



6 Egypt says its population passes 100 million mark



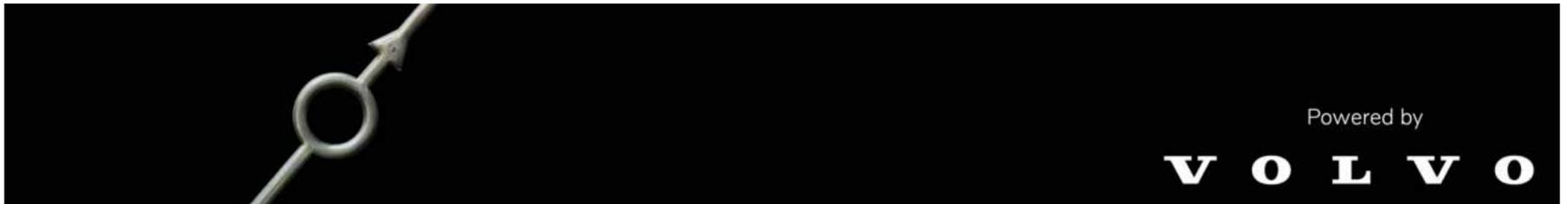
19 War rocks Middle East, but love must go on



24 Palestinian leader warns UN on Trump's 'Swiss cheese' peace



26 Kohli seethes as India let Black Caps sweep series



China virus deaths top 1,000; WHO warns of global threat

Amir sends condolences to Xi • Deadly coronavirus named 'COVID-19'



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA (See Page 2)

Article 18 visa renewal online from March 1

KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Residency Affairs Maj Gen Talal Maarafi said renewal of article 18 residencies can be done online through the interior ministry's official website from March 1. Maarafi said the interior ministry has launched a new system to link companies, allowing them to renew residencies of their workers online without the need to go to residency departments. He said each company will have its own password to enter the system and follow the procedure to renew the residency without any complication. This step will benefit more than 1.5 million expats. The second step, after the success of the first, will be for article 20 residencies. He said the third step will allow renewal of family visas online. — Al-Qabas

BEIJING: The death toll from the novel coronavirus outbreak surged past 1,000 in China yesterday as the World Health Organization warned that the epidemic poses a "very grave" global threat. The WHO is holding a conference in Geneva on combatting the virus as Beijing struggles to contain a disease that has now infected more than 42,000 and reached some 25 countries. Another 108 deaths were reported yesterday - the first triple-digit daily rise since the virus emerged in late December.

"With 99 percent of cases in China, this remains very much an emergency for that country, but one that holds a very grave threat for the rest of the world," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus at the conference, where the virus was officially named "COVID-19". He said that "co" stands for "corona", "vi" for "virus" and "d" for "disease", while "19" was for the year, as the outbreak was first identified on Dec 31. However, Tedros remained optimistic that there was a "realistic chance" of stopping the virus. "We have to use the current window of opportunity to hit hard and stand in unison to fight this virus in

Continued on Page 24

Ultra-rare snowfall carpets Baghdad as Kuwait shivers



KARBALA: An Iraqi girl plays with her mother in the snow in this holy Shiite city yesterday. — AFP

KUWAIT/BAGHDAD: Residents of Baghdad rushed to have snowball fights or take photographs yesterday as the Iraqi capital woke carpeted in white by only its second snowfall in a century. In neighboring Kuwait, the temperature is expected to drop below zero degrees Celsius tonight as a cold wave continues to sweep through the country. The weather forecast for today predicts the maximum temperature to reach only 12 degrees, while the mercury could drop as low as -1 degrees.

"[The weather is] very cold with light to moderate northwesterly wind with a speed

of 12-40 km/h. Some scattered clouds will appear with a chance of frost in agricultural and desert areas," the Kuwait Meteorological Department forecast yesterday. The same weather conditions are projected for today, while temperatures are set to gradually increase to a maximum of 17 degrees Celsius and minimum of 4 degrees tomorrow, then continuing to increase through the weekend.

The last recorded snowfall in Baghdad was in 2008, but it was a quick and mostly slushy affair - and prior to that, it had

Continued on Page 24

Wednesday

Some scattered clouds will appear

12 Max Temp °C -1 Min Temp °C

Today's weather forecast for Kuwait.

AAP crushes BJP in Delhi election

NEW DELHI: Followers of an upstart Indian political party danced in the streets yesterday after inflicting a crushing defeat on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right-wing party in a key election in the capital. The poll was the first electoral test for Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party after it passed a controversial nationality law which opponents say is anti-Muslim. Aam Aadmi Party supporters cavorted to bhanga music and set off fireworks as the vote count showed they had crossed the 36 seats needed to secure a majority in the 70-seat regional assembly.

Congress, led by the storied Gandhi-Nehru dynasty and the main opposition at the national level, drew a blank in another low for a party that ruled Delhi for 15 years before AAP took over. Final results from the Election Commission of India late yesterday showed AAP won 62 seats while the BJP won eight.

Hindu-nationalist Modi, whose party swept to power in national elections last year, congratulated AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal, the incumbent Delhi chief minister. "Wishing them the very best in fulfilling the aspirations of the people of Delhi," Modi tweeted. The BJP had launched an aggressive campaign to win the city of nearly 20 million people from the AAP, using the election to rally support for the law easing citizenship rules for religious minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, but

Continued on Page 24

FEBRUARY

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99 KD

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~~800 KD~~

199 KD

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Local

Amir meets Canadian Prime Minister, new ambassadors, Iraqi Speaker

Kuwait, Canada discuss regional, international developments



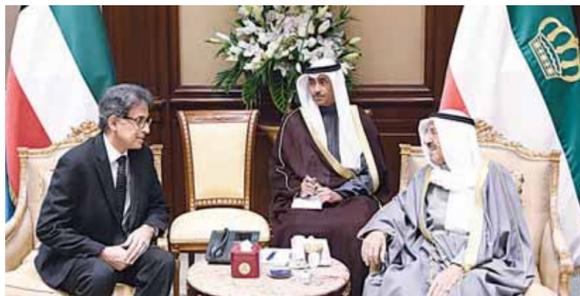
KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. —Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina Romanowski.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Bahraini Ambassador to Kuwait Salah Al-Malki.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Libyan Ambassador to Kuwait Sulaiman Al-Sahili.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mohammad Al-Halbousi.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who escorted Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his accompanying delegation on his official visit to the country. During the reception, both sides discussed bilateral relations and ways to boost cooperation in various fields, in addition to issues of common interest between the two countries. Advisor at the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Dr Salem Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah attended the reception. His Highness the Prime Minister had received at the Bayan Palace his Canadian counterpart upon his arrival to Kuwait on Monday. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged cordial conversations and tackled the close bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and means to boost cooperation in various fields.

Regional situation

His Highness and his guest also discussed the overall

regional and international situations. The meeting was attended by the Adviser in the Cabinet of the Prime Minister Sheikh Dr Salem Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Muhammad Al-Sabah and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah. Furthermore, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Office Sheikh Etmad Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Chief of the General Staff of the Kuwaiti Army Lieutenant General Mohammad Khaled Al-Khudhr, and a number of senior officials at the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Trudeau had visited Canadian troops stationed in Kuwait during his short stay in the country. In a message delivered during a visit to a base where many Canadian troops had to relocate about a month ago from Iraq, the Canadian Prime Minister said that "Canadian military efforts have been essential in the fight to defeat Islamic militants in Iraq and elsewhere." Canada has two ongoing operations in Iraq, totaling about 500 soldiers, but was forced to suspend them on Jan 7, days after top

Iranian general Qassem Soleimani was killed in a targeted drone strike by the United States.

New ambassadors

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir attended a reception at Bayan Palace celebrating newly-appointed ambassadors to Kuwait, including US Ambassador Alina Romanowski, Bahraini Ambassador Salah Al-Malki, and Libyan Ambassador Sulaiman Al-Sahili. The ceremony was also attended by Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Muhammad Al-Sabah, Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, Amiri Diwan Undersecretary and His Highness the Amir's Office Director Ahmad Fahad Al-Fahad, Director of Amiri Protocols and Ceremonials Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah.

Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received yesterday National Assembly Speaker Marzuq Al-Ghanem, accompanied by Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mohammad Al-Halbousi during his official visit. The receptions were attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah welcomes Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mohammad Al-Halbousi at Dar Salwa.

Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. Later yesterday, His Highness the Amir held a lunch banquet at Dar Salwa in honor of the visiting Iraqi Parliament Speaker and his accompanying delegation.

Crown Prince receives Capital Governor



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. —KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. In other news, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-

Jaber Al-Sabah is set to patronize the Crown Prince Horse Race Championship at Jahra Equestrian Club today. His Highness deputized Jahra Governor Nasser Al-Hajraf to attend the ceremony, which will kick off at 3:30 pm. —KUNA

Saudi King hosts Kuwait's Prime Minister

RIYADH: Saudi King Salman bin Abulaziz Al Saud met yesterday with His Highness the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation, in the presence of Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Mohammad bin Salman. Emerging from the meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said he was honored to meet the Saudi King and the Crown Prince, to whom he conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, wishing the kingdom perpetual progress and prosperity. Voicing much happiness at his visit to the kingdom, the Kuwaiti prime minister said Saudi Arabia and Kuwait enjoy close and time-tested fraternal bonds. He quoted the Saudi king as having stressed brotherly and historical relations between both countries, calling for promoting and developing bilateral cooperation in various fields that serve mutual interests. His Highness the Prime Minister



RIYADH: This handout photo released by the Saudi Press Agency shows Saudi King Salman bin Abulaziz Al Saud meeting with His Highness the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah in Riyadh yesterday.

added that he had listened to the Saudi king's views on an array of regional and international issues and the latest global developments, speaking highly of his insight and shrewdness. He noted that his visit to the kingdom reflected historical relations between both countries and showed appreciation for the kingdom's balanced policy and efforts to safeguard regional security and stability. Sheikh Sabah

Al-Khaled voiced much thanks and appreciation to the kingdom's leadership, government and people for warm welcome and hospitality he was accorded during his visit. Afterwards, the Saudi king held a luncheon banquet in honor of His Highness the Prime Minister and his accompanying delegation. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled then left the kingdom following a fraternal visit. —KUNA

Zain celebrates national holidays at Qout Market



Waleed Al-Khashti with Zain's team at the company's booth in Qout Market.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, celebrated Kuwait's national holidays in Qout Market at Abraj Park in Adaliya. The company's participation came as part of its community partnership of the market's seventh season, which is considered Kuwait's largest artisanal farmers gathering.

Zain is eager to play a vital role by partnering with Qout Market as part of its ongoing efforts of empowering local talents who contribute to shouldering the national economy. The

company's solid and well-focused corporate sustainability and social responsibility strategy continuously works towards identifying initiatives like Qout Market that carry a clear objective of developing local talents.

As it does every year, Zain participated in the event via its own dedicated booth, where the company celebrated Kuwait's national holidays with the market's visitors through a variety of traditional performances that reflected the joyous spirit of Kuwaiti people during February of every year.



Zain's national celebrations at Qout Market.

Zain also showcased its latest exclusive offers to visitors and held exciting competitions with opportunities for winning valuable prizes.

Qout, the community-based farmers market, helps and supports local farmers and artisans to exchange thoughts and ideas while offering the opportunity for visitors to express their opinions towards the products available. Qout Market has a proven record of success, having attracted nearly 18,000 visitors in previous years per season. The

market's selection of vendors includes a combination of fresh produced items as well as handmade items where people can stop by to enjoy on the spot. Zain expressed its ongoing keenness in supporting events that uplift local talents to higher levels, by encouraging outstanding projects and ideas. Zain's support is aimed at investing in the creative abilities of Kuwaiti entrepreneurs, preparing them to engage in the business world by encouraging them further and nurturing innovation within their businesses.

Local



KUWAIT: Editors-in-chief of local media and members of Kuwait Journalists Association visit the Al-Salam Palace during a tour organized by the Amiri Diwan before the palace opens to the public shortly. — Amiri Diwan

Kuwaiti Finance Minister, London's Lord Mayor discuss boosting ties

Govts, investors have major role in achieving net-zero economy: Russell

Public spending down by 2.8 percent in 2019

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Spending by citizens and expats retreated by 2.8 percent in 2019 (KD 672.6 million) to reach KD 23.18 billion compared to KD 23.85 billion in 2018. According to statistics issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait, the total sums spent by citizens and expats on direct point-of-sale purchases of goods and services retreated by 6.7 percent (KD 773.5 million) to reach KD 10.7 billion, compared to KD 11.47 billion in 2018. On the other hand, statistics showed a slight increase of 0.8 percent (KD 100.8 million) in ATM cash withdrawals, taking total withdrawals to KD 12.47 billion compared to KD 12.37 billion in 2018. The total number of dud cheques in 2019 was 5,508. Bank accounts closed because of dud cheques were 899, owned by 887 clients who issued 2,594 dud cheques of a total value of KD 42 million.

Economic reforms

A ministerial committee assigned by the government to set a package of executive measures to achieve economic and financial reforms submitted a related detailed report to the Cabinet to be discussed soon, pending approval and immediate implementation unless they needed special legislations and referral to the parliament, said informed government sources.

The sources added that the measures set by the committee include reforming

the mechanism followed for purchases at government bodies, as it had been found that the current mechanism leads to wasting 40 percent of public funds. "Suggested reforms also include merging some government bodies, namely those with similar specialties," the sources explained, noting that this includes scrapping the Quran authority and subjecting it once more to the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, and scrapping the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation and returning its responsibilities to the Ministry of Public Works.

Review of subsidies

The sources added that subsidies paid for foodstuff, fuel, electricity, construction materials and social aid will be periodically reviewed to be given to certain categories of citizens only. In addition, the sources said the national labor support allowances have become overburdening in view of several violations and unlawful recipients. "Fines and penalties on companies not committed to employing citizens at the expense of expats will be increased," the sources added, noting that the government will also increase the rent values of state-owned properties and offer them for rent through public auctions. Furthermore, the sources said the reforms will include launching a privatization program by offering several government bodies such as post, electricity, media, some Ministry of Health sectors and the ports for privatization.

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel held talks yesterday with the visiting Lord Mayor of the City of London William Russell, on enhancing ties between the two countries. The meeting dealt with investment opportunities in both countries in public and private sectors. Aqeel said in a press statement. She pointed out that the meeting came as part of Russell's and his accompanying delegation's official visit to the country. The meeting was attended by the Managing Director at Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) and KIA representatives.

Meanwhile, Russell said that governments and investors have a major role to play to achieve a net-zero economy. This came in a speech Russell delivered during a forum on sustainable finance ESG organized by Ahli United Bank (AUB) yesterday. "Finance has a privilege role in our global transition to a net-zero and climate resilient future, that's because finance connects with all other sectors," said Russell. Russell pointed out that the UK was the first G7 country to legislate for a zero carbon emissions, which it aims to achieve by 2050, noting that in 2035 the UK would only have electric cars. The new majority government of UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, said Russell, would encourage investors to contribute to economic projects the country planned to launch soon.

The City of London has been working for more than 800 years to maintaining economic and financial leadership of the British capital, as well as seeking to attract investors including those from State of Kuwait, he noted. He also said that those who are in the financial sector need to identify the positive actions to take, stressing that there are huge opportunities to



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel meets with Lord Mayor of the City of London William Russell. — KUNA

invest in the transition to zero carbon economy. Kuwait is doing a great progress in green financing through the Kuwaiti Investment Authority (KIA) One Planet Initiative, he added.

