



**6** Modi vows 'grand' Hindu temple, eyes arms exports



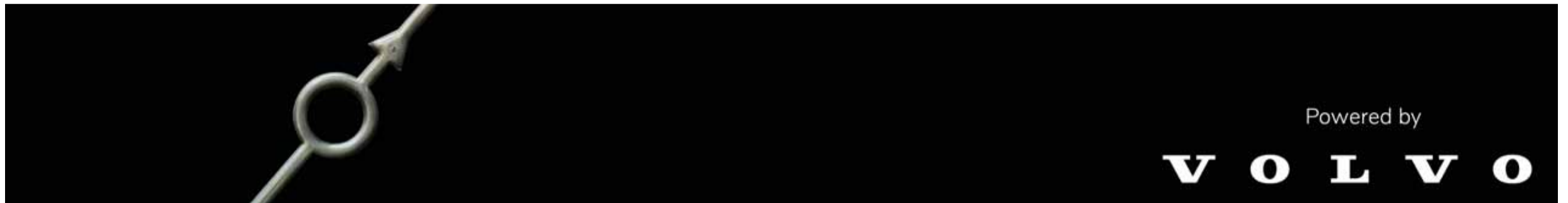
**19** Syria hero doctor reluctantly steps into Oscars limelight



**24** Buttigieg leads in chaotic Iowa vote, Sanders second



**27** Messi fires back at Abidal after dressing room jibe



# MPs slam Trump's 'Deal of the Century', call on all to reject it

Amir is in good health: Ghanem • Speaker calls to expose 'fake' citizens amid housing crunch

## Zain KSA profits soar, revenues hit \$2.24bn



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

**RIYADH/KUWAIT:** Zain Saudi Arabia (Zain KSA) announced record-high financial results for all key indicators for the full-year and fourth quarter ended Dec 31, 2019 with the operator serving 7.6 million customers. For the full-year 2019, Zain KSA generated revenues of SAR 8.4 billion (\$2.24 billion), a 11 percent Y-o-Y compared to SAR 7.5 billion for the full year of 2018, while EBITDA for the year increased by 27 percent Y-

o-Y to reach SAR 3.82 billion (\$1.02 billion), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 46 percent. Net income soared to reach SAR 485 million (\$130 million), reflecting a 46 percent increase on the 2018 full-year net income of SAR 332 million. Zain KSA reported total capex investment of SAR 1.9 billion (\$512 million) for full year 2019.

Commenting on the positive financial results, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi, said: "Zain KSA's ever improving financial results are attributed to the team's diligent implementation of its digital growth strategy, combined with the close cooperation and support of the resources of Zain Group. Zain KSA's distinct accomplishments in 2019 include the commercial launch of the kingdom's largest 5G network that enhance competitive capabilities; operational efficiency initiatives; and provision of a great customer mobile experience that is instrumental in growing its enterprise and individual customer base." (See Page 11)

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The National Assembly yesterday strongly condemned US President Donald Trump's Middle East peace plan, calling on the government to continue to reject it while urging all Arab and Islamic nations to also unanimously reject the so-called "Deal of the Century" because it undermines the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

Lawmakers called for exerting all efforts to oppose and halt the process of normalizing Arab ties with Israel, saying all Israeli practices are in violation of international law. A communique issued by the Assembly stressed the plan stipulates major concessions from the rights of Palestinians. The statement called for unified Arab and Islamic popular and official stands to support the Palestinian people and their just cause.

## Philippines mulls partial lifting of deployment ban

**MANILA:** The Philippine Department of Labor and Employment said in a press release yesterday that in light of the fruitful meeting between the Philippine labor delegation and Kuwaiti officials, the labor department is set to move to partially lift the ban on the deployment of Filipino workers to Kuwait. Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III said he will recommend to the Philippine

Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) governing board the relaxation of the deployment ban after the Kuwaiti government agreed to sign an agreement on the standard employment contract for Filipino household service workers.

"I had a fruitful meeting with my counterparts in Kuwait. Both sides agreed on the harmonized standard employment contract. I will talk with the POEA governing board to recommend the partial lifting of the ban," Bello said. However, he added, lifting of a total ban will only follow unless an official status report is provided by the Kuwaiti government on the cases of overseas Filipino workers Jeanelyn Villavende, Constanca Dayag, Joanna Demafelis and a Filipina who was raped upon

arriving at Kuwait airport.

"In the case of Villavende, I wanted some validation of their claim that they [accused employers] are formally charged and are behind bars. We have to be contented who have been charged and what are the nature of the charges," Bello said. Upon the issuance of a decision on the partial lifting of the ban, the labor chief said they will allow skilled, semi-skilled and professional workers to be deployed to Kuwait, while newly hired HSWs are still covered by the prohibition. The balik manggagawa (returning workers) category on the other hand will be the subject of discussion and decision of the POEA governing board.

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## Unique solution to help Muslims pray at Olympics

**TOKYO:** For the thousands of Muslim athletes, officials and supporters arriving in Tokyo for the Olympic Games later this year, it may be a struggle for them to find an appropriate place to pray. The answer might just be found roaming the streets of Tokyo on the back of a truck. By the time the Games start in July, there will be prayer rooms available at the currently under-construction athlete's village. However, some venues may not have a designated space. There is also a dearth of prayer spaces in hotels and public areas across the Japanese capital.

This is where the Mobile Mosque, a fully-equipped 48-sq-m prayer room that opens up on the back of a parked truck, comes in. The back of the modified truck can be widened in seconds and the vehicle also includes Arabic signage and outdoor water taps for pre-worship cleaning. The Yasu Project, the organization behind the enterprise, plan on pitching up outside venues during the Olympics, which run from July 24 to Aug 9.

The organization's CEO Yasuharu Inoue hopes athletes and supporters alike will use the truck. "I want athletes to compete with their utmost motivation and for the audience to cheer on with their utmost motivation as well. That is why I made this," said Inoue, pointing to the white truck parked next to Tokyo Tower yesterday. "I hope it brings awareness that there are many different people in this world and to promote a non-discriminatory, peaceful Olympics and Paralympics."

Tokyo 2020 said yesterday that they were looking at various avenues to provide appropriate facilities for all religious groups. "The Organizing Committee is preparing a list of religious or faiths centers that could be contacted or visited if requested by residents of the Villages during the Games," Tokyo 2020 told Reuters in an email. "In the Games' venues, multi-faith prayer spaces for

Continued on Page 24

## Trump-Pelosi feud erupts, unity in shreds

**WASHINGTON:** A bitter feud between US President Donald Trump and top Democrat Nancy Pelosi boiled over at his State of the Union speech on Tuesday, with Trump denying her a handshake and Pelosi ripping apart a copy of his remarks behind his back. Trump avoided the subject of his impeachment drama in a succinct 80-minute speech, but the raw wounds from the battle were evident with fellow Republicans giving him standing ovations while rival Democrats for the most part remained seated.

The Republican-led Senate was expected to acquit him of charges he abused his powers and obstructed Congress during a vote later yesterday. Seeing Pelosi, the US House of Representatives speaker, for the first time since she stormed out of a White

House meeting four months ago, Trump declined to shake her outstretched hand as he gave her a paper copy of his remarks before starting to speak.

Despite having not spoken to Trump since their last meeting, Pelosi appeared to be taken aback. She avoided citing the customary "high privilege and distinct honor" that usually accompanies the speaker's introduction of the president to Congress. "Members of Congress, the President of the United States" was all she said in introducing Trump. When his speech ended, Pelosi stood and tore up her copy of the remarks he had handed her, later telling reporters it was "the courteous thing to do, considering the alternative".

"The president has no class," House Democrat Jim McGovern told reporters afterwards. "I mean, he should have, out of respect, taken the speaker's hand." But after delivering what essentially was a campaign rally speech that was terribly dark and divisive, I think the speaker did the right thing ripping it up," Kayleigh McEnany, Trump's campaign spokeswoman, said of Pelosi: "Her hatred for

Continued on Page 24



WASHINGTON: US Vice President Mike Pence claps as Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi rips a copy of US President Donald Trump's speech after he delivered the State of the Union address at the US Capitol on Tuesday. — AFP

## Plane skids off runway, splits into three parts

**ISTANBUL:** A plane carrying 177 people skidded off the runway at an Istanbul airport, caught fire and split into three after landing in rough weather yesterday. Officials said that no-one had lost their lives in the spectacular accident, but dozens of people were injured. Live images broadcast on Turkish television showed several people climbing through a large crack in the severed aircraft and escaping onto one of the wings at the rear. The Boeing 737 operated by Turkish

low-cost carrier Pegasus Airlines had flown into Istanbul's Sabiha Gokcen airport from the Aegean port city of Izmir, NTV television reported. The plane was apparently buffeted by strong winds and heavy rain lashing Istanbul, Turkey's largest city. Fifty-two people were injured and taken to hospital, Istanbul governor Ali Yerlikaya said in a statement on Twitter, but there were no deaths.

"Some passengers evacuated the plane by themselves but others are stuck inside and our rescuers are working to free them," Transport Minister Mehmet Cahit Turhan said on CNN-Turk television. The plane was carrying 171 passengers and six crew members, the governor said, while Turkish media reports

Continued on Page 24



ISTANBUL: This picture taken yesterday shows a Pegasus airlines Boeing 737 plane after it skidded off the runway at Sabiha Gokcen airport. — AFP

## Local

# Crown Prince hosts Prime Minister; Premier meets Arab, Int'l Council chief

## Crown Prince patronizes Al-Ahmadi equestrian event 2019-2020



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



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the Chairman of the Arab and International Relations Council Mohammad Jassem Al-Saqr.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister received at Bayan Palace the Chairman of the

Arab and International Relations Council Mohammad Jassem Al-Saqr and members of council. The meeting coincided with the ninth meeting of council's Board of Trustees. In other news, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is set to patronize the 2019-

2020 Al-Ahmadi equestrian event. His Highness the Crown Prince will be represented at the event today by Al-Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The event will be held at 04:30 pm at Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah range. — KUNA

## EU, Kuwait hold first human rights dialogue

BRUSSELS: The European Union and Kuwait concluded their first informal human rights dialogue in Brussels Tuesday in a positive atmosphere. "We discussed many issues such as the overall developments in the fields of human rights both in the EU and Kuwait and selected topics of fundamental rights in Kuwait and the EU and cooperation in multilateral forums," Kuwait's Ambassador to the EU, Belgium and NATO Jassem Al-Budaiwi said after the end of the one-day meeting. "The European side took note of the presentations given by the Kuwait experts in all issues that were discussed in the meeting in a transparent and frank and straight forward manner," he said.

They are looking forward to working closer on issues that we discussed, noted Budaiwi. Both sides were represented by different institutions that deal with human rights issues, he stated. Assistant foreign minister for human rights affairs Talal Al-Mutairi led the Kuwaiti side and the EU side was led by Gabriel Munuera Vinals head of the Arab Peninsula section in the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU's diplomatic service. The meeting also provided an opportunity to exchange views on the UN Human Rights Council and the UN third committee in the UN General Assembly, Budaiwi said.

"The Kuwait side presented a follow up on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) which published a review on Kuwait last week especially that Kuwait is keen in inter acting with all its partners for the improvement of human rights around the world and attaches



BRUSSELS: Officials from Kuwait and the European Union attend an informal human rights dialogue. — KUNA photos



Kuwait's Ambassador to the EU, Belgium and NATO Jassem Al-Budaiwi with Members of the Kuwaiti diplomatic mission.

great importance to all of its laws and regulations which serve as fair and practical mechanism for evaluating and solving human rights issues in Kuwait and the world at large," he stressed. Another opportunity for both sides

to chat up on issues of common interest in the fields of human rights will be during the next EU-Kuwait senior officials meeting which will take place in Kuwait on 10 March, Budaiwi concluded. — KUNA

## Kuwait has open foreign policy to nations: Minister

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah praised efforts to encourage scientific research worldwide, adding that Kuwait has an open and welcoming foreign policy that encourages acceptance between cultures and peoples. In his speech at a ceremony to honor the winners of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) Awards for Arab scientists and researchers, as well as Al-Sumait African Development Award, the minister hailed the goals of KFAS' initiative to encourage these endeavors. The minister, who attended the event as he heads the secretaries board of the Al-Sumait Award, took time to reflect on the prize launched by His Highness the Amir at the joint Arab-African Summit, hosted by Kuwait in 2013. The \$1 million award, named after the late Kuwaiti philanthropist Abdulrahman Al-Sumait, is a "source of pride" for Kuwaitis, he said, due to its impact on improving the lives of millions who suffer from malnutrition and food scarcity. Congratulating the two winners of the prize, he hailed their efforts to increase the production and nutritional value of food in the continent. The awards presented were the Kuwait Award, the Youth Scientific Production Award and the Al-Sumait African Development Award, according to KFAS Director General Adnan Shihabeddeen. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah poses for a group photo during the ceremony. — KUNA photos



Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah shakes hands with the winners.

## Speaker receives Estonian parliament delegation



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Estonian parliament Enn Eesmaa. — KUNA photos



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem poses for a group photo with the visiting Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Estonian parliament Enn Eesmaa and his accompanying delegation.

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem received yesterday the visiting Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Estonian parliament Enn Eesmaa, and his accompanying

delegation. During the meeting, they reviewed the cooperation and relations between the two friendly countries and ways to enhance them, in addition to discussing a number of topics and issues of common concern. — KUNA

## ABK sponsors 'Be Ready Program' at KU

KUWAIT: Committed to empowering Kuwaiti talent, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) sponsored the 'Be Ready Program' at Kuwait University - College of Business Administration. Under the patronage of Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at the College of Business Administration Dr Anwar Al-Shriaan, the two-day event aimed at bridging the gap between students and the professional world.

Aware of the need to connect students and potential employers, the university regularly holds educational events. The 'Be Ready Program,' which featured several higher education institutions showcasing their education programs, equips students with the knowledge that will shape the future direction of their careers, while simultaneously giving them the support they deserve in the process.

Partnerships with educational institutions are key catalyst in enabling the youth to develop their leadership skills. Enhancing professional growth is a key priority for ABK and these events reinforce the Bank's commitment to playing an active role in supporting Kuwait's next generation of talent during the early stages of their work life.



Local

# Kuwait's Foreign Minister echoes call for int'l backing to Palestinian rights

## US informed Kuwait about peace plan on reveal day: Sheikh Ahmad

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah yesterday restated Kuwait's call on the international community to stick to international law and legitimacy so that Palestinians can regain their rights of self-determination and a state with its capital in East Jerusalem. Addressing a parliament session on the recently unveiled US Middle East peace plan, the minister reiterated his country's unshakable policy, principles and basics established by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, regarding the Palestinian cause.

“Palestine main focus at UNSC”

During recent extraordinary meetings of the Arab League and Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Kuwait repeated its relentless stance based on the fact that only utter abidance by relevant international legitimacy resolutions could produce a just and comprehensive solution, he underlined. In this regard, he cited the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and UN Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242, 338 and 2334, along with other relevant resolutions, which all require complete withdrawal from all

Arab territories which were occupied in 1967 and an independent Palestinian state on the June 4, 1967 border with its capital in East Jerusalem.

He added that on January 28, US National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien had contacted him to inform Kuwait about a fresh US peace plan on the basis of firm relations between Kuwait and the US and the significance which the US attaches to His Highness the Amir's sensible policy. On the same day, he maintained, the US unveiled its new vision for the Middle East peace process.

Afterwards, Kuwait began to make contacts with the Palestinian side, in addition to Gulf and Arab countries, in order to have concerted stances at regional and international gatherings, Sheikh Ahmad Nasser remarked. He also cited the Foreign Ministry's statement on January 30 as emphasizing that a just and total solution to the Palestinian cause could be attained only by commitment to relevant international legitimacy resolutions, chiefly an independent Palestinian state on the June 1967 border with its capital in East Jerusalem. It also spoke highly of US efforts to resolve the Palestinian

cause and put an end to over 70 years of the Arab-Israeli conflict which caused the bitter agony of the Palestinian people and put regional security and stability in jeopardy, the foreign minister noted. He further quoted the Cabinet as having recently repeated Kuwait's backing to the Palestinian issue, in addition to all international efforts, including US ones, to reach a fair and total solution.

The minister recalled official talks between His Highness the Amir and US President Donald Trump in September 2017 and September 2018 following reports on a reported US peace plan, with Sheikh Sabah having stressed that the Palestinian case is of paramount significance to Kuwait, Arabs and Muslims. Furthermore, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, when he had just taken over as foreign minister, had reaffirmed Kuwait's unwavering backing to Palestinian rights during several meetings with former and current secretaries of state, he said. "The US reply came just as a request from the Kuwaiti side to carefully mull over the plan once it was put on table, and not to turn it down immediately," he noted.

During its non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council in 2018-2019, Kuwait focused on Arab issues, chiefly Palestine, on the grounds that it was the Arab representative at



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah speaks at the National Assembly yesterday. — KUNA

## Kuwait's security chief meets Italian, Japanese envoys

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's National Security Apparatus Chief Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Al-Sabah yesterday held talks with Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Carlo Baldozzi and the Ambassador of Japan to Kuwait Masato Takaoka. During the meetings, Sheikh Thamer reviewed with both envoys aspects of cooperation and bilateral relations, as well as ways to enhance and develop them, in addition to issues of common interest on regional and international levels. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Army Officers Club hosted yesterday a farewell ceremony for former Kuwait Army Deputy Chief of Staff Lt Gen Abdullah Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah.

## Kuwait hosts robotics, AI festival

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) yesterday held a press conference to announce the launch of the Robotics and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Festival on Sunday. The festival is a first-of-its-kind that aims to educate, engage and inspire people in Kuwait. Director General of KFAS Dr Adnan Shihabeddeen said the festival will be under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and in the presence of Education Minister Saud Al-Harbi.

He said that due to developments in scientific discoveries and inventions in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, many universities have begun to prepare for new majors to cover the labor market need for these advanced skills. "In a few years, many university majors will become useless in light of upcoming global developments such as robotics science, smart machines, Internet of Things, alternative and renewable energy, etc," he added.

Shihabeddeen affirmed that the festival serves KFAS' strategic goals, which are to spread cultural awareness and support the creation of an environment of science and knowledge "Therefore, one of the foundation's strategic goals is to keep pace with the accelerating global technology trend here." He said the foundation has an important and effective role to contribute to changing the prevailing view of the classical education process.

Therefore, its role is based on two main pillars - firstly, to spread scientific awareness of one of the most important components of recent rapid developments, which are robotics and artificial intelligence and enabling society, especially the younger generation, to contribute to involve in the required technological infrastructure.

"Secondly, to show the importance of introducing new specializations to

the educational curricula in Kuwait, whether at schools or universities. Consequently, developing advanced curricula based on STEM - science, technology, engineering and mathematics - and urging decision-makers in Kuwait to adopt modern studies that offer technological specializations," Shihabeddeen noted.

KFAS Scientific Culture Director Dr Salam Al-Ablani said the festival will feature high-tech, world-class interactive experiences, live shows, short films and hands-on sessions to spark interest and inspire active engagement from a wide spectrum of audiences - a highly interactive adventure taking people of all ages on a journey from smart machines in the past to the current hi-tech world of robotics.

Meanwhile, Manal Al-Rashed, Director of Motivating Science and Technology Program, explained that the festival will have four zones. The first zone will be on early automation in the Muslim civilization. The second will have interactive experiences showcasing the latest AI and robotics technology. The third zone will hold workshops and competitions. The last zone will be on outdoor experiences and exhibits.

She added that the ministry of education has fully booked the day period for its students for educational field trips. "Students will be visiting and participating in the festival during the morning period, while the evening period will be available for parents and other audiences."

The festival is held with the cooperation of "1001 Inventions", a British based organization that creates international educational campaigns and engaging transmedia productions aiming to raise awareness of the contributions to science, technology and culture from the Golden Age of Islamic Civilization. The festival will be open to the public from Feb 9 to 14 at Salwa Hall in Salmiya. Entry is free of charge. To register, visit the website kfasfestivals.com.



**KUWAIT:** KFAS Director General Dr Adnan Shihabeddeen (center) speaks during the press conference. — KUNA

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## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: The Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway. —Photo by Sameera Al-Khalifa (KUNA)

# Spain hosts 'Kuwaiti cultural days in Madrid'

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**MADRID:** Kuwaiti Ambassador to Spain Ayadah Al-Saidi inaugurated activities of the 'Kuwaiti cultural days in Madrid' which continue until Saturday. The activities are held in cooperation with Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL). The inauguration ceremony was held on Tuesday at the 'Arab House,' the official center for Arab-Spanish cultural exchanges, with attendance of the Arab House chairman Pedro Martinez, Assistant Secretary General of the Culture department at NCCAL Dr Essa Al-Ansari and diplomats. In the opening speech, Saidi expressed satisfaction with the first round of activities that coincided with Kuwait's national holidays, stressing that they would enhance cooperation between the two countries. The Kuwaiti leadership, namely His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, firmly believes that culture is an influential force for communication and promoting tolerance. He indicated at establishment of a center for teaching Spanish language in Kuwait as a prelude to establishing a Spanish university. The exhibition includes two art fairs, one by the artist Atared Al-Thakib and the second by photographer Reda Salem. Dr Hassan Ashkanani lectures on history and relics of Failaka Island. Saidi thanked Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, the NCCAL and the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially its affiliate the 'Arab House,' in appreciation for the efforts to prepare



Kuwaiti Ambassador to Spain Ayadah Al-Saidi presents a memento to Arab House chairman Pedro Martinez.

this important cultural event. Meanwhile, Martinez said he is proud to host the activities, admiring the initiative that contributes to deepening understanding and cooperation between the two countries. He added that Kuwait has a major and active role in the Middle East and in the world, especially in cultural, humanitarian and charitable fields. —KUNA



MADRID: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Spain Ayadah Al-Saidi, Arab House chairman Pedro Martinez and other guests in attendance pose for a group photo. —KUNA photos



Kuwait's folkloric band performs during the opening ceremony.

Local

# Helping Fund paid KD 3.5 million for cancer patients in Kuwait last year

Covering services including cash aid, medicine, fees, radiology tests and others

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** The Patients Helping Fund Society (PHFS) had a special booth at an event organized Tuesday at Faisal Sultan bin Essa Radiology Center's park to mark World Cancer Day, through which it explained the fund's role in helping patients fight cancer through aid that is around KD 3.5 million for 500 patients in 2019. PHFS explained that the aid it provides to patients includes around 3,500 services such as cash aid, medicine, fees, radiology tests and others. PHFS also contributes in boosting all forms of health awareness through lectures,

seminars, forums and health exhibitions.

Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC) Director Dr Ali Al-Mousawi explained the work process at KCCC and listed the bodies cooperating with it, namely PHFS. Mousawi also announced using electronic prescription at all KCCC clinics and departments for both Kuwaiti and expat patients, adding that the prescription will soon include chemotherapy medications and those prescribed for patients hospitalized in wards.

Mousawi announced that all labs, OPDs and wards will be linked with the e-filing system by the end of February and that the cyclotron device will be re-oper-

ated after being fully developed and updated to become the main center to provide all nuclear medicine needs in Kuwait. He said all chemotherapy daycare wards had been renovated in less than 14 days and radiotherapy wards had been refurbished in a week. "The surgery department's ICU will be renovated in less than 10 days," he added, noting that all renovations are fully supported by Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah and his undersecretary Dr Mustafa Redha.

Commenting on the activities held to mark World Cancer Day under the slogan of 'I am and I Will,' Mousawi said they call for personal commitment and



represent the strength of individual work towards changing the future for better conditions. Responsible for 15 percent of fatalities, cancer is the second-leading cause of death after cardiac diseases worldwide and in Kuwait.



**KUWAIT:** NBK officials with small and medium enterprise owners.

## NBK organizes 'Digital Talks' at Al-Shaheed Park

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organizes 'NBK digital Talks' at Al-Shaheed Park, as part of the bank's continuous efforts to support the social and economic development in Kuwait.

The first 'NBK Digital Talk' took place on Tuesday, January 28, 2020 at the Multipurpose Hall in Al-Shaheed Park. The speakers were Abdulaziz Al-Loughani, CEO, Floward, Ali Al-Matrook, Managing Director, TONS and Nasser Al-Humaidi, CEO, Upayments. NBK will be arranging different digital

events all the year round as part of its support to and partnership with Al-Shaheed Park.

NBK's Public Relations Manager Yaqoub Al-Baqer said that NBK will be organizing a number of events at Al-Shaheed park in line with our digital strategy that aims to creating a digital community between NBK and its customers. Baqer noted that as part of our annual support and partnership with Al-Shaheed Park, NBK chose this year to lead the change and arrange digital Talk events.

"Part of NBK's commitment to sustainability and to provide our community and customers with responsible products and services, we are committed to creating digital engagement with our customers," he added. "This improves our customer satisfaction, increases resources efficiency, helps in creating a digital community and empowering SMEs to embrace the technological developments to stay in the race."

Baqer added "NBK Digital Talks will allow our

Business Banking customers to share their success stories and emphasize the role that NBK has played in their success." These events are held in collaboration between NBK Business Banking, NBK Digital Factory and other digital departments in the bank.

It is worth mentioning that Al-Shaheed Park is managed by LOYAC. The park management's vision is to help in enhancing the cultural and civilized dimensions of the country, as well as support the development of the heritage.



Yaqoub Al-Baqer

## 42 servicemen test positive for AIDS: Report

**KUWAIT:** The medical testing committee discovered 42 uniformed men from the interior and defense ministries as well as the Kuwait National Guard are infected with AIDS, a local daily reported yesterday quoting sources familiar with the test results. The joint committee tests all uniformed men in these three bodies periodically. Al-Qabas reported quoting the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity. After some of them collapsed during heavy training, they were tested, as their temperatures were high. They were isolated and further tests revealed they have AIDS.

The sources said seven personnel in the Kuwait National Guard, 21 in the army and 14 in the interior ministry have AIDS, as testing continues in coordination with the health ministry according to strictly confidential procedures, and those infected were isolated in a special ward. The sources lauded the Kuwait National Guard's decision to send the infected guardsmen into medical retirement - two have been retired while the other five are waiting for completion of the administrative and legal process.

They said the joint committee that includes medical specialists from the military and health ministry will start comprehensive tests of uniformed men to make sure they are free of hepatitis, and those found infected will be sent into retirement immediately.

## 90 percent of KOC staff Kuwaitis

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) announced recruiting around 662 new Kuwaiti graduates to bring the total number of its Kuwaiti employees to 9,560. According to official statements, the percentage of Kuwaitis in KOC has risen to 90 percent. The company also managed to Kuwaitize 3,700 jobs in subcontracts to take the total percentage of citizens working through these contracts to 26.58 percent.

Meanwhile, a state of confusion spread within the oil sector following statements attributed to a Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) subsidiary company's CEO about merging Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC), Kuwait Integrated Petrochemical Industry Company (KIPIIC) and Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC). In this regard, informed oil sources said the statements made by KNPC CEO Waleed Al-Bader came during an unofficial meeting and that the reports were inaccurate and misinterpreted as they only came in response to an inquiry made by a staff member concerning the initially agreed upon merger pending concluding final studies. The sources underlined that the merging process requires concluding ongoing studies, getting final approvals and up to a year or 18 months of arrangements and coordination before going any further.

In other news, Minister of Oil and Electricity and Water Khaled Al-Fadhel said the Al-Zour Northern power plant has been built according to a 40-year public-private-partnership (PPP) contract. Fadhel explained that the plant will produce 1526.8 megawatts per hour that would be sold to the state according to the contract conditions.



**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti artists Redha Salem and Otared Al-Thaqeb opened their galleries at the 'Arab House' in Madrid, Spain yesterday as part of the 'Kuwaiti cultural days' activities, held in the Spanish capital in cooperation with Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL). — KUNA

## Kuwait authority says no China food ban

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Public Authority for Food and Nutrition said that the World Health Organization (WHO) has not issued any recommendations for nations to ban the import of foods from China, neither has any country done so. Based on scientific evidence from global organizations such as WHO and other food safety bodies, food has not been identified as a likely source of transmission of the novel coronavirus, deputy director Reem Al-Felaj said. The Kuwaiti body said it is closely monitoring food safety reports issued by the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN), a body jointly established by WHO and the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization. It is also aware of necessary precautions to be taken, if need be, in line with the Gulf Cooperation Council regional alert system on the novel coronavirus. The Kuwaiti public was urged to abide by health and hygiene standards during the consumption of food, including the need to ensure that meats are cooked thoroughly before eating. — KUNA



More Chinese cities shut down as virus death toll nears 500

## Who is indigenous? Millions may be denied land in Assam over definition



NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (center) gestures to supporters during a rally for the upcoming Delhi Legislative Assembly election in New Delhi. — AFP

# Indian PM eyes arms export tag

## Modi vows 'grand' Hindu temple at flashpoint site

LUCKNOW: India is targeting defense exports worth \$5 billion in the next five years in a bid to boost local manufacturing, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said yesterday. The country is the world's second-largest arms importer after Saudi Arabia, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, but Modi wants to turn that around under an ambitious "Made in India" initiative.

"In the last five years India has made remarkable progress in indigenizing the production of military equipment," Modi said at the opening of a defense fair in Lucknow. The five-day defense expo-which will include demonstrations of land, naval, air and virtual security systems-is being attended by manufacturers from France, the US and Russia, Delhi's biggest arms supplier.

India, which last year fought air battles with arch-rival Pakistan over disputed Kashmir, wants to bolster its combat capabilities to counter regional rivals

including China. Last year Indian officials said they were looking to spend \$130 billion over five to seven years on defense. Russia is India's main weapons supplier. More than 1,000 firms-including 172 foreign companies-are expected to take part in the exhibition, the defense ministry said in a statement.

### 'Grand' Hindu temple

Meanwhile, the construction of a grand Hindu temple at holy site bitterly contested with Muslims moved a step closer yesterday when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said a trust had been finalised to oversee the project. The razing of a mosque at Ayodhya by a huge crowd of Hindu zealots almost 30 years ago unleashed some of the country's worst sectarian violence since independence, with more than 2,000 people killed.

After a decades-long legal battle, India's highest court ruled in November that the land in northern

India should be managed by a trust to oversee the construction of a temple. Modi announced in parliament, to applause and chants of "Hail Lord Ram" from



### A 'Made in India' push

party supporters, that the trust has now been set up. "Let us all support the construction of a grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya," Modi said, referring to the

deity it will be named after. The temple construction had been a campaign pledge of Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) even before the mosque's demolition in 1992. In 2002, when Modi was chief minister of Gujarat state, 59 Hindu activists died in a blaze on a train from Ayodhya, leading to riots that saw upwards of 1,000 people perish, mostly Muslims.

For critics, the temple construction forms part of Modi's alleged master plan to remould the country as a Hindu nation, something he denies. The temple will be built on 67 acres (27 hectares), while five acres on the outskirts of Ayodhya will be handed over to a Muslim body for the construction of a mosque, the Press Trust of India reported. India's powerful Home Minister Amit Shah welcomed Modi's announcement, saying a centuries-old wait for the temple was over, and people would be finally able to worship at Ram's birthplace. — Agencies

## Alarm over BBC future as UK proposes fee changes

LONDON: The British government yesterday announced plans to stop prosecuting people who do not pay the BBC's compulsory subscription fee, sparking concerns about the broadcaster's future funding. Culture Secretary Nicky Morgan said that in an era of streaming services such as Netflix, all public service broadcasters "must adapt". And she said it was "an anachronism" that anyone refusing to pay the license fee-an annual levy on everyone watching BBC television-could face a fine or even jail.

But the proposal to decriminalize non-payment sparked alarm, against a backdrop of tensions between the BBC and Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative Party. The Tories have accused the broadcaster of political bias-a charge it denies. Johnson refused to take part in a major BBC interview in December's election, while ministers are now boycotting the flagship BBC news show, Radio 4's "Today". Currently set at £154.50 (183 euros, \$202) a year, the license fee generated £3.69 billion for the BBC last year, allowing it to operate free from commercial constraints.

In a speech in London, Morgan admitted that removing the threat of prosecution would "almost certainly" see a funding cut. The BBC previously said it would cost around £200 million. But Morgan denied the proposed change was "any kind of attack on the BBC", which she said was an "incredibly important



LONDON: A general view of the headquarters of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in London. The BBC will axe 450 jobs in its newsroom as part of plans to adapt "to changing audience needs" and meet its £80 million (\$104 million, 95 million euro) savings target, the British broadcaster announced. — AFP

organization". The corporation's latest annual report found that 91 percent of UK adults use BBC television, radio or online each week, for an average of 18 hours-both down slightly on previous years.

### 'Undermining the BBC'

The consultation, for changes due to come into effect in April 2022, comes just five years after a review into license fee enforcement recommended no change. "There is a question about what issue this repeat consultation is trying to solve," a BBC spokeswoman said. Philippa Childs, head of the broadcasting trade union Bectu, said it "makes no sense". "It appears it is wholly motivated by the current government's apparent obsession with undermining the BBC at every opportunity," she said in a statement. Morgan noted that in 2015, a license fee was not required to watch BBC content online. Since then, the BBC has also decided to scrap free licenses for people aged over 75.

But Tracy Brabin, culture spokeswoman for the main opposition Labor party, warned: "The future of the BBC is under serious threat from this Conservative government. "Decriminalizing non-payment of the license fee will leave the corporation without a predictable income and potentially hundreds of millions of pounds short. "The BBC as a public broadcaster is highly valued and something we should fight to protect." The consultation comes at a particularly challenging time for the BBC.

