



**5** Diplomat: Kuwait, Philippines want deal on domestic workers



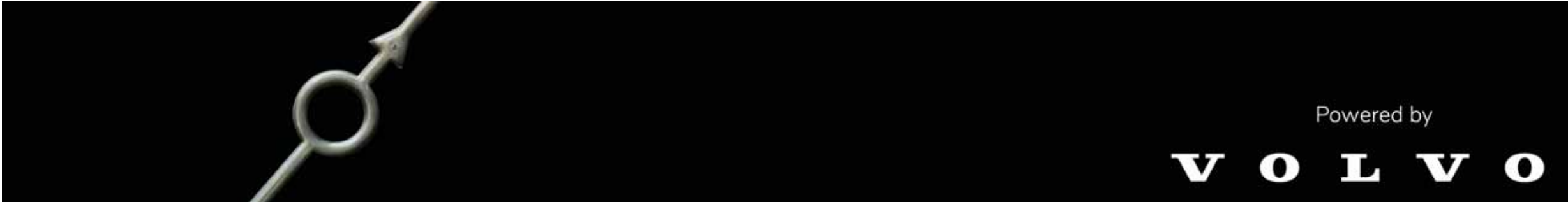
**7** Protest camps splinter over Sadr's backing of new PM



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**28** 'Comeback Kings' Kansas City end 50-yr Super Bowl drought



# OIC rejects Trump plan; Kuwait says Palestine cause top priority

Netanyahu talks 'normalization' with Sudan • Uganda 'studying' embassy in Jerusalem



JEDDAH: Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad Al-Maliki (right) delivers a speech during an emergency ministerial meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) yesterday to address US President Donald Trump's Middle East plan. — AFP

JEDDAH: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation yesterday rejected US President Donald Trump's peace plan for the Middle East, calling on its 57 member states not to help implement it. The pan-Islamic body, which represents more than 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide, "rejects this US-Israeli plan as it does not meet the minimum aspirations and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and contradicts the terms of reference of the peace process", it said in a statement.

A meeting of foreign ministers at OIC headquarters in the Saudi city of Jeddah called on "all member states not (to) deal with this plan or cooperate with the US administration efforts to enforce it in any way or form". Under the US plan unveiled last week, Israel would retain control of the disputed city of Jerusalem as its "undivided capital" and annex settlements on Palestinian lands. Trump's plan suggests that Israel would retain control of the contested city of Jerusalem as its "undivided capital" but Palestinians would be allowed to declare a capital adjacent to Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem.

The OIC reiterated its support for east Jerusalem as capital of a future Palestinian state, stressing its "Arab and Islamic character". It said peace would "only be achieved with the end of the Israeli occupation, the full withdrawal from the territory of the State of Palestine in particular the holy city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif (Jerusalem)

and the other Arab territories occupied since (the) June 1967 (Middle East war)".

Kuwait highly appreciates the international community's efforts to find a solution to the Middle East conflict, the Kuwaiti foreign minister said yesterday, describing the "Palestinian cause" as the Muslim world's chief concern. The misery the Palestinians have had to withstand amid a conflict that has raged on for more than half a century is unspeakable, Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah told the OIC meeting. After similar talks involving the foreign ministers of Arab League member states last week, he lamented the fact that an end to the plight of the Palestinians remains elusive, emphasizing that an independent state of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital remains the ultimate goal.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met Sudan's leader yesterday to discuss "normalization" between the two states, his office said. Netanyahu met Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, chairman of Sudan's ruling sovereign council, and "agreed to start cooperation leading to normalization of the relationship between the two countries," a statement from his office said. Israel and Sudan are technically at war. "History," Netanyahu said in a tweet announcing the meeting. The statement from Netanyahu's office said the prime

Continued on Page 24

## News in brief

### China admits virus 'shortcomings'

BEIJING: China's top leadership yesterday admitted "shortcomings and difficulties" in its response to the coronavirus outbreak and the government said it "urgently" needed medical supplies to battle the outbreak which has killed more than 360 people. The comments came as 57 new deaths were confirmed yesterday - the single-biggest daily increase since the virus was detected late last year in the central city of Wuhan, where it is believed to have jumped from animals at a market into humans. The government also said it "urgently" needed medical equipment and surgical masks, protective suits, and safety goggles as it battles to control the outbreak. — AFP (See Page 24)

### UAE discovers huge gas reserves

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates, a leading OPEC producer, announced yesterday the discovery of huge gas reserves, saying the find would help the Gulf state achieve self-sufficiency. Abu Dhabi National Oil Co (ADNOC) said about 80 trillion cubic feet (2.2 trillion cu m) of shallow gas resources were discovered between the emirates of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the largest of the seven-member UAE. Leaders of Abu Dhabi and Dubai witnessed the signing of an agreement between ADNOC and Dubai Supply Authority for the exploration and development of the gas resources. The produced gas will be supplied to Dubai which currently imports most of its gas needs from neighboring Qatar. — AFP

### Denmark arrests 3 Ahwaz 'spies'

COPENHAGEN: Denmark's intelligence service arrested and charged three members of an Iranian separatist group with spying on behalf of Saudi Arabia in Denmark, it said yesterday. The Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) said it arrested three leading members of the ASMLA, Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz. The three "have carried out espionage activities on behalf of a Saudi intelligence service from 2012 to 2018", Finn Borch Andersen, head of the intelligence agency, told a Copenhagen press conference. Denmark's foreign minister Jeppe Kofod said he had summoned the Saudi ambassador for talks. In the Netherlands, another suspected member of the same organization was arrested south of The Hague yesterday. — AFP

## Turkey, Syria in deadly flare-up

BEIRUT: Turkish and Syrian troops traded fire in northwest Syria yesterday, with more than 20 reported dead, further raising tension between Ankara and regime backer Moscow over the war-torn Idlib rebel enclave. Russian air strikes also killed 14 civilians in the same area, where a government offensive has caused one of the worst displacement waves of the nine-year-old Syrian conflict, a monitoring group said.

The tit-for-tat shelling between Turkish and Russian-backed Syrian forces was the deadliest since Turkey deployed troops in Syria in 2016 and escalated tensions between the conflict's two top foreign protagonists. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had

offered rare criticism of Russia last week, accusing it of "not honoring" agreements to prevent a regime offensive on rebel-held Idlib.

The overnight clash began with regime shelling of Turkish positions in Idlib, hours after a Turkish military convoy of at least 240 vehicles entered northwest Syria, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor. The attack killed five soldiers and three Turkish civilians despite previous coordination on where Ankara's forces would be in the region, Turkey's defense ministry said.

The Russian defense ministry said Ankara had failed to give prior warning of its troop movements at the time of the incident. Retaliatory rocket attacks by Ankara on regime positions later killed at least 13 Syrian government troops and wounded 20 others in Idlib and

Continued on Page 24



URUM AL-KUBRA, Syria: Members of the Syrian White Helmets prepare the bodies of children killed in a Russian air strike for burial in this village in rebel-held northern Aleppo province yesterday. — AFP

## Gold and Bentleys: Lebanese spend big to salvage savings

BEIRUT: Companies are closing and restaurants are half empty but in the gloom of Lebanon's worst economic crisis in decades, luxury jewelers, supercar dealerships and art galleries are doing brisk business. Worried that their life savings might vanish with a collapse of the banking sector, some Lebanese are syphoning cash from their accounts and buying the most expensive goods they can get their hands on.

Banks have slapped restrictions on withdrawals and overseas transfers, leading some depositors to use cashier's checks to spend savings they fear would otherwise be depleted by a haircut or a devaluation. "Our sales have trebled since November," said Karl Kenaan, a Beirut-based real estate broker. "There's a huge demand."

Companies encouraging Lebanese to offload their savings by investing in property have launched advertising campaigns on billboards and on social media. "People want to diversify their investments as a precaution against the threat that hovers above the banking sector and the national currency," Kenaan said. To be on the safe side, many choose to buy flats and houses outside of Lebanon for fear the property market could collapse too. "Secure your savings with a property investment in Greece you can pay for in Lebanon," reads a Facebook ad for a real estate agency.



DBAYEH, Lebanon: A picture taken on Jan 28, 2020 shows a billboard advertising real estate north of Beirut. — AFP

The Lebanese pound has been officially pegged to the dollar since 1997 but it has lost a third of its value on the parallel market recently. With the prospect that Lebanon might restructure or default on its debt after years of economic mismanagement and corruption, many Lebanese fear that an official devaluation of the pound will slash their savings. The loss of confidence in a banking sector that was once a source of national pride is such that deposits in Lebanon have slumped by \$12 billion over the first 11 months of 2019.

For years, deposits had been fuelled by the influx of money from Lebanon's vast diaspora and Gulf residents who were attracted by high interest rates. These rates, however, have decreased significantly since December, further dissuading depositors abroad and at home from putting their money in the bank.

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## Slovenia's first mosque opens after 50 years

LJUBLJANA, Slovenia: Slovenia's first mosque opened in the capital Ljubljana yesterday after surmounting financial hurdles and right-wing opposition, 50 years after the initial request to build was made. Opponents of the project - including those who criticized its Qatari financing - have repeatedly tried to halt it, and pig heads and blood have also been left on the site.

Islamic community head Multi Nedžad Grabus said the mosque's opening was "a turning point in our lives". "Slovenia is the last former Yugoslav state to get a mosque, making Ljubljana a capital rather than a provincial town on the edge of the world," he told a press conference.

Muslims in the predominantly Catholic Alpine country first filed a request to build a mosque in the late 1960s while Slovenia was still part of the former Communist Yugoslavia. The community finally received permission 15 years ago, but ran into opposition from right-wing politicians and groups, as well as financial troubles.

Construction, which began in 2013, cost some €34 million (\$39 million), out of which €28 million were Qatari donations, according to Grabus. Situated in a semi-industrial area of Ljubljana, the mosque, which can hold up to 1,400 people, constitutes the core of the six-building Islamic Cultural Centre.

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## Local

# Crown Prince receives Saudi STC chief at Bayan Palace

## Amir offers condolences over Tanzania stampede victims



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the visiting Chairman of Saudi Telecom Company (STC) Prince Mohammad bin Khalid Abdullah Al Faisal. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the visiting Chairman of Saudi Telecom Company (STC) Prince Mohammad bin Khalid Abdullah Al Faisal and members of his delegation.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace the visiting Chairman of Saudi Telecom Company (STC) Prince Mohammad bin Khalid Abdullah Al Faisal and board chairmen of Saudi and Kuwaiti telecom companies. His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Protocol Head Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah attended the meeting. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received Prince Mohammad and his accompanying delegation yesterday at Seif Palace.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable of condolences to President of Tanzania John Joseph Pombe Magufuli over victims of a church stampede in Moshi, northern Tanzania, which resulted in 20 deaths and many casualties. In the cable, His Highness wished mercy for the deceased and a swift recovery for the injured. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables, while National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem sent a condolence cable to his Tanzanian counterpart Job Ndugai. — KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the visiting Chairman of Saudi Telecom Company (STC) Prince Mohammad bin Khalid Abdullah Al Faisal.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the visiting Chairman of Saudi Telecom Company (STC) Prince Mohammad bin Khalid Abdullah Al Faisal and members of his delegation.

### News in brief

#### Kuwait, Russia FMs discuss developments

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah yesterday received a phone call from his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov, discussing distinguished ties between their own countries. During the conversation, both ministers underlined mutual willingness to develop and cement relations to serve the common interests of both sides and their own people. They also mulled over the latest regional and international developments, stressing that it is essential to de-escalate tensions, stave off looming hazards in the region and exercise wisdom and self-restraint so that regional security and stability prevail. — KUNA



Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Sabah

#### Mortgage market hits KD 22.8 million

KUWAIT: Mortgage loans at Kuwait Credit Bank (KCB) were worth KD 22.8 million (\$74.9 million) in January, according to official statistics released by the bank yesterday. KCB's real estate portfolio was valued KD 128,300 (\$422,000), while loans allocated for the construction of private residential units stood at KD 2.1 million (\$6.9 million), the statistics showed. Loans for government-owned properties hit KD 12.7 million (\$41.7 million) it added. — KUNA

#### Schools working with health ministry

KUWAIT: The ministries of education and health are working in coordination on the detection and prevention of the new coronavirus at schools across the country, a health ministry official said. Health ministry spokesperson Abdallah Al-Sanad highlighted the importance of increasing the role of school clinics nationwide and training medical staff on how to deal with the epidemic. He also underlined the need to create awareness campaigns for students and parents alike, illustrating the ministry's commitment to the public's health and to take the necessary precautions against the disease. Warning against non-essential travel to countries that have registered confirmed cases of the disease, he reiterated that Kuwait up until now has not yet identified any infected individuals. Nationals and residents were urged to communicate with the ministry, through its official channels, in regards to announcements made about the disease and to disregard rumors that may jeopardize health security and cause fear amongst the public. — KUNA

## KMAC honors pioneers of Kuwaiti media



KMAC honors the family of late Kuwaiti actor Abdulhussein Abdulredha.



KMAC honors the family of late minister and columnist Ahmad Al-Rabie.

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Kuwait Media Association and Communication (KMAC) held a Kuwait Media Day event on Sunday. During the event, a discussion panel was held, where journalists spoke about the present situation of Kuwait's media and their aspirations for the future. Journalists also spoke about the most important issues and the obstacles they are facing in their profession. KMAC also presented its proposal for a future vision of Kuwaiti media.

This was followed by an award ceremony honoring more than 50 of Kuwait's most popular actors, TV and radio anchors, TV producers, authors, jour-

ists, Kuwait University professors, poets, musicians, composers, photographers and others.

Madhi Al-Khamees, President of KMAC, said the awards are for personalities who have made great achievements in the media, arts and cultural fields. "I fell in love with journalism after seeing an interview with a famous reporter. So I decided the next day to visit him at the newspaper, where I went on a tour. They gave me an office there and I started working in this field. I learnt a lot from them, and today I'm awarding some of these great people," he noted.

To commemorate popular Kuwaiti personalities who have passed away,

Khamees handed a few awards in their names in various categories. "The family members of these famous personalities will present the trophies to the awardees. In this way, each of these prizes will commemorate this person as it was named after them. I want to apologize to those who deserve an award but I was not able to award them this year," Khamees added.

Dr Qais Al-Azawi, Assistant Undersecretary for the Media and Communication Sector at the Arab League, expressed his happiness for attending the award ceremony. He spoke about the history of journalism in the Arab world, mentioning some stories of popular personalities from Arab and Islamic history.



KUWAIT: President of KMAC Madhi Al-Khamees speaks during the event. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Veteran actor Ibrahim Al-Sallal waves to the crowd after being honored.



Veteran actress Muna Shaddad is honored.



## Local

# London seeks closer ties with Kuwait following Brexit: Minister Murrison

Britain 'fully engaged' to guarantee safety of navigation in Strait of Hormuz



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah and UK Minister of State for International Development and the Middle East Dr Andrew Murrison sign an agreement during the 15th Kuwait-UK Joint Steering Group (JSG) meeting. — KUNA photos



Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with UK Minister of State for International Development and the Middle East Dr Andrew Murrison.

## Kuwait-UK 15th Joint Steering Group session convenes

KUWAIT: The 15th Kuwait-UK Joint Steering Group (JSG) was held in Kuwait on Sunday to review the historical friendly ties between the two countries. Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah headed the Kuwaiti delegation to the group, while Minister of State for International Development and the Middle East Dr Andrew Murrison led Britain's team. During the meeting, the two sides also reviewed the accomplishments made by the group over the last years that cemented the bilateral relations. The two sides discussed the latest developments in the region, and means of coordination between their countries to face these developments. The group was established in 2012, during His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit to London. The

group, which includes high-level officials of the two countries, holds its meetings twice per year in rotation between Kuwait and the UK. The group has managed, during the last years, to make tangible progress on all levels pertaining to the bilateral ties. Among this progress was the application of e-visa, which facilitated measures for Kuwaitis, mainly students and patients, to obtain visas to Britain. Earlier in the day, the two sides signed three deals including an action plan of the group, and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and UK Department for International Development. The last deal was inked between Kuwait Society of Engineers (KSE) and the UK Engineering Council. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Britain is seeking even closer relationship with the State of Kuwait following Brexit, a senior government official has said, as London was eyeing broad and deep ties across the region. Minister of State for International Development and the Middle East Dr Andrew Murrison said Britain was seeking advancement of relations with Kuwait since it left the European Union (EU) over the weekend. "That means seeking broad and deepen all relationships across the region with countries seeking close relationship, and Kuwait is one of those countries," Murrison, the first British Minister to visit Kuwait after Brexit, said in an interview at the British Ambassador's residence. Britain, following Brexit, will be moving at different levels in order to forge new multi-faceted relationships with countries and organizations across the globe, particularly in economy. The British government is "seeking to forge autonomous relationship with other countries that will service the medium and long term" interests, including that of Kuwait, said Murrison.

The British people voted in a referendum in 2016 to leave the EU, and the road the Brexit was marred by complex negotiations between Britain and the EU on one side, and 10 Downing Street with the House of Commons on the others, which resulted in the toppling of two Prime Ministers: David Cameron and Theresa May. But recent parliamentary elections brought about a majority government led by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, which enabled him to finalize the Brexit agreement and leave the EU.

### Joint committee

Murrison was in Kuwait on February 2 and co-chaired the Joint Steering Group (JSG) with Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah. The two sides expressed commitment to working together over the next six months to advance close Kuwait-Britain

relationship. They agreed to continue cooperation on trade, investment, migration, security, defense, cyber security, healthcare, education, higher education, scientific research, environment, culture and international development.

The two parties discussed how to combat shared threats, including protection of aviation interests through improved airport security and training. The two sides signed an MoU between Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) and Britain's Department for International Development to establish a framework for operational cooperation to ultimately contribute to realization of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and strengthen development global efforts. The two countries also signed an MoU between Kuwait Society of Engineers (KSE) and the UK Engineering Council EngC, which will provide Membership to British Chartered and Incorporated Engineers according to KSE requirements and the criteria needed to become members of KSE. EngC shall do the same according to EngC requirements and criteria needed for that. The JSG tries to "extend the range of things we partner on and do together... to establish what we are going to do along a number of fronts" with Kuwait, said Murrison.

On the Middle East peace process, Murrison called on the Israelis and Palestinians to get back to the negotiations' table "and talk about what the future might look like, and try to find something mutually acceptable to both." He warned against closing down discussions between parties concerned because it would only mean prolonged suffering of Palestinian people who share "a very tight constraint space in this region. They are the ones who suffer both in security terms and in terms of well-being and livelihood." Murrison acknowledged that the Palestinian people were living in impover-

ished, constrained and restricted lives right now, and they must expect a better tomorrow. He said there were little prospects of things getting better in Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The senior official noted that Britain was putting a great deal of financial assistance into humanitarian assistance, education and health care in Gaza and the West Bank.



Andrew Murrison

### Maritime navigation

Murrison, on safety of maritime navigation on Strait of Hormuz, called for ensuring safety of the strategic waterway, through which a huge proportion of the globe's oil and gas move. "It is a vital checkpoint on which Gulf economies [and] our economies rely. It is a general principle that we should have freedom of navigation," he said, citing Britain's full engagement in guaranteeing safety of navigation in the Strait. Murrison, on the other hand, said Britain was engaged with France and Germany, known as European three (E3), to bring about Iran's full compliance with the nuclear agreement. He meanwhile said it was very important that coalition maintained its outputs in Iraq and elsewhere in the region in order to prevent re-emergence of the so-called Islamic State (IS). On Libya, Murrison urged the Libyan parties to comply with outcome of recently-held conference in Berlin, Germany, in order to pave way for a political process in compliance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions. — KUNA

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KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at his office yesterday Cristian Tudor, head of European Union Delegation to Kuwait. During the meeting, the two sides discussed the bilateral relations between Kuwait and EU countries, and ways to boost security cooperation between them, the Kuwait National Guard said in a statement.

## KFSD completes 'Shamel 6' exercise preparations

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) completed its preparations for the 'Shamel 6' exercise to be held Thursday, Feb 6, 2020 in Julaiah under the patronage and attendance of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-

Hamad Al-Sabah. Thirty-two state departments are set to participate in the exercise which is held under the slogan 'joint command for crises management,' in order to enhance the efficiency of government departments to face fires and natural disasters. KFSD's Public Relations Department said in a statement yesterday.





## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Sunrise over Kuwait City. — Photo by Sadath Kunjumoldeen (KUNA)

# Burgan Bank rewards top-performing employees and branches for 2019

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**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank recently held its annual ceremony to reward the best branches and employees of Branches, Contact Center, Direct Sales and Merchant Sales for their outstanding work in the fourth quarter of 2019 and the Year 2019 overall. Divided into separate categories, the top achievers were presented with the titles of "Best Branches," "Best Customer Service Representative" and "Best Merchant Sales officer" at Al-Hamra Luxury Center. The ceremony is held periodically in recognition of Burgan Bank employee's hard work, optimal performance, and commitment to quality assurance and premium customer service.

The event, that was held at the Grand Cinemas in Al-Hamra Luxury Center, witnessed the attendance of senior management from the bank and branches alongside top-performing employees. Nasser Al-Qaisi - Chief Retail Banking officer at Burgan Bank applauded their efforts and efficiency as they each received a certificate of appreciation. He further explained that their performance was a demonstration of the bank's increased investment in advanced training and development to sustain successful banking operations.

The employees were additionally treated to a blockbuster movie soon after the rewarding ceremony. The Customer Experience Management (CEM) in Burgan Bank



has adopted objectives to continue to upgrade its banking operations and maintain high quality services in line with the bank's customer satisfaction strategy. The Customer Experience Management (CEM) also continue to create incentive based initiatives to further inspire employees, develop their skills, and enhance commitment to the bank's practices and processes to improve customer experiences.





## Local

# Assembly to discuss coronavirus preparations, Mideast peace plan

## Lawmaker asks if bedoons were illegal residents

**KUWAIT:** The National Assembly is due to debate today the government's preparations to face the new coronavirus and also the position of the house on the Middle East peace plan released last week by US President Donald Trump, speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said. The speaker said the assembly will also continue debating the Amiri speech delivered at the start of the current term besides the government's program.

MP Omar Al-Tabtabai meanwhile sent a letter to the assembly calling to convene special sessions to be able to approve a large number of necessary draft laws that have been repeatedly delayed because of other issues. The letter is expected to be debated at the start of the session today.

Tabtabai also said that he sent a number of questions to the education minister over the need to introduce fundamental changes at the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, and warned that he might grill the minister or even the prime minister if

these changes did not take place.

MP Abdullah Fahhad said yesterday he sent a question to the minister of finance Mariam Al-Aqeel asking if stateless people known here as bedoons are called illegal residents and if this means they are illegally living in the country and therefore deserve punishment.

Some 120,000 bedoons live in Kuwait and claim the right to Kuwaiti citizenship because their fathers or forefathers have been living in the country for decades. The government says a majority of them do not qualify for Kuwaiti citizenship.

Head of the assembly financial and economic affairs committee MP Safa Al-Hashem said that she sent a letter to the assembly over the resignation of four members from the seven-MP committee. She said that she expects the assembly to elect other

MPs to replace the outgoing members for the committee to continue with its meetings. The four members have resigned saying the panel does not hold regular meetings.



### MP calls for special sessions to approve bills

## Lawmaker files proposal to abolish article 153

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** MP Safa Al-Hashem announced filing a proposal to cancel article 153 of penal law number 16/1960. In her proposal, Hashem stressed that this particular article is a violation of the constitution in the form of gender segregation, as well the principle of considering defendants innocent until proven guilty. Hashem stressed that Kuwait is fully committed to the universal declaration of human rights that stipulates that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" regardless of gender. Notably, article 153 of law number 16/1960 stipulates that "whoever catches his wife committing adultery, or catches his daughter, mother or sister with a man, and kills her immediately, or kills them together, shall be punished with imprisonment for a period of up to three years and/or a fine not exceeding 3,000 ruppees (\$45)".

### Appeal rejected

The court of cassation yesterday rejected an appeal filed by 21 citizens, including activists and former lawmakers, who had been indicted for promoting a speech by former MP Musallam Al-Barrak, against the appeal court sentences over charges of slandering HH the Amir. The court seconded the two-year verdict and a payment of KD 2,000 each

to suspend the verdict passed against the defendants, including former lawmakers Jamaan Al-Harbash, Waleed Al-Tabtabaei, Faisal Al-Mislem, Salem Al-Namlan, Nayef Al-Merdas, Abdullah Al-Barghash, Mubarak Al-Waalan, Khaled Al-Tahous and Faisal Al-Yahya. In other news, the criminal court yesterday sentenced a number of Ministry of Health (MoH) employees to two years in jail with labor and KD 1,000 fine each over charges of forging their punch-in and -out fingerprints.

### Bedoon employees

A number of lawmakers recently started mobilizing against the Public Authority for Manpower to foil its plans to mandate private companies to register their bedoon employees with the authority, the same way they do with expat and Kuwaiti workers. In this regard, informed sources said the decision is considered another form of inhumane restrictions against bedoons and part of abusive measures taken by the central apparatus for illegal residents despite parliamentary demands to cancel them.

"This means that bedoons will not be employed unless they hold valid security IDs, which are not issued by the apparatus unless applicants sign affidavits confessing they hold other citizenships," the sources explained, noting that most bedoons have been refraining from doing so and thus have expired IDs. Further, the sources said lawmakers will make the parliamentary human rights committee summon Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel to discuss the problem as part of a report Kuwait had submitted to the UN about bedoons, which they deem

has false data. In addition, the sources stressed that lawmakers believe that bedoons should be prioritized before expats in terms of private sector employment.

### Powers restored

Well-informed official sources stressed that acting minister of social affairs and minister of state for municipal affairs Waleed Al-Jassem is about to reauthorize the director of the public authority for the disabled Shafiq Al-Awadhi with the authorities that had been curtailed by the resigned minister of social affairs Ghadeer Aseeri. The sources said the decision to undo Aseeri's decision and restore Awadhi's powers had been drafted pending Jassem's approval.

### KD 20 million budget rejected

The finance ministry rejected a budget of KD 20 million to build 60 new parks and do landscaping works in new areas through two contracts, said informed sources. The sources added that the finance ministry rejected all the projects demanded by the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR).

### Employees' benefits

Kuwait Oil Company's (KOC) employees syndicate strongly rejected the government's plans to reduce government employees' benefits on grounds of implementing the strategic payroll alternative law, which it publicly rejected. Syndicate chairman Yousef Jarallah Al-Shareifi accused parties he described as 'bats of the dark' of messing with citizens' social stability instead of executing real development projects and employing more Kuwaiti youth.



KUWAIT: The National Assembly.



KUWAIT: A joint Kuwaiti-Filipino committee convenes yesterday.—KUNA

## Diplomat: Kuwait, Philippines want deal on domestic workers

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait and the Philippines are mutually committed to put in place proper procedures over the recruitment of domestic labor, said a Kuwaiti diplomat yesterday. A joint Kuwaiti-Filipino committee convened over the course of two days to discuss the matter, Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Consular Affairs Sami Al-Hamad

said in a statement. Both countries are committed to reach a deal over the recruitment of domestic workers from Philippines, Hamad added. During the talks, attended by Kuwaiti and Filipino diplomats, both sides agreed to cooperate to ensure that the rights of Kuwait's Filipino workers are protected, he added. — KUNA

## Fishermen union denies strike rumors

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** Chairman of Kuwait Fishermen Union Thaher Al-Suwayyan strongly denied recent reports about fishermen's alleged defiance of Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan, and that around 100 fishermen and owners have allegedly been refusing to enter auctions held according to new regulations. Suwayyan stressed that fishermen are fully committed to Ministry of Commerce and

Industry (MoCI) resolutions and that none of them had gone on strike. "We know there are legal channels to express objections through contacting relevant bodies," he added, noting that the union welcomes the new market regulations and equal law enforcement on all. But at the same time, it had some remarks about some of the articles in the new regulations and that it had officially urged MoCI to amend them while continuing to provide the local market with all the fish they catch.

## Kuwaiti Army Chief meets US general

**KUWAIT:** Chief of General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army Lt Gen Mohammad Al-Khodhr discussed yesterday with US Marine Corps Forces Central Command Chief Gen Kenneth McKenzie and his accompanying dele-

gation issues of common interest. During the meeting, the two sides tackled military bonds and ways to enhance them, Army's Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations said in a press release. Kuwaiti Army Deputy Chief of Staff Lt Gen Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah, Commander of the Kuwait Navy Rear Admiral Khaled Al-Kandari, Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning Brigadier General Mohammed Al-Kandari, and US Air Force Brigadier General Randolph J Staudenraus also attended the meeting. — KUNA



## ABK's 1st group graduate from 'IT Academy'

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) congratulated six students from the first batch of intakes, who recently graduated from the 'IT Academy' after successfully completing a six-month intensive program. The students received training on the main IT systems used at ABK, including the Finacle Core Banking solution, the PowerCARD payment processing system, and key Oracle and

Microsoft solutions. The program also provided students with the human and soft skills needed to prepare them for entry into the workplace, and to enable them to develop careers as IT professionals in the banking industry.

ABK launched the ABK IT Academy as part of its commitment to supporting the Kuwaiti education sector and its active role in

driving nationalization within the country, with the intention of employing these graduates in the IT division as this is one of the areas within banking that falls short of local talent. The bank is investing in technology and innovation in line with its 'Simpler Banking' and digital transformation strategy, and continuously strives to improve its customers' digital experience.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways participated in an exhibition held on the sidelines of a flag-hoisting ceremony organized by the social care homes' complex in Sulaibikhat recently, in celebration of Kuwait's national holidays.





Don't mention the word!  
But UK PM insists no  
'Brexit' ban

## Gazan bridegrooms end up in prison over unpaid debts



LONDON: Police forensic officers work outside of a Boots store on Streatham High Road in south London yesterday, after a man was shot dead by police, following reports he had stabbed two people. —AFP

# UK to toughen terrorism rules

## Man shot dead wanted girlfriend to behead her parents

**LONDON:** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson will set out tougher rules on releasing people convicted of terrorism offences after an Islamist attacker injured two people in a stabbing spree days after he was set free half way through his prison term. Sudesh Amman, jailed in 2018 for possession of terrorist documents and disseminating terrorist publications, was shot dead by police on Sunday after he went on the rampage with a stolen 10-inch knife on a busy London street.

Amman had previously praised the Islamic State militant group, shared an online Al-Qaeda magazine and encouraged his girlfriend to behead her parents. Johnson said the government would announce fundamental changes in dealing with people convicted of terrorism offences. "Those measures will build upon the actions we have already put in place," said his interior minister, Priti Patel. She said there would be legislation to end the early release from prison of counter-terrorism offenders. "It is right that these individuals are kept behind bars," Patel said.

British politicians have repeatedly discussed tougher rules on terrorism, calls that increased after a former convict killed two people and wounded three more

before police shot him dead near London Bridge in November. Johnson said that since that attack, the government had "moved quickly to introduce a package of measures to strengthen every element of our response to terrorism - including longer prison sentences and more money for the police".

### Sunday in Streatham

Sunday's attacker, Amman, had recently been released from prison, according to police, having been jailed for promoting violent Islamist material. He went on the rampage at around 1400 GMT on Streatham High Road, having strapped a fake bomb to his body. He stabbed two people, while a third suffered minor injuries caused by shattered glass when police opened fire.

Amman was under surveillance at the time of the attack by armed police, who shot him dead. In November 2018 he pleaded guilty to possessing terrorist documents and disseminating terrorist publications, and the following month he was sentenced to more than three years in prison. Ian Acheson, who carried out a review of the management of Islamist extremists in jail, said the prison service

did not have the appetite or aptitude to manage terrorist offenders.

"We may need to accept there are certain people who are so dangerous they must be kept in prison indefinitely," he told BBC radio. Mark Rowley, formerly Britain's most senior counter-terrorism police officer who was in post when Amman was arrested, said dozens of other people convicted of terrorism offences were due to be released soon. Amman was 17 and living at home with his mother and younger siblings when he first began committing terrorism offences, according to authorities.

Police became aware of his activities in April 2018 and he was arrested by armed officers in a north London street a month later. When officers examined his computers and phone, they found he had downloaded material about making explosives and carrying out terrorist attacks, according to prosecutors. Messages showed that he had discussed with his family, friends and girlfriend his extreme views and desire to carry out an attack, often focused on using a knife, prosecutors said.

In December 2017 Amman posted a picture of Islamic State leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, who was killed in a US raid in Syria in October, and told his brother in a



LONDON: Police officers conduct a search on Streatham High Road in south London yesterday. —AFP

message that "the Islamic State is here to stay". He also described Yazidi women as slaves and said the Koran made it permissible to rape them, and in another message he encouraged his girlfriend to behead her

parents. Police said he had shared an online al-Qaeda magazine with his family and while in a discussion about school with a sibling he wrote he would "rather blow myself up". —Reuters

## A room of one's own? London carves out spaces for women

**LONDON:** As she approaches her 90th birthday, Shirley Meredeen sits in her flat in a leafy part of north London, proud of the women-only co-housing space she helped to establish, which started as just an idea in her living room two decades ago. The sprawling Older Women's Co-Housing (OWCH) complex, which opened in 2016, includes 25 flats, shared gardens and communal facilities.

But Meredeen was clear - it is not a gated retirement community, but a self-managed women's space, she said. "Older women have had lives and careers where men have taken charge," Meredeen said. "We thought if we allow men into the community we'll lose (our) autonomy." From female-only housing schemes to dedicated women's marketplaces, projects that cater solely to women are cropping up around the British capital, carving out spaces for women to meet and support each other.

In an increasingly urbanized world - with almost 70% of the world's population expected to be living in cities by 2050 - women-only environments help combat loneliness, encourage female entrepreneurs and diversify public spaces, say supporters. Inspired by similar projects in Scandinavia and the Netherlands, the OWCH in London's High Barnet area is the only co-housing community for older women in the country, said Meredeen.