In the meantime, AUB Acting CEO Jehad Al-Humaidhi affirmed that AUB took several steps towards sustainable financing, noting that in 2011 the bank adopted the Equator Principles and in 2020 the bank adopted the UN Environment Program Finance Initiative (UNEP

FI). The forum was attended by British Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport and several AUB officials. Russell is a British financier, who is serving as the 692nd Lord Mayor of the City of London for 2019-2020 and a member of the Advisory Board of Innovate Finance, an independent not-for-profit membership organization serving the global FinTech community and a Court Assistant to the Haberdashers' Company. — KUNA

Ministry inspected 196 private medical facilities in 6 months

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Health Ministry's medical licenses department has inspected 196 private medical facilities in six months to make sure their licenses as well as the licenses of their staff were valid, a ministry official announced yesterday. Speaking on the sidelines of opening the 24th obstetrics and gynecology conference on behalf of Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah, assistant undersecretary for private medical services affairs Dr Fatima Al-Najjar explained that the 196 facilities included 94 polyclinics, 30 specialized clinics, 65 medical centers and seven hospitals. Najjar said the conference provides the opportunity to shed light on the latest international developments in obstetrical and gynecological diseases, treatments, diagnoses and preventive early detection tests.

Head of Adan Hospital's obstetrics and gynecology department and the head of the conference Dr Abeer Al-Thayedi announced a new project to renovate the obstetrics and gynecology department's out-patient departments as well as the obstetrics and gynecology

casualty department. Thayedi added that the conference will help exchange expertise with at least nine specialist experts from the UK, US, Denmark, Italy and India.

Treatment costs

The Patients Helping Fund Society and the Awqaf secretariat general renewed a partnership and cooperation memo they had signed in 2010 on a number of treatment projects for patients with chronic diseases who are incapable of bearing the cost of treatment in Kuwait. Society Chairman Jamal Salem Al-Fauzan said KD 305,117 had been agreed upon through an operational plan proposed by the society and approved by the secretariat general, including monthly aid to the families of patients residing in Kuwait totaling KD 14,575. Fauzan added the society's medical department will study all medical cases of patients applying to get aid to determine their needs, including the cost of various medical tests or surgeries, as well as health awareness activities and lectures with the remaining sum of KD 291,142.

CBK disavows supervision of online trading in currencies and metals

KUWAIT: Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) yesterday emphasized its commitment to protect the stability of the banking and financial system against risks of money laundering. However, the CBK said in a press release, it has no jurisdiction over supervising the online trading in currencies and precious metals which is the role of other state bodies. The statement comes in response to allegations, circulated on some social media websites, that some celebrities are engaged in suspicious money laundering or fraudulent activities, including online trading in currencies and metals.

The legal system specified clearly the authority of the CBK to protect the financial and banking system and prevent the risks of money laundering, the statement said, citing Act 106 (2013). The law and its executive statutes are in consistency with the international criterions relating to the combat against money laundering and financing for terrorism, it pointed out. The law outlined the roles of the supervisory bodies and the responsibilities of each of them. Pursuant to the provisions of the law, the CBK issued, in July 2013, directives to the banks and financial institutions in the State of Kuwait to tighten controls on any suspicious money laundering or terrorism financing activities.

These directives were updated in May 2019 in keeping with the developments in the relevant international standards, the statement added.

Banks should take measures to fully implement what is stated by law and constantly monitor all transactions, CBK added. In the event of a suspected money-laundering operation, banks must, according to law, address directly the Financial Investigations Unit, the body responsible for receiving and investigating this information, then reporting on it to Public Prosecution, if necessary. In the meantime, the Central Bank is responsible for monitoring and supervising locally-based banks in order to verify their commitment to the implementation of their requirements.

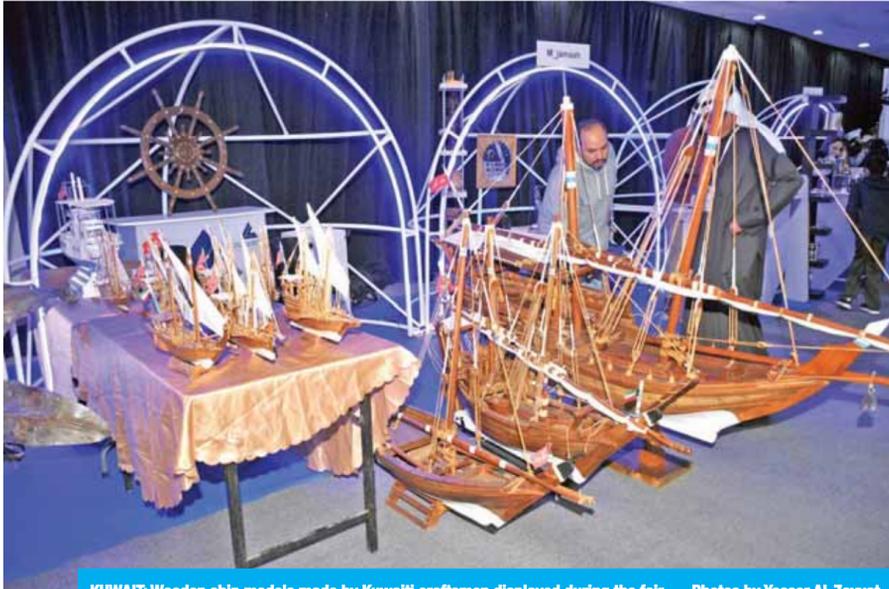
Through this inspection, if violations are unearthed, financial penalties of up to KD 500,000 (\$1.6 million) are applied along with administrative sanctions stipulated by law. As for fraudulent transactions conducted via forex and gold trading platforms on the internet, the Central Bank clarifies that these companies are "not licensed and do not fall within its jurisdictions or regulatory role." "Within the aforementioned legal system, freezing the accounts of these companies at local banks requires a decision by the judiciary," it explained. — KUNA



Local

Maker Faire 2020 opens featuring 179 projects from 12 countries

Part of Amir's directions to support Kuwaiti ventures



KUWAIT: Wooden ship models made by Kuwaiti craftsmen displayed during the fair. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Participants are seen during the event.

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: A total of 179 projects from 12 countries are participating in the Maker Faire 2020 at the Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref from Feb 11 to 15, 2020. The participating projects were chosen by the judging committee out of 540 that applied. The best projects will receive cash prizes.

Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan said this fair is part of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's directions to support and adopt Kuwaiti ventures, especially industrial, technological and handmade projects. "These projects may be a quantum leap in the Kuwaiti industrial field that keeps up with the New Kuwait 2035 vision. I was impressed by the projects displayed in this fair from Kuwait and other countries as well. I hope that the best of these projects will get a chance to be part of Kuwait's industries," he said during the opening ceremony yesterday.

Chairman of Kuwait Investment Company Yusef Al-Ali said the company is organizing this fair for the fourth consecutive year. "It's held under the patronage of HH the Amir to support Kuwaiti youth. We believe that Kuwaitis are able to add value to their inventions and new projects, and through this fair we aim to shed light on them and to adopt the ideas of those who deserve it," he pointed out.

Some of the participating projects in the past years have been realized. "Some of the previous projects were supported and are now expanding in the health, technology and other sectors. This is an example for the youth to continue their hard work to realize their dreams, as their projects can represent Kuwait at international fairs the same way as some previous projects did," added Ali.

The number of participants increased this year. "This year we have more participants from more countries compared to the previous version of the fair. The participating countries are, besides Kuwait, Saudi Arabia,

Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Yemen, Sudan, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Iran. This signifies the success of this fair year after year. Through this fair we aim to achieve our goal of boosting the 'Made in Kuwait' slogan. This will change our economy from a single-income revenue economy to a sustainable economy," stressed Bader Al-Sabei, CEO of Kuwait Investment Co.

The participating projects are from various fields. "The participating inventions, ideas and projects are from the technology field including mechanical, electronic and virtual applications. Also, there is participation from the arts and crafts fields including clay carving, sculpting, sand carving, wood art and metal carving. Then there is the heritage category that includes music and traditional handicrafts, in addition to educational projects that include applications and others," noted Talal Al-Rashdan, Public Relations and Media Manager, Kuwait Investment Co.

Maker Faire also includes a competition. "Twelve best projects will receive cash prizes. Apart from evalua-

tion by the judging committee, visitors of the fair can vote for the best projects in their opinion," Rashdan further added.

