck (left) prepare a dish.

Oscars party menu goes 'almost' vegan

Organizers have touted plans to go mostly vegan at this year's Oscars party but celebrities need not fear—there will still be plenty of caviar, smoked salmon and wagyu, the event's main chef assured Friday. "We work with everything because a lot of people like vegan but still, the big majority eats meat and fish," said celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck who will be feeding Hollywood's elite after the Academy Awards on February 9. The 70-year-old has catered the extravagant post-Oscars party—the Governors Ball—for 26 years, preparing thousands of dishes for the 1,500 guests, including the night's winners, who attend the bash.

He said the menu will be 70 percent plant-based this year, in line with what appears to be a trend this awards season. Among the vegan dishes will be roasted cauliflower, sweet potato tempura, wild mushroom bolognese and avocado toast. Puck, who worked in some of France's top

restaurants before relocating to the United States at age 24, said while he himself is not vegan, he still enjoys concocting vegan dishes at his many restaurants. "We want everybody to be happy," he told AFP during a tour of his kitchen where he was prepping for the extravaganza.

"At the end of the day you can make vegan food taste really good and you won't miss meat or fish," Puck—who heads an empire of restaurants stretching from Beverly Hills to Las Vegas and Singapore—said he had no trouble adapting this year's Oscars menu to the last-minute desire of organizers given he already serves vegan dishes at his establishments. "It's easy because we have all the chefs from all our different restaurants and I can call them and ask 'what do you do for vegan?'" he said.

He said this year's menu will feature some classics—including smoked salmon, wagyu beef and caviar—but that he also

added 18 vegan dishes. On the sweet side, most of the desserts will also be vegan, to the despair of some chefs who rely heavily on butter and eggs. "We managed to overcome the difficulties of not working with these ingredients by using lots of almond and coconut milk," said Kamel Guechida, who heads a team of 25 pastry chefs preparing for the event.

On offer will be salted caramel brownie cookies, ube (purple yam) and coconut cream pillow tarts, and dark chocolate and yuzu (citrus fruit) raviolis. Let's not forget the 5,000 or so Oscar statuettes covered in 24 karat gold which will also be vegan thanks to chocolate maker Valrhona which supplied Puck with some 400 kilograms (880 pounds) of strawberry and yuzu-flavored chocolate. — AFP

Guatemala civil war film vies for Belgian 'Oscar'

In Belgium's version of the Oscars this weekend, a film about Guatemala's civil war is an unusual nominee—telling a story set more than two decades ago and 9,000 kilometers (5,000 miles) away. But, explained director Cesar Diaz, "the distance is essential" to his movie, "Our Mothers" ("Nuestras Madres"), which already picked up a Camera d'Or prize in Cannes last year for best first feature. It is running in six categories in the Magritte awards which are handed out on Saturday in Brussels, including best movie, best director and best screenplay. "If I had made the same movie while living in Guatemala, I think it would have been a much more dogmatic film, much less human," Diaz explained to AFP.



The 42-year-old was born in Guatemala but as a boy he left the grandmother and uncle raising him for Mexico to join his mother who went years before the civil war. Of his father, a "political missing person", he has no memories. In Mexico, Latin America's movie-making powerhouse, Diaz's passion for film took hold. But after failing to get into Cuba's School of Cinema, he landed in Belgium in 1999 to join an uncle living there. It was meant to be a short stay, but—apart from a 2009 detour to France to study screenwriting—it became his home, and his second nationality.

The phantoms of the conflict that haunt his birth country have never left him, however. His memories of soldiers in the streets and former dictator Efraim Rios Montt on the television stayed with him. "It marked my life," he said. He has, he explained, tried to "exorcise" those ghosts by putting them in creations mixed with a search for family and for history.

A 'message' to nationalists today

The path to his feature movie passed by a 2010 short on an early episode in the civil war called "Semillas de Ceniza", or "seeds of ash". In 2015 he brought out a documentary with his mother that recalled the scope and savagery of the conflict, a war between the government and leftist guerrillas, which cost 200,000 lives. All of that—his migration, his obsession with Guatemala's bloody recent past, European filmmaking sensibilities—led to "Our Mothers", which Diaz calls the "culminative point" of his career so far. A fictional feature, it delves into the search of those "disappeared" under Guatemala's government and the massacre of native Mayan communities suspected of being guerrilla sympathisers.

Diaz said he believed the recognition his movie has achieved was a wake-up call to populists in Belgium or elsewhere employing anti-immigrant rhetoric. "It's a message to all those in Europe's nationalist wave," Diaz said, a declaration from "citizens like me, who maybe weren't born in this country, that we form part of it... without forgetting who we are." — AFP

Weinstein accuser tells court relationship was based on fear

An actress accusing disgraced Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein of rape told a court Friday she had only stayed in contact with him out of fear. Jessica Mann said she had been naive when she first met Weinstein and then so scared of him that she would agree to massage him, fake an orgasm or stay in contact with him even after he allegedly raped her. Dozens of women have accused Weinstein of sexual abuse but only the cases of Mann and fellow actress Mimi Haley have led to criminal charges in a New York court.

Three other women — Annabella Sciorra, Dawn Dunning and Tarale Wulff — have testified that Weinstein sexually assaulted them, but their cases are not the subject of the trial, which was sitting for the eighth day of testimony. Weinstein denies the predatory assault charges and maintains that all his relationships were consensual. Mann, 34, grew up on a farm in Washington state and was on the streets for a while before becoming an actress. She was the only Weinstein accuser who had not heard of him before they met, seven years ago.

She began weeping Friday even before prosecutor Joan Illuzzi-Orbon's questioning started and, at times, was so emotional she had trouble speaking. She described her first encounters with the producer as a mixture of seduction, humiliation and manipulation. Then, in a hotel in Los Angeles, she said she agreed to give him a massage. "He'd make me feel stupid, saying it was not a big deal," she said. Later, when she was with one of Weinstein's assistants, he called her into a room and tried to kiss her.



Former Actress Jessica Mann arrives for the trial of Harvey Weinstein at the Manhattan Criminal Court in New York City. — AFP

Sports

Wales beat Italy 42-0 in Six Nations opener

'Brutal' England seek French tonic to heal World Cup scar

CARDIFF: Reigning Grand Slam champions Wales began their Six Nations title defence with a 42-0 thrashing of Italy in Cardiff yesterday to give Wayne Pivac a victory in his debut Test as coach.

Cardiff Blues wing Josh Adams scored a hat-trick to take his tally of tries to 10 in his last eight Tests. Defeat extended Italy's losing streak in the Six Nations to 23 matches, the Azzurri without a win in the Championship since 2015.

Meanwhile, England have threatened "absolute brutality" against France in their opening Six Nations game today in a bid to start to heal the pain of a lost Rugby World Cup final. Eddie Jones guided his English side to a thrilling semi-final win over New Zealand in Japan, but they faltered in the final, going down 32-12 to South Africa.