Its director-general, Tony Hall, is stepping down later this year and it recently announced plans to cut 450 newsroom jobs. The license fee model is guaranteed until 2027 but the government has indicated it is looking at different ways to do this in future. In 2018, more than 121,000 people were convicted of evading the license fee and fined an average of £176, the government said. The BBC said only five people in England and Wales were jailed for non payment of such fines. —AFP

## Iran-linked hackers pose as journalists in email scam

WASHINGTON: When Iranian-born German academic Erfan Kasraie received an email from The Wall Street Journal requesting an interview, he sensed something was amiss. The Nov 12 note purportedly came from Farnaz Fassihi, a veteran Iranian-American journalist who covers the Middle East. Yet it read more like a fan letter, asking Kasraie to share his "important achievements" to "motivate the youth of our beloved country." "This interview is a great honor for me," the note gushed.

Another red flag: the follow-up email that instructed Kasraie to enter his Google password to see the interview questions. The phony request was in reality an attempt to break into Kasraie's email account. The incident is part of a wider effort to impersonate journalists in hacking attempts that three cybersecurity firms said they have tied to the Iranian government, which rejected the claim.

The incidents come to light at a time when the US government has warned of Iranian cyber threats in the wake of the US air strike that killed Iran's second most powerful official, Major-General Qassem Soleimani. In a report <https://blog.certfa.com/posts/fake-interview-the-new-activity-of-charming-kitten-published-yesterday>, London-based cybersecurity company Certfa tied the

impersonation of Fassihi to a hacking group nicknamed Charming Kitten, which has long been associated with Iran.

Israeli firm ClearSky Cyber Security provided Reuters with documentation of similar impersonations of two media figures at CNN and Deutsche Welle, a German public broadcaster. ClearSky also linked the hacking attempts to Charming Kitten, describing the individuals targeted as Israeli academics or researchers who study Iran. ClearSky declined to give the specific number of people targeted or to name them, citing client confidentiality.

Iran denies operating or supporting any hacking operation. Alireza Miryousefi, the spokesman for the Islamic Republic's mission to the United Nations, said that firms claiming otherwise "are merely participants in the disinformation campaign against Iran."

Reuters uncovered similar hacking attempts on two other targets, which the two cybersecurity firms, along with a third firm, Atlanta-based Secureworks, said also appeared to be the work of Charming Kitten. Azadeh Shafiee, an anchor for London-based satellite broadcaster Iran International, was impersonated by hackers in attempts to break into the accounts of a relative of hers in London and Prague-based Iranian filmmaker Hassan Sarbakhshian.

Sarbakhshian - who fled the Islamic Republic amid a crackdown that saw the arrest of several fellow photojournalists in 2009 - was also targeted with an email that claimed to be from Fassihi. The message asked him to sign a contract to sell some of his pictures to The Wall Street Journal. Sarbakhshian said in an interview that he was suspicious of the message and didn't respond. — Reuters

International

# Gaza farmers return to their lands along volatile border

## Border area has been a 'no-go' zone for Palestinians

**GAZA:** Returning to his fields for the first time in 14 years, Palestinian farmer Naser Abu Isaeed surveyed the toll taken by conflict on formerly productive soil. "I saw an empty area full of holes and dry weeds," said Abu Isaeed, who once grew fruit on the tracts along Gaza's volatile border with Israel. He is one of about 600 Palestinian farmers who regained access to their fields along the border to cultivate crops under a project launched by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Citing security concerns, Israel has for years designated a 100 meter by 300 meter strip along its 40-km (25 mile)-long fence at the frontier as off-limits to Palestinians in Gaza, an enclave ruled by the Hamas militant group. Palestinians say the policy has deprived them of large areas of farmland, cut into livelihoods and reduced the space available to the densely populated strip's two million residents.

Under the ICRC project, launched in 2015, members of the Hamas-led Interior Ministry have cleared unexploded ordnance and other war material from 40 percent of the 2,500 acres (1,012 hectares) that make up the borderlands in that tract. Abu Isaeed was one of 90 farmers whose lands were being rehabilitated by ICRC in the project's third phase which began last

August and will end with the harvest in May. In all, the ICRC said some 580 farmers have regained access to their land.

Fields were ploughed, fertilized and sown with wheat by ICRC-employed workers as part of the endeavor, organized in cooperation with Israeli authorities, Gaza's Agriculture Ministry, local municipalities and farmers' committees. "We risk death every time we enter the land," said Serhey Abu Mandeel, 71, noting its proximity to the border, which is closely monitored by the Israeli military. He and his family owned 12 acres planted with peas, soybeans, wheat and lentils.

Like other Palestinian farmers, Abu Mandeel complained that herbicides sprayed by cropdusters inside Israel were being carried by winds across the border into Gaza and harming fields there. Farmers said the herbicides have killed their crops. Gaza's Agriculture Ministry put their losses at \$1.25 million since last December. "We believe there should be a balance between security concerns and the impact of the herbicides on public health, the environment and the livelihoods of local people," Gaza ICRC spokeswoman Suhair Zakkout told Reuters, adding they were in discussion with Israel over the issue. —Reuters



GAZA: A fisherman and his son work off the coast of Gaza City yesterday.—AFP



**ICRC sponsors agricultural project in Gaza**

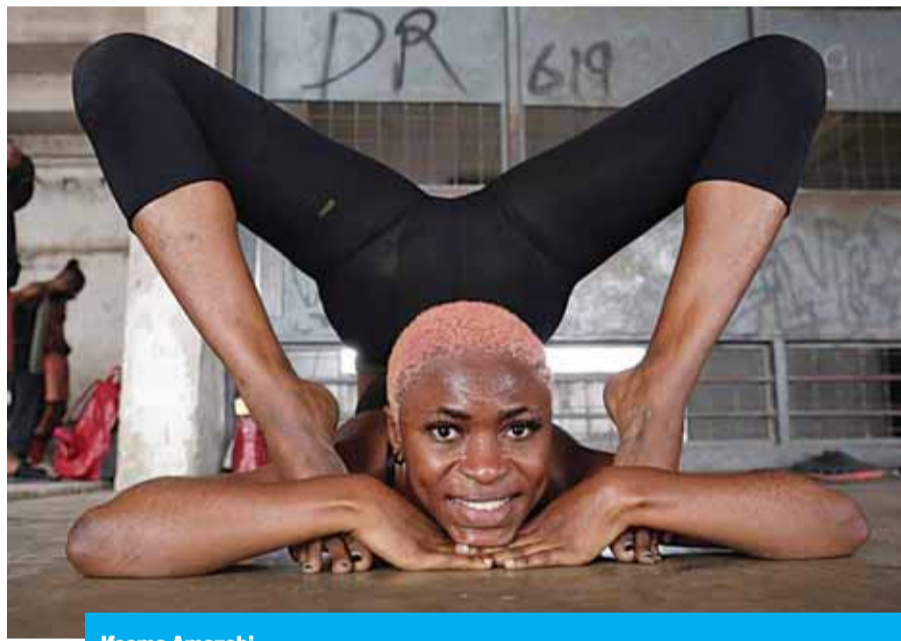
## Contortionists go out on a limb for recognition

**LAGOS:** Her family wanted her to be a doctor or a lawyer, but on discovering as a teenager she could contort her body in unusual ways, Nigerian Ifeoma Amazobi decided that would be how she made a living. Contortionists are rare in her country, where a suspicious public sometimes brand them as witches or sorcerers, or "dead bodies". But even though it also led to irreconcilable differences with her family and forced her to leave home, Amazobi was determined to pursue her dream.

She met up with another contortionist, and then joined a community of around 20 more, who put on a show

entitled "Limberness" to bring recognition to their work and win respect for the strength and long hours of training it requires. "There was a lot of discrimination from my parents, people around me... everyone was just after me. They were like 'no', this is not what they want me to be," she told Reuters. Oyindamola Kolawole, 26, leads the troupe. He is scheduled to work at the travelling Circus Zyair for 10 months.

"They still find it hard to believe it's real. That's why we are putting this together for people to see that it is an extreme act and we are also human beings, we are not aliens," he said of his Nigerian audiences. Many who saw the show at a studio in Lagos said they were overwhelmed by the contortionists' feats. Kolawole and Amazobi have also had to reassure friends that they are not damaging their health with their performances and running the risk of huge medical bills. —Reuters



Ifeoma Amazobi

## Lebanon economic crisis deals blow to once-thriving press

**BEIRUT:** Publications disappearing from newsstands, radio and TV channels struggling to stay on air: Lebanon's once-flourishing media is collapsing under the weight of the worst economic crisis in decades. The Daily Star, Lebanon's only English-language newspaper, which suspended its print edition on Tuesday, is the latest casualty.

It comes shortly after the English-language Radio One broadcaster went off air at the weekend after nearly four decades. Due to funding shortages in recent years, a series of prominent dailies and broadcasters in Lebanon have disappeared, undermining the country's regional reputation as a media hub. The situation has become more dire in recent months, as Lebanon struggles with a wide-reaching recession and a spiralling financial crunch exacerbated by political turmoil and mass protests.

To keep their heads above water, surviving organisations have had to slash salaries and lay off employees. Some have stopped paying salaries all together. "We haven't been paid in five months," said an employee at the country's oldest newspaper, An-Nahar, asking not to be named to protect his job.

The Daily Star announced on its website the temporary halt of the printing presses was a result of the economic downturn.

It cited "the financial challenges facing the Lebanese press, which have been exacerbated by the deterioration of the economic situation in the country". It said the temporary suspension came after "a drop to virtually no advertising revenue in the last quarter of 2019, as well as in January of this year". In recent months, employees at the newspaper had complained of not being paid, with one departing journalist reporting in December that some were owed up to half a year in wages. The outlet will however continue to publish content on its website and social media.

### Crumbling empire

The Daily Star was founded in 1952 by Kamel Mroue, then owner and editor-in-chief of the pan-Arab Al-Hayat daily newspaper. The newspaper was bought by businessmen close to former prime minister Saad Hariri in 2010 and is owned by Hariri's family, according to a report on media ownership in Lebanon by the Samir Kassir Foundation and Reporters Without Borders.

The Daily Star is just the latest media outlet linked to the former premier to be struggling. In September last year, Hariri announced the suspension of Future TV, his ailing mouthpiece whose employees had been on strike over unpaid wages. In January 2019, the Hariri-linked Al-



BEIRUT: A file photo taken on Aug 08, 2019 shows a man reading a copy of the Lebanese local English-language newspaper "The Daily Star". —AFP

Mustaqbal newspaper issued its last print version, 20 years after it was established, though it too maintains a presence online.

Saudi Oger, a once-mighty construction firm that was the basis of the Hariri business empire, collapsed in 2017, leaving thousands jobless. Hariri stepped down as prime minister in late October under pressure from unprecedented nationwide protests against alleged official corruption and ineptitude. Last year, The Daily Star published a newsless

black issue to protest the political and economic crises gripping the country. The economic situation has since deteriorated further.

The economic downturn has left no sector unscathed, starving publications of advertising revenues and traditional sources of funding. L'Hebdo Magazine, a French-language publication established in 1956, printed its final issue in December because of a drop in advertisement revenues, said a former employee. —AFP

## US and Nigeria hope to resolve visa row soon

**WASHINGTON:** The United States and Nigeria voiced hope Tuesday that President Donald Trump's administration would soon lift onerous visa restrictions slapped on Africa's most populous country, which said it was "blindsided" by its ally. On a previously scheduled visit to Washington, Nigerian Foreign Minister Geoffrey Onyeama said he sought more information on Trump's latest immigration crackdown announced last week which targeted Nigeria and five other countries.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, meeting Onyeama, said Trump took action partly due to the "terrorism threat" in West Africa, where Nigeria has fought alongside the United States against Islamist extremists.

Nigeria remains a "strategic partner" but Trump restricted visas as it has "room to grow in sharing important national security information." "I'm optimistic that's going to happen," Pompeo told reporters.

Smiling and striking a diplomatic tone, Onyeama said his talks were "very gratifying" but acknowledged that many Nigerians put "different spins" on why Trump was moving against them. "We were somewhat blindsided by the announcement of the visa restrictions," Onyeama said. He said that Nigeria had already been looking to address US concerns, such as providing information on suspected terrorists and embedding electronic data into passports. "We know, and the US officials have also confirmed, that we have been able to tick most of those boxes," he said.

The lingering problem, he said, involved how to handle lost and stolen Nigerian passports. He said Nigeria was putting in place a system that would make data from such passports "immediately available" to all members of Interpol, the global law enforcement body. "We hope to have that up and running very soon," he

said. "Hopefully, once that has been achieved, we look forward to being taken off this visa restriction list."

Trump came to office vowing to impose border restrictions and notoriously was quoted as using a vulgar epithet for African and other developing nations that send immigrants to the United States. Unlike a controversial order days after he took office that essentially banned entry to citizens from a number of Muslim-majority countries, the latest restrictions primarily involve foreigners who seek to immigrate rather than visit. Along with Nigeria, Trump imposed the curbs on nationals from Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Sudan and Tanzania.

Despite the visa row, the Trump administration has stepped up cooperation with Nigeria as it cracks down on Boko Haram, the jihadist group notorious for suicide attacks against civilians. The Trump administration has agreed to sell to Nigeria 12 A-29 Super Tucanos, light attack aircraft frequently used by the US Air Force in Afghanistan, and accompanying weapons for nearly \$600 million. —AFP

## Syria regime pushes Idlib offensive; half a million displaced

**HAZANO:** A regime offensive in Syria's last rebel enclave has caused one of the biggest waves of displacement in the nine-year war, with tensions spiking between Ankara and Damascus following a deadly exchange of fire. Weeks of intensive aerial bombardment and a bruising ground offensive have emptied entire towns in northwest Idlib and sent huge numbers fleeing north towards the Turkish border. "Since 1 December, some 520,000 people have been displaced from their homes, the vast majority — 80 percent — of them women and children," said David Swanson, spokesman for the United Nations' humanitarian coordination office, OCHA.

The exodus, coinciding with a biting winter, is one of the largest since the 2011 start of a conflict that has seen more than half of Syria's pre-war population of 20 million displaced. "This latest displacement compounds an already dire humanitarian situation on the ground," Swanson said. He said the UN was alarmed by the plight of more than three million people-half of them displaced by violence elsewhere—who live in Idlib province and surrounding areas.

Government troops and militia forces backed by Russian and other allied forces have in recent weeks upped the pressure on the jihadist-dominated region. Mohammad Bahjat, 34, said he and his family were escaping deadly bombardment for the third time in days. "We fled in the middle of the night and have no idea where to go," he told AFP, sitting in the front of a pickup truck next to his wife and three small boys. "You never know when a rocket or shell is going to hit."

### Three million displaced

Regime forces also exchanged deadly fire with Turkish troops on Monday, an escalation UN chief Antonio Guterres called "extremely worrying". Regime shelling of Turkish positions in Idlib killed at least five Turkish soldiers and three civilians, Ankara said. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that retaliatory fire from Turkey killed at least 13 Syrian government troops. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday told his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin that Ankara would respond "firmly" to any new Syrian attack.

Syria's military command said the presence of Turkish forces was "illegal and a flagrant act of aggression", vowing to respond to any Turkish attack on its forces, state news agency SANA reported. Guterres, speaking at UN headquarters, appealed for "a cessation of hostilities". But US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo backed Washington's NATO ally, calling the Syrian mortar attack "a grave escalation" and saying US officials "fully support Turkey's justified self-defense actions in response". Syrian forces have retaken dozens of villages and some major towns including the former rebel bastion of Maaret al-Numan and continue to advance, pushing displaced populations ever closer to the Turkish frontier. Erdogan accused Damascus of driving "innocent and grieving people in Idlib toward our borders". Turkey, which already hosts more than three million displaced Syrians, is keen to stop another mass influx.

But in the town of Hazano, an AFP correspondent saw dozens of small trucks, vans and tuk-tuks piled high with belongings crawling along a main road. They advanced bumper-to-bumper, carrying men, women and children, along with blankets, carpets, washing basins and furniture. Almost 300 civilians have been killed since mid-December in bombardment on the Idlib region, says the Britain-based Observatory. Syrian forces seized much ground in the enclave's south and are also attacking from Aleppo province to the east. —AFP

## International

# Cheers, jeers, ripped speech: Trump and a House divided

## Pelosi rips up her copy of the president's speech

WASHINGTON: One half of the chamber was on its feet, roaring its approval for Donald Trump. The other sat in sullen silence, broken by boos and occasional hisses, until their leader Nancy Pelosi ultimately ripped up the president's speech. Six weeks after he was impeached by the House of Representatives - and a day before his expected acquittal in the Senate - Trump's annual State of the Union address was delivered in a triumphant vein, and could not have been more polarizing.

Chants of "Four more years! Four more years!" greeted the president as he entered the chamber headed by his chief political nemesis in Washington: the Democratic Speaker of the House. After a slow stroll down the center aisle, accepting backslaps from Republican lawmakers, Trump stepped up to the rostrum and handed Pelosi a copy of his speech.

The smiling speaker reached out for a handshake. Trump did not return the favor. And at the very end of his address, Pelosi - very deliberately - ripped up her copy of the president's speech - in a pointed political statement delivered on live television. The bitterness between the 73-year-old president and the 79-year-old speaker is nothing new.

But the latest flashpoint comes one day before the US Senate votes almost certainly to acquit the 45th president on the impeachment charges of abuse of power and obstruction of justice. Throughout the impeachment crisis, Trump has repeatedly assailed Pelosi for her impeachment "hoax," branding her "nervous Nancy" and "crazy Nancy" on Twitter. Trump leaned into Chief Justice John Roberts, who is presiding over his Senate trial, and spoke with him for a good seven seconds - an eternity in the walk-up to his speech.

### Theater

The shadow of impeachment hung heavy over the evening - neatly illustrated by Jerry Nadler, one of the lawmakers who led the prosecution at Trump's trial, who sat leafing through a pocket copy of the US Constitution ahead of his address. But Trump made no mention of impeachment or his expected acquittal in the one hour and 18 minutes speech, opting instead to focus on his "incredible" record on the economy. "Jobs are booming, incomes are soaring, poverty is plummeting, crime is falling, confidence is surging," Trump said, earning a prolonged standing ovation - one of dozens during the night. Democrats remained largely silent as Trump boasted of his achievements - with many female lawmakers dressed in white in a nod to the suffragette movement for women's voting rights. But when he spoke of creating an "inclusive society," elevating "every race color, religion and creed," many in the opposing camp winced, hissed or jeered. "No!" cried one female lawmaker. Several Democrats walked out.

Democrats, many looking shell-shocked, booed further as the president accused them of being soft on "dangerous criminal aliens" and seeking to "impose a socialist takeover of our healthcare system." In a reality TV-style flourish, Trump paid a live tribute to controversial conservative talk radio host Rush Limbaugh, who recently disclosed he has advanced lung cancer, asking Melania Trump to present him with the Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor.

Trump went on to single out a woman in the audience whose army husband had been away for months on foreign deployments, telling her he had "a very special surprise." It was her husband, in full uniform, coming down the stairs for a tearful, surprise reunion - in front of a



WASHINGTON: US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi holds up her torn copy of President Donald Trump's speech after she tore it up at the conclusion of his State of the Union address at the US Capitol in Washington, DC. — AFP

primetime national television audience. But Trump's theatrics appeared to largely leave Democrats cold. "Every State of the Union has oratorical and presentation flour-

ishes, but you don't want to make it into a theater, you know - we didn't go to the opera," House Democrat Raja Krishnamoorthi said. — AFP

## Italy's 3-wheeled newsagent revs up against crisis

MILAN: Every morning, the instantly recognizable whirr of Andrea Carbini's three-wheeler fills this Milan square, where he throws open his mobile newsagent's doors for a news-hungry and largely elderly clientele. "Corriere della Sera!" "That's two euros, have a nice day, see you tomorrow!" says Carbini, with the cheerfulness of newspaper sellers of yesteryear.

He promises a customer to put aside a newspaper, to find a certain book, he asks for news about the family. There is so much demand that the yellow and white Ape (Bee) three-wheeler van will be late for its next rendez-vous in another nearby piazza. "I come every day. The newspaper kiosk closed in July and fortunately the Ape has been coming for a month," Maria Ricciardi, 77 said. "I don't like the Internet. It may be necessary, but real culture is in books and newspapers."

Since the local kiosk closed, "I've had to go for a long walk" to get a paper, notes 72-year-old Maria Malzani. She and her typographer husband, who always read newspapers, say the initiative is "fabulous". Carbini, 52, came up with the mobile newsagent's idea to counter the disappearance of newsstands. "Ten years ago there were still 650 in Milan, now there are only 450," says Diego Averna of the Cisl trade union, pointing out that many are "just about surviving" thanks to the sale of public transport tickets or snacks.

### Vicious circle

The problem is national: from 2009 to 2019, Italy lost nearly a quarter of its newsagents, tumbling from 18,000 to 14,000, according to Unioncamere-Infocamere, the federation of chambers



MILAN: Andrea Carbini drives his three-wheeled transporter newsstand during his daily itinerary in different points of Milan. — AFP

of commerce. Simultaneously, newspaper sales are plummeting: just 2.2 million newspapers are now sold each day in Italy, down from 5.5 million in 2007, according to ADS.

Fewer sales can be blamed on the rise of digital media and a certain lack of youth interest in the press but it is "also because there is a lack of sales outlets," said Giuseppe Ferrauto, managing director of the Cairo Editore group. It's a vicious circle. "That's why an initiative like the mobile newsstand is something that we publishers must encourage," he said. For now, former bookshop owner Carbini has only one route, stopping in four neighborhoods where newspaper kiosks have recently closed. But he dreams of expanding.

### 'Battle not over'

"What I'm doing is a provocation and I hope young people will take over. I shook up a situation where no one was doing anything," Carbini says of his "Edicole Quisco". "People tend to think that the battle is already lost. But I think newspapers, even if a shrinking market, still have a future," he says, stressing the importance of "safeguarding press freedom and the production of culture". He says that by working every day and choosing your neighborhoods well, you can earn 1,800 to 2,000 euros (2,000-2,200 dollars) a month. The advantage over a normal newsstand is that the Ape avoids high overheads and has a high concentration of customers over a few hours.

Its clientele is mainly over 50 years old, but also includes some in their thirties and forties, and children, who come to buy figurines made by Panini, also a sponsor. "The Ape has an extremely important symbolic value in Italy, it represents the economic boom of the 50s and 60s," said Carbini. "The newsagent is a neighborhood friend. They can't just disappear, like local shops," lamented Marianna Saraceno, a 66-year-old retired schoolteacher. "It's huge loss, for culture, for sociability, for living together". — AFP

## UK police probe gun blunder by former PM's bodyguard

LONDON: An investigation has been launched after former British Prime Minister David Cameron's bodyguard left his gun in a toilet on a commercial flight, police said yesterday. The Glock semi-automatic pistol was found by a passenger before take-off on the British Airways flight from New York to London, causing a delay and scaring passengers, reports said.

The officer had also left Cameron's passport in the loo. The overnight flight landed at London's Heathrow airport on Tuesday. "We were waiting to take off when a guy started to show pictures on his phone of a gun and two passports - one was David Cameron's - he said he'd found in the toilet." The Sun newspaper quoted one passenger as saying: "They were just resting on the side by the sink." Scotland Yard police headquarters said it was investigating. "We are aware of the incident on a flight into the UK on February 3 and the officer involved has since been removed from operational duties," a spokeswoman told AFP. "We are taking this matter extremely seriously and an internal investigation is taking place." Former British prime ministers are automatically entitled to 24-hour armed protection. Cameron was premier from 2010 to 2016, stepping down after the Brexit referendum in which he had cam-

## EU climate service: Jan 2020 warmest on record

PARIS: Last month was the warmest January on record globally, while in Europe temperatures were a balmy three degrees Celsius above the average January from 1981 to 2010, the European Union's climate monitoring system reported Tuesday. Across a band of countries stretching from Norway to Russia, temperatures were an unprecedented 6C above the same 30-year benchmark, Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) reported in a statement.

New temperature highs - monthly, yearly, decadal - have become commonplace due to the impact of climate change, caused mainly by the burning of fossil fuels, scientists say. The five last years have been the hottest on record, as was the ten-year period 2010-2019. 2019 - the second warmest year - was only 0.04C below 2016, when temperatures were boosted by a powerful El Nino, a periodic

natural weather phenomenon over the Pacific Ocean. The global record last month was 0.03C above the preceding warmest January, also in 2016.

For Europe, last month was "about 0.2C warmer than the previous warmest January in 2007, and 3.1C warmer than the average January in the period 1981-2010," C3S reported. Records also tumbled in specific locations across the northern reaches of the continent. The village of Sunndalsora in western Norway, for example, hit 19C (66 Fahrenheit) on January 2, more than 25C above the monthly average, while the Swedish town of Orebro saw its warmest January day on the 9th since records began in 1858.

Cross-country ski tracks were closed across large swathes of Norway and Sweden. Exceptional above-average temperatures extended over nearly all of Russia as well, and they were higher than normal over much of the United States, eastern Canada, Japan and parts of eastern China. Temperatures were likewise higher than normal in New South Wales in Australia, where massive bushfires devastated large areas of the state.

Atmospheric concentrations of CO2 - which causes global warming - are now at their highest level in at least 800,000



LONDON: In this file photo, outgoing British Prime Minister David Cameron leaves after speaking outside 10 Downing Street with his family son Arthur Elwen, his daughter Nancy Gwen, daughter Florence Rose Endellion and his wife Samantha Cameron in central London. — AFP

paigned to stay in the European Union.

### Daughter left in pub

It is not the first time a toilet-related Cameron mix-up has resulted in something important being left behind. In 2012, Cameron accidentally left his eight-year-old daughter at the pub following a misunderstanding with his wife. Nancy Cameron wandered off to the toilets while the premier and his wife Samantha were arranging lifts from the pub, and the couple only realized she was missing once they got home.

Cameron, 53, has largely kept a low profile since leaving office. He re-surfaced last year when his memoirs were released. Cameron was critical of Prime Minister Boris Johnson, his old schoolmate, who spearheaded the Brexit referendum campaign to leave the EU.

Nonetheless, Johnson offered Cameron the job of leading the 2020 United Nations Climate Change conference, COP26, which Britain is hosting in Glasgow in November. However Cameron turned it down, as reportedly did fellow former Conservative Party leader William Hague, the ex-foreign secretary. "It was an honor to be asked to do that job and I'm very grateful to have been asked," Cameron said.

"But I think it's best in these situations if you have a government minister doing the job." The COP26 launch event was on Tuesday and there is still no summit president in place after Johnson last week sacked the woman leading plans for the conference. She then launched a blistering attack on the government, saying the administration was "miles off track" on meeting climate change commitments. — AFP



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson and British broadcaster and conservationist David Attenborough (unseen) attend an event to launch the United Nations' Climate Change conference, COP26, in central London. — AFP

years. The United Nations said last year that manmade greenhouse gas emissions needed to tumble 7.6 percent annually over the next decade to cap global warming at 1.5C above preindus-

trial levels, the aspirational goal set in the landmark Paris Agreement. Current pledges to cut emissions put Earth on a path of several degrees warming by the end of the century. — AFP



## International

## Indonesia's cannabis coffee: Sharia stronghold sidestepping drug ban

## Police hunt weed farmers, imprison users and torch marijuana

**BANDA ACEH:** Agus plunges a wooden paddle into his coffee and marijuana-filled wok, taking care to roast just the right mix of ingredients-and stay one step ahead of police in Indonesia's Aceh province. His contraband brew is a hit with locals and buyers in other parts of the Southeast Asian archipelago, who pay 1.0 million rupiah (\$75) for a kilo of it.

But this is risky business in Aceh, where even drinking alcohol or kissing in public can earn you a painful whipping under its strict Islamic law. Agus, not his real name, is part of a clandestine economy in the region at the tip of Sumatra which, despite its no-nonsense reputation, is Indonesia's top weed-producer with fields covering an area nearly seven times the size of Singapore, according to official estimates. Pot was once so common in Aceh that locals grew it in their backyards and marijuana was sold to the public. But it was outlawed in the Seventies and Muslim majority Indonesia has since adopted some of the world's strictest drug laws, including the death penalty for traffickers. The nation has declared itself in the midst of a drug "emergency" because of soaring methamphetamine use. But the situation in Aceh is muddled.

Police hunt weed farmers, imprison users and torch mountains of confiscated marijuana-more than 100 tons last year alone. Yet just last week a lawmaker from the province proposed in Parliament that the drug should be legalized, so the country could export it for pharmaceutical purposes. He was quickly reprimanded by his Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), while the national narcotics agency slammed the proposal claiming it would discourage Aceh ganja farmers from adopting its suggestions to switch to vegetables and other crops.

## Perfect high

Despite the risks, Agus, claims he has little fear of going to jail. "How can you ban something that's everywhere?" he said, adding: "It's all over Aceh. This huge crackdown just makes it rarer to see in public but people still use it." Most days, his biggest concern is hitting the perfect ratio for his java - 70 percent coffee and 30 percent marijuana. "If you put more than 30 percent ganja in there then you lose the coffee taste," he explained.

For two decades Agus was a white collar professional but he swapped his prestigious career for a more lucrative trade in order to better support his family. "I wanted to focus on coffee because this is my area of expertise," he added. Agus insists his recipe offers a pleasant, less intense high than smoking it or eating popular dodol ganja. The local speciality mixes marijuana with a fudgy sweet made from glutinous rice, palm sugar and coconut milk. "That stuff can really make you hallucinate," Agus said. How marijuana became a thing in Aceh is a matter of debate.

Some say it was brought by Dutch colonists hundreds of years ago as a gift for a sultan in the jungle-clad region. But local historian Tarmizi Abdul Hamid counters that marijuana use-for everything from medicine and cooking to repelling pests from crops and preserving food-can be found in manuscripts that predate the Dutch arrival. "It shows that ganja can be used to cure baldness or high blood pressure," he said of one text. "Ganja was also used for cooking and medicine. Smoking, however, is not mentioned in the ancient scriptures," he added.

## Heavenly weed

Centuries later, marijuana was on the front lines-literally-of a separatist insurgency in Aceh. Former weed farmer Fauzan remembers harvesting his crop when bullets started flying across his field in a shootout between government soldiers and rebels back in 2002, three years before a peace deal ended the bloody conflict. Fauzan estimates that some 80 percent of the people in his hometown Lamteuba, about 50 kilometers from provincial capital Banda Aceh, were once ganja farmers.

Locals in the one-time rebel stronghold created secret pathways to their lucrative crops and even built hiding places to stash their weed harvest in a cat-and-mouse game with authorities. "This village is like heaven. Whatever you plant here it'll grow," Fauzan said. "Throw a ganja seed on the ground, leave it and then come back for the harvest." But, fearing arrest, he later quit the trade. Fauzan, who now grows chilies to support his family, works with the government to convince farmers to switch to vegetables and other crops.

That's a hard sell in an impoverished village with few job opportunities. "If the government doesn't take care of people and supply assistance, they're likely to go back to their old routine," Fauzan acknowledged. For pot enthusiast Iqbal-not his real name-the only thing prohibition has done is make locals better at hiding pot in a cup of coffee or plate of noodles. He muses: "It's impossible to get rid of ganja in Aceh. Cracking down on meth by destroying a lab is easier. But when police destroy a ganja plantation, it'll just grow somewhere else." —AFP



**BANDA ACEH:** Photo shows coffee roasted with marijuana being served in Banda Aceh, Aceh province. The contraband mixture of cannabis and coffee is a hit with locals and buyers in other parts of the Southeast Asian archipelago, who pay 1.0 million rupiah (75 USD) for a kilo of it. —AFP

## More Chinese cities shut down as virus death toll nears 500

**HANGZHOU:** Millions more people have been ordered to stay indoors as China battles to curb the spread of a new virus that authorities said yesterday has already killed nearly 500 people. With more than 24,000 cases in China, a growing number of cities have been imposing a range of restrictions in recent days far from central Hubei province, the epicenter of the outbreak, as authorities struggle to contain the virus.

Global concerns have risen as cases continue to spread abroad, with 10 people testing positive for the virus on a ship quarantined off the coast of Japan. Italy announced that passengers from every international flight would be scanned for fevers. Vietnam, which has detected 10 cases, joined a growing list of countries banning arrivals from China, and it was setting up field hospitals with thousands of beds to handle a potential spike in coronavirus patients in the country.

And Hong Kong, which reported its first coronavirus death this week, said anyone arriving from the mainland will face a mandatory two-week quarantine from Saturday. In Hangzhou, some 175 kilometers southwest of Shanghai, fences blocked streets near the headquarters of Chinese tech giant Alibaba-one of the world's most valuable companies-as a fighter jet circled overhead. The building appeared to be shut down, while deliverymen moved in and out of

nearby fenced-in residential areas to drop off groceries. Many people were also seen going out.