It's important that older women live in or close to cities, she added, as they need to access hospitals, shops and neighborhoods and feel part of a community. Britain has a rapidly ageing

population, with women living longer than men and more likely to live alone, according to charity Age UK. With an average resident age of 73, all of the OWCH flats are full and the organization receives weekly email requests for people keen to join. "We wanted to help each other," said Meredeen. "We'd much rather have women looking after us than men."

### Girls' club

Across age groups, however, women in cities face sexual harassment, economic disparities and cultural barriers, a poll by the Thomson Reuters Foundation found in 2017. Looking at factors such as access to healthcare and economic opportunities, the poll ranked London as the most female-friendly megacity followed by Tokyo and Paris, with Cairo faring worst. In 2018, London Mayor Sadiq Khan launched the year-long "#BehindEveryGreatCity" campaign to promote gender equality in public spaces.

The campaign includes public art by women on the London Underground, the first statue of a woman in Parliament Square - suffragist leader Millicent Fawcett - and an initiative to support women in leadership. But social entrepreneur Wendy Davis, who has worked as an architect, said that despite progress cities such as London still do not take the needs of women seriously and are lacking dedicated single-sex spaces. The last straw for Davis came in 2013, when a purpose-built women's library in east London, which housed the most extensive collection of women's historical memorabilia in Europe, was closed due to lack of funding and its contents relocated.

That motivated her to start a social enterprise called Rooms of our Own, which aims to build a permanent women's centre in the capital. "We thought it important to own our own building in perpetuity so it couldn't be taken away from us," said Davis, who had originally planned to develop the property on the site of a disused car park in east London.

Davis' group was in the middle of buying the land, worth about 1 million pounds (\$1.30 million), when the decision to sell

was overturned by local authorities in 2014 after a cabinet reshuffle. Undeterred, she is on the hunt for a fresh spot in the capital and says that in the push for gender equality, people have forgotten that single-sex spaces are necessary for empowering women.

"At one time there was a real understanding that any group suffering particular issues, oppression or discrimination ... needed to have spaces where they could meet with each other," said Davis. "The whole (movement) has been towards making services generic ... actually it's very uninclusive." Davis' proposed women's centre will house charities that deal with domestic abuse and female genital mutilation as well as offering yoga classes, study spaces and a cafe and crêche.

### A woman's world

Among the hustle and bustle of a noisy east London street market, the traders of "Lady Lane" are discovering that a women-only space can also be good for business. Selling everything from jewellery to hot sauce, Lady Lane is the first female-only street market in the country, say its organisers. "It's a sisterhood," one trader, 30-year-old Amira Ismail, explained as passersby stopped to sample her spicy Somali-inspired date and tamarind sauce.

"You get a lot from women helping you with ideas, networking - so it's much better." Ismail trades at a few London markets but said Lady Lane is "special" because of the sense of community it fosters, unlike in other markets where most sellers are men. Research by the Tower Hamlets Council, which runs the Lady Lane project, has shown that about 90% of market traders in the area are male. Since its soft launch in November, the market already hosts a dozen women traders and the council has been "inundated" with interest, with new stalls added each week, said Kirsty Valentine, program manager at the council.

"(A marketplace) is predominantly a very heavy male-dominated environment, so we're exploring to see if there is any way



GLASGOW: A traffic cone painted in the colors of the EU flag perches atop the head of a statue of the Duke of Wellington outside the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow. —AFP

of re-balancing that because it's important that a local market should reflect its local community," she said. "We're not doing it to be exclusive to anybody else." Men still dominate positions of power across politics, the law, media and other key sectors in Britain, according to a study by women's rights group the Fawcett Society, with women from ethnic minority backgrounds particularly under-represented.

Fawcett Society chief executive Sam Smethers said initiatives like all-female housing or women-only public spaces can go a long way to addressing that imbalance. "Women-only spaces are vital as often mixed spaces can become male-dominated, marginalizing women's voices or deterring women from participating at all," Smethers said in emailed comments. "Spaces like this give women a chance to network and support each other to overcome persistent structural barriers which hold all of us back." —Reuters



## International

# Iraqi cleric Sadr tells followers to clear sit-ins after PM appointed

## Thousands protest in Baghdad, south Iraq

**BAGHDAD:** Populist Iraqi cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr urged his followers to help security forces clear roads blocked during months of sit-in protests, calling for a return to normal life after the designation of a new prime minister. Sadr, who had alternately sided with the anti-government protesters and the Iran-backed political groups they reject, urged his unarmed supporters known as “blue hats” to work with authorities to ensure schools and businesses can operate normally again.

Protests broke out immediately in Baghdad and several southern cities on Saturday night after President Barham Salih named Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi as prime minister in an effort to end the political unrest. On Sunday, thousands gathered in Baghdad's Tahrir square, where the main protest camp in the capital is located, to reject the move. They banged drums and chanted against Allawi and Sadr, saying “Allawi is rejected and so are his parties”.

In a message issued on Twitter, Sadr said “I advise the security forces to stop anyone from cutting off roads and the ministry of education should punish those who obstruct regular working hours, be they students, teachers or others”. Some of his followers appeared to have helped already to clear out protest areas in Tahrir Square overnight, a Reuters reporter said. Hours before Allawi's appointment, the blue hats, armed with batons, attacked a skeleton building in Tahrir Square, known as the Turkish Restaurant, that demonstrators have occupied since October. The building was mostly empty on Sunday and the blue hats stood guard, occupying its gates and pacing with walkie-talkies outside it. “They attacked us by surprise

and forced us out of the building shouting that we didn't do any good to the country except ruining its economy,” said Rassoul, 20, a protester who has lived in the Turkish Restaurant since October.

Anti-government protests continued nearby, with demonstrators directing their ire towards Allawi. He was named on Saturday as part of a deal between Sadr and rival Iran-backed political groups, who have wrangled since November's resignation of premier Adel Abdul Mahdi. Allawi must form a government within a month and face a confidence vote in parliament. Iran welcomed his designation on Sunday. Protesters demanding the removal of Iraq's ruling elite and the creation of better jobs and services have regularly blocked main roads in Baghdad and southern Iraq since demonstrations erupted in October.

### UN and EU flags

Some of the protesters in Baghdad on Sunday waved the national flag while others had United Nations and European Union flags. “We call on the UN to support and protect Iraqi protesters,” read several signs. “Allawi is a member of the political game that has destroyed Iraq, he needs to go,” said Malek Jawad, a student and protester.

A dozen young Iraqis stood on a truck carrying massive speakers and cheered the crowd. “Moqtada al-Sadr sent conflicted messages since the beginning but at the end he made it clear that he's against the protesters,” Jawad added. Sadr supporters watched the protesters from in and around the Turkish Restaurant. Sadr has directed anti-government unrest in previous



**NASIRIYAH:** Iraqi anti-government demonstrators block a road with burning tires in the southern Iraqi city of Nasiriyah yesterday during a demonstration against the new Iraqi prime minister designate.—AFP

years but he has not been able to control this round of demonstrations and many protesters oppose him as much as the rest of the political class.

Sadr's supporters had previously bolstered the protesters and sometimes helped shield them from attacks by security forces and unidentified gunmen. Many of Sadr's

supporters hail from eastern Baghdad slums and share the same grievances as many Iraqis over a lack of job opportunities, poor healthcare and education. The unrest is Iraq's biggest crisis for years. It has shattered nearly two years of calm that prevailed after the defeat of the Sunni Muslim extremist Islamic State in 2017.—Reuters

## Iraq's Moqtada Sadr: Cleric and kingmaker

**BAGHDAD:** Whether in protests, elections, secret negotiations or government formations, one man always seems to have the last word in Iraq's tumultuous political scene: sharp-tongued cleric Moqtada Sadr. The onetime militiaman has earned himself a cult-like following in Iraq which he can mobilize with a single tweet to crown-or bring down-a government. He appeared to do just that this week, endorsing ex-minister Mohammad Allawi to become Iraq's new premier after four months of anti-government protests had brought political life to a standstill.

Sadr had backed the rallies early on, even though they called for the downfall of a cabinet and PM he had sponsored, and for early elections that may cost him seats in parliament, where he controls the largest bloc. Mind-boggling politicking is par for the course when it comes to Sadr, said Renad Mansour of the London-based Chatham House think-tank. “He's a guy who has multiple sides: an anthropologist who goes with the street, making him inconsistent over the years,” said Mansour.

Sadr, 46, was born in the southern Iraqi town of Kufa to a family with deep political roots. His father, Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr, who was assassinated in 1999, was one of Iraq's most respected Shiite clerics and a fierce opponent of Saddam Hussein's regime. Moqtada Sadr

is also related to Mohammad Baqer Al-Sadr, the prominent thinker who was executed by Saddam in 1980. This legacy fuelled the younger Sadr's fire, and he saw his opportunity in Saddam's 2003 ouster by a US-led invasion—which he also opposed with his Mahdi Army. Sadr virtually disappeared in 2006, spending the next few years studying to become a cleric in Iran's Qom before returning to Iraq's holy city of Najaf in 2011.

As he returned to public life, Sadr began railing against corruption and its main symbol in Iraq: Baghdad's once-exclusive “Green Zone” which hosts government offices and embassies. In 2016, he held weekly Friday protests against graft in a country considered the 12th most corrupt in the world, according to watchdog group Transparency International. Sadr regularly dispatched his critiques to his more than 900,000 followers on Twitter.

But after years as a self-styled opposition, his Saeroon bloc won the largest share of parliament's 329 seats in the 2018 elections. To form a majority, he allied with the next-biggest bloc, Fatah, the political arm of the Hashed al-Shaabi military network and his longtime rivals. “Sadr presents himself as an anti-establishment champion of reform and a populist voice of the millions who have been let down by the system,” said Fanar Haddad, an expert at Singapore University's Middle East Institute.

“But the fact remains that the Sadrist have been an integral part of the political classes and have had no shortage of ministerial posts and high ranking public office,” he added. That contradiction has been strained in recent months as Sadr issued a dizzying series of tweets backing, then abandoning, then re-endorsing anti-government rallies rocking Iraq



**JEDDAH:** A file photo shows Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman (right) receiving prominent Iraqi Shiite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr in Jeddah. — AFP

since October.

He also organized his own anti-US rally that saw tens of thousands flood the streets of Baghdad to demand foreign forces leave Iraqi territory. “Sadr is torn between two competing trends—one to try to unify the political leadership, and two, to try to bring protesters closer to it,” Mansour added. He has tried to walk the tightrope between them: asking his supporters to remain in protest camps but condemning student sit-ins and road closures—the two main tactics used by other demonstrators.

### ‘Winding trajectory’

But Sadr's instructions have all been issued on Twitter as he is thought to still be in the Iranian holy city of Qom. He has complex ties with Iran, a country to which his family was long opposed but where he is now completing his religious studies. Sadr shocked many when he

travelled to Tehran in September, meeting both supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Iranian general Qasem Soleimani, who was killed months later in a US drone strike on Baghdad. It was another indication of Sadr's “winding trajectory,” said Karim Bitar, an international relations analyst at the Paris-based Institute for International and Strategic Affairs.

“A nationalist anti-American troublemaker during the Iraq war, who we then find allied to Saudi Arabia, before he makes another radical turn again to get closer to the Iranians,” Bitar said. Now, Sadr once again finds himself the main sponsor of Iraq's new prime minister but has insisted that he remains a rebel at heart. At the bottom of a recent tweet urging a return to normal life, swiftly shared and reposted by thousands of his die-hard followers, Sadr signed off: “patron of the revolution.”—AFP

## Militants hit gas pipeline in Sinai

**CAIRO:** Militants blew up a gas pipeline Sunday in Egypt's restive Sinai Peninsula, security sources said. The masked gunmen drove a four-wheel drive before detonating explosives in the attack, carried out around 80 kilometers west of the provincial capital El-Arish, the sources said. No casualties or injuries have so far been reported and no group has claimed responsibility.

According to sources, the gas pipeline hit was a domestic one that connects to a power station in El-Arish, powering homes and factories in central Sinai. Some media reports in Egypt and Israel however said the section of pipeline hit was part of Israel's Leviathan offshore field that connects the two countries — claims denied to AFP by the Leviathan consortium.

Israel began pumping natural gas to Egypt for the first time earlier this month under a \$15 billion, 15-year landmark deal to liquefy it and re-export it to Europe. The Islamic State group last week encouraged its fighters to launch “a new phase” and vowed major operations against Israel. Egypt's Petroleum Ministry did not react to a request for comment. One of the two offshore fields managed by Israeli and American firms in the deal, Leviathan is estimated to hold 535 billion cubic meters (18.9 trillion cubic feet) of natural gas, along with 34.1 million barrels of condensate.

Egypt has previously exported gas to Israel but land sections of the export pipeline were targeted multiple times by Sinai militants in 2011 and 2012. It hopes the recently inked deal will position it to become a regional gas hub. The country has for years been fighting a hardened insurgency in North Sinai that escalated after the military's 2013 ouster of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi following mass protests. In February 2018, the army and police launched a nationwide operation against militants focused on North Sinai.—AFP

## Moroccan border clampdown thwarts Europe-bound migrants

**FNIDEQ:** Mustapha left his home in Guinea two years ago to make the arduous journey to Morocco, hoping to cross the fence separating the kingdom from the Spanish enclave of Ceuta. “We're going to cross this barrier,” he said, in defiance of increasing pressure on migrants from Moroccan authorities, supported by Europe.

A few months ago, migrants like Mustapha were a common sight on roadsides or in camps near urban centers. Today, those aiming to reach Europe from Morocco prefer to stay hidden, fearing the waves of arrests that have elicited condemnation from NGOs. In recent months, European pressure to shore up borders — bolstered by funding — has pushed Morocco to clamp down on migration. Two years after leaving Guinea, Mustapha, now 18, lives in abject poverty in a hideout in the Belyounech forest, a few kilometers from Ceuta on Morocco's northern coast. Cautiously, he ventures out to beg at the side of a road for a few coins, water or food, but it is rare that passing cars pay him any attention. “My dream is to go live in Norway and be a DJ,” said the young man, wearing worn-out shoes and a black beanie, a colorful school satchel over his shoulder. “I dropped out of high school for this trip.”

Travelling with two companions from the same neighborhood back home, Ahmed and Omar, both 17, Mustapha took a perilous journey from Conakry, traversing Mali and Algeria, before crossing the closed border to enter Morocco. “That part was not easy,” he said. To reach Ceuta, the trio needs to cross the barbed wire barrier

which, along with the fence around the other Spanish enclave of Melilla, mark the only land borders between Africa and Europe.

### ‘Deportations’

The fence cuts across fields and forests, and Moroccan auxiliary force vehicles are posted along the border. Like Mustapha, many migrants live in precarious encampments deep within forests, keeping out of sight. Local aid groups are no longer authorized to meet with them, according to testimony gathered by AFP. In Nador, a town bordering Melilla, the Moroccan Association of Human Rights has condemned “serious and repeated violations”, with migrants “illegally detained in very difficult conditions” and “deportations” to regions far from transit routes. “The authorities come into the forest looking for us and, if they find us, they send us back,” Mustapha said.

“They are looking for us today even,” said his companion Omar, but added he was ready to seize “the right opportunity to get across” the fence. A day later, Moroccan authorities announced they had blocked 400 migrants from sub-Saharan Africa from entering the Spanish enclave in an operation that resulted in injuries to both migrants and security forces. Migrants who are detained by authorities are sent to southern Morocco by bus or returned by air to their country of origin, according to testimony collected by AFP.

Khalid Zerouali, who is in charge of migration and border monitoring at the interior ministry, told AFP that measures Morocco put in place in 2019 after sustained pressure to tackle “irregular migration” were aimed at trafficking networks. “Our security measures do not target migrants because, in our view, they are the victims,” he said. Morocco has led two “regularization” campaigns since 2014, offering residency permits to 50,000 illegal migrants. According to the European Union border security agency, Frontex, Guineans in recent years have been among the largest groups trying to reach Europe via Morocco.

“We decided to leave for a better future. We found nothing to do in Guinea,” Omar said. Ahmed dreams of



**FNIDEQ, Morocco:** African migrants Mustapha (right), 18, and his travel companions Ahmed (center), 17, and Omar, 17, return to their hideout in the Belyounech forest, a few kilometers from Ceuta on Morocco's northern coast. — AFP

being a “professional footballer in Europe”. “I play mid-field. I want to go to Germany, if they let me in,” he said, a striped scarf around his neck to ward off the cold.

Despite the challenges, the boys say they still prefer Morocco to the Libyan route. “There is violence there. My friends tried to get through and told me it was hard,” Ahmed said. Like many young people seeking a better future, the trio cling to a romanticized image of life in Europe, though they seem to know little about it. While they are just a few of the many that try to get through the barriers around Ceuta and Melilla, others attempt to reach Europe by crossing the Mediterranean in makeshift boats.

“I can't afford to go by sea, it's too expensive,” Ahmed said. In recent months, Moroccan authorities have stemmed the flow of migrants into Europe. According to

the Spanish interior ministry, nearly 32,500 migrants entered Spain in 2019 by land and sea routes, down by nearly half from 2018. But the number of migrant drownings in the western Mediterranean remains high: 325 deaths were recorded in the first 10 months of 2019, compared to 678 for the same period in 2018.

Zerouali said last year, “around 74,000 attempts to immigrate irregularly to Spain were blocked by Moroccan law enforcement,” compared to 89,000 in 2018. In 2019, the European Union allocated 140 million euros (\$155.3 million) to support Morocco's efforts against irregular migration, with Spain also providing additional aid to its southern neighbor. But even as Morocco works to tackle migration via its territory, it says it will not act as Europe's police force.—AFP



## International

# Jailbreak in ‘city of blood’: Brazil drug gangs overrun Paraguay

## Prison escape underscores the organization’s growing influence

**PEDRO JUAN CABALLERO:** Luis Alves da Cruz awoke around 3 am to a commotion in the Paraguayan prison he called home. A small-time Brazilian drug smuggler, da Cruz saw fellow inmates dressed head-to-toe in black. “We’re breaking out,” one of them told him. “Are you coming?” Within minutes, da Cruz was among 75 prisoners who fled the facility in the early hours of Jan 19 in one of the most audacious jailbreaks in Paraguay’s history.

The fugitives were members of the First Capital Command, Brazil’s largest and most powerful gang, known by its Portuguese acronym PCC. The escape underscores the organization’s growing influence in Paraguay, whose weak institutions have proven no match for the PCC and other fast-growing Brazilian criminal syndicates that have set up shop here.

Authorities at the prison in the city of Pedro Juan Caballero near the Paraguay-Brazil border knew what the PCC was planning, according to Paraguay’s Justice Minister Cecilia Perez. Some were complicit, she said, while others looked the other way out of fear of retribution. Thirty-two prison officials, including the jail’s warden, are now under arrest. “We’re facing a security crisis whose epicenter lies in the prison system,” Perez said.

The Pedro Juan Caballero Regional Penitentiary did not respond to a request for comment. Forty of the escapees, including da Cruz, were Brazilians. So far, only 11 prisoners have been recaptured. Da Cruz, was nabbed within days near the Brazilian town of Dourados. Reuters obtained exclusive access to the testimony he gave to Brazilian police.

Da Cruz, 30, told them that guards at the Paraguayan lockup had helped facilitate the escape. He said he was

among those who fled through a fan-ventilated tunnel that prisoners had dug with trowels and illuminated with light bulbs tacked to the earthen walls with forks. The tight, muddy passage started in a cell occupied by PCC members and exited just beyond the jail’s exterior wall.

Senior prisoners didn’t bother getting dirty, da Cruz said in his testimony; they simply walked out the front door. Other recaptured prisoners gave similar accounts, Paraguayan police say. “This (jailbreak) demonstrates that the PCC does what it wants, when it wants,” said Juan Martens, an academic and security analyst based in the capital Asuncion who has studied the PCC’s role in Paraguay. “The Paraguayan state represents no obstacle to its plans.”

**‘City of blood’**  
Sandwiched between Brazil, Argentina and Bolivia, Paraguay is one of the world’s top marijuana producers and a key trans-shipment point for Andean cocaine. Paraguay is poor, with a GDP per capita in line with that of Namibia. It is also riddled with graft, trailing Venezuela as the second-most-corrupt country in South America, according to Transparency International’s 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index.

As a result, it has become an attractive operational base for Brazilian gangs, including the Sao Paulo-based PCC, Rio de Janeiro’s Red Command and a Porto Alegre syndicate with the pugnacious moniker Bullet In The Face. Authorities say

Brazilian gangsters operate with near-impunity here, both inside and outside prison. The PCC, for example, actively “baptizes” non-affiliated prisoners into its ranks, according to Gilberto Fleitas, the head of criminal investigations at Paraguay’s National Police.

He estimated there are currently 500 PCC members in Paraguay’s prisons, a figure that has doubled since last year thanks to the gang’s aggressive recruiting. Fleitas’ colleague,

Ruben Paredes, believes that number to be even higher, and that around 10% of Paraguay’s 16,000 prisoners belong to Brazilian gangs. Many more operate beyond the jailhouse walls, Paredes said, buying off lawmakers and corrupt police.

“At least in prison they’re contained,” said Paredes, investigations chief of the National Police in the densely populated region that includes Asuncion. “Outside, they do as they

please.” Dubbed the “city of blood,” Pedro Juan Caballero has proven a particularly alluring outpost for Brazil’s drug gangs, authorities said. The city blends almost imperceptibly into the adjacent Brazilian municipality of Ponta Porã. Reuters saw no police checkpoints or barriers separating the two towns. People from both sides of the border cross with ease.

Small planes carrying Bolivian cocaine frequently touch down on remote landing strips outside Pedro Juan Caballero, Brazilian and Paraguayan authorities told Reuters. From

there, they said, the drugs move through southern Brazil and on to Europe, where demand is booming. The fallout can be seen in the rising body count in Pedro Juan Caballero as gangs battle to control trafficking routes, authorities said. Mayor Jose Carlos Acevedo said there were more than 150 homicides last year in the city of 120,000 people. He said residents live in fear of the gangs, who have made a mockery of the security apparatus.

“The police are completely corrupt,” Acevedo said. In a Jan. 30 editorial, Paraguay’s most influential newspaper, ABC Color, bemoaned the atmosphere, alleging it is the “golden dream” of many cops to be transferred to Pedro Juan Caballero because of the “illicit extra money” they can earn aiding and abetting drug traffickers. The city’s police force, which does not report to Acevedo, did not respond to requests for comment.

### Criminal history

The criminal trajectory of da Cruz, the recaptured escapee, highlights Paraguay’s challenge. Born in an isolated village in northeastern Maranhao, Brazil’s poorest state, da Cruz told police he moved to the western state of Mato Grosso when he was 10 years old. In 2012, he went to jail for selling drugs, but was freed under a day-release program in 2015.

He didn’t hang around. Da Cruz said in his testimony that he fled across the border to Pedro Juan Caballero, where he was arrested on drug trafficking charges in 2016 and sent to the city’s prison. Once inside, he opted for PCC baptism and began handling administrative chores for the gang, he said in his testimony. Da Cruz was a low-ranking prisoner, according to a Brazilian cop who requested anonymity. —Reuters



### Residents live in fear of the gangs

## Watchdog throws lifeline to Britons drowning in debt

**LONDON:** British lenders will only be able suspend credit cards if they can prove they have exhausted other options to help customers stuck in debt, Britain’s financial watchdog said yesterday. Under rules introduced in March 2018, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) forced credit card companies to help persistently indebted customers repay what they owe and save up to 1.3 billion pounds (\$1.70 billion) annually through lower interest charges.

The banks and other lenders had to identify and write to customers in difficulty. If the debt continued for 36 months, they had to act and ultimately could suspend credit cards, with a first batch of suspensions possible this month. The FCA said it was concerned some firms were planning a blanket suspension of cards for all customers in the persistent debt category. That could drive them to desperate measures, such as resorting to loan sharks.

“When they (firms) choose to suspend or cancel a customer’s access to credit, they must serve customers with a notice giving reasons for this, and those reasons must be objectively justified,” the FCA said in a letter on Monday to credit card firms. “Where we identify poor practice, we will take swift action to ensure customers are being treated fairly and our rules are being followed.” Customers may not be aware they could be entitled to measures such as reduction, waiving or cancellation of interest and charges. Persistent debt is defined as paying more in interest, fees and charges over 18 months than the principal on the card.

The rules target some 1.6 million customers who are making minimum payments and urge them to follow a repayment plan for 3-4 years. They are a small portion of Britain’s 30 million credit card-holders. StepChange, a charity that helps people in debt, said between one and two million people will shortly receive letters about their debt under the FCA deadline. “The FCA is unequivocal that firms should not cancel people’s cards wholesale,” said Peter Tutton, head of policy at StepChange. He welcomed the FCA’s telling firms to include in their letters a reminder that options are available if people cannot afford suggested payments.

Rachel Springall, an analyst at Moneyfacts.co.uk, said the FCA could have thrown struggling borrowers a lifeline. “There may well be borrowers out there who are keeping up with the minimum repayments but are unable to pay more each month, and these borrowers need support,” she said. But she said there was a risk credit card firms could reduce the range of deals on offer if they lose income from interest fees. UK Finance, which represents banks, said it was important customers do not ignore letters from their card provider. —Reuters

## Don’t mention the word! But UK’s Boris insists no ‘Brexit’ ban

**LONDON:** Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday insisted that “Brexit” was not banned, despite not mentioning the word in a speech setting out Britain’s negotiating position with Brussels for trade talks. Britain on Friday became the first country to leave the EU after 47 years of membership, capping more than three years of division and debate following a landmark 2016 referendum. But the word was noticeably absent from his speech at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, south London, a UNESCO World Heritage Site of the country’s sea-

far past and former glories.

“Brexit” was named word of the year by dictionary publisher Collins in 2016, as usage surged by more than 3,400 percent before, during and after the referendum nearly four years ago. Collins described it as “arguably politics’ most important contribution to the English language... since the Watergate scandal gave commentators and comedians the suffix ‘-gate’.”

Johnson also campaigned on the slogan “Get Brexit Done” at the last election in December, where he won a sizeable majority enabling him to push his divorce deal with Brussels through parliament. But asked why he had not used it during his speech — apart from a fleeting mention of “the B-word”, he told reporters: “It’s not banned... ‘It’s like the glorious revolution that preceded and events chronicled behind us. It’s gone... It’s receding behind us in history and that’s the approach we should take to it.” —AFP



**LONDON:** Britain’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson reacts as he delivers a speech at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, south east London yesterday. —AFP

## Barnier and Boris Johnson clash over post Brexit ties

**BRUSSELS:** The EU and Britain open hostilities in Brexit’s next bruising chapter yesterday, laying down red lines for a post-divorce future following the UK’s dramatic exit from the bloc. Europe’s chief negotiator Michel Barnier will formally announce his ideas for new ties in Brussels, with trade the most pressing issue, while Johnson will firmly make his case in a speech in London. According to the prime minister’s office, Johnson will come out swinging against the EU, saying that Britain has no more reason to meet EU standards than the EU has to meet British ones.

“There is no need for a free trade agreement to involve accepting EU rules on competition policy, subsidies, social protection, the environment, or anything similar,” Johnson will say, according to Downing Street. “The UK will maintain the highest standards in these areas - better, in many respects, than those of the EU - without the compulsion of a treaty and it is vital to stress this now.” There will be just 11 months to reconcile the colliding visions of EU-UK relations with Johnson flatly refusing to extend the negotiating peri-

od beyond the end of this year.

Until then, Britain has agreed to abide by the rules of EU membership, but failing a deal, the two sides would resort to the most basic of relationships with border checks and high tariffs causing big shocks to the cross-channel economy. Johnson, a polarizing figure accused of glossing over the complexity of leaving the EU, is in a rush to seal an agreement and deliver the “independence” promised by Brexiteers, following Britain’s exit on January 31. This would also open the way for Britain to seal more ambitious trade deals across the globe, most notably with the United States.

### Britain is ‘better’

Brussels has repeatedly warned Britain that the depth of future trade ties will depend on how closely London adheres to EU standards — what is known as maintaining the level playing field. “There will be two conditions which will be very clear in this trade agreement,” Barnier told French broadcaster LCI on Sunday.

“We want an agreement on fisheries, which will be difficult... and at the same time, we want an agreement on the level playing field,” he said. “Not everything will be done in 10 months. We’ll do the maximum,” he added on French radio yesterday. Britain has asked for the EU’s trade deal with Canada to be used as a model, which Europeans consider acceptable on tariffs and quotas, but too weak on provisions to guarantee fair trade.



**BRUSSELS:** EU Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier gestures during a press conference on negotiations with UK yesterday. —AFP

### ‘Nationalistic rhetoric’

In a sign of the fraught nature of the high-stakes talks, Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar urged London on Sunday to “tone down” what he called “nationalistic rhetoric”. Britain should avoid repeating the past mistake of insisting on “rigid red lines” which “makes it hard to come to an agreement”, he said. Barnier’s negotiating mandate will be discussed and approved by the EU’s 27 member states later this month with direct trade talks with London to begin in early March.

Fishing access for European boats in British waters will be a key issue to solve, even though both parties have promised to reach an agreement before July 1. Fishermen from eight member states, in particular France and Denmark, are heavily dependent on British waters that account for 30 percent of sales of French fishing crews. Yet, “it so happens that the United Kingdom exports 75 percent of its fishing production to the European Union”, Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told French media. —AFP

## Why Iowa? How a little rural state picks nominees

**WASHINGTON:** Utilizing a complicated in-person caucus system, the first contest in the Democratic presidential primary will take place in Iowa yesterday. Iowans do not use paper ballots, but instead hold meetings across the state to pick their choice for president. There are 11 Democrats running for their party’s nomination to challenge Republican President Donald Trump in the November election. Up for grabs will be 41 delegates to the Democratic National Convention, where a candidate will need to secure 1,991 delegates to become the party’s nominee.

### How does the process work?

Instead of heading to a polling site to cast their ballots, Iowans conduct a series of caucus meetings across the state, gathering in school cafeterias, community centers and private living rooms to tally who they think should be their party’s nominee. In total, Iowans hold more than 1,600 caucus meetings.

The results are sent to the state party, which then calculates how many delegates each presidential candidate receives. In each caucus, voters will divide themselves up and stand with others who are supporting the same candidate. If there are enough like-minded voters, then their candidate gets a delegate, referred to as being “viable.”

However, voters who pick a candidate who does not have enough support - often at least 15% of those attending the caucus - will be forced to make a second choice. They will have three options: back a candidate who is already viable, combine forces with the supporters of another unviable candidate and make them viable, or leave. This process is known as “realignment.” The meetings are held at the same time and are scheduled to begin at 8 pm ET on today.

### Why second choices matter

Which candidate is a voter’s second-choice preference can play a big role in the outcome. Currently, most opinion polls show only four candidates-former Vice President Joe Biden, former South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg and US Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren-registering above 15% in Iowa. Since a candidate must have at least 15% of the support of those in attendance in any given precinct in order to remain “viable,” supporters of other candidates will be forced to realign or pick someone else. Collectively, the four front-runners’ supporters make up just

above 70% of the electorate, according to national polling average. That leaves about 30% of voters who could be forced to pick their second choice among those four candidates - a large number that could tip one of the front-runners ahead of their rivals. For example, if US Senator Amy Klobuchar is unlikely to reach viability in most precincts, are her supporters more inclined to back another woman, like Warren, or a candidate closely aligned with her ideology, like Biden or Buttigieg?

### What is different this year?

The state party is changing the way that results are reported this year, after complaints from supporters of Sanders in 2016 who narrowly lost Iowa to Hillary Clinton, the eventual Democratic nominee. Previously, Iowa Democratic officials only made public the final results of the caucus, or how much support each candidate after realignment had forced people to make their second choice.

In 2016, Sanders supporters argued that on the first count he had more support than Clinton. But that after realignment, when most supporters of former Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley were forced to make a second choice, then Clinton had more support. To mollify that complaint, this year Iowa Democrats will make public both counts-how voters align on their first choice and then the results after supporters of unviable candidates make a second choice. —Reuters



**MUSCATINE:** Latinx, a Latin American community outreach organization, and Bernie organizers Candy Alfaro (left) and Carlos Rojas (2nd right) talk with volunteer Jose Garza (right) as they ready themselves for canvassing for Democratic Presidential candidate Bernie Sanders in Muscatine, Iowa. —AFP



## International

# Gazan bridegrooms end up in prison over unpaid debts

## Palestinians' love of big weddings proving very costly in Gaza

**GAZA:** Bridegrooms in the Gaza Strip are finding marriage a path to debtors' prison rather than to happiness. Wedding celebrations cost around \$10,000 in the Palestinian enclave, but a tradition of strong family ties and large gatherings often trumps financial common sense. So with unemployment in Gaza topping 50% and the economy in a parlous state, many bridegrooms turn for help to money-lending associations that offer wedding loans ranging from \$2,000 to \$4,000, but repayment often becomes impossible. A spokesman for the police in Gaza, which is governed by the Islamist Hamas group, said that of 100,000 debt-default cases opened last year, 22% involved marriage loans.

Eyad al-Zahar said he had turned into "a regular visitor to prison" since taking such a loan. Now a father of two, Zahar, 24, used to install marble tiles but is now unemployed. "I sold my wife's jewelry, my washing machine and the boiler," he told Reuters, sitting on a chair in a room otherwise empty of furniture. As he spoke, rain leaked through the metal ceiling and his family scurried to place plastic pots to catch the drops. Zahar said he had been jailed at least five times for failing to repay his loan, spending 10 to 12 days behind bars each time until someone bailed him out.

Salama Al-Ewadi, director of the Farha Society, which lends money to help facilitate marriages, said some 20 groups like his own had shut down because of poor repayment rates. Amid crushing hardship in the

territory, Ewadi said business had been falling off, even at marriage loan societies. "We used to have 50 clients per month. In 2019 the number ranged between 15 and five," he said. Currently, his office is pursuing legal action against 120 clients, and another 600 have fallen behind in their repayments.