"There's a scar there and you'll have that scar for the rest of your life," Jones acknowledged. "It never goes away, but you deal with the scar." Jones, who said he wanted his England team to be referred to in the same way as rarely-beaten New Zealand, added: "You want to be motivated by success."

"Going forward, we want to play rugby that stops the nation. We want to play with such a ferocious spirit that the opposition don't know where to go." England thrashed France at Twickenham last year but the Red Rose has traditionally struggled to win on French soil.

STEELY EDGE

Since inception of the Six Nations in 2000, France have won six of the 10 meetings at the Stade de France. France were poor under Jacques Brunel, but threaten to be a different under newly-appointed Fabien Galthie, who has brought in experienced hands in ex-hooker and skipper Raphael Ibanez and Warren Gatland's former right-hand man at Wales, defence specialist Shaun Edwards.

A steelier edge and less pedestrian approach are expected from a team that rarely bared its teeth in last year's World Cup, where they exited after a 20-19 quarter-final defeat by Wales, expedited by a red card for Sebastien Vahaamahina's reckless elbow to Aaron Wainwright's face. Galthie has injected some youth into the France team. The starting XV has an average of fewer than 15 caps and there are only 12 survivors from the World Cup quarter-final loss to Wales in the 23 who will don kit on Sunday. Yet the backline has a familiar feel.

Romain Ntamack and Antoine Dupont start at half-back, inside the potentially dangerous midfield pairing of Gael Fickou and Fiji-born Virimi Vakatawa. "We need continuity as we build this team," said Galthie, with France to host the next Rugby World Cup in 2023.

"We count on them to continue to work and develop the potential in our team." There are Test debuts for Montpellier tight-head prop Mohamed Haouas and his club teammate, full-back Anthony Bouthier, with a further pair of international rookies on the bench in lock Boris Palu and back-rower Cameron Woki.

Flanker Charles Ollivon captains the side following Guilhem Guirado's retirement. Jones, meanwhile, hands George Furbank a Test debut at full-back, with prop Will Stuart likely to get his first cap off the bench in an England team featuring 12 starters from the World Cup final.

Owen Farrell, one of five players from crisis-hit Saracens in the match-day squad, again captains the English from inside centre. Jones predicted that the youthful France side, many of whom played for the country's world championship-winning u-20 side, "will have never have played against a brutal physicality and intensity that we are going to play with today".

That didn't sit well with some French people, the word carrying connotations of violence in the language



CARDIFF: Wales' Jarrod Evans (C) is tackled by Italy's Guglielmo Palazzani during the Six Nations international rugby union match between Wales and Italy at the Principality Stadium in Cardiff, south Wales, yesterday. Wales won the game 42 - 0. —AFP

of Voltaire. "You saw in the World Cup final how important aggression is," said Jones. "It's going to be the same today. I apologise if it's been interpreted the wrong way."

"You only have got to watch the World Cup to see

how brutal the game is. It's a tough game and we intend to play tough today." Jones added that French teams "never have been and never will be" shy of being brutal themselves, before adding: "It's a bit of a pointless conversation, to be honest." —AFP

stc sponsors Flare Festival for second year in a row

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company-stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, sponsored "Flare Festival", the largest of its kind fitness event in Kuwait for the past four years. The event falls under the one-year strategic partnership for 2020 between stc and Flare and includes a series of sports initiatives that will be launched throughout the period.

stc's sponsorship for the second consecutive year of the two-day competition was organized to enhance the local fitness scene and promote a healthier lifestyle for athletes of all ages. Participants, whether professional athletes, adults or children, competed in various challenges including powerlifting, CrossFit, the Hindrance race hosted by stc, and other challenges.

As part of its initiative, stc organized a series of challenges, activities and prizes at its booth. Representing the Company at the event, Danah Aljaseem and Ahmad Nawaibet honored the winners of the Hindrance race. stc also had a series of new promotions and offers for visitors of which was the exclusive launch of the HUAWEI Mate 30 Pro 5G.

Commenting on the sponsorship, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, Danah Aljaseem, said, "We believe that breaking down the barriers between health and fitness is essential towards the path of an active lifestyle. Sponsoring events that encourage the youth to strengthen their teamwork skills, challenge their mental and physical health, as well as participate in



social events that promote an energetic atmosphere are all key traits that fall in line with stc's primary social responsibility initiatives."

She said, "Over the years, Kuwait has experienced a drastic increase in the demand for athletic competitions that challenge participants to push past their mental barriers and truly challenge their physical state. While some competitions may be healthy to push athletes towards achieving their mental and physical goals, the true benefits lie in the social atmosphere and emotional responses that create a positive ripple effect among attendees. Whether individuals are participating, cheering or spectating, they are bound to sense the level of energy, enthusiasm and excitement that is projected into the air."

She concluded, "We are proud to have played a role in witnessing the successful outcome of this

event, and on this occasion stc would like to extend its gratitude and appreciation towards the organizers and other sponsors. We will continue to play an active role in the local community and participate in events that will drive sustainable growth in physical activity inspiring the youth to embrace a healthier and more proactive lifestyle."

The fitness competition, the largest fitness event of its kind in Kuwait this year, was held at Marina Crescent with 1,400 participants who drew in a crowd of 3,000 attendees to witness the various physical challenges. Opening categories at the festival include the student competition, the heat, the barbell, the gravity, the hindrance race and the market. Over the course of the two action packed days, both students and athletes from around the region challenged their opponents to be crowned the winners in their respective categories.

Crusaders set Super early pace as Sunwolves surprise

FUKUOKA: The Canterbury Crusaders launched their Super Rugby title defence with a 43-25 victory over the NSW Waratahs in an entertaining ninety festival in Nelson yesterday. It was the pupil outsmarting the master as the Crusaders scored six tries to three to confirm their status as championship frontrunners again, while in Fukuoka the Sunwolves began their farewell season with 36-27 upset of the Melbourne Rebels.

Crusaders coach Scott Robertson, bidding to take his side to a fourth consecutive title was mentioned early in his coaching career by now Waratahs coach Rob Penney and obviously learned well as the defending champions raced to a 24-6 lead at half-time.

They received a jolt midway through the second half when 19-year-old Waratahs' flyer Mark Nawaqanitawase scored twice in three minutes to narrow the gap to 24-18 before the Crusaders finished off with three further tries.

According to captain Scott Barrett it largely went according to plan. "We wanted to start well, we wanted to set the pace in this competition and we showed plenty of attacking endeavour. But in the first game of the season there were plenty of errors," he said.

Waratahs leader Rob Simmons was disappointed his side could not capitalise on opportunities they created. "They showed us that if you give them a sniff they're going to come and keep coming." The Crusaders showed their wide-ranging counter-attacking repertoire, mixing wide passes with close-range off-loads and deft kicks in behind the defence had the visitors scrambling.