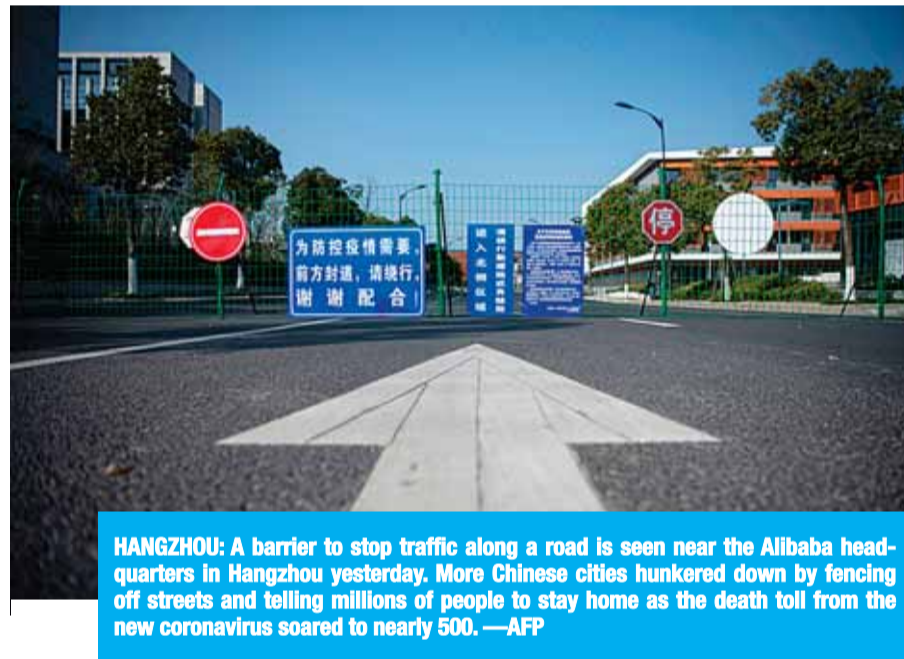
The firm is based in one of three Hangzhou districts subject to new restrictions that allow only one person per household to go outside every two days to buy necessities. "Please don't go out, don't go out, don't go out!" blared a message on a loudspeaker urging people to wear masks, wash their hands regularly and report any people who are from Hubei-reflecting a common fear that people from the province might infect others.

At least three other cities in Zhejiang province-Taizhou, Wenzhou and parts of Ningbo-have imposed the same measures, affecting 18 million people. Similar restrictions have been put in place as far away as Heilongjiang province on the Russia border, and in the central city of Zhumadian authorities said one person would be allowed to leave each household only every five days. Residents of the city of seven million were also offered cash rewards for informing on people from neighboring Hubei who were in the city.

## Jitters

The disease is believed to have emerged in December in a Wuhan market that sold wild animals, and spread rapidly as people travelled for the Lunar New Year holiday in January. The Ministry of Public Security said "political security" was the "top priority" in confronting the epidemic. "We should take strict precautions against and crack down on all kinds of disruptive activities by hostile forces," ministry secretary Zhao Kezhi said in a briefing.

The statement came days after the top leadership admitted "shortcomings" in its handling of the outbreak, for which authorities have been criticized



**HANGZHOU:** A barrier to stop traffic along a road is seen near the Alibaba headquarters in Hangzhou yesterday. More Chinese cities hunkered down by fencing off streets and telling millions of people to stay home as the death toll from the new coronavirus soared to nearly 500. —AFP

for withholding information. The death toll has steadily increased, rising to 490 in China yesterday after Hubei reported 65 more people had died. Most deaths have been in the province and officials have noted that the death rate, at around two percent, is below the mortality rate of SARS, which killed some 800 people in 2002-2003. Two fatalities have been reported outside the mainland, in Hong Kong and the Philippines. The outbreak has prompted the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare a global health emergency, several governments to institute travel restrictions, and airlines to suspend flights to and from China.

United and American Airlines said yesterday they have added Hong Kong to their China flight suspensions. China has reacted angrily against travel bans, noting that the WHO does not advise imposing them. It has accused the US of

spreading "panic" in its response to the coronavirus, including its ban on Chinese travelers, and yesterday it took another swipe. "Panic is more deadly and contagious than any virus," foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a press briefing.

## 'Window of opportunity'

The WHO said Tuesday that dramatic measures taken by China offered a chance to halt transmission. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the great majority of cases are in China. "That doesn't mean that it won't get worse. But for sure we have a window of opportunity to act," he said. Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand all reported new infections not imported from China on Tuesday. Semi-autonomous Hong Kong has closed all but two land crossings with the Chinese mainland. —AFP

## India police 'harassing' students over sedition probe: Rights groups

**NEW DELHI:** Indian police are "harassing" primary school students by repeatedly questioning them after their school was charged with sedition over a play allegedly criticizing the government's contentious citizenship law, rights groups said yesterday. India has been gripped by widespread street demonstrations against the law that grants citizenship to religious groups from three neighbouring countries, but excludes Muslims.

Police questioned nearly a dozen young student actors after a member of the youth wing of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party filed a complaint against the school in

Bidar district in southern Karnataka state. A teacher and a mother of an 11-year-old participant were arrested under the British colonial-era law for helping the children with the performance, which was part of the school's foundation day program.

"They have been asked to explain the reasons over repeated questioning of children," the head of the Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Anthony Sebastian, told AFP. CCTV footage released by the school showed one policeman questioning students as another officer recorded the interviews on a camera. Other videos showed children in uniform being led by plain-clothes policemen to a room, where they were quizzed.

The play depicted a worried family talking about how they feared the government would ask millions of Muslims to prove their nationality or be expelled from India. The citizenship law, combined with a mooted national register of citizens, has stoked fears that India's 200 million Muslims will be marginalized. The

dismal plight of women and alarming rates of sexual violence in 21st-century India. The hangings have already been postponed twice and Delhi High Court judge Suresh Kumar Kait said that the men have played India's slow legal system long enough.

"It cannot be disputed that the convicts have frustrated the process by using delaying tactics," Kait observed, according to the Press Trust of India news agency. He also said that they must be hanged at the same time as per the law, after the government applied for them to be executed separately. The men were initially handed the death sentence in 2013. A fifth, the suspected ringleader, was found dead in jail in a suspected suicide, while a 17-year-old accomplice spent three years in a juvenile detention centre.

While two of the convicts have exercised their final legal options, the remaining two have yet to do so. Their options

play ended with a poem written by a Bollywood lyricist that has become a rallying point for hundreds of thousands of protesters across India.

Amnesty International India urged the government to drop the sedition charges. "It is shameful that the Bidar police have been harassing and intimidating the school children by repeatedly interrogating them over their involvement in the school play," executive director Avinash Kumar said in a statement. Bidar police chief T Sreedhara told AFP his men were "following the rules while questioning the students". "The investigation is still on," he added.

The British-era sedition law enacted in 1860 carries a maximum penalty of life in prison. Prosecutions are rare but it has frequently been used against critics of the government of the day. Activists say the authorities often misuse the law to stifle dissent. India's junior home minister on Wednesday told the parliament that more than 230 people were charged with sedition between 2014 and 2018. —AFP

include pleas to the Supreme Court and mercy petitions to the president. Another law stipulates that 14 days must pass after the president rejects a mercy plea before a person can be executed. Yesterday's ruling came amid widespread support for their execution within Indian society and among political parties. The media has been full of gory details including that the nooses will be smeared with banana to soften them.

Singh, 23, was returning home from the cinema with a friend on a Sunday evening in December 2012 when they boarded a Delhi bus, thinking it would take them home. The five men and one juvenile knocked the friend unconscious and dragged Singh to the back of the bus and raped and tortured her with a metal rod. The physiotherapy student and the friend were then dumped on the road. Singh died 13 days later in a Singapore hospital from massive internal injuries. —AFP

## Who is indigenous? Millions may be denied land in India's Assam

**GUWAHATI:** Millions of migrants and tribal people in India's northeastern Assam state could be denied land because of a new definition of the term "indigenous", land and human rights experts said. Assam has a long-simmering movement against immigrants and its 2019 land policy, aimed at overhauling a three-decade old land law, seeks to allocate land to landless indigenous people - but does not specify who is indigenous.

"After we bring the law, an indigenous person can sell his or her land to an indigenous person only, not to anyone else. That means our land will be preserved for our people," health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters at a briefing. The new land law comes as nearly 1.9 million residents, mostly Muslim, were left off a citizens register in Assam last year, as part of a drive to detect and detain illegal immigrants.

Protests erupted across India in December against a new citizenship law, with demonstrators in Assam fearing it would convert thousands of illegal migrants from neighboring Muslim-majority Bangladesh into legal residents. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which also governs Assam, says there are hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants in Assam from Bangladesh.

To be included on the citizenship register, people had to furnish proof of residence in India going back decades, before March 24, 1971, the year in which hundreds of thousands of people fled Bangladesh, as it split from Pakistan. Minister Sarma said a committee will define the term "indigenous", and consider various cut-off dates for arrival in the state to determine who belonged there and was entitled to receive land from the government.

Any definition would run counter to India's classification of indigenous people, which is applied to its 104 million tribal population - also known as Adivasis or "original inhabitants" - who make up nearly 10% of the country's 1.3 billion citizens. Nationally, indigenous people are entitled to special rights and protections, including over land and resources. Assam's new land policy is to set to further marginalize millions of poor tribal people and ethnic minorities, said Walter Fernandes, a senior fellow at the North Eastern Social Research Centre, a think-tank in Guwahati city in Assam.

"In a country where birth certificates, marriage certificates and death certificates are not common, how do you produce these records for yourself, let alone your parents?" he told said. The land policy, with its restrictive definition of indigenous people that applies cut-off dates and requires supporting documentation, will mark a "paradigm shift" in Assam, said Aman Wadud, a human rights lawyer.

"It is a very discriminatory policy, as Bengali Muslims and Hindus will not be regarded as indigenous," said Wadud, who represents several residents left off the citizenship list. "Even those who have lived here for a long time will not be regarded as indigenous, including women who generally have few documents to prove residence." Yet resentment against migrants, seen as taking away jobs and land, is growing and may spark more policies across India that limit land ownership to select groups, Fernandes said. —Reuters

## One-week ultimatum for New Delhi rapists on death row

**NEW DELHI:** Four men sentenced to death for a gang-rape and murder on a Delhi bus in 2012 that shocked the nation were given a week yesterday to exercise their remaining legal options. Their brutal attack on Jyoti Singh sparked weeks of demonstrations, shining a spotlight on

## Analysis

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Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi extends her hand to US President Donald Trump before he delivers the State of the Union address at the US Capitol in Washington on Tuesday. —AFP

## China's stuttering economy braces for impact of deadly virus

China's struggle to contain the deadly coronavirus is deepening concerns about the impact on the world's number-two economy, as factories stay closed and millions of consumers remain holed up at home. The epidemic, which has killed hundreds and infected more than 24,000, has led to sweeping travel restrictions across the country as well as the closure of popular tourist attractions, businesses, schools and entertainment venues.

Central Hubei province - at the epicenter of the outbreak - has effectively been locked down since late January with other cities imposing restrictions this week in the eastern industrial belt, including the home of tech giant Alibaba. Now, economists are warning of a bruising first quarter for the already stuttering economy - and potentially a severe hit to full-year growth-after a ruined Lunar New Year holiday, with some saying it could prove more painful than SARS.

"The inopportune timing of the outbreak around Chinese New Year, a time of increased transport and economic connectivity... as well as the lockdown of affected regions all add to the equation," said Louis Kuijs of Oxford Economics. The crisis also comes as Beijing battles to kickstart growth after a drawn-out slowdown caused by weak overseas demand and the US trade war, and there are building concerns a hit to China could have a domino effect globally. Moody's analysts said the virus was "a serious mounting threat to the fragile Chinese and global economies", adding that there are "no good scenarios".

### Quiet factories

Many factories closed for the Lunar New Year break have delayed reopening-exceeding a three-day extension of the holiday that authorities imposed to prevent large public gatherings. Manufacturing accounts for around a third of China's economy and the auto industry is set to take a sharp blow, given that Hubei's quarantined capital, Wuhan, is among China's largest production bases. A Ford spokesman told AFP production would resume around next week, but said the epidemic has already "suppressed or delayed consumer purchases to a large degree".

Dongfeng Motor Corporation, which is based in Wuhan and is one of China's biggest auto groups, said its reopening "will depend on the prevention and control of the epidemic". Ratings agency S&P has predicted the delay in opening factories could hit car production by up to two percent and warned the real impact may be larger as workers could potentially shun Hubei when called back to work. Oxford Economics believes the virus could knock at least two percentage points off China's growth in the first quarter before seeing an improvement in April-June.

Still, it cut its full-year outlook to 5.4 percent expansion-markedly down from its previous estimate of six percent, which was in line with 2019 and the slowest in three decades. However, the biggest hit to the economy is likely to be from China's army of consumers staying at home, observers said, with Moody's analysts expecting spending on transportation, retail, tourism and entertainment to be hammered.

The 2019 Lunar New Year holiday saw retail and catering enterprises report combined sales of around \$150 billion, according to state news agency Xinhua. Domestic travel revenues clocked in at more than \$73 billion, it said, as people travelled across the country to visit family, while the Forbidden City hosted nearly half a million visitors. But this year, shopping malls, eateries, cinemas and transport hubs were quiet, while the Forbidden City was closed.

### State support

Big-name high-street titans are also feeling the strain. Nike and clothing giant H&M have both closed half their stores in China, with the Swedish firm telling AFP a "short-term impact on sales is inevitable". Jewelry chain Pandora said there had been "an unprecedented decline in consumer traffic in China and Hong Kong". Apple and Starbucks have also shut down outlets. Passenger volumes on air, rail, road and water transport plunged more than 70 percent from a year ago.

Analysts at Allianz and Euler Hermes warned the economic impact could surpass the SARS epidemic because private consumption is now a much more important driver of economic growth than in 2003. While authorities have stepped up to provide support-the central bank has pumped more than \$200 billion into financial markets this week-Moody's analysts said the full benefits are "unclear" for now. "Given the high levels of uncertainty, consumers may simply save the spending they had planned for the Lunar New Year holiday, and could spend more cautiously in general," they said.

ING economist Iris Pang added that with the central bank having done its part to avoid "market chaos"-Shanghai equities have clawed back some of Monday's near-eight percent rout-government fiscal stimulus is next on the cards. Beijing has already been spending on rapidly building hospitals in Wuhan, and eased import duties and consumption tax on medical equipment. But experts warn of a larger spillover effect on supply chains, with DBRS Morningstar noting China makes up 17 percent of global GDP, while a growing list of nations banning flights to and from the country will have a huge impact on their tourist sectors. —AFP

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## Emboldened Trump gives Dems reason to fret

US President Donald Trump took the stage for his State of the Union speech in an unfamiliar position: With the wind at his back. For most of his three years in office, Trump has been surrounded by tumult, much of it of his own making, resulting ultimately in his impeachment by the House of Representatives. Now, for the first time in a long time, things are looking up.

He was on the verge of being acquitted by his fellow Republicans in the US Senate yesterday. Opinion polls show his approval ratings on an upswing. And the Democratic presidential nomination race was consumed by chaos as results from the Iowa caucuses this week were delayed by a full day because the mobile app used to record the results had a coding problem.

For Trump, the timing could not be better. Despite being impeached, he is firmly entrenched in office, after surviving the Mueller investigation into Russian electoral interference and accusations that he abused his office by pressuring Ukraine to investigate a political rival, former vice president Joe Biden. "He has had existential political threats facing him from the moment he was elected until tomorrow," said Texas-based Republican consultant Matt

Mackowiak, referring to the impending acquittal vote on impeachment charges.

All of it brought out the showman in the former reality TV star during his State of the Union speech on Tuesday night. At one point, he choreographed a reunion between a US servicemember returning from Afghanistan and his family to cheers from lawmakers. Along that line, for much of the speech, Trump appeared to be making an overt appeal to suburban voters who could decide his fate.

### Right turn

He spoke of child-care initiatives, and efforts to combat AIDS and the opioid crisis. He called for greater transparency for medical bills, and he sought to take credit for protecting Americans with pre-existing healthcare conditions, even though his administration supports a lawsuit that would gut the Affordable Care Act. Trump also touted bipartisan accomplishments such as the US-Mexico-Canada trade deal and vowed to protect entitlement programs such as Medicare and Social Security. He pledged to protect the public from the coronavirus that is spreading in China and beyond.

But lest anyone think the combustible Trump had turned touchy-feely, he also

reassured his hardline supporters by previewing what promises to be a recurrent campaign theme: Accusing Democrats of supporting unlimited free healthcare to undocumented immigrants. As he did during his first presidential campaign, he warned of the dangers of so-called "Sanctuary Cities" and detailed incidents of violent crime committed by border-crossers.

Trump, too, seemed eager to exploit divisions among Democrats as they struggle to settle on a candidate who could mount the biggest threat to him. The early favorite, Biden, appeared to have stumbled badly in Iowa, while US Senator Bernie Sanders, a democratic socialist, was much more competitive. At one point, Trump appeared to reference Sanders, who favors a government-run healthcare system, by declaring "We will never let socialism destroy American healthcare!"

At a campaign event in New Hampshire, Sanders drew a laugh from the crowd on Tuesday when he questioned Trump's pledge to improve healthcare in America: "Really? How gullible do you think the American people are?" he said. In his speech to Congress, Trump did not address the most polarizing topic in the room, the months-long attempt by Democrats to

remove him from office. He avoided any temptation to take a victory lap ahead of yesterday's Senate vote.

"It was very smart to ignore the impeachment trial, stay above the fray and instead provide a laundry list of accomplishments along with proposals that will keep his base rock solid," said Ron Bonjean, a Republican strategist in Washington. That did not stop partisan tensions from running high. At the close of his remarks, Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, who had orchestrated Trump's impeachment in the House, tore up her copy of his speech. Earlier, Trump had refused to shake her hand upon entering the chamber.

While recent polls showed that more than 40 percent of Americans favored Trump's conviction and removal from office on charges that he tried to persuade Ukraine to interfere in the coming election, Trump received good news from another poll on Tuesday. The Gallup organization said he had reached his personal best in their tracking poll, hitting 49 percent approval - the highest since he took office. That prompted nervous Democrats on social media all day to fret that Trump, after three years of non-stop drama, might be peaking at just the right time. —Reuters

## In divided America, impeachment may become less rare

In the more than 230 years of US history, only three presidents have suffered the humiliation of an impeachment trial. Yet in the last half-century, this dramatic procedure seems to have become "normalized" in a way analysts say is unlikely to be reversed soon. Impeachment is a rarely used and powerful weapon, provided by the US Constitution as a means to remove a president found guilty of "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors". Only Andrew Johnson in 1868, Bill Clinton in 1998 and now Donald Trump have faced Senate impeachment trials. The Constitution sets a high bar for the removal of a president requiring the votes of 67 of the 100 senators, and Trump, like his two predecessors, was expected to be acquitted Wednesday in his trial before the Senate. But while impeachment has been a rare and historic event, it is not nearly as rare as it was. Johnson's impeachment came nearly 100 years after the nation's founding.

But it has been just over 21 years since Clinton's impeach-

ment trial. And only 24 years before that, Richard Nixon resigned his presidency to avoid the indignity of impeachment over the Watergate dirty-tricks scandal. More recently, the threat of impeachment was raised, unsuccessfully, against George W. Bush over the invasion of Iraq, and even against Barack Obama on rather shakier grounds, such as the false claim that he was born outside the United States.

### 'An alarming trend'

"Trump's impeachment is less a historic moment than a continuation of an alarming trend," Michael Gordon, a former member of the Clinton administration, wrote on the Business Insider website. "Considering the increasing division in our country..." he added, "it's likely that impeachment will soon become normalized." Trump's lawyers warned of that during the Senate trial. Without dwelling on the charges facing the Republican president - that he withheld aid from Ukraine to pressure it to investigate his political rivals - his lawyers asserted that even if the facts were proven, they would not justify Trump's removal from office.

"The bar for impeachment cannot be set this low," argued Jay Sekulow, Trump's lead outside counsel in the trial. That, he said, would "impact the functioning of our constitutional republic and the framework of that Constitution for generations". Members of a minority party, added Republican Senator Rand Paul, could use impeachment "as a weapon to get rid of a president they simply don't like".

## 'Don't go out': A grim message in Alibaba hometown

A loudspeaker broadcast ominous instructions across the deserted streets of Hangzhou, the eastern Chinese city that is home to e-commerce giant Alibaba: "Please don't go out, don't go out, don't go out!" Hangzhou is famous for being where tech tycoon Jack Ma founded his online shopping business in an apartment two decades ago, a one hour journey on a bullet train from Shanghai. But as large parts of China come to a standstill in a bid to end the spread of the deadly novel coronavirus, green fences and "no entry" signs blocked streets near the headquarters of one of the world's most valuable companies.

Alibaba's headquarters are inside one of three Hangzhou districts where some three million people were told this week that only one person per household would be allowed outside every two days, to buy necessities. The city is on an extended Lunar New Year holiday as part of efforts to keep people indoors and a temperature check had been set up outside the Alibaba office, near a "2020 Happy New Year" sign in English and the company's logo.

Nobody was seen coming in or out, and a security guard told AFP that the company's parks across the country were closed. Several

roads in closed-off Yuhang district were sealed and manned by security personnel. Blue signs explained: "Due to the requirements of epidemic prevention and control, the road ahead is closed, please go around. Thank you for cooperating!" In nearby streets, a message blared from a loudspeaker urging people to avoid gatherings. "Please don't go out, don't go out, don't go out!" said the voice advising people to wear masks, wash their hands regularly and report any people who are from Hubei.

Alibaba said they were focused on "getting things done" when asked by AFP about the office closure. The coronavirus outbreak has cost 490 lives in China and so far infected over 24,000 people, mostly in Hubei, whose 56 million people have been under virtual lockdown since late last month. Hangzhou, which has a population of nine million, has 141 confirmed cases. At least three other cities in Zhejiang province - Taizhou, Wenzhou and parts of Ningbo - have imposed similar restrictive measures on people leaving their homes.

### Getting food

The normally packed shores around West Lake - Hangzhou's central tourist attraction - were deserted. Few taxis were available in the city's quiet streets. Inside sealed off areas, residents in masks came out of buildings to collect food and groceries from deliverymen, watched by local volunteers in red arm bands. Boxes of supplies piled up on the pavement. One resident came out to collect her goods wearing a blue plastic apron over pink pyjamas, mask and ski goggles. A 35-year-old man



Security personnel checks the temperature of shoppers at Hema, an Alibaba supermarket in Hangzhou, near the Alibaba headquarters. —AFP

surnamed Chen said he had already stocked up before the new year holiday, but that there was now competition for food. "I have to get up at 6:00 every morning to grab goods, or else I won't be able to get any," he said.

### 'Victory is not far away'

Two South African women told AFP that when they left their building to get groceries, guards took their details in order to enforce the limits on outbound trips. But AFP saw sev-

eral other people walk out of the building without having to give any details or checks. Deliverymen also moved easily in and out of the fenced-off residential areas to drop off groceries. "There are no patients in (the compound), it's just a preventive effect," said 27-year-old local Wang Runyu. The voice in the loudspeaker urged residents to be patient: "We know it's hard to stay inside the house. Please tolerate it for a few more days. ... Victory is not far away." —AFP

## Business

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2020

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# Zain KSA 2019 profits soar 46%, revenues up 11% to reach \$2.24bn

- Bader Al-Kharafi: Company's ever improving financial results attributed to the team's diligent implementation of its digital growth strategy
- EBITDA up 27% to reach SAR 3.82 billion (\$1 billion), a 46% margin

RIYADH/KUWAIT: Zain Saudi Arabia (Zain KSA) announces record-high financial results for all key indicators for the full-year and fourth quarter ended 31 December, 2019 with the operator serving 7.6 million customers.

For the full-year 2019, Zain KSA generated revenues of SAR 8.4 billion (\$2.24 billion), a 11 percent Y-o-Y compared to SAR 7.5 billion for the full year of 2018, while EBITDA for the year increased by 27 percent Y-o-Y to reach SAR 3.82 billion (\$1.02 billion), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 46 percent. Net income soared to reach SAR 485 million (\$130 million), reflecting a 46 percent increase on the 2018 full-year net income of SAR 332 million. Zain KSA reported total capex investment of SAR 1.9 billion (\$512 million) for full year 2019.

Commenting on the positive financial results, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi, said, "Zain KSA's ever improving financial results are attributed to



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

the team's diligent implementation of its digital growth strategy, combined with the close cooperation and support of the resources of Zain Group. Zain KSA's distinct accomplishments in 2019, include the commercial launch

of the Kingdom's largest 5G network that enhance competitive capabilities; operational efficiency initiatives; and provision of a great customer mobile experience that is instrumental in growing its enterprise and individual customer base."

Al-Kharafi added, "The company is proud of its position as a major contributor to Saudi Arabia's ICT sector; a position it has earned through constant innovation and qualitative initiatives aimed at further developing Saudi nationals. Zain KSA's productive relationship with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, and the Communications and Information Technology Commission, emphasize the company's dedication to supporting the targets of the Kingdom's Vision 2030."

Al-Kharafi confirmed 2020 will see further expansion of Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) and the 5G network to new cities across the Kingdom, supporting Zain KSA's focus on rolling out higher value B2B services

targeting government and enterprise customers as well as individual data monetization initiatives.

Zain KSA launched its commercial 5G network in October 2019, the largest in the Middle East, Europe, and Africa, which at the time of roll-out was the third largest globally. Through its first phase, the network serves 27 cities via 2,600 towers. Furthermore, Zain Saudi Arabia and Zain Kuwait launched the first 5G roaming service across the MENA region, with download speeds reaching as high as 500 Mbps for both outbound and inbound roaming.

Furthermore during 2019, Zain KSA built on its partnership with Alibaba Cloud, the world's third largest cloud computing entity, through which it launched Zain KSA Cloud. The company also recently delved into FinTech digital financial services through Tamam, which is offered via the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority's (SAMA) Sandbox platform. Zain KSA has also con-



cluded agreements with leading global technology companies to improve and develop the 5G ecosystem and is introducing various innovative digital services with regards to IoT, Healthcare, Fintech and Automation.

## Trump touts stock market's record run, but who benefits?

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump loves to trumpet the hot US stock market as a key achievement of his presidency, and he was in full self-congratulatory mode on that front during Tuesday night's State of the Union address. "All of those millions of people with 401(k)s and pensions are doing far better than they have ever done before with increases of 60, 70, 80, 90 and 100 percent and even more," Trump said in his address to a joint session of Congress.

While pensions and retirement funds were lifted by the rise in stock markets, the president has avoided talking about one key point about who really benefits when the market rallies: Most of the gains go to the small portion of Americans who are already rich.

That's because 84 percent of stocks owned by US households are held by the wealthiest 10 percent of Americans, according to an analysis of 2016 Federal Reserve data by Edward Wolff, an economics professor at New York University. So when the stock market has a blockbuster year - such as the nearly 30 percent rise in the S&P 500 benchmark index in 2019 - the payoff primarily goes to people who are already rich. "For most Americans, a stock price increase is pretty immaterial to their well-being," said Wolff, who published a paper about wealth inequality in the National Bureau of Economic Research in 2017.

Roughly half of Americans own some stocks through a brokerage account or a pension or retirement fund. But for most people, the exposure is too small for market gains to be life-changing or leave them feeling much better about their finances, Wolff said. "They'll see a small increase in their wealth, but it's not going to be anything to write home about," he said.

What's more, nearly 90 percent of families who own stock do so through a tax-deferred retirement account, meaning they can't access the money until they reach retirement age, unless they pay a penalty, Wolff said.

So who owns most of the stock market? The majority of corporate equities and mutual fund shares are held by investors who are white, college educated and above the age of 54, according to an analysis from the Center for Household Financial Stability at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

The typical middle-class family gets the bulk of its wealth from the housing market. Households in the middle three quintiles of wealth held 61.9 percent of their assets in their principal residence in 2016, according to Wolff's analysis. That compares to households in the top 1 percent, who held 7.6 percent of their wealth in their



WARREN, MI: Employees look on as President Donald Trump speaks at Dana Incorporated, an auto-manufacturing supplier in Warren, Michigan. During his speech Trump touted good job numbers and the strong performance of car companies in the state. — AFP

homes. Because most consumers accumulate the majority of their wealth through their homes, a rise in property values can provide a more substantial boost to household wealth than a stock market rally, said William Emmons, lead economist at the St. Louis Fed's Center for Household Financial Stability.

Still, the recent revival in the housing market, spurred in part by the Federal Reserve's interest rate cuts, is not helping all Americans equally. Rising property values benefit homeowners but make it harder for aspiring home buyers to break into the market, said Eugene Steuerle, co-founder of the Tax Policy Center, a joint venture between the Urban Institute and the Brookings Institution.

And some people who bought homes immediately before the recession hit may still be trying to recover their losses, Steuerle said. Their wealth may have been wiped out by foreclosure, meaning they then struggled to qualify for a new mortgage during the recovery, he

said. That's in sharp contrast to well-off investors, whose overall wealth surged after the crisis thanks to strong returns on stocks, property and other investments. Some 72 percent of wealth accumulated between the third quarter of 2009 and the third quarter of 2019 went to the richest 10 percent of households, according to an analysis by Oxford Economics. Over that same time period, the poorest 50 percent of households reaped only 2 percent of wealth gains.

"There are a lot of families that have not yet recovered from the financial crisis," Emmons said. Some more evidence that the recent stock market boom is not making everyone feel richer: There has been little evidence of the "wealth effect," which says that people tend to spend more when stock markets are up, said Lydia Boussoir, a senior economist for Oxford Economics.

Since the recession, people have mostly continued to increase their savings even as the stock market rose. "Consumers are a lot more cautious," she said. — Reuters

## How global companies are responding to China virus

LONDON: Given China's economic heft and position in the nexus of global supply chains, the new strain of coronavirus is affecting companies from far and wide in multiple sectors. Here's how a selection of multinational brands are responding to the epidemic, which has forced many companies to stay shut until at least February 10 after China extended its Lunar New Year holidays:

### Travel and tourism

The travel sector is most directly affected by China's decision to quarantine dozens of cities and ban overseas tour groups, in a bid to contain the outbreak. Other countries have told their nationals to avoid travel to China and banned arrivals from there. Many airlines are trimming their schedules. Air Canada, Air France, British Airways, Delta and Lufthansa are among leading carriers that have cancelled all their flights to China. Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific is suffering the biggest financial hit, and yesterday asked its entire workforce of 27,000 to take up to three weeks of unpaid leave. Casinos in Macau, normally a playground for the rich and the hopeful from mainland China, have closed their doors. So have Disney theme parks in Shanghai and Hong Kong.

Paris department stores, a de rigueur stop for Chinese tour groups, are unusually quiet. Italy's tourism market could face a hit of 4.5 billion euros this year, according to the think tank Demoskopika.

MSC Cruises, Costa Cruises and Royal Caribbean have cancelled stops by their ships in China. Cinemas around China have been forced to close, during what was meant to be a prime time for blockbuster releases during the holidays. Canada-based Imax Corp. could be deprived of \$60-200 million in lost box-office revenues, according to analysts.

### Electronics

Taiwanese tech giant Foxconn is keeping its Chinese factories closed until mid-February and telling some staff to stay away for another 14 days, the incubation period of the virus. That could affect global supply chains for tech companies that rely on Foxconn to assemble everything from Apple's iPhones to flat-screen TVs and laptops. For its part, Apple is working on "mitigation plans" to make up for any production loss from its suppliers in China.

South Korea's LG Electronics has withdrawn from this month's Mobile World Congress, the leading showcase for the smartphone industry, citing expert advice to avoid non-essential travel.

Chinese giant Huawei says it is still examining its options for the February 24-27 conference in Barcelona. — AFP

# KUWAIT FINANCE HOUSE K.S.C.P.

(Incorporated in the State of Kuwait) Commercial Registration Number 26066

بيت التمويل الكويتي  
Kuwait Finance House



## NOTIFICATION OF KUWAIT FINANCE HOUSE K.S.C.P.'S FIRM INTENTION TO MAKE A VOLUNTARY CONDITIONAL OFFER TO ACQUIRE 100% OF THE ISSUED AND PAID UP ORDINARY SHARES OF AHLI UNITED BANK B.S.C. BY WAY OF A SHARE SWAP

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### DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

THE DIRECTORS OF KUWAIT FINANCE HOUSE K.S.C.P. ISSUING THIS NOTIFICATION OF FIRM INTENTION TO MAKE AN OFFER, WHOSE NAMES APPEAR IN THIS DOCUMENT JOINTLY AND SEVERALLY ACCEPT FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACCURACY OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS NOTIFICATION. TO THE BEST OF THE KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF OF THE DIRECTORS, WHO HAVE TAKEN ALL REASONABLE CARE TO ENSURE THAT SUCH IS THE CASE, THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS NOTIFICATION IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FACTS AND CONTAINS NO OMISSIONS LIKELY TO AFFECT THE IMPORTANCE AND COMPLETENESS OF THIS NOTIFICATION.

**Important note:** Pursuant to TMA-2.7.6 of the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) Rulebook, Volume 6, Takeovers, Mergers and Acquisitions Module (TMA Module), the offer document must be sent to the offeree company by or on behalf of the offeror within 21 calendar days of the date of the announcement of the terms of the offer.

**Date of submission of the statement of firm intention:** Kuwait Finance House K.S.C.P. (the Offeror or KFH) notified the board of directors of Ahli United Bank B.S.C. (the Offeree or AUB) on 5 February 2020 after trading hours, that it has a firm intention to make a voluntary conditional offer to acquire 100% of the issued and paid up ordinary shares of AUB by way of a share swap, subject to the fulfillment, or waiver by KFH, of the conditions outlined below.