### 'There will be an explosion'

Three wars between Israel and Gaza militants, tight Israeli restrictions along the Gaza border and divisions between Hamas, which has run Gaza since 2007, and the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority of President Mahmoud Abbas have deepened the economic crisis. In a bid to squeeze Hamas, Abbas has slashed salaries of tens of thousands of PA-hired workers in Gaza and suspended those of others. Hamas, considered a terrorist group by the West, has been unable to pay full salaries to its own 40,000 public employees for many years.

Local economists said nearly 1,000 small to large businesses had shut their doors in 2018 and 2019. Naem Al-Siksik, CEO of one of the largest plumbing and infrastructure companies in Gaza and the West Bank, said the firm that once employed 400 people was now down to 146 and was struggling to stay in business. "People are melting down. If things do not improve there will be an explosion here because people have nothing to lose," he said. — Reuters



**KHAN YUNIS:** A woman rides in the back of a motorcycle cart next to food packages as people come to receive food aid from a United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) distribution centre in the Khan Yunis camp for Palestinian refugees. — AFP

## Chinese turn to social media to feed stranded pets in the virus city

**BEIJING:** China's unprecedented quarantining of virus-hit Wuhan has separated millions from their families-and many from their pets, prompting worried owners and kind strangers to take to social media to ensure left-behind animals are looked after. The virus that has killed more than 360 in China emerged during the Lunar New Year when hundreds of millions were travelling across the country, and the subsequent lockdown on Wuhan and central Hubei province has left many stranded.

The hashtag "save the pets left behind in Wuhan" became the third-most searched term on the Twitter-like Weibo platform yesterday, receiving millions of views from those unable to return to the city, where the virus is believed to have originated, and others willing to help. "Please help me feed my cat", one user posted on January 30. Yesterday, he used the hashtag to post the happy news he had



**BEIJING:** A man wearing a protective facemask walks on a pedestrian crossing in Beijing yesterday. A virus similar to the SARS pathogen has killed more than 300 people in China and spread around the world since emerging in a market in the central Chinese city of Wuhan. — AFP

found a "young man" who had agreed to go and feed his cat Maomao. "In the video chat, after the man opened the door Maomao meowed so miserably, no one has been home for more than a dozen days..." he said.

More than 2,000 people also joined a group created by the Wuhan Small Animal Protection Association on Chinese chat app QQ to look for "kind-hearted people" willing to feed pets left behind in Wuhan by owners unable to enter the city. One

member yesterday asked if anyone would be willing to feed a pet snake. "I'm worried to death" the user, who posted anonymously, said. "I didn't let him hibernate this winter because he's a baby snake." That post had no takers as of yesterday.

"If any cats and dogs are stranded and you can let me in, I can help you feed them on livestream," wrote Katherine Cui in eastern Zhejiang province-where the city of Wenzhou was placed under a similar lockdown to Wuhan on Sunday. "I have many pets at home, and plenty of cat food, dog food and kitty litter, I know too well how important fur babies are." The drive to save pets comes after multiple Chinese media reports said apartment complexes had banned pets to stop the spread of the virus, as well as unverified reports that people had thrown animals to their deaths for similar reasons.

While the novel coronavirus is believed to have crossed over from animals to humans at a Wuhan market known for selling live wildlife, the World Health Organization has said on its Weibo account there is "no evidence that dogs, cats and other pets can catch the novel coronavirus." China is home to a growing population of pet owners, with pet-related spending in China reaching 170.8 billion yuan (\$23.7 billion) in 2018, according to a report by Pet Fair Asia and pet website Goumin.com. — AFP

## China hunts for travelers from virus epicenter

**BEIJING:** Communities in China are offering cash rewards, knocking on doors and questioning people trying to enter their neighborhoods-but they're not looking for criminals. They're searching for anyone coming from Wuhan, the central city at the epicenter of a deadly virus epidemic that has sparked fear-even panic-in China and beyond. The end of the extended Lunar New Year holiday this weekend has raised concerns that the new coronavirus could spread further as people travel across the country.

In Beijing, neighborhoods have sealed themselves off-some with homemade barriers-to force visitors or anyone returning home from the holiday to register their travel history. One district in northern Shijiazhuang city is even offering cash incentives of 2,000 yuan (\$288) for reporting anyone who has travelled to Wuhan in the past two weeks.

For some communities, anyone who has visited central Hubei province-of which Wuhan is the capital-is no longer welcome at all. "Even if you live here, you can't enter," said a security guard at the entrance of a Beijing neighborhood when asked about returning Hubei residents. "Those from Hubei could bring the infection here," he told AFP, wearing a blue mask. "If you're from Hubei, you have to notify the neighborhood committee."

China has scrambled to contain the epidemic by halting transport from Wuhan, suspending overseas tour groups, cutting long-distance bus routes, and suspending thousands of trains. But the virus has continued to spread, killing more than 360 people and infecting more than 17,000 across the country. Most of those infections - 11,177 - are in Hubei. All but one of the 57 deaths reported on Monday were in the province. Beijing, in comparison, has reported 191 cases.

A week ago, China's health commission urged villages around the country to leave "no blind spots" when investigating where people have travelled. But with the holiday ending on Monday, local governments are under pressure to root out those who have visited the hard-hit province of Hubei. "If they look unfamiliar or are dragging a suitcase, I'll ask them to register," said a woman working at a compound in Beijing. "I'm pretty worried," she added, only offering her surname, Mei.

### 'Bottom-up' tracking

Though some neighborhoods have taken the extreme stance of blocking visitors or residents from Hubei, many will allow travelers back in-but monitor them stringently over a two-week quarantine period. Once back in their homes, "they cannot go in and out," explained Xu Aimin, secretary of a neighborhood in Beijing.

If they need to buy food, the neighborhood committee can do that for them, she explained. Residents from Hubei province also receive daily phone calls and have their temperature recorded during quarantine, she added. According to Xu, her neighborhood committee-which manages an apartment complex of more than 2,400 households-has knocked on every door to check each residents' records. "Our information is bottom-up", she told AFP, adding that they also check travel histories.

"We want to let everyone become a source of information," Xu said. If residents "don't trust the person next door, they should promptly call (the neighborhood committee)". The virus has already spread in large numbers across China, despite drastic government lockdown measures in Hubei, highlighting the challenge of countering a pathogen like this. On Sunday, authorities announced lockdown measures for Wenzhou, a city of nine million people that has reported hundreds of infections. Wenzhou is more than 800 kilometers by road from Wuhan.

But the rush to close off neighborhoods to outside visitors could also create a backlash from frustrated residents. It is a concern shared by the Beijing government, which on Saturday reminded community leaders they had "no power" to stop people from entering their neighborhood once they had passed a temperature check. Still, that hasn't quelled fears about the increased risk of infection from travelers returning home. Gou Hairong, a woman returning to Beijing from Chengdu, southwestern Sichuan province, told AFP on Sunday that she had been barred from her compound. Stranded at the Beijing West railway station, the 24-year-old said her neighborhood had told her she was "not allowed in at all". "If they really don't let me back in, I'm prepared to buy another ticket home," she said. — AFP

## First UN 'mercy flight' leaves the rebel-held Sanaa

**SANAA:** Children in critical need of medical care were evacuated yesterday from Yemen's rebel-held capital Sanaa, in what the United Nations hopes will be the first of many mercy flights. Seven young patients and their families had gathered at Sanaa airport, closed to commercial flights since 2016, clutching their transport documents for the trip to Amman.

"This is the first of what we hope and believe will be many flights," said UN Resident Coordinator for Yemen Lise Grande. "It's a very important day, it's a day of hope. It shows that everyone wants the people who need help to get that help," she told reporters. "The key is to have many flights, bigger planes, so that the people who need aid can get to the places where they will receive it."

Yemen's internationally recognized government, backed by a Saudi-led military coalition, has been fighting Iran-backed Houthi rebels since 2014 when they seized control of the capital. In November, the coalition-which controls Yemen's airspace-said patients needing medical care would be allowed to fly out of Sanaa. The move was among confidence-building measures aimed at ending the five-year war that has killed thousands of people and displaced millions in what the UN has termed the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

### 'We are overjoyed'

One of the children waiting for the evacuation flight, Abdullah Abed, is suffering from kidney failure and needs an organ transplant, his father said. "We are overjoyed," Abed Ali Murshid said. "Today is the start of the air bridge that we have been waiting for two years." "Severe diseases in Yemen are many, and people need to travel. The United Nations must operate the air bridge regularly, send abroad patients suffering from diseases, open Sanaa airport, and end the blockade of Yemen," he said.

The Houthis on Sunday criticized the evacuation plan as inadequate for the needs of thousands of sick people in urgent need of medical care. "The World Health Organization said it will transport via a small UN plane only seven patients with their escorts per flight," the rebels said, in a statement carried by their Al-Masira television. "The number of people signed up for medical evacuations are around 32,000 patients with serious illnesses." The Norwegian Refugee Council welcomed the start of the humanitarian airlift, saying thousands of Yemenis had been handed down a "death sentence" when the coalition closed down Sanaa airport. — AFP



**BANGKOK:** People with protective facemasks wait at a crossroad in downtown Bangkok, Thailand so far has detected 19 confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus believed to have originated in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, which is under lockdown. — AFP

## Chinese tourism; main engine of global travel

**PARIS:** The impact of the current health crisis on Chinese foreign tourism is likely to be worse than during the SARS epidemic in 2002/2003 or the swine flu crisis in 2009, simply because so many more Chinese people travel abroad for pleasure than back then. Their country is now the top contributor to world tourism.

But in response to the spread of a novel coronavirus, Chinese authorities have suspended package holidays and advised nationals to avoid foreign travel. Curbs and cancellations affecting commercial flights to and from China are also weighing on traveler numbers. Here are some facts about the worldwide role of Chinese tourism.

### Chinese tourism rules

Mainland China with its 1.3 billion inhabitants is the top contributor to world tourism numbers with 150 million foreign trips in 2018. Only about 10 percent of China's population actually hold a passport.

### Where they go

Most Chinese tourists go elsewhere in Asia, most often to Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, Thailand, South Korea and Vietnam. When they venture further afield it's usually to

Europe, the United States or Australia. France is their top destination in Europe, with 2.2 million Chinese visitors in 2018, followed by Germany, Italy and the UK, according to the European Travel Commission. Most first-time Chinese visitors to Europe pack several countries into their itinerary, typically as part of a package tour, says Atout France, an agency promoting French holiday destinations.

### Big spenders

Chinese holiday makers spend more on average than any other nationality on their trips, around \$1,850 per person per year. They overtook both the Americans and the Germans as the highest-spending tourists as early as 2012, according to the World Tourism Organization, a UN agency. Total Chinese spending on foreign tourist trips amounted to \$277.3 billion in 2018. In Europe, Chinese visitors account for around 30 percent of duty-free sales, according to sector specialists Planet.

### The damage last time

The global impact on world tourism of the H1N1 swine flu epidemic that broke out in 2009 is estimated at \$55 billion, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), an industry body. The impact of the SARS outbreak in 2002 and 2003 is estimated at between \$30 billion and \$50 billion. Chinese tourism-linked companies contributed 25 percent less to GDP than usual because of the health crisis, and the sector lost 2.8 million jobs, according to the WTTC. — AFP



## Analysis

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## In politics-crazy Iowa, one couple simply can't agree

The signs planted in the snow-covered yard outside their Iowa City home announce the clashing priorities of those living inside: Rod Sullivan and Melissa Fath support opposing candidates in the Democratic presidential vote held yesterday in their Midwestern state. With the vote drawing near, the amiable but politically active couple have little time to chat. Each has donned a T-shirt in the colors of his or her favored candidate while preparing to go knocking on neighborhood doors in hopes of winning undecided voters over to their camp.

Sullivan, 54, currently the chairman of the Johnson County Board of Supervisors, supports progressive senator Elizabeth Warren. Fath, also 54 and a cancer researcher at the University of Iowa, backs centrist senator Amy Klobuchar. Warren and Klobuchar recently won the support - in an unprecedented joint endorsement - of the New York Times.

## Same goal, different method

"Because I respect his candidate very much and he respects my candidate very much, it's fine," Fath says. "They want the same thing, the same goal, through a different method." The couple laughingly explain that their situation is rare even in Iowa, whose inhabitants are particularly passionate about politics since their first-in-the-nation vote carries outsized importance. "I think what makes it even a little bit more unique is the fact that we both work pretty hard for our candidates," Sullivan said.

Iowa City, a university town of 75,000, is something of a progressive enclave in a state that voted for Donald Trump in 2016. On a chilly morning, Sullivan sets out to go door-to-door in one of the last neighborhoods not yet reached by the many volunteers working for Elizabeth Warren, who stands fourth in the latest Iowa polls. After getting no answer at several homes, Sullivan finally gets lucky: a young woman answers the door and announces that she has decided to back Warren... based on the results of an online questionnaire she had taken.

Fath has more homes to visit: Klobuchar, in fifth place with the backing of less than 10 percent of those polled, has fewer volunteers, so they have much more ground to cover. But she, too, finally strikes gold: someone supporting Klobuchar. "Anyone but an old white guy," laughed Maria Watt, 42.

## A woman president

The couple, together since 1996, found themselves in agreement only once before at this stage in a primary election season: Both supported Barack Obama during his 2008 campaign. In 2016, Sullivan was one of the first elected officials in the country to declare his support for independent senator Bernie Sanders. After a long and sometimes bitter battle for the Democratic nomination, the Vermont socialist finally lost to Hillary Clinton, who was Fath's choice.

Four years later, Warren gratefully recognized Sullivan at an Iowa City rally as one of the first elected officials - this time around - to back her. Why did he turn his back on Sanders? "Senator Warren has a lot of the same ideas but has a little bit more thought-out plan," Sullivan said. "Plus, I think it would be great to have a female president." Fath agreed with the last part, but said she prefers Klobuchar's more incremental positions.

"I think that's what our country needs right now, because we need a Band-Aid on the division" after the polarizing presidency of Donald Trump, she said. Both Fath and Sullivan did vow to support whichever candidate the Democratic Party finally selects to face Trump in the Nov 3 election. But this weekend, with yesterday's vote drawing near, they both continued to campaign, even within their own family. Sullivan's mother has promised to support Klobuchar, Fath said, as has the only one of the couple's three children who will vote in Iowa. To which Sullivan replied, laughing, "Mama's boy!" — AFP



Rod Sullivan, 54, Warren supporter and his wife Melissa Fath, 54, Klobuchar supporter pose for a portrait in Iowa City on Feb 1, 2020. — AFP

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A local resident using a drone sprays disinfectant at a village in Pingdingshan, in China's central Henan province, on Jan 31, 2020 during the virus outbreak in Hubei's city of Wuhan. — AFP

## China showcases micro drone surveillance

Sometime last week, a small group of Chinese residents were sitting outside in the town of Chengdu. A small drone approached them, hovered nearby and began to speak. "Playing mahjong outside is banned during the epidemic," said a voice from the drone. "You have been spotted. Stop playing and leave the site as soon as possible." "Don't look at the drone, child," it continued. "Ask your father to leave immediately."

For many in the rest of the world, what China's Global Times described as a "creative use" of drones to tackle its coronavirus outbreak may still sound like a scene from a futuristic dystopia. Those in power in Beijing, however, clearly view it as something to be proud of. The video was shared widely on Chinese social media platforms such as Weibo and showcased in its English-language media for consumption abroad.

It was, perhaps, an indicator of two important things. Firstly, not only is China keen to use all means at its disposal to contain the coronavirus outbreak, but it may well use it to harden, strengthen and demonstrate the growing capabilities of the most sophisticated surveillance state the world has ever known. Secondly, of course, it demonstrates the proliferation of sophisticated, smaller unmanned vehicles and platforms as a tool for mass surveillance - as well as outright social control. That's a trend likely to be seen well beyond the world's more authoritarian states, and it is that one democracies will need to have a much more public and accessible conversation about than they have managed so far.

## Law enforcement

The uses for often already overstretched law enforcement and other security services are obvious. On Sunday, two people were stabbed in London by a recently released extremist, raising questions about the ability of authorities to keep track of individuals deemed risky. Automated technology solutions such as facial recognition software make that easier, but clearly also unsettle many.

In the United States, several towns and cities including Oakland and Berkeley in California and Cambridge, Massachusetts, have outright banned the use of facial recognition technology by law enforcement. Other states and locations are considering tighter controls - but across much of the rest of the United States and Western world, surveillance technology continues to be rolled out, sometimes largely unnoticed and unchallenged.

Much larger unmanned weapons-carrying drones have been at the centre of US operations in the Middle East and beyond for years. Where the United States has led, China has often followed. Beijing is a major supplier of large armed drones to countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, frustrated by limits on US drone exports. The next revolution, however, looks to involve much smaller drones that while less lethal, can also be a much more intrusive presence.

In August last year, the US Defense Advanced Research Project Agency demonstrated a drone swarm at Fort Benning, Georgia, that used largely off-the-shelf technology to autonomously locate, find and monitor a specified object in a particular building - a city hall - in a US military training complex. The aim is for swarms of up to 250 devices to be able to operate largely independently or controlled by a single operator, providing a level of mobile surveillance and coordination not previously available.

## Drone technology

For now, the Chinese example demonstrates the limitations of that technology. Beijing has been pouring resources into drone and surveillance technology for decades. In 2018, the South China Morning Post reported that included developing flocks of unmanned aircraft designed to resemble birds such as doves in both appearance and movement. Such devices, it said, have already seen service along China's borders and in its north-western Xinjiang province, where a crackdown on Muslim

minority ethnic Uighurs has long been a testbed for Beijing's surveillance state.

These devices, it said, have proved convincing enough that they can be flown over flocks of sheep - normally very sensitive to aircraft - without the animals determining their true nature. In the long run, Beijing almost certainly wants to match that technology with its other surveillance tools - widespread static cameras, and a colossal facial identification database the state has been building since 2015. Other tools reportedly developed by China include systems to identify people by their distinctive walking gaits.

The surveillance drones in the Global Times videos, however, are clearly under the control of individual human operators, their voices broadcast by loudspeaker. Another video from Jiangsu province, eastern China, showed a policewoman using a drone to check passengers at a crossing wearing masks. "The handsome guy who is on the phone, where is your mask? Put it on please," she said through its loudspeaker. "The girls who were eating food while walking, put on your masks please. You can eat when you arrive at home."

It's a reminder that for all its investment in technology, like previous mass surveillance states such as East Germany China remains dependent on using humans to watch other humans. That, however, is changing very quickly. Artificial intelligence algorithms, combined with the colossally larger data trails humans already leave, has already proved a game changer when it comes to targeted advertising. Numberplate recognition cameras mean most vehicles in most countries have their locations recorded sometimes dozens of times a day.

According to the "Global Times", China's citizens viewed the Chengdu footage as useful entertainment while they stayed inside following the cancellation of Lunar New Year festivities. Whether that is true is another question - but it's an issue the rest of the world may also find itself grappling with sooner than it thinks. — Reuters

## At Iraq protests, Sadr tweets split his followers

Sporting their signature blue caps, the men marched triumphantly through Baghdad's protest camp. The diehard followers of firebrand cleric Moqtada Sadr were back in Tahrir Square, and they wanted everyone to know it. Sadr, an enigmatic Shiite cleric who shot to prominence years ago by battling US occupation troops with his notorious Mahdi Army, has built a cult-like following across Iraq and controls the largest parliamentary bloc.

Rarely seen in public, the 45-year-old with the round, turbaned face has fuelled the sense of chaos of months-long anti-government protests with a dizzying and often contradictory series of directives issued via Twitter. Back in October, he sent thousands of "Sadrist" into the streets to support the unprecedented wave of rallies demanding the ouster of Iraq's entire political class and slamming their backers in Iran.

In late January, Sadr suddenly told supporters to pack up their tents - but a week later he changed course again, issuing an impassioned call that saw them back in protest camps "to renew the peaceful, reformist revolution". On Saturday, Sadr endorsed Iraq's new prime minister-designate Mohammad Allawi, a figure loathed by the youths in revolt, in a move that has splintered protest squares.

Hardcore Sadrists then ousted protesters from a multi-storey building that had become a symbol of the uprising, tearing down portraits of youths shot



A file photo taken on Oct 29, 2019 shows Iraqi Shiite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr driving a car as he joins anti-government demonstrators gathering in the central holy city of Najaf. — AFP

dead in rallies and banners listing demonstrators' demands. The head-spinning back-and-forth of Sadr's positions, usually by tweet, has stuck a wedge in his millions-strong base, even his followers say.

## 'Love and obedience'

At the weekend, Sadr's face could be seen on posters taped to three-wheeled motor-rickshaws and carried in gold-rimmed frames by fervent fans in Tahrir. "If our lord, our commander Sadr told us to walk into a fire, we'd do it," said Nabil, a middle-aged supporter. Nabil said he had torn down his protest tent when Sadr said he would no longer back the anti-regime rallies, but had returned Saturday following the latest directive. Asked if the contradicting orders confused him, he said no.

Nadia Abbas, a 45-year-old woman

from Sadr's namesake stronghold in east Baghdad, Sadr City, also said she saw "no contradiction between last week and right now". "Whatever he says, we do. Big or small," she told AFP, as a cluster of veiled women around her nodded in agreement. Sadr's younger supporters weren't so sure. Many of them had defied the cleric's orders last month and remained in Tahrir, watching in disbelief as neighbors packed up their tents.

"From the moment I came here, when the revolution started, I've seen a lot - people dying, falling in the street and someone picking them up, ambulances, blood," said Hamza, 26, who follows the Sadrist movement. "We got used to all those scenes but what hurt me the most was watching those tents be taken away. I felt like I was from one country and they were from another," he said.

Hussein, 24, struggled to explain the

differing orders. "He's the commander, but his statement wasn't a direct order to withdraw," the blue-eyed demonstrator insisted. If Sadr issued a clear order to abandon the protests, what would he do? Hussein paused, then said: "There's no way I would leave. Anyway, he'd never do that."

Ali, 29, hails from Sadr City and his older brother died fighting for the cleric's Mahdi Army in the years after the 2003 US-led invasion. He had spent the past four months living in a tent in Tahrir, but said he couldn't blindly follow Sadr's tweets. "The Sadrist movement has a huge popular base - eight million people isn't nothing," he said. "Their hearts are with the protests, but love and obedience are two different things."

## 'Growing schism'

The movement was founded by Sadr's father and was one of the first Shiite religious currents to adopt populist and even revolutionary rhetoric under Saddam's brutal regime. It has splintered multiple times, and many of the powerful armed factions in Iraq today trace their roots back to the Sadrist movement, including those that oppose the protests. "The danger of another schism is always there," a source within the Sadrist movement told AFP, asking not to be named in order to be able to speak freely. Asked about the recent divide over Sadr's shifting positions, the source said: "Ultimately, this is a religious movement, not a democratic one."

Renad Mansour, a researcher at the London-based Chatham House, said Sadr was struggling to reconcile his populist rhetoric with a growing stake in the state, where he controls parliament's largest bloc and key ministry posts. "There's been a growing schism for a while," said Mansour. "But winning the (2018 parliamentary) election put him into the elite, and he's trying to balance too many things." — AFP



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2020

# Business

**12** Kuwait economic growth slows amid oil price drop; non-oil activity spikes



**13** STC records KD 43.6m net profit for 2019



**14** NBK first bank in Kuwait to launch 'Garmin Pay' service



## Al-Jarrah: KIB records profit of KD 17 million in 2019

**EPS of 15.01 fils for 2019 • Total assets grew by 24%**

**KUWAIT:** Chairman of Kuwait International Bank (KIB), Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah, announced that the Bank recorded a net profit of KD 17 million for the year ended 31 December 2019. Meanwhile, earnings per share (EPS) reached 15.01 fils while registering total operating income of around KD 69 million.

Al-Jarrah also noted that KIB's total assets grew by KD 0.52 billion or 24 percent in 2019 to reach KD 2.69 billion compared to KD 2.17 billion in 2018. This increase was a result of a growth in KIB's financing portfolio by KD 260 million to reach KD 1.87 billion compared to KD 1.61 billion at the end of 2018, achieving a growth of 16 percent as well as growth in investment portfolio by KD 74 million to reach KD 180 million compared to KD 106 million in 2018, achieving a growth of 70 percent due to increased exposure to high quality Sukuk.

Al-Jarrah added that revenue from financing income also increased by KD 14 million to reach KD 103 million, or a 16 percent increase compared to 2018. Additionally, the investment income increased by KD 2.5 million, or 160 percent, reaching KD 4.1 million compared to KD 1.6 million during the previous year.

### 7% cash dividends

Moreover, Al-Jarrah stated that KIB's Board of Directors proposed payment of cash dividends of 7 percent of the nominal value of shares (7 fils per share) and 5 percent bonus shares from issued and paid up capital (5 shares for every 100 shares), subject to the approval of the Bank shareholders' general assembly and regulatory authorities.

Depositors' accounts increased by KD 151 million or 11 percent to reach KD 1.47 billion, compared to KD 1.32 billion recorded for last year. In 2019, Depositors' Accounts witnessed a strong growth. Annualized return on KIB Term Deposit (KD) was 3.5 percent and Long Term (KD) three-year deposits was 3.7 percent. Similarly, KIB's Ithmaar Call Account offered an average annual rate of return of 1.75 percent at the end of 2019. This unique account offers corporate customers instant access to funds through unlimited deposits and withdrawals, and provides an opportunity for companies to earn a profit on the account balance. Businesses are able to enjoy greater flexibility, better returns and unrestricted access to funds at the same time with a cheque book option.

Moreover, the Saving Investment Account in Kuwaiti Dinars continue to yield the highest return in the market, at a net



Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah



Raed Jawad Bukhamseen

### HIGHLIGHTS

•16% increase in financing portfolio

•16% growth in financing income

•7% cash dividends and 5% bonus shares proposed for 2019

•11% growth in Depositors' Accounts

•Average annualized rate for KIB Term Deposit KD stood at 3.5% in 2019

•Annualized return in Q4 2019 on Long Term KD deposits (3 years) were offered at 3.7%

•Al-Ithmaar Call Account recorded an

average annual return of 1.75%

•Highest return in the market - Savings Investment Account

•Profits were credited to depositors' accounts upon announcement of results

•Fitch Ratings affirmed Bank's LT-IDR at "A+" with a Stable Outlook

•\$300 Million AT1 Sukuk issued in 2019 enhancing CAR

•KIB received a number of prestigious local, regional and international awards

annualized return of 2.1 percent in 2019. With this account, individuals can enjoy both benefits of savings and investment. Opened in Kuwaiti Dinars or in any other major foreign currency, the Saving Investment Account does not require a minimum amount to open and profit distribution takes place on a quarterly basis. Profits were credited to depositors' accounts upon announcement of financial results.

### Growth trajectory

Al-Jarrah stated: "We continue on our growth trajectory, delivering high-quality products and services that push boundaries amidst a highly competitive market. Our financial performance bears testament to the vision of our strategic direction, leveraging the latest innovations to better serve our customers and adopting digital solutions that deliver on our slogan's promise of being a 'Bank for Life'." In 2019, global credit rating

agency Fitch Ratings affirmed KIB's Long Term Issuer Default Rating (LT-IDR) at "A+" with a Stable Outlook. Fitch also affirmed the Bank's Viability Rating (VR) at "bb-".

Commenting on the results, Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of KIB, Raed Jawad Bukhamseen, said: "KIB continues to enjoy a stable operating environment in Kuwait. Our latest credit rating reflects our exceptional standing, the strength of our strategic direction and our reputation in the market."

Bukhamseen added that KIB had issued a \$300 million Additional Tier 1 (AT1) Sukuk during Q2 2019, reflected in the high Capital Adequacy Ratio of 19.24 percent and financial leverage ratio of 11.79 percent as at 31 December 2019. NSFR was maintained at 107.49 percent.

### Awards, recognitions

As a testament to its continued efforts in



2019, KIB garnered a number of prestigious local, regional, and international awards that reflected its stellar performance and achievements across various areas and sectors.

KIB was awarded the 'Best Sharia Compliant Bank - MENA 2018' for the fourth consecutive year by Capital Finance International (CFI.co), 'Best Islamic Bank GCC 2018' by World Finance for the third consecutive year, as well as the 'Deal of the Year 2018' award from Islamic Finance News (IFN), for its syndicated Murabaha financing of \$250 million. Moreover, KIB renewed its ISO 27001:2013 certification for information security management systems until 2022.

KIB also received the debut 'GCC Best CSR Business Model' award by World Finance, honoring leading financial and investment institution in the GCC.

Additionally, the Bank received the 'Best CSR Initiative - Arab Banking' award by The Banking Executive Magazine in recognition of its efforts in improving financial literacy and addressing various challenges in order to improve people's standards of living.

Bukhamseen pointed out that, as a result of its current strategy, KIB continues to grow year after year. The Bank also aims at improving its customer service as well as meeting the changing needs of its customers by adopting the latest digital solutions that are easily accessible at any time and place. He noted that this growth will help KIB in achieving its strategic objectives, cementing its long-standing position as a leading Islamic Bank, building its trust and reputation on its proven track record, as well as its many growth opportunities.

## Shareholders Distribution

Board of Directors recommended distribution of following dividends for the year ended 31/12/2019.

Cash Dividend

2019

7%

Bonus Shares

5%

Recommendation is subject to the approval by the shareholders General Assembly and concerned authorities.

## Depositors' Profit

Long Term Deposit\*

2019

3.70%

KIB Term Deposit\*

As per investment percentage

3.50%

Savings Account\*\*

2.10%

\*Annualized profit rate for Q4 in Kuwaiti Dinar

\*\*Annualized net profit rate for Q4 in Kuwaiti Dinar

Terms & conditions apply

## Financial Results

	For 2019		
	2019	2018	%
Total Assets "KD Billion"	2.69	2.17	24 ↑
Financing Receivables "KD Billion"	1.87	1.61	16 ↑
Customer Deposits "KD Billion"	1.47	1.32	11 ↑
Financing Income "KD Million"	103	89.5	16 ↑
Operating Income "KD Million"	68.5	66.6	3 ↑



# Kuwait economic growth slows amid oil price drop; non-oil activity spikes

## Project awards fall short of expectations in 4Q19 with KD177m in awards

**KUWAIT:** The fourth quarter of 2019 saw pessimism surrounding the global economy moderate, helped by better economic data, the striking of a preliminary US-China trade deal, and further policy loosening by the US Federal Reserve. Oil prices were also initially boosted by the announcement of fresh production cuts by OPEC+, before falling back in January as the coronavirus outbreak weighed on the outlook for China and travel demand and as fallout from a flare-up in US-Iran tensions quickly eased. In Kuwait, latest figures showed underlying non-oil growth picked up in 3Q19 but remained at modest levels. Meanwhile, the subdued oil market outlook continues to weigh on the fiscal position, with the draft budget for next year projecting another large deficit despite spending being pegged at unchanged levels.

### Oil prices end 2019 on a high

Benchmark oil prices ended 2019 on a strong footing thanks to improved economic sentiment, sparked in part by the announcement of a 'phase one' trade deal between the US and China, and OPEC's decision to deepen production cuts further in a bid to redress the supply-demand imbalance. Indeed 2019 overall was oil's best performing year since 2016.

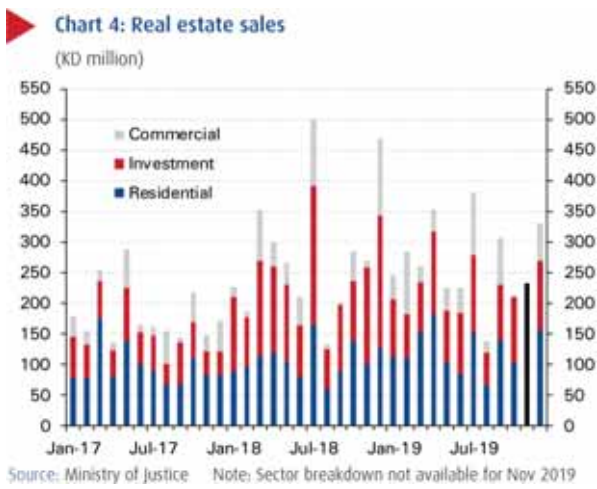
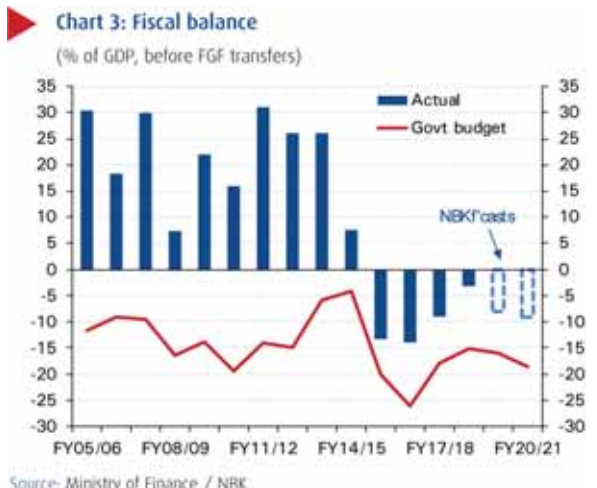
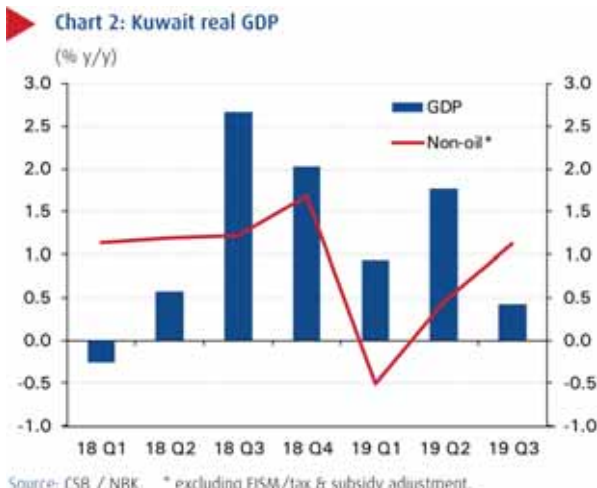
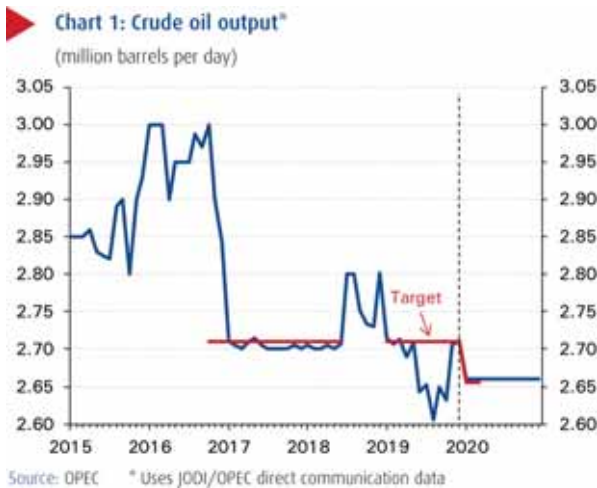
Kuwait Export Crude closed at \$68.4/bbl, up 11 percent q/q and 31 percent y/y, and just off its seven-month high of \$69.0/bbl of 27th December. January saw fresh volatility as the killing of a senior Iranian military figure by the US saw prices spike higher, then quickly fall back as tensions de-escalated. Brent slumped below \$60 in late January as soft market fundamentals reasserted themselves and as the coronavirus outbreak threatened economic prospects in China. In December, the OPEC+ group agreed to deepen production cuts by a further 0.5 mb/d to 1.7 mb/d for at least the duration of 1Q20 and pending a reappraisal in March, on top of voluntary cuts of 0.4 mb/d by Saudi Arabia. Kuwait - which had over-complied with the previous output cuts - will see its new target level lowered by 55 kb/d to 2.67 mb/d. Kuwait's production in December, according to secondary sources, was 2.71 mb/d, so its output will need to fall by 39 kb/d in January to meet its new target. Given continued strong growth in non-OPEC supply and moderate demand growth, the global oil market should remain well supplied in 2020 and we expect Brent crude to average \$60/bbl in 2020, softer than last year's \$64.