Fahd Al-Saad is participating in this fair with a collection of handmade knives that he makes as a hobby. "I call my brand Roy knife. I design and make the knives according to orders using natural materials including wood, leather and others. I have different kinds of blades including Dimashqi, D2 or the 1095. I then shape the knife to a unique beautiful art piece for multiple purposes, including hunting, in the kitchen, when travelling, or for breaking and cutting wood," he told Kuwait Times.

"I fell in love with this hobby when I was a child. It attracted me as it is artistic work. But I only started making these knives about two years ago. I display my work at home. The pieces are for sale, but the customer is the one who decides the price, as I do this as a hobby in my free time. I prefer spending my free time in a useful activity such as this craft," added Saad.

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KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan visits stc's booth at the event.

stc sponsors universal 'Maker Faire'

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company- stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, sponsored the renowned Kuwait Maker Faire 2020 expo held from February 11th to the 15th. The Faire was held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, at the Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref.

stc's sponsorship of the event, which was attended by the Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan, and the Executive Management at stc, comes in line with the company's social responsibility initiative to support technology, small and medium sized enterprises, and supporting the local youth in creating innovative solutions across various fields.

Following stc's social responsibility agenda, the Company will be sitting on the judging panel that evaluates the participants' creations, selecting the most innovative and creative inventions presented at the Faire organized by Kuwait Investment Company.

Commenting on the sponsorship, Danah Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc

said, "stc's sponsorship of the Maker Faire expo is driven by the Company's initiative towards enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait by supporting innovative concepts run by entrepreneurs, specially within the fields of technology and digital solutions. In addition to stc's continuous role in supporting and empowering the youth, we feel that it is our social responsibility to provide them with the strategic guidance and advice that will help benefit our society and the economic sector as a whole."

On this occasion, Jasem thanked the organizers as well as the sponsoring companies who made this event possible once again. The level of enthusiasm and ingenuity witnessed during the event emphasizes Kuwait's role in driving youth led innovations. She also expressed her gratitude towards the continuous efforts displayed by the Kuwait Investment Company to host such a major event in Kuwait that attracts local and regional participants to display their inventions. She added, "We are proud to be part of the judging panel and look forward to the results. This panel provides creative minds of those entrepreneurs to display their talents and inventions at the Maker Faire face to face."

It is worth mentioning that the Maker Faire originated in the United States of America and since then has gained global popularity. Since then, the Maker Faire has been held in several countries around the world, with Kuwait being the first GCC country to exclusively host the expo, gathering tech enthusiasts, educators, creators and inventors to display their creations and share their talents in unique ways. This year, the Maker Faire was held during the month of February right before Kuwait's National and Liberation Day celebrations.

Gulf Bank sponsors MGRP career fair

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank announced it is the platinum sponsor of the 2020 edition of the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) career fair. The two-day event, titled 'Because You Deserve It,' is set to take place from Feb 12-13 at the Public Authority of Manpower from 9 am to 2 pm, and from 5 pm to 10 pm. This marks the third consecutive year that Gulf Bank sponsors the career fair as part of the Bank's commitment to offering employment opportunities to local youth.

As a platinum sponsor, Gulf Bank's participation reflects its ongoing commitment to Kuwait Vision 2035 'New Kuwait,' the national development plan that was developed by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Sponsorship of the career fair falls under the bank's corporate social responsibility plan and is part of the bank's social and economic sus-

tainability initiatives. By working to support and empower Kuwaiti youth, Gulf Bank is working in line with 'New Kuwait,' which prioritizes the development of the private sector and the national economy overall.

Gulf Bank's General Manager of Human Resources, Salma Al-Hajjaj noted: "We are proud to sponsor this year's Manpower and Government Restructuring Program career fair for the third year in a row, as the sponsorship is one of several initiatives that reflect Gulf Bank's efforts in advancing the national economy and achieving the development goals of our country. At Gulf Bank, we are committed to our role in achieving His Highness the Amir of Kuwait's Vision 2035 and, as part of this commitment, have made it a priority to ensure job opportunities across the country. By hiring local talent, we are spearheading efforts in the private sector that contribute to a more sustainable national economy."



Salma Al-Hajjaj

Kuwait govt takes measures to probe suspected corruption in aircraft deals

Interior Minister briefs Cabinet on digital transformation efforts

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Cabinet held on Monday its customary meeting at Bayan Palace, under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Upon His Highness the Premier's directives on combating corruption and boosting transparency, and after media reports on suspicion of bribes and corruption regarding some aircraft deals, the Cabinet watched a presentation by Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Fahad Al-Afasi on measures taken by the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) on verifying whether there are suspicions on the deals made with the Kuwait Airways Corporation, according to a statement by Minister of Interior and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh after the meeting.

Minister Afasi noted that the authority made its legal measures on collecting international and local data on this matter. The Cabinet tasked the authority with completing its serious measures so as to find facts in this file. It also asked the Fatwa and Legislation Department, the Foreign Ministry, Kuwait Airways Corporation and all relevant authorities to take necessary measures to provide all data, documents to the authority to help reach a conclusion related to these suspicions in preparation for starting legal procedures against anyone suspected of seizing or squandering public money. The Cabinet affirmed its determination to confront the scourge of corruption and bring to accountability those who squander or waste public money, Saleh said.

Digital transformation

Within the framework of the Cabinet's follow-up of the implementation of its programs, Minister Al-Saleh

made a presentation before the Cabinet members on the Interior Minister's report on steps achieved in the government's action program. He pointed out that the Interior Ministry coordinated with the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to establish a specialized unit, affiliated to the Ministry's General Department of Criminal Investigations, in combating corruption, in addition to the department for combating public money crimes. The Ministry launched several services within the framework of its plan for digital transformation to enhance transparency in government transactions and facilitate services for both expats and citizens around the clock, Minister Saleh clarified. He cited as examples of these services: e-services for residence affairs, canceling residence stickers in passports, and adding residency information to the civil identity cards, as well as renewing domestic workers' residency permits and renewing driver's licenses through the ministry's website. The Cabinet lauded efforts made by the Interior Ministry in implementing the government's action program mainly the first axis represented in combating corruption.

Coronavirus

The ministers, during the meeting, discussed the rapid developments on the new coronavirus outbreak in China. In this regard, Minister of Health Dr Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah made a presentation on the emergency plans and the precautionary measures taken to confront the spread of this epidemic into the country with all means. The ministers were reassured that the country is free from any coronavirus infected case. In recognition of China's efforts to



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's meeting. — KUNA

confront the virus and preventing its spread, the Cabinet assigned the Foreign Ministry to communicate with Chinese officials on Kuwait's contribution to support these efforts and help Chinese friends in dealing with this deadly disease. Upon His Highness the Amir's order and in recognition of the efforts made by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said of Oman in backing the GCC, and the issues of both Arab and

Muslim nations, the Cabinet tasked the Kuwait Municipality to name one of the country's main roads after the late Sultan. Furthermore, the ministers discussed National Assembly affairs and the proposals submitted by some MPs. They also mulled the political affairs in light of the reports regarding the developments in the political arena on both Arab and international levels. — KUNA

Iran Embassy celebrates anniversary

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Iranian Embassy in Kuwait celebrated the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution on Monday. On this occasion, Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammed Irani said the Iranian people are celebrating the victory of the Islamic revolution at a time of suffering from the "worst-ever embargo, sanctions and international pressure."

"The young generation proved their success in different fields including scientific, technical, health, nanotechnology, nuclear energy, military manufacturing, missiles, vehicles, satellites and many others. Due to the illegal American embargo, the Iranian economy is gradually heading to a decrease in dependence on oil, as the Iranian government has achieved self-sufficiency in most products. The national budget is now depending 70 percent on nonoil exports," added Irani.

Regarding the regional situation, he said Iran shares the vision with its neighboring countries that security issues in the region should be resolved through joint efforts of the regions' countries. "Security is a common



KUWAIT: Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammed Irani (left) participates in cutting the cake during the ceremony. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

need for all the countries in the region, and this includes respecting national sovereignty, not interfering in internal issues, peaceful coexistence and following the good neighborhood policy to ensure security for all countries. The Hormuz peace initiative proposed by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani was inspired by these principles, and it aims for stability and peace in the region," the ambassador pointed out.