**Identity of the Offeror making the statement of firm intention to make an offer:** Kuwait Finance House K.S.C.P., PO Box 24989 Safat 13110 Kuwait, Telephone: + (965) 22445050

KFH is registered with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in the State of Kuwait under commercial registration number 26066 as a Public Kuwaiti Shareholding Company whose ordinary shares are listed on Boursa Kuwait (the BK).

KFH is licensed by the Central Bank of Kuwait (the CBK) as a locally incorporated bank operating as an Islamic bank and provides a wide range of banking Sharia'a compliant products and services.

KFH has an authorized share capital of KWD 1,117,648,920.200 and an issued and paid up share capital of KWD697,648,920.200 divided into 6,976,489,202 ordinary shares with a nominal value of KWD0.100 each.

**Shareholders of the Offeror:** The summary of principal shareholdings in KFH is given below:

Shareholder's Name	% owned in KFH*	No. of Shares
Kuwait Investment Authority	24.079%	1,679,888,678
Public Authority for Minors Affairs	10.484%	731,430,456
General Secretariat of Awqaf	7.296%	509,009,141
The Public Institution for Social Security	5.91%**	412,387,713
Other Public	52.231%	3,643,773,214
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6,976,489,202</b>

\*As at 31 December 2019, unless otherwise provided.

\*\*Indirect shareholding as at 7 January 2020.

**Board of Directors and Management of the Offeror:** KFH's Board of Directors currently comprises of ten board members, as follows:

Board of Directors	Title
Hamad Abdul Mohsen Al Marzouq	Chairman
Abdul Aziz Yacoub Alnafisi	Vice Chairman
Fahad Ali AlGhanim	Director
Muad Saud Al Osaimi	Director
Khaled Salem Al Nisf	Director
Noorur Rahman Abid	Director
Hanan Yousef Ali Yousef	Director
Barrak Ali Alsheatan	Director
Motlaq Mubarak Al-Sanei	Director
Salah Abdulaziz Al-Muraikhi	Director

The current management team of KFH is:

Management Personnel	Title
Mazin Al-Nahedh	Group Chief Executive Officer
Shadi Zahran	Group Chief Financial Officer
Waleed Mandani	Group Chief Retail and Private Banking Officer
Abdulwahab Al-Rushood	Group Chief Treasury Officer
Ahmed Al Kharji	Group Chief Corporate Banking Officer
Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem	Group Chief Strategy Officer
Gehad El-Bendary	Group Chief Risk Officer
Frederick Carstens	Group Chief Human Resources Officer
Srood Sherif	Group Chief Information Officer
Abdullah Abu Al-Hous	Group Chief Operations Officer
Wissam Sami El-Kari	Group Chief Internal Auditor
Dr Khaled Mohammed Al-Jumah	Group General Manager Legal

**Intention to make an offer to purchase securities of:** Ahli United Bank B.S.C., Building 2495, Road 2832, Al Seef District 428, PO Box 2424, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain

AUB is registered with the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism in the Kingdom of Bahrain under commercial registration number 46348 as a Public Bahraini Shareholding Company whose ordinary shares are listed on the Bahrain Bourse (the BB) and BK.

AUB is licensed by the Central Bank of Bahrain (the CBB) as a locally incorporated bank operating as a conventional retail bank.

AUB has an issued and paid up share capital of USD2,193,611,070.250 divided into 8,774,444,281 ordinary shares with a nominal value of USD0.25 each.

**Details of securities for which an offer will be made:** AUB shares that comprise 100% of AUB's issued and paid up share capital. That is inclusive of 8,774,444,281 AUB shares of a nominal value of USD0.25 each and any AUB shares that may be issued, whether as dividends shares or otherwise (the AUB Shares).

**Consideration for the offer:** The consideration for the offer is new shares in the Offeror at a share exchange ratio of 1 KFH share for each 2.325581 AUB Shares.

The offer price (which determines the number of shares that will be issued to AUB shareholders in KFH as a result of the offer) was agreed between KFH and AUB following valuations and other analysis prepared by the independent international advisors, financial analysis prepared by the financial advisor, and detailed commercial negotiations between the two banks confirmed on 12 September 2019.

**Mechanism:** It is envisaged that the offer will be implemented by way of a voluntary conditional offer to the shareholders of AUB by KFH to acquire no less than 100% of the issued and paid up ordinary shares of AUB by way of share swap, at the exchange ratio, in line with the provisions of the TMA Module, and subject to approvals, exemptions and/or waivers granted or may be granted by the CBB.

**Offer finance sources:** Excluding the impact of fractional entitlements and issuance of AUB bonus shares for the year ending 31 December 2019, the consideration of the offer will be financed through an issue of 3,773,011,682 new shares in KFH, which has been approved by the extra ordinary general assembly held on 20 January 2020. The final consideration number of new KFH shares will be determined and announced by KFH as part of the offer process.

**Conditions to which the offer or the posting is subject:** The implementation of the offer will be subject to the fulfilment or waiver, where applicable, of the following conditions precedent. For the avoidance of doubt, the offer shall not become unconditional unless the below conditions precedent are fulfilled or waived by KFH:

- The Offeror having received valid acceptances in respect of AUB Shares that represent at least 85% of the total issued share capital of AUB.
- Following receipt of the requisite acceptances referred to in (a) above, the AUB shareholders approving, amongst other things, and subject to any legal and regulatory requirements, converting the AUB business in Bahrain to Sharia'a compliant at the AUB extra ordinary general assembly meeting by a majority vote of two thirds of the AUB Shares represented at the AUB meeting.
- Receipt of all regulatory and statutory approvals, exemptions and/or waivers in connection with the offer and the acquisition of no less than 100% of the issued and paid up ordinary shares of AUB, including receipt of the Central Bank of Bahrain and Central Bank of Kuwait final approvals, exemptions and/or waivers required to implement the offer, receipt of the Kuwaiti Capital Markets Authority approval for the issuance of the new KFH shares and receipt of any other approval required from any regulatory or statutory authority as may be determined.
- KFH successfully completing a cross-listing on Bahrain Bourse in line with the applicable rules and regulations of the Central Bank of Bahrain and Bahrain Bourse.

In respect of condition (b) above, the invitation to the extra ordinary general assembly meeting will be published upon declaring the offer unconditional as to acceptances in line with the provisions of the TMA Module and the Decree Law No. 21 of the year 2001 promulgating the Commercial Companies Law in the Kingdom of Bahrain, as amended from time to time.

Shareholders and/or potential investors of AUB should note that the offer shall be subject to the satisfaction or, with the exception of conditions (a) and (d) above, waiver (where applicable) of the conditions and conditional upon, the offer becoming or being declared unconditional in all respects. Accordingly, the offer may or may not become unconditional. Shareholders and/or potential investors of AUB should therefore exercise caution when dealing in the securities of AUB. Persons who are in doubt as to the action they should take should consult their licensed brokers, dealers, solicitors, professional accountants or other professional advisers.

**Offeror's intention for the future of the company:** Following the successful implementation of the offer and acquisition of shares, KFH intends to maintain AUB's commercial registration, however, KFH intends on changing AUB's name to become "Kuwait Finance House - Bahrain", in due course. AUB will continue to operate under normal course of business and maintain its operations as a wholly owned subsidiary of KFH where disruption to or cessation of any significant line of operations of AUB is not expected to occur as a result of the proposed acquisition of shares under the offer.

KFH's strategy for AUB post-acquisition commences with the process of converting the business of AUB in the Kingdom of Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq and the United Kingdom to Sharia'a compliant offering full range of Sharia'a compliant banking products subject to approval of CBB.

Following the successful completion of the offer, KFH will commence converting AUB's subsidiary in Kuwait to a digital bank as requested by the CBK. Immediately following the successful completion of converting AUB's business to Sharia'a compliant, KFH will commence the process of conducting a statutory merger to merge its two wholly owned subsidiaries in Bahrain, being AUB and KFH Bahrain.

**Details of any existing holding of AUB Shares and rights over the AUB Shares:** None. No AUB Shares have been acquired by KFH in the last 12 months.

**Details of any outstanding derivative in respect of the AUB Shares entered into by KFH or any person acting in concert with it:** None.

**Details of any arrangement (whether by way of option, indemnity or otherwise) in relation to the KFH shares or AUB Shares which might be material to the offer:** None.

**Details of any relevant securities of AUB in which KFH or any person acting in concert with it has an interest or has a right to subscribe:** Except as disclosed otherwise, none of the KFH directors have any direct or deemed interest in the AUB Shares as of the date of this firm intention.

However, the table below depicts the KFH directors' share ownership in AUB as of the date of this firm intention:

KFH Board of Directors	Shares currently owned or controlled in AUB	
	Ownership %	No. of shares
Hamad Abdul Mohsen Al Marzouq	0.163	14,306,762
Abdul Aziz Yacoub Alnafisi	-	-
Fahad Ali AlGhanim	-	-
Muad Saud Al Osaimi	-	-
Khaled Salem Al Nisf	-	-
Noorur Rahman Abid	-	-
Hanan Yousef Ali Yousef	-	-
Barrak Ali Alsheatan	-	-
Motlaq Mubarak Al-Sanei	-	-
Salah Abdulaziz Al-Muraikhi	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.163</b>	<b>14,306,762</b>

**Details of any relevant securities of AUB which KFH or any person acting in concert with it has borrowed or lent, excluding any borrowed shares which have been either on-lent or sold:** None.

**Details of any agreements or arrangements to which KFH is party which relate to the circumstances in which it may or may not invoke or seek to invoke a pre-condition or the consequences of its doing so, including details of any break fees payable as a result:** None.

**Details of any arrangement for the payment of an inducement fee or similar arrangement:** None.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of KFH

Mr. Hamad Abdul Mohsen Al Marzouq  
Chairman

Business

During earnings webcast for year-end 2019

# Al-Nahedh: Leading position in the Islamic sukuk and financial services market for KFH

## Al-Mukhaizeem: KFH invested strongly in innovation, launched smart financial solutions

**KUWAIT:** Mazin Al-Nahedh, Group Chief Executive Officer at Kuwait Finance House (KFH) highlighted the financial performance for year-end 2019. He said that KFH realized a net profit of KD 251.0 million for the year 2019 for KFH shareholders an increase of 10.4 percent over last year. Total financing income reached KD 931.6 million, i.e. an increase of 8.1 percent compared to last year. Net operating income increased to reach KD 510.1 million, i.e. a growth of 12.5 percent over the last year. Earnings per share for 2019 reached 36.45 fils an increase of 10.3 percent over last year.



Mazin Al-Nahedh



Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem



Shadi Zahran

### Zahran: Group C/I ratio continued to improve

The Board of Directors has proposed 20 percent cash dividends to shareholders and 10 percent bonus shares subject to general assembly and concerned authorities' approval.

Al-Nahedh added during the Earnings Webcast for Year End 2019, that the solid financial statements that KFH achieved in 2019 came as a result of achieving the highest levels of innovation and excellence in customer services, also these strong results confirm KFH's ability to adapt to the challenges that the region and global markets witnessed in 2019. In addition, the prudent approach that KFH follows towards risk management created a buffer against market fluctuations and geopolitical developments regionally and worldwide.

He continued: "the high liquidity levels that KFH enjoys are one of its main strengths along with the Group's geographical spread in Turkey, Germany, Bahrain, and Malaysia, as well as the diversified investment and banking services that are aligned with latest financial technology."

Al-Nahedh explained that the year 2019 achieved success in many aspects as KFH made qualitative leaps in implementing its digital transformation strategy, by adopting the latest financial technology innovations. KFH also has a leading position in the Islamic Sukuk and Financial Services market. Investment in Sukuk reached KD 2.276 billion an increase of KD 713 million i.e. a growth of 45.6 percent compared to last year having most of the balance representing sovereign sukuk.

He pointed out that on January 20, 2020 KFH has held its ordinary and extraordinary general assembly meetings, in which it approved key aspects regarding the acquisition of AUB Bahrain including the Sharia Supervisory Board's report on the conversion plan to Sharia compliance, the assessment reports prepared by the international advisors noting the fair exchange rate of 2.325581 shares of AUB Bahrain for one share of KFH, in addition to the listing of KFH in Bahrain Bourse.

Al-Nahedh said that KFH has disclosed to the regulatory authorities and the market the latest developments regarding the Acquisition. All these disclosures were published via the official website of Boursa Kuwait and any new development will be updated as and when it comes available.

#### Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem:

Eng. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem, Group Chief Strategy Officer at KFH, highlighted Kuwait operating environment with an overview on KFH. He shared KFH's strategy, as well as Year End 2019 results.

He added during the Earnings Webcast that on Dec 18th, 2019, (MSCI) announced the official reclassification of Kuwait Indexes to Emerging Markets Status. The upgrade serves Kuwait's 2035 vision of becoming an

attractive financial center through the valuable attraction of foreign capital, increased liquidity, and the enhanced levels of transparency.

As for interest rates, he said that the Central Bank of Kuwait has made a 25 basis point cut in October 2019 with interest rates unchanged at 2.75 percent.

On the other hand, according to the IMF, GDP is expected to witness an increase in 2020 reaching 3.1 percent. As an overview of KFH's awards and ratings, Al-Mukhaizeem explained that KFH has won the World's Best Islamic Financial Institution 2019 award, Best Islamic Financial Institution 2019 award in the Middle East, and the Safest Islamic Financial Institution in the GCC 2019 from Global Finance Magazine.

Further, Fitch and Moody's have affirmed long term ratings for KFH at A+ and A1 respectively. Moody's have recently changed their outlook from Stable to Positive.

Al-Mukhaizeem added: "Our strategic distribution remains one of KFH's strengths with a branch network exceeding 510 branches around the world. KFH has invested strongly in banking innovation and in the latest technology while achieving excellence in mobile banking services and the launch of digital products and services including fully-automated digital self-banking stations "KFH Go", the digital Cheque Deposit solution through mobiles, in addition to the Jazeel app which has an "easy on-boarding" process developed in KFH Bahrain, adding to our smart digital solutions."

He confirmed that KFH continues to participate locally and regionally in key mega projects in such vital sectors as energy, water, infrastructure, and construction.

#### Shadi Zahran:

Shadi Zahran, Group Chief Financial Officer at KFH said that the Group has achieved Net Profit After Tax (NPAT) attributable to Shareholders for the period ended 31st December 2019 of KD 251.0 million higher by KD 23.6 million or 10.4 percent as compared to 2018 of KD 227.4 million. Financing Income increased by KD 69.5 million or 8.1 percent resulting mainly from the increase in average yielding assets. Net financing income (NFI) has marginally increased by KD 3.0 million or 0.6 percent compared to last year. This is due to increase in financing income of KD 69.5 million offset by the increase in COF by KD 66.5 million. The increase in COF is mainly due to the full effect of increase in benchmark rates (as reached the highest level in

2018 fourth quarter) besides the increase in distribution to depositors as a result of higher group profitability. However, the reduction in the benchmark rates which started in second half of 2019 did not materially impact the COF. Net Operating income increased by KD 56.6 million or 12.5 percent compared to last year reaching KD 510.1 million; the increase is mainly from Investment Income by KD 66.9 million.

He added that the increase in investment income is mainly generated from gain on sale of investments and income from Islamic derivatives transactions (Islamic Currency swaps or Wa'ad structure) which led to increase in investment income contribution to total operating income to reach 16 percent compared to 8.5 percent last year. However, the other non-yielding income contribution remained at the same level.

Zahran explained that the total Operating Expenses at KD 304.2 million has increased by KD 11.8 million or 4 percent compared to last year. Increase in cost was mainly due to inflationary conditions seen in some markets where the group operates. In addition to supporting growth of Banking Business.

He added that despite the increase in operating expenses, the group C/I ratio continued to improve showing reduction of 184bps during 2019 to reach 37.36 percent. Displaying an improved efficiency, and optimized total operating expenses.

Furthermore, at KFH-Kuwait, C/I ratio at 32.7 percent is still below both the local Islamic Banks average of 43.1 percent and local conventional Banks average of 37.1 percent (calculated from published financials for September 2019). He pointed out that Average Profit Earning Assets increased by 6.6 percent compared to 2018 and 15 percent compared to 2017, maintaining the growth momentum of yielding assets for the past years. (avg. YoY financing receivables and MM is higher by KD 0.5 billion and avg. Sukuk is higher by KD 0.4 billion) Group NFM at 3.10 percent shows an 8bps decrease over 2018 of average 3.18 percent.

He said that Group average yield was maintained despite aggressive market competition and slow discount rate involvement compared to Fed rate. However, as mentioned earlier the COF is higher as compared to 2018 on account of KFH increased profitability and higher market rates.

Zahran said that the group total provisions and impairment charge increased by KD 34.4 million or 21.2 percent to reach KD 196.9 million. Higher provisions on financing by KD 101.8 million is on account of precautionary

provision of KD 60 million recorded at group level on our Turkish subsidiary financing portfolio on conservative basis in view of market outlook. In addition to the increased COR in Turkey.

He continued: "Provisions and impairment for investments and others decreased from KD 105.6 million to KD 38.2 million due to last year one-off impairment for certain legacy properties in GCC. Net Operating Income (before provisions) from banking activities remained at same level of 93 percent of Group Net Operating income. Total Assets at KD 19.4 billion increased by KD 1.6 billion or 9.1 percent during 2019.

Zahran went on to say that the group achieved an outstanding growth in deposits in 2019 of KD 1.8 billion or 15 percent with contribution from all banking entities reflecting the depositors' strong confidence in KFH group in addition to group investments in digitalization mainly in Turkey and Bahrain.

He added: "Additionally, the favorable deposits mix continues to show very healthy contribution from CASA deposits which represents 44.3 percent of total group deposits as at the end of 2019 - maintaining same level during the past years. It's also worth to mention that KFH Kuwait dominates the saving accounts with the market share of 41.2 percent (as per CBK latest published reports, Nov-19)."

He illustrated that financing receivables at KD 9.3 billion increased by 1.6 percent in 2019. Growth in financing receivables contributed from Kuwait, Turkey and Bahrain. Group strategy focusing on assets quality resulted in slower growth besides the impact of strong market competition on pricing in Kuwait. He clarified that investments in Sukuk at KD 2.3 billion increased by KD 713 million or 45.6 percent compared to 2018 and contributed from all banking entities with majority of Sovereign Sukuk investment. The growth in Sukuk portfolio is a response of growth in deposits in all markets in which we operate where limited good asset quality financing opportunities are available within the Group's overall risk appetite.

He said that customer deposits as a percentage of total deposits at 83.1 percent continues to improve reflecting the healthy funding mix and shows robust liquidity. He noted that NPL ratio reduced further to reach 1.88 percent (as per CBK calculation) in Dec-19 compared to 1.99 percent at Dec-18 on account of improvement in overall risk profile of the Bank supported by recoveries and write-offs. Coverage ratio (provision) for Group improved to 231 percent in 2019

(2018: 191 percent). Coverage ratio considering collateral for Group improved also to 284 percent in 2019 (2018: 247 percent).

He said: "In the last slide looking at the key performance ratios, the group compared to last year same period is as follow:

- ROAE from 12.45 percent to 13.00 percent.
- ROAA decreased from 1.51 percent to 1.40 percent (the decline is associated to the one-off precautionary provision impacting net profit including minority).
- C/I from 39.20 percent to 37.36 percent.
- EPS from 33.06 fils to 36.45 fils.

He added: "Now, in addition to the financial position and highlights provided in the appendix we have also included this time a section related to the AUB acquisition due to its importance for the investors. All of the information in those slides was made available to shareholders prior to the EGM on 20th of Jan 2020, and I will focus briefly on the key financial highlights. As already disclosed, KFH shareholders have approved the transaction and both regulators CBK and CBB have provided their conditional approvals."

He continued: "As well disclosed, the consideration for the Acquisition (being the Exchange Ratio) is 1 KFH Share for 2.325581 shares of AUB, this will result in representation of AUB shareholders of 35 percent in the new combined group. The transaction positions KFH as a dominant bank in the Middle East, diversifying its footprint to 6 new markets in addition to the existing ones. KFH and AUB have complementary businesses and as a result of acquisition the new combined KFH Group will offer a well-diversified full-service financial institution, with each business segment of corporate banking, retail and private banking, treasury and investment represent one-third of the group total assets post acquisition."

Also, from the total assets perspective, he said that the acquisition of AUB will create the largest Islamic bank in the world, largest bank in Kuwait and Bahrain and 6th largest bank in Middle east with combined total assets base exceeding \$101 billion.

From the perspective of total customer deposits, he said that KFH will be the second largest Islamic bank in the world. The anticipated annual run-rate synergies are estimated to be in the range of 10-15 percent per annum of the combined group cost base, after completion of integration and conversion.

The combined group is expected to benefit from a more efficient platform, optimizing infrastructure from both groups, greater scale and negotiating positions with suppliers. Further KFH Group should be in a position to capture the significant opportunities arising from existing relationships across both groups.

He continued: "The pro-forma financials based on audited 2018 financial statements of both groups and considering the issuance of the new shares, the transaction is expected to be earnings accretive for KFH shareholders by 21.8 percent excluding the impact of estimated synergies. And 31.8 percent with estimated synergies. There is also strong financial rationale for this transaction with enhancement in all key ratios as the expected ROA to be above 1.5 percent, ROE above 15 percent, C/I ratio below 35 percent, and CAR above 16.5 percent".



## Business

# Gulf Bank sponsors Kuwait Tech Expo

## Sponsorship reflects Gulf Bank's commitment to national development plan

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank has announced it is this year's diamond sponsor of Kuwait Tech Expo 2020, the biggest technology event of its kind in Kuwait. This year's Kuwait Tech Expo is set to take place on February 6-9, 2020 at Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref at Hall 6. The expo will be held in the presence of major local and international companies from the technology and telecommunications sectors, and will include local governmental entities as well.

As a diamond sponsor, Gulf Bank's participation reflects its commitment to the country's national development plan. The sponsorship is one of several initiatives that reflect Gulf Bank's efforts in advancing the national economy and achieving the development goals of the country, including activities related to the communications and technology sectors.

Kuwait Tech Expo 2020 is considered Kuwait's

biggest event for technology and telecommunications services. The event aims at offering effective solutions to the country's various bodies with the aim of serving the community's needs on both local and international levels. Gulf Bank's participation reflects its commitment to technological growth and advancement, as the Bank works to elevate its banking experience to better serve clients.

Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "As part of our commitment to advancing the field of technology, Gulf Bank is constantly developing ways in which we can better serve our clients and elevate their banking experience. We are proud to sponsor events and initiatives like Kuwait Tech Expo as they provide an invaluable opportunity for major stakeholders to explore the latest services that the technology sector



has to offer."

Kuwait Tech Expo aims at finding a common platform for decision makers, companies, and consumers in the fields of telecommunications and technology, while creating opportunities for companies and government entities to learn more about related projects and opportunities. The event also aims at finding the most appropriate mechanisms for communication through the display of the participating companies'

products and services at the exhibition, thereby contributing to the development of infrastructures of the various developmental projects.

Gulf Bank is one of the leading conventional banks in Kuwait with total assets of KD 6 billion for year ending 31 December 2018. The Bank provides a broad offering of consumer banking, wholesale banking, treasury, and financial services through its large network of 58 branches and more than 200 ATMs in Kuwait.



Ahmad Al-Amir

## LuLu Exchange opens new branch at Farwaniya



KUWAIT: Group Chairman MA Yussuf Ali inaugurates the company's 24th LuLu Exchange branch in Kuwait in Farwaniya.



**KUWAIT:** LuLu Financial Group, one of the world's most trusted names in currency exchange and remittance services, launched its new branch at Farwaniya yesterday. The new branch, which was inaugurated by the Group Chairman, MA Yussuf Ali, is the company's 24th in Kuwait and its 4th under the Farwaniya Governorate. The branch will offer remittances and foreign exchange services. Customers can also opt for premium membership with the LuLu Gold Card and

avail a host of discounts at other shopping & hospitality partners, as well as benefits from any LuLu Exchange branch, including best rates for remittances and currency exchange, and faster turnaround time on transactions.

Speaking post the inauguration, Adeb Ahamed, MD, LuLu Financial Holdings said, "Kuwait is a key market for us. The new branch is in line with our vision to extend our offerings and bring our network closer to

our customers around the world. Our well-connected global network and focus on modern technology will make it easier and convenient for residents of Kuwait to conduct payments, exchange currency and remit money to their dear ones back home."

The company is also upbeat about its mobile app LuLu Money, which has emerged as a game-changer in the sector. "Our digital payments offering, Lulu Money, is already impacting the way our customers transact

online. We see it as the way forward for our business to connect with new-age customers", Ahamed added.

Lulu Money, which is a fully integrated mobile app available on Android and iOS, enables customers to conduct all regular transactions online and monitor exchange rates in real-time, apart from a slew of other features. The new branch is conveniently located in the LuLu Express Building and will operate on all days from 8.30 am to 11pm.

## Burgan Bank celebrates National & Liberation Days with customers

**KUWAIT:** On the occasion of the National and Liberation Days, Burgan Bank announces its participation in the celebrations through its branches. Burgan Bank will be surprising branch customers with valuable instant cash gifts up to KD 1,000. Every day during the month of February, one lucky customer visiting one of the bank's branches will receive an instant cash gift. The bank encourages its customers to visit their branches as they can be one of the lucky winners.

On this occasion, Nasser Al-Qaisi - Chief Retail Banking Officer of Burgan Bank said: "The National and Liberation day will bring unique surprises and memories. These celebrations are an integral part of our national heritage, of which we are proud". Burgan Bank extends its best wishes and greetings to the public in celebration of this joyful month.



Nasser Al-Qaisi

## Regional businesses should aspire to internationalize

By Nathalie Amiel-Ferrault

**N**inety percent of the businesses in the Middle East region are classified as small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In their next wave of growth, these businesses stand to gain substantially from adopting strategies to grow internationally, with the help of their logistics providers among others.

Currently, five percent of the SMEs in the region can be classified as "scale-ups" - otherwise described as companies with proven business models that are undergoing a rapid growth phase. These are the businesses that are ripe to take advantage of the possibilities offered by growth and expansion beyond domestic borders, especially if they are bringing something unique to the market.

The increasing rate of technological change, globalization of markets, and rising customization creates opportunities for businesses everywhere. Ultimately, how successful a business is, in terms of international growth, depends on the viability of the product itself, and how it fits the unique needs of customers. Technology adoption is a crucial step towards internationalization, allowing for faster communication and easier connectivity.

Advancements in technology also allows for more integrated



supply chains, and increased visibility when it comes to product fulfillment. Working with their logistics partners, businesses can deliver new opportunities including a better understanding of financial viability when distributing in-market or cross-border. As valued partners that support SMEs to realize their global growth plans, logistics providers offer access to a wealth of information and insights on trade, customs clearance, inventory management, storage, warehousing, and last-mile distribution.

Logistics companies have access to the intelligence and expertise to guide their customers on matters related to trade laws and the implementation timeline for their internationalization plans. Such insights can also guide a business on whether it should centralize inventories in these new international markets in order to be able to meet local demand in peak seasons or when customs procedures take longer than desirable.

The strength of the FedEx Express air network enhances the direct connection between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Europe and is an example of how our global air and ground networks support the successful growth of SMEs into new markets. The European Union (EU) ranks first globally in terms of international trade investments. More than seventy percent of imports enter the EU at zero or reduced tariffs. As a single market with over 500 million consumers it offers considerable scope for businesses to grow as they access the free

movement of goods, services and capital, with minimal technical, legal, and bureaucratic barriers. Gaining access to a new market that consists of countries with various consumer preferences and national infrastructure means that businesses, in addition to accommodating specific cultural nuances, must consider a new set of variables. These can include the mode of transport and various handling practices that are incorporated within the supply chain domestically; all these factors can be entrusted to the logistics service provider. SMEs must continue to operate their business models to gain the most from such collaborations with logistics providers; together, the collective power of technology, transportation, information, and ideas can compound and multiply.

Relationships within the logistics industry will continue to be the differentiator for SMEs in order to develop and make the most of their resources and assets as they enter new markets. In the case of the GCC-EU trade lane, the Gulf can evolve into a trans-shipment hub but also an export manufacturing powerhouse on its own. SMEs that have successfully scaled up in the GCC region will have a significant multiplier effect, supporting its diversification goals and the advancement of the non-oil economy.

Note: Nathalie Amiel-Ferrault is Vice President, Customer Experience and Marketing at FedEx Express Middle East, Indian Subcontinent and Africa

What's On



# ABCK holds annual membership and networking event

The American Business Council Kuwait (ABCK-AmCham Kuwait) kickstarted 2020 with their Annual Membership and Networking Event on January 20, 2020 at the JW Marriott Hotel.

In attendance were over 100 guests, consisting of ABCK- AmCham Kuwait members and non-members from

across different industries in Kuwait and the GCC region. The event was aimed at informing guests about ABCK-AmCham Kuwait's goals and initiatives and updating them on past performance as well as future plans.

In his opening statements, ABCK- AmCham Kuwait's Chairman, Frank Belonus, thanked the event's Gold Sponsor,

Kuwait Resources House (KRH), and ABCK- AmCham Kuwait members for their constant support and contribution to the organization. He then gave a snapshot of ABCK-AmCham Kuwait's activities over the past year: "We saw a 70% increase in organizational growth over the past 12 months, and a 300% increase in member benefits.

We currently have over 600 members from top companies and leaders in virtually every industry in Kuwait". After that, the Chairman introduced Shari Stout, Senior Commercial Officer at the US Embassy Kuwait, and called onto the stage Chris Johnson, Chairman of Middle East Council for American Chambers of Commerce (MECAC).

## LuLu Hypermarket launches 'Dream Drive' promotion

LuLu Hypermarket, the largest retailer in the region, has launched a 'Dream Drive' promotion from 29 January to 14 March at all Lulu outlets in Kuwait.

During the 45-day promotional period, shoppers will receive one e-affle coupon for every KD 5 worth of purchases at any LuLu Hypermarket outlet in the country. The coupon entitles shoppers to enter a raffle draw to win one of four Nissan X-Trail 2020 model Sports Utility Vehicles (SUV). In addition to the bumper prize, 100 winners will each receive KD 100 worth of gift vouchers, for a total of KD 10,000 in promotional vouchers.

LuLu Hypermarket remains committed to offering customers the widest range and largest variety of quality products from around the world at highly competitive prices. The 'Dream Drive' promotion is part of this customer-oriented approach that aims to ensure customer satisfaction at every retail touch-point, and add value to the shopping experience at the hypermarket.



## TIES Center

The TIES Center cordially invites you to another session on the Stories of Prophets this Thursday, February 6th, at 7 pm.

Come to last session of Prophet Musa's life where you will get answers to the following questions and more information about Prophet Musa (AS):

1. What qualities did Musa have that qualified him to be a Messenger?
2. How did he die and where was he buried?
3. Does the Bible include Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) message?
4. What did Musa, Jesus and Ibrahim look like?

Come and learn more about the life and times of Prophet Musa (AS) in a serene and relaxed environment at the TIES Center.



## Kindergarten graduation ceremony in ICSK Amman

On Thursday, 30th January, 2020, ICSK Amman wore a festive look, illuminated with shining faces as they celebrated the Graduation Ceremony of their KG students. The function was graced by the presence of Ms. Carla. E. Burton, Head, Department of Foundation Studies, Box Hill College, Kuwait.

The event commenced with the Islamic prayer followed by the lighting of the lamp by the Honorable Chief Guest, Ms. Carla, Senior Administrator & Principal ICSK Senior Dr. V. Binumon, Principal ICSK Amman, Rajesh Nair, C, Vice Principal, Dr Mary Isaac and the Pre-Primary supervisor Julie Anthony. The Principal welcomed the gathering and inspired the students with his words of wisdom.

The very inspiring and dynamic Chief Guest, Ms. Carla, set the positive tone for the day. In her address, the Chief Guest, congratulated all the graduates and appreciated the

school for the efforts put forward in moulding the children.

The most important part of the Graduation Ceremony began with the students of Pre-Primary dressed in Graduation robes and caps walking the stage. The Principal and the Chief Guest felicitated the students with certificates of graduation.

A very vibrant welcome dance was performed by the students of UKG. The highlight of the day was a Barbie dance followed by a Bollywood fusion performed by the flamboyant nursery students for their graduating seniors. The vibrant music, coordinated dance steps and breathtaking colours promptly set the tone and mood at ICSK Amman.

We stand proud as our little ones move forward from Kindergarten to Grade One, yet another new beginning in a different chapter of their lives.



Health

# Permafrost collapse is speeding climate change, study says

**PARIS:** Permafrost in Canada, Alaska and Siberia is abruptly crumbling in ways that could release large stores of greenhouse gases more quickly than anticipated, researchers have warned. Scientists have long fretted that climate change — which has heated Arctic and subarctic regions at double the global rate — will release planet-warming CO2 and methane that has remained safely locked inside Earth's frozen landscapes for millennia.

It was assumed this process would be gradual, leaving humanity time to draw down carbon emissions enough to prevent permafrost thaw from tipping into a self-perpetuating vicious circle of ice melt and global warming.

But a study published on Monday in Nature Geoscience says projections of how much carbon would be released by this kind of slow-and-steady thawing overlook a less well-known process whereby certain types of icy terrain disintegrate suddenly — sometimes within days.