Kurtley Beale was a constant threat for the Waratahs but his chances were few and the one time he did cross the line the try was scrubbed out because of a forward pass. David Havili, handed the kicking duties for the Crusaders ahead of Richie Mo'unga, traded early penalties with Waratahs fly-half Will Harrison.

But once the early testing exchanges were over, the Crusaders switched to try-scoring mode. Outside backs Will Jordan, Braydon Ennor and Leicester Fainga'anuku all scored in the first half, with Fainga'anuku running 60 metres after claiming a precision cross-kick from Mo'unga.

Nawaqanitawase's second try for the Waratahs after the break was also a 60-metre effort from an intercept as the Sydneysiders closed within six points and just over 20 minutes remaining. But the Crusaders stepped up another gear with Ennor and Jordan scoring their second tries, both finishing long-range attacks while Luke Romano crashed over from close to the line.

Alex Newsome scored the Waratahs third try just before full-time. The Sunwolves may no longer be wanted in Super Rugby after winning just eight of 61 matches since joining the competition in 2016, but they showed against the highly-touted Rebels they intend competing to the end.

Keisuke Moriya, Jaba Bregvadze, Tautalatasi Tasi, James Dargaville and Garth April all scored tries in the Fukuoka sunshine, and the mercurial fly-half April finished with 16 points, including five from-six with the boot.

The Sunwolves led 22-13 at half-time and were ahead with a solid 36-13 with 15 minutes to go when the Rebels came back with two late tries. "We only assembled four weeks ago," said Jake Schatz, captain of the hastily cobbled together side. —AFP

Refreshing bowling tournament

KUWAIT: As part of the bowling club board of directors' efforts to broaden the participation base as well as discovering new talent in order to take the game to new levels, the first refreshing tournament for men, youth and women will be launched today at the club in Salmiya and will continue until February 8.

The board, chaired by Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah allocated unprecedented prizes for first to sixth place as first place will be awarded KD 750. For ladies there will be prizes for first to eighth and for youth prizes will be given the first to fourth place.

It is expected the tournament will see many of those wishing to participate from both genders based on previous tournaments. The tournament is one of several organized by the club during the year.



Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah

USA Gymnastics offers Nassar victims \$215m to settle claims

NEW YORK: USA Gymnastics has offered \$215 million (194 million euros) to victims of sexual abuse by former national team doctor Larry Nassar to settle legal claims, a plan the attorney for more than 200 women called "unconscionable."

The offer was unveiled Thursday in a 76-page reorganization plan filed by the US sport governing body with the US bankruptcy court for the Southern District of Indiana. Olympic gymnasts are among more than 300 people who have sued USA Gymnastics for failure to properly safeguard them from Nassar, who in 2018 was sentenced to 40-125 years in prison for abusing female gymnasts while supposedly treating them.

USA Gymnastics, which hopes to escape bankruptcy protection before the July start of the Tokyo Olympics, says women abused by Nassar can vote as a group to accept \$215 million to settle all claims or continue to pursue lawsuits and collect judgments from the organization's insurance policies — with the option preferred collectively applying to all with abuse claims.

"It has always been our goal to reach a consensual settlement agreement with all of our

creditors through the bankruptcy process," said USA Gymnastics president and chief executive Li Li Leung.

"While we do not yet have an agreement with the Committee representing the survivors, we still hope to reach an agreement. "This plan allows for ongoing negotiations among the parties and we are hopeful that continued discussions will lead to an agreement that is supported by all parties in the case."

John Manly, an attorney for more than 200 athletes who accused Nassar, told the New York Times and Indianapolis Star the plan was "unconscionable." "Speaking to my clients and other lawyers, there's a better chance of (US President) Donald Trump endorsing (political rival) Bernie Sanders than the victims accepting this offer," Manly told the Times.

Manly, whose clients include Olympic gymnasts Aly Raisman and McKayla Maroney, also blasted the US Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) for not taking the matter seriously enough at the time.

"It's time we all begin to question why USOPC's sponsors continue to support an organization so blatantly indifferent to sexual assault of little girls and women," Manly tweeted. Manly told the Star the plan showed "an ongoing and blatant disregard" for more than 500 women who participate in its programs.

"This proposed plan does not include the critical structural changes necessary to ensure the safety of girls moving forward, nor does it appropriately address the myriad physical and emotional challenges the victims face as a result of these crimes," Manly told the Star.

"Most disturbingly, this proposed plan attempts to absolve USOPC of any responsibility for these crimes which were committed under its watch." —AFP

Sports

Ovechkin scores twice to reach 695 goals as Capitals beat Senators 5-3

Vasilevskiy, Lightning hold off Ducks

OTTAWA: Alex Ovechkin scored twice to reach 695 goals for his career and move into eighth on the NHL's all-time list, as the visiting Washington Capitals beat the Ottawa Senators for an eighth consecutive time, 5-3, on Friday night. Ovechkin drew even with Mark Messier for eighth place via a three-on-one with 9:33 left in the second period to give the NHL-leading Capitals a 3-1 lead. He took sole possession of the eighth spot with his 37th of the season and 11th goal in five games with a late empty-netter. T.J. Oshie, Evgeny Kuznetsov and Carl Hagelin also scored as Ilya Samsonov made 25 saves to win his 10th straight start — and 11th consecutive decision — for Washington, which is 8-3-0 in 2020. The Capitals have outscored Ottawa 38-16 during that eight-winning streak amid a 15-1-1 stretch in this series. Chris Tierney, Thomas Chabot and Artem Anisimov scored for the Senators, who entered on a 2-0-1 stretch. Marcus Hogberg stopped 32 shots as Ottawa fell to 2-4-5 at home since Dec. 21.

PENGUINS 4, FLYERS 3 (OT)

Sidney Crosby took a feed from Kris Letang and scored on a shot from the right edge of the high slot 55 seconds into overtime to give Pittsburgh a win over visiting Philadelphia in the league-leading 16th overtime game for both teams. Evgeni Malkin had a goal and two assists, Bryan Rust and Letang also scored, and Crosby added two assists for Pittsburgh, which is 11-3-1 in its past 15 games and leads the NHL with 19 home wins. Penguins goalie Tristan Jarry made 27 saves. Tyler Pitlick had a goal and an assist, Jacob Voracek and Scott Laughton also scored, and Matt Niskanen had two assists for the Flyers, who had won two straight. Brian Elliott made 16 saves.