### Economic growth slows

Headline real GDP growth slowed in 3Q19 to 0.4 percent y/y from 1.4 percent in the previous quarter, and the mildest rate of growth since 1Q18. The slowdown was on the back of decline in oil GDP (-5.3 percent), which is related to Kuwait's OPEC+ production cut obligations. On the other hand, according to official and preliminary figures, non-oil activity spiked to 7.8 percent from 4.3 percent in Q2, driven by gains in the 'other services' sector, which includes real estate (+9.2 percent), electricity, gas and water (+4.1 percent), which typically goes up in the summer months, followed to a lesser extent by education (+2.9 percent) and public administration (+1.3 percent). Sectors that contracted include manufacturing (-3.7 percent), construction (-7.3 percent) and telecommunications (-5.8 percent). It should be noted, however, that non-oil growth will likely be adjusted down (as in the past) in the annual data to account for the erratic 'taxes and subsidies' component and also financial intermediation, which are not included in the quarterly series. Excluding these, non-oil growth would have been a more modest 1.1 percent versus 0.5 percent in Q2.

The government registered a fiscal deficit of KD 1.0 billion during the first nine months of FY2019/2020, a pro-rated 3 percent of estimated 2019 GDP, and compared to a KD 3.6 billion surplus a year ago. After Future Generations Fund (FGF) transfers, the deficit was KD 2.3 billion. The rise in the deficit was driven by lower oil prices, which pushed total revenues down 19 percent y/y. As for expenditures, they rose 13 percent with current spending up 18 percent - though we believe this robust increase partly reflects unusual weakness reported at the same stage last year. With oil prices subdued and given that spending usually jumps at the end of the year, we expect the deficit to end up higher for the year as a whole: we project a deficit of 8 percent of GDP before FGF transfers. Given the continued absence of a new debt law, the shortfall will be covered by the General Reserve Fund, which has seen sizeable withdrawals in recent years but as of last September had remaining assets of nearly KD 21 billion, although liquid assets are reported to be much lower.

Fiscal pressures are likely to persist over the coming year. The government's draft budget (which is still subject to parliamentary approval) for FY2020/21 projects a deficit of KD 7.7 billion (19 percent of our GDP forecast) before FGF transfers, or KD 9.2 billion post transfer. This is around KD 1 billion larger than budgeted a year earlier. There are signs of expenditure restraint with total spending unchanged at KD 22.5 billion, including current spending up a modest 0.9 percent and capital spending down 4.5 percent. Revenues meanwhile are projected down 6.5 percent to KD 14.8



billion thanks to lower oil receipts; while the oil price assumption is unchanged from last year at \$ 55/bbl, oil production is assumed at a lower 2.7 mb/d, from 2.8 mb/d before. We project a smaller deficit of 9 percent of GDP before transfers on an oil price assumption of \$60/bbl and some underspending in line with previous years. These figures do not include investment income from the sovereign wealth fund.

### Project awards short of expectations in 4Q19

Project awards fell short of expectations in 4Q19 with only KD177 million in awards, mostly due to delays and prolonged bid negotiations. Awards in the fourth quarter stemmed mostly from a heavy oil-related project by Kuwait Oil Company, valued at KD 122 million. This brings the total annual awards for 2019 to a disappointing KD 1.1 billion, the lowest annual figure on record. The construction sector dominated with nearly KD 500 million in awards, followed by the oil and gas sector with KD 293 million. According to MEED, some KD 8 billion in project awards are planned for 2020, mostly from the petrochemical sector. However, judging by recent trends, this target appears to be too ambitious and the eventual figure will most likely end up much smaller. A large part of the expected 2020 awards comes from KIPIC's highly-anticipated Al-Zour Petrochemical Complex, scheduled for 4Q20 and valued at KD2.8 billion in addition to large projects in the power sector including the Dibdiba solar power plant and the KAPP/MEW Khiran IWPP valued at KD 360 million and KD 1.1 billion respectively.

### Real estate sales solid overall in 2019

Real estate sales amounted to a decent KD 774 million in 4Q19, albeit down 24 percent from the same quarter of 2018, while total transactions stood at 1472, a 24 percent decrease from the previous year. Sales were driven mostly by a robust residential sector, with total sales of KD 380 million, up 3 percent y/y, although the number of transactions were down 8 percent at 1119. Investment sector activity was weak by comparison, with sales of KD 277 million, a 41 percent drop, and similarly for transactions, which fell by 35 percent to 326 deals. Commercial sector activity was healthy, with sales of KD 122 million, but was weighed down by an unusually weak October which lead to a 34 percent y/y decline.

Meanwhile price trends were mixed as of October. Residential prices made strong gains in 2019, with the NBK residential land and home indices up 16 percent and 11 percent y/y respectively. But weakness from oversupply and soft demand have weighed down on building and apartment prices, with the investment building and apartment indices down 3.2 percent and 3.5 percent, respectively. With monthly prices having shown signs of stability in recent months and housing rents in the CPI also stable over the past seven months, in addition to modest economic growth, we expect both sectors to be steady in 2020.

### Consumer spending was upbeat 4Q19

Consumer spending held strong in 2019. Aggregate data on point-of-sale transactions, online payments and ATM withdrawals showed a solid average increase of 13.0 percent y/y in 4Q19, up from 7.9 percent in 3Q19 and higher than the 11.6 percent average recorded in 2018. Growth in transactions has mainly been driven by online spending, which was up 92 percent in 4Q19. The positive momentum in consumer spending growth is a reflection of the ongoing strength in the Kuwaiti jobs market and a relatively stable macroeconomic climate. Job growth among Kuwaiti nationals stood at a robust 3.5 percent y/y in 2Q19, the latest period for which data is available.

Meanwhile, latest data also show average wage growth among Kuwaiti employees on the mend, rising by 2.0 percent y/y in 2Q19 versus the 1.2 percent rise of 1Q19 and higher than the 0.8 percent for 2018 overall. Notably too, wage growth among Kuwaiti employees (+1.7 percent) surpassed that of expatriates for the first time in three years, likely helped by Kuwaitization efforts among high skilled workers in both the public and private sectors. By contrast, latest data showed growth in expat employment at its slowest in eight years, once domestic workers are excluded. With Kuwaitization efforts targeting higher-paying jobs on average, the corresponding shift in average expat jobs towards lower-skilled work could inject some downward pressure on expat wage growth going forward.

Headline inflation eased to 1.5 percent y/y in December from 1.6 percent in November and 1.7 percent at the end of Q3. The decline from November was in tandem with a slight moderation in food prices (1.8 percent from 2.0 percent) and as housing services remained negative (-0.9 percent). Core inflation (i.e. excluding food and housing) also eased slightly from 3.1 percent to 3.0 percent, as lower inflation in education (2.9 percent from 3.9 percent) and transportation (3.9 percent from 4.4 percent) more than offset higher inflation in household goods, communications and other goods & services. For 2019 overall, inflation came in at an annual average of 1.1 percent, in-line with our estimates and higher than the 0.6 percent recorded in 2018. Higher inflation was driven mostly by the food, household goods, transportation and clothing & footwear segments as well as slower deflation in housing services (-0.8 percent from -1.1 percent), which by itself carries a weight of 33 percent of the CPI basket.

Looking forward, we expect inflation to average 1.5-2.0 percent in 2020 with housing inflation more stable but still weighing on the headline rate. Core inflation is expected to be steady in the range of 2.0-2.5 percent in line with modest economic growth, moderate credit growth, a strong and stable dinar and limited inflationary pressure from wholesale prices. Credit growth edged up to 4.7 percent y/y in November 2019 from 4.2 percent at the end of 3Q19, driven by a faster expansion in business lending, which witnessed one of its best months of the year in October. Growth in business

lending picked up to 4.4 percent in November from 4 percent in September, on the back of continued strength in real estate lending. The growth in the latter surged to a multi-year year high of 10.2 percent in November (9 percent in September), and in fact has contributed as much as 92 percent of the total increase in business lending since November 2018.

Household credit remained steady at 5.2 percent in November (5.1 percent at end-3Q19) with its two components maintaining their diverging trends. Growth in housing loans weakened further to +2.3 percent in November (2.8 percent in September) while personal consumption loans (only about 10 percent of household credit) continued to power ahead with their growth accelerating to 37 percent (30 percent at end-3Q19). For 2020, we expect overall credit growth to be in the mid-single digits, i.e. broadly similar to the growth recorded in 2019. Meanwhile, although deposit accumulation remained muted in 2019, there was some improvement since the end of 3Q19 as growth inched up to 1.5 percent y/y from 0.8 percent, the improvement being wholly driven by government deposits. After keeping rates on hold when the Fed had lowered rates by 25 basis points in each of August and September, the Central Bank of Kuwait cut interest rates by 25 basis points in October when the US Federal Reserve made its third cut.

### Equities surge in 4Q19

Kuwaiti equities outperformed by far others in the Gulf region in 4Q19, with the All-Share index up an impressive 10.6 percent q/q, lifted by the premier market which gained 13 percent in the strongest quarterly performance of the year. In contrast, the MSCI-GCC rose 3.7 percent. The rally in Kuwaiti stocks was led by the consumer services (14 percent), real estate (14 percent), banking (14 percent) and telecom sectors (13 percent). Market capitalization stood at KD35.8 billion as of the end of December, the highest since 2010, and liquidity was strong, with an average daily turnover of 150 million shares in 4Q19, a 67 percent increase over 4Q18.

Net foreign inflows, although softer than previous quarters, were still decent at a total of KD90.2 million in 4Q19. The quarter also saw the successful conclusion of two large IPOs: the North Al-Zour and Boursa Kuwait IPO, both oversubscribed and due for listing sometime in 2020, though the Boursa Kuwait IPO has already started trading in the over-the-counter market at a considerable premium to the subscription price. Kuwaiti equities benefited from strong sentiment and capital inflows ahead of the recently-confirmed MSCI-EM inclusion in May 2020, which is expected to generate additional sizeable passive and active capital inflows and support the market going forward into 2020. However some profit-taking looks possible after last year's strong run and the market could be looking for a fresh catalyst after the May upgrade. Indeed, the market traded flat in the first few weeks of 2020, affected also by lower oil prices and global worries about the coronavirus outbreak.

## EXCHANGE RATES

### Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

#### ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.811
Indian Rupees	4.269
Pakistani Rupees	1.987
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.675
Nepali Rupees	2.664
Singapore Dollar	225.330
Hongkong Dollar	39.239
Bangladesh Taka	3.547
Philippine Peso	5.996
Thai Baht	9.935
Malaysian Ringgit	77.916

#### GCC COUNTRIES

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

#### ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.550
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	19.326
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	230.485
Sterling Pound	402.095
Euro	338.810
Swiss Frank	295.780
Bahrain 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	4.260
Pakistani Rupees	1.967
Bangladesh Taka	3.552
Philippines Peso	5.971
Cyprus pound	18.105
Japanese Yen	3.805
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalase Rupees	2.678
Malaysian Ringgit	74.945

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	43.795
Thai Bhat	10.735
Turkish Lira	51.320
Singapore dollars	225.111

### BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.393681	0.407581
Czech Korune	0.005358	0.014658
Danish Krone	0.041085	0.046085
Euro	0.329989	0.343689
Georgian Lari	0.104432	0.104432
Hungarian	0.000909	0.001099
Norwegian Krone	0.029140	0.034340
Romanian Leu	0.053623	0.070473
Russian Ruble	0.004759	0.004759
Slovakia	0.009111	0.019111
Swedish Krona	0.027572	0.032572
Swiss Franc	0.309497	0.320497
Australian Dollar	0.195738	0.207738
New Zealand Dollar	0.190716	0.200216
Canadian Dollar	0.224526	0.233526
US Dollars	0.300550	0.305100
US Dollars Mint	0.301050	0.305100
Bangladesh Taka	0.002896	0.003697

Chinese Yuan	0.042171	0.045671
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037134	0.039884
Indian Rupee	0.003640	0.004412
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002721	0.002901
Korean Won	0.000244	0.000259
Malaysian Ringgit	0.0070589	0.0076589
Nepalase Rupee	0.002627	0.002967
Pakistan Rupee	0.001296	0.002066
Philippine Peso	0.005864	0.006164
Singapore Dollar	0.217169	0.227169
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001320	0.001900
Taiwan	0.009918	0.010098
Thai Baht	0.009478	0.010028
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	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	0.424785	0.433785
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000101	0.000251
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	0.104138	0.112138
Turkish Lira	0.044430	0.054275
UAE Dirhams	0.082311	0.083139
Yemeni Riyal	0.000990	0.001070



Business

# Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc) records KD 43.6 million net profit for 2019

Total revenue reaches KD 293.7 million • EBITDA records a growth of 6% to reach a KD 82.4 million

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc), a subsidiary of stc Group and a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its financial results for the full year ended on 31 December 2019, reporting a total revenue of KD 293.7 million while company's net profit reached KD 43.6 million.

Commenting on the announcement of these financial results, Eng Maziad Al-Harbi - stc's Chief Executive Officer - stated: "company's financial results for the year ended on 31 December 2019 witnessed a growth, were stc managed to achieve revenues of KD 293.7 million compared to KD 287.9 million during the last year, with a percentage growth of 2 percent. In 2019, stc's EBITDA recorded a growth of 6 percent to reach a KD 82.4 million compared to KD 77.8 million for the same period in 2018. Meanwhile, EBITDA margin reached 28 percent in 2019 compared to 27 percent in 2018. As a result, stc achieved a net profit of KD 43.6 million (earnings per share of 87 fils) in 2019 with a profit margin of 15 percent.

These positive results have been achieved despite the continued competition in Kuwait's Telecommunications sector - one of the most competitive markets in the region - where stc has achieved high levels of revenue in addition to enhancing the operational efficiency in order to help creating value for its customers and better returns for its shareholders. stc has achieved these results by implementing the digital transformation strategy and offering integrated technology solutions to its customers, individuals and enterprises. Stc has also driven its business operations into

new areas of sustainable growth, through a series of innovative initiatives aimed at improving operational efficiency, improving customer experience, as well as delivering the best services and products to meet their customers' needs. Furthermore, and in addition to investing in the advanced 5G infrastructure, the company has the largest 5G network with 100 percent coverage of the populated areas at the end of 2019. Moreover, stc's customer base has reached 2.0 million customers at the end of December 2019".

Al-Harbi added: "stc's financial results reflected its capability to compete and enhance its position as the second greatest telecom operator in the Kuwaiti Telecom market in terms of its market share of revenue. Due to its secure and stable financial policy, stc continued to implement the cost optimization program that was adopted by the company during the previous year in order to achieve the best results, which will, in turn, enhance company's profitability through adopting a balanced and effective financial policy in the operational and capital expenditures. Shedding the light on company's financial position as of 31 December 2019, company's total assets reached KD 391.1 million where total shareholders' equity reached KD 215.4 million, with a book value of 431 Kuwaiti fils per share. In addition, stc has a strong financial solvency position, which is considered one of the best amongst the telecom companies across the Middle East.

Meanwhile, stc's Board of Directors has recommended distributing cash dividends to respective shareholders of 50 Kuwaiti fils representing 50 percent of the share's nominal value for the year ended 2019, subject to the approval of the Ordinary General

Assembly of the company".

Al-Harbi concluded, "2019 has marked an exceptional number of achievements for stc. We have successfully launched our new brand 'stc' and the 5G services commercially nationwide. Stc has also launched the "Let's go further" campaign which involves introducing company's new concept and strategy of boosting digital services, offering new innovative digital solutions and enhanced service offerings that go beyond the traditional telecom services. This campaign also aims to enrich the customer experience, create additional communication channels and a dynamic approach that is dedicated to catering with customers' needs. The campaign also highlights implementing innovative services and products offerings in order to elevate the Company to obtain and retain its leading position in the market. Furthermore, acquiring 100 percent of the share capital of Qualitynet - the Internet Service Provider General Trading and Contracting Company in Kuwait - is considered one of the extraordinary achievements of stc during 2019. In light with the ongoing changes in the global economic markets, and the increasing competitiveness in providing leading services in domestic as well as regional digital communications and services, stc has made every effort to enhance the efficiency of its business model and operations, adding value to all stakeholders, including customers, investors and share-



holders. In this regard, stc has been working on offering a number of unique as well as innovative products and services, thus supporting its current position as a leader in the Kuwaiti Telecom market".

Net profit: KD 43.6 mn	EPS: 87 Kuwaiti fils
Total Revenue: KD 293.7 mn	EBITDA: KD 82.4 mn
Customer base: 2.0 mn	Shareholder's Equity: KD 215.4 mn
Assets: KD 391.1 mn	Book Value: 431 Kuwaiti Fils

## Bioethanol plays an important role in chemical industry, says Alaa Hassan

**KUWAIT:** Bioethanol is a type of ethanol that is extracted from natural or biological sources and used as a source of energy. It is considered one of the most important modern discoveries in the field of alternative energy that aims at reducing toxic gases harmful to the ozone layer and our planet in general.

ChemiKuwait Chief Executive Alaa Hassan said there are several ideas and many researches aiming at reducing problems and disasters, one of which is the production of bioethanol, which is a substance used widely and has several uses in many fields. She said it can also reduce global health and environmental hazards. Bioethanol, used in manufacturing pharmaceuticals, is one of the most important solutions in its use as an alternative for industrial solvents which has a negative effect on the liver in the long run and causes cancerous diseases.



### Bioethanol

Hassan said the company is working on establishing a factory to benefit from bioethanol, and a research and development center will be part of it. She said this is the first-of-its-kind center in Kuwait and the region and will target students who want to complete their studies and do research in this field. She hoped it will meet the purpose it was founded for, in addition to developing the performance of production lines through continuous research with regards to raw material and operational process, and protecting the environment by using plant leftovers as raw material for the production of bioethanol, which is considered one of the most important material used for fuel, pharmaceuticals, food and industry.

She said the factory's building will be environment-friendly, and relies to a large extent on natural resources. As the end product - bioethanol - is extracted from natural and biological sources, it is considered an environment-friendly product and works on reducing carbon and poisonous gases released due to burning fuel, which in turn harm the ozone layer and violate the Basel treaty signed by world leaders. The company, in line with the 2035 vision of HH The Amir, attempts to have a place on the world's economic map. It is looking to raise the degree of Kuwait's competitiveness at the world level in its vision for 2035, to be among the best countries in economy and development.

## Pound pummeled as Johnson's tough talk rekindles hard Brexit fears

**LONDON:** Sterling fell by around 1 percent yesterday after Prime Minister Boris Johnson set out tough terms for Brexit talks with the European Union, rekindling fears Britain would reach the end of an 11-month transition period without agreeing a trade deal. The sides have until the end of the year, when a standstill transitional period expires, to secure a deal on trade and future relations but Johnson is striking a tough tone, saying Britain will not adhere to the bloc's rules and regulations. —Reuters

## Shanghai stocks plunge on virus fears

**LONDON:** Chinese equities plunged almost eight percent yesterday as nervous traders returned from their extended Lunar New Year break, hit by fears that the deadly coronavirus could hammer the country's economy.

The steep losses led another sell-off across Asia following a painful week for global markets with the virus death toll topping 360 people and more than 17,000 infected, and governments around the world banning flights to and from China. Oil prices hit 13-month lows at the start of Asian trading on expectations that crude demand could slide as the virus hits economic output.

OPEC members and their ally Russia will convene a technical meeting this week to analyze oil price falls since the outbreak of a coronavirus epidemic, a source close to the cartel said on Sunday.

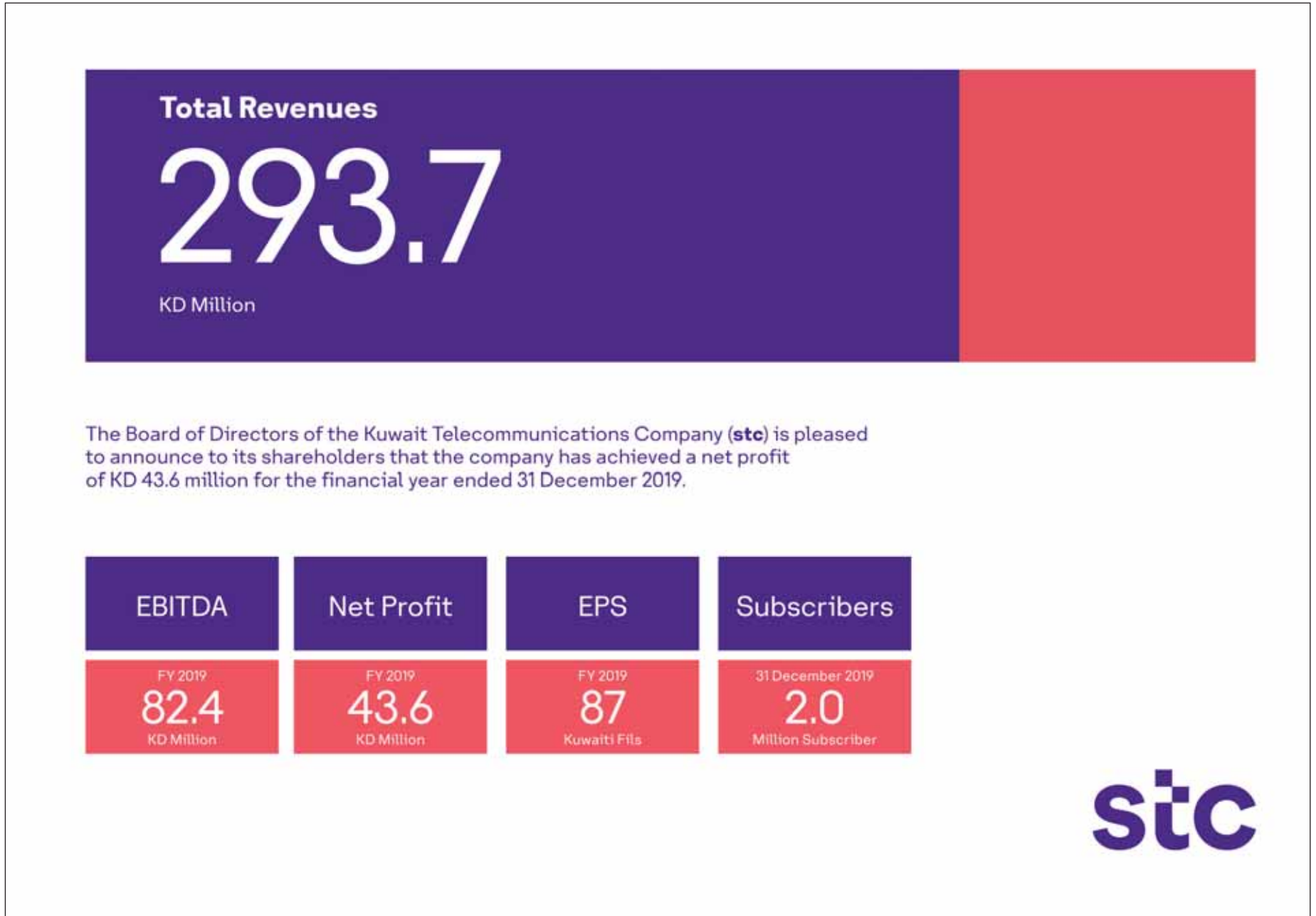
Brent North crude dropped to \$55.42 per barrel and WTI to \$50.42 yesterday — the lowest levels since January 2019. Prices recovered in European trading. In foreign exchange, sterling slid more than one percent versus the dollar on Monday, hit by worries over post-Brexit trade deal negotiations after Britain's exit from the European Union last Friday, dealers said. The pound's tumble helped to lift London's benchmark FTSE 100 index. Sterling's slide is "generally good for companies whose shares are priced in pounds but who earn in foreign currencies including the dollar", noted Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

Elsewhere, "Chinese stocks played catch-up... as its markets reopened after more than a week's closure", said Mould. "While the scale of this movement is enormous in terms of daily stock market action, it essentially puts China's market more in line with how the Hong Kong index has reacted in the past few weeks."



Analysts have warned that the virus outbreak could slash global growth this year, throwing a spanner in the works just as economies were showing signs of stabilizing after more than a year of slowing. Observers said that with China being a crucial part of the global trade infrastructure, other countries would also be badly hit, while major corporate names have frozen or scaled back their Chinese operations, threatening the global supply chain. The World Health Organization last week invoked a global health emergency but stopped short of recommending trade and travel restrictions that could have had a bruising effect on China. Still, JP Morgan Asset Management strategist Tai Hui remained relatively upbeat about the future. "As the number of infections is still likely to rise in the weeks ahead, we would expect the

Chinese onshore equity market to come under pressure," he said in a note. "That said, we still believe that economic activities should recover swiftly once the number of new cases comes under control, and subsequently market sentiment should also improve." European stock indices held in positive territory in afternoon trading, while Wall Street moved higher at the opening bell following sharp losses on Friday on fears of the impact of the coronavirus on the global economy. "Those concerns haven't just fallen by the wayside, yet they seem at least to have been set aside by traders expecting a patented buy-the-dip effort," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick J. O'Hare. "The open, however, isn't the important move. The important move comes after the reflexive buying action," he added. —AFP





## Business

# NBK first bank in Kuwait to launch 'Garmin Pay' service

## Garmin Pay introduces a qualitative transition in users' lifestyles

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announced the launch of "Garmin Pay" service, which enables its customers to make payments at a touch on their wearable Garmin Pay-compatible watch. The new Garmin Pay service comes as part of NBK's continued efforts to provide its customers with top-notch, digitalized payment solutions that meet their aspirations and complements their unique lifestyle.

NBK is the first bank in Kuwait to offer contactless payments on Garmin watches, further emphasizing on its leading position as a provider of high-tech services and disruptive payment solutions.

Customers are required to add the details of their NBK Credit Cards to the compatible device to activate the service and then enjoy making fast and easy payments via their wearable device. "We are happy to announce the launch of this new service, which came in line with NBK's efforts to introduce its customers with easy-to-use, fast, innovative and time-saving payment solutions. We are always looking for more unique and exceptional banking services that cater to the needs of all our customers," stated Mohammed Al-Othman, General Manager of Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait commenting on the new service.

"Garmin Pay is a payment solution specially designed for people who are always on the move. Customers can use this service in their daily purchases at retailers that support contactless payments," Al-Othman added. "NBK is always keen on providing its customers with innovative and full-fledged banking solutions by expanding its product base and while ensuring more secure and easier services. The bank always thrives to build strategic partnerships with the leading global service providers to offer the safest and most disruptive banking services. This is part of its well-established position locally and in the GCC region as the top provider of the most advanced financial services," Al-Othman noted.

"We are celebrating the launch of Garmin Pay, the innovative payment service, for the first time in Kuwait, in coordination with NBK, the top bank in the Middle East, which has a leading position locally and regionally. This service will represent a qualitative transition in users' lifestyles as the smart watch will stand as a GPS navigator, a mobile notification center, a sports mate and a wallet," stated Ahmad Al-Ameeri, General Manager of Seas & Deserts Group, the exclusive agent of Garmin firm in Kuwait.



Mohammed Al-Othman and Ahmad Al-Ameeri

"Our company always takes the lead to introduce its customers and the Kuwaiti market with the top-notch and most disruptive services. Launching Garmin Pay in coordination with a distinguished partner like NBK came within this policy," he stated, adding that "our partnership with NBK is well-established; their confidence in our products and our services is a reflection of a long-term strategic partnership."

NBK has successfully maintained a long-standing leading regional position, thanks to offering the highest-quality banking services, in addition to its effort to provide the top-notch and the most innovative payment solutions to meet customers' ever-changing needs.



NBK and Garmin Pay teams

### How to set up Garmin Pay

- Download the latest version of the Garmin Connect Mobile app to your smart phone, or your tablet whether Android- or Apple-supported (Make sure Garmin Watch battery is fully-charged)
- Open Garmin Connect Mobile app and press Garmin Devices
- Select your Garmin Watch
- Select Garmin Pay and press on the Create Your

### Wallet button

- You will be prompted to make a four-digit passcode to keep the wallet on your watch secure
- Enter your card data
- Read and accept the terms and conditions
- Enter the Authentication Code (OTP) sent by SMS to your registered mobile number
- Once you are done, the card will be added to your wallet and you're ready to use Garmin Pay service

## Boubyan Bank provides services in WhatsApp via 'Msa3ed'

**KUWAIT:** Boubyan Bank announced the launch of a group of outstanding digital services and products as "Msa3ed" service, the digital personal assistant, has been incorporated with WhatsApp as a part of the bank's constant endeavors to provide customers with special services and unique banking experiences.

Abdulla Al-Tuwaijri - Deputy Chief Executive Officer stated: "We announced previously our collaboration with Infobip, the international telecommunications company, for the first time in Kuwait to add to our list of digital services that we uniquely provide to our customers in the Kuwaiti market. Now, we are pleased to tell our customers that we are bringing an update that includes a new group of services whereby customers can perform a group of financial services by incorporating Msa3ed with WhatsApp."

Al-Tuwaijri went on to explain: "Customers can now check their banking information with "Msa3ed" through WhatsApp such as checking their balances, sharing their IBAN, and reviewing the last 5 transactions made using their credit cards in addition to the last 5 transactions made on the customer's account."

"In addition to all these services, customers can request further banking information from Msa3ed in WhatsApp such as information about various Boubyan Bank's services and products (account balance, branches' business hours and location, IBAN sharing, next salary date...) in addition to many other services that can be done swiftly due to the availability of 24/7 support," he added.

Al-Tuwaijri confirmed "As is the case with other services of Boubyan Bank, this service enjoys the highest levels of information security. WhatsApp messages are encrypted and the green badge next to Boubyan Bank name in the chat window ensures customers are engaging with a business verified account, ensuring a secure and reliable communication between customers and the Bank." Al-Tuwaijri concluded: "At Boubyan, we always aim to create simple innovative solutions that help reinforce our relationship with customers, and provide an outstanding level of service for them, and being the most used messaging app in the world, WhatsApp is the best channel that customers already trust and enjoy."

It is worth-mentioning that Msa3ed Service (the first AI-based digital personal assistant in Kuwait) can now respond to all inquiries about customers and others via WhatsApp through Boubyan Bank's verified number 1820082, where customers can find all the answers they need.



Abdulla Al-Tuwaijri

## Gulf Air returns to Erbil with 3 weekly flights

**MANAMA:** Gulf Air - the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain - celebrated its resumption services to Erbil in Iraq as its flight GF233 landed in Erbil International Airport at 1630 on 02 February 2020. Upon arrival, a celebratory event was held at the airport which saw the attendance of Gulf Air's Chief Operations Officer Capt. Suhail Ismaeel and the airline's Country Manager in Iraq Isa Shah along with various dignitaries, a number of local media, travel industry representatives and airport officials. At the inaugural



event in Erbil International Airport, Capt Suhail Ismaeel said: "We're happy to return to Erbil and operate direct flights to and from this Iraqi city". He also added: "With three weekly direct flights between Bahrain and Erbil supplemented with

great connectivity through our hub, this destination promises to be a key route within our growing network." Gulf Air's flights to Erbil will further strengthen the airline's existing Iraqi routes of Baghdad and Najaf.

## Boursa Kuwait tour raises capital markets awareness among graduates

**KUWAIT:** Reinforcing its commitment to nurturing a new generation of well-informed retail investors and securities professionals, Boursa Kuwait hosted 20 trainees from the fifth edition of the Capital Markets Authority's (CMA) fresh graduates training program on January 28, for an exclusive guided tour of the stock exchange, providing them with a deep understanding of the capital market operations.