"Although abrupt permafrost thawing will occur in less than 20 percent of frozen land, it increases permafrost carbon release projections by about 50 percent," said lead author Merritt Turetsky, head of the Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research in Boulder, Colorado. "Under all future warming scenarios, abrupt thaw leads to net carbon losses into the atmosphere," she added.

Permafrost contains rocks, soil, sand and pockets of pure ground ice. Its rich carbon content is the remains of life that once flourished in the Arctic, including plants, animals and microbes. This matter — which never fully decomposed — has been frozen for thousands of years.

It stretches across an area nearly as big as Canada and the United States combined, and holds about 1,500 billion tons of carbon — twice as much as in the atmosphere and three times the amount humanity has emitted since the start of industrialization.

Some of this once rock-solid ground has begun to soften, upending indigenous communities and threatening industrial infrastructure across the sub-Arctic region, especially in Russia. The evidence is mixed as to whether this not-so-permanent permafrost has started to vent significant quantities of methane or CO2.

Projections are also uncertain, with some scientists saying future emissions may be at least partially offset by new vegetation, which absorbs and stores CO2. But there is no doubt, experts say, that permafrost will continue to give way as temperatures climb.

**'Fast and dramatic'**

In a special report published in September, the UN's scientific advisory body for climate change, the IPCC, looked at two scenarios. If humanity

manages — against all odds — to cap global warming at under 2C, the cornerstone goal of the 2015 Paris climate treaty, "permafrost area shows a decrease of 24 percent by 2100," it concluded.

At the other extreme, if fossil fuel emissions continue to grow over the next 50 years — arguably an equally unlikely prospect — up to 70 percent of permafrost could disappear, the IPCC said. But both scenarios assume the loss will be gradual, and that may be a mistake, Turetsky suggested.

"We estimate that abrupt permafrost thawing — in lowland lakes and wetlands, together with that in upland hills — could release 60 to 100 billion tons of carbon by 2300," she noted in a comment also published by Nature.

One ton of carbon is equivalent to 3.67 tons of carbon dioxide (CO2), which means this would be equivalent to about eight years of global emissions at current rates. "This is in addition to the 200 billion tons of carbon expected to be released in other regions that will thaw gradually," she said.

Current climate models do not account for the possibility of rapid permafrost collapse and the amount of gases it might release, the study notes. Abrupt thawing is "fast and dramatic," Merritt said, adding: "Forests can become lakes in the course of a month, landslides can occur with no warning, and invisible methane seep holes can swallow snowmobiles whole." —AFP

## Measles vaccine group targets 45 million children

**LONDON:** Vaccine group Gavi said on Tuesday it would help to inoculate up to 45 million children in countries in Asia and Africa over the next six months. Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, will work with governments and groups including the World Health Organization and UNICEF to target children under five years old, the age group most vulnerable to the disease.

Cases have surged dramatically in recent years, with nearly 360,000 cases recorded globally in 2018 and almost 430,000 cases reported for 2019, according to provisional data. "The measles vaccine is safe, effective and low-cost — there is no reason children should still be dying of this disease," said Seth Berkley, CEO of the London-based alliance.

"While the headlines might focus on rising cases in Europe and the US, it is sadly still the case that the vast majority of measles deaths are happening in the world's poorest countries." The vaccination campaigns will take place in Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nepal, Somalia and South Sudan. —AFP

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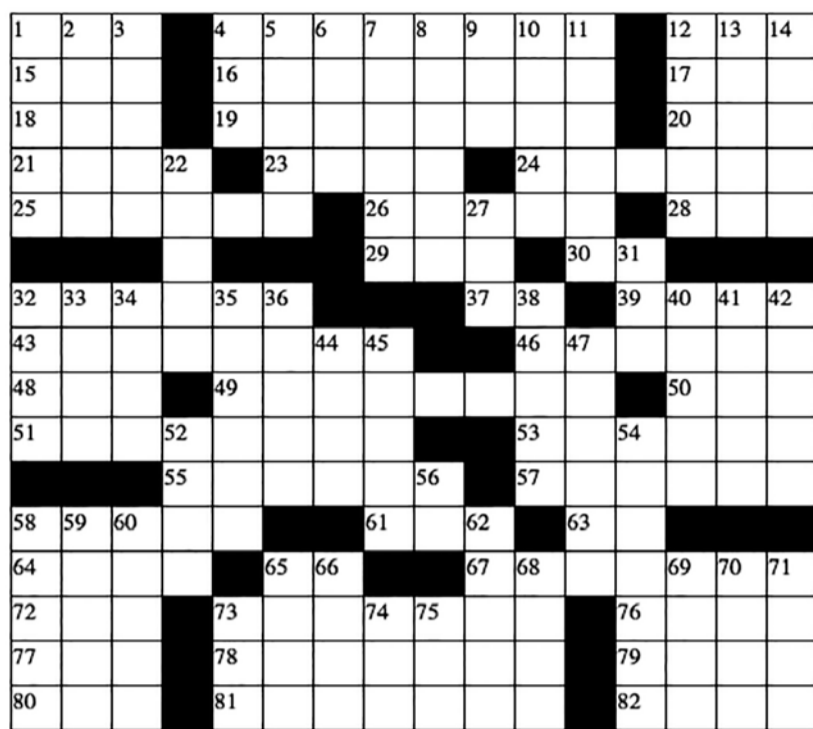
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- ◆ Bariatric surgeries.
- ◆ Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- ◆ Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- ◆ G.I. surgeries.
- ◆ Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- ◆ Anal surgeries.

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

Stars

CROSSWORD 2429



- ACROSS**
- The most common computer memory which can be used by programs to perform necessary tasks while the computer is on.
  - Pertaining to or containing or similar to ammonia.
  - A genetic disorder of metabolism.
  - A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
  - Small genus of North American herbs having mostly basal leaves and slender racemes of delicate white flowers.
  - Made warm or hot.
  - Of the blackest black.
  - Waterlines to show the level the water should reach when the ship is properly loaded.
  - A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
  - An association of people to promote the welfare of senior citizens.
  - A lump of material formed from the content of a liquid.
  - A medicinal drug used to evoke vomiting (especially in cases of drug overdose or poisoning).
  - The whiteness that results from removing the color from something.
  - Any of various perennial South American plants of the genus *Loasa* having stinging hairs and showy white or yellow or reddish-orange flowers.
  - A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
  - The address of a web page on the world wide web.
  - A heavy odorless colorless gas formed during respiration and by the decomposition of organic substances.
  - King of the Huns.
  - A public promotion of some product or service.
  - An elaborate party (often outdoors).
  - An iron-clad vessel built by the Confederate forces in the hope of breaking the blockade imposed by the North.
  - Any of various small terrestrial or aquatic crustaceans with seven pairs of legs adapted for crawling.
  - A self-funded retirement plan that allows you to contribute a limited yearly sum toward your retirement.
  - A nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (trade name Clinoril).
  - The seed of the cereal grass.
  - Any of 12 kings of ancient Egypt between 1315 and 1090 BC.
  - Small tree of dry open parts of southern Africa having erect angled branches suggesting candelabra.
  - Marked by simplicity.
  - A person who has received a degree from a school (high school or college or university).
  - An assertion of a right (as to money or property).
  - An affirmative.
  - A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
  - A period of time containing 365 (or 366) days.
  - An ideal instance.
  - Resonance of protons to radiation in a magnetic field.
  - Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
  - The United Nations agency concerned with international maritime activities.
  - (British) A car that is even smaller than a subcompact car.
  - A notable achievement.
  - Airtight sealed metal container for food or drink or paint etc.
  - Idle or foolish and irrelevant talk.
  - Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
- DOWN**
- The seventh month of the Moslem calendar.
  - Of or relating to or involving an area.
  - The basic unit of length adopted under the System International d'Unites (approximately 1.094 yards).
  - A nucleotide derived from adenosine that occurs in muscle tissue.
  - Giving milk.
  - The bags of letters and packages that are transported by the postal service.
  - Brass that looks like gold.
  - (Greek mythology) A wise old counselor to the Greeks at Troy.
  - The United Nations agency concerned with the interests of labor.
  - European shad.
  - A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
  - Type genus of the Phocidae.
  - Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
  - A city in central New York.
  - A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
  - A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
  - A member of the Siouan people living in the Yazoo river valley in Mississippi.
  - A three-tone Chadic language.
  - A conveyance that transports passengers or freight in carriers suspended from cables and supported by a series of towers.
  - Gracefully slender.
  - A doctor's degree in musical arts.
  - English aristocrat who was the first wife of Prince Charles.
  - (computer science) A read-only memory chip that can be erased by ultraviolet light and programmed again with new data.
  - Ornamental evergreen tree-like shrub of United States Pacific coast having large white flowers and red berrylike fruits.
  - Swelling from excessive accumulation of serous fluid in tissue.
  - On or toward the lee.
  - Having unsuitable feminine qualities.
  - Of or relating to a directionless magnitude.
  - An independent ruler or chieftain (especially in Africa or Arabia).
  - A state of Uganda and site of a former Bantu kingdom.
  - A brittle silver-white metalloid element that is related to selenium and sulfur.
  - A subsidiary proposition that is assumed to be true in order to prove another proposition.
  - American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
  - Strike with disgust or revulsion.
  - A disorderly outburst or tumult.
  - (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
  - A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
  - A Gaelic-speaking Celt in Ireland or Scotland or the Isle of Man.
  - An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
  - A quantity of no importance.
  - The basic unit of electric current adopted under the System International d'Unites.
  - A case for containing a set of articles.
  - A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

When was the last time you used a pen and paper, Aries? In this age of computers, the keyboard has all but replaced these wonderful tools. In the same way that walking provides much more than fresh air, the kinesthetic value of the rhythmic motion of writing with a pen is far more soothing and even healing than most realize. Moving your hand across the page can feel good and unlock places within you that aren't accessed by typing. Try it today.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Today may bring a keen sense of empathy and understanding. Taurus. With this, verbal communication is also more likely to be effective. Consider seizing this energy by making a point of talking through any problems or issues you have with those in your life. If they don't live with you, see about driving over to visit them or calling them up to work things out. If there isn't anything pressing, see about expressing your affection for those closest to you by telling them straight out what they mean to you.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Don't be surprised if you find your mind going a thousand miles a minute today, Gemini. Slowing down will likely elude you and you'll have to find one means or another to express what's racing around in your head. The aspects today lend much to communication. Perhaps talking over your writing or ideas with someone whose insight you value will do the trick. Even doodling can give you a place to put your thoughts. Explore these activities today.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Welcome to another great day, Cancer. The energy from the day's aspects is positive and encouraging when it comes to communication and interaction with others. Why not take advantage of this? Get together to visit with friends and family and enjoy yourself. Consider inviting people over for a game or dinner. Even a potluck can be a lot of fun. You work hard all the time, so play hard today!



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You might find yourself really interested in getting out and doing something today, Leo. And why not? It can't be too difficult to phone a few friends and arrange to get together in the evening. Or perhaps you can look in the events page in your local newspaper and see whether a meeting or lecture is taking place that you'd like to attend. Is there a place you've been curious about and wanted to visit? If so, go there today and check it out. Make the best of your time!



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Consider channeling your philosophical inspirations into some creative writing, Virgo. You'll certainly enjoy this type of activity. Even if you haven't explored this before, there's no better day than today to give it a whirl. Why not start a journal if you haven't done so already? This will give your ideas a place to incubate, and it can become a starting point for further reflection. Or you could try your hand at poetry and fiction instead.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You might feel the need for some time to yourself today, Libra. And why not take it? Chances are you're surrounded by others most of the time, and when you don't take time to be alone with your thoughts and feelings, it can prove unhealthy for you. Taking care of your emotional well-being is critical, as you have a deeply sensitive nature. With continuous activity around you, there's no time to connect with this part of you. Make time today.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Today you may want to go your own way regardless of what someone else wants, Scorpio. Your independence is very important to you. However, compromise might be necessary in order to avoid serious conflict. Consider splitting your day to allow for the wishes of those close to you and time for yourself. If you can't make others understand why you want to be alone, this might be the best solution.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 19)

Today may well find you in the mood to head out on a venture or visit someone, Sagittarius. When was the last time you took a day for something like this? Chances are it's been too long. Not only will you enjoy it but others will be thrilled to have some time with you as well. Whether you pack up the whole family or head out on your own, seize the opportunity to visit a new place or connect with people you haven't seen in a while.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Serious thinking and communication will be enhanced today, Capricorn. These are strong qualities for you anyway, and with this added boost, you'll need to have a place to express yourself. If you've started a journal, this can prove to be an excellent outlet. Talking with other people is another. If there are issues or worries that have been bothering you, consider getting together with those involved and airing what's on your mind. It's a perfect day to get things resolved.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

You might feel cornered into doing something you just don't want to do today, Aquarius. Perhaps you made a promise to handle a project, or someone close to you has decided that it's the day to tackle something specific. Either way, if you're uncomfortable following through, communicate that to this person. Your ability to express yourself and be understood is enhanced with this day's energy. Rescheduling might be far better than any potential resentment.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You might discover that someone close to you, a family member perhaps, could use a hand today, Pisces. Chances are good, too, that he or she won't ask for help out of pride. Don't let that stop you, though. If you recognize a situation where you can be of assistance, go for it. Don't wait for an invitation or request. Simply take hold of the circumstances and do what you can. Your efforts will be appreciated and you'll leave feeling terrific that you could make a difference.

Wordsearch Puzzle

More 1950's Songs

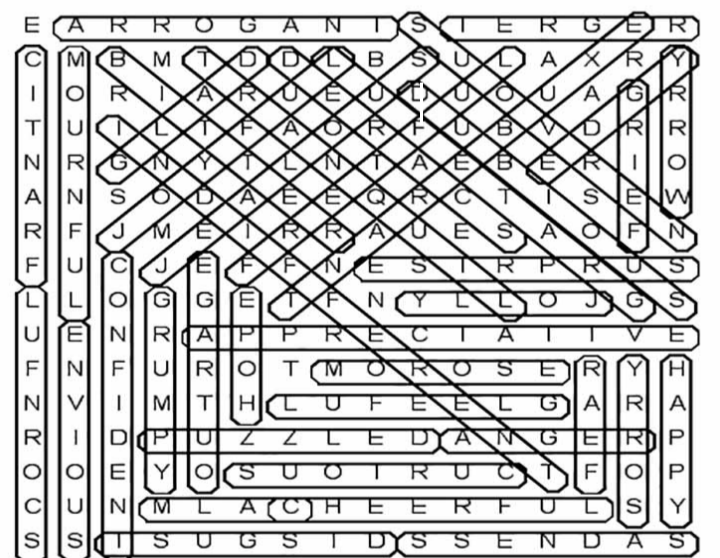
Find and circle all of the 1950's song titles that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the title of an additional 1950's song.

I M W A L K I N R E B E L R O U S E R  
P L N I L R A D E L T T I L E S A M Y  
A Y E W S E E E E Y B E H S I E S S Y L  
L E L G H E U R R L L E A M T N R E  
L N P O D I C N L I L U C W A A M T R  
S O A O A E T I E E F R E G I Y M E E  
H S D S L C E B V U N G M T N I A C  
O Y O N Y U M E L I A E O I O U D H N  
O E R I L E H O S I R Y L L O N A F I  
K N O G E T L E S L G A L L U N D L S  
U O L H U A A O E T N H E E T O S A O  
P M L T R N T E O O G I T I N O S M Y  
G G I I C I T E S D U R L N W O E I D  
O E N R E T H R B O M L O H I K L N N  
D T S E B I E M L Y Y O A W U N E G A  
R J A T N T P H O N L A T T J N E G O D  
R D O E N I O T A N A M D N A S R M M  
I O N O O T P C H A N C E S A R E L I  
B B E O D V E D O O L B G N U O Y E J

- ALL SHOOK UP  
ALMOST GROWN  
AT THE HOP  
BIRD DOG  
BLUE MONDAY  
CHANCES ARE  
CHANTILLY LACE  
CRY  
DON'T BE CRUEL  
EL PASO  
FLAMINGO  
GET A JOB  
GOODNIGHT IRENE  
I'M A MAN  
I'M WALKIN'  
JIM DANDY  
JUKE  
LITTLE DARLIN'  
LONELY AVENUE  
LOUIE LOUIE  
LUCILLE  
MAYBE  
MONEY HONEY  
MR SANDMAN  
PERSONALITY  
REBEL ROUSER  
ROLLIN' STONE  
JUKE  
SEA CRUISE  
SINCERELY  
SO WHAT  
SOUL ON FIRE  
STAGGER LEE  
THE BELLS  
THE WIND  
TIPTITINA  
TOM DOOLEY  
TRY ME  
WHITE LIGHTNING  
YOUNG BLOOD

Yesterday's Solution

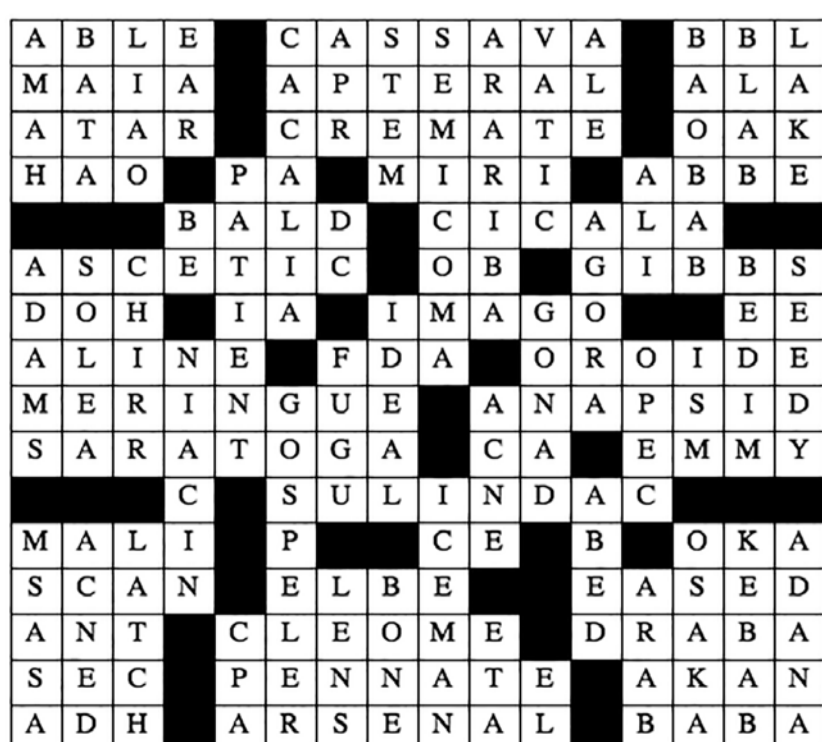
Moods & Emotions 3



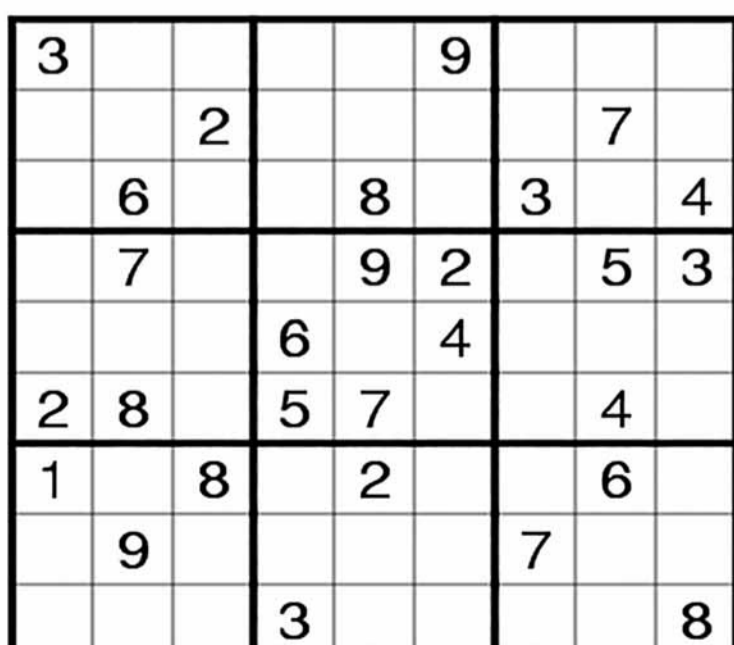
- ANGER  
APPRECIATIVE  
ARROGANT  
BITTER  
CALM  
CHEERFUL  
CONFIDENT  
CURIOUS  
DISGUST  
DUBIOUS  
EDGY  
ENVIIOUS  
EXUBERANT  
FEAR  
FRANTIC  
FRETFUL  
GLAD  
GLEEFUL  
GRATEFUL  
GRIEF  
GRUMPY  
HAPPY  
HOPE  
INDIFFERENT  
JEALOUS  
JOLLY  
JOYFUL  
MOROSE  
MOURNFUL  
NERVOUS  
OUTRAGE  
PUZZLED  
REGRET  
SAGNESS  
SCARED  
SCORNFUL  
SORRY  
SURPRISE  
TRANQUIL  
WORRY

The hidden word is: EMBARRASSMENT

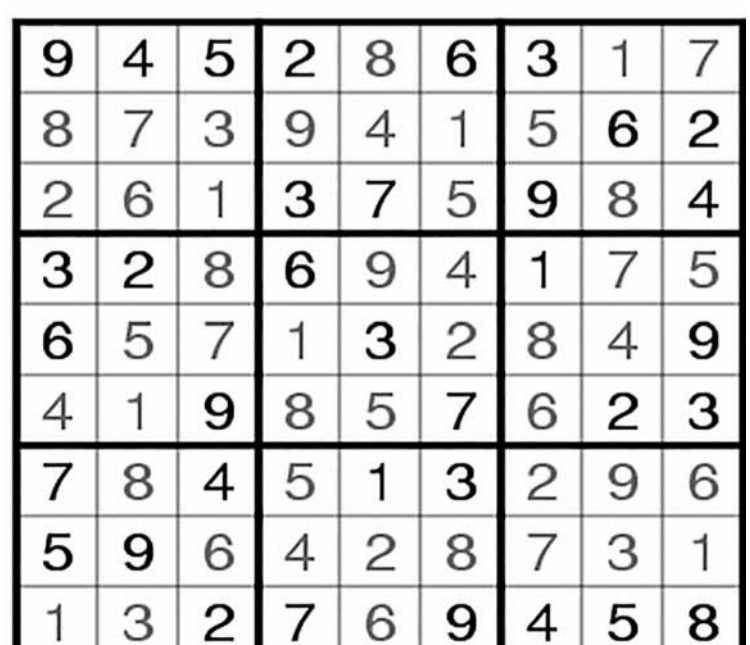
Yesterday's Solution



Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



# Lifestyle

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2020



This picture taken yesterday, shows houses covered with snow on the outskirts of Pristina after, heavy snowfalls.—AFP

## Syria's hero doctor steps reluctantly into Oscars limelight

She treated thousands of people in an underground hospital in a besieged rebel enclave in Syria. Now Amani Ballour, the doctor at the center of the Oscar-nominated documentary "The Cave", is stepping out into the limelight. But the 32-year-old pediatrician, who is still haunted by the dying and mutilated children she had to treat, hopes the attention the film has garnered will remind the world that the horror of the Syrian war is about to enter its ninth year.

hopefully help push people to support us," said Ballour, who has been living in Turkey since Eastern Ghouta fell after a five-year siege in 2018. The rebel enclave was described as "Hell on Earth" by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres as it was being pummeled by President Bashar al-Assad's forces. With the war still raging in Syria, half a million people have been displaced in the last two months by an offensive by the Assad government and its Russian allies in the



Syrian pediatrician doctor Amani Ballour holds a wounded child in her arms at the Cave hospital in Kafar Batna, Syria.

"For me it is not a film, it's my life, my reality," Dr Ballour told AFP before she obtained a visa allowing her to attend the Oscars ceremony in Los Angeles on Sunday. The harrowing 102-minute film shows the doctor not just struggling to keep wounded children alive in her operating theatre in the former rebel stronghold of Eastern Ghouta, but also having to deal with sexism as a woman in charge of a Syrian hospital. "The Cave" is one of two shattering films about the conflict in the running for an Oscar alongside Waad al-Kateab's Aleppo-set "For Sama", which won best documentary at the Cannes film festival in May.

### 'Hell on Earth'

"The Oscar nomination will help throw more light onto the Syrian cause, and

northwest of the country.

The exodus of refugees it has sparked is one of the biggest of the war. Like millions of Syrians forced from their homes, Ballour said that she finds it difficult to be at peace with herself in exile. "When I was at home I could help people, I was calmer despite all the difficulties, the bombardments, the hunger and the tragedies we were witnessing every day," she said. Instead, the young woman who has just won the Raul Wallenberg Prize from the Council of Europe for her "exceptional humanitarian acts", is haunted by the suffering of her thousands of child patients.

"The children did not understand anything... They always asked what was happening, why are they bombing us, why they were hungry. It was very difficult to explain to them," the doctor said. She was



Syrian paediatrician doctor Amani Ballour holds a wounded child in her arms at the Cave hospital in Kafar Batna, Syria, on February 6, 2018. — AFP photos

particularly marked by one 11-year-old boy, Abdel Rahmane, who was in school when his class was hit by a shell, wounding most of his classmates.

### 'Where are my legs?'

"He lost his two legs. When he woke from the anaesthetic, he asked, 'Where are

my legs? Why have you amputated them?'" "You could not look the children in the eye when you are treating them, none of us could," she added. The most difficult memory is of the day when the area was attacked with sarin poison gas in August 2013. At least 1,429 people, 426 of them children, were killed in the attack blamed on the Assad government, according to US statistics.

"In 'The Cave' hospital there was no room left to put the corpses, we piled them up one on top of the other," she recalled. Yet the documentary, made by the Syrian director Firas Fayyad, has moments of joy, like an improvised birthday party, when surgical gloves were blown up to serve as balloons. The medical staff became "one big family, we tried to find moments of joy... so we could feel human again," she said.

But as well as the daily horrors, Dr Ballour had to put up with the sexism in what is still a very conservative environment. "At the start, I heard them say things like (as a woman) I was not up to it. As well as all the pressures of the job, I had to prove that women were capable" of running a hospital, she said. — AFP



### Bizarre news

#### Asteroid 'will destroy Earth within a decade'

An asteroid will destroy Earth within 10 years, according to a conspiracy theorist. Pastor Thomas Thorn claims the planet will meet a fiery end, according to Revelation 8, as text suggests that one of the signs of the plagues of Exodus is "scorching and setting ablaze fields and forests" - which he linked to the wildfires in Australia. Thorn came to the conclusion after analyzing this 'sign' and the Book of Revelation. He cited a passage: "Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them, and there followed hail and fire mixed with blood, and they were thrown upon the earth. A third of the trees and all the green grass were burned up." "Then the second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea became blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed."



#### Two lampposts built in same garden

A family is furious after they were left with two lampposts in their garden. The trouble began when Steve and Louise Price were told the first lamppost had been put in the wrong place. Three years later a second lamppost has now been put on the other side of their house, as the land is owned by developers. To make matters worse, Steve and Louise have discovered the garden of their new build home is 3ft shorter than it was meant to be, and the family are now locked in a legal dispute with the developers. Steve said: "The whole situation has caused us a huge amount of upset and stress. I've been petrified they will turn up at my house when I'm at work and dig up my garden. We are in a stand-off. They won't pay us for the loss of land so I am trying to stop them from finishing the work until they pay. "We wouldn't be in this position if they put the lamppost in the right place to begin with."

#### Man mistakes coat for a leopard

A man pulled over after seeing a leopard on the road - only to discover that it was "some tart's coat". Ben Lily, tentatively approached the "animal" in Hebden Bridge in Yorkshire and feared that he may have his face "ripped off" by the creature, only for her dread to turn to embarrassment. Admitting to his mistake in a Facebook post, Ben said: "Careful! Dead leopard in the road on way to Halifax! Oh no, it's some tart's coat from last night, can't believe I turned back for this!" He added: "My heart was racing with a kind of excitement. I thought 'is this a big cat? It would be an amazing thing to find. I got out cautiously, because I didn't want something taking my face off, but as soon as I looked at it from the other angle I started laughing. "I crept up with my phone out and as the angle changed, I felt like I was on candid camera. I was chuckling to myself. I started laughing then to save my own embarrassment."

#### People can be buried in glitter coffins

The dead have been given the chance to go out in style - via glitter coffins. The Glitter Coffin Company is giving people the chance to have a glitzy final resting place in "beautiful bespoke glitter and crystal coffins and caskets". There is a range of coloured coffins available from lilac to rose gold to pink, all of which are upholstered by hand. The company's website reads: "Our stunning coffins are a beautiful way to reflect and celebrate a person's life. "Our glitters are made up of a chunky crackle glitter which catches the light beautifully giving the ultimate sparkle effect on a sunny day or when the light catches the glitter flex." For those who want to be cremated, there are a range of ashes boxes available in similar shimmering finishes. There are even options for pets, meaning your beloved pooch or feline can be given a fitting send-off. — Bang Showbiz





## Lewis was suicidal after hearing loss

**H**uey Lewis was "suicidal" after losing his hearing in 2018. The 'Hip to Be Square' hitmaker completely lost the hearing two years ago whilst in Dallas for a concert with his longtime band the News, and has said the incident was an "absolute nightmare". He explained: "I thought the bass amp had blown a speaker. I just heard this horrible noise and I couldn't find pitch or even hear myself. It was an absolute nightmare. The worst thing. Just horrible." The 69-year-old star had previously lost the hearing in just his right ear in 1987, when he diagnosed with Meniere's disease and was told to "get used to it". He said of his

first run in with hearing loss: "I felt like I had been in a swimming pool and my ear was full. I couldn't shake it out or pop my ears. I went to all kinds of doctors and an EMT finally said to me, 'Get used to it.' I said, 'Get used to it? I'm a musician!' "[Meniere's disease is] a syndrome based on symptoms. If you have fullness in your ears, vertigo, and tinnitus, they call it Meniere's, but they don't know what it is." Huey adjusted to life with partial hearing loss, but when he also lost the hearing in his left ear in 2018, he was left contemplating his "demise". The star first tried various methods to try and get his hearing back, including visiting renowned hearing specialists and

following an all-organic, low-fat, caffeine-free, essential-oils diet, but nothing worked. He said: "I was suicidal. There was literally a roaring tinnitus in my head. I just laid in bed. There was nothing I could do. I'd just lay in bed and contemplate my demise." Huey pushed through the darkest times with the help of his family and friends, and is now thankful things aren't much worse. He told Rolling Stone magazine: "It turns out you can get used to almost anything. I told myself things like, 'At least I don't have pancreatic cancer ...'"

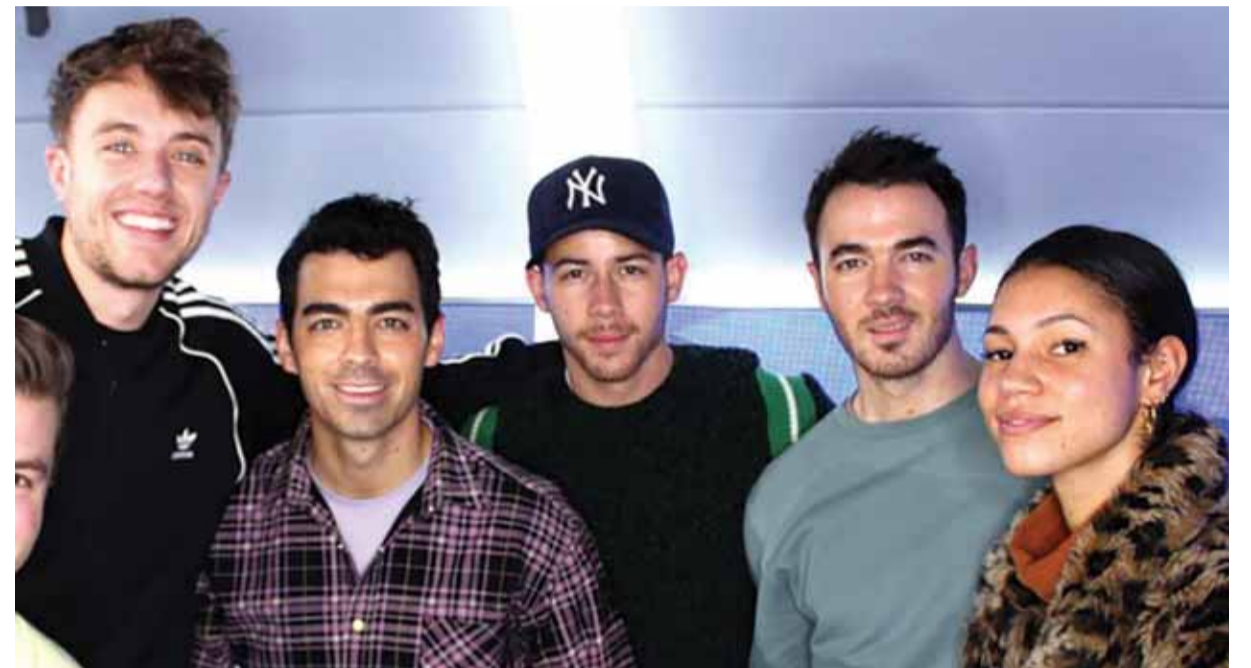
## Jessica Simpson unveils six new songs



**J**essica Simpson has unveiled six new songs. The 39-year-old singer is releasing a few new tracks to coincide with her memoir 'Open Book' and "for the first time", she feels "no pressure". Taking to her Instagram account, she wrote: "Releasing music isn't what it used to be for me. For the first time, I feel no pressure. Today I'm releasing six new songs, written from my heart, at the end of my audiobook with connection, peace and compassion for myself. #OpenBook #PartyOfOne (sic)". In one of the songs, she sang that she was "not broken just cause she cries" and insisted she was "more than these demons holding her down". Singing the lyrics, she shared: "Gonna look in the mirror, straight in my eyes ... tell myself I'm not broken just cause I cry. It's a love song, part of one. I'm not weak cause I don't want to fight. I am more than than my body, more than my wealth. I am more than these demons holding me down. It's a love song, party of one: God knows its my bad for my health." And Jessica - who has Maxwell, seven, Ace, six, and Birdie, 10 months, with her husband Eric Johnson - says music is her "biggest passion". Speaking previously, she said of music after having a studio built in her house: "That's how I started; that's always [been] one of my biggest passions in the world. I love to use my voice. [Once it's completed, I'll] be down in the basement recording. I'm sure my kids will completely take over."