GOLDEN KNIGHTS 4, HURRICANES 3

Alex Tuch scored his seventh goal of the season with 2:28 remaining as Vegas returned from a layoff to hold off Carolina in Raleigh, N.C. Tuch's winning goal came

just six seconds into a power play and only 71 seconds after Sebastian Aho tied the game for Carolina. Paul Stastny and Jonathan Marchessault each had a goal and an assist, while Nate Schmidt also scored for the Golden Knights. Golden Knights goalie Malcolm Subban stopped 22 shots. Teuvo Teravainen and Aho each registered a goal and an assist for the Hurricanes. Brock McGinn ignited the comeback with a goal. Goalie Petr Mrazek made 33 saves for Carolina, which had its two-game winning streak snapped.

LIGHTNING 4, DUCKS 3

Andrei Vasilevskiy made 23 saves to post his 150th NHL victory as Tampa Bay defeated host Anaheim, with Anthony Cirelli and Nikita Kucherov each finishing with a goal and an assist. Ondrej Palat and Erik Cernak also scored for the Lightning, who improved to 7-0-0 against the Pacific Division this season and are 14-2-1 in their past 17 games overall. Rickard Rakell, Michael Del Zotto and Troy Terry scored for the Ducks, and goaltender John Gibson stopped 18 of 22 shots. Ryan Getzlaf notched two assists, and Rakell and Del Zotto had one apiece.

BRUINS 2, JETS 1

Jake DeBrusk scored a power-play goal to snap a tie early in the third period as Boston skated to a victory at Winnipeg. Patrice Bergeron converted on a five-on-three power play late in the first period, and David Pastrnak notched a pair of assists for the Bruins, who improved to 6-2-1 in their past nine games. Bruins goalie Tuukka Rask made 37 saves in his return from a three-game absence caused by a concussion. Patrik Laine scored, and Laurent Brossoit turned aside 23 shots for the Jets, who have been outscored 22-8 during a season-worst, five-game losing streak.

OILERS 4, BLUES 2

Leon Draisaitl scored twice to lead host Edmonton



OTTAWA: Alex Ovechkin #8 of the Washington Capitals skates with the puck as Jean-Gabriel Pageau #44 of the Ottawa Senators looks on in the first period at Canadian Tire Centre in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. — AFP

past St Louis. Caleb Jones and Josh Archibald also scored for the Oilers, who are 6-1-1 in their last eight games. Goaltender Mikko Koskinen stopped 30 of 32 shots. David Perron and Robert Thomas scored for the Blues, who are 1-5-1 in their last seven road games. Netminder Jake Allen made 31 saves.

RANGERS 4, RED WINGS 2

New York scored four consecutive goals in a span of just over 15 minutes bridging the second and third periods, holding on to beat visiting Detroit. Pavel Buchnevich, Chris Kreider, Artemi Panarin and Mika Zibanejad scored for the Rangers, who snapped a two-game losing streak in their first game since the NHL All-Star break. Goalie Igor Shesterkin, making his fourth career start, recorded 23 saves. Robby Fabbri and Valtteri Filppula scored five minutes apart in the third period for the Red Wings, who began the second half by taking their seventh consecutive loss (0-6-1). Goalie Jimmy Howard made 35 saves. — Reuters

New era beckons as Chiefs, 49ers clash in Super Bowl

MIAMI: The Kansas City Chiefs chase their first Super Bowl title in 50 years today when they face the San Francisco 49ers in a championship clash poised to usher in a new era for the NFL. Around 100 million Americans are expected to tune in for the biggest event on the US sporting calendar, which kicks off at Miami's Hard Rock Stadium at 6.30pm (2330 GMT).

The eagerly anticipated showdown could mark a changing of the guard for the NFL's quarterback hierarchy as the curtain comes down on the league's 100th season. With Tom Brady and the New England Patriots failing to reach the Super Bowl for the first time since 2016, the stage is set for the Chiefs' Patrick Mahomes to crown his emergence as the best quarterback in the league.

The gifted 24-year-old Texan could become the second youngest quarterback to win a Super Bowl if he leads the Chiefs to victory in only his second full season as a starter.

Mahomes, who became only the second quarterback in history to amass 5,000 passing yards and 50 touchdowns in a season in 2018, has cut a relaxed figure during this week's build-up.

"I'm going to go out there and try and have fun and play the way I've played all season long," Mahomes said. "It's early in my career and I'm excited to go out there with my brothers and try to win."

Attempting to frustrate Mahomes and the Chiefs, who start as narrow favorites according to Las Vegas bookmakers, are a 49ers team chasing a record-equalling sixth Super Bowl.

Led by the 28-year-old quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo — who won two Super Bowl rings during his stint as a back-up to Brady in New England — the 49ers boast a fearsome defense which will attempt to knock Mahomes out of his stride.

Pakistan to treat India W Cup semi-final as 'normal game'

BENINI: Pakistan will treat the latest episode in their long cricket rivalry with neighbours India as "a normal game", batsman Mohammad Huraire said Friday ahead of their Under-19 World Cup semi-final.

Huraire struck 64 off 76 balls on Friday as Pakistan comfortably chased down 190 to beat Afghanistan in the quarter-finals of the



MIAMI: (L-R) Sportscaster James Brown SiriusXM host Joel Osteen, SiriusXM host Victoria Osteen, former NFL player Tony Dunny take photos onstage during day 3 of SiriusXM at Super Bowl LIV in Miami, Florida. — AFP

Garoppolo has an array of weapons at his disposal. Against the Green Bay Packers in the NFC Championship game, the 49ers blew away their opponents with a fearsome ground game which saw running back Raheem Mostert rush for four touchdowns and more than 200 yards.

The 49ers are also bound to have a few offensive tricks up their sleeve as they prepare under the guidance of head coach Kyle Shanahan, one of the most innovative minds in the NFL.

A win today would see the 49ers coach emulate his father Mike Shanahan, who won back-to-back Super Bowls with the Denver Broncos in 1998 and 1999. But Shanahan's coaching wizardry may prove moot if the 49ers defense is unable to contain Mahomes and a Chiefs offense bristling with pace in the form of receiver Tyreek Hill and power in the shape of tight end Travis Kelce.

The Chiefs have averaged 43 points per game in two playoff games, and during the regular season averaged just over 28 points per game. Kansas City's ability to produce devastating bursts of scoring was showcased in their playoff game against Houston last

youth tournament. Next up is a clash against India in Potchefstroom on Tuesday with a place in the final at stake.

"The India-Pakistan rivalry has always been there," said Huraire. "There will be a bit more pressure, but we'll get used to it. Myself, should I play, I'll try and play it like a normal game, and we look forward to it." India are the defending champions and have captured the Under-19 title on four occasions.

Pakistan were back-to-back champions in 2004 and 2006. They beat India in the 2006 final in Colombo where they bowled out their rivals for just 71 pursuing a modest target of 109. On Friday, Pakistan eased to victory with 53 balls to spare in Benoni but Huraire's innings came to a controversial end, being 'Mankaded' by Afghanistan

month, when they came back from a 24-0 deficit to win 51-31.