The fresh graduates were able to get an inside look at the recent developments made at Boursa Kuwait, and how their efforts have significantly improved their international ratings and allowed Kuwait to become more attractive to local and international investors. A presentation that shed light on the various aspects of the company's activities and operations, which included major milestones in Boursa Kuwait's journey to a leading stock exchange, and the first stock exchange to be fully owned by the private sector in the Middle East, as well as its three market development plans.

The participants also took a tour of the company's trading hall where they gained first-hand knowledge of trading operations and the trading



board. They were also offered the opportunity to get an up-close look at the tools and equipment involved in trading before the adoption of electronic trading.

The event comes in line with Boursa Kuwait's corporate sustainability initiatives, which conform to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and falls under the 'Education' pillar of the company's Corporate Sustainability strategy. The pillar envisions a robust capital market ecosystem where all stakeholders are fully equipped with the knowledge and skill required to be an active player in the nation's

exchange in particular and its capital market in general. The strategy also includes 'Community' and 'Environment' pillars that envision a profitable business while also contributing to the well-being of the society and the environment. The company has launched a number of initiatives under the Education pillar, including the Boursa Academy free digital education portal, ongoing collaboration with a number of universities to advance capital markets literacy among students and raise awareness of Boursa Academy, as well as investor relations workshops and seminars for executives and professionals from companies listed on the stock exchange.

## Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah account weekly draw

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 2nd February 2020 announcing the names of the winners for the week of 26 - 30 January 2020. The weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

### The winners this week are:

Badreya Ali Hasan Alomstath  
Husain Hajji Tesho Ali Karam Hussain  
Khayriyah Abdullah Ali Dashti  
Maryim Ibrahim Hilal Aldokhi - minor  
Nadia Abdulmalak Haydar Bahman

Gulf Bank's announced that Al-Danah is now bigger, and that the prize of the annual draw will be KD1,500,000 as of 2020. The annual draw will be held on 14 January 2021, and the last chance to participate by depositing in the Al-Danah account will be on 30 September 2020.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services. Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to

deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app. Furthermore, loyal Al-Danah customers are rewarded with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous year, which are added to the customer's chances the following year. Therefore, the total chances earned by Al-Danah customers in 2019, have been added to their 2020 chances, and the same process will take place in 2021, and so on. Terms and conditions apply.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days.

## Huawei introduces FreeBuds 3 red edition in Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Huawei Consumer Business Group (CBG) has introduced the Huawei FreeBuds 3 Red version in the State of Kuwait, which will be on pre-order starting February 1 until February 5, 2020, with bundle Gift of Huawei Wireless Charger, priced at KD 49,900. Hint that, the Huawei FreeBuds 3 was previously available in black and white models only.

Huawei's vision is to bring digital to every person, home and organization for a fully connected, intelligent world. With this vision, Huawei continuously aims to create a competitive advantage by developing differentiated technological devices for consumers. The Huawei FreeBuds 3 red edition is a new addition to Huawei's innovative device. The Huawei FreeBuds 3 pick up the human voice efficiently for call quality that feels



like a face to face conversation and support active noise cancellation for an immersive music experience. Audio and video are perfectly synchronized for video playback and a premium gaming experience. Let's take a closer look at the World's First Open-fit Active Noise-Cancellation Earphone from Huawei.

### A more intelligent approach to noise cancellation

Huawei used innovative ideas to obtain true noise cancellation: Thanks to this technology, ambient noise in areas like malls or cafes are cancelled out, allowing users to enjoy a more immersive audio experience be it while using the

### Open-fit design comfortable to wear for a long time.

Huawei FreeBuds 3 has a unique open-fit design, allowing users to have a comfortable and pleasant wearing experience. The pebble shaped case is simple, elegant and ergonomic, while the earbuds are designed to fit comfortably without creating any stuffiness or discomfort. In terms of color options, it comes in glossy finishes of Black and White. Suitable for multiple scenarios be it to take long conference calls at work or playing your favorite music at the gym. Listening to music on these earphones are an absolute delight, with the bass, treble and middle perfectly balanced and every note heard at its best.



## Business

# Ahli United Bank reports record net profit of KD 55 million in 2019

## Bank achieves 11.2% growth in total assets to reach KD 4.4 billion

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) achieved another year of sustainable growth under its clear strategy, exceptional presence and strong brand, announcing good financial results at the end of 2019 reporting a surge in the net profit of 7.3 percent amounting to KD 55.0 million compared to KD 51.3 million year-on-year.

The Bank achieved 11.2 percent growth in total assets which has reached to KD 4.4 billion compared to KD 3.9 billion in the previous year. Financing Receivables grew by 7.8 percent to KD 3.0 billion and customer deposits grew by 11.2 percent to KD 2.7 billion as of year-end 2019. Assets and Deposits are managed prudently to achieve sustainable earnings. The Shareholders' equity increased by 5.8 percent to KD 0.5 billion at the year-end 2019. AUB's Board of Directors has proposed the distribution of cash dividend of 15 fils per share and 5 shares for every 100 common shares as bonus shares which is subject to the approval by Shareholders in the Annual General Assembly.

In addition to the foregoing achievements, the Bank maintained a solid capital adequacy ratio (CAR), before dividend, of 16.0 percent as of 31 December 2019 exceeding the level required by the regulators. The Bank also achieved a return on average equity (ROAE) and return on average assets (ROAA) of 12.7 percent and 1.4 percent respectively, for the year 2019, which is one of the highest in the market. Earnings per share (EPS) stood at 27.8 Kuwaiti fils compared to 25.8 Kuwaiti fils in 2018.

The Bank has maintained a conservative approach of risk management, which contributed to improving the quality of assets and reducing the irregular financing ratio to 1.26 percent with 330 percent coverage ratio including collaterals as of the year-end 2019.

Commenting on these results, the



Dr. Anwar Al-Mudhaf

Chairman of Ahli United Bank, Dr. Anwar Al-Mudhaf, said: "We are pleased with the Bank results for the year 2019, which reaffirms the success of the clear strategy and sound vision that we have adopted by focusing on the core banking activities to continue achieving strong results".

Al-Mudhaf affirmed that the Bank continues its achievements based on a proven long history of banking business since its establishment in 1941 as the first bank in Kuwait, which helped it to achieve a unique position as an Islamic banking institution keeping pace with the latest developments in banking industry, supported by the trust and loyalty of its customers, its professional team with the highest level of expertise and skills, which contributed to supporting its operations and ensuring the quality of all services it provides to customers, and at the same time supporting its continuation to realize further growth over these many years.

Dr. Al-Mudhaf added, the Bank places customers on the top of its priorities and accordingly pays great attention to customers' behavioral and data analysis in order to offer competitive products and services then meeting the customer needs and their aspirations. This will go alongside raising customer financial awareness and cyber security alerts to protect

against electronic crimes and enhance their banking relationships and shelters.

Al-Mudhaf added: "We as a prestigious financial institution are keen to play an effective role to contribute to achieving the economic growth within the country wide vision (New Kuwait 2035). This growth is built on a strong business environment which calls for optimism, main characteristics of this environment are the political stabilization Kuwait enjoys and the large size of the sovereign assets which highly contribute in maintaining a robust banking sector in Kuwait.

In addition, Dr Al-Mudhaf indicated that the Bank is extending every possible support to the small and medium size enterprises on all fronts considering its great role in local economy and national workforce chances for employment. Al-Mudhaf lauded AUB's success in its digital transformation journey and innovation of banking digital solutions that keep abreast with growth in the global banking sector and meet the expectations of customers seeking flexible, fast and secure digital banking services and products.

Al-Mudhaf noted the advanced capabilities enjoyed by AUB and its commitment to the highest professional standards that are most appreciated by global ratings agencies and place the Bank at the forefront of Shariah compliant banking and financial service providers in the State of Kuwait, which enables the Bank to continue to receive these superior ratings from agencies in addition to the prestigious awards received from international well-known entities specialized in following the business of banking and financial institutions, adding that these achievements are a strong indicator of the Bank's business strategy and sound performance. He has further advised that the Bank is in an advance stage by enhancing further its digital transformation platforms leading towards business cre-



ativity and innovation by applying the state-of-the-art new technologies.

At the end, the Chairman of AUB, Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf expressed thanks and appreciation for the Central Bank of Kuwait and all supervision authorities for their continuous support to the Bank. He also expressed appreciation to AUB Board of Directors, its executive management, shareholders and all employees for their dedicated efforts and persistent work. He also expressed thanks to the Bank's valued customers for their loyalty and trust in the Bank, confirming the Bank's management commitment to remain placing them at top priority.

Commenting on AUB financial results for the year 2019, Jehad Al-Humaidhi, Acting CEO of AUB affirmed that AUB managed to achieve several successes in 2019, as

these results record another year of strong performance within the implementation of the Bank's five-year strategic plan launched in 2015 to reflect the Bank's vision and goals for attaining development and growth.

Al-Humaidhi added: Based on the success achieved, we are proud to have won a number of excellence awards during the past year from prestigious international agencies, including; the "Best Business IT Innovation - Banking - Kuwait 2019" award from the International Finance Magazine (IFM), "Best Online Cash Management Bank" in Kuwait 2019 in Corporate Banking for the third year in succession by Global Finance, the leading international finance magazine, the "Most Innovative Digital Banking Initiative (Smart Branch) Kuwait 2019" by Global Banking & Finance Review for the digital branch

AUB opened at the Avenues Mall, Phase IV, in addition to the "Best Private Bank Kuwait 2019" by The Banker Magazine in collaboration with the Private Wealth Management (PWM) Magazine, in a new indication of the Bank's leadership in the private banking and wealth management sector, highlighting its commitment and concern to its customers, not only to provide for their needs, but also by exceeding their expectations on an ongoing and lasting basis. Moreover, Al-Hassad Islamic Account won "Best Savings Product Kuwait 2019" by the prestigious Magazine, Banker Middle East, based on the numerous unique features it provides.

Al-Humaidhi affirmed that AUB has an admirable work environment that managed to attract and employ Kuwaitis with exceptional capabilities, providing them all factors of success.

Al-Humaidhi noted the great success achieved by the Bank's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program, which was confirmed by winning the "Best CSR Services, Kuwait 2019" from the prestigious CPI Financial Banker Middle East in recognition of the Bank's remarkable social initiatives. Al-Humaidhi added: "We are proud of our established track-record of success and consecutive achievements made to date, and we are still working to develop our operations, enhance our services and products to meet our customers' requirements. We are fully confident that the future is full of opportunities which we will make every effort to take advantage of to achieve sustainable growth for our operations and for the Islamic banking sector in Kuwait in general. Al-Humaidhi concluded saying: "During the past years, we could fulfill our promises to our customers, making them distinguished with a bundle of exclusive banking services and solutions that have contributed to enriching this fast developing sector."



## OPEC+ weighs 500,000 bpd oil output cut

LONDON: OPEC and its allies are considering cutting their oil output by a further 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) due to the impact on oil demand from the coronavirus, two OPEC sources and a third industry source familiar with discussions said. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia, known as OPEC+, are considering holding a ministerial meeting on Feb. 14-15, one of the OPEC sources said, earlier than a current schedule for a meeting in March.

Oil has fallen \$10 a barrel this year to \$56, lower than the level many OPEC countries need to balance their budgets. The coronavirus outbreak in China could cut oil demand by more than 250,000 bpd in the first quarter, analysts and traders say. OPEC member Iran said yesterday the spread of the virus had hit oil demand and called for an effort to stabilize prices. Iran's official news agency IRNA reported.

"The oil market is under pressure and prices have dropped to under \$60 a barrel and efforts must be made to balance it," Iran's oil minister, Bijan Zanganeh, said.

Russia on Friday said it was ready to bring forward the OPEC+ meetings to February. The country is the biggest non-OPEC producer working with OPEC so its approval is key. An OPEC and non-OPEC panel called the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) has scheduled a meeting for Feb. 4-5 in Vienna to assess the impact of the virus on demand, other OPEC+ sources said.

The technical panel is likely to make a recommendation on any further action to

support the market, the sources said. OPEC+ has been reducing oil supply to support prices, agreeing in December to cut output by 1.7 million bpd until the end of March. Its next meeting is scheduled for March 5-6.

The partners are also discussing extending the duration of the cuts and separate OPEC sources said last week the group wanted to prolong the curbs until at least June. Saudi Arabia's economy, the largest in the Arab world, remains dominated by hydrocarbon revenue despite plans to diversify. The kingdom needs prices of around \$80 to balance its state budget.

Meanwhile, freight rates for supertankers on the Mideast Gulf and US Gulf routes to Asia have fallen to their lowest since mid-September as the coronavirus outbreak hit Chinese demand, ship brokers told Reuters. China's Sinopec Corp, Asia's largest refiner, and so-called "teapot" independent refineries have reined in operations in the face of plunging fuel demand.

"The market has gone back to what it was before the COSCO sanctions came in," one ship broker said, referring to US sanctions on subsidiaries of the state-owned Chinese shipping company.

"All the other variables have gone away, such as IMO 2020 congestion at ports, movement of low-sulfur fuel and industrial action in Europe."

Freight rates shot up in late September on the back of the COSCO sanctions and again in December because of logistics snags related to the switch to cleaner shipping fuels with the introduction of the new IMO 2020 regulations. The United States partially lifted sanctions on COSCO last Friday.

Ship broker Braemar yesterday said that the rate for a very large crude carrier (VLCC) from the U.S. Gulf to Asia had fallen to \$8 million, the lowest since Sept. 19. Another broker said a similar voyage was quoted at \$7.5 million. —Reuters

## Funds dump oil as fears about coronavirus hit to demand grow

LONDON: Hedge funds were heavy sellers of crude oil and refined products last week as the worsening coronavirus outbreak stoked fears about a China-led slowdown in oil consumption in 2020. Sunny optimism at the start of the year about an acceleration in the global economy has evaporated, replaced instead by extreme concern that the coronavirus and quarantine measures will hit oil consumption hard.

Travel restrictions within China, the reduction in passenger flights to and from the country, and the slump in freight movements will all severely dent oil demand, especially for middle distillates such as diesel and gasoil.

Hedge funds and other money managers sold petroleum futures and options in the six most important contracts equivalent to 147 million barrels in the week to Jan. 28, according to data from regulators and exchanges. Fund sales were the largest in any one week since July 2018 and among the heaviest at any time in the last eight years, the period for which detailed data is available.

Portfolio managers last week sold NYMEX and ICE WTI (56 million barrels), Brent (27 million), US gasoline (28 million), US diesel (16 million) and European gasoil (20 million).

Fund selling in oil started shortly after Jan 7, initially in small volumes, reflecting profit-taking after a large accumulation of bullish positions late last year, but has accelerated more recently. Funds have sold a total of 236 million barrels of crude and products over the last three weeks, after buying 533 million barrels over the previous three months.

A new cycle of short-selling appears to have started in NYMEX WTI with fund managers adding 39 million barrels of additional short positions since Jan. 7. Following the heavy sales, hedge fund positioning in crude and products appears close to neutral, with bullish long positions outnumbering bearish short ones by 4:1, slightly below the long-term average of 5:1.

The long-short ratio has fallen from almost 7:1 at the start of the year but remains well above the recent low of less than 3:1 in early October. Since the turn of the year, long-short ratios have fallen from 9:1 to 4:1 in WTI; 13:1 to 8:1 in US gasoline; and 13:1 to 3:1 in European gasoil.

In US diesel, hedge funds have transformed a net long bullish position of 21 million barrels at the end of 2019 into a net short bearish position of 14 million barrels last week. Oil traders are anticipating a massive hit to consumption in the short term, with governments and businesses in many provinces of China extending the lunar new year holiday to help contain the epidemic.

No one knows how long the coronavirus outbreak will last nor how far it will spread before burning itself out, but traders are now expecting a severe shock to consumption in the short term. — Reuters

## HK recession deepens as virus outbreak darkens outlook

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's economy contracted for the first time in a decade in 2019 as violent anti-government protests and trade tariffs between Washington and Beijing took more steam out of the economy in the final quarter of last year. The worst is yet to come, with no end in sight to the protests in the Chinese-ruled city and a new coronavirus outbreak in mainland China.

"The coronavirus outbreak will probably keep the city in recession for a while longer," said Martin Rasmussen, China economist at Capital Economics. Hong Kong, which has so far seen 15 confirmed cases of the virus, has taken measures to reduce the flow of visitors from China where the death toll has risen to 361. The city's retail and tourism sectors rely heavily on spenders from the Chinese mainland. The economy shrank by a seasonally adjusted 0.4 percent in October-December from the previous quarter, versus a revised 3.0 percent contraction in July-September. On an annual basis, the economy shrank 2.9 percent, compared with a revised 2.8 percent fall in the third quarter.

For the whole of 2019, real gross domestic product contracted by 1.2 percent, the first annual decline since 2009. "The coronavirus is grabbing the headlines, but the protests haven't gone away," said Iris Pang, Greater China economist at ING, who expects the economy to contract by 4.5 percent this year and return to mild growth in 2021 "if the virus is contained".

"Retail, catering, tourism, mass transportation are all suffering."

ANZ analysts predicted a 1.4 percentage



HONG KONG: An aerial view shows a section of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HKZM) in Hong Kong. Hong Kong's economy contracted for the first time in a decade in 2019 as violent anti-government protests and trade tariffs between Washington and Beijing took more steam out of the economy in the final quarter of last year. — AFP



## Health &amp; Science

# China's anti-doping agency halts testing over deadly coronavirus

LAUSANNE: China's state anti-doping agency "temporarily" suspended testing yesterday less than six months before the Tokyo Olympics in response to the coronavirus epidemic, the International Testing Agency said. "The situation is one of caution so as not to endanger athletes or test officials and while recognizing the importance of anti-doping activities, the priorities are to maintain public health for all," said the ITA.

The Olympics start on July 24. The Chinese agency (CHINADA) "will gradually resume testing as soon as the situation improves," the ITA said, adding that it was examining whether "private providers" could conduct tests. "We are still six months away from the Tokyo games," an agency spokeswoman said. "It is indeed likely that this will have an impact on the testing missions in China and solutions will have to be found."

The Chinese authorities reported 57 new deaths from the virus yesterday, taking the tally past 360 since the virus was detected late last year in the central city of Wuhan, where it is believed to have jumped from animals. The virus has spread to more than 24 countries. A string of sports events in China have been cancelled. All domestic football has been suspended and among the events either cancelled or postponed are the World Indoor athletics championships, Tokyo Olympics boxing and



BEIJING: Security guards and volunteers wearing protective masks stand by the entrance of a residential area, where people are inspected for identification and temperature checks before entering the premises, in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

women's basketball qualifiers and cycling's Tour of Hainan.

Also cancelled are snooker's China Open, badminton's China Masters and golf's LPGA Blue Bay tournament. The Chinese Formula E Grand Prix on March 21 was called off on Sunday. The Chinese Formula One Grand Prix, in Shanghai on April 19, is also at risk,

with the FIA announcing last Thursday it was "monitoring the evolving situation". The ITA spokeswoman said that for events moved outside China the planned testing regimes would not be changed. "We will continue to run the program we have prepared, even if the competitions are held in other locations." — AFP

## Dozens of koalas dead after logging at plantation

SYDNEY: Dozens of koalas have been euthanized and some 80 more are being treated for injuries and starvation after their habitat was logged, prompting an Australian government investigation yesterday. Victoria's environment department said the state's conservation regulator was investigating a "very distressing incident" at a bluegum plantation near the coastal town of Portland that resulted in the deaths of dozens of koalas. "If this is found to be due to deliberate human action, we expect the conservation regulator to act swiftly against those responsible," the department said. Those responsible could face steep fines under laws designed to protect Australia's native wildlife.

The environment department said approximately 80 koalas had been removed from the plantation site over the weekend for medical treatment, while others had to be put down.

"Wildlife welfare assessment and triage will continue with qualified carers and vets," the department said in a statement. "Plans are being made to translocate remaining animals offsite if they are well enough to be moved."

Friends of the Earth said the plantation was logged in December in what it called a "massacre" that left hundreds of koalas dead or injured. The conservation group said the scale of the incident was uncovered when local residents witnessed dead koalas being bulldozed into piles in recent days. The deaths come after devastating bushfires destroyed large swathes of koala habitat across Australia's southeast and killed thousands of the animals, which are listed as "vulnerable" to extinction.

The Australian Forest Products Association said a forestry contractor harvested the land in November in accordance with strict wildlife protection rules before the remaining trees were later bulldozed after the contractor left.

"It is unclear as yet who bulldozed the trees with the koalas apparently still in them, but it is absolutely certain that this was not a plantation or a forestry company," chief executive Ross Hampton told Nine newspapers. "We support all those calling for the full force of the law to be applied to the perpetrator." The forestry industry lobby group has pledged to hold its own investigation into the incident. — AFP

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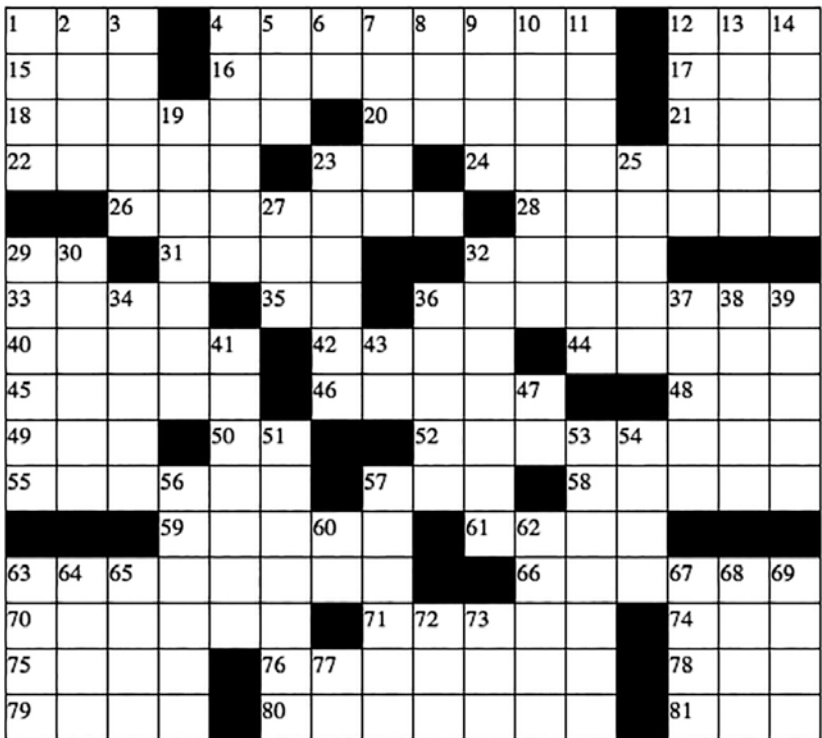
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ACROSS

- 1. Mythical bird of prey having enormous size and strength.
- 4. The condition of having no arms.
- 12. A solution containing a phosphate buffer.
- 15. The sign language used in the United States.
- 16. Line that is the commercial organization responsible for operating a railway system.
- 17. The syllable naming the sixth (submediant) note of a major or minor scale in solmization.
- 18. Grayish baboon of southern and eastern Africa.
- 20. Type genus of the Upipidae.
- 21. Fiddler crabs.
- 22. Boiled or baked buckwheat.
- 24. Something (especially a game) that is played again.
- 26. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- 28. A family of North American Indian language spoken in southwestern United States.
- 29. 1/1000 gram.
- 31. A quantity of no importance.
- 33. Earn on some commercial or business transaction.
- 35. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
- 40. Malicious satisfaction.
- 42. A material effigy that is worshipped as a god.
- 44. Physicist honored for advances in solid state electronics (born in Japan in 1925).
- 45. Tall perennial herb of tropical Asia with dark green leaves.
- 46. Make less active or intense.
- 48. A graphical record of electric currents associated with muscle contractions.
- 49. One of the most common of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
- 50. A public promotion of some product or service.
- 52. Irish playwright remembered for his satirical comedies of manners (1751-1816).
- 55. Prokaryotic bacteria and blue-green algae and various primitive pathogens.
- 58. Complacently or inanely foolish.
- 59. The basic unit of money in Yemen.
- 61. A detailed description of design criteria for a piece of work.
- 63. Extension upward of the toes when the sole of the foot is stroked firmly on the outer side from the heel to the front.
- 66. A hostel for pilgrims in Turkey.
- 70. Come out into view, as from concealment.
- 71. Little known Kamarupan languages.
- 74. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- 75. An administrator in charge of a division of a university or college.
- 76. Of or relating to or characteristic of Uganda or its people.
- 78. The principal activity in your life that you do to earn money.
- 79. (prefix) In front of or before in space.
- 80. Learn something again, as after having forgotten or neglected it.
- 81. Black tropical American cuckoo.

DOWN

- 1. Framework for holding objects.
- 2. A law passed by US Congress to prevent employees from being injured or contracting diseases in the course of their employment.
- 3. A fastener (as a buckle or hook) that is used to hold two things together.
- 4. A large fleet.
- 5. The cry made by sheep.
- 6. A state in New England.
- 7. Scale-like structure between the base of the wing and the halter of a two-winged fly.
- 8. A byproduct of inflammation.
- 9. A period of time equal to 1/24th of a day.
- 10. (Greek mythology) The Titan who was father of Atlas and Epimetheus and Prometheus in ancient mythology.
- 11. Resoluteness by virtue of being unyielding and inflexible.
- 12. A cartoon character created by Walt Disney.
- 13. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
- 14. United States artist whose work reflected social and political themes (1898-1969).
- 19. A city in Tamil Nadu on the Bay of Bengal.
- 23. Any of various spiny trees or shrubs of the genus Acacia.
- 25. A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria and closely related to Hausa.
- 27. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
- 30. Agile long-tailed nocturnal African lemur with dense woolly fur and large eyes and ears.
- 32. An English economist who argued that increases in population would outgrow increases in the means of subsistence (1766-1834).
- 34. Relating to or characteristic of people of Rome.
- 36. The shore of a sea or ocean.
- 37. English monk and scholar (672-735).
- 38. Swedish oceanographer who recognized the role of the Coriolis effect on ocean currents (1874-1954).
- 39. A linear unit (1/40 inch) used to measure diameter of buttons.
- 41. Marked by extreme intensity of emotions or convictions.
- 43. A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.
- 47. The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.
- 51. A male ballet dancer who is the partner of a ballerina.
- 53. Pioneer of non-Euclidean geometry (1826-1866).
- 54. A ruler of the Inca Empire (or a member of his family).
- 56. A city in northwestern Turkey.
- 57. Of or relating to a wedding.
- 60. A state in northwestern North America.
- 62. Of or relating to a hair.
- 64. A primeval personification of air and breath.
- 65. (informal) Very tired.
- 67. A Hindu prince or king in India.
- 68. Very dark black.
- 69. A sock with a separation for the big toe.
- 72. Used of a single unit or thing.
- 73. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
- 77. A brittle gray crystalline element that is a semiconducting metalloid (resembling silicon) used in transistors.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

If your lifestyle is considerably different than that of others, resist feeling self-conscious about it today. Aries. Try to remember that you chose the life you have for specific reasons. Even if you've come to a point where you're considering a change, there's no need to feel badly, ashamed, or embarrassed about where you are now. Everyone has to make his or her own way. If this conforms to the norm, that's fine. If it doesn't, that's fine, too.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

An enhanced feeling of determination could motivate you today. Taurus. Finish the things that aren't complete and make some plans for this evening. Don't hesitate to take on something that feels complicated or big. Chances are you'll be able to handle most anything and it will feel great when it's finished. Enjoy your day by making the most of opportunity.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Feeling the effects of today's energies, Gemini? Take heart if this is the case, because the end of the tunnel isn't as far away as it seems. Do your best to take things one step at a time and see about making some plans for a little fun this evening. Get together with friends or take in a movie. Help yourself feel better by staying busy and focused and follow up with some recreation. Before you know it, the aspect will pass and you'll be back to normal.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Consider making some plans for a vacation or short getaway. Cancer. Looking forward to something fun can make even the toughest of days far easier to handle. You'll be amazed how much you can manage when there's an end in plain sight. Your entire attitude can lighten. So take the bull by the horns and create an incentive for yourself. Do something special to reward the hard work you do day after day.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Don't judge someone if he or she has a different lifestyle than what you consider to be OK, Leo. You probably lean toward the traditional, yet not everyone feels this way about relationships, working, or lifestyle. While it may seem impossible to understand and even frighten you, try not to be too harsh on those you deem odd. You'd be better off using that energy to keep your own life on track.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Friends seeking advice or a shoulder to cry on could be plentiful today, Virgo. You're one of best people to give them the support and care they need. Just be sure that you don't give so much to others that you don't have anything left for yourself. True friendship is about sharing and the exchange of problems and help. Running yourself down will leave you in a place where you aren't going to be much help to anyone.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Getting through today shouldn't pose too big a problem for you. Libra. You may feel a huge second wind that can give you the drive and determination to see your chores and projects through. Make some plans for this evening, such as getting together with friends or taking in an event that really intrigues you. Until then, go about your tasks bit by bit. You'll get things finished before you know it.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Working within boundaries and restrictions could really get to you today, Scorpio. Yours is an independent spirit and your best achievements are often born of doing things your own way. Yet like it or not, we all have to follow guidelines and rules. Do your best to follow suit and finish what needs to be done. Afterward, you may find more freedom to act independently without consequences. Exercise patience and diligence as needed today.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 19)

Chances are that you'll feel upbeat and positive today, Sagittarius. Consider sharing this energy with those around you who are feeling less than content. Your attitude can have a profound effect on friends, partners, spouses, and children. Even neighbors and extended family can pick up on your spirit without you even realizing it. Share your optimism with everyone you can today. If you see someone hurt or angry, tell him or her that everything will eventually work out and to keep trying.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Don't discount your ability to be extremely resourceful if you need to be, Capricorn. If you don't have everything you need or all of the required information, take time to think. Who can you ask? What places can you access? Who might know where you can find what you need? Rather than panic because the pieces aren't all there, instead make a list of contacts and go for it. Trust in yourself.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Try not to let today's blues get you down, Aquarius. While it's true that some days can seem to drag on, the busier you are the faster time will pass. Get down to finishing any work still before you and then make plans for tonight. If there's a light at the end of the tunnel, not only will things seem to speed up but you'll feel better knowing it's coming.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Dare to be different, Pisces. It can be so easy to fall into a drill. Sleeping at the same time, eating at the same time, wearing the same style, and going about work the same way day after day. Before you know it, you feel like you're in a rut. The only way to get away from this is to make a decision to break free by doing something unique. Try a new haircut. Wear colors that are unusual for you. If the need is there, consider a new career. Pursue expansion.

Wordsearch Puzzle

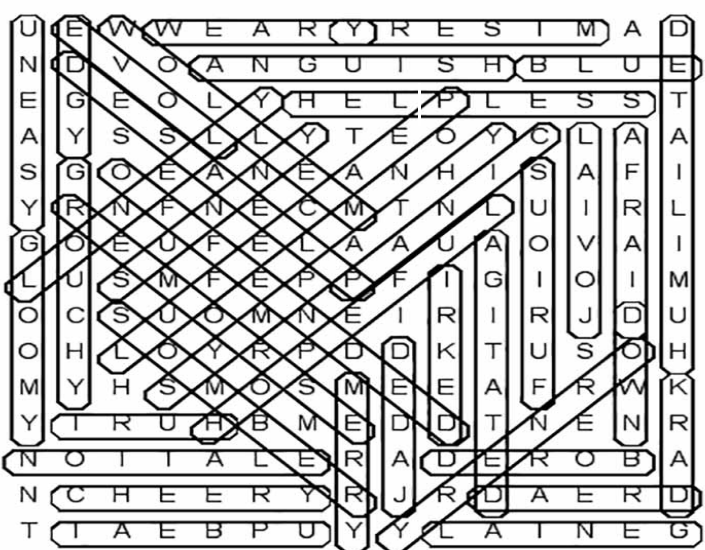
Moods & Emotions 2

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



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

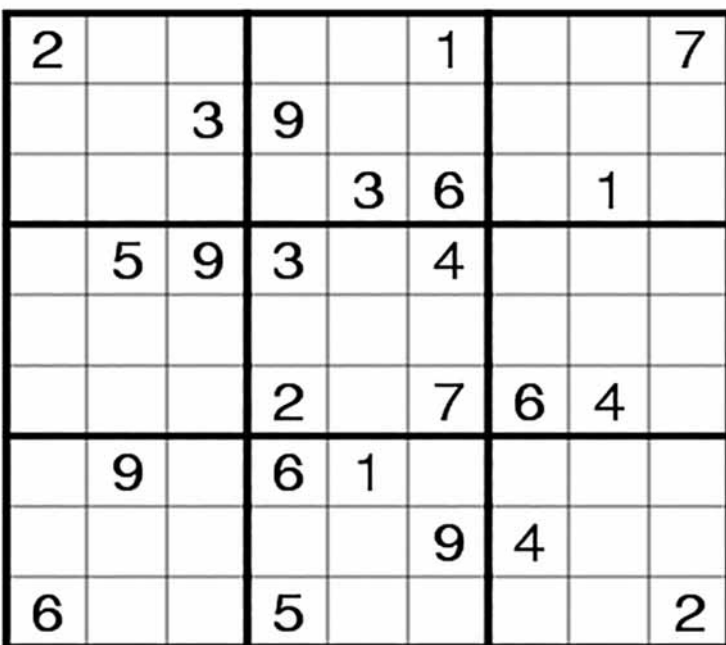
Moods & Emotions 1



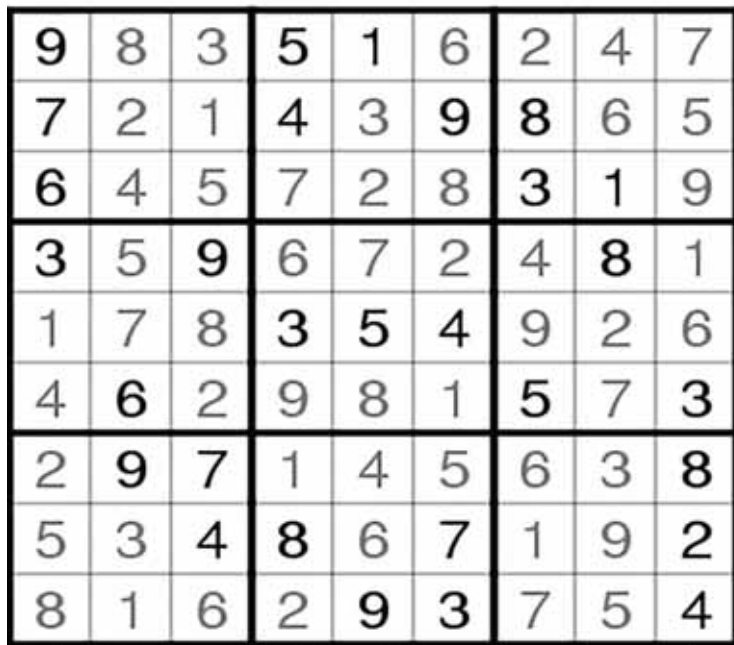
- |          |            |          |          |
|----------|------------|----------|----------|
| AFRAID   | ELATION    | JADED    | PEACEFUL |
| AGITATED | FURIOUS    | JOVIAL   | PLEASED  |
| ANGUISH  | GENIAL     | LONELY   | REMORSE  |
| BLUE     | GLOOMY     | LOVE     | SOMBER   |
| BORED   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

The hidden word is: ASTONISHMENT

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution





# Lifestyle

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2020



The street art Rubik's Cube version of the 'Mona Lisa' entitled 'Rubik Mona Lisa' made in 2005 by French artist Invader is on display at the Artcurial auction house in Paris yesterday before being auctioned next February 23rd. — AFP photos

## Rubik's Cube 'Mona Lisa' goes on sale in Paris

A street art Rubik's Cube version of the "Mona Lisa" is expected to sell for up to 150,000 euros (\$166,000) when it goes under the hammer in Paris this month. Made from 330 Rubik's Cubes by the French artist Invader-famous for his ceramic Space Invaders figures inspired by the vintage pixelated video game-is called "Rubik Mona

Lisa". It is the first of a series of works in which the artist has recreated some of the great paintings of art history in Rubik's Cubes.