## Robyn to receive songwriter award

**R**obyn will be named Songwriter of the Decade at the NME Awards this month. The 'Dancing On My Own' hitmaker is "humbled and honored" to have been chosen to receive the one-off honor, which recognizes her contribution to and influence on the current pop landscape. She said: "I'm always mystified and ready to be seduced by a beautiful song. "There are so many good songs that were written before and after 2010 that inspired me. So I feel very humbled and honored to be given this award." Meanwhile, it has been announced that 'Deal Wiv It' collaborators Slowthai and Mura Masa will open the ceremony, which takes place at the O2 Academy Brixton in London on Wednesday February 12. And Slowthai - who is up for four awards - has vowed to dominate the evening. He told NME.com: "I'm coming to win all the awards (including Godlike Genius) and if there's one I don't win then I'll take it from them anyway. "Me and Mura Masa are excited to headline the awards and play our unfortunately rejected-in-favour-of-Billie-Eilish James Bond theme song yet still number-one-multi-platinum single 'Deal Wiv It'. All those that perform after us are simply the dessert... the digestif... the followers... the laggards. Except IDLES, if my brothers are playing then it's a co-headline. If they're not playing, why not?! Brixton is mine. As you were. Mura Masa added: "Any opportunity to play with Ty is a dream. You never know what's going to happen and I think this will be especially unpredictable." Yungblud, AJ Tracey, Beabadoobee and The 1975 were previously announced as performers at the ceremony, which will be hosted by Katherine Ryan and Julie Adenuga. It was announced last month that the Godlike Genius Award will be presented to Glastonbury organiser Emily Eavis this year and Courtney Love will receive the Icon Award.



## Jonas Brothers' tease new album is coming 'soon'

**J**onas Brothers have teased their new album will be released "sooner" than people might think. The trio of brothers - comprised of Kevin, Joe, and Nick Jonas - are gearing up to release their second studio album since their return from hiatus last year, which will be the follow-up to 'Happiness Begins', and whilst they won't give a firm release date for the record, they have said new music will be coming "soon". Asked when their new album will drop, Nick said: "Soon. Probably sooner than you might think. It's done, that's the cool part, and there's even more new music coming as well." The 'Sucker' hitmakers also dismissed rumors that their former Disney Channel co-star Miley Cyrus would be joining them on a track from their new record, which will mark their sixth studio venture overall. And although Miley won't be making an appearance on the album, there will be "a feature or two" from other musicians. Speaking during an interview with Capital

Breakfast with Roman Kemp, co-host Vick Hope asked: "So looking at the new album, is Miley Cyrus gonna be on there? That's what I read." To which Nick said: "Oh, wow, I have not read that." And Kevin added: "That's not true." Nick then teased: "No, that's not true but there might be a feature or two ..." Meanwhile, the group recently said they plan on adapting their sound to survive in the modern music industry. Ahead of their release of 'Happiness Begins' in June, Nick said: "[We needed to reflect] the ever-changing landscape of the way music is released and how people consume it. "We were conscious that there would always be a new wave of entertainers you can feel you're in competition with but rather than be frustrated with how quickly things change, we've chosen to lean into it."

## Damon Albarn: Slowthai is a 'kindred spirit'

**D**amon Albarn says slowthai is a "kindred spirit". The Blur frontman and Gorillaz star teamed up with the 25-year-old rapper on new Gorillaz track 'Momentary Bliss' - which also featured Slaves - earlier this week, and has now said he wanted to join forces with slowthai because they both share the same "world view". Speaking to Hanuman Welch on Apple Music's ALT CTRL, Damon said: "He's just a kindred spirit. You need to work with people who are kindred spirits, people who are in the same pocket as you are about world view, emotion." The 51-year-old musician also praised the 'Ladies' hitmaker for using music to make "grim scenarios" - such as the current political climate - into "uplifting" situations that make people feel as though they can "do something about it". He added: "In some ways every generation, [it] crosses their mind - when I was his age, there was still the last decade of the cold war - there was a huge anxiety about atomic apocalypse. We really felt that as kids. I feel for everyone really: having to assimilate so much information which they are absolutely innocent of its creation, but have to live with its implications. "Someone like slowthai has a great positivity about him - even though he talks about grim scenarios but he's got an energy that is uplifting ... it makes you feel like you can do something about it ... which is what you need." Alongside slowthai - whose real name is Tyrone Kaymone Frampton - Gorillaz recently teased a collaboration with Tame Impala, and Damon said there are still plenty more "surprises" to come on their 'Sound Machine' project. Damon - who created the digital band alongside Jamie Hewlett - said of the Tame Impala collaboration: "... There'll be lots of surprises!"



## Guns N' Roses add North American tour dates

**G**uns N' Roses have added a North American leg to their extensive 2020 tour. The 'Welcome to the Jungle' rockers already have plans to travel across Central and South America in March, and throughout Europe in May, but they've now also announced plans to head back to home soil for a string of dates in North America, which will take place in July. According to the Guns N' Roses website, the band will kick off their US tour with a set at Summerfest in Milwaukee on July 4, before embarking on a series of stadium shows in 18 different cities. Guns N' Roses will play in Philadelphia, Detroit, Toronto, Washington, East Rutherford, Boston, Minneapolis, Chicago, Commerce City, Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Tampa, Arlington, Indianapolis, Fargo, and Missoula throughout July and August. Meanwhile, the band's guitarist Slash recently confirmed "stuff is happening" with regards to making a new album - which will be their first since 2008's 'Chinese Democracy' - but admitted they are "not really sure" how to release new music because of the "nature of the industry". He said: "There's been no definitive answer on anything and I'll just keep keep to that. Stuff is happening, but there are no specifics. More than anything, it's because of the nature of the industry right now. "It's just like, how do you want to do this? I mean there's material and there's recording and there's s\*\*t going on, but we're not really sure what we're doing with it right now." Slash admits some have suggested they go "old school" when they make their new record. He added: "There's a handful people who said, 'Yeah, make a record and go old school.' "And there's a handful of people that are like, 'We don't even know what buying a record is any more.'"



## Slade split as Hill sacks Powell over email

**S**lade have split after Dave Hill fired Don Powell over email. The drummer and guitarist - who are both 73 and played on the band's iconic festive hit 'Merry Xmas Everybody' - were the only two remaining founding members, after frontman Noddy Holder and original bassist Jim Lea both left in 1992. In a statement on Don's website this week, the musician's team confirmed the news and wrote: "It is with great sadness and regret that Don needs to inform his fans that he now is no longer a member of Dave Hill's Slade. "Dave has sent Don a cold email to inform him that his services are no longer required, after working together and being friends since 1963." However, the drummer confirmed he is "fully fit to play drums again", and would be returning with Don Powell's Slade alongside ex-Slade

2 bassist Craig Fenney, while he is also working on a new solo record, and will be released a record with Don Powell's Occasional Flames later this year. Original singer Noddy left the band - which was formed in 1966 and became the first group to have three chart hits debut at number one - in 1992 amid feuds between the members, and he later admitted he wished they could find some way to reconcile. Speaking back in 2015, he said: "It really saddens me that the four guys who were in Slade can't get together and sit round the dinner table. "Five years ago I got the four of us together so we could air our grievances face to face, but it was so painful I'd never want to repeat it. I was shocked."



Lifestyle | Gossip



# Tarantino unlikely to make tenth film in the near future

**Q** uentin Tarantino's final movie is unlikely to be made any time soon, according to his long-time producer Shannon McIntosh. Shannon has worked with the legendary filmmaker on features such as 'Once Upon a Time in Hollywood' and 'Django Unchained' and suggested her collaborator is likely to focus on other creative plans before directing his 10th and last motion picture. When asked about Quentin's next film by NME, Shannon said: "I don't know! He has many things he's thinking about. He has some other projects he may do before his last (film). "We're going to try and not rush into that last movie, so he can keep creating

amazing art that we can all enjoy. I hope to the end that we're working together, we've had a wonderful collaboration so far." Quentin has frequently discussed retiring from filmmaking after helming 10 movies, with his most recent project, 'Once Upon a Time in Hollywood', classed as his ninth. The director's wife, Daniella Pick, is also pregnant with the couple's first child and Quentin recently discussed how the change to his family dynamic means he will be prioritizing his personal life over his career. He said: "I kind of feel this is the time for the third act (of my life) to just lean a little bit more into the literary, which would be good as a new father, as a new husband. "I

wouldn't be grabbing my family and yanking them to Germany or Sri Lanka or wherever the next story takes place. I can be a little bit more of a homebody and become a little bit more of a man of letters." The 56-year-old director has previously pitched the idea for a 'Star Trek' story, but admits he is unlikely to direct the project. Quentin said: "I think they might make that movie, but I just don't think I'm going to direct it. It's a good idea. They should definitely do it and I'll be happy to come in and give them some notes on the first rough cut."

## Zellweger's different kind of responsibility

**R**enee Zellweger felt a "different kind of responsibility" starring in 'Judy'. The 50-year-old actress - who stars as the late singer Judy Garland in the 2019 movie - admits there was an added pressure to play someone who really existed. She said: "I tried to break it down from an intellectual perspective and look at the methodology behind it. Like, okay there's a style of singing here, and what octave she's singing in, and what the damage at that time in her life in terms of her performances. What are those things that are defining characteristics in terms of her performance choices? And I'd try to study those. When you're portraying non-fictional accounts of people's lives there's a different kind of responsibility you feel to represent what could be known as accurately as possible." Renee tried not to overthink her role as she would have just "run away". She added: "I tried not to think too much about the obvious, which is how adored Judy is and has been through generations. I tried to take that off the table and look at it as an exploration of trying to understand the human experience on the other side of that stardom ... otherwise I would have just run away." And the 'Bridget Jones' star had a lot of voice training to perfect her vocals. Speaking to People magazine, she shared: "I never tried to hit any of those notes before - I mean, maybe in the shower it was a good idea. So I started the vocal training and the practical training that I could, just to see what that felt like and to see what was necessary in order to actually make that sound."



## Jurnee Smollett-Bell wants Black Canary spin-off film

**J**urnee Smollett-Bell feels that a Black Canary spin-off would be "incredible". The 33-year-old actress - who plays the heroine in upcoming blockbuster 'Birds of Prey' - admitted she could definitely be tempted by a stand-alone film focusing on her DC Comics character. Asked by Digital Spy if she'd like to be in a spin-off, she said: "That would be incredible." However, Smollett-Bell insisted that she is "living the dream" with a role in 'Birds of Prey', regardless of what happens in the future. She explained: "Listen, I'm in love with Black Canary, and I'm in love with the DC world. So you know, whatever happens with 'Birds of Prey', it's like I'm living the dream." Her co-star Margot Robbie - who reprises her 'Suicide Squad' role as Harley Quinn and produced the movie - joked that Black Canary could feature in a "musical" spin-off. 'True Blood' actress Smollett-Bell also suggested that there is a "lot" more to come from Black Canary, as this movie serves as the origin story for the character. She admitted she did not embrace her character's powers - such as the ability to stun her enemies with a sonic cry and her skills as a street fighter - fully, which she hopes to do in the future. Jurnee said: "She's a beast, but I had to be really patient and kind of like reel that in because it is an origin story. "She's not there yet, so it was great to explore this idea of, you know, a woman who's really needing to be emancipated from a state of mind. Because she's really the one in her own way. "I mean, she's the most powerful person in the room. She's got the Canary Cry and yet she's choosing to hide it. And she's very much the reluctant hero."



## Woody Harrelson to star in Triangle of Sadness

**W**oody Harrelson is starring in new satire, 'Triangle of Sadness'. The three-time Oscar nominee leads the cast alongside Harris Dickinson and Charlbi Dean in the new project, which will be directed by Swedish filmmaker Ruben Ostlund. The plot follows a fashion model couple, Carl and Yaya - played by Dickinson and Dean - who are invited on a luxury cruise that later sinks. When the boat goes down, the pair are stranded on a desert island with a group of billionaires and a cleaning lady (Dolly De Leon) - who is the only person who knows how to fish - as traditional hierarchies go out of the window in the fight for survival. Ostlund told Deadline: "I was raised with the idea that looks don't matter, that it is the inside that counts. Even as a child I realized that this was a well-meaning lie. "Through the models, Carl and Yaya, I want to explore the significance of looks in three different environments - in the fashion world, on a luxury yacht amongst billionaires and on a desert island. "On the island, a Filipino cleaning lady ends up on top of the hierarchy. At the same time Carl finds a new way to use his good looks." The 45-year-old director also revealed that Harrelson will play an eccentric Marxist seas captain who spouts the communist manifesto at his passengers during a storm which has his precious cargo reaching for the sick buckets. Ostlund travelled the world to see many of the prospective actors in person, during which time they did improvisations, and the filmmaker admitted he was impressed by Woody's performance. He said: "Woody responded well to the role. I think we share political views to an extent." The film will begin shooting on February 19 in Sweden and Greece, where cameras will roll on the Adriatic Sea.



## Miller working on sci-fi musical

**E**zra Miller is teaming up with Saul Williams and Lin-Manuel Miranda on a sci-fi musical. The 'Justice League' star - who has formed new production company MartyrLoserKin with artist and musician Williams - is set to work on will upcoming project 'Neptune Frost'. The movie will be directed by Williams - who will also co-produce alongside Miller - while 'Hamilton' creator Miranda is on board as an executive producer. According to Deadline, the film will focus on an intersex African hacker, a miner, and the "virtual marvel born as a result of their union". Pre-production on the project is underway in Rwanda. 'Neptune Frost' will be the first offering from MartyrLoserKin, which the duo plan to use to "create and proliferate works that dismantle conventional cinematic ideological frameworks". They said in a statement: "[Our projects will] synergistically naturalise into this industry more poetic, queer, explorative, anarchic, diverse, subversive, non-binary, aboriginal, environmental, ecological and esoterically conscious content that will speak to both the times in which we live and the forces that seek to restrict them." The news comes after the announcement that Miranda's acclaimed musical 'Hamilton' will be in cinemas across the world next year after producers landed a £58 million deal with Disney. The film was shot in 2016 - two weeks before the original cast left the Broadway show - and is based on three live performances, and is set to be released in October 2021. Once the production has had a cinematic release, it will then be added to the studio's new streaming service, Disney+. Miranda took to Twitter to confirm the news, writing: "Disney presents: Hamilton. With The Original Broadway Cast. Filmed onstage at The Richard Rodgers Theatre. In A Theater Near You. October 15, 2021. #Hamilton (sic)."

## Sher was concerned about Phoenix during Joker filming

**J**oker cinematographer Lawrence Sher was worried about Joaquin Phoenix's commitment to the role. The filmmaker was concerned the 'Gladiator' star would "go too far" into the character, during filming and admitted his fears came from the way the late Heath Ledger - who died before the release of 'The Dark Knight' - threw himself into playing the villainous alter ego. When he was worried about Joaquin's dedication to the character at Sunday's BAFTAs in London, Sher told NME: "Nobody has ever asked me that, but a little bit. "I did, I thought because of Heath and what happened before the release of the movie, yeah. "It was like a tiny bit in my head just being concerned for when people take something on so deeply, to be a character that has madness inside of them how can it affect him? So a little bit of that." The 45-year-old actor lost 52 pounds for his portrayal of Arthur Fleck - who eventually transforms into Batman's iconic foe - and Joaquin's weight loss made Sher worry. He said: "I just wanted to give him a sandwich, because he had lost so much weight. I was a little concerned for his health." The cinematographer also revealed that he knew 'Joker' would be a success after seeing Joaquin - who won the BAFTA for Leading Actor for his performance - at work for the first time He recalled: "Once we got to day one - we shot the scene where he's talking to the social worker, and that was the first time really I got to see Joaquin work. "And after one take I realized this movie is going to be something special. And this idea that for 58 more days I get to watch him work, and see how [director Todd Phillips] connected with him, it was a really, really special movie."



## SCHWARZENEGGER TURNED DOWN ROLES OFFERED BY DAD ARNIE

**P**atrick Schwarzenegger has turned down roles offered to him by his father Arnold. The 26-year-old actor and model has forged a career on the big-screen - including roles in the likes of 'Go North' and 'Midnight Sun' - but has no interest in acting alongside the 'Terminator' legend. He told Metro.co.uk: "My parents [are] very supportive of me wanting to do this on my own. I'm not interested in doing little roles on my dad's movies. And he gets that. "He's asked me to be in some things and I said no. I want to climb my way up to the ladder, not be a given." Patrick - the son of Arnie and his former wife Maria Shriver - played Daniel, a demented imaginary friend in the horror 'Daniel Isn't Real', which was released in December 2019. His character acts as a devil on the shoulder of tormented Luke (Miles Robbins), who is dealing with an absent father, a mentally ill mother and PTSD. Patrick admitted he enjoyed the experience of playing such a villainous character. He explained: "It was really fun to try to change into another person. Trying to see how people look at how he's dressed and how he acts." Patrick also opened up about how he dabbled in method acting to immerse himself in the part. He confessed: "Sometimes on my days off, I created this whole look for Daniel, and went down to Starbucks dressed as him - in my skintight leather pants and my fishnet, with my black hair. "I went and hung out and I remembered what it was like to order my coffee and be in line with people looking at me. It was an interesting perspective."



# Did the Oscars snub women? Decades-old debate rages on

It is an accusation that has been leveled at the Oscars all too often over the years, and 2020 is no different—too many men, not enough women, particularly in the most prestigious categories. The hashtag #OscarsSoMale reared up again following the Academy Award nominations announced last month, with much of the focus on the absence of Greta Gerwig in the best director category. Her acclaimed film adaptation of “Little Women” was shortlisted for best picture, but Gerwig’s name was missing from an all-male, five-strong best director section, sparking controversy.

than 90 Oscars ceremonies. But ironically, the last woman nominated in the category was Gerwig herself, for 2017’s “Lady Bird.”

This nomination has been held up as proof by some that her absence this year is no deliberate exclusion, but simply a result of extremely strong competition in an award season featuring the likes of “Joker,” “1917,” “Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood,” “The Irishman” and “Parasite.” Sasha Stone, founder of the Awards Daily website that has tracked film prizes for 20 years, described the supposed snub as “fake news.” “The misconception that Gerwig was passed over in favor of lesser male counterparts is patently untrue,” Stone wrote.

## ‘Boys’ club’

Since the Oscars were first held in 1929, the Academy has faced an uphill battle to break with misogynistic habits—both within the organization, and the broader movie business. “Of course, systemic gender bias in the film industry exists, without a doubt,” said Stone. While few women “in the past were ever trusted to helm prestige films,” the directors’ branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has itself “always been a boys’ club,” she said. “For decades, its members were the men nominated for Oscars and the men who won them.”

Melissa Silverstein, founder of the “Women and Hollywood” website and director of the Athena Film Festival, added: “It’s disturbing but not surprising that women directors still don’t get the respect and awards that male directors do.” “The system and the culture are the problems,” Silverstein said. The Academy has boosted efforts to address this, increasing its membership dramatically after criticism of under-representation of women and minorities.

Since 2016, it has expanded the number of Oscar voters—currently around 8,500 — by 35 percent. “We went through our membership roster and said, ‘Who have we not included? Who needs to be here?’” Lorenza Munoz, the Academy’s head of member relations and awards, told The Hollywood Reporter. “And there was a very long list of people. Our members have really dug in and taken it very seriously.”

The organization is still 68 percent male and



In this file photo Kathryn Bigelow celebrates winning the best director Oscar during the 82nd Academy Awards at the Kodak Theater in Hollywood, California on March 7, 2010.

84 percent white, but for the first time in history, women made up half of the new recruits added last year. And at last month’s Oscar nominations announcement, an Academy press release prominently noted that a “record 64 women were nominated, one-third of this year’s nominees.” This statistic includes Gerwig’s own two nominations—best adapted screenplay for “Little Women,” and best picture, as she is one of the film’s producers.

And more broadly, several of the most eagerly awaited films of 2020 will be directed and/or produced by women, such as “Wonder Woman 1984,” “Mulan” and “Black Widow.” “There have been great strides and we’ve got to keep going: keep writing, keep making, keep doing. It’s all there,” Gerwig said. —AFP

## Women at the Oscars: Often in a secondary role

Since the first Oscars were awarded more than 90 years ago, there have been by far fewer women winners in all categories except costume design. With the 92nd edition of the Academy Awards on Sunday also shaping up to be dominated by male winners, here is a breakdown of the wins for women over the years:

### 15 percent women winners

Since the first Oscar ceremony in 1929, just 15 percent of the golden statuettes for acting and film production have been handed to women, according to an AFP analysis of data on winners of individual awards (not overall awards given to films). This is equivalent to 376 women from a total 2,435 winners. The proportion of women drops to roughly 10 percent, or 201 of 2,085, when the gender-specific actor and actress awards are not included.

The percentage of women winners has increased over time, but they remain largely in the minority. For the first 10 years of the Oscars, 13 percent of winners were women—and only four percent in the categories open both to men and women. Over the most recent decade, this rose to 22 percent of overall laureates, and 17 percent in the mixed categories. The most “feminine” Oscars were in 2016: the jury handed 11 of 30 mixed awards, or about 37 percent, to women.

### No woman’s land

A woman has never won in the cinematography category. The prestigious best director category has only gone to a woman once: to American Kathryn Bigelow in 2010 for “The Hurt Locker”. No woman has been nominated this year. There has also only been one woman among the 207 winners for sound mixing: American Lora Hirschberg in 2011 for “Inception”.

The best visual effects award has only been handed to women twice, from a total 240 winners. The best original score category has only seen three female winners out of 167: American lyricist Marilyn Bergman in 1984 for “Yentl”; English composer Rachel Portman in 1997 for “Emma”; and Englishwoman Anne Dudley in 1998 for “The Full Monty”. They may be joined this year by Icelandic maestro Hildur Gudnadottir, who is nominated for her work on “Joker”.

### Makeup and costumes

While still under-represented, women fare better in the categories of screenplay with 21 winners out of 279; sound editing (six of 72); production design (25 of 296); and film editing (15 of 113). Only two categories see a strong female presence: makeup and hairstyling, and costume design. The Oscar for makeup and hairstyling has been handed to women 30 times out of 81 (37 percent). And costume design is the only category in which more women than men have received the golden statuette: 66 out of 112 overall, or 59 percent, rising to 77 percent for awards since 2000. American Edith Head received the Oscar eight times between 1950 and 1974, including for “All About Eve” in 1951 and “Roman Holiday” in 1954.

### Young actresses favored

For acting, the spread of winners is equal between the genders because of the separate categories for men and women in leading and supporting roles. But young actresses take home by far more awards than their older colleagues. Of 92 winners for best actress, only 11 have been aged over 50. This compares to 21 for best actor. And 32 of the women were aged under 30, which is the case for only a single male actor: Adrien Brody for “The Pianist” in 2003. It means that winning male actors are, on average, seven years older than their women counterparts, a gap that has nonetheless closed to four years over the past decade. —AFP



In this file photo US director/actress Greta Gerwig arrives for the 2020 Oscars Nominees Luncheon at the Dolby theatre in Hollywood on January 27, 2020.

— AFP photos

“It’s quite remarkable, after everything that has happened over the last few years, that the Academy refuses to acknowledge women in multiple categories,” said Tema Staig, executive director of the advocacy group Women in Media. “It’s outrageous, and it affects our ability to tell our stories and also to move up in the industry,” she told Vogue magazine. Some social media users and industry professionals have even called for a boycott of Oscars night on Sunday over the issue.

While that may be a minority position, there is little arguing with criticism of the Oscars’ longer-term track record: it wasn’t until 2010 that a woman won best director—Kathryn Bigelow for “The Hurt Locker.” No female directors have won since, and only five have ever been nominated over the course of more

## ‘90210’ star Doherty suffers cancer relapse

Shannen Doherty, the US star of hit television shows “Beverly Hills, 90210” and “Charmed,” has been diagnosed with stage-four breast cancer. The 48-year-old described the recurrence of her cancer after three years of remission as a “bitter pill to swallow,” in an interview aired Tuesday. “My cancer came back, and that’s why I’m here,” she told ABC News program Good Morning America. “I don’t think I’ve processed it.”

Doherty’s new diagnosis came months after the death of her “90210” co-star Luke Perry last March. Perry and Doherty’s characters were once a popular couple on the teen drama, with Doherty sharing an old cast photo of them embracing after the news of his death. The show ran for 10 seasons from 1990 to 2000 and followed the lives and romantic entanglements of a group of teenagers living in an affluent area of Los Angeles. It became a huge international hit but Doherty, who played sassy Brenda Walsh, left after four seasons in 1994 after battling with



script writers. Doherty returned to the small screen playing a witch in “Charmed” in 1998, and has reprised the role of Walsh in further “90210” spin-offs and reboots. Doherty said she kept the remission quiet while filming last year’s “90210” reboot to honor Perry,

and to show fellow cancer patients that “our life doesn’t end the minute we get that diagnosis—we still have some living to do.” Reports of her first cancer diagnosis emerged in 2015 when she sued her manager, claiming her treatment was delayed as she couldn’t re-enroll in insurance. She has documented her battle on social media, including photographs of her undergoing scans in hospital. The disease has now reached stage four, the most serious category which typically means it has spread to other parts of the body. Doherty added that her health condition would likely have been revealed in a new lawsuit against her insurance company over damage to her property in a 2018 California wildfire. —AFP

In this file photo Actress Shannen Doherty walks the carpet at the Farrah Fawcett Foundation’s “Tex-Mex Fiesta” honoring Marcia Cross. — AFP



US singer Jennifer Lopez performs 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

## Lopez’s Spotify

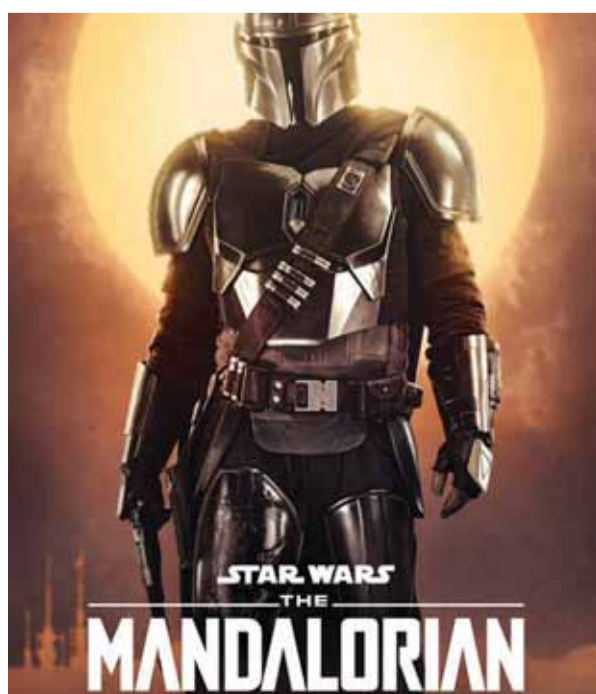
streams increase over 335% after Super Bowl

Jennifer Lopez saw her Spotify streams spike to over 335% after her Super Bowl halftime LIV show. The 50-year-old pop star took to the stage during the halftime show with co-headliner Shakira and welcomed special guests Bad Bunny and J Balvin to join them on Sunday night, and each of their Spotify streams have jumped since their epic performance. J-Lo’s music saw an increase of 335%, with her hit song “Get Right” soaring the most with a 735% jump. Other songs she performed that night also got a boost, as “Waiting for Tonight” went up to 685%, “Let’s Get Loud” to 570% and “Jenny From the Block” to over 545%. Meanwhile, Shakira saw her music soar to 230% as her track “Empire” had a huge 2135% increase.

The 43-year-old singer’s other tracks also saw a big rise following her appearance, as “She Wolf” sparked over 905%, “Whenever, Wherever” was up to 705% and “Hips Don’t Lie” boosted more than 430%. Bad Bunny - who joined Shakira on stage - saw an increase of more than 24% in the hours since the halftime show while J Balvin - who joined J-Lo - saw an increase of more than 16%. What’s more, Demi Lovato - who kicked off the night’s event with her rendition of the national anthem - saw an increase in her music streaming of over 31% following the telecast.

Meanwhile, Lopez sent Shakira an empowering “girl power” message on social media ahead of their co-headlining sets. The pair became the first Latin headliners of the sporting showpiece when they took to the stage at Miami’s Hard Rock Stadium. Jennifer tweeted: “So excited to share the stage with you tonight @Shakira! Let’s show the world what two little Latin girls can do. #LetsGetLoud #GirlPower #SuperBowlLIV #SBLIV (sic). — Bang Showbiz

prequel to movie spin-off “Rogue One.” Disney’s Marvel films have a massively successful history of creating interlinking movies—and now television shows—with “share” popular superhero characters. — AFP



Disney is ramping up its Baby Yoda content with the next series of “The Mandalorian” set for October and potential spin-offs in the works, chief Bob Iger said Tuesday. The live-action “Star Wars” television show launched last year was a hit for new streaming platform Disney+, with its tiny, cute co-star taking “the world by storm,” said Iger. Setting an October launch for season two on an earnings call, Iger promised “more coming from ‘The Mandalorian’ thereafter, including the possibility of infusing it with more characters.”

This could include “taking those characters in their own direction in terms of series,” he said. “The priority in the next few years is television” for “Star Wars,” Iger added. “The Mandalorian” follows a mysterious bounty hunter played by Pedro Pascal (“Game of Thrones”) who roams the galaxy’s lawless outer reaches looking for mercenary work. During the first season he formed an unlikely bond with a small, adorable creature officially called “The Child,” but dubbed Baby Yoda by online fans.

The mischievous, green tyke launched thousands of memes, knocking Democratic presidential candidates off the top of news searches. “Of course I would be remiss if I didn’t mention a certain child in ‘The Mandalorian’ who has taken the world by storm,” Iger told investors, hailing a “sensational response to this new character.” “We know there is great anticipation for the substantial array of Baby Yoda consumer products hitting the market in the coming months,” he added. Iger also flagged previously announced “Star Wars” television shows, including the return of Ewan McGregor as Obi-Wan Kenobi, and a

## More Baby Yoda? ‘Mandalorian’ back in October as spin-offs mooted

## ‘MASH’ co-creator Gene Reynolds dies at 96

Gene Reynolds, the co-creator of hit television series “MASH”, has died aged 96, Hollywood’s directors guild said Tuesday. Veteran director and producer Reynolds oversaw the 1972 pilot of the long-running Korean War show, for which he would go on to win three of his six Emmy Awards. The sitcom about a team of surgeons in the conflict was one of the most popular series in TV history, with its finale attracting a record 105 million viewers in 1983. Reynolds also co-created “Lou Grant”, a spin-off of “The Mary Tyler Moore Show”.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1923, he began his career as a child actor at age 10 as his family relocated to Los Angeles. After serving in the US Navy during World War II, he went on to appear in episodes of “The Lone Ranger” and “I Love Lucy”. As a director, writer and producer, he was nominated for a total of 24 Emmys, and also won three Directors Guild of America (DGA) awards. Reynolds had served during the 1990s as president of the DGA, which on Tuesday confirmed the news of his passing in a statement. Current DGA president Thomas Schlamme praised Reynolds’ “significant and lasting” influence, including his efforts to promote young and minority directors. — AFP

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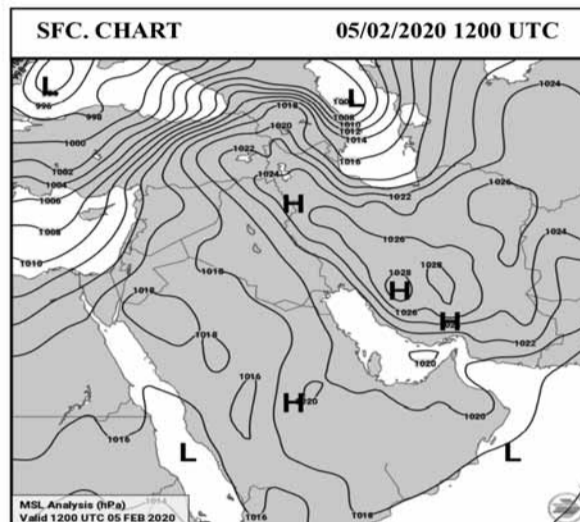
## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY NIGHT:** Cool and Partly cloudy with light to moderate south easterly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain.