"Bilateral relations with Kuwait are an example of useful cooperation between people in both countries and the region. Thousands of Kuwaitis visit Iran every year for religious and medical tourism, beautiful resorts and nature. Iran has open doors for all visitors, and I invite them to exploit this opportunity to benefit from the law encouraging foreign investments and economic development projects," noted Irani.

KIB sponsors business college's career fair

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) sponsored a career fair and orientation week for the academic year 2020, which is organized by the College of Business Administration's (CBA) Student Union at Kuwait University Al-Shadadiya campus. Taking place from February 9 to 13, the event is attended by a large group of faculty members, graduates of various colleges, high school students as well as representatives from private institutions.

With a huge list of entities and students participating, the event is considered one of the largest career fairs to take place in Kuwait and serves graduates from the CBA and a large segment of graduates from other colleges in Kuwait University. The career fair gives students and graduates the opportunity to meet with representatives from various companies who provide them with both full-time and part-time job opportunities; thereby helping them launch their careers in an ideal work environment that supports their ambitious goals.

On this occasion, Feras Al-Darmi, Deputy General Manager of the Human Resources Department at KIB, said: "Our sponsorship of this event comes as part of our ongoing commitment to participate in career fairs, which reflects our efforts to empower ambitious local youth and attract fresh graduates. By providing them with suitable job opportunities

and training programs, we help them improve their professional skills and pave the way for their future career goals."

Darmi invites all graduates and soon-to-be graduates of Kuwait University to visit the KIB booth at the career fair. A team from the bank's human resources department will be present to welcome visitors, introduce them to job opportunities available for young talents, as well as introduce them to the nature of the working in a bank and how to join. At the booth, the KIB team will also provide graduates with valuable advice on how to choose the most suitable career.

It is worth noting that KIB participates in a number of career fairs and exhibitions throughout the year, as part of its leading social responsibility program. The bank aims at empowering youth through supporting them and investing in local talents. Accordingly, KIB has opened its doors to these local talents by employing them and developing their capabilities, as it believes they are the building blocks of a better, brighter future for Kuwait.



Feras Al-Darmi

Amir congratulates KCCI chief on Arab British Chamber post

KUWAIT/LONDON: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable of congratulations to the Chairman of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Ali Mohammad Al-Ghanem. In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed his sincere congratulations to Ghanem for having been selected honorary president of the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce (ABCC) in appreciation for his great and continuous efforts to consolidate the economic and commercial relations between the Arab countries and the friendly United Kingdom. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent him similar congratulatory cables.

Ghanem had expressed on Monday his

pride of ABCC choosing him to be its first honorary president. In statements following a ceremony held by the ABCC in London to honor him, Ghanem hailed the ABCC move as an honoring for the State of Kuwait, its leadership and people. This is an honoring for Kuwait and its leadership who was and is still encouraging all efforts to develop national economy and strengthen economic relations with all countries, he said. He pointed out that Kuwait's relationship with Britain is special and distinguished and the Kuwaiti government is always striving to strengthen these relations at all levels.

Meanwhile, the Ambassador of Kuwait and the Dean of the Arab and Foreign Corps in the UK Khaled Al-Duwaisan affirmed that Ghanem is a distinguished person in Kuwait and abroad. Ghanem has left outstanding hallmarks and achieved great successes in

through all the posts he had held, Duwaisan said. He stressed that Ghanem had a prominent role throughout his membership in the Board of Directors of ABCC in cementing trade relations between the Arab countries and Britain. Through his special relations with the British side, he helped remove obstacles facing many Arab businessmen.

During the ceremony, ABCC Secretary-General and CEO Bandar Reda hailed Ghanem's "tireless efforts" to strengthen Arab-British trade relations, particularly relations between Gulf countries, especially Kuwait, and Britain, through all the posts he held. "Naming Ghanem as an honorary president of the ABCC is just a recognition of his efforts and support to the ABCC," Reda clarified. In his speech, Ghanem affirmed that the ABCC represents a unique form of joint Arab action institutions that aim to enhance

Arab economic and cultural cooperation with the world. Ghanem said that the chamber has made important accomplishments and implemented various missions.

He also pointed out that the Arab-British relations are concentrated in four areas, namely energy, trade, investment and security, and all these areas are witnessing radical changes in their nature, importance and trends. He noted that these changes are evolving rapidly due to the great Asian growth, which is about to return the global economic weight to the east, with its huge size and high competitiveness. Ghanem held many positions and was elected as the President of the Chambers of the Gulf Cooperation Council states, and he was awarded the highest merit medal from the Federal Republic of Germany in the German President in 2005. — KUNA

News in brief

Danish doctor wins Amir's award

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is a proponent of medical research covering various fields, including, but not limited to elderly care, Kuwait's health minister said yesterday. Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah's remarks came in a statement to the press, in which he congratulated Danish neurologist Gunhild Waldemar for winning His Highness the Amir's award for elderly care research this year. The minister wished Waldemar, who is a professor of clinical neurology at Denmark's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, every success as she looks to further her medical career. His Highness the Amir's award for elderly care research acknowledges exceptional contributions in this field, where the award is bestowed upon amid a lavish ceremony each year. — KUNA

Chinese New Year 'delays' project

KUWAIT: Mutlala housing project, which faces difficulties in meeting its time schedule, suffered yet another setback caused by the Chinese New Year celebrations on Jan 25. Head of Mutlala Residents Voluntary Society Khalid Al-Enezi said hundreds of Chinese workers involved in the project left the country to celebrate with their families, but the coronavirus epidemic in their country prompted Kuwait to ban their return as a precaution to prevent the spread of the virus in the country. Enzei said if the workers are not replaced, there will be further delays, and asked the housing authority to intervene with solutions, saying there must be alternative plans. — Al-Qabas

Oil companies' merger approved

KUWAIT: The Supreme Petroleum Council gave preliminary approval to merge oil companies and accepted the study with regards to the merger process. Informed sources said the council approved the merging of oil companies in principle, provided that there will be other steps that may take 12 to 18 months, during which detailed studies will be made, along with discussions between the oil companies and appointments of international consultants. The council also approved the operational budget of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation for 2020-2021 of nearly KD 4.3 billion, with profits expected at KD 2.5 billion. — Al-Qabas



KUWAIT: A Kuwait Fire Service Directorate officer closes a restaurant in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.

KFSD closes 92 facilities in Jleeb

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) closed 92 facilities administratively in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh after warning them over preventive violations. KFSD Director General Lt Gen Khalid Al-Mikrad issued the decision after the warning period elapsed.

Fire drill

KFSD carried out an exercise in cooperation with Bidaa fire station and Movenpick Hotel. Both sides succeeded in achieving the exercise goals, which focused on quick evacuation and control and preventing the fire from spreading.

Agreement signed

KFSD signed a cooperation agreement with Al-Najat Society (Islamic Presentation Society) on 14 items related to increasing societal knowledge and holding training workshops on security and safety principles and dealing with fires for various communities in Kuwait. A joint committee will be formed to take executive decisions that do not clash with their interests in order to prevent fires by focusing on communities of various nationalities in their languages. KFSD was represented by Public Relations Director Brig Khalil Al-Amir, while Al-Najat Society was represented by Deputy Chairman of the Board Rasheed Al-Hamad.



The rise and fall of Merkel's 'mini-me'

Coronavirus clips wings of Asia biggest air show

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BEIRUT: Riot police use tear gas to disperse anti-government demonstrators during a protest, against parliament giving a confidence vote to the cabinet in the capital Beirut yesterday. — AFP

Protests rock Beirut; hundreds injured

Security forces clash with protesters

BEIRUT: Hundreds of people were injured in Beirut yesterday in clashes between security forces and protesters who rejected the new government as it sought to win a parliamentary vote of confidence. Smoke wafted through Beirut where riot police fired tear gas at protesters seeking to block MPs from reaching the heavily barricaded parliament.