They also started slowly in the AFC Championship game against the Tennessee Titans, going 17-7 down before eventually running out 35-24 winners. The Chiefs are all too aware that conceding an early lead against the 49ers and their stingy defense could well be fatal.

"We obviously want our guys to go out there and have a faster start," said Chiefs offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy. "You certainly never ever want to spot a team 24 points."

A victory for Kansas City, meanwhile, would be the crowning glory of Chiefs head coach Andy Reid's distinguished career. A popular figure known affectionately among his players as "Big Red", the 61-year-old Reid is the most successful coach never to win a Super Bowl, having just missed out when his Philadelphia Eagles lost to New England in 2005.

"He's had an amazing career," Mahomes said of Reid. "Obviously, we want to win this game, the big one, to put that on his resume." — AFP

bowler Noor Ahmad.

Afghan captain Farhan Zakhil admitted after his side's eventual six-wicket defeat that they may not have resorted to the tactic if they had been in a better position. "At that time, we realised let's do something different to build pressure on Pakistan," Zakhil told cricinfo.com. "To be honest, it was not in the spirit of the game."

But Huraire conceded that he was to blame for leaving his crease. "I should've been in the crease, and I'll learn from the mistake. I'll ensure it isn't repeated again." India made the semi-finals with a 74-run win over Australia on Tuesday, maintaining their perfect record in the tournament having won all of their three group games. The second semi-final features Bangladesh against New Zealand, also in Potchefstroom, on Thursday. — AFP

India snatch another super over T20 victory against N Zealand

WELLINGTON: India snatched the fourth Twenty20 against New Zealand on Friday after yet another super over was needed to separate the two sides after the scores were tied following the regulation 20 overs. New Zealand, batting first in the decider, made 13 with Tim Seifert dropped twice before he was eventually dismissed.

In reply, Indian captain Virat Kohli hit the winning runs with a ball to spare. The third match also ended in a super over with Rohit Sharma hitting sixes off the last two balls to get India home. "What's happened in the last two games is unbelievable," Kohli said.

"It feels good when you are out of the game and then somehow find a way to come back and that shows the character of the team." The win puts India 4-0 up in the five match series with New Zealand stand-in captain Tim Southee not happy that his side could not wrap the game up in the 20 overs.

"It's very tough, especially in the position we got ourselves into and then to give them a chance at the end, they're going to grab it with both hands," he said. New Zealand, chasing India's 165 for eight, went into their last over only needing seven runs to win and with seven wickets in hand.

However, they were restricted to six runs and lost four wickets to finish 165 for seven and set up the super over.

Pakistan recall Ashraf, Bilal for Bangladesh Test

LAHORE: Pakistan yesterday recalled allrounder Faheem Ashraf and off-spinner Bilal Asif for the first Test against Bangladesh starting in Rawalpindi next week. Ashraf, 26, showed a lot of promise in his debut Test against Ireland in 2018 when he scored 83 but then faced injury problems and was discarded after the South Africa tour in January last year.

Bilal, 34, played the last of his five Tests against New Zealand in December 2018 and was not selected last year. Senior batsman Azhar Ali will lead the team. Head coach and chief selector Misbah-ul-Haq said Ashraf did well in the domestic tournament final two months ago.

"We have this option of playing a pace bowling allrounder against Bangladesh and Ashraf took five wickets in the Quaid-e-Azam trophy final so we have selected him," said Misbah.

The first Test starts in Rawalpindi from February 7. Bangladesh had

New Zealand had already suffered an earlier setback with talismanic captain Kane Williamson a late scratching having not fully recovered from a shoulder injury suffered while fielding in game three.

It was left to lusty hitting by Colin Munro and Seifert to provide the backbone of their innings with Munro making 64 and Seifert out in the final over for 57. India, sent into bat first, made 165 for eight on a flat track at Wellington stadium with the innings anchored by an unbeaten 50 from Manish Pandey and his partnerships with Thakur and Navdeep Saini. India were six for 88 in the 12th over before Pandey and Thakur arrested the slide in a 43-run stand with Thakur contributing 20.

Saini, who was not out 11 in his first appearance on tour, put on 22 with Pandey off the last 13 deliveries. In a slow start to their reply, New Zealand were 23 for one after five overs.

But in the sixth over, when Thakur would back the pace to under 140 kilometres per hour (87mph), Munro found his timing with a six and two fours to get the scoreboard moving.

In partnership with Seifert they put on 72 off 44 deliveries before Munro was run out in a smart piece of relay fielding involving Thakur and Kohli who threw down the stumps. — AFP

agreed to tour Pakistan in three phases and after playing three Twenty20 internationals returned home earlier this week.

They will play the first Test and then return again for the sole one-day international (April 3) and second Test (April 7-11) — both in Karachi. Misbah said Pakistan would have to play at their best despite beating Bangladesh 2-0 in the three-match Twenty20 series, with one match rained off.

"There is no guarantee that if a team doesn't do well in one format then it will not do better in the other format as well," said Misbah. "They are a gritty team and will be under no pressure." Both the Tests are part of the ongoing World Test championship contested by the top nine teams.

India currently lead the championship with 360 points followed by Australia (296), England (146) and Pakistan (80). The top two teams in the table will play the June 2021 final in England.

Squad: Azhar Ali (captain), Abid Ali, Asad Shafiq, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Bilal Asif, Fawad Alam, Haris Sohail, Imam-ul-Haq, Imran Khan, Mohammad Abbas, Mohammad Rizwan, Naseem Shah, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shan Masood, Yasir Shah. — AFP

Sports

Zidane inspires Real Madrid to derby victory over Atletico

Gareth Bale's absence was not related to fitness

MADRID: Zinedine Zidane's double substitution at half-time transformed the Madrid derby yesterday as Real Madrid edged past Atletico 1-0 to move six points clear at the top of La Liga. Karim Benzema scored the winner at the Santiago Bernabeu after Zidane's decisive intervention turned a contest that Atletico had dominated into another comfortable Real Madrid victory.

Vinicius Junior, one of the substitutes, was a key to the goal. Second-place Barcelona can cut the gap back to three points by beating Levante at home today but Atletico now trail the leaders by 13 points.

While Diego Simeone's side were excellent in the first half, they were yet again blunt in front of goal and then failed to respond when their opponents found a different gear. This is Atletico's fifth game without a win. The worry is that on this form, they should worry not about the title race but about missing out on Champions League qualification.

It is a far cry from pre-season when Atletico thrashed Real 7-3 and many were tipping them as serious challengers. Zidane was under pressure then, but his team are on a relentless run, now 21 games unbeaten, the latest due in large part to his changes.

The decision to ditch a failing system and revert to 4-3-3, with Vinicius Junior and Lucas Vazquez coming on for Isco and Toni Kroos, was both brave and effective. Real's form is impressive and they have Eden Hazard, out since November, on the brink of a return, perhaps on Thursday in the Copa del Rey quarter-finals against Real Sociedad.