**BY DAY:** Warm and Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind, with speed of 12 - 40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery later on.

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings
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STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.
KUWAIT CITY	19 °C	13 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	11 °C
ABDALY	22 °C	08 °C
BUBYAN	18 °C	12 °C
JAHRA	22 °C	11 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	18 °C	12 °C
SALMIYAH	17 °C	14 °C
AHMADI	17 °C	15 °C
NUWAISIB	20 °C	11 °C
WAFRA	22 °C	09 °C
SALMY	23 °C	09 °C



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	02/06	Warm and Partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery later on	24 °C	11 °C	SE	12 - 40 km/h
Friday	02/07	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear with a chance for fog forming at night	26 °C	13 °C	SE-VRB	08 - 40 km/h
Saturday	02/08	Fair with a chance for rising dust and some high clouds will appear later on	23 °C	14 °C	SE-NW	15 - 45 km/h
Sunday	02/09	A significant decrease in temperature	18 °C	06 °C	NW	12 - 35 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:14
Sunrise	06:36
Zuhr	12:02
Asr	15:07
Sunset	17:29
Isha	18:48

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	19 °C
MIN. Temp.	03 °C
MAX. RH	69 %
MIN. RH	24 %
MAX. Wind	S 21 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

### Hospitals

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

### Clinics

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

**CHANGE OF NAME**  
I, **Javed** Ahmed Abdul Hamid holder of Indian Passport No. M4640773 having permanent address House No. 76-106-A11-A5, Guru Raghavendra Nagar, near Bellary Chowrasta, Kallur, Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, India, Pin Code No. 518003. Residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given name Shaik Javed Ahmed S/o Shaik Abdul Hamid and surname Shaik. (C 5628)

I, **Abdul** Jabbar father of Aasiyah Zareen holder of Indian Passport No: S9728352 issued in Kuwait on 16/8/2018. Do hereby declare that my daughter's given name is Aasiyah Zareen and Surname is Abdul Jabbar. (C 5635) 6-2-2020

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.

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	1884918
Turkish Airlines	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073

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

### Flight Schedule

### DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 6/2/2020				Departure Flights on Thursday 6/2/2020			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	KAC	781	Jeddah	13:30
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	KAC	123	Dubai	13:40
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	KAC	541	Cairo	13:45
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
KAC	102	London	00:55	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
KAC	504	Beirut	01:05	KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	15:00
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
RJA	642	Amman	01:40	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	UAE	878	Dubai	15:40
PGT	828	Istanbul	01:50	FDB	8066	Dubai	15:40
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:45
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	KAC	673	Dubai	15:50
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	JZR	125	Dubai	16:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	SVA	501	Jeddah	16:00
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	743	Dammam	16:20
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	283	Dhaka	16:25
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:30
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:05	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:35
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:45
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	JZR	735	Cairo	16:50
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	JZR	103	Bahrain	16:50
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KNE	532	Jeddah	16:55
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	503	Beirut	17:05
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	IRA	666	Esfahan	17:25
KAC	352	Istanbul	04:30	KAC	619	Doha	17:35
KAC	302	Mumbai	04:40	KAC	357	Kochi	17:35
KAC	796	Madinah	04:40	FEG	242	Alexandria	17:35
JZR	406	Kochi	04:45	JZR	405	Kochi	17:40
JZR	540	KTM	04:45	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
JZR	702	Asyut	04:50	FDB	052	Dubai	17:45
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	JZR	539	KTM	17:50
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	KAC	563	Amman	17:55
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	QTR	1073	Doha	18:00
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	SAW	706	Dammam	18:00
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:20	KAC	675	Dubai	18:10
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	NIA	562	Asyut	18:10
JPJ	3730	KSQ	05:30	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:35	FEG	342	Sohag	18:20
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	SAW	511	Riyadh	18:20
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:50	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	106	London	06:00	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	KAC	301	Mumbai	18:35
KAC	332	Trivandrum	06:05	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
KAC	344	Chennai	06:10	KAC	381	Delhi	18:45
KAC	362	Colombo	06:30	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:55
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	JZR	253	Amman	19:20
BAW	157	London	07:05	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	KAC	691	Muscat	19:30
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:10	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
QTR	8511	Doha	08:05	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:10	RJA	641	Amman	20:10
KAC	622	Doha	08:30	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	NIA	162	Cairo	20:30
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	OMS	226	Muscat	20:45
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:55	KAC	333	Trivandrum	20:50
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:00	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	QTR	1091	Doha	21:00
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	DLH	624	Dammam	21:45
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45	QTR	1089	Doha	21:55
NIA	361	Alexandria	09:50	JZR	507	KHI	22:00
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	JZR	701	Asyut	22:15
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	10:00	KAC	203	Lahore	22:15
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
JZR	114	Doha	10:20	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:20
JZR	402	Bahrain	10:40	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
JZR	714	Sohag	10:50	QTR	1081	Bahrain	22:30
JZR	122	Dubai	11:15	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:50
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
KAC	352	Kochi	11:35	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	RBG	552	Alexandria	23:00
SYR	341	Damascus	12:00	MSC	502	Alexandria	23:00
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
JZR	252	Amman	12:05	RBG	214	Sohag	23:10
MSR	610	Cairo	12:25	KAC	783	Jeddah	23:15
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	383	Delhi	23:20
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	QTR	1083	Doha	23:25
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	KAC	543	Cairo	23:30
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:50	KAC	303	Mumbai	23:40
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	GOW	062	CNN	23:55
UAE	877	Dubai	14:10				

# Buttigieg leads in chaotic Iowa vote, Sanders second

**MANCHESTER, New Hampshire:** Democratic White House candidate Pete Buttigieg seized a shock lead in the chaotic Iowa caucuses, closely trailed by leftist senator Bernie Sanders, according to partial returns released on Tuesday after an embarrassing delay in reporting the results. Progressive standard-bearer Elizabeth Warren was in third place followed by Joe Biden, a disappointing showing for the former vice president who has claimed he is best positioned to defeat Donald Trump in November.

Buttigieg, the 38-year-old former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, who has been battling Biden for the moderate wing of the party, hailed what he called an "astonishing victory" in the Midwestern farm state which kicks off the presidential nominating process. "I have never been more confident in our campaign, in our team, and in the vision that brought to us this point," Buttigieg told ecstatic supporters in New Hampshire, which holds the next nominating contest on Feb 11.

With polls still mixed on whether Americans would be comfortable with an openly gay president, Buttigieg also made a rare, though implicit, reference to his sexuality - and the added significance it gave the Iowa outcome. "It validates for a kid, somewhere in a community, wondering if he belongs, or she belongs, or they belong in their own family, that if you believe in yourself



Pete Buttigieg



Bernie Sanders

and your country there's a lot backing up that belief," he said with a catch in his voice.

According to the partial results, Buttigieg, unknown nationally a year ago, leads with 26.8 percent followed by Sanders, the 78-year-old self-described democratic socialist, with 25.2 percent, followed by Senator Warren with 18.4 percent, and Biden with 15.4 percent. The centrist senator from Minnesota Amy Klobuchar was in fifth place on 12.6 percent, with 71 percent of the precincts reporting. The results were posted some 21 hours after Iowans gathered across the state to hold the first vote of the presidential nominating season.

Troy Price, the chairman of the Iowa Democratic Party, apologized profusely for the delay and blamed it on a "coding error" with an app being used for the first time to report the returns from precincts across the farm state. Price pledged to provide the full results as soon as possible. "We have been working day and night to make sure that the results are accurate," he said. "And we also have a paper trail and documentation that we have been able to use to provide information to help verify the results."

As Iowa struggled to publish the results and frustrated Democratic candidates fumed, Trump gleefully pounced on the hold-up, describing the Democrats' failure to deliver timely results as an "unmitigated disaster". "Nothing works, just like they ran the country," tweeted Trump - hours before delivering his annual State of the Union speech to a joint session of Congress under the cloud of impeachment.

The results are usually known within hours of the conclusion of the caucuses, which do not involve a traditional ballot but see voters attending public gatherings and voicing support for the candidate of their choice. Iowa kicks off the process of selecting presidential nominees every four years, but the fiasco surrounding the results is likely to increase calls for the state to lose the honor.

"The top finishers, probably Sanders and Buttigieg, could have used their showings to launch into New Hampshire," the next contest, said Larry Sabato, a professor of politics at the University of Virginia. "Instead, the story is the shocking incompetence of the Iowa Democratic Party." He called for an end to the "strange system in a 91 percent white state" in favor of giving other states a chance to kick off the process.

Virginia Senator Mark Warner expressed alarm over the Iowa debacle. "This chaos has created an environment where misinformation is now running rampant online, further undermining confidence in the democratic process," he said. With Iowa still mired in confusion, the Democratic candidates turned their sights on New Hampshire. According to a Boston Globe/WBZ-TV/Suffolk University poll released Monday, Sanders is leading in the Granite State with 24 percent, followed by Biden on 18 percent, Warren with 13 percent and Buttigieg with 11 percent.

Alluding to his own victory in Republican caucuses in Iowa, Trump said that "the only person that can claim a very big victory in Iowa last night is 'Trump'". "When will the Democrats start blaming RUSSIA, RUSSIA, RUSSIA, instead of their own incompetence for the voting disaster that just happened in the Great State of Iowa?" Trump tweeted. — AFP

## Avalanches kill nearly 40 in eastern Turkey

**ANKARA:** At least 33 people were killed in eastern Turkey yesterday by a second avalanche which buried a team of rescuers searching for people hit by the first the day before. The bodies of 33 rescue workers and civilians were discovered in Van province, where they had been helping dig out a minibus buried by snow late Tuesday, the government's disaster agency AFAD said. Five people aboard the vehicle were killed, taking the overall toll to 38. Eight people had been rescued alive from the first avalanche.

Television images showed dozens of people scrambling up the mountains, digging through snow in blizzards to find those trapped under the snow. The number of those injured was 53 in total after the second avalanche hit after 0900 GMT between Bahcesaray and Catak districts, AFAD said. Health Minister Fahrettin Koca warned the number of casualties could rise as local media reported an unknown number of people could still be under the snow.

The rescuers had been searching for two people from Tuesday's incident, AFAD's Van province chairman Osman Ucar told reporters from his hospital bed. He was among those injured including former ruling party MP for Van, Gulsen Orhan, who now advises President Recep Tayyip

Erdogan. Van governor Mehmet Emin Bilmez said rescue efforts continued despite the difficult winter conditions causing transport problems with heavy snow continuing to fall on the mountainside.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu said rescuers had paused overnight and resumed their efforts yesterday morning to find the last two people. Authorities were alerted to the first avalanche when snow-clearing vehicle operator Bahattin Karagulle escaped from his snow-covered machine and informed officials of what had happened, Milliyet daily reported.

The AFAD agency sent dozens of rescue workers after the first disaster while gendarmerie officers and firefighters provided assistance. Local media reported that residents in nearby areas also joined the rescue efforts in an area difficult to reach in harsh winter conditions. Television images showed dozens of people scrambling up the mountains, digging through snow in blizzards to find those caught under the snow.

A special military plane with 75 gendarmerie officers and other rescue officials were on their way from Ankara, AFAD and the defense ministry said. Erdogan spoke to Soyulu to obtain information on the efforts, the presidency said. The president's spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, also said on Twitter that "every tool available was mobilized" to help officials. Christian Berger, the EU ambassador to Turkey, offered his "deepest sympathies and heartfelt



**VAN, Turkey:** Emergency service members dig in the snow around at least three overturned vehicles near the town of Bahcesehir in this eastern province of Van yesterday. — AFP

condolences" as did the US embassy to Turkey on Twitter. Last month, the eastern province of Elazig was hit by a powerful 6.7-magnitude earthquake, killing 41

people and injuring over 1,600 others. A 2009 avalanche in the northeastern province of Gumushane killed 11 climbers in the Zigana mountains. — AFP

## Unique solution to help Muslims...

Continued from Page 1

athletes and spectators are under consideration in venue operations planning." According to an investigation by Waseda University, there were 105 mosques in Japan at the end of 2018. But with these spread across the country and many of them small and on the out-

skirts of Tokyo, it may be difficult for Muslims who need to pray five times a day. Inoue said he has already spoken to several Olympic committees, including most recently Indonesia, about helping their athletes.

Topan Rizki Utraden, an Indonesian who has lived in Japan for 12 years, came to the Mobile Mosque for the first time with his daughter. He said it can be challenging to find a quiet place to pray in Japan, particularly outside Tokyo. "It is really difficult to find mosques near your place," said Utraden. "If you are in the city there is no problem but if you take a road trip outside Tokyo it is difficult. 'Sometimes I pray in a park but sometimes the Japanese look at me like 'what are you doing?'" — Reuters

The OFWs are also entitled to a paid full day per week break and must not work for more than 12 hours a day. The worker should be allowed to have no less than an hour's break after five consecutive hours of work, and the right to at least eight hours of consecutive night rest. Employers are also prohibited to assign a domestic worker to work outside Kuwait or be transferred to another employer without the OFW's written consent. If this occurs without the agreement of the worker, the worker will be returned to the Philippines at the expense of the employer.

The employer should ensure the OFW's adequate lifestyle and is obliged to provide medical treatment and nursing by registering her in the health system applicable in Kuwait. "All of the provisions which President Rodrigo Duterte requested were all granted. The harmonized employment contract should be retroactive and effective immediately," Bello added. In early January, the labor department imposed a total deployment ban due to the alleged attempt of the Kuwaiti government to cover up the true cause of the death of Villavende.

but dropped to just over 39,000 five years later. Their number jumped to 124,000 in 1975 and to as many as 220,000 in 1990 just before the Iraqi invasion. After the liberation in early 1991, the number of bedoons almost halved to 117,000, as many returned to their original nationalities.

The speaker said there are bedoons who sacrificed their lives defending Kuwait, but there are others who betrayed the country, and as such "we should not treat them equally". He said 3,944 bedoons who worked in the military before the invasion collaborated with the Iraqi occupation, and thus betrayed the country, adding they will not be granted citizenship. Ghanem told HHI the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah that some people are plotting to topple him, adding that they are preparing to grill the premier but are waiting for the right timing.

Minister of Public Works and Housing Rana Al-Fares told the Assembly that over the past six years, as many as 66,000 housing units and plots have been distributed, adding that the government has signed several projects worth hundreds of millions of dinars to accelerate the construction of homes. MIP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri said resolving the housing problem is very simple because money and land are available, but said that there are some who deliberately refuse to resolve the problem because they want to keep citizens engaged forever. He said resolving the housing problem will save KD 1.2 billion paid in housing allowances over the next 10 years.

## Plane skids off runway, splits...

Continued from Page 1

said there were 12 children on board. Turkish media also said the two pilots, a Turkish national and a South Korean, were seriously hurt.

NTV showed images of the badly damaged plane and flames inside, which were later put out by firefighters. After darkness fell, television footage showed dozens of rescue workers in high-visibility jackets surrounding the plane with flashlights. Some sprayed water jets onto the severed body of the aircraft, while others could be seen climbing up onto the plane to comb through the cabin.

According to NTV, Turhan said the plane broke after a "strong landing" at Sabiha Gokcen, one of two main international airports in Istanbul. The front of the plane including the cockpit was sliced off from bulk of the fuselage, and another

huge fissure separated the rear of the aircraft including the tail. Sabiha Gokcen, which lies on the Asian side of Turkey's commercial hub, was closed and flights were being redirected to Istanbul's main airport.

There had been very strong winds and rain in the area before the incident and poor weather conditions in Istanbul, particularly in winter, often lead to the cancellation of flights. The Istanbul public prosecutor has launched an investigation into the incident. The plane had landed at the airport at 1518 GMT, the private DHA news agency reported. In Jan 2018, a Pegasus Boeing 737-800 slid down an embankment at Trabzon airport on the Black Sea, and landed just meters from the water with its wheels stuck in thick mud.

After four days, the plane was eventually lifted back onto the runway with engineers using cranes. All 162 passenger and six crew were safely evacuated. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has sought to make Istanbul the world's top aviation hub and in 2018 opened a new mega-airport in the city of 15 million people, Pegasus, which has been flying for 20 years, has a fleet of 83 aircraft, including 47 Boeings and 36 Airbus planes, according to its website. — AFP

## Trump-Pelosi feud erupts...

Continued from Page 1

@realdonaldtrump has blinded her to the repulsive nature of her smug, elitist behavior."

After the event, Pelosi tweeted a photo of her with her hand reaching out to Trump and said, "Democrats will never stop extending the hand of friendship to get the job done #ForThePeople. We will work to find common ground where we can, but will stand our ground where we cannot. #SOTU"

The tension was a sign that little legislative progress should be expected with the presidential election nine months away. The impeachment case has intensified bitter feelings between Trump, a former reality TV star-turned conservative politician, and Pelosi, a California liberal, that have existed throughout his presidency. He routinely calls her "Crazy Nancy" at his campaign rallies.

As he began the speech, Republicans from both houses of Congress chanted "four more years" while he stood at the lectern in the chamber of the House. Democrats sat silently and some could be seen shaking their heads as Trump declared, "The state of our union is stronger than ever before." Pelosi, who dropped her opposition to impeachment and allowed Democratic lawmakers to seek the charges against him, sat stoically and grim-faced behind Trump and paged through a paper copy of his speech as he spoke.

Trump presented himself as a big improvement over Democratic President Barack Obama, whom he succeeded three years ago, saying he had bolstered US economic growth and increased jobs. "In just three short years we have shattered the mentality of American decline and we have rejected the downsizing of America's destiny," he said. The House impeachment managers, acting as prosecutors in the Senate impeachment trial, were seated together at the front of the Democrats' section.

Many House Democratic women wore white for a second year in a row, a sign of the suffrage movement that won women the right to vote 100 years ago. Several Democratic lawmakers refused to attend the annual speech to protest Trump, such as liberal firebrand Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Trump, using the speech to lay

out his vision for a second four-year term, said a Democratic plan to expand government-funded health insurance amounted to a "socialist takeover" that would bankrupt the country, cut benefits for those who have them now and provide care to illegal immigrants. Democratic presidential candidates and many lawmakers have proposed healthcare plans that would be run by the government, a sharp departure from the current, private system in which millions of Americans receive medical insurance from their employers. Trump's lack of a healthcare plan has left him open to criticism that he has not put enough work into finding a way to reduce rising insurance costs that burden middle-class Americans. "We will never let socialism destroy American healthcare!" Trump said.

Democratic women stood and chanted "HR 3" - a reference to a Democratic bill that would lower drug costs. In the televised Democratic response to Trump's speech, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer said: "Democrats are trying to make your healthcare better. Republicans in Washington are trying to take it away."

Trump said his policies of deregulation and tax cuts - criticized by opponents as damaging the environment and favoring the wealthy over the poor - were responsible for "unparalleled" economic success. He listed the North American USMCA trade pact, a trade deal with China, massive military spending, "unprecedented" measures to stop illegal immigration, and his bid to "end America's wars in the Middle East" as examples of fulfilling his commitments to voters. He threw his conservative base strings of red meat - tough talk on abortion, prayer in schools and the right to bear arms.

But flourishes that could have come right out of Trump's days as a reality TV show entertainer grabbed the real attention. At one moment he paused his speech to praise Rush Limbaugh, one of the fathers of America's hugely influential conservative radio landscape, who disclosed this week that he has advanced lung cancer. To the surprise of the packed audience, Trump announced that his wife Melania, who was alongside Limbaugh, was going to present the ideological star with the coveted Medal of Freedom - the highest possible civilian award.

Later, Trump outdid even this stroke of theatrics by singling out a woman in the audience whose army husband had been away for months on foreign deployments, then telling her he had "a very special surprise". It was her husband, in full uniform, coming down the stairs for a tearful, surprise reunion - in front of a primetime national television audience. — Agencies

## Philippines mulls partial lifting...

Continued from Page 1

Last week, Bello, Undersecretary Claro Arellano, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) head Hans Leo Caddac and Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) chief Bernard Olalia met with Kuwaiti officials to discuss and agree on a standard employment contract to ensure the welfare and protection of OFWs in the Gulf state.

The salient provisions of the standard employment contract include prohibition for employers to keep any of the worker's personal identity documents such as the passport, and the entitlement of a worker to own a phone and use it outside working hours provided that she guards the secrets and privacy of the household, and use the phone in a manner consistent with public morals.

## MPs slam Trump's 'Deal of the Century...'

Continued from Page 1

Ghanem also said he will submit a proposal to form a commission to investigate people suspected of obtaining Kuwaiti citizenship through illegal means, insisting their number is not small. The government also promised to accelerate the process of building homes for Kuwaitis, while several MPs doubted that the government is serious, saying its housing policies are controlled by highly influential people.

In his speech about stateless people or bedoons and Kuwaiti citizenship, Ghanem said he will submit today a proposal calling for setting up a central agency for probing suspected forgery cases in Kuwaiti citizenship. He cited the example of a woman who obtained citizenship illegally and even obtained two identities and got employment as a citizen, adding that there was an increase of 400,000 people in housing applications and this must be investigated. He said that he does not say that all of the 400,000 have got citizenship through illegal means, but thousands have fake nationalities and this must be investigated.

On bedoons, Ghanem said they were 51,466 in 1965,



## Sports

# Farrell hopes to disrupt Pivac and Wales's 'nice marriage'

## Farrell must prevent holders from getting quick ball to backline

**DUBLIN:** Wayne Pivac and Wales are a "nice marriage" but Ireland coach Andy Farrell says his side can disrupt their wedded bliss in the Six Nations clash at Lansdowne Road on Saturday.

The 44-year-old Englishman made a winning start to his tenure with an edgy 19-12 win over Scotland last weekend while Pivac made it two from two with a 42-0 walloping of hapless Italy.

Pivac, whose first game in charge was an entertaining 43-33 victory over the Barbarians last November, was renowned when in charge of Welsh region Scarlets for encouraging free-flowing, attacking rugby.

"I think that's what we saw at the weekend, and we saw a little bit of what Wayne brings from his Scarlets days," Farrell told reporters in his pre-match press conference at Ireland's training base. "I think it's a nice marriage. "First up they got off to a great start. We have to be aware of all that."

"I think that what we did last week worked really well. We concentrated on ourselves, we were wary of Scotland and what they were going to bring."

"I'm sure we can deal with Wales in the right manner. "I think we need to get our own house in order."

Farrell said Pivac had evidently worked on the Welsh defence since the Barbarians match, with the former New Zealand police constable instilling more discipline.

Farrell knows a lot about the defence side of the game having been praised for his work on the Irish one. Two victories over New Zealand and the 2018 Grand Slam came during his time as defence coach under Joe Schmidt. "I spoke to Wayne (Pivac) at the Six Nations launch (a fortnight ago) and he said it (the Barbarians match) was very, very useful," said Farrell.

"Obviously, attack takes a while to get a grip of and he's coached most of the boys there, so there's a bit of a

head-start there. "He was happy with and grateful for the week to get a decent start, but he said he wasn't quite happy with the other side of the ball and I thought defence was excellent at the weekend."

"After a performance, you get to fix a few things and I thought they did that at the weekend defensively."

Farrell said the Irish must prevent the Grand Slam holders from getting quick ball to a backline that is bursting with talent and unlikely to be as profligate in spurning chances as the Scots were last Saturday.

"If they get quick ball you can't have line speed, first and foremost you have to win your collisions and that's what happens in top-level rugby across the world," he said. "That's got to be the Holy Grail really." Farrell has kept the changes in the starting line-up to a minimum, bringing in Robbie Henshaw in the centre for the injured Garry Ringrose.

Veteran Peter O'Mahony steps in for Caelan Doris. The latter is unavailable after a head injury which forced him off inside five minutes of his international debut. Farrell said O'Mahony, who came as an early replacement for Doris, was a pretty classy alternative. "I hope he brings the same as what he did off the bench," said Farrell.

"He was bleeding a lot. "He got a smack on the back of the neck after a brilliant turnover. "I thought he was a warrior out there, Pete." Farrell says there is plenty to be worked on, primarily seizing their opportunities when they spring up. "Of course, the quality of the team we're playing against — the game will take its own course as we always know it will," he said.

"Recognising opportunities for us, the opportunities that arise, we need to be better as far as that's concerned. "Will they arise because we're playing against a good side? Only time will tell." — AFP



**DUBLIN:** File photo shows Ireland's head coach Andy Farrell watches his players warm up ahead of the Six Nations international rugby union match between Ireland and Scotland at the Aviva Stadium in Dublin. —AFP

## Folau 'grateful' for Catalans chance as Super League clubs hold talks

**LONDON:** Israel Folau says he is "grateful" to be at Super League outfit Catalans Dragons as the competition's clubs held talks yesterday over the controversial signing of the dual-code international.

The French rugby league club have been heavily criticised for signing the 30-year-old, who was sacked last year by Australian rugby union chiefs over his highly publicised homophobic views. Folau, who arrived in

Pergignan at the weekend to begin training with his new teammates ahead of Sunday's round two fixture at Wakefield, said he was raring to get started.

"I'm excited to be back playing the game that I grew up playing," Folau said. "It's been 10 years since I last played rugby league and I'm grateful for the opportunity to be part of a great organisation, a great team in the Catalans Dragons."

Coach Steve McNamara admitted the club had expected the signing of Folau to be controversial. But he added: "Having spent a lot of time speaking to him and understanding him a lot more, and getting the reassurances we did, we made a decision as a club that we would support the signing of Israel and give him another opportunity in our game."

Dragons chairman Bernard Guasch was conspicuous in his absence at a meeting of Super League clubs in the northern English city of Salford yesterday, where the hot topic of discussion was the signing of Folau.

The other clubs had specifically requested the pres-

ence of Guasch after he ignored the will of both Super League and the Rugby Football League in signing Folau. Hull KR chairman Neil Hudgell wrote a letter to the Dragons warning them of possible legal consequences in the event of his club losing out financially due to the presence in Super League of Folau.

Guasch, who has defended his club's decision to hand Folau a 12-month contract, was expected to attend the regular meeting but had not arrived when it got under way at 1000GMT. Folau, who scored 37 tries in 73 Test appearances for the Wallabies, was dismissed last May after a social media post warning "hell awaits" gay people.

Rugby Australia in December reached mediated agreement to end Folau's lawsuit over his sacking but the financial terms of the deal were confidential. Folau had been demanding Aus\$14 million (US\$9.5 million) in compensation, claiming he was unlawfully dismissed under legislation that bans sacking someone because of their religion. — AFP

## Jaguars set for two '20 games in London

**LONDON:** The Jacksonville Jaguars will become the first NFL team to play two home games outside the United States in the same season when they host a pair of contests in London during the 2020 campaign.

The games will be held on consecutive Sundays, the team announced Tuesday, and the potential opponents for those home games are Houston, Indianapolis, Tennessee, Cleveland, Detroit and Miami. The Jaguars will receive additional revenue with two games in London, making the decision the correct one in the eyes of team president Mark Lamping as the team works toward gaining approval of a proposed \$700 million entertainment district development around TIAA Bank Field.

The Jaguars also announced the hiring of former San Francisco 49ers general manager Trent Baalke to be their director of player personnel. In Baalke's first three seasons with the 49ers, the team went to three straight NFC Championship Games and one Super Bowl, losing to the Baltimore Ravens following the 2012 season.

Free agent tight end Greg Olsen will visit the Seattle Seahawks, multiple outlets reported. It was reported Monday that the former Carolina Panthers star would visit the Buffalo Bills and Washington Redskins in the near future.

Olsen, 34, hasn't yet decided if he will play another NFL season or go into broadcasting with Fox. He ranks fifth in league history among tight ends with 718 receptions and 8,444 receiving yards.

Left tackle Andrew Whitworth, 38, is returning for a 15th season in 2020 and will re-sign with the Los Angeles Rams. NFL Network's Ian Rapoport reported. Whitworth is a four-time Pro Bowl selection and two-time All-Pro who spent his first 11 seasons with the Cincinnati Bengals before signing with the Rams in the spring of 2017.

The Kansas City Chiefs hope to keep wide receiver Sammy Watkins in 2020 by renegotiating his upcoming major cap hit. NFL Network reported. Watkins' salary-cap hit climbs next season to \$21 million — the highest of any NFL wideout. The Chiefs could free up \$14 million by releasing or trading Watkins, but the report said the Super Bowl champs are hoping to negotiate a new extension or contract adjustment with Watkins. NFL Network reported that Miami signed wide receiver Ricardo Louis to a one-year extension. He had 45 catches for 562 yards through two seasons before missing the past two seasons with knee and neck injuries.

The Arizona Cardinals signed multi-dimensional Canadian Football League quarterback Chris Streveler, a reigning Grey Cup champion, to a futures contract.

Defensive tackle Carl Davis has been suspended for the first four games of the 2020 season due to a violation of the league's policy on performance-enhancing drugs, according to multiple reports. He finished the 2019 season with the Jaguars and is slated to become a free agent.

The Los Angeles Chargers signed offensive coordinator Shane Steichen to a new deal, Rapoport reported. The 34-year-old Steichen took over the job midway through last season when Ken Whisenhunt was fired following a 3-5 start.

Carolina signed running back Reggie Bonnafon to a one-year extension, preventing All-Pro Christian McCaffrey's backup from becoming an exclusive rights free agent. Panthers defensive end Wes Horton announced his retirement, ending a seven-year career that saw him register 97 tackles and 15.5 sacks in 83 career games, all with Carolina. — Reuters

## Kuwait's volleyball team defeats Al-Ain



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Club and UAE's Al-Ain teams in action.

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Club Volleyball team had a deserved win over UAE's Al-Ain with the score of 3-0, in a match that was held on Tuesday at the Kuwait Club. The match is the first round of the 37th Gulf Volleyball Champion Clubs Championship, hosted by Kuwait Club and will continue until February 10.

The results of the three games were: (30-28, 25-16, 26-24), and Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal defeated Oman's Al-Seeb 3-1 (25-19, 25-21, 26-24).

Kuwait Club Volleyball teams tops the table with points difference, as Qatar's Police is second, Hilal in third while Al-Ain, Dar Kulaib and Seeb remain pointless. The match between Kuwait and Al-Ain was fast, particularly in the first game during which Al-Ain players showed some advantage due to the lack of concentration and personal mistakes by Kuwait's players, then they were able to restore their balance and tied the score at 22-22 on their way to winning the game.

In the second game things were different, as Kuwait dominated play with good performance by their Cuban player Roland, Bahraini Mohammad Anan and Abdallah Jassim who were smashing the ball from the sides of the net, and the same was in the third game.

International rules are applied in calculating points, as the winner by the score of 3-0 or 3-1 gets three points, and the winner with the score 3-2 gets 2 points, and the loser gets a point.

Deputy Chairman of the Higher Organizing Committee, Kuwait Club member of the board Mohammad Al-Nisf said he was satisfied with the win of his team, and described it as up to the ambition, while urging players to exert their extreme effort to make things better. He said the technical levels of participating teams seemed close following the first round.



Kuwait Club Coach the Tunisian Baleid expected competition for the title to limited to Kuwait Club, Dar Kulaib and Qatar Police, especially that those three clubs have highly talented international players. Baleid lauded the win against Al-Ain, despite the pressure the team was under because it is the host and must win, adding "our players have much more than they gave, and we hope they give better performance despite the

win. Kuwait Club player Abdallah Buftain said he was happy with the win against Al-Ain in its first match. Buftain, the setter, said the team was actually under the pressure of the first match, and that is why they did not perform as expected from them, but were able to win, and this is the important thing. He said this will give players a motive in the next matches in order to give better performance during the championship.

## CADF confirms Astana report leak

**LONDON:** The Cycling Anti-Doping Foundation (CADF) said yesterday it "deeply regretted" the leaking of a report into possible anti-doping violations by the Astana team and confirmed that it had not initiated disciplinary proceedings.

Reports in Danish media this week, allegedly based on the leaked 24-page CADF report, claimed the high-profile Danish Astana rider Jakob Fuglsang had met banned doctor Michele Ferrari last year.

Astana, Ferrari and Fuglsang, winner of last year's Criterium du Dauphine and Liege-Bastogne-Liege races, all strenuously denied the claims made in the publication Politiken along with Danish state television DR and Norwegian daily VG. Cycling's governing body the UCI also issued a statement saying it had not received a report from the CADF in order to initiate proceedings against individuals or the team.

In a statement yesterday, cycling's independent anti-doping body the CADF said it had acted on information it had received into possible anti-doping violations and had asked intelligence service provider Sportradar to

conduct additional research.

"Sportradar's subsequent report was shared in strict confidentiality and in a secured manner with a selection of relevant anti-doping bodies and law enforcement agencies," the statement said.

"The CADF treated the information contained in the report with extreme care. At no point did it share the findings with any other third party, including media representatives. "The CADF deeply regrets that the report was leaked, and an inquiry is being conducted to understand how the file was made public and prevent this from happening again."