The Lebanese Red Cross said it treated 373 people for injuries, taking 45 of them to hospital. One of the world's most heavily indebted states, Lebanon is facing an unprecedented financial crisis rooted in decades of state waste and corruption which have fuelled public anger. Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri was quoted saying Lebanon should seek IMF technical help to draw up an emergency plan though it could not surrender itself to the IMF because the nation could not bear its conditions.

In comments reported by an-Nahar newspaper and confirmed to Reuters by a government source, Berri also said Lebanon should decide whether to pay maturing foreign debt next month based on IMF advice. Lebanon's crisis came to a head last year as slowing capital inflows from abroad led to a

hard currency crunch and protests erupted against the ruling elite.

"People are suffering and the government is not listening, said Lama Tabbara, 34, an unemployed protester. "It takes a long time to uproot an old rotten tree and that's what the government represents." Eggs and paint were hurled at the cars of MPs and ministers arriving near parliament, but the session went ahead despite the scuffles. At the start, Berri said an MP had received stitches after being hit in the face and head by stones. Men and women, their faces wrapped in scarves, lobbed rocks at security forces deployed at several locations. Police fired water cannon.

Some MPs skirted the clashes, reaching parliament on the back of motorcycles. Crowds chanted revolution, waved Lebanese flags and held signs that said "no confidence". A branch of one of Lebanon's biggest banks, BLOM, was set ablaze. Flames engulfed the bank where people smashed the facade and furniture. Banks have severely curbed savers' access to their money and blocked transfers abroad. The Lebanese pound, pegged at the same level since 1997, has lost more than a third of its value.

'Lebanon is not Greece, Argentina'

At yesterday's session, Prime Minister Hassan Diab, whose government took office last month, read out its policy statement which urges some "painful steps" to address the crisis. It calls for moves including cutting interest rates and seeking foreign help. His government was formed with backing from the powerful, Iran-backed Shiite Hezbollah, Berri's Amal Movement and the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) founded by President Michel Aoun.

Berri was quoted as saying Lebanon must take advantage of the time remaining before its next debt maturity on March 9 to send a message abroad, "specifically to the Americans" that the country needs IMF technical help through a rescue plan. "There is still room for Lebanon during the coming two weeks and before the end of the current month to benefit from this measure," Berri was quoted as saying.

Based on this, "Lebanon will be able to form its position on the maturing Eurobonds - whether to pay its commitments or not to pay them - based on what the IMF advises." But Berri also said the Lebanese people would be unable to bear IMF conditions and



BEIRUT: Lebanese MP Salim Saade arrives to attend a parliamentary session after being attacked by protesters, in the Lebanese capital Beirut yesterday. — AFP

the country was not Greece or Argentina - which have experienced their own financial crises. Senior FPM lawmaker Alain Aoun told Reuters the country needs IMF techni-

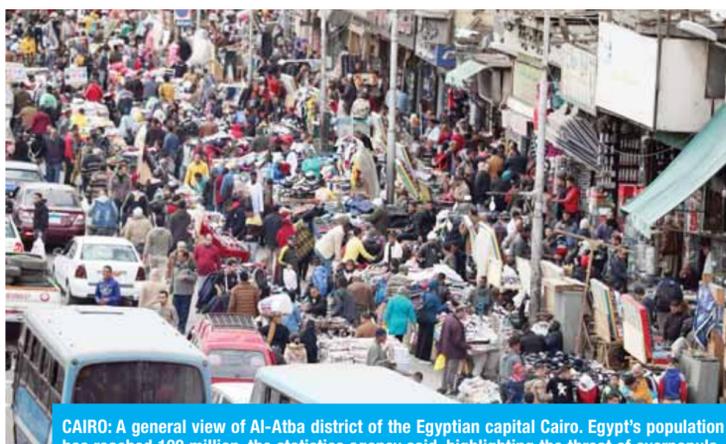
cal assistance and should draw on IMF advice in its decision on whether to pay the Eurobond, and his party was expected to adopt the same position. — Reuters

Egypt population hits 100 million

CAIRO: Egypt's population has reached 100 million, the statistics agency said yesterday, highlighting the threat of overpopulation in a poverty-stricken country where many live in crowded megacities. The North African country retains its position as the most populous Arab nation and Africa's third most populous country behind Ethiopia and Nigeria. A counter installed atop the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS) ticked over into nine digits for the first time, the agency said.

A new baby is born in Egypt roughly every 17.9 seconds, the statistics body calculated. Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly told a cabinet meeting last week that "population growth is the single largest challenge facing the state ... and affects national security". Most Egyptians live on the eight percent of national territory that is the stretch of arable land along the River Nile basement. The life-line, which Egypt shares with Sudan and Ethiopia, critically provides around 97 percent of Egypt's water needs.

Birth rates in Egypt have skyrocketed in the past three decades with around 1.5 million babies born every year - but they have recently slowed down as Egypt's government



CAIRO: A general view of Al-Atba district of the Egyptian capital Cairo. Egypt's population has reached 100 million, the statistics agency said, highlighting the threat of overpopulation in a poverty-stricken country where many live in crowded megacities. — AFP

has encouraged smaller families. Egyptians numbered around 57 million 30 years ago. The latest census in 2017 showed nearly 95 million citizens residing in the country. President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi said at the time that terrorism and overpopulation represented the two most important threats for Egypt.

As with the majority of Arab countries, Egypt has a youthful population with just over 60 percent under the age of 30. Around

10 million Egyptians live overseas, most of them in the Gulf in search of better economic opportunities. Their remittances have become an important source of income for Egypt. Nearly one in three Egyptians live below the poverty line, according to CAPMAS figures released last year. The unemployment rate is hovering 10 percent, with millions leading precarious lives often without social protection in the informal economy. — AFP

At least 15 refugees drown as boat sinks off South Bangladesh

SAINT MARTIN'S ISLAND: At least 15 women and children drowned and more than 50 others were missing after a boat overloaded with Rohingya refugees sank off southern Bangladesh as it tried to reach Malaysia yesterday, officials said. Some 138 people - mainly women and children - were packed on a trawler barely 13 meters long, trying to cross the Bay of Bengal, a coast guard spokesman said.

"It sank because of overloading. The boat was meant to carry maximum 50 people. The boat was also loaded with some cargo," another coast guard spokesman, Hamidul Islam, added. Seventy-one people have been rescued including 46 women. Among the dead, 11 were women and the rest children. Anwara Begum said two of her sons, aged six and seven, drowned in the tragedy. "We were four of us in the boat... Another child (son, aged 10) is very sick," the 40-year-old said.

Fishermen tipped off the coast guard after they saw survivors swim-

ming and crying for help in the sea. The boat's keel hit an undersea coral in shallow water off Saint Martin's island, Bangladesh's southernmost territory, before it sank, survivors said. "We swam in the sea before boats came and rescued us," said survivor Mohammad Hossain, 20. Coast guard commander Sohel Rana said three survivors, including a Bangladeshi, were detained over human trafficking allegations.

Nearly one million Rohingya live in squalid camps near Bangladesh's border with Myanmar, many fleeing the neighboring country after a 2017 brutal military crackdown. With few opportunities for jobs and education in the camps, thousands have tried to reach other countries like Malaysia and Thailand by attempting the hazardous 2,000-kilometre journey. An estimated 25,000 Rohingya left Bangladesh and Myanmar on boats in 2015 trying to get to Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Hundreds drowned when overloaded boats sank. — AFP

International

Over 100 US troops suffer brain injury in Iran attack

Iran taunts US on anniversary of shah's ouster

WASHINGTON: More than 100 US troops sustained "mild" traumatic brain injury, far more than originally announced, when Iran launched missiles at their base in Iraq last month, the Department of Defense said Monday. "As of today, 109 US service members have been diagnosed with mild traumatic brain injury, or mTBI, an increase of 45 since the previous report," the Pentagon said in a statement.

Of them, 76 have returned to duty while most of the rest are still undergoing evaluation and treatment. President Donald Trump had initially said that no Americans were injured in the strike on the Ain Al-Asad base in western Iraq on the night of January 7-8, although authorities later reported that 11 troops were injured.