Gareth Bale's absence was not related to fitness. The Welshman was left out of the squad despite training for most of the week after an ankle injury. Atletico were

without the injured Kieran Trippier, meaning Sime Vrsaljko came in a right-back. January signing Yannick Carrasco was named on the bench, after rejoining from Dalian Yifang the day before.

Simeone's side were significantly better in the first half and should have taken one of a handful of decent chances as Vitolo hit Thibaut Courtois, Saul Niguez flashed wide and Angel Correa poked past the post after going through one-on-one, even if he probably would have been called offside.

Real Madrid's cluster of central midfielders looked unsure of their 4-3-2-1 shape. Fede Valverde looked particularly uncomfortable as he spent much of the first half as a right winger. Luka Modric was virtually anonymous in his more advanced role.

Zidane's double change was a recognition of Atletico's superiority as he reverted to the more familiar 4-3-3 with Modric deeper in midfield. The balance shifted immediately. Real dominated the start of the second half.

In the 56th minute, Vinicius cut in from the left and slipped in the overlapping Ferland Mendy, whose cross to the back post gave Benzema a simple finish. Atletico had been weakened shortly before when Alvaro Morata, perhaps the best player on the pitch in the first 45 minutes, went off with an injury. He was replaced by Thomas Lemar, whom Simeone expected to be sold in the January transfer window. Real retreated a little, perhaps waiting for an Atletico push that never came.

Valverde enjoyed a spontaneous standing ovation for a burst forward, an appreciation too perhaps for his brilliant breakthrough season. Another roar of approval greeted the final whistle. —AFP



MADRID: Atletico Madrid's Brazilian defender Felipe (TOP C) jumps for the ball with Real Madrid's Spanish defender Sergio Ramos (TOP R) during the Spanish league football match between Real Madrid CF and Club Atletico de Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid yesterday. — AFP

Bayern beat Mainz to go top, Haaland scores again

BERLIN: Bayern Munich scored three goals in the opening 26 minutes to defeat Mainz 05 3-1 away yesterday and go two points clear at the top of the

Bundesliga with their sixth straight win. Top scorer Robert Lewandowski headed in his 22nd league goal in the eighth minute and Thomas Mueller and Thiago Alcantara added two more to lift the Bavarians to 42 points, two ahead of RB Leipzig who face Borussia Moenchengladbach later.

Bayern's fast start was enough to kill off the game and Mainz, who cut the deficit on the stroke of halftime through Jeremias St Juste, rarely threatened although Leandro Barreiro hit the post.

The Bavarians also set a club record with 58 goals in their 20 league games in a boost for interim coach

Hansi Flick, whose future at the club is still unclear. Borussia Dortmund enjoyed an even more dominant afternoon, demolishing Union Berlin 5-0 with two goals from Norwegian sensation Erling Haaland, who became the first player in Bundesliga history to score seven goals in his first three matches. Jadon Sancho opened their account in the 13th and teenager Haaland added another five minutes later. Dortmund scored twice more after the break through Marco Reus and Axel Witsel before Haaland drilled in his second for the Ruhr valley club's third straight league win this year. — Reuters

Blazers top Lakers on tribute night for Kobe Bryant

LOS ANGELES: Damian Lillard scored 29 of his 48 points in the second half, and the visiting Portland Trail Blazers posted a 127-119 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Friday as the Lakers paid tribute to the life of Kobe Bryant. Lillard, who just missed recording his second straight triple-double, also had 10 assists and nine rebounds. He connected on 7 of 12 3-point attempts and 17 of 30 shots from the floor. Hassan Whiteside had 30 points on 13-of-14 shooting while adding 12 rebounds and five blocks for Portland. Anthony Davis led the Lakers with 37 points, 15 boards and five blocks. LeBron James finished with 22 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds, and Kyle Kuzma had 17 points and 15 rebounds. There were a host of tributes and musical performances throughout the affair, including a moving pregame speech by James, as the Lakers played their first game since the Bryant, his 13-year-old daughter Gianna and seven others perished in a helicopter crash Sunday in Calabasas, Calif.



LOS ANGELES: LeBron James #23 of the Los Angeles Lakers drives to the basket during the game against the Portland Trail Blazers at STAPLES Center in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

BROOKLYN NETS 133 - CHICAGO BULLS 118
Kyrie Irving delivered an electrifying, 54-point performance in Brooklyn's victory over Chicago in New York. It was the third-highest point total for Irving, whose career high was 57 on March 12, 2015, with Cleveland at San Antonio. The Nets beat the Bulls for the ninth time in the past 11 meetings thanks to Irving, who made his first 10 shots, shot 19 of 23 overall and helped finish off the win with one dynamic stretch in the fourth quarter. Irving also tied a season high by making seven 3-pointers (on nine attempts). Spencer Dinwiddie added 20 points and seven assists for the Nets, who shot 62.5 percent and won for the third time in four games. Zach LaVine scored 22 points for the Bulls, who shot 48.8 percent.

DENVER NUGGETS 127 - MILWAUKEE BUCKS 115
Will Barton had 24 points, eight assists and seven rebounds, Nikola Jokic was an assist shy of a triple-double, and visiting Denver beat Milwaukee. The Nuggets had all nine players who got into the game score in double figures. Jokic finished with 15 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists for the Nuggets, and Michael Porter Jr. had 15 points and 11 rebounds before leaving in the fourth quarter with an ankle injury. Malik Beasley added 16 points and Monte Morris had 14 for Denver, which made a season-best 22 3-pointers. Giannis Antetokounmpo had 31 points, 16 rebounds and nine assists. Khris Middleton added 24 points and Eric Bledsoe scored 15 for the Bucks, who had their nine-game winning streak snapped.

HOUSTON ROCKETS 128 - DALLAS MAVERICKS 121
James Harden and Russell Westbrook combined for 67 points, and undersized Houston squared its season series against visiting Dallas,

which played without All-Star guard Luka Doncic (right ankle sprain). Harden posted 35 points, a season-high 16 rebounds, six assists and four steals. Westbrook added 32 points, six rebounds, nine assists and three steals. Eric Gordon tallied 17 points for Houston, which made 21 of 45 3-point attempts (46.7 percent) and 45.9 percent from the floor overall. Kristaps Porzingis led Dallas with 35 points and 12 rebounds. Seth Curry added 16 points and Tim Hardaway chipped in 15. The Mavericks shot 48.7 percent from the floor but only 38.9 percent from behind the arc.