Invader, whose real name is Franck Slama, claimed that they the foundational creations of a new art movement called "Rubikcubism". He has glued Space

Invaders works to walls in more than 33 countries, and even inspired smartphone applications for fans trying to track them down. "Rubik Mona Lisa" will go on sale at Artcurial on the Champs-Élysées in Paris on February 23 as a part of auction featuring some of the biggest names in street art.

Invader made "Rubik Mona Lisa" in 2005

and has since gone on to recreate Edouard Manet's Impressionist masterpiece "Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe" ("Luncheon on the Grass") as well as Gustave Courbet's ever-controversial "The Origin of the World" in Rubik's Cubes. The cube, a cult children's puzzle in the 1980s, was invented by the Hungarian sculptor Emo Rubik as a teaching

tool to explain three-dimensional forms to his architecture students. A blockbuster Leonardo da Vinci show at the Louvre museum in Paris, which holds the "Mona Lisa", finishes at the end of this month. — AFP

## LATIN PRIDE ON DISPLAY DURING J-LO, SHAKIRA SUPER BOWL SHOW

Jennifer Lopez and Shakira turned the Super Bowl halftime show into a giant Latin dance party Sunday, wowing the sold-out crowd with their greatest hits. The performance, at Miami's Hard Rock Stadium, was a high-energy celebration of culture and abs, as both women showcased soaring vocals and thunderous dance routines. Shakira opened in a glittering ensemble, getting the crowd of 65,000 on their feet with "She Wolf" and "Wherever, Whenever". She was then joined by Puerto Rican reggaeton singer Bad Bunny for a few lines of "I Like It" (originally sung by rap star Cardi B) before segueing into her iconic hit, "Hips Don't Lie".

The stage then cleared as Jennifer Lopez appeared atop a miniature Empire State Building, a nod to her New York roots, much like King Kong-or Queen Kong, as it were. After a few bars of "Jenny From the Block," Jenny herself took the crowd through a medley of "Love Don't Cost A Thing", "Get Right" and "On the Floor", her transitions as fast and sharp as her dance moves. Lopez started out wearing a black leather, heavily cutout jumpsuit. But she soon shed that for a revealing silver number as she performed a pole dance to "Waiting For Tonight", alongside Colombian reggaeton star J Balvin.

The dance was in honor of her acclaimed performance as Ramona in

"Hustlers," a film Lopez also produced. She earned a Golden Globe nomination for the role-and many thought she should have won an Oscar nod. Her daughter Emme then took the stage for the show's most political moment: small children in light-up "cages" surrounded the stage, a pointed reference to a President Donald Trump administration "zero tolerance" policy launched in 2018 that saw thousands of children separated from their parents at the border.



Lopez then returned wearing an American flag feather cape-that she then lifted to reveal the flag of Puerto Rico, the US territory struggling in the aftermath of earthquakes and a devastating hurricane. Backed up by Shakira on the drums, the mother and daughter sang a few lines of Bruce Springsteen's "Born In the USA" before transitioning into "Let's Get Loud". Shakira called out. Twitter lit up after the performance, with many praising the women's skills. The hashtags #Latinas and #Latinapower also began trending. Lady Gaga, who performed at the Super Bowl halftime in 2017, called the performance "so incredible!!!" "I danced and smiled the whole time," the singer tweeted. "Such powerful sexy women!!!!" — AFP

The song quickly turned into a full-on Latin dance number, with Shakira and Lopez showcasing fierce, high-intensity footwork on a raised platform and ending the show back-to-back in a "Charlie's Angels"-esque pose. "Muchas gracias!" Shakira called out. Twitter lit up after the performance, with many praising the women's skills. The hashtags #Latinas and #Latinapower also began trending. Lady Gaga, who performed at the Super Bowl halftime in 2017, called the performance "so incredible!!!" "I danced and smiled the whole time," the singer tweeted. "Such powerful sexy women!!!!" — AFP

Colombian singer Shakira performs on stage.



US singer Jennifer Lopez and her daughter Emme Muniz (left) perform during the halftime show of Super Bowl LIV between the Kansas City Chiefs and the San Francisco 49ers at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Florida. — AFP



Emme Muniz (front), daughter of US singer Jennifer Lopez (not shown) performs on stage.



US singer Jennifer Lopez (right) and Colombian singer Shakira (left) perform on stage.



US singer Jennifer Lopez performs on stage.





1917 British director Sam Mendes (center) and producers Pippa Harris (center right), Callum McDougall (left), and Jayne-Ann Tenggren (center left) pose with the award for Best Film for '1917' with citation readers Andrew Scott (right), Mark Strong (second right), Dean-Charles Chapman (second left) and George Mackay (third left) at the BAFTA British Academy Film Awards at the Royal Albert Hall in London. — AFP photos



British director Sam Mendes poses with the award for a Director for his work on the film '1917'.

# '1917' wins big at Baftas to take pole position for Oscars



British cinematographer Roger Deakins poses with the award for Cinematography for his work on the film '1917'.



US actress Renee Zellweger poses with the award for a Leading Actress for her work on the film 'Judy'.



US actor Joaquin Phoenix poses with the award for a Leading Actor for his work on the film 'Joker'.

**S**weeping World War I odyssey "1917" won big at Sunday's Bafta awards, landing the best film prize and best director trophy for Sam Mendes, and putting it in line for potential Oscars glory next weekend. The movie, which follows two British soldiers on a perilous mission across no man's land, had already scooped the Golden Globe for best drama, and has 10 Academy Award nominations including for best picture.

Hailed as a groundbreaking piece of cinema, it scooped seven of the nine prizes it was nominated for at Britain's top film awards, including in cinematography, production design, sound and special visual effects. "It's moving for me to get this in my hometown for the first time," said Mendes, the first British winner of the best director Bafta since Danny Boyle prevailed in 2009 for "Slumdog Millionaire". "Thank you to all the people who have gone to see this in the cinemas," he told the star-studded ceremony at the Royal Albert Hall in London.



South Korean director Bong Joon-ho poses with the award for a Film Not In The English Language for 'Parasite'.

## Disappointments

At this year's Baftas, the same five movies filled the best film and best director nominations. Joining "1917" and Mendes were "Joker" (Todd Phillips); South Korean comedy thriller "Parasite" (Bong Joon-ho); "The Irishman" (Martin Scorsese), and "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" by Quentin Tarantino. The evening proved particularly anti-climatic for the latter two: Tarantino's comedy-drama won just one award—Brad Pitt, for best supporting actor—

while Scorsese's crime flick finished empty-handed.

But the evening was perhaps equally disappointing for hit film "Joker", which led the way with 11 nominations but ended up with just three prizes, including Joaquin Phoenix for best actor. He beat Hollywood heavyweight Leonardo DiCaprio ("Once Upon a Time in Hollywood") as well as Adam Driver ("Marriage Story"), Taron Egerton ("Rocketman") and Jonathan Pryce ("The Two Popes").

## 'Very humbling'

Renee Zellweger claimed the best actress award for her portrayal of Judy Garland's late-life comeback tour in "Judy", marking a stunning renaissance for her own wide-ranging career. She saw off stiff competition from a talented field boasting Jessie Buckley ("Wild Rose"), Scarlett Johansson ("Marriage Story"), Saoirse Ronan ("Little Women") and Charlize Theron ("Bombshell"). "This is very humbling," she told the audience of Hollywood royalty. "Miss Garland, London town, which you have always loved so much, still loves you back. This is for you."

Meanwhile Laura Dern won the best supporting actress gong for Netflix's divorce tearjerker film "Marriage Story". She beat out her co-star Scarlett Johansson, for her role in "Jojo Rabbit", as well as Florence Pugh ("Little Women") and twice-nominated Margot Robbie ("Bombshell") and "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood".

## Diversity criticism

The British Academy of Film and Television Arts, in its 73rd annual movie awards, are often seen as indicative of which way the Oscars might go in Los Angeles, this year on February 9. This year's Baftas have faced some criticism for lacking ethnic diversity among the acting categories' nominees, all 18 of whom were white. Phoenix took aim at "systemic racism" and "oppression" within the industry in his acceptance speech. "I think that we send a very clear message to people of colour that you're not welcome here," he added.

The British academy said it would review its voting system in time for next year's awards. The winners and nominees in most categories are voted for by the 6,500 members, who are industry professionals and creatives from around the world. In previous years, senior Bafta figures said the awards could only reflect the cinema industry's output. "It's infuriating.



(From left to right) Visual effects artists Greg Butler, Guillaume Rocheron and Dominic Tuohy pose with their awards for Special Visual Effects for their work on the film '1917'.

We can't make the industry do something; all we can do is encourage," said Bafta film committee chairman Marc Samuelson.

## Kennedy, Serkis honored

The ceremony was hosted by TV chat show presenter Graham Norton, with Prince William and his wife Kate adding some royal glamour in his 10th year as Bafta president. The prince presented the Academy Fellowship, its highest accolade, to American producer Kathleen Kennedy, the boss of Lucasfilm, and behind some of the biggest-grossing movies ever. They

include the Star Wars sequels, "Jurassic Park", "E. T. the Extra-Terrestrial" and the "Back to the Future" trilogy.

Meanwhile, British actor Andy Serkis received the Outstanding British Contribution to Cinema Award for his pioneering motion-capture acting for computer-generated characters. The 55-year-old's roles include Gollum in "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy, Caesar in the "Planet of the Apes" reboot, the titular gorilla in "King Kong" and Supreme Leader Snoke in two "Star Wars" sequels. — AFP



(From left to right) Hamza Al-Kateab, Sama, Syrian filmmaker Waad al-Kateab and British filmmaker Edward Watts pose with their awards for a Documentary for 'For Sama'.



Sound director Scott Millan, sound designer Oliver Tarney, sound editor Rachael Tate and sound engineer Mark Taylor pose with their awards for Sound for their work on the film '1917' and cinematographer Roger Deakins (second right) for his award for Cinematography for '1917'.



(From left) British filmmaker Mark Jenkin, British producer Linn Waite and British actress and producer Kate Byers pose with the awards for an Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director or Producer for their work on the film 'Bait'.



# Lifestyle | Awards



Hair stylist Anne Morgan poses with the award for Makeup and Hair for her work on the film 'Bombshell'.



Spanish animator and director Sergio Pablo (left) and film producer Jinko Gotoh (right) pose with their awards for an Animated Film for 'Klaus'.



British actor Micheal Ward poses with the Rising Star Award.



US actress Laura Dern (center) poses with the award for a Supporting Actress for her work on the film 'Marriage Story'.



British costume designer Jacqueline Durran poses with the award for Costume Design for their work on the film 'Little Women'.



New Zealand filmmaker Taika Waititi poses with the award for an Adapted Screenplay for the film 'Jojo Rabbit'.

## Baftas 2020 winners

### BEST FILM

1917 - Pippa Harris, Callum McDougall, Sam Mendes, Jayne-Ann Tenggren

### LEADING ACTRESS

Renee Zellweger - Judy

### LEADING ACTOR

Joaquin Phoenix - Joker

### SUPPORTING ACTRESS

Laura Dern - Marriage Story

### SUPPORTING ACTOR

Brad Pitt - Once Upon a Time in Hollywood

### OUTSTANDING BRITISH FILM

1917 - Sam Mendes, Pippa Harris, Callum McDougall, Jayne-Ann Tenggren, Krysty Wilson-Cairns

Bait - Mark Jenkin, Kate Byers, Linn Waite

### FILM NOT IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Parasite - Bong Joon-ho

### DOCUMENTARY

For Sama - Waad Al-Kateab, Edward Watts

### ANIMATED FILM

Klaus - Sergio Pablos, Jinko Gotoh

### DIRECTOR

1917 - Sam Mendes

### ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

Parasite - Han Jin Won, Bong Joon-ho

### ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

Jojo Rabbit - Taika Waititi

### ORIGINAL SCORE

Joker - Hildur Guonadottir

### CASTING

Joker - Shayna Markowitz

### CINEMATOGRAPHY

1917 - Roger Deakins

### EDITING

Le Mans '66 - Andrew Buckland, Michael McCusker

### COSTUME DESIGN

Little Women - Jacqueline Durran

### MAKE UP & HAIR

Bombshell - Vivian Baker, Kazu Hiro, Anne Morgan

### SOUND

1917 - Scott Millan, Oliver Tarney, Rachael Tate, Mark Taylor, Stuart Wilson

### SPECIAL VISUAL EFFECTS

1917 - Greg Butler, Guillaume Rocheron, Dominic Tuohy

### BRITISH SHORT ANIMATION

Grandad was a Romantic - Maryam Mohajer

### BRITISH SHORT FILM

Learning to skateboard in a warzone (if you're a girl) - Carol Dysinger, Elena Andreicheva

### EE RISING STAR AWARD (voted for by the public)

Micheal Ward

### OUTSTANDING BRITISH CONTRIBUTION TO CINEMA AWARD

Andy Serkis



British actor Andy Serkis poses with the award for Outstanding Contribution to British Film.



LE MANS '66 Film editor Andrew Buckland (left) and US film editor Michael McCusker (right) pose with their awards for Editing for their work on the film 'Le Mans '66'.



US actor Brad Pitt winner of Supporting Actor for his work on the film 'Once Upon a Time in Hollywood'.



Filmmakers Carol Dysinger (left) and Elena Andreicheva (right) pose with the awards for a British Short Film for 'Learning To Skateboard In A Warzone (If You're A Girl)'.



Iranian-British filmmaker Maryam Mohajer poses with the award for a British Short Animation for 'Grandad Was A Romantic'.

## AFTER 'ROMA' GLORY, ACTRESS APARICIO HAS NEW ROLE – ACTIVIST

A year after the movie "Roma" catapulted her from obscurity to an Oscar nomination, Mexican actress Yalitza Aparicio is using the spotlight to promote causes close to her heart: indigenous and women's rights in her country. Taking a break from film sets, the 26-year-old from the Mixteca community in the southern state of Oaxaca is dedicating this year to working as a UNESCO goodwill ambassador for indigenous peoples. In her new role, Aparicio—the first indigenous woman ever nominated for a best actress Oscar—returned to school this week to give a talk at Harvard University's Mexico Conference 2020.

In an interview with AFP in Mexico City, she said she understood that fame and her career would be "a series of ups and downs." "So the thing is to use this current high to lend visibility [to indigenous communities] and to explain to more people the things that I have been concerned about," she said. "It's been gratifying." Aparicio became an inspiration to many Mexicans when she earned rave reviews for her role in "Roma," by Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón. The film ended up winning three Oscars. Her "Roma" character Cleo is a domestic worker inspired by Cuarón's own childhood nanny.

The film's success not only brought her international plaudits, but she ended up

doing interviews and photo shoots for top magazines such as Vogue and Vanity Fair—where indigenous faces are rare. Of course, the praise was accompanied by some vitriol on social media. Many with indigenous roots in Mexico have experienced discrimination, in a society that has



Mexican actress Yalitza Aparicio, Oscar nominee for the film 'Roma' in 2019, poses for a photograph after an interview with AFP, in Mexico City. — AFP

been reluctant to acknowledge its own racism. "We are not new faces, we are simply the people we always were, but who nobody had ever bothered looking at before," she said. "May we never again be afraid to say, 'Enough! We exist too!'"

### 'I am a feminist'

On the back of "Roma," Aparicio connected with many ordinary women in Mexico, and pushed celebrities to lend their support to the Latin American feminist movement. Chilean singer Mon Laferte invited Aparicio to appear in the video for her song "Plata Ta Ta," a high-octane reggaeton performance in which Aparicio wore a green headscarf, the international symbol of the struggle for women's rights. In her native Oaxaca—the second place in Mexico after the capital to decriminalize abortion—conservatives have criticized her liberal stance, but she is holding firm.

"Every one of us is free to decide for themselves, depending on their situation," she said. "I am simply supporting the right which all women have: we are free to make decisions about our own bodies." Violence against women in Mexico — 10 are killed every day, according to the United Nations—and female empowerment come up often when Aparicio speaks, and she describes herself as a "feminist for equality." "I am a feminist and I always have

been," she said. "Lots of times, people think being a feminist means being 'more than men' when in reality, it's just a question of seeking the equality that so many of us lack."

### Back to her roots

Aparicio stumbled into the world of movies by chance. Having recently graduated as a teacher, she accompanied her sister to a casting call—with no idea that she herself would be cast and it would change her life. Her sudden flurry of globe-trotting due to the success of "Roma" left her longing to return to her hometown of Tlaxiaco, a community of 40,000 people in the mountains who now see her as a star.

"When I go back home, they say to me, 'What are you washing the dishes for? You just sit down, you're a celebrity!'" and I quip back that the plates aren't going to suddenly slip out of my hands," she said. Aparicio used to dream that one day her students would come back to her and show off their university degrees: she now hopes her work will inspire others. "I bump into more and more people who say 'Yes I can do this,' and that gives me lots of energy," she said with a smile. — AFP

## Patti Smith guitarist Ivan Kral dies at 71

Czech rock guitarist, songwriter and producer Ivan Kral, who played with Patti Smith, Iggy Pop and David Bowie, has died aged 71, the organizers of a Prague festival said yesterday. "We're terribly sorry but we have to confirm the information that Ivan Kral has passed away," said the Metronome Festival Prague organizers on Facebook. Kral died of cancer in his Michigan home, his wife Cindy Hudson said on Twitter.

Born in 1948, just after the Communists seized power in former Czechoslovakia, Kral moved to the United States with his parents in 1966 when he was already an acclaimed musician at home. He played with Blondie in 1974 before joining the Patti Smith Group a year later. Kral wrote a number of songs with Patti Smith, including "Dancing Barefoot", and scores for several films, including Barry Levinson's 1982 debut "Diner".

When the Communist regime in former Czechoslovakia fell in the 1989 Velvet Revolution, Kral started to return to his home country as a performer and producer. — AFP





# 7% OF KUWAIT GOES TO GYM ON A REGULAR BASIS, HOW TO MOTIVATE THE REST?

By Abdullah Al Askari, MSc, owner of Clubfit Gym Co and managing partner at C Club Kuwait

The fitness and wellness landscape of Kuwait is changing in front of our eyes with more and more specialized trainings and personal trainers being introduced to the market. Yet committing to regular exercising in a sedentary-lifestyle country like Kuwait is not an easy task. What are the ways to motivate Kuwaiti population to adopt a healthier lifestyle? We can notice multiple efforts being made from both the government and private sector actors.

The health and fitness industry in the GCC region are poised to grow exponentially. Nike opened their largest Middle Eastern store at Dubai Mall and Dubai intends to become the world's healthiest city. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia is proclaimed by the World Health Organization (WHO) to be the least active country globally although Saudi government finally introduced PE classes to schoolgirls in 2018. Female fitness segment in the neighboring Saudi remains untapped, with a penetration of less than 5%.

And where does Kuwait stand in comparison to its regional counterparts? Kuwait's health and fitness sector are undoubtedly rapidly growing. The private sector is sponsoring many events throughout the country, such as marathons, triathlons etc. Meanwhile, the government-owned clubs are moving towards privatization of major sports. The expansion of gyms and fitness centers is most visible in rural areas that are heading towards urbanization. We must also not forget that wellness centers, including physio and rehab centers, are also on the rise.

## Establishing a National Diabetes Registry by 2023

The role of governments in nurturing their citizens' health and fitness is indispensable. Within the GCC, many sport and fitness initiatives are supported by the states to tackle the prevailing unhealthy lifestyles, which are closely linked with non-communicable chronic diseases (NCCD) such as diabetes and obesity. Kuwait is not an exception to this trend. The New Kuwait Vision 2035 recognized well-being and high-quality healthcare as one of its seven pillars.

When it comes to CNCD, the Dasman Diabetes Institute plays a vital role in diabetes research and treatment in Kuwait. One of the Institute's latest tasks is to establish a National Diabetes Registry by 2023, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. Dr Qais Al-Duwairi, the Director-General of the Institute, stressed on the importance of prevention and management of diabetes as one its strategic initiatives of 2018-2023. This includes the creation of intervention and educational programs that aim to reduce the incidence of diabetes by promoting a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

## Healthier menus and food choices

In the same vein, the New Kuwait Vision 2035 initiated a number of projects in this area, including Healthy Cities Initiative (to manage disease control and improve living environment of residential areas by tackling traffic and environmental pollution, lack of walkways and green areas etc.) and Prevention and Response Management project to chronic non-communicable diseases (to reduce smoking among teenagers, physical inactivity, death rates as a result of CNCD



etc.). Nevertheless, changing the mindsets of different generations won't be that easy and smooth given that serving food is an entrenched social ritual in the local culture.

Certainly, food represents a large part of the Kuwaiti culture, whether traditional or the modern and trendy. However, as fitness center owners and managers, we are noticing that many of today's health seekers have become more critical about the food they indulge themselves with and opt for a healthy choice. This is where we can notice many upcoming small businesses head towards creating healthier menus and food choices.

## Group trainings

Following the global developments, the fitness model in Kuwait is shifting away from traditional gyms and embracing technology. Kuwait's fitness professionals are focusing on education and accessibility because education is key in any profession. For example, my team and myself take it upon ourselves to provide the highest form of education to our trainers: whether providing workshops, guests appearances from fitness professionals, or assisting them in continuing their education, because all of us should always be looking to learn and improve.

One of the ways to increase the number of gym goers is to motivate them through group trainings, which are known to boost motivation. Many gyms are also implementing high intensity interval trainings, bodyweight trainings and yoga classes into their schedules. Children are not being left behind either. Being active is critical for child development. Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that every child has a right to play. The New Kuwait Vision 2035 includes a project of developing health services for school students, which is nearly completed.

## Spreading awareness via social media

There is, however, another up and coming segment of customers that the local health and fitness market needs to take into consideration: the millennials. This group has its own demands and requirements. According to Goldman Sachs, millennials exercise more, eat smarter, smoke less and spend more on sports brands than the previous generations. Surprisingly-or perhaps not, millennial females use fitness apps much more often than males. Wearable and fitness trackers are clearly another means of fitness motivation.

Still, only 7% of Kuwait's population visits gym on a regular basis. Perhaps a very viable way forward is spreading health and fitness awareness via social media like Instagram. These channels are not only a powerful tool to promote the latest F&B outlets in the country; they can equally help promote the benefits of exercising and adopting a healthier lifestyle. Because nobody wants to look bad on a selfie, no matter if it is your cheat day or not.

## Ninety eight bells of the Palace of Mafra's Basilica finally resound



A bell, wrapped for restoration, is pictured in the Mafra Palace in Mafra.



Mario Pereira, Director of the Mafra Palace stands under the bells of the Basilica in Mafra.



In this file photo Spanish actor and actress Javier Bardem (right) and Penelope Cruz pose during a photocall to present the film 'Loving Pablo' in Madrid. — AFP photos



In this file photo Best Director, Best Foreign Language Film, and Best Cinematography winner for 'Roma' Alfonso Cuarón poses in the press room with his Oscars during the 91st Annual Academy Awards at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California.



In this file photo US writer Emily V. Gordon (left) and US-Pakistani comedian Kumail Nanjiani arrive for the premiere of Apple TV+'s 'Little America' series at the Pacific Design Center in West Hollywood, California.

## Can foreign-language films ever win over Hollywood?

When South Korea's Bong Joon-ho accepted the Golden Globe for best foreign language film for his widely hailed "Parasite," he urged moviegoers to "overcome the one-inch-tall barrier of subtitles." "You will be introduced to so many more amazing films," he promised, reopening a debate that has long plagued Hollywood-can non-English films ever break into the US mainstream? "Parasite," a searing black comedy about class divisions, has earned six Oscar nominations, including for best picture and best director.

In the end, English is the lingua franca in Hollywood and in the pivotal North American market-making it the language of the awards season as well. Fredell Pogodin-a veteran publicist who has worked to promote hundreds of movies, including the Oscar-winning foreign films "Roma,"

picture Oscar. For many, the subtitle barrier is more than an inch tall. It requires you to focus on the bottom of the screen, meaning you may miss key visuals. Others, however, say that subtitles invite increased focus on a film.

## 'Cultural myopia'

"Parasite" follows one down-and-out Seoul family as they gradually insert themselves into the lives of a wealthy clan, a process that ends in tragedy. It has so far earned about \$31 million at the US box office, and more than \$160 million worldwide, according to industry tracker Box Office Mojo. The critical praise and Oscar buzz around the film drew spectators to theaters, but its ticket sales are light years away from what a traditional blockbuster rakes in. Even indie films in English rarely are box office gold.

"The average American moviegoer goes to see between three and five movies at the cinema a year," said Tom Nunan, the producer of "Crash," which won the Oscar for best picture. "You think they're going to go see a Korean film? Subtitles? Forget about it." Pogodin, who is now retired, says Oscar campaigns are, however, not generally built around everyday audiences-they are constructed around critical acclaim, and film festival hype. But Nunan, who says he's part of the "most elite, arthouse populace on the west side of Los Angeles," insists that even his friends ask if a film is in a foreign language before they head to the cinema.

Justin Chang, a film critic for the Los Angeles Times, wrote that with his comment at the Globes, Bong "seemed to be rebuking the cultural myopia of Hollywood itself, which reserves special prizes each year for movies shot in countries outside the US and in languages other than English." While "Parasite" is a long shot for best picture, it is the favorite to win the prize for best foreign film, now called best international feature. "The bestowing of

these awards... is often a condescending gesture disguised as an inclusive one," Chang wrote.

## 'Language is not important'

Pop culture generally is an English-language world: music, television, film, marketing slogans for major brands-it's all in English and usually goes untranslated around the world. To reach wider audiences, some non-anglophone producers are working in English... even if their films and actors come from elsewhere. That was the case for "Loving Pablo," a 2017 film about late Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar starring Spanish actors Penelope Cruz and Javier Bardem and filmed in accented English. "The rules of the market don't allow for films with a five or six million euro budget to be made in Spanish," Bardem told AFP ahead of the film's premiere. "In the end, the story is well told-the language is not important."

Streaming giant Netflix sees it differently-when it launched its series "Narcos," also about Escobar, it was done in English and Spanish in a way that did not dissuade its fans. Its competitors have hopped on the bandwagon. This month, Apple TV+ launched "Little America," an anthology series about immigrants-the dialogue mixes Spanish, Hindi, Arabic and English, among other languages. "What a glorious thing to feel like you're immersed in another language but still understanding what's going on," said Emily Gordon, who is a series producer along with her actor husband Kumail Nanjiani. "I just think that's kind of magical," she said. "I can't always hear what's happening and I want to be able to read." Maybe Gordon can help others to jump over the one-inch barrier. — AFP



In this file photo 'Parasite' cast (from left) Song Kang-ho, Cho Yeo-jeong, director Bong Joon-ho, Lee Jung-eun, Choi Woo-shik, and Lee Sun-kyun pose with the trophy for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture in the press room during the 26th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.

After the film captured the top prize from the Screen Actors Guild in a shock upset, some believe it could win big at the Academy Awards, but that would be history-making, indeed. No non-English-language production has ever won the best

"Mediterraneo" and "Koyla"-says the obstacle is not just the language; it's the content. "It's not just because there are subtitles-they're arty here, to begin with. They're not mainstream," Pogodin told AFP. "There is a certain kind of audience for it.



# Classifieds

Tuesday, February 4, 2020



## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Fair with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h .