Iran fired ballistic missiles at the base to retaliate for the January 3 US drone strike that killed top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani while he was in Baghdad. Trump was understood to downplay the impact on US troops to help ratchet down tensions between the two countries, amid concerns that a full war could break out. It was only a week later that reports surfaced that US troops had experienced concussions and other brain injuries.

But the US leader then dismissed the reported injuries as "headaches" and "not very serious." "We are grateful to the efforts of our medical professionals who have worked diligently to ensure the appropriate level of care for our service members, which has enabled nearly 70 percent of those diagnosed to return to duty," said Pentagon press secretary Alyssa Farah in a statement Monday. "We must continue to address physical and mental health together," she said.

Iran taunts US

Meanwhile, Iran taunted the United States on the 41st anniversary yesterday of the ouster of its ally the shah, as huge crowds took to the streets to mark the historic occasion. Waving national flags and holding portraits of the founder of the Islamic republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the crowds converged on Tehran's iconic Azadi Square braving sub-zero temperatures.

"It is unbearable for the United States to accept the victory of a great nation and that a superpower has been driven out of this land," President Hassan Rouhani told the gathering. "It is natural for them to have dreamt, for 41 years, of returning to this land, because they know that we are one of the most powerful countries" in the Middle East, he added.

Tehran and Washington have been sworn enemies since 1979,

when the government of the US-backed shah was ousted and the Islamic republic established. Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi had already fled the country weeks earlier after months of protests against his regime. That November radical students demanding the shah's extradition seized 52 hostages at the US embassy in Tehran and held them for 444 days, prompting Washington to sever ties. The bad blood between Tehran and Washington worsened in 2018 when US President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from a deal that froze Iran's nuclear program and reimposed crippling sanctions. In the capital, the atmosphere was mixed, with some people casually strolling the streets with their children clutching balloons and others chanting hardline slogans and trampling on US and Israeli flags. "Death to America" and "We will resist until the end", read some of the banners they carried.

Show of unity

Women in black chadors held portraits of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Qasem Soleimani, a hugely popular general killed in a US drone strike last month. Young men posed for selfies in front of a row of coffins draped in US flags and bearing the logos of companies seen as symbols of American imperialism. Girls marched with backpacks bearing Soleimani's face as patriotic songs and Koranic verses were played on loudspeakers and volunteers dished out bowls of soup to keep people warm.

"I'm here to support the authority of the Islamic republic," one participant, Yasser Mohammadi, 37, told AFP. "Maybe we have some problems internally, like the economy and mismanagement, but this won't stop us supporting our Islamic republic." "We want to show the world that what the US is doing is wrong, including the killing of Soleimani." State television showed crowds on the streets of the northern cities of Rasht and Tabriz, dressed in woolly scarves and hats and holding umbrellas, seemingly undeterred by heavy snowfall.

The state had appealed for a large turnout as a show of solidarity after a year in which Iran has been shaken by protests and military tensions with the United States. "Securing our country and our region depends on our unity, and participation in this rally is a symbol of this unity," said Hadi Khamenei, brother of the supreme leader. Iran's economy has been battered since May 2018, when Trump abandoned the multilateral nuclear deal and reimposed sanctions.



TEHRAN: President Hassan Rouhani delivers a speech during commemorations marking 41 years since the Islamic Revolution in the capital Tehran's Azadi Square. —AFP

Crucial elections

When Iran raised petrol prices in November, nationwide protests erupted and turned violent before security forces put them down amid a near-total internet blackout. Tensions with Washington escalated in early January when the US killed Soleimani, head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' foreign operations arm, the Quds Force. Iran retaliated by targeting US forces but then accidentally shot down a Ukrainian airliner, killing all 176 people on board, in a tragedy that sparked anger at home and abroad. This year's anniversary comes ahead of crucial parliamentary elections in Iran. In another development, Iraqi officials

yesterday commemorated Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, the senior commander killed in last month's US drone strike that targeted powerful Iranian general Qasem Soleimani. Muhandis was the deputy head of the Hashed Al-Shaabi, a loose network of paramilitary groups formed in 2014 to fight jihadists that has since been absorbed into the Iraqi state. He, Soleimani and eight others were killed in the January 3 US strike outside Baghdad's International Airport that Iraq's government slammed as a violation of its sovereignty. To mark 40 days since their deaths, a tradition in the Middle East, top officials held a memorial service in Baghdad's high-security Green Zone. —Agencies

Jihadists kill, abduct dozens in northeast Nigeria

AUNO: Jihadists killed at least 30 people and abducted women and children in a raid in northeast Nigeria's restive Borno state, a regional government spokesman said yesterday. The attack Sunday evening targeted the village of Auno on a key highway linking to regional capital Maiduguri. The jihadists stormed in on trucks mounted with heavy weapons, killing, burning and looting before kidnapping women and children, state government spokesman Ahmad Abdurrahman Bundi said. They targeted travelers who had stopped for the night and torched vehicles.

AFP journalists saw the smoldering wreckage of trucks, buses and cars lining the road at the scene of the attack. The jihadists "killed not less than 30 people who are mostly motorists and destroyed 18 vehicles," Bundi said in a statement after visiting the scene. The assault, some 25 kilometers west of Maiduguri, occurred in an area where fighters from the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have been

active, mounting roadblocks to target security forces and civilians. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

'Burnt alive'

Witnesses said jihadists set alight 30 vehicles in the raid, including trucks that had stopped overnight on their way to Maiduguri. "Many of the drivers and their assistants who were sleeping in the vehicles were burnt alive," said Babakura Kolo, a member of a state-backed anti-jihadist militia. The jihadists combed through the village, looting and burning shops and property before withdrawing, he said. Kolo told AFP the militants took away three buses carrying women and children to Maiduguri which had parked in the village for the night.

"We still don't know how many women and children they took away but the number is huge," he said. Auno lies on the 120-kilometre highway linking Maiduguri to Damaturu, a major regional city in neighboring Yobe state. The highway has been increasingly targeted by ISWAP militants in recent months. Jihadists disguised as soldiers have set up roadblocks to abduct and kill passing travelers and have above all targeted Christians and members of the security forces.

The UN has complained of an upsurge of violent attacks in recent weeks across the conflict zone. The



AUNO: Cars burnt down by suspected members of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) during an attack. Jihadists killed at least 30 people and abducted women and children in a raid in northeast Nigeria's restive Borno state. —AFP

increase comes after the Nigerian army last year launched a new strategy that saw it withdraw troops from remote bases into larger so-called "super camps". The military says the tactic has helped to stem jihadist attacks but local residents and aid workers say it appears to have bolstered the jihadists by leaving vast swathes of territory unprotected.

Last month four Nigerian soldiers were killed and seven injured when the jihadists attacked troops positioned in

Auno. The decade-long Islamist insurgency has killed 36,000 people and displaced around two million from their homes in northeast Nigeria. The jihadists have split into rival factions with one group affiliated to Islamic State group and the other loyal to longtime Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau. The violence has spread to neighboring Niger, Chad and Cameroon, prompting the creation of a regional military coalition to fight the insurgents. —AFP

Couple jailed for exploiting migrant women

KUALA LUMPUR: An Indian couple was sentenced to more than five years in jail in Singapore yesterday for exploiting migrant women, the first labor trafficking conviction in the affluent nation that is home to many foreign workers. The two Indian nationals were given a prison term of five years and six months each after they were found guilty of exploiting three Bangladeshi women they recruited to dance at nightclubs they ran in Singapore.

The pair was also given a fine, while the male owner of the nightclubs was ordered by the court to pay nearly S\$5,000 (\$3,600) in unpaid wages, according to a spokesman from Singapore's Manpower Ministry. "Both intend to appeal against their convictions and sentences. They are out on bail," the spokesman told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an email. The Southeast Asian nation of 5.6 million depends on about one million migrant workers from countries like Indonesia, China and Myanmar to power its economy, working in sectors from construction to manufacturing and domestic care.