TORONTO RAPTORS 105 - DETROIT PISTONS 92
Pascal Siakam had 30 points, seven rebounds and four assists, and visiting Toronto extended its winning streak to 10 games by rolling past struggling Detroit. Serge Ibaka contributed 21 points, six rebounds and three assists. Fred VanVleet supplied 16 points, eight rebounds and nine assists for the Raptors, who led most of the way. Center Marc Gasol missed the game with a hamstring injury, but Toronto outscored Detroit 66-28 in the paint. Derrick Rose led the Pistons, who have lost five straight, with 21 points. Andre Drummond had 20 points and 20 rebounds.

NEW ORLEANS PELICANS 139 - MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES 111
Zion Williamson scored 24 points to lead eight New Orleans players in double figures in a rout of visiting Memphis. The game featured the first matchup between Williamson, the No. 1 overall pick in last summer's NBA draft, and No. 2 pick, the Grizzlies' Ja Morant. Brandon Ingram followed Williamson with 20 points and Lonzo Ball scored 19 for the Pelicans. New Orleans coach Alvin Gentry got his 500th career victory. Jonas Valanciunas scored 18 to lead the Grizzlies, who saw their four-game winning streak end. Memphis lost for just the third time in 14 games. Morant scored 16 points, and Jae Crowder had 15.

OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER 111 - PHOENIX SUNS 107
Chris Paul had 20 points and 10 assists, and he scored six critical points in the final 1:03 to lift Oklahoma City to a victory at Phoenix. The win was the seventh in eight games for the Thunder and the seventh consecutive on the road. The loss was the fourth in six games for the Suns. Danilo Gallinari led the Thunder with 27 points while Dennis Schroder added 24 off the bench. Kelly Oubre and Devin Booker scored 27 each for Phoenix, though Booker was just 1 of 5 from behind the 3-point arc. — Reuters

Live		Matches on TV	
		(Local Timings)	
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE			
Burnley FC v Arsenal FC	beIN Sports		17:00
Tottenham Hotspur v Manchester City	beIN Sports HD 2		19:30
SPANISH LEAGUE PRIMERA			
CD Leganes v Real Sociedad	beIN Sports		14:00
SD Eibar v Real Betis	beIN Sports		16:00
Athletic de Bilbao v Getafe CF	beIN Sports		18:00
Sevilla FC v Deportivo Alaves	beIN Sports		20:30
FC Barcelona v Levante	beIN Sports		23:00
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE			
Juventus FC v ACF Fiorentina	beIN Sports HD 4		14:30
Atalanta v Genoa CFC	beIN Sports		17:00
SS Lazio v spal	beIN Sports		17:00
AC Milan v Hellas Verona FC	beIN Sports		17:00
US Lecce v Torino FC	beIN Sports		20:00
Udinese Calcio v Internazionale Milano	beIN Sports		22:45
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA			
FC Koln v SC Freiburg	beIN Sports		17:30
SC Paderborn 07 v VFL Wolfsburg	beIN Sports		20:00
FRENCH LEAGUE			
OGC Nice v Olympique Lyonnais	beIN Sports		17:00
FC Metz v Saint Etienne	beIN Sports		19:00
FC Girondins de Bordeaux v Olympique Marseille	beIN Sports		23:00

Everton seal remarkable comeback win at Watford

LONDON: Everton fought back from two goals down at Watford to earn a remarkable 3-2 win with just 10 men, prevailing in a dramatic finish to an entertaining contest on Saturday between two sides who are looking re-energised under new management. After starting their stirring comeback with two first-half stoppage-time goals from Yerry Mina, Everton were a man down for the final 20 minutes after Fabian Delph was sent off for a second yellow card foul. Despite being under the cosh, Theo Walcott sealed the most unlikely of wins, tapping in after a 90th minute counter-attack with a winner that leaves Watford still struggling one place from the bottom of the league. Watford's impressive revival under the stewardship of Nigel Pearson had earlier looked set to continue as they went two up through Adam Masina's 10th minute goal, his first in the Premier League, and Roberto Pereyra's smart 42nd minute finish. Yet Everton, displaying impressive new-found enterprise under Carlo Ancelotti, struck back with two goals in three minutes just before the break, with their unlikely saviour being the Colombian defender Mina. Having struck in the first minute of added time when he bundled the ball home after a goalmouth scramble, he then headed in the equaliser on the stroke of half time. After the break Everton looked the more threatening until Delph's expulsion for two yellow card offences in the space of a quarter of an hour. — Reuters

25 Wales beat Italy 42-0 in Six Nations opener



26 New era beckons as Chiefs, 49ers clash in Super Bowl



27 Zidane inspires Real Madrid to derby victory over Atletico



Kenin stuns Muguruza to win Australian Open



MELBOURNE: Sofia Kenin (R) of the US poses with the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup along with runner-up Spain's Garbine Muguruza after their women's singles final match on day thirteen of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

MELBOURNE: America's Sofia Kenin stunned two-time Major champion Garbine Muguruza to win the Australian Open yesterday, completing a surprise run where she has come from nowhere to win her first Grand Slam title.

Despite making her debut in a Major final Kenin, 21, showed all her trademark aggression as she fought back from a set down to win 4-6, 6-2, 6-2 in 2hrs 3mins against the shellshocked Spaniard. The 14th seed, who will now jump as high as seventh in the world and usurp Serena Williams as America's number one, was in tears at the end and headed straight for her father Alexander, who is her coach.

It was the final twist in a tournament of upsets, after Williams went out in the third round and Kenin upset Australia's world number one Ashleigh Barty in

the semi-finals. "My dream officially came true, I can't describe this feeling," said Moscow-born Kenin. "It's amazing, dreams come true. If you have dreams, go for it, it's going to come true."

Spain's Muguruza, 26, was unseeded for the first time at a Slam since 2014 having suffered a marked loss of form in the last 18 months. She was resurgent in Melbourne over the past fortnight, but after grabbing the first-set lead, her serve failed her spectacularly.

She totted up eight double-faults in all, three of them in the final game — including one on the second championship point, handing the title to her younger opponent. Muguruza drew first blood at Rod Laver Arena, where the roof was closed for rain in Melbourne, getting the first break of serve. Moscow-

born Kenin, who ended the fairytale run of 15-year-old Coco Gauff on her way to the final, bounced her American stars-and-stripes racquet on the hardcourt in irritation.

The 2016 French Open and 2017 Wimbledon winner Muguruza took the first set in 52 minutes when the young American planted her forehand out. But the aggressive Kenin upped the ante in the second set, breaking her more experienced opponent in the fourth game and easily holding to sprint into a 4-1 lead. Kenin, who won their only previous encounter in three sets, grabbed the second set in an emphatic 32 minutes. A rattled Muguruza was seen briefly by a physio for what appeared to be a lower-back problem. Into the deciding set and the gutsy Kenin saved three game points in a pivotal fifth game, tossing the

ball back over her head by way of celebration. Kenin, who was overshadowed in the build-up to Melbourne by the likes of Williams, Osaka and Barty, adds by far the biggest title of her fast-burgeoning career to the three WTA crowns she won last year.