The Swiss-based organisation confirmed that "after careful review" it had not submitted the report to the UCI. According to Politiken, the CADF report stated that Fuglsang had met Ferrari at the 2019 Volta a Catalunya. Ferrari, a former medic to disgraced rider Lance Armstrong, was banned for life in 2012 after failing to contest a charge from the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) accusing him of administering and trafficking prohibited substances.—Reuters

## Sports

# Taylor-made victory as Black Caps down India in run-fest

## Second ODI at Auckland's Eden Park on Saturday

### SCOREBOARD

Final scores in the first one-day international between New Zealand and India in Hamilton yesterday:

India	
P. Shaw c Latham b de Grandhomme	20
M. Agarwal c Blundell b Southee	32
V. Kohli b Sodhi	51
S. Iyer c Santner b Southee	103
KL Rahul not out	88
K. Jadhav not out	26
Extras (lb 7, w 19, nbl)	27
Total (4 wickets, 50 overs)	347
Fall of wickets: 1-50 (Shaw), 2-54 (Agarwal), 3-156 (Kohli), 4-292 (Iyer)	
Bowling: Southee 10-1-85-2 (w1), Bennett 10-0-77-0 (w6), de Grandhomme 8-0-41-1 (w3), Neesham 8-0-52-0 (nbl, w3), Santner 10-0-58-0 (w2), Sodhi 4-0-27-1	

New Zealand:	
M. Guptill c Jadhav b Thakur	32
H. Nicholls run out Kohli	78
T. Blundell st Rahul b Yadav	9
R. Taylor not out	109
T. Latham c Shami b Yadav	69
J. Neesham c Jadhav b Shami	9
C. de Grandhomme run out Kohli	1
M. Santner not out	12
Extras (lb 4, w 24, nb 1)	29
Total (6 wickets, 48.1 overs)	348
Fall of wickets: 1-85 (Guptill), 2-109 (Blundell), 3-171 (Nicholls), 4-309 (Latham), 5-328 (Neesham), 6-331 (de Grandhomme)	
Bowling: Bumrah 10-1-53-0 (w13), Shami 9.1-0-63-1 (w7), Thakur 9-0-80-1 (nbl,w2), Jadeja 10-0-64-0 (w1), Yadav 10-0-84-2 (w1)	
Result: New Zealand win by four wickets.	

**HAMILTON:** An unbeaten century from veteran batsman Ross Taylor powered New Zealand to a stunning four-wicket win over India in the first one-day international in Hamilton yesterday. The hosts completed the second highest run chase in their history to finish on 348 for four and overhaul the imposing target set by India.

It was a morale-boosting victory for the Black Caps, who went into the match as underdogs after a 5-0 whitewash in the recent Twenty20 series, when they repeatedly squandered winning opportunities. The roles were reversed at Seddon Park, with India posting a mammoth total of 347 for four after losing the toss, including a maiden century to Shreyas Iyer and half-centuries for skipper Virat Kohli and KL Rahul.

But the tourists' bowling attack failed to prevent a match-turning innings from Taylor, who scored a 73-ball century, his 21st in ODIs, and ended the match on 109 not out. He was supported by a quick-fire 69 from captain Tom Latham and Henry Nicholls' hard-fought 78, although three late wickets gave India hope of rescuing the match.

"It's been a long time between drinks," said Latham, whose side suffered a 3-0 Test series defeat in Australia before the T20 drubbing on home soil. "It's nice to get over the line and we managed to keep our composure at the end and get there."

Kohli was gracious in defeat, saying India produced a "decent" performance that was not quite good enough on the day.

"You have to say that the opposition played better than us because they were more intense," he said.

New Zealand started their chase well, reaching 147 for two after 25 overs as Taylor and Nicholls developed a promising partnership. It took a piece of fielding brilliance from Kohli to break it with India's skipper swooping on a stay ball and tossing it underarm with skill in mid-air to run-out a diving Nicholls.

But Taylor continued his assault with Latham to take New Zealand to 292 for three with 10 overs remaining and the 35-year-old remained at the crease to hit the winning run. While Iyer's 103 from 107 balls was the



**HAMILTON:** India's Virat Kohli (L) runs out New Zealand's Colin de Grandhomme (R) during the first One Day International cricket match between New Zealand and India at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday. — AFP

highlight of India's innings, debutant opening batsmen Mayank Agarwal and Prithvi Shaw also performed solidly, bring up an opening partnership of 50.

Iyer rode his luck at times — dropped on nine and 83 — but earned praise from VVS Laxman for the way he set about dismantling New Zealand's attack. "I really enjoyed the way he paced his innings, a very mature knock," the Indian batting legend said in commentary.

Laxman's praise for Rahul, who scored an unbeaten 88, was even more fulsome, saying the wicketkeeper-batsman had cemented his spot in the Indian side after recovering from a form slump.

"He's a special talent, I'd put him in the league of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli," he said. The ever-reliable Kohli cruised to his 58th ODI half-century in a 102-run partnership with Iyer that ended when spinner Ish Sodhi clean bowled him on 51 with a deceptively flighted ball.

It was a rare highlight for the New Zealand bowlers, whose inaccuracy proved expensive on the small ground. Tim Southee was the best performer with two wickets, but he conceded 8.5 runs an over taking them. The second ODI will be played at Auckland's Eden Park on Saturday. — AFP

## N Zealand cricket defend controversial coach holiday

**WELLINGTON:** New Zealand Cricket on Tuesday defended Black Caps coach Gary Stead's decision to take a holiday after critics accused him of abandoning his team in their hour of need.

The Black Caps are in the midst of a form slump, following up a 3-0 Test series hiding in Australia with a 5-0 Twenty20 whitewash on home soil against India. It has left the team, who just a few months ago were being hailed as one of New Zealand's best, short on confidence and desperately seeking leadership.

Which is why Stead's decision to take a mid-season break as New Zealand face India in a three-match one-day series raised eyebrows among Black Caps supporters. To make matters worse, skipper Kane Williamson is sidelined with a shoulder injury, robbing the team of his batting prowess and tactical nous.

Former captain Jeremy Coney said Stead should be concentrating on turning around his team's fortunes, not going on holiday. "Can you see Steve Hansen leaving the All Blacks after they are one-nil down against the (British and Irish) Lions, and taking a week off before the second Test?" he told Radio Sport.

"This is the job and this is the main part of the season. It's ridiculous this is happening at this crunch time." New Zealand Herald sports columnist Chris Rattue said the decision to take a break in the midst of a tour by India was "unfathomable".

"The brilliant Indians are world sport rock stars, a team to measure your mettle against," he wrote. "Surely any coach would move heaven and earth to be part of an ODI series against Virat Kohli's men?"

New Zealand Cricket (NZC) chief executive David White said Stead's week off had been planned six months ago. "Of any sport in New Zealand, cricket has the most demands for time," he told reporters.

"These guys are away from home for a long time and we must manage their workload." White said the Twenty20 World Cup in Australia later this year and the new Test Championship were priorities for 2020, so Stead was concentrating on those formats rather than ODIs.

Despite the outrage in New Zealand, Kohli also downplayed the importance of the ODI series on Wednesday, saying it was a chance for India to experiment with new players. "ODIs are not as relevant as T20s this year, especially having the (T20) World Cup and the Test Championship running simultaneously," he said before the opening ODI match in Hamilton. "So I think in the ODIs you'll see more new guys getting chances and really having a go at expressing themselves at this level." — AFP

## Bavuma hits out at double standards in transformation debate

**CAPE TOWN:** Temba Bavuma hopes his eye-catching innings in South Africa's seven-wicket victory over England in the first one-day international at Newlands on Tuesday will end the debate over whether he deserves his place in the side.

Batting at number three, Bavuma's excellent 98 comes after a difficult month in which he was temporarily dropped from the test side for a home series against England that South Africa lost 3-1.

His axing stirred debate on social media about whether his place in the team was deserved or whether he was only being picked because of efforts to redress imbalances from the country's apartheid era.

Cricket South Africa targets the inclusion of two black African players and four from the mixed-race and Indian communities in each team, averaged through the year. "It has been hard. It's not so much the dropping part, all players get dropped, everyone goes through slumps of not scoring well," Bavuma told reporters. "The awkwardness and discomfort from my side is when you are thrown into talks of transformation."

"Yes, I am black, that's my skin. But I play cricket because I love it. "I'd like to think the reason I am in the team is because of performances I have put forward in my franchise side, and also for the national team, whenever I have been able to."

The 29-year-old, who has been a top performer across all formats in domestic cricket over the past few



**CAPE TOWN:** South Africa's Temba Bavuma (R) is watched by England's wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow as he plays a shot during the first one day international (ODI) cricket match between South Africa and England at The Newlands Cricket Stadium in Cape Town. — AFP

years, has hit out at what he saw as double standards in the transformation debate.

"The one thing that irks me is when you are seen through the eyes of transformation," he said.

"When you do well, transformation is not spoken about but when you do badly transformation is thrown at the top of the agenda. I have a serious problem with that. "We've got to be able to take the good with the bad. If transformation is bad when black African play-

ers are not doing well, then when we are doing well, let's also recognise transformation for what it's done."

The diminutive batsman said he is not taking his place in the team for granted. "I don't think I have nailed my spot in the side. This was just my third game and I am just happy to be on the field," he added.

"I don't know what's going to happen after this series or next week. It's just to enjoy the little moments I have." — Reuters

## Injured Farah out of London half marathon

**LONDON:** British distance-running great Mo Farah has withdrawn from next month's Big Half race in London with an achilles injury, organisers announced yesterday.

The four-time Olympic gold medalist, preparing for the 2020 Games in Tokyo, suffered the minor injury in training. Farah, 36, has won the half-marathon event for the past two years and was due to take on a field featuring Ethiopia star Kenenisa Bekele on March 1.

"I was really looking forward to racing the Vitality Big Half again," said Farah in a statement issued by event organisers. "Everyone knows how much I love racing in London, but my priority is to be fit, healthy and competitive for the summer season and for that reason I have had to make the tough decision not to race this year."

Farah will continue his Olympic preparations in Africa after changing his mind about running the marathon in Tokyo to return to the track, having won double gold over 5,000 metres and 10,000m at the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Games.

He won the 2018 Chicago marathon in a European record time but could only manage



Mo Farah

a fifth-place finish at last year's London Marathon. Eliud Kipchoge, the world record holder, is the favourite to win marathon gold in Tokyo. Farah is set to defend his 10,000m title in Japan instead. — AFP

## Nepal's first home ODI ends in defeat

**KATHMANDU:** Thousands of fans turned up to watch Nepal play their first ever official one-day international (ODI) on home soil in Kathmandu yesterday but Oman spoiled the party as they won by 18 runs. It was the first of six matches in a tri-series that also includes the United States at the Kirtipur Cricket Ground, which was packed on a special day for the Himalayan nation.

Put into bat by Nepal, Oman scored 197 for nine in their 50 overs, with middle order batsman Mohammad Nadeem anchoring the innings and finishing with a patient 69 not out off 96 balls. Nepal were all out for 179 despite late heroics by Sandeep Lamichhane after Sharad Vesawkar scored 55 at the top of the order. Lamichhane's cameo had the fans on their feet as he hit three boundaries and a six before falling for 28 off 27 balls.

Nepal's 29-year-old captain and batsman Gyanendra Malla had spoken about what a proud

moment it would be for his country to host an ODI recognised by the International Cricket Council. "When we started playing cricket, everybody wanted to get ODI status and get big cricket over here," Malla had told ESPNcricinfo [https://www.espncricinfo.com/story/\\_/id/28626756/have-dream-play-test-cricket-nepal-sandeep-lamichhane](https://www.espncricinfo.com/story/_/id/28626756/have-dream-play-test-cricket-nepal-sandeep-lamichhane) earlier this week.

"Finally, one-dayers are here in Kathmandu, one of my favourite venues. The first ODI home series, that's one of the proudest moments for me as a captain." Lamichhane, the first Nepalese picked up at the Indian Premier League (IPL) auction in 2018 when he signed for the Delhi Capitals, hopes they will one day play test cricket.

"I have a dream to play test cricket for Nepal and every little contribution from my side will go for Nepal cricket," the 19-year-old had said. "Till the day of retirement of my cricket career, I would like to play test cricket for Nepal." — Reuters

Sports

# Liverpool youngsters reach FA Cup fifth round against Shrewsbury

## Reds to face Chelsea in last 16 at Stamford Bridge

**LONDON:** Liverpool's youngest ever team proved coach Jurgen Klopp was right to rest his stars as they reached the FA Cup fifth round with a 1-0 win against third-tier Shrewsbury on Tuesday.

Klopp and his entire first team were all absent for the fourth round replay at Anfield as part of the club's winter break. The Liverpool manager was criticised for disrespecting the FA Cup, but his youngsters proved up to the task and their mature display was rewarded when Ro-Shaun Williams headed the decisive own goal in the closing stages.

Liverpool will face Chelsea in the last 16 at Stamford Bridge on March 5 as they remain on course for a potential treble of the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup. Klopp had turned over the responsibility of leading Liverpool to the club's under-23 coach Neil Critchley, who also took charge when the Reds played an under-strength side for their League Cup quarter-final defeat at Aston Villa earlier this season. On that occasion, Klopp had a better excuse for his absence as Liverpool were in Qatar on course to win the Club World Cup. This time, it was purely his decision to ignore the FA Cup, but resting Mohamed Salah, Virgil Van Dijk and company at least gave fans a glimpse of the next generation.

With an average age of 19 years and 102 days, it was Liverpool's youngest ever starting line-up in all competitions. There were seven teenagers, including 16-year-old Harvey Elliott, while Pedro Chirivella was the oldest player in the team at 22.

Liverpool-born teenager Curtis Jones became the club's youngest captain at 19 years and five days. Liverpool had blown a two-goal lead in that original meeting, but several of these youngsters had helped stun Everton in the third round and once again they showcased their potential.

Despite dominating possession, Liverpool almost fell behind in the 58th minute when Shaun Whalley headed

home, only to see VAR disallow the goal for offside against one of his team-mates in the build-up.

Liverpool made the most of that escape to win it in the 75th minute. Neco Williams' long pass looked harmless but Ro-Shaun Williams tried to head back to O'Leary and, with the Shrewsbury keeper way off his line, the ball looped over him into the empty net.

### Newcastle survive

Newcastle reached the fifth round for the first time since 2006 after a dramatic 3-2 win at third tier Oxford. Held to a 0-0 draw at St James' Park in the initial tie, Steve Bruce ignored the trend of Premier League clubs making mass changes in the FA Cup as he sent out a strong Newcastle line-up.

Sean Longstaff opened the scoring with a superb curling strike from the edge of the area in the 16th minute. Newcastle striker Joelinton got on the score-sheet in the 30th minute, converting Longstaff's pass for just his third goal since his big-money move from Hoffenheim last year.

But Liam Kelly got one back with a fine free-kick in the 84th minute before Nathan Holland equalised deep into stoppage-time with his first senior goal. Allan Saint-Maximin saved Newcastle's blushes with a powerful strike four minutes from the end of extra-time to clinch a trip to second-tier West Bromwich Albion in the last 16.

Wayne Rooney booked an emotional clash with his former club Manchester United as second tier Derby cruised to a 4-2 win over Northampton at Pride Park. Rooney scored Derby's fourth goal from the penalty spot to wrap up an emphatic victory that brought the prize of a reunion with 12-time FA Cup winners United.

The former England star, who recently joined Derby after a spell with DC United, spent 13 years with the Old Trafford club and won a host of major trophies before returning to Everton in 2017. — AFP



**LIVERPOOL:** Liverpool's Canadian striker Liam Millar (C) vies with Shrewsbury Town's Grenadian defender Aaron Pierre (R) during the English FA Cup fourth round replay football match between Liverpool and Shrewsbury Town at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England. — AFP

## Premier League boss admits VAR needs to improve

**LONDON:** Premier League chief executive Richard Masters admits his organisation must try to improve VAR after a season marred by controversy surrounding the review technology. A recent survey from opinion polling firm YouGov showed more than two-thirds of Premier League fans questioned believe VAR has made the game less enjoyable since it was introduced into the English top-flight.

Players, managers and fans have all complained about the way the system is used, with lengthy review delays and dubious eventual decisions causing widespread frustration. Masters, who started his permanent

role with the Premier League in December, told BBC Sport that VAR would stay in the game, but he hopes it can be improved.

"I don't think VAR has been damaging but I accept it needs improvement," Masters said. "Scrapping it is not an option — what we have to do is try and make VAR better." VAR has been brought in to the Premier League to decide on goals, penalties, red cards and off-side decisions.

Masters revealed to the BBC that the Premier League would discuss changes to VAR with the clubs in April. "We are going to have a debate about what sort of VAR they would like next season and what improvements can be made to the system," he said.

"It's going to be a work in progress this season and next as we try to rebalance it so you get the positives of better decision-making and fewer of the perceived negatives about delay and sometimes confusion."

Meanwhile, in his first major media interviews, Masters said he does not believe homegrown player quotas will improve the fortunes of the England team.

The balance between homegrown and overseas players in a 25-man Premier League squad is back in the spotlight following the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, which will affect the way clubs do their international transfer business once the transition period ends at the end of the year.

The Football Association has previously stated in November 2018 that it favoured cutting the number of overseas players per squad from 17 to 13 with a view to boosting the chances of young English talent. FA representatives are due to present to Premier League clubs at the league's shareholders' meeting today, and Masters says the conversation will be taken forward from there.

"We have to come up with a different system," he said. "The FA, the EFL and the Premier League all agree that (system) shouldn't impact on the competitiveness of the Premier League, that concept of the best versus the best. Clubs should still be able to acquire the best talent and support a cohort of homegrown players coming through the system. — AFP

## Ovechkin's hat trick too much for Kings

**WASHINGTON:** Alex Ovechkin scored three consecutive third-period goals in less than five minutes as the Washington Capitals rallied for a 4-2 victory over the visiting Los Angeles Kings on Tuesday night. The Kings held a 2-1 lead before Ovechkin pulled off his quick hat trick, with the last goal being a long empty-netter. Ovechkin has 14 goals in his past seven games, 40 this season and 698 in his career. Braden Holtby started in goal for the Capitals after sitting the past two games in favor of rookie Ilya Samsonov, who won 11 straight decisions before losing Sunday. Holtby made 29 saves. Jeff Carter scored the Kings' two goals, and Jonathan Quick stopped 20 of 23 shots. Los Angeles has lost seven of its past eight games.

### BLUE JACKETS 1, PANTHERS 0 (OT)

Zach Werenski scored 1:54 into overtime as Columbus extended its point streak to nine games with a home victory over Florida. Werenski, who recorded a hat trick in a 4-1 home win over Florida on Dec. 31, took the puck on the far boards, skated in and beat ex-Blue Jackets goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky for the game's lone goal. Rookie Elvis Merzlikins made 32 saves for his fourth shutout of the season for Columbus, 8-0-1 in its last nine games and 18-2-5 since Dec. 9.

### PREDATORS 2, JETS 1 (OT)

Mikael Granlund's one-timer off the post 1:11 into overtime gave Nashville a victory at Winnipeg. Granlund's 11th goal of the season gave the Predators their third win in four games, with two of those victories coming beyond regulation. Nashville's Juuse Saros stopped 33 of 34 shots while Winnipeg's Connor Hellebuyck stopped 34 of 36 shots. The Jets' Mason Appleton and the Predators' Nick Bonino scored first-period goals.

### CANADIENS 5, DEVILS 4 (SO)

Ilya Kovalchuk scored the winning goal in a shootout as Montreal overcame a three-goal deficit and bounced back from allowing the tying goal in the final seconds of regulation to edge New Jersey in Newark, N.J. Kyle Palmieri scored the tying goal on a rebound during a scramble in front of the net with 19.4 seconds remaining on a six-on-four. New Jersey had a power play after Montreal was called for having too many men on the ice, and the Devils pulled goalie Louis Domingue to set up the tying tally. Canadiens goaltender Charlie Lindgren filled in for Carey Price (flu), who did not make the trip, and stopped 20 saves in the first 65 minutes. He then stopped Nikita Gusev, Palmieri and Jack Hughes in the shootout.

### DUCKS 3, SENATORS 2 (SO)

Ondrej Kase scored in regulation and a shootout to lift Anaheim to a win at Ottawa. Nick Ritchie also

scored a regulation goal for Anaheim, and John Gibson made 30 saves. Rikard Rakell scored the clincher in the shootout. The Ducks came up short of winning two straight in regulation for the first time since Oct. 16-18, but they have won five of seven for the first time since starting the season 6-2-0.

Drake Batherson and Artem Anisimov scored power-play goals, Mike Reilly had two assists, and Marcus Hogberg made 26 saves for the Senators.

### AVALANCHE 6, SABRES 1

Andre Burakovsky tied his career high in goals for a season and added three assists as Colorado scored four goals in the second period to win easily in Buffalo. Valeri Nichushkin added a goal and two assists, and Samuel Girard, Nazem Kadri, Nikita Zadorov and Mikko Rantanen also scored for the Avalanche, who won for the fourth time in their past five games. Kadri and Zadorov also had assists, and goaltender Philipp Grubauer made 23 saves. Sam Reinhart scored the lone goal for the Sabres, who dropped to 1-4-0 in their past five games. Buffalo goalie Carter Hutton allowed five goals on 13 shots before being replaced at 10:58 of the second period by rookie Jonas Johansson, who was making his NHL debut. Johansson allowed a goal on his first shot faced, then stopped the final 13.

### ISLANDERS 4, STARS 3 (OT)

Anthony Beauvillier scored his second goal of the game with 2:08 left in overtime as host New York rallied to beat Dallas. Beauvillier also opened the scoring in the first period. Derick Brassard and Mathew Barzal added goals for the Islanders, who have earned points in four straight games (2-0-2). Semyon Varlamov recorded 28 saves. Denis Gurianov, Jason Dickinson and John Klingberg scored for the Stars, who had a two-game winning streak snapped. Ben Bishop made 37 saves.

### WILD 3, BLACKHAWKS 2 (OT)

Matt Dumba produced the game-winning goal 2:21 into overtime as Minnesota defeated Chicago in Saint Paul, Minn. The defenseman took a pass from Mats Zuccarello, scored in close and popped a puck up and in past goalie Corey Crawford. Chicago's Jonathan Toews hit the crossbar on a two-on-one with Patrick Kane earlier in the extra session. Dumba, who also contributed an assist, scored for the first time in 34 games — his first goal at home this season and just his fourth overall. The Wild's Kevin Fiala potted two goals to bring his total against Chicago to four in the teams' two meetings, and Minnesota goalie Alex Stalock stopped 27 shots.

### SHARKS 3, FLAMES 1

Joe Thornton collected the 1,500th point of his career with his second assist of the night, and Aaron Dell made 30 saves in a sparkling performance as San Jose snapped a two-game losing streak with a win at Calgary. Brent Burns, Evander Kane and Kevin Labanc all scored for the Sharks, who had lost five of six games but drew up a

comeback win. Johnny Gaudreau notched a power-play goal for the Flames, and David Rittich stopped 23 shots. Calgary captain Mark Giordano left late in the second period due to a lower-body injury sustained when he fell awkwardly while attempting to take a shot.

### BRUINS 4, CANUCKS 0

Charlie Coyle scored a controversial first-period goal, and Tuukka Rask stopped all 25 shots he faced as host Boston won its fourth straight game, blanking Vancouver. Brad Marchand, David Krejci and Karson Kuhlman also scored, and Charlie McAvoy had two assists. Rask's shutout was his third of the season and the 48th of his career. Jacob Markstrom made 38 saves for the Canucks, who lost their second straight since a five-game winning streak.

### LIGHTNING 4, GOLDEN KNIGHTS 2

Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 27 shots to pick up his league-leading 27th victory, and Steven Stamkos scored the go-ahead goal midway through the third period to lead host Tampa Bay past Vegas for its fourth straight victory. Brayden Point had a goal and an assist, and Tyler Johnson and Alex Killorn also scored goals for Tampa Bay, which improved to 16-2-1 in its last 19 games. Nikita Kucherov and Ondrej Palat each added two assists. Vasilevskiy improved to 14-0-2 in his last 16 starts, tying the team record for longest point streak of 16 games set by Nikolai Khabibulin (12-0, four ties) set in 2003. Paul Stastny and William Carrier scored goals, and Brayden McNabb had two assists for Vegas, which had a two-game winning streak snapped. Marc-Andre Fleury finished with 14 saves.

### BLUES 6, HURRICANES 3

Brayden Schenn and Zach Sanford each scored two goals as host St. Louis defeated Carolina. Sammy Blais and Colton Parayko also scored for the Blues, who extended their home-ice point streak to 11 games (10-0-1). Ryan O'Reilly had three assists, and Jordan Binnington made 25 saves. Sebastian Aho, Brock McGinn and Martin Necas scored for the Hurricanes, who lost their fifth consecutive road game. Petr Mrazek allowed all six goals on 26 shots.

### COYOTES 3, OILERS 0

Conor Garland, Lawson Crouse and Christian Dvorak scored goals and goaltender Antti Raanta stopped 30 shots as Arizona shut out Edmonton in Glendale, Ariz. It was Raanta's second shutout of the season, 13th of his career and second ever against Edmonton. The Coyotes ended a five-game losing streak while at the same time extending their streak of home games with at least one point to eight. Edmonton lost in regulation for just the second time in 10 games. The Oilers totaled 22 goals from their previous four games, including eight in a win over Calgary on Saturday, but on Tuesday were shut out for the first time since Oct. 22. Goalie Mikko Koskinen stopped 24 shots. — Reuters

Live		Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
SPAIN COPA DEL REY			
Real Madrid CF v Real Sociedad	21:00		
beIN SPORTS			
Athletic de Bilbao v FC Barcelona	23:00		
beIN SPORTS			

## Messi criticism of Abidal won't affect Barcelona: Setien

**BARCELONA:** Barcelona will not be destabilised by a possible confrontation between talisman Lionel Messi and sporting director Eric Abidal, coach Quique Setien said yesterday. The usually inverted Messi caused a stir by criticising his former team mate Abidal on Tuesday, saying in a post on Instagram that the club's hierarchy, not the players, should take responsibility for sacking Ernesto Valverde last month.

Abidal had told newspaper Sport that he had sensed that "many players weren't satisfied or working hard" under Valverde. Messi responded by saying Abidal should name which players he had in mind so as not to tarnish the image of the entire squad.

Messi's intervention dominated the front pages of Wednesday's sports newspapers: Sport said his reaction had caused a 'tsunami', Marca declared the Argentine had delivered 'a knockout blow', while AS headlined their edition 'FC Chaos'.

Setien said he had spoken to the players about the disagreement for around a minute and that they were only concerned about their upcoming matches, beginning with Thursday's Copa del Rey quarter-final tie at Athletic Bilbao.

"I will do everything to ensure this does not affect the team, all I'm interested in is tomorrow's game and the obligation to get through to the next round. I can't control anything else and won't waste my energy," he told reporters.

"This situation doesn't affect me, all I can do is give the players the tools they need to make the most of their talent. Every single club has its problems but there are things I can't control, so please, only talk to me about football."

Messi's criticism of Abidal came on the same day Barca learned that winger Ousmane Dembele had ruptured his hamstring and would miss the rest of the season, adding to their shortages in attack while Luis Suarez recovers from knee surgery.

Setien said that he was more concerned about Dembele's injury than Messi's musings on social media, adding that the club's all-time goalscorer was in good spirits and did not need to be reminded about his responsibilities.

"Of course I believe he is as motivated as ever, he's smiling, he looks well and he loves coming here to train. He's the same as yesterday or the day before," Setien added. "Messi has enough experience and ability to know what he needs to do, I'm not going to get involved in his life or anyone else's. I'm not the father of any of these players, all I have to do is get them to train. The rest isn't part of my job." — Reuters

**25** Farrell hopes to disrupt Pivac and Wales's 'nice marriage'



**26** Injured Farah out of London half marathon



**27** Liverpool youngsters reach FA Cup fifth round against Shrewsbury



## Harden's heroics lead Rockets past Hornets



HOUSTON: Cody Martin #11 of the Charlotte Hornets drives to the basket against the Houston Rockets at the Toyota Center in Houston, Texas. — AFP

HOUSTON: James Harden finished one rebound shy of a 40-point triple-double, and the host Houston Rockets erased a 15-point deficit to beat the Charlotte Hornets 125-110 on Tuesday. Harden was exceptional throughout but especially down the stretch, fueling a 12-3 run in the fourth quarter that enabled Houston to secure control. He finished with 12 assists, nine rebounds and three steals as the Rockets prevailed despite the absence of Russell Westbrook (thumb) and Clint Capela (heel). Danuel House Jr. had 22 points and nine rebounds for Houston while P.J. Tucker posted 13 points, 10 rebounds, three assists and three steals. Miles Bridges and Terry Rozier scored 20 apiece for the Hornets, who have dropped four in a row

and 12 of their past 13 games. Bridges added a game-high 15 rebounds.

### MILWAUKEE BUCKS 120 - NEW ORLEANS PELICANS 108

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 34 points and 17 rebounds, and visiting Milwaukee used a third-quarter surge to pull away from New Orleans. The Bucks trailed for most of the first half and were down 61-58 at half-time before outscoring the Pelicans 42-24 in the third quarter. Antetokounmpo scored 16 in the period. Fellow All-Star Khris Middleton added 20 points for Milwaukee. All-Star forward Brandon Ingram led New Orleans with 32 points, and rookie Zion Williamson

scored 20 (although on 5-of-19 shooting).

### LOS ANGELES LAKERS 129 - SAN ANTONIO SPURS 102

LeBron James scored 19 of his 36 points in the fourth quarter as host Los Angeles overcame a slow start shooting from the field and cruised past San Antonio. Anthony Davis and Kyle Kuzma scored 18 points each, and Kuzma added 12 rebounds as the Lakers won at home for the first time since the death of former Laker Kobe Bryant and eight others in a Jan. 26 helicopter crash. DeMar DeRozan scored 28 points and Bryn Forbes added 13 for the Spurs, who lost on back-to-back nights in Staples Center after falling to the Los Angeles Clippers on Monday. The Spurs

have dropped five of their past seven games.

### DENVER NUGGETS 127 - PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS 99

Nikola Jokic had 29 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists. Jamal Murray scored 20 in his return to the lineup after missing 10 games, and host Denver beat Portland. Jerami Grant scored 17 points. Will Barton added 16, and Malik Beasley scored 14 for the Nuggets, who have won all three meetings with Portland this season. Denver won for the third time in four games overall. Damian Lillard was held to 21 points, his lowest output since Jan. 9, and CJ McCollum had 20 for Portland. The Trail Blazers had their four-game winning streak snapped. —Reuters

## Ighalo took pay cut to sign for 'dream club' Manchester Utd

LONDON: Lifelong Manchester United fan Odion Ighalo said he had no hesitation in taking a pay cut to complete his dream deadline-day switch to Old Trafford, enduring a sleepless night as the deal was hammered out.

United were already short in attack following the summer departures of Alexis Sanchez and Romelu Lukaku and a back injury sustained by Marcus Rashford, making a reinforcement during the January transfer window of crucial importance to the Old Trafford club.

United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer looked at a variety of options and eventually completed a late loan deal for ex-Watford striker Ighalo, who has joined until the end of the season from Shanghai Shenhua.

"I'm very happy," the Nigeria forward told United's website. "First, I want say thank God for making this happen and it's just like a dream

come true for me. "People that know me, even back in Nigeria, and even when I was playing at Watford, my team-mates knew that I loved Man United, I support them. When I played against Man U, that emotion is there, because it is my dream.

"It is a nice reality, so I'm very happy and I'm looking forward to start." Ighalo, 30, followed Sporting Lisbon midfielder Bruno Fernandes into Old Trafford, with the forward calling his last-minute move "very dramatic", having been informed by his agent the day before of United's interest.

"From 11:00 pm (2300 GMT) there was paperwork, negotiating and all that, for the loan deal and all that, so we are talking and other teams are calling them, wanting me," he said. "But I told my agent that this is what I want. I want to come here.

"He said 'you're going to get a pay cut to go to United'. I said I don't care. Make this deal happen. I want to go to United. I don't care how much is the pay cut, I know that, make it happen." Ighalo, who will be the first Nigerian to play for Manchester United, said there had been huge excitement among his family and friends.

"It was crazy because, all over the news for the last few days, is about my deal to Man United," he said. "Even the street I grew up on, they are doing parties, celebrating Ighalo signing for United."



Odion Ighalo

Solskjaer's side are currently seventh in the Premier League table, with United a huge 38 points behind runaway leaders and arch-rivals Liverpool. — AFP

## Kane could return for Spurs: Mourinho

LONDON: England captain Harry Kane could return from injury in time for the final two games of the Premier League season, Tottenham Hotspur coach Jose Mourinho said on Tuesday.

Kane is recovering from surgery to repair a ruptured tendon in his hamstring suffered during Tottenham's defeat at Southampton on New Year's Day. Tottenham had previously stated they expect the 26-year-old to return to training sometime in April despite reports he could be sidelined for six months. However when asked if Kane would play again this season, Mourinho told reporters: "The Leicester match (May 9). Maybe we need that match for something. Maybe we need that match for something. To be fourth, to be fifth, to be sixth. Maybe we need that match for

something and maybe he can help us in this match. I hope.

"There's no pressure, he keeps going, no setback. I just think that's my feeling. "It's better not to put any kind of expectations, any kind of pressure. Let it go and let's see."

Kane, fighting to get fit for Euro 2020, is a notoriously quick healer and posted a video on Twitter last week of him stretching.

He has flown to the Bahamas this week for a stint of warm-weather training, amid hopes he could be back soon. His return for the Leicester and Crystal Palace matches would be a boost for Mourinho as he tries to lead Tottenham to a top four finish and Champions League qualification. Tottenham would also hope to still be in the Champions League and FA Cup by the time Kane returns. — AFP