**BY NIGHT:** Cold with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	18 °C	12 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	06 °C
ABDALY	21 °C	05 °C
BUBYAN	17 °C	08 °C
JAHRA	21 °C	09 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	17 °C	11 °C
SALMIYAH	17 °C	13 °C
AHMADI	17 °C	13 °C
NUWAISIB	20 °C	09 °C
WAFRA	22 °C	06 °C
SALMY	21 °C	04 °C

**SFC. CHART 03/02/2020 0000 UTC**

4 DAYS FORECAST					
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction
			MAX.	MIN.	
Tuesday	02/04	Fair and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain later on	21 °C	08 °C	VRB-SE
Wednesday	02/05	Fair and Clouds will increase gradually with a chance for scattered light rain later on	23 °C	11 °C	VRB-SE
Thursday	02/06	Warm and Partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	26 °C	12 °C	SE
Friday	02/07	Warm	26 °C	13 °C	SE-VRB

PRAYER TIMES		
Fajr		05:15
Sunrise		06:36
Zuhr		12:02
Asr		15:06
Sunset		17:28
Isha		18:46

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT		
MAX. Temp.		20 °C
MIN. Temp.		04 °C
MAX. RH		69 %
MIN. RH		20 %
MAX. Wind	S	21 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.		0 mm

## CHANGE OF NAME

**I, Raees** Ahmed Bashir Ahmed, holder of Indian Passport No: S3694625, Civil ID No. 265011101812 and Aadhar Card No. 299382056264, have changed my name as Given Name: Raees Ahmed Bashir Ahmed, Surname: Shaikh. Hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by the name of Raees Ahmed Bashir Ahmed Shaikh. (C 5629)

**Shaikh Aslam** Shaika Farid, holder of Indian Passport No: R5454580 issued at Kuwait on 16/04/2017, Civil ID No: 267060106811, permanent address room 403 4th floor A Wing Tagore SRA CHS Ltd. 90 feet road Anna Nagar Kumbharwada Dharavi Mumbai Maharashtra 400017. Has changed my name Shaikh Aslam Shaika Farid to Given name: Shaikh Aslam Shaikh Farid. (C 5627)

**I, Javed** Ahmed Abdul Hamid, holder of Indian Passport No: M4640773, Civil ID No: 270020704398, changed my name from Javed Ahmed Abdul Hamid to Shaik Javed Ahmed S/o Shaik Abdul Hamid. Permanent Address: House No. 76-106-A11-A5, Guru-Raghavandra Nagar Ballary Chowrasta Kallur Kurnool 518003. (C 5628) 4-2-2019

Given name is Abdul Taiyeb Zainy now change to given name Abdul Taiyeb and last name Zainy. Add. Shergarhwalla Mohalla, Yusufpura Partapur, Dist. Banswara (Raj.) (C 5626) 3-2-2020

**Airlines**

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Turkish Airlines	1884918
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578

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## DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Tuesday 4/2/2020					Departure Flights on Tuesday 4/2/2020					JZR					Jeddah				
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	KAC	515	Tehran	12:10				
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05	JZR	231	Dammam	12:35				
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	KAC	742	Dammam	14:35	SVA	503	Jeddah	00:05	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55				
JZR	716	Sohag	00:35	KAC	672	Dubai	14:40	JZR	215	Jeddah	00:05	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00				
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	KAC	774	Riyadh	14:40	MSC	406	Sohag	00:15	JZR	115	Doha	13:00				
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40	QTR	1093	Doha	00:25	GFA	210	Bahrain	13:05				
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	SVA	500	Jeddah	14:45	FDB	072	Dubai	00:35	MSR	611	Cairo	13:25				
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	118	New York	14:50	JZR	409	Delhi	00:50	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30				
KAC	102	London	01:25	KAC	286	Dhaka	14:55	AIC	990	Mumbai	01:10	KAC	781	Jeddah	13:30				
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	KAC	692	Muscat	15:00	IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40				
RJA	642	Amman	01:40	KAC	618	Doha	15:00	JZR	111	Doha	01:55	KAC	541	Cairo	13:45				
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	JZR	602	Baku	15:10	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:00	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15				
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	KNE	529	Jeddah	15:10	KAC	285	Dhaka	02:00	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15				
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	JZR	234	Taif	15:15	JZR	119	Dubai	02:05	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00				
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	KAC	677	Dubai	02:10	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10				
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:25	THY	773	Istanbul	02:20	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25				
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	JZR	232	Dammam	15:30	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:30	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:45				
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	JZR	222	Riyadh	15:30	KAC	417	Manila	02:30	KAC	673	Dubai	15:50				
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	OMA	645	Muscat	15:35	IGO	1765	Delhi	02:55	SVA	501	Jeddah	16:00				
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	562	Amman	15:40	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00				
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	UAE	567	Dubai	15:45	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40	KAC	563	Amman	16:00				
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:05	JZR	732	Cairo	15:50	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20				
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	ABY	127	Sharjah	15:55	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55	KAC	743	Dammam	16:20				
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	JZR	152	Mashhad	16:00	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00	KAC	283	Dhaka	16:25				
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:00	JZR	212	Jeddah	16:25	QTR	1087	Doha	04:00	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:30				
KAC	414	Bangkok	04:00	FEQ	241	Alexandria	16:35	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35				
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	QTR	1072	Doha	16:35	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:35				
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	JZR	116	Doha	16:40	KAC	621	Doha	04:20	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:45				
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	502	Beirut	16:45	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:25	JZR	735	Cairo	16:50				
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC	546	Cairo	16:45	JZR	713	Sohag	04:30	JZR	103	Bahrain	16:50				
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:30	FDB	051	Dubai	16:45	KKK	1269	Istanbul	04:35	FEQ	242	Alexandria	17:35				
KAC	302	Mumbai	04:40	KAC	516	Tehran	16:50	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00	KAC	619	Doha	17:35				
JZR	540	KTM	04:45	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:25	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10	KAC	357	Kochi	17:35				
JZR	702	Asyut	04:50	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45				
JZR	508	KHI	05:00	JZR	214	Jeddah	17:45	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:30	FDB	052	Dubai	17:45				
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	SYR	341	Damascus	17:55	JZR	101	Bahrain	05:50	JZR	539	KTM	17:50				
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	KAC	158	Istanbul	17:55	THY	771	Istanbul	06:25	KAC	331	Trivandrum	17:55				
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	UAE	875	Dubai	18:00	JZR	121	Dubai	06:35	QTR	1073	Doha	18:00				
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	JZR	302	Istanbul	18:15	JZR	113	Doha	06:40	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00				
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:20	FDB	063	Dubai	18:15	RJA	643	Amman	06:55	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10				
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	JZR	124	Cairo	18:20	FDB	070	Dubai	07:05	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:20				
JPJ	3730	KSQ	05:30	MSR	620	Cairo	18:30	FEQ	442	Asyut	07:05	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20				
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	QTR	1080	Doha	18:30	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15	KAC	301	Mumbai	18:35				
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:35	FEQ	441	Asyut	18:55	KAC	167	Paris	07:35	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35				
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:45	RJA	640	Amman	19:10	KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:00	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40				
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:50	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:20	IGO	1767	Mumbai	08:10	KAC	381	Delhi	18:45				
KAC	106	London	06:00	RBG	555	Alexandria	19:25	KAC	165	Rome	08:15	SYR	342	Damascus	18:55				
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25	THY	6376	Dubai/ISL	08:35	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:55				
KAC	332	Trivandrum	06:05	NIA	161	Cairo	19:30	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20				
FEQ	341	Sohag	06:05	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30	JZR	001	LGW	08:40	JZR	253	Amman	19:20				
KAC	362	Colombo	06:30	KAC	744	Dammam	19:35	JPJ	3733	Baghdad	09:00	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30				
THY	6376	ISL	06:30	QTR	1090	Doha	19:35	KAC	501	Beirut	09:00	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30				
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	KAC	782	Jeddah	19:50	KAC	163	MXP	09:00	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55				
JZR	120	Dubai	07:00	JZR	104	Bahrain	19:55	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:00	FEQ	342	Sohag	19:55				
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	KAC	776	Riyadh	20:05	BAW	156	London	09:10	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05				
BAW	157	London	07:05	OMA	647	Muscat	20:20	KAC	157	Istanbul	09:10	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05				
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	QTR	1088	Doha	20:30	JZR	731	Cairo	09:10	JZR	653	OSS	20:05				
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	616	Bahrain	20:30	KAC	691	Muscat	09:20	RJA	641	Amman	20:10				
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:40	QTR	1085	Doha	09:30	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15				
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:10	KAC	674	Dubai	20:55	KAC	545	Cairo	09:30	NIA	162	Cairo	20:30				
KAC	622	Doha	08:30	KAC	542	Cairo	21:10	JZR	601	Baku	09:30	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:35				
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	ALK	229	Colombo	21:20	KAC	671	Dubai	09:35	JZR	501	Lahore	20:40				
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:55	MEA	402	Beirut	21:20	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55				
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20	KAC	101	London	09:45	QTR	1091	Doha	21:00				
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	UAE	859	Dubai	21:30	KAC	561	Amman	09:45	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20				
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	KAC	172	Frankfurt	21:30	JZR	233	Taif	09:50	DLH	624	Dammam	21:45				
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50				
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:50	JZR	151	Mashhad	09:55	QTR	1089	Doha	22:15				
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	164	MXF	21:55	UAE	856	Dubai	10:00	KAC	205	Islamabad	22:15				
IRA	675	Lar	09:40	AZG	565	Baku	22:00	KAC	117	New York	10:00	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20				
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45	KAC	168	Paris	22:00	KAC	613	Bahrain	10:05	KAC	701	Asyut	22:20				
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	KAC	160	Amman	22:00	JZR	301	Istanbul	10:05	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:25				
NIA	361	Alexandria	10:00	KAC	564	Doha	22:00	KAC	773	Riyadh	10:15	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25				
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	QTR	1082	Doha	22:05	FDB	056	Istanbul	10:20	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30				
JZR	114	Doha	10:20	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15	KAC	617	Dubai	10:35	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50				
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	AIC	987	Chennai/Hyderabad	22:25	UAE	857	Doha	10:35	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55				
AXB	789	CNN/Bahrain	10:40	RBG	213	Sohag	22:30	IRA	674	Lar	10:40	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05				
JZR	714	Sohag	10:50	KAC	786	Jeddah	22:50	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40	RBG	214	Sohag	23:10				
JZR	122	Dubai	11:15	BBC	043	Dhaka	23:00	JZR	211	Jeddah	10:40	KAC	783	Jeddah	23:15				
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	GOW	061	CNN	23:00	NIA	362	Alexandria	10:50	KAC	383	Delhi	23:20				
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	JZR	002	LGW	23:05	QTR	1071	Doha	11:00	QTR	1083	Doha	23:25				
GFA	209	Bahrain	12:05	QTR	1092	Doha	23:10	SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00	KAC	411	Bangkok	23:25				
MSR	610	Cairo	12:25	JZR	128	Dubai	23:15	KAC	741	Dammam	11:20	KAC	543	Cairo	23:30				
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	MSC	405	Sohag	23:15	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25	KAC	795	Madinah	23:30				
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	JZR	736	Cairo	23:30	AXB	790	CNN	11:40	KAC	303	Mumbai	23:40				
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	FDB	071	Dubai	23:40	JZR	221	Riyadh	12:00	GOW	062	CNN	23:55				



# China's top leadership admits 'shortcomings' in virus response

**BEIJING:** China's top leadership yesterday admitted "shortcomings and difficulties" in its response to the coronavirus outbreak and the government said it "urgently" needed medical supplies to battle the outbreak which has killed more than 360 people. The comments came as 57 new deaths were confirmed yesterday - the single-biggest daily increase since the virus was detected late last year in the central city of Wuhan, where it is believed to have jumped from animals at a market into humans.

The virus has since spread to more than 20 countries despite many governments imposing unprecedented travel bans on arrivals coming from China. The World Health Organization has declared the crisis a global health emergency, and the first foreign death from the virus was confirmed in the Philippines on Sunday. China's elite Politburo Standing Committee called for improvements to the "national emergency management system" following "shortcoming and difficulties exposed in the response to the epidemic," according to the official Xinhua news agency.

"It is necessary to strengthen market supervision, resolutely ban and severely crack down on illegal wildlife markets and trade," it added. The government also said it "urgently" needed medical equipment and surgical masks, protective suits, and safety goggles as it battles to control the outbreak. Authorities in provinces that are home to more than 300 million people - including Guangdong, the country's most populous - have ordered everyone to wear masks in public in an effort to contain the virus.

But factories capable of producing around 20 million masks a day are only operating at 60-70 percent of capacity,

industry department spokesman Tian Yulong said, adding that supply and demand remained in "tight equilibrium" as a result of the Lunar New Year break. Tian said authorities were taking steps to bring in masks from Europe, Japan and the US, while the foreign ministry said countries including South Korea, Japan, Kazakhstan and Hungary had donated medical supplies.

All but one of the 57 new deaths reported yesterday were in Wuhan and the rest of Hubei province, most of which has been under lockdown for almost two weeks. The national death toll reached 361, exceeding the 349 mainland fatalities from the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak of 2002-03. SARS killed a total of 774 people, with most other deaths in Hong Kong. With 17,200 confirmed infections, the mortality rate for the new coronavirus is around 2.1 percent, compared with 9.6 percent for SARS.

The virus is taking an increasing economic toll, shutting down businesses, curbing international travel and impacting production lines of major global brands. The Shanghai stock market plunged almost eight percent yesterday on the first day of trading since the holiday as investors played catch-up with last week's global retreat. In Wuhan, which has been transformed from a bustling industrial hub into a near-ghost town, residents have been living in deep fear of catching the virus.

The city's medical facilities have been overwhelmed, with Xinhua reporting that 68 medical teams of 8,300 staff had been sent to Hubei. And amid mounting pressure, the government has been racing to build two new hospitals to treat the infected. The first of those, a 1,000-bed facility, was due to open yesterday, just 10



WUHAN, China: This aerial photo taken on Sunday shows the Huoshenshan hospital, which means "Fire God Mountain", after it was handed over to China's army in this city in China's central Hubei province. — AFP

days after construction began, although no opening had been reported by state media by late evening.

With the numbers of infections surging in Wuhan and other areas of Hubei, it was not immediately clear what overall impact the hospitals would have on containing the epidemic. The industrial city of Wenzhou, 800 km to the east, was placed under a similar lockdown to Wuhan on Sunday and its nine million people ordered to stay indoors.

The emergence of the virus coincided with the Lunar New Year, when hundreds

of millions travel across the country for family reunions. Originally scheduled to end last Friday, the holiday was extended by three days to give authorities more time to deal with the crisis. But some major cities -including Shanghai - extended it again, and many schools and universities have delayed the start of new terms.

Road traffic on Sunday, when hundreds of millions of people would have been expected to return to their cities of work, was down 80 percent, the transport ministry said. Train journeys were down 74 percent on last year, according

to Xinhua, and plane trips a fifth. Many companies offered staff the option to work from home or defer travel, or simply remained closed.

Many nations have evacuated hundreds of their citizens from China - with some forcing them into quarantine on their return - and more airlines are cancelling services to the mainland. China's foreign ministry yesterday criticized the US for being the first to evacuate nationals without providing "substantial assistance" to China. The US actions had caused "panic", said spokeswoman Hua Chunying. — AFP



LJUBLJANA: A picture taken yesterday shows a general view of the prayer hall inside Slovenia's first mosque. — AFP

## Slovenia's first mosque opens...

Continued from Page 1

The centre also comprises the community's offices; an education center, which includes a library; a restaurant; a basketball court; housing for the Muslim clergy; and a 40-m-high minaret. All the buildings are made from white concrete combined with steel, glass and wood. A large blue textile-made dome dominates the mosque's interior, referring to heaven and reminiscent of famous mosques like Istanbul's Blue Mosque.

"We wanted to link traditional Islamic architecture values with contemporary architecture," architect Matej Bevk told AFP adding the center's glass facades were meant to show its transparency and openness. Until now, Muslims have been worshipping and holding ceremonies

in rented sports halls or buildings. They make up 2.5 percent of the country's two million people, constituting the second biggest religious group, according to the last 2002 census. Grabus estimated there were around 80,000 Muslims currently.

Opponents of the project have twice tried to halt it, once in 2004 and again in 2009, by asking for a referendum. The constitutional court denied the requests both times. Critics claim Qatar is one of the main financiers of terrorism. Pig heads and blood were also tossed on the site in two incidents in 2016. Pigs are considered to be unclean and pork and its by-products forbidden under Islam.

Ljubljana's long-time mayor Zoran Jankovic has supported the project. Azra Lekovic, a Slovenian Muslim in her late 40s, described the mosque as "crucial", saying her children, 22 and 24, had distanced themselves from the religion over the years. "I hope it will allow my children to get in touch with the Islamic community again, to meet progressive people and find friends that share their religion," the entrepreneur from Sezana in western Slovenia said. — AFP

to fighting in and around Idlib but air strikes, many of them carried out by Russian warplanes, have continued.

Yesterday, Russian air strikes killed 14 civilians in northwest Syria, said the Observatory. Nine of those killed were displaced people who died when a missile hit their car in the Urum al-Kubra area, on the rebel bastion's eastern flank. An AFP reporter saw rescue workers carry away the limp bodies of two small children and lay them in thick blankets on the back of a pickup truck.

The regime now controls more than two thirds of Syria, up from a barely a fifth before Russia's military might came to the rescue in 2015. A group led by members of Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate still controls swathes of land in and around Idlib province, which is home to some three million people and where pro-Ankara rebel groups are also present.

Pro-Damascus forces have pressed northwards along the M5 highway that connects the capital to Syria's second city Aleppo, crossing Idlib. Government forces last week retook the key town of Maaret al-Manan along the highway, and they have moved on northwards. A Turkish-Russian deal in 2018 saw Turkish troops deploy at observation posts around Idlib, but the agreement has failed to stem repeated regime military offensives.

Displaced from other regions recaptured by government forces make up half of the Idlib region's population, with many living in precarious shelters in the countryside along the Turkish border. On Sunday, hundreds of Syrian men, women and children marched towards the border in a symbolic protest, demanding to be allowed through. — Agencies

## Gold and Bentleys: Lebanese spend big...

Continued from Page 1

Despite the controls slapped by banks to prevent capital flight, Lebanese depositors can still ask for cashier's checks and they are using them to buy goods they feel will not depreciate or can be easily resold abroad.

"More and more clients are buying gold coins, chains, bracelets and necklaces, only for their monetary value," said one jeweler whose business has 14 branches nationwide. One car dealer who also asked not to be identified said Lamborghinis and Bentleys sometimes fetching \$400,000 were still in demand "even as auto sales are generally plummeting". "Sure, these cars gradually lose some of their value but for many buyers

it's a case of trying not to lose everything," he said.

Artworks, a traditional safe investment in times of crisis, are being snapped in Beirut's edgy galleries. "Lately I've had visits from people I've never seen before in my gallery," one owner said. "They basically want to see the largest paintings, buy the most expensive pieces." Those who are unsure what to spend their money on tend to pull as much cash as possible from the bank and keep it at home.

According to the banking authorities, \$3 billion has been withdrawn from banks and hoarded at home since September, triggering a rush on safes. "Our sales have gone up 50 percent," said Khalil Chehab, a retailer who specializes in safes and lock boxes. "Banks used to be our main clients before the crisis broke out, now it's their customers who are coming to us," he said, adding that some buyers were ready to spend up to \$20,000 on high-end safes. "People are no longer looking for any kind of profit. They just want to save their money, at any price." —AFP

## OIC rejects Trump plan; Kuwait says...

Continued from Page 1

minister believed "Sudan is headed in a new positive direction". On Sunday, Sudan said the US had invited Burhan to Washington for an official visit, the first such move in more than three decades.

Iran - a member of the OIC - was not represented at yesterday's meeting, with its foreign ministry saying that the delegation was granted visas to archival Saudi Arabia "just hours" before the group was to convene. However, Tehran has already condemned the US plan, saying it amounted to the "treason of the century" and was bound to fail.

The Arab League on Saturday also rejected the controversial plan, saying at a meeting in Cairo that it did not meet the "minimum rights" of the Palestinians. They insisted on a two-state solution that includes a Palestinian state based on borders before the 1967 war - when Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza - and with east Jerusalem as its capital.

In his opening remarks yesterday, Palestinian foreign minister Riyad Al-Maliki said the plan "cannot be called a peace plan because the Palestinians are not a part of it, and it eliminates all chances of peace". Gulf powerhouses Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates said last week they "appreciated" US efforts to reach a Palestinian-Israeli agreement in what was seen as a balancing act aimed at appeasing their powerful US ally.

"The plan announced (on January 28) offers an important starting point for a return to negotiations within a US-led international framework," said UAE Ambassador to the US Yousef Al-Otaiba, who - along with Omani and Bahraini envoys - was at the White House for the announcement. Saudi Arabia said it "appreciates" Trump's efforts and called for direct Israeli-Palestinian talks, while reiterating its "steadfast" support for the Palestinians.

Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas announced in Cairo during the Arab League meeting that he will cut all ties with Israel and the US. "We are informing you that there will be no relations with you (Israel) and the United States, including on security cooperation," he said. But yesterday he appeared to step back from that statement, implying he had not yet severed ties but still could.

"If the Americans continue with this project, the boycott is there (as an option), a full boycott," he told a cabinet meeting. Israeli-Palestinian security coordination ranges from information sharing about militant cells in the West Bank to coordination between police forces. Palestinian forces have also received training from the United States and other Western countries.

Abbas cut political relations with the Trump administration in Dec 2017 after the US controversially recognized the disputed city of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. "There is one channel left and this channel should be cut off," Abbas added, seemingly referring to security coordination. He pledged that his government would continue to provide Palestinians with key services, including health and education. Abbas has made threats to cut security ties with Israel multiple times, without following through.

The Trump plan also gives Israel the green light to annex the strategic Jordan Valley - making up 30 percent of the West Bank - and all Jewish settlements, which number more than 200. "The plan from the beginning carries with it seeds of its demise," Nevine Mossaad, a political science professor at Cairo University, told AFP. "After all this Palestinian, Arab and Islamic rejection, be assured of its death."

In a related development, Uganda is "studying" the possibility of opening an embassy in Jerusalem, President Yoweri Museveni said yesterday during a visit by Netanyahu. Such a move would be seen internationally as a statement of support for Israel's claim for the city of Jerusalem to be its capital, a potential political win for Netanyahu less than a month before a national election on March 2.

"If a friend says I want your embassy here rather than there I don't see why there would be...." Museveni said before trailing off and continuing: "We are really working, we're studying that." "You open an embassy in Jerusalem and I will open an embassy in Kampala," promised Netanyahu. "We hope to do this in the near future."

Uganda and Israel currently have no embassy in each other's country, though Museveni is a long-standing ally of Israel, which trains some elements of the Ugandan security forces. Israel's embassy in Nairobi, in neighboring Kenya, currently handles its relations with Uganda.

Uganda's Entebbe airport was the scene in 1976 of a dramatic rescue operation conducted by Israeli commandos to save nearly 100 mostly Israeli passengers on board an Air France airliner hijacked by Palestinian and German militants. Netanyahu, whose elder brother Yonatan, a commander in the operation, was killed in the incident, said he found every visit to Uganda "profoundly moving" for this reason. Three passengers and all the hostage takers also died in the operation.

As well as the embassy issue, Netanyahu said Israel and Uganda were exploring the possibility of having direct flights and of closer cooperation in cyber security. "Israel is coming back to Africa and Africa is coming back to Israel in a big way," he said. Rights groups, critical of Museveni's record on human rights, are unlikely to welcome the prospect of increased cooperation with Israel on cyber security. Security personnel in Uganda routinely break up opposition rallies with tear gas, beatings and detentions. — Agencies

## Turkey, Syria in deadly...

Continued from Page 1

neighboring Hama and Latakia provinces, the Observatory said. The heaviest Syrian casualties were inflicted south of Saraqeb, a flashpoint Idlib town that Damascus has been trying to encircle since last week, said the Observatory. State news agency SANA said the Syrian army had not suffered any casualties.

Speaking to reporters at an Istanbul airport before leaving for Ukraine, Erdogan said between 30 and 35 Syrian forces were "neutralized" in the counterattack that had targeted 40 locations. He called on regime ally Russia to "assume its obligations". Defense Minister Hulusi Akar later said Turkish forces had hit 54 targets in Idlib in retaliation and "neutralized" 76 Syrian government soldiers, the state-owned Anadolu agency reported. The Observatory said a new Turkish military convoy entered Syria yesterday.

Increasing attacks by the regime and Moscow in northwest Syria have displaced more than 388,000 people since December, according to the United Nations, forcing many of them towards Turkey's border. Ankara - which already hosts more than three million Syrian refugees on its soil - says it fears the latest fighting will trigger another mass influx. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Saturday called for an end



## Sports

# ‘The greatest’: Djokovic takes aim at Federer’s Slams, ranking record

## Djokovic has so far clocked up 276 weeks as number one

**MELBOURNE:** Novak Djokovic put Roger Federer on notice as he won his 17th Grand Slam title at the Australian Open and warned he was going all-out for the Swiss’s record of 20 — and his mark for weeks as world number one.

Djokovic, who came through a mid-match slump to win his eighth title in Melbourne, is relentlessly totting up the victories that could soon end the debate over who’s the greatest in history. The five-set victory over Dominic Thiem was his eighth in eight finals in Melbourne, putting him alongside Federer and Nadal as the only men to win the same Slam eight times.

It makes Djokovic, 32, the first man in the Open era, and only the second in history, to win Grand Slam titles in three different decades — and as a not-insignificant bonus, returns him to world number one.

In an ominous sign for his rivals, the Serb has started the year unbeaten with Wimbledon, the French Open, the Tokyo Olympics and the US Open all lying in front of him as tantalising opportunities. He is clear-sighted about his goals: overtaking Nadal’s 19 Major titles and Federer’s 20 to become the all-time Grand Slam king, and outdoing the Swiss master’s record 310 weeks in the top ranking.

Djokovic has so far clocked up 276 weeks as number one and could pass second-placed Pete Sampras’s 286 in April, and Federer’s 310 on October 5. “Obviously at this stage of my career, Grand Slams are the ones I value the most. They are the ones I prioritise,” said Djokovic, adding “there’s a lot of history on the line”.

“Grand Slams are one of the main reasons why I am

still competing and still playing full season, trying to obviously get the historic number one (record). That’s the other big goal,” he said.

### ‘HUGE WIN’

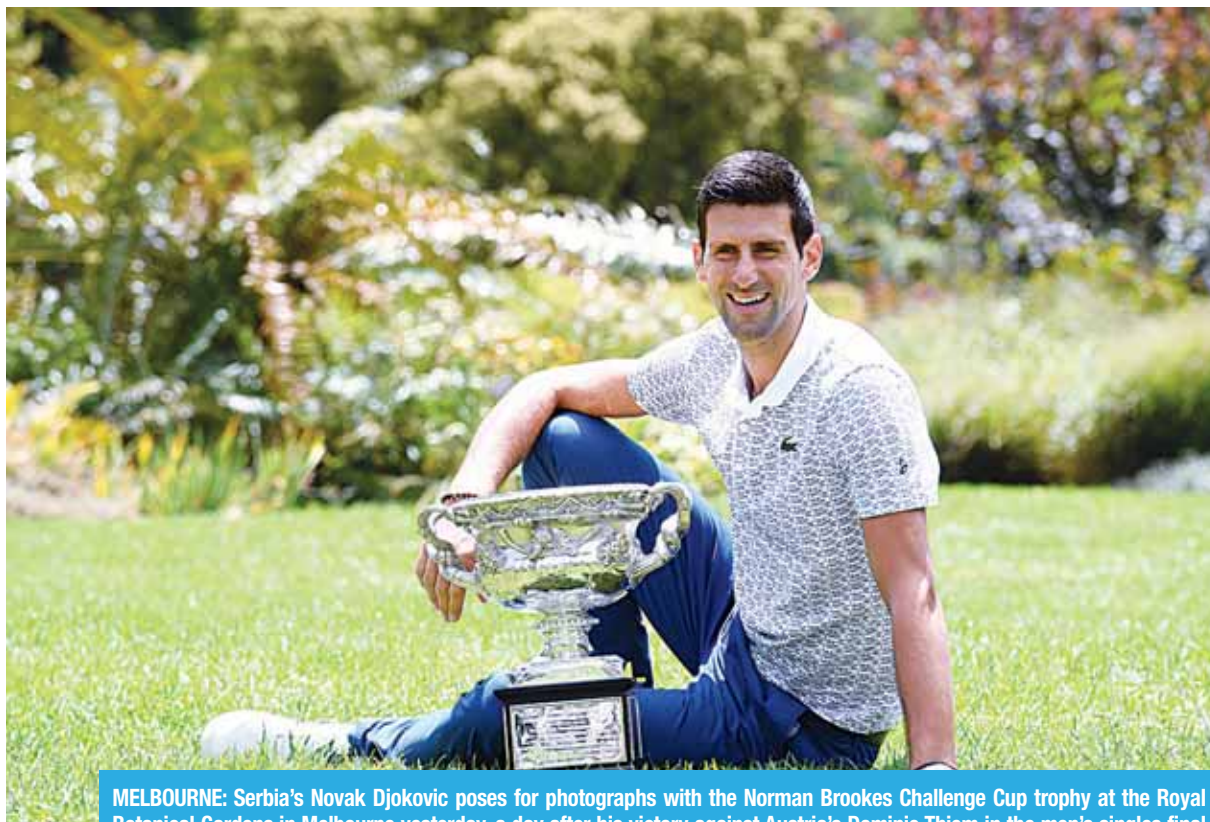
With five Major titles in just over two years, and unbeaten by Nadal and Federer at the Grand Slams since 2014, there’s no question who’s now the leading member of the Big Three. The latest rankings tell the story at the top of men’s tennis: Djokovic is number one, Nadal, one year older at 33, is second and 38-year-old Federer is a relatively distant third.

Seven-time Major winner Mats Wilander said Djokovic’s win in Melbourne sets a marker for a year in which he could sweep all before him. “At the end of the year, we could have two players on 20 or two on 19 or even more because Novak can win all four,” he said.

“This is a huge win for him going forwards. A loss here would have been very difficult to get confidence and come back. “But the door is open for him to start climbing through it and talk about being the greatest ever.”

As he jets out of Melbourne, his name etched yet again on the Norman Brookes Challenge Cup, Djokovic warned that his confidence and expectations were soaring. “I’m super-happy with the way I started the season. It kind of sets the tone for the rest of the year,” he said.

“To start off the season with a Grand Slam win significantly boosts your confidence and your expectations are quite high for the rest of the season. “But whatever happens, this season is already successful.” —AFP



**MELBOURNE:** Serbia’s Novak Djokovic poses for photographs with the Norman Brookes Challenge Cup trophy at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Melbourne yesterday, a day after his victory against Austria’s Dominic Thiem in the men’s singles final of the Australian Open tennis tournament. —AFP

## Kuwait ‘Stars’ Ice Hockey Club win its first match

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait “Stars” Ice Hockey Club had its first win on Sunday evening, in Kuwait Open Arab Clubs championship against the Saudi Jeddah Club.

Kuwait players were able to get past their first stop of the championship being held at the new hall of the club, located at Bayan Sports Yard. The stars won by the score of 5-0, as they were in control of the match with outstanding performance by local and professional players.

UAE’s Al-Theeb’s club defeated Egypt’s the “Pharaohs” Club also (5-0), while Lebanon’s Cedars defeated Bahrain (5-1).

Championship patron, Information Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri said this event is considered a distinguished launch to polish the skills of Arab players and develop them through these brotherly competitions, that contribute to elevating the level of players and the game at all levels.

Al-Jabri, in a press statement, following the opening of the championship, said “this Arab sport event, in such a facility that belongs to the Public Authority for Sport (PAS), which a unique facility in the region, for being the first that belongs to a government department, is yet another addition for Kuwait sport, and reminded that the hall named after the late Ajeel Al-Ajran, as he is one of the dedicated men in the history of Kuwait.

He said Kuwait’s hosting of the championship reflects its care and interest to develop this game in the region, and wished the participating teams success.

Meanwhile Foreign Minister Assistant for Protocol Affairs Ambassador Dhari Al-Ajran thanked the Kuwait Winter Games Club Board of Directorate for naming the hall after the late Ajeel Al-Ajran, and considered that a major appreciation of him, as he was a big supporter of them when they started.

Chairman of the Higher Organizing committee head of Kuwait Winter Sports Club Fuhaid Al-Ajmi said the participation of Arab clubs in this championship that is under the supervision of the International Federation, reflects the confidence in the club’s ability to organize and host the most important regional and continental championships.

Al-Ajmi said the championship includes an elite group of Arab clubs who has professional and local players, and hoped the championship comes out in a high technical level.

He appreciated the support of Minister Al-Jabri for the club and his care for the championship. He also thanked the Public Authority for Sport for allocating the land to build the hall that was opened today.

The opening ceremony was attended by PAS Director General Humoud Fulaiteh, his deputies Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Sabah and Dr Saqer Al-Mulla beside other dignitaries.



Kuwait and Saudi match in progress.

## Rafa Nadal Academy ‘vital’ for advancing Kuwait’s tennis: KTF president

**KUWAIT:** Rafa Nadal Tennis Academy Kuwait, which will open tomorrow, is vital to the advancement of the game in the country, Kuwait Tennis Federation (KTF) President Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said yesterday. In an interview with KUNA, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber said that this organization will enable local talent emerging in tennis, as well as upcoming generations of champions in Kuwait. The opening of the Academy in the Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex will take place with the presence of Rafael Nadal himself: Spain’s number one tennis player, who will play an exhibition match, he pointed out. The Academy is concerned with training participants and players for both genders, in addition to training national teams in collaboration with KTF, and under the supervision of highly experienced coaches in the game, he noted.

KTF will organize local championships throughout the year in cooperation with the Academy to provide experiences that benefit the national teams, he said. Regarding the Complex, he specified that it includes 18 tennis courts, nine of which are indoor, as the indoor main stadium accommodates 5,000 spectators, while the main outdoor stadium accommodates 1,500. The complex also includes a hotel consisting of 300 rooms

and special facilities for tennis, indicating that the official opening of the facility as a whole will take place next September. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber said that the Complex will host the first tournament, the 3rd Gulf Sports Games next April.

The press conference with them addressed the details of this prominent project that will contribute to enhancing awareness levels about tennis and a healthy lifestyle among the youth, as well as enticing a new generation of sports enthusiasts. During the conference in a video message, ‘Rafa’ expressed his pleasure at the new venture saying: “I’m personally very happy to open the Academy in Kuwait. We’re working hard to create the right programs for the kids and our members, making for strong development of tennis all over the region. See you very soon.” Meanwhile Toni Nadal said that they have worked since the Academy’s opening in Spain to train tennis enthusiasts worldwide in the finest technical and ethical skills. He added that in Kuwait, they will provide high-level training for children and adults enrolled in the Academy. The Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex project, which has a building area of 70,000 square meters, is the first multi-facility and service complex for tennis in the Middle East. The Complex includes KTF headquarters, in addition to the Rana Nadal Academy, the largest international tennis academy in the Middle East, in which unlike the Academy in Mallorca, is not intended for student accommodation. Each of these stadiums is equipped with a package of the latest international technology, advanced sound insulation and a variety of fixed and foldable seats designed by the architect and designer Norman Foster, manufactured by Figueras International Seating. On his part, Nuno Marques, the vastly experienced coach at

the Academy who will assume the role of head of tennis at the planned academy, stressed his ultimate aim of producing future Kuwaiti tennis champions. He revealed his collaboration with KTF to grow the sport domestically and provide a platform for people to pursue healthy lifestyles begins immediately. “The Rafa Nadal methodology includes five main sections: tennis training, physical training, mental training, nutrition and competition. We are bringing that method to Kuwait,” Marques pointed out. —KUNA



Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



Top aerial view of the tennis complex.

## Zain main sponsor of Kuwait Open Championship for Ice Hockey Clubs



Mohammed Al Jabri (center) and Fulateh during the opening of the first club of its kind in the region.

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of the 2020 Kuwait Open Championship for Professional Arab Ice Hockey Clubs. The competition is held at the Kuwait Winter Games Club’s ice rink, considered the first of its kind in the region, from February 2-8 under the patronage of the Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammed Al Jabri.

Zain took part in the championship’s opening ceremony, which witnessed the official inauguration of the Kuwait Winter Games Club’s ice rink.

The event featured the presence of the Minister of Information and Minister of State

for Youth Affairs Mohammed Al Jabri, Director General of the Public Authority for Sports Dr Humoud Fulateh, Deputy Director General of the Public Authority for Sports Dr Saqer Al Mulla, Kuwait Winter Games Club Chairman and Head of the Championship’s Organizing Committee Fuhaid Al Ajmi, Zain Kuwait’s Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, as well as representatives from the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) and delegations from the participating clubs.

Zain strongly believes in the important role played by the private sector in developing the youth and sports sectors in Kuwait. The company makes this concept a reality



Al Khashti with Al Mulla and Al Ajmi during the championship launch.

by sponsoring and supporting various major sporting events in Kuwait, including this regional championship, as well as sponsoring and encouraging many Kuwaiti athletes who represent Kuwait in local, regional, and international arenas.

Zain’s support to the championship comes in line with its keenness on encouraging the various efforts that contribute to developing the Kuwaiti youth and sports sectors. The company puts the support of Kuwaiti sports at the forefront of its priorities under the umbrella of its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy. Zain’s support of Kuwaiti champions results in many achievements that the company is proud of

one year after another.

The 2020 Kuwait Open Championship for Professional Arab Ice Hockey Clubs is held in the newly inaugurated Kuwait Winter Games Club’s ice rink with the presence of representatives from the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF). The championship features the participation of Stars Club from the State of Kuwait, Jeddah Club from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Theeb’s Club from the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain Club from the Kingdom of Bahrain, Pharos Club from Egypt, and Sedar Club from Lebanon. The championship will also witness two Women ice hockey test matches between Kuwait and Lebanon.

Muguruza in Melbourne. Australian Barty, who fell to 21-year-old Kenin in the semi-finals, retained her position as world number one ahead of Simona Halep, who replaced Karolina Pliskova, ousted in the third round.