"The past two weeks have been the best of my life," she told Rod Laver Arena, as her father — who left the Soviet Union in 1987 to give the family a better life — filmed her victory speech on his phone. "I love you guys from the bottom of my heart, thank you so much," she told the crowd.

At 21 years and 80 days, Kenin is 22 days younger than Japan's Naomi Osaka when she won the title last year. Kenin is the youngest Australian Open champion since Maria Sharapova — her idol — won aged 20 in 2008. — AFP

Liverpool move 22 points clear as Chelsea salvage point at Leicester

LONDON: Liverpool surged a massive 22 points clear at the top of the Premier League with a 4-0 win over Southampton as Leicester and Chelsea consolidated their place in the top four in a thrilling 2-2 draw at the King Power. Mohamed Salah scored twice as the champions-elect equalled a Premier League record with a 20th straight home win at Anfield. Southampton believed they should have had a penalty early in the second half when Danny Ings went down in the box against his old club, but no spot-kick was given and Liverpool went straight up the other end to take the lead through Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain.

Jordan Henderson doubled the European champions lead with a smart finish on the hour mark. Salah then produced two cool finishes in the final 20 minutes as Jurgen Klopp's men took their tally of points to a remarkable 100 from the last possible 102.

Chelsea stretched their advantage over Manchester United, Wolves and Tottenham to seven points, but offered further hope to the chasing pack in the battle for a Champions League place.

Frank Lampard's men have now won just four of their last 13 league games and the Blues' boss' frustration at

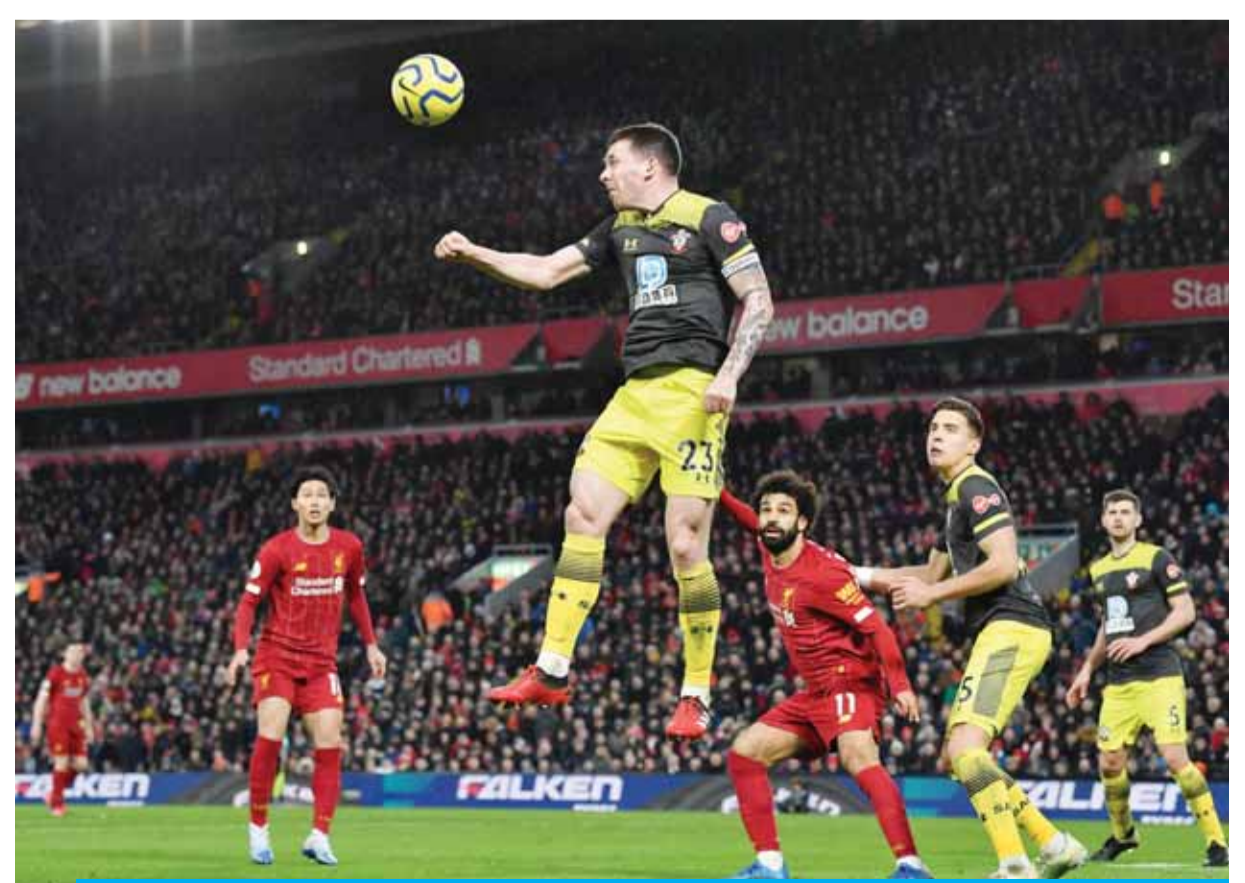
not being able to add to his forward options in the January transfer window was exacerbated as the visitors needed two goals from centre-back Antonio Rudiger just to claim a point. "Not many people gave us the top four slot and I understand why, and it's probably the same now," said Lampard. "We've come to Leicester, who everyone's raving about, quite rightly, and we've got a point."

All the goals came in the second half as Rudiger nodded Chelsea in front before two goals in 10 minutes from Harvey Barnes and Ben Chilwell turned the game around for Leicester. A brilliant leap from Rudiger 19 minutes from time denied the Foxes all three points, but Brendan Rodgers's men maintain an eight-point lead over Chelsea in third.

"We should have won having gone 2-1 up. We gifted them two goals really, which we're disappointed with," said Rodgers. Sheffield United are now Chelsea's closest challengers as Chris Wilder's men moved into fifth with a 1-0 win at Crystal Palace thanks to a calamitous own goal from Eagles' goalkeeper Vicente Guaita.

Manchester United or Wolves could move back above the Blades with victory when they face off later at Old Trafford. At the bottom of the table, West Ham and Watford blew two-goal leads to slip into the relegation zone. A double for Robert Snodgrass after Issa Diop's opener put West Ham 3-1 up on Brighton at the London Stadium, but the Seagulls fought back through Pascal Gross and Glenn Murray for a point that keeps them two points above the drop zone.

Aston Villa's celebrations at reaching the League Cup final in midweek were short-lived as 10-man Bournemouth held on for a 2-1 win that lifted them up to 16th. Norwich are now seven points adrift of safety at the bottom of the table as they again paid for not taking their chances in a 0-0 draw at Newcastle. —AFP



ANFIELD: Southampton's Danish midfielder Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg (C) heads the ball during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Southampton at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England yesterday. — AFP