### Latest WTA rankings published yesterday:

1. Ashleigh Barty (AUS) 8367 pts
2. Simona Halep (ROU) 6101 (+1)
3. Karolina Pliskova (CZE) 5290 (-1)
4. Elina Svitolina (UKR) 4775 (+1)
5. Belinda Bencic (SUI) 4675 (+2)
6. Bianca Andreescu (CAN) 4665
7. Sofia Kenin (USA) 4495 (+8)

8. Kiki Bertens (NED) 3965 (+2)
9. Serena Williams (USA) 3915
10. Naomi Osaka (JPN) 3626 (-6)
11. Petra Kvitova (CZE) 3466 (-3)
12. Madison Keys (USA) 2962 (-1)
13. Aryna Sabalenka (BLR) 2820 (-1)
14. Johanna Konta (GBR) 2753 (-1)
15. Petra Martic (CRO) 2586 (-1)
16. Garbine Muguruza (ESP) 2527 (+16)
17. Marketa Vondrousova (CZE) 2430 (-1)
18. Alison Riske (USA) 2360 (+1)
19. Elise Mertens (BEL) 2360 (-2)
20. Angelique Kerber (GER) 2175 (-2). —AFP



Sports

# Future cricket stars on show as India meet Pakistan in U-19 WCup

## India-Pakistan match brings out an extra edge to the whole competition

**POTCHEFSTROOM:** India head into today's Under 19 World Cup semi-final against Pakistan in Potchefstroom as slight favourites but cricket matches between these two sides are seldom straightforward.

"When you talk about India-Pakistan (matches) that brings out an extra edge to the whole competition," said former India Test player Zaheer Khan in the Indian media. "I am sure the boys will be geared up for the big occasion and they will do well."

With political relations on a knife-edge, there has been no Test series between the two countries since 2007/2008 and no white ball series since 2012/2013. The only time they have come together of late is at international tournaments. In 2019, they met at Old Trafford during the ODI World Cup in England - Rohit Sharma's 140 ensuring a comfortable India win.

And now it is the turn of the youngsters, the future stars of international cricket, to go up against each other in South Africa's North West province, close to the Mooi river.

The Indians won their group beating New Zealand and Japan in the process before going on to hammer Australia by 74 runs in the quarter-final. Pakistan's group match against Bangladesh — who meet New Zealand in the second semi-final on Thursday — was abandoned with Bangladesh in desperate trouble at 106 for nine. The Pakistanis beat Scotland and Zimbabwe to set up a quarter-final with Afghanistan. That was another comfortable win in spite of the twitter storm over Afghan spinner Noor Ahmed running out Muhammad Huraiba when he marginally backed up too far at the bowler's end.

The Indian quartet Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ravi Bishnoi, Akash Singh and Kartik Tyagi have already found their way into the IPL, each of them making important contributions in South Africa. "In this World Cup, I bowled very well in the first game but got no wickets," fast bowler Tyagi, whose four for 24 did for Australia in the last round, told Cricinfo. "Then the next two games, I bowled poorly but I took wickets. And finally, against Australia, I bowled well and got rewarded for them."

"Ups and downs are the realities of life, so I've stopped thinking about the wickets column. I have just been focusing on the process." For all the players at this World Cup, there remains the dream not just of winning but doing enough to start forging a professional career in the game. Some big names have trodden this path before: current international captains Virat Kohli, Eoin Morgan and Kane Williamson all figured at the tournament in the past along with some of the greats of the recent past, players such as Brian Lara, Yuvraj Singh, Chris Gayle and Steven Smith.

The stage in Potchefstroom is set to see who if any young Indians or Pakistanis are likely to join this elite band in the decade ahead. — AFP



POTCHEFSTROOM: India under-19 World Cup team.

## S Africa not fazed by playing world champions England

**CAPE TOWN:** New South Africa captain Quinton de Kock says facing world champions England will be just like playing any other team as they prepare for the three-match one-day international series starting at Newlands today.

South Africa are seeking to rebuild after a disastrous World Cup in England last year in which the hosts claimed the trophy in thrilling fashion with victory over New Zealand in the final. This will be England's first match since the decider at Lord's in July. "It is just like playing any other team," De Kock told reporters yesterday. "Just because you have a World Cup doesn't change anything. It is still the normal England team we will play against."

"I remember last time they came here (in 2016) we did pretty well and won the series. So it doesn't really matter if they are World Cup winners or not. It is the same as if we are playing Australia, India, Bangladesh, or whoever."

South Africa have struggled in both the ODI and test formats in the last 12 months, and while there could be a certain amount of experimentation as they begin a new cycle to the 2023 World Cup, De Kock says most important is to get a series win.

"We have new guys that have come in and they bring a lot of energy. We have guys who will potentially make their debut, so the team is very excited," he said. "We are in a rebuilding phase and we are looking forward to the next World Cup squad. We want to give the opportunities to youngsters and help them grow as cricketers."

"But for this series, we just want to win. There is a lot of time to give opportunities, but for us right now it is better to get a series win, just for the morale of the team." England have rested Ben Stokes, arguably the world's best all-rounder, but De Kock says there is still much quality in the squad. "It's always nice not to have to play against Ben Stokes, but they still have quality players," he said. "There are World Cup winners that are part of the squad and they have also got exciting young players. "To start off with a win would be great for the team environment and the boys seem to be up for it." — AFP

## Bangladesh coach Domingo rues Pakistan fixture

**DHAKA:** Bangladesh begin a to-and-fro commute to Pakistan tomorrow for a Test and one-day international series sandwiched between home fixtures — a quirky fixture list prompted by security fears.

They play a first Test in Rawalpindi starting Friday, but head home immediately afterwards for a series against Zimbabwe.

They then return to Pakistan for the second Test beginning April 5, after an ODI on April 3.

"It is not ideal. You always want to go there at least seven or eight days before a Test match," coach Russell Domingo told reporters in Dhaka yesterday.

Bangladesh wanted to play the series in phases because they want to spend as little time in the country as possible due to safety concerns.

Until late last year, Pakistan had not hosted an international cricket match for nearly a decade after a visiting Sri Lanka side was ambushed by Islamist gunmen in Lahore on their way to play a game.

Domingo said he was happy with the form shown by some of the Bangladesh batsmen in domestic competition this season, but acknowledged conditions would be different away from home.

Tamim Iqbal scored an unbeaten 334 runs on Sunday — the highest first-class innings ever on Bangladeshi soil — in a local league game.

Skipper Mominul Haque and senior batsmen Mahmudullah Riyad and Liton Das have also scored recent centuries.

"The wickets that they are playing here don't have much pace and bounce," Domingo said.

"I am sure Rawalpindi might have some pace and bounce... it is going to be a big challenge for the boys."

The South African said he had demanded more commitment from his batsmen — especially away from home.

"Some of the boys know that they have to put in some big performances on the back of a poor Test series against India," he said.

"We have to show a bit more commitment with the bat, and find ways to manufacture scores even when the conditions are not good."

Bangladesh lost all five of their Test matches in 2019,



DHAKA: Cricketer Tamim Iqbal is congratulated by teammates as he walks back to the pavilion after a record-breaking triple hundred on the third day of the BCL first-round match between Central Zone and East Zone at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. Tamim Iqbal warmed up for his Test comeback with a triple hundred in first-class cricket that is the highest score on Bangladeshi soil. — AFP

with their last two defeats coming by an innings margin against India in November.

Bangladesh visited Pakistan earlier in January amid tight security for a three-match Twenty20 international series in Lahore, which they lost 2-0.

Meanwhile, Tamim Iqbal warmed up for his Test comeback with a triple century Sunday — the highest first-class score ever recorded on Bangladeshi soil.

The left-hander became only the second Bangladeshi to score a triple ton while smashing an unbeaten 334 for East Zone against Central in the Bangladesh Cricket League.

He overtook former Under-19 teammate Roqibul Hasan's 313, before surpassing Sri Lankan Kumar Sangakkara's 319 — against Bangladesh in a Test match in 2014 — to also chalk up the highest individual innings in Bangladesh.

"This is really a special feeling. Everyone has a dream, but I never thought that it would come in this match," Tamim told reporters after his innings.

"Scoring 300 is always difficult against any opposition at any level. If it was easy, you would see someone scoring 300 every month."

Tamim could not have timed his record innings better, as he is preparing to return to Test cricket after skipping Bangladesh's previous three matches, against Afghanistan and India.

He took a break from international cricket after a dip in form, and also opted out in November to be with his expectant wife.

Bangladesh's top run-scorer in all three formats, Tamim struggled at the World Cup in England last year scoring just 235 runs in eight innings at an average of 29.37. — AFP

## Penguins clip Caps in first meeting of season

**WASHINGTON:** Sam Lafferty, Patric Hornqvist, Dominik Simon and Brandon Tanev each scored a goal as the visiting Pittsburgh Penguins defeated the Washington Capitals 4-3 Sunday. This was the first time the two rivals have met this season, and the 75th game where Sidney Crosby and Alex Ovechkin did battle — including the playoffs. Crosby and his friends took this one, as their offense kept the pressure on Washington for long stretches. Pittsburgh goalie Matt Murray was in just his eighth game since the start of December but now has won six in a row. He finished with 29 saves, including 11 in the third period. Meanwhile, Washington rookie goalie Ilya Samsonov had won his previous 11 decisions before dropping this one. He also finished with 29 saves.

### BLUE JACKETS 4, CANADIENS 3

Pierre-Luc Dubois scored two goals and added an assist as Columbus defeated host Montreal. Elvis Merzlikins stopped 27 shots as the Blue Jackets earned at least one point for the eighth straight game. Columbus is 17-2-5 over its past 24 games, and Merzlikins is 10-0-2 since starting goalie Joonas Korpisalo sustained a knee injury on Dec. 29. Canadiens goalie Carey Price, making his fifth straight start, stopped 23 in the loss. Tomas Tatar, Max Domi and Shea Weber scored for Montreal.

### HURRICANES 4, CANUCKS 3

Justin Williams provided the winning marker in a shootout for the second time in his four games since returning to action, lifting Carolina past visiting Vancouver. Nino Niederreiter, Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov scored for the Hurricanes in regulation. Elias Pettersson scored two goals, and Tyler Myers added the other in regulation for the Canucks, who had a five-game winning streak end. Pettersson also converted in the shootout. — Reuters



WASHINGTON: Patric Hornqvist #72 of the Pittsburgh Penguins and John Carlson #74 of the Washington Capitals battle for the puck during the third period at Capital One Arena in Washington. — AFP

## No excuses for England, says coach Jones

**PARIS:** England coach Eddie Jones did not look for excuses after his team fought back to avoid an embarrassing thrashing in a 24-17 defeat by France in their Six Nations opener on Sunday. The World Cup runners-up had fallen 24-0 behind and were too far from their usual high standards in the opening hour to secure victory at the Stade de France.

"We did not match their intensity early on. Why? We'd all like to know, if we knew we'd never lose a game," said Jones, who had promised England would unleash a "brutal physicality" on the French. "We were not good enough in the first half, we didn't win the gain line." England were without brothers Mako and Billy Vunipola and lost powerhouse centre Manu Tuilagi to a groin injury early on, but Jones would not use those setbacks as reasons for the loss.

"Tuilagi tweaked his groin. He's a big gain line player for us. In those conditions we did miss him, but we've got to be good enough to deal with that," the Australian said. France's second try was debatable as it appeared Charles Ollivon had knocked the ball on in the build-up but it was awarded after review.

"When I look at the scoresheet afterwards, it's a try," Jones said. "If we think it's not right, we suck it up and get on with it and if it's right, we suck it up and get on with it." Jones thought France should be given more credit for their performance, especially scrumhalf Antoine Dupont.

"I don't think we're giving the French enough credit here, one of those games where France should be given credit," he said. The Stade de France crowd went into rapture after Ollivon scored both his tries as Les Bleus dominated England in a one-sided opening hour and Jones feared the result could have been worse.

"It was a game that could have been ugly for us, the crowd were going nuts," he said. England finally came into the match after the interval and two Jonny May tries showed their attacking threat. "I'm disappointed, it was a tough match but we're proud of the response we showed," captain Owen Farrell said. "But we should have been better in the first half and not let France get the momentum." — Reuters



Sports

# Fati and Messi connection sees Barca hold on against Levante

## Sevilla held to a 1-1 draw at home to Alaves

**MADRID:** Ansu Fati became the youngest player ever to score a brace in La Liga on Sunday by capitalising on two brilliant Lionel Messi assists to give Barcelona a 2-1 victory over Levante.

Fati, at 17 years and 94 days old, broke the previous record held by Juanmi Jimenez, who scored twice for Malaga against Real Zaragoza at 17 years and 115 days old in 2010. Messi teed up Fati's quick-fire double with a defence-splitting pass and then a trademark weaving run before Ruben Rochina scored Levante's goal in the 92nd minute, which really should have come sooner.

Barca reduce the gap at the top to three points behind Real Madrid and begin to regain some rhythm under new coach Quique Setien after Thursday's 5-0 thumping of Leganes in the Copa del Rey. "We could have won 8-2 or 8-3," said Setien. "We lost a little control in the second half and conceded too much but it was a good job from the team."

Yet Levante should have converted more of a handful of excellent chances in the second half, that suggested Barcelona's defensive problems and fragility when in the lead are far from solved. Leganes and Levante, who sit 18th and 13th respectively, offered a relatively straight-forward route back to winning ways too for Barcelona, who were wobbling last weekend when they followed a last-gasp win over Segunda side Ibiza with a convincing defeat by Valencia.

Setien, who replaced Ernesto Valverde as coach last month, found his methods questioned and there was evidence against Levante to suggest he may have decided to introduce his style of play more gradually.

Barca played with more urgency and ambition, their dominance of possession sacrificed occasionally for riskier passes forward. Yet Levante also pressed high and left gaps to be exploited, despite the likes of Valencia and Granada enjoying more success against Setien's team by sitting deep and bursting out on the

break. Fati has been one of the main beneficiaries of Setien's arrival. He exploded onto the scene at the start of the season but was used increasingly rarely by Valverde, who may have been wary of burdening the teenager with too much too soon.

Instead, Setien has started Fati in all five of his games in charge so far and this was the first time his faith has really been rewarded. "He is a boy who is emerging and has great potential," Setien said. "Today he had a historic day for his goals and for helping the team." Messi's own excellent form also continues. He now has nine goals and four assists in his last 10 league games. His first set-up for Fati came from the centre circle where he played a reverse pass through three Levante players that sent clear his teammate, who cut inside Jorge Miramon and finished.

Less than two minutes later, Fati was in again. Levante lost the ball upfield and Gerard Pique fired straight into Messi inside the right flank, midway inside the opposition's half.

He drove into the penalty area and when he finally stopped by a cluster of Levante chasers, he slid left to Fati, who fired through the legs of Aitor Fernandez for a second. Nelson Semedo crashed a shot against the crossbar and then hopped over Tono only for Antoine Griezmann to tap wide at the front post.

But Levante were more dangerous in the second half and could have taken a draw if they had been more clinical with a handful of opportunities.

The best of them fell to Gonzalo Melero, who blazed over, and by the time Rochina's shot flew through one pair of legs and in off the hands of Marc-Andre ter Stegen, there were only two minutes remaining.

There was time for one Levante attack and Sergio Busquets' weak header gave Rochina another chance but he could not keep his shot down. Sevilla and Real Sociedad both lost ground in the race for Champions



**BARCELONA:** Barcelona's Guinea-Bissau forward Ansu Fati (L) scores during the Spanish league football match between FC Barcelona and Levante UD at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona. — AFP

League qualification as Getafe beat Athletic Bilbao to climb to third.

Real Sociedad lost 2-1 away at struggling Leganes while Sevilla were held to a 1-1 draw at home to Alaves. In between, Getafe had carved out a 2-0 victory away at Bilbao to put them in pole position behind Real

## Haaland and Sancho, Dortmund's pronged teenage attack

**BERLIN:** Lost among the increasingly justified hype surrounding teenage sensation Erling Braut Haaland has been the stellar form of another 19-year-old Borussia Dortmund forward, Jadon Sancho.

While Sancho's combination with Dortmund captain Marco Reus drove the side to within two points of Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich last season, the Englishman's budding rapport with Haaland suggests the side could go one better this term.

In the three games since Haaland's arrival, the two teenagers have scored 10 of Dortmund's 15 goals, while they've also racked up four assists between them.

Haaland's seven goals in three games — a Bundesliga record — adds to the 28 he scored in just half a season with former club Red Bull Salzburg, making for an exceptional return of 35 goals from 25 appearances. In the yellow and black, Haaland has now scored once every 19 minutes — another Bundesliga record. Not willing to be outdone, Sancho's 13th-minute opener in Dortmund's 5-0 win over Union Berlin on Saturday made him the youngest player — and only teenager — to score 25 goals in the Bundesliga.

Since arriving from Manchester City, Sancho has also chalked up 34 assists for Dortmund — including 13 this season — to have the pair shaping up as the most dangerous two-pronged attack in German football.

After the victory over Union, Sancho hailed the start of what is already a formidable combination. "We combine very well and we're able to bring that into the games and help the team," Sancho told the Bundesliga website. "I'm really happy he's here." Also speaking after the game, Haaland's feelings towards the Englishman were clearly mutual. "You can see on the pitch it (the relationship) is very good. He's a great guy," Haaland said. "I'm enjoying my time here so far. My teammates are good and as you can see that makes it easier for me."

While one of Haaland's stated goals on signing day was to learn German, his on-field relationship with Sancho shows no signs of being lost in translation. "We do everything in English. But what is most important is that we understand each other on the field based on instinct - just like today," Haaland is not content to rest on his laurels after his record-breaking start.



**DORTMUND:** Dortmund's Norwegian forward Erling Braut Haaland celebrates after scoring during the German first division Bundesliga football match Borussia Dortmund vs FC Union Berlin in Dortmund. — AFP

He warned the rest of the Bundesliga — as well as Dortmund's Champions League last 16 opponents Paris Saint-Germain — that he's yet to hit his stride in the German top division. "It was really tough but it was also nice. I need to get fitter but that will come with more games. I'm not yet at 100 percent." Speaking to the Bundesliga website after Dortmund's 5-1 win over Cologne in late January — in which Haaland scored a brace — Sancho said his teammate's drive was clearly evident.

"As you can tell, he's very clinical in front of goal - but he was disappointed today because he should have scored three or more goals."

But while the Norwegian is flying high, he needs look no further than former

teammate Paco Alcacer to see that there's no guarantee the good times will last.

Alcacer started his Dortmund career with six goals in his first 81 minutes — a record bettered by Haaland by four minutes when scoring his first against Union.

Alcacer departed before the winter transfer deadline to Villarreal, after injuries and a run of poor form — as well as the big Norwegian's arrival — saw him fall out of favour. But with RB Leipzig and Borussia Moenchengladbach's form struggles since the winter break, Dortmund fans will hope Haaland — as well as sidekick Sancho — will be able to continue their assault on the Bundesliga as the side look to break Bayern Munich's seven-year stranglehold on the title. —AFP

<div> <div>Live</div> <div>Matches on TV</div> <div>(Local Timings)</div> </div>	
SPAIN COPA DEL REY	
Granada CF v Valencia C.F	23:00
beIN SPORTS	
FRENCH LEAGUE	
AS Monaco FC v Angers SCO	
beIN SPORTS	
LOSC Lille v Stade Rennais	21:00
beIN SPORTS	
FC Nantes v Paris Saint-Germain	23:05
beIN SPORTS	

## Rampant Enyimba, resilient Zanaco reach CAF q-finals

**JOHANNESBURG:** Enyimba of Nigeria went on a scoring spree and Zanaco of Zambia defended doggedly Sunday to book the two CAF Confederation Cup quarter-finals places up for grabs.

Victor Mbaoma scored twice as former African champions Enyimba trounced San Pedro of the Ivory Coast 5-2 in Abidjan to fill the second qualifying place in Group D. Zanaco came from behind to force a 1-1 at Renaissance Berkane of Morocco, who had scored 13 unanswered goals in four previous CAF home matches, and finish Group B runners-up.

Pyramids and Al Masry of Egypt, Berkane and Hassania Agadir of Morocco, Horoya of Guinea and Al Nasr of Libya had secured knockout places before the final matchday. The draws for the quarter-finals and semi-finals in the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League will be made in Cairo this Wednesday with group winners and runners-up kept apart. Abdulrahman Bashir and Mbaoma netted for Enyimba within three minutes of the kick-off and the 2003 and 2004 CAF Champions League winners led 3-2 at half-time. In the closing stages, Mbaoma and Stanley Dimgba each scored their fourth goal of the Confederation Cup season to seal an impressive victory.

Enyimba, the most successful Nigerian club in CAF competitions with four titles, had scored only six goals in five previous group matches. Agadir won the group, finishing one point above Enyimba despite a shock 3-0 home loss to third-place Paradou of Algeria.

Meanwhile, Zanaco needed a draw in northeastern Moroccan city Berkane to be sure of retaining second place and qualifying for the knockout stage.

The bank club from Lusaka began disastrously, conceding a goal within two minutes as Burkinaabe Alain Traore scored for Berkane, runners-up to Zamalek of Egypt last season. However, the Zambians gradually regained their composure and levelled before half-time when Rodgers Kola scored his sixth goal of the Confederation Cup campaign.

Zanaco then survived a second-half pummeling from Renaissance to finish ahead of Daring Club Motema Pembe of the Democratic Republic of Congo. After taking a third-minute lead through Vinny Kombe, Motema Pembe failed to score again against bottom-of-the-table ESAE of Benin and had to settle for a 1-0 win in Kinshasa.

But it proved a hollow victory as the Congolese outfit were eliminated on head-to-head records having drawn at home and lost away to Zanaco. Hopes that already eliminated Enugu Rangers of Nigeria could finish on a high note proved unfounded as they were held 1-1 at home by Group A runners-up Masry.

Palestinian international Mahmoud Wadi gave the Port Said club an early lead that Ifeanyi George cancelled midway through the first half. A disastrous campaign for South African club Bidvest Wits ended with a 2-0 defeat by Djoliba of Mali in Soveto, which condemned them to last place in Group C. —AFP

## Solskjaer backs Martial to regain scoring touch

**LONDON:** Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has backed Anthony Martial to rediscover his scoring touch and says the French forward is giving the club "everything" both on the pitch and the training ground.

The 24-year-old has scored 12 goals in all competitions in an injury-hit season but has just one in the last six matches as United struggle for goals in the absence of striker Marcus Rashford, who is nursing a stress fracture in his back.

"He's giving us everything. He's been asked to play — he has started the last eight games — and running probably 20% more than he did when I came here," Solskjaer told reporters.

"We'll give him more support, give him rest when he deserves it ... he's been asked to play too much as well, especially now when Marcus is injured.

"I know he's tired, but he's never ever dodged a training session. He's training, he's available for every game, so I'm delighted with the boy."

Rashford scored 19 goals in all competitions before injury struck while academy graduate Mason Greenwood has chipped in with 10. The club also signed 30-year-old Nigerian Odion Ighalo on loan from China's Shanghai Shenhua on transfer deadline day. United, seventh in the Premier League with 35 points from 25 matches, visit Chelsea on Feb. 17. — Reuters

## Can Guardiola salvage Man City's season?

**LONDON:** Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola conceded the Premier League title to Liverpool long ago, but his side's profligate attack and porous defence are becoming worrying trends. A sixth defeat of the campaign, at Tottenham on Sunday, means City have now lost as many times this season as in their previous 84 league games under Guardiola and are relying on cup competitions to salvage their season.

Guardiola's men are into a third consecutive League Cup final, where they will be heavy favourites to beat Aston Villa on March 1. They face Sheffield Wednesday in the fifth round of the FA Cup. However, City's season will now be judged on how they fare in the Champions League, with the might of 13-time winners Real Madrid awaiting them in the last 16.

An inability to progress beyond the quarter-finals in Guardiola's three seasons at City so far has been the major disappointment of an otherwise hugely successful reign. "I will be judged, if we don't win it in my final period here, that I will be a failure here. I know that," said the City boss ahead of this weekend.

### RELYING ON LAPORTE

If they are to be crowned European champions, City need

major improvements at both ends of the pitch, but tightening up at the back is the most pressing priority. In their back-to-back title winning campaigns, Guardiola's men conceded 27 goals in 2017/18 and 23 last season. With 13 games still to play this season, they have already conceded 29.

The loss of Aymeric Laporte for most of the season with a serious knee injury and failure to replace the departed Vincent Kompany has left Guardiola short on reliable centre-backs due to the erratic form of John Stones and Nicolas Otamendi. Laporte is back fit, although he has been bedded in slowly after making his return in a 1-0 win at Sheffield United nearly two weeks ago. The Frenchman still has another three weeks to get up to speed before City visit Madrid on February 26, but needs to get back close to his best if the visitors are to escape from the Bernabeu unscathed.

Guardiola also has to decide who he trusts to start at left-back against Madrid. Oleksandr Zinchenko cost his side the game at Tottenham by getting sent off for a second yellow card with half an hour to play.

Benjamin Mendy has not won back Guardiola's trust in another season dogged by fitness problems and poor form, while Angelino, who started some of City's biggest

games of the season, against Liverpool and Manchester United, was shipped out on loan to Leipzig last week.

### WAITING TO 'CLICK'

The 2-0 defeat in north London on Sunday was only the second time City have failed to score in the league this season. They have still scored five more goals in the league than Liverpool, who are 22 points clear at the top and striking towards the title.

However, a failure to take their chances has also been a recurring theme of City's season. Against Spurs they had 18 shots to Tottenham's three, missed a penalty and a series of other sitters. "Always I believe and, today more than ever, you are closer to win the games when you create more chances and concede few," insisted Guardiola.

"Maybe one day we make a click and we change it. I think the team is good, I like the way my team play but it is not enough." Guardiola has garnered a reputation as one of football's all-time great coaches after winning 28 trophies in three different countries with Barcelona, Bayern Munich and City.

A true test of that greatness will be whether he can turn the tide in the next few weeks to avoid City's season ending limply. — AFP



## 25 Kuwait 'Stars' Ice Hockey Club win its first match



## 26 Penguins clip Caps in first meeting of season



## 27 Haaland and Sancho, Dortmund's two-pronged teenage attack



# Mahomes sparks Chiefs to Super Bowl win



MIAMI: Patrick Mahomes #15 of the Kansas City Chiefs raises the Vince Lombardi Trophy after defeating the San Francisco 49ers 31-20 in Super Bowl LIV at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami, Florida. — AFP

**MIAMI:** Patrick Mahomes led a thrilling late comeback as the Kansas City Chiefs ended their 50-year wait for a Super Bowl crown with a 31-20 victory over the San Francisco 49ers on Sunday. Chiefs quarterback Mahomes shrugged off an error-strewn start to overturn a 20-10 49ers fourth quarter lead in a gripping battle for the Vince Lombardi Trophy at the Hard Rock Stadium.

The Super Bowl win was Kansas City's first NFL Championship since their triumph over the Minnesota Vikings in 1970, and only their second ever. And it owed everything to the nerve of Mahomes, who for the third straight postseason game led the Chiefs back from a double-digit deficit to seal a dramatic win.

"We kept believing," said Mahomes, who was later named Super Bowl MVP. "That's what we've done all postseason. They guys really stepped up. They believed in me...We found a way to win it in the end."

The Chiefs quarterback had looked out of sorts until early in the fourth quarter, throwing two interceptions in the face of fierce pressure from the marauding San Francisco defense led by the marauding Nick Bosa.

But with the game on the line in the fourth quarter, Mahomes led his team on two long drives to set up

touchdowns for tight end Travis Kelce and running back Damien Williams. Those scores put the Chiefs into a 24-20 lead and Kansas City made the game safe when Williams danced up the sideline for a 38-yard rushing score with 1min 12sec remaining.

Mahomes finished with 286 passing yards and 26 completions from 42 attempts with two touchdowns. The Chiefs quarterback also rushed for a touchdown early in the first quarter. But the defeat was desperately hard on the 49ers, who were chasing a record-equalling sixth Vince Lombardi Trophy.

The 49ers had barely put a foot wrong through three quarters, with their defense shackling Mahomes superbly and their offense moving the ball confidently to put them in the driving seat late in the game.

### GAROPPOLO CRACKS

But as the pressure in the fourth quarter mounted, 49ers quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo's sure touch deserted him and the Niners offense dried up. With Mahomes leading the Chiefs on two long drives to engineer a 24-20 lead, Garoppolo had one last chance to lead the 49ers on a game-winning drive with 2min 44sec remaining.

But the Chiefs defense suddenly began to find gaps to pressure Garoppolo, and when he was sacked on 4th&10 to hand possession back to Kansas City, the writing was on the wall. Two plays later Williams then drove the final nail into the 49ers coffin, finding space down the left hand touchline and galloping into the endzone for a score to make it 31-20.

Garoppolo was then intercepted on the next 49ers possession and it was left to Kansas City to run down the clock for victory. The win was a long-awaited first Super Bowl triumph for Chiefs head coach Andy Reid, the 61-year-old veteran long regarded as the best NFL coach not to win a championship.

Reid later praised his team's composure under pressure. "We knew it'd be a close game, and we knew there would be some challenges that we'd have to battle through — nobody lost their poise," Reid said.

But the fourth quarter collapse was cruel on 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan. Shanahan had been the offensive co-ordinator for the Atlanta Falcons at the 2017 Super Bowl when they let a 28-3 lead slip in a stunning loss to the New England Patriots.

"It's tough," 49ers quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo said. "I mean, I've never had this feeling before. Kind of

an unreal feeling." The fourth quarter drama came after a nip-and-tuck opening three quarters with little to choose between the two sides.

Mahomes' rushing touchdown in the first quarter and a Harrison Butker field goal had helped Kansas City into an early 10-3 lead. But Garoppolo found Kyle Juszczyk for a 15-yard touchdown in the second quarter to make it 10-10 at halftime.

A Robbie Gould field goal and a touchdown from running back Raheem Mostert helped put the 49ers 20-10 ahead and momentum seemed to have decisively in San Francisco's favour. At that point Mahomes had looked off-colour for much of the game, throwing two uncharacteristically sloppy interceptions as the Chiefs struggled to build momentum.

But once again the Chiefs ability to score quickly came to their rescue. Mahomes hit receiver Tyreek Hill for 44 yards on the drive that led to Kelce's touchdown to make it 20-17.

Another 38-yard completion to Sammy Watkins on the next Chiefs drive led to the go-ahead touchdown for Williams and a crucial 24-20 lead. "Doesn't matter what the score is, we've got Pat Mahomes," Kelce said afterwards. "And you know what? I love him." — AFP

## Harden, Giannis spark Rockets, Bucks to big NBA victory

**WASHINGTON:** NBA scoring leaders James Harden and Giannis Antetokounmpo powered their teams to decisive NBA triumphs Sunday while Detroit snapped a five-game losing streak by rallying past Denver.

Houston star Harden scored 40 points, grabbed 10 rebounds and handed out nine assists as the Rockets defeated visiting New Orleans and rookie star Zion Williamson 117-109. Harden, on pace for his third NBA scoring title in a row with 35.6 points a game, hit 12-

of-24 shots from the floor, 7-of-15 from 3-point range, and all nine of his free throws.

"We want to finish these games up before the break and come back with some momentum," Harden said. "When we hit our stride it's going to be pretty scary. We're still trying to find it and we will."

Greek big man Antetokounmpo scored 30 points, exactly his season scoring average, while pulling down 19 rebounds and passing off nine assists to spark the league-leading Milwaukee Bucks over the visiting Phoenix Suns 129-108.

Khristian Middleton added 25 points for the Bucks, who improved the NBA's best record to 42-7, while Devin Booker led the Suns with 32 points. "We all depend on each other and we just want to continue to get better each night," said Milwaukee's Brook Lopez, who had 17 points and nine blocked shots.

The Rockets, outrebounded 63-43, used a smaller lineup with Swiss center Clint Capela injured, taking full advantage of the speed, passing and playmaking skills of Harden and Russell Westbrook, who con-

tributed 22 points, seven assists and six rebounds. "Be healthy and continue to keep our good spirit up, we'll be all right," Harden said.

The Rockets, fifth in the Western Conference at 31-18, committed only seven turnovers compared to 21 by the Pelicans, who had 21 points and 10 rebounds from Williamson. The highly touted NBA newcomer played a season-high 32 minutes after making his debut only two weeks ago due to a knee injury that sidelined him for three months.

"Beast," Harden said of Williamson. "He has a feel for the game. He's strong. He's going to be really great." The Pelicans, led by 28 points and 12 rebounds from Brandon Ingram, went 10-of-33 from 3-point range, missing their last 33-point shots after the middle of the third quarter.

"They play at a very high pace, very fast and they put up a lot of 3s," Harden said. "We just had to keep up with them, make sure we contain their dribble penetration and offensively just do what we do."

Andre Drummond scored 21 points and grabbed

17 rebounds as the Detroit Pistons rallied from 21 points down early to defeat visiting Denver 128-123 in over-time. Reggie Jackson came off the bench to score 20 points while Detroit reserve Bruce Brown added 19 as seven Pistons scored in double figures. Nuggets center Nikola Jokic of Serbia had a triple double with a game-high 39 points plus 10 rebounds and 11 assists in a losing cause as Denver fell to 34-16, third in the West.

At 18-33, Detroit stands 11th in the Eastern Conference, four games behind Orlando for the final playoff spot.

The defending champion Toronto Raptors, led by 31 points from reserve Terence Davis, stretched their win streak to 11 games by defeating visiting Chicago 129-102. At 36-14, the Raptors have the third-best record in the NBA, trailing only the Bucks and the West-leading Los Angeles Lakers.

Cameroon star Pascal Siakam scored 17 points and grabbed nine rebounds for the Raptors. Thaddeus Young led Chicago with 21 points. — AFP