The case was the first conviction since Singapore introduced a law in 2015 in a bid to fight human trafficking, which labor rights groups say migrant workers are most vulnerable to. Offenders can face up to 10 years in jail, whipping and a fine under the law. There were two other labor trafficking cases pending in court. Court documents showed the couple had subjected the women to verbal abuse, controlled their movement and confiscated their passports.

The couple was also found guilty of forcing one of the women into sex work. The prosecution has said the three Bangladeshi women had to work every day and the couple did not pay at least two of them their monthly salary of 60,000 taka (\$707). The government has warned employers that it would take strong action to prevent trafficking cases. —Reuters

Syrian forces retake major M5 highway

BEIRUT: Government forces battling rebels in northwestern Syria took full control yesterday of a key highway, over which they lost control in 2012, linking the country's four largest cities. The latest gain marked another step in the government's advance against Syria's last rebel-held pocket, where intense fighting has displaced 700,000 civilians since December.

The remaining rebel fighters and some three million civilians are being pushed ever closer to the Turkish border by the regime's inexorable northward push. The M5 motorway which links the capital Damascus to the second city of Aleppo through the cities of Homs and Hama has been a key government target for years. Yesterday, government and allied forces retook the Rashideen Al-Rabea area near Aleppo, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

"That means they control the entire M5 for the first time since 2012," Rami Abdel Rahman, the head of the UK-based war monitor said. The government's advance also helps secure Aleppo, the country's former industrial hub, which still comes under sporadic rocket fire from holdout rebel groups. The war in Syria, which started with a popular movement against President Bashar Al-Assad's rule that was brutally repressed, has killed more than 380,000 people in nine years and displaced around half of the country's population.

'Giant refugee camp'

The Islamic State group's once sprawling "caliphate" has collapsed, and the number of front lines been reduced by recent government gains. But aid groups have warned that one of the conflict's worst humanitarian catastrophes yet could be unfolding in Idlib, with staggering numbers of families sleeping rough in sometimes sub-zero temperatures. "You shouldn't have a war in what is essentially a giant refugee camp," the head of the Norwegian Refugee Council, Jan Egeland, told CNN in an interview.



ALEPPO: A convoy of vehicles loaded with Syrian families and their belongings is pictured on a road near the town of Al-Ghazawiya, as they flee pro-regime attacks on the western countryside of Aleppo yesterday. —AFP

The Idlib region is a dead-end for hundreds of thousands of people who were forced to flee or were evacuated from formerly rebel-held territory elsewhere in Syria. Some have moved four times or more since the start of the war but there is nowhere for them to go after Idlib, with the Turkish border to the north and government forces in the other three directions. Turkey, which has troops deployed in several locations in northern Syria, continues to support rebel groups battling the Assad regime or acting as proxies against Kurdish forces.

Russia-Turkey deal

With Russia, it is the key foreign broker in northern Syria but a 2018 deal aimed at averting a major offensive has failed to take hold. On Monday, artillery fire by government forces killed at least five Turkish soldiers in Idlib. Ankara said it responded and "neutralized" 101 Syrian forces. It was not possible to verify that claim on the ground, and neither state media nor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported any casualties on the government side. —AFP

News in brief

Teacher accused of sex assaults

CAIRO: An Egyptian court has upheld a teaching ban against an elementary school teacher accused of sexually harassing 120 female pupils, the education ministry said Monday. The incidents date to 2013, when complaints were lodged against the maths teacher at a school in Alexandria, said the ministry's undersecretary Youssef Al-Deeb. "The teacher was fired from the school back then," Deeb said. The Supreme Administrative Court on Sunday rejected the teacher's appeal against a lower court's decision permanently banning him from teaching, he added. Elementary schools in Egypt teach children between the ages of six and 12. Sexual harassment is highly prevalent in Egypt. United Nations surveys have found that most Egyptian women have been subject to harassment, ranging from catcalling to pinching and groping. Egyptian authorities have criminalized sexual harassment since 2014 but many women complain that the problem remains rampant. —AFP

Fate of missing IS captives

BEIRUT: Human Rights Watch called yesterday for Damascus and the Kurdish authorities in northeastern Syria to investigate the fate of thousands of people who went missing in the custody of the Islamic State group. More than 8,000 people, detained by IS when it controlled swathes of the north and east, remain unaccounted for, the New York-based watchdog said, citing figures from the Syrian Network for Human Rights. Among them are a few well-known cases of foreigners, such as British reporter John Cantlie and Italian Jesuit priest Paolo Dall'Oglio. HRW said the Syrian government and the Kurdish authorities who now control former IS territory have so far failed to prioritize the search for the truth about what happened to the missing. Kurdish authorities in the northeast "rarely" provide answers to those in search of their relatives, HRW said. —AFP

Man jailed for spitting on pizza

ISTANBUL: A Turkish court sentenced a delivery driver to two years in prison for spitting on a pizza before giving it to a customer, local media reported yesterday. The incident took place in 2017 in the central Anatolian city of Eskisehir and was captured by a security camera in the customer's apartment block. The footage showed the delivery man, identified as Burak S, spitting on the pizza and recording the moment on his mobile phone. His motive was unknown. The man denied the claim during yesterday's hearing, the official Anadolu news agency reported. "I didn't spit on the pizza," he told the court. "I demand my acquittal." But the court in Eskisehir convicted him on charges of "damaging property" and "poisoning food and endangering people's health," Anadolu said. He was sentenced to two years and six months. —AFP

Pyongyang importing illegally

UNITED NATIONS: North Korea, which has been hit by a series of UN sanctions, is illegally importing more and more oil and continues to bring in luxury cars and alcohol, according to an annual report delivered Monday to the UN Security Council. "The DPRK violates the resolutions through illicit import of petroleum," the report said, which was conducted by experts responsible for monitoring the application of sanctions. North Korea has "increased procurement including through a notable increase in the number of these larger foreign-flagged tankers directly delivering to the DPRK on multiple occasions," the experts said, without identifying their origin. —AFP

International

Seven years after stepping down, Benedict fuels '2 popes' headache

Pope Benedict XVI - weakened by age but still intellectually spry

VATICAN CITY: Seven years after his surprise resignation, Benedict XVI - weakened by age but still intellectually spry - appears unable to remain in the shadow of his Argentinean successor Francis, creating the appearance of "two popes" at odds. On February 11, 2013, at the age of 85, the German intellectual Joseph Ratzinger announced in Latin to astonished cardinals that he would cease being pope, a situation unheard of for seven centuries. For five years, the unusual cohabitation in the smallest state in the world between the 265th pope in retirement and the 266th, Francis, went on without a hitch.

But as the "emeritus" Pope Benedict XVI, a learned theologian, continued in his retirement to write on the great themes of the Church, friction has arisen, most recently over the topic of married priests. Today, Francis will unveil his stance on priestly marriage after a synod of Amazonian bishops recommended in October that the priesthood be opened to married indigenous people. Some say this exception would solve the problem of a lack of priests in remote areas of the Amazon.

The Vatican insists that Francis's position was already decided in December, before the publication in January of a book castigating the synod conclusions and defending the celibacy of priests, co-signed by Benedict XVI and the ultra-traditionalist Guinean Cardinal Robert Sarah. Some Vatican observers say Francis was strongly irritated by the publication, which caused shockwaves when excerpts were first published by Le Figaro newspaper.

Through his private secretary, the German archbishop Georg Gaenswein, Benedict tried to backtrack on the publication, explaining that he had never approved a co-authored book project. But the damage had been done, with the former pope weighing in on the importance of priestly celibacy ahead of his successor's pronouncement on the subject. Benedict also ruffled feathers

in April 2019, when in a long text he blamed paedophilia within the church on the 1960s sexual revolution and an absence of God in modern society.

Francis has said the problems stem from within the church itself, and has criticized "clericalism," or how a sense of priestly superiority has caused the clergy to become remote from the faithful. Gaenswein, whose duties included organizing Francis' audiences, has not been seen at the side of the current pope since the publication of the book. The prelate appears to have been sidelined and invited to spend more time taking care of the retired Pope.

'His strength has weakened'

A Bavarian television documentary in January revealed a frail Benedict, in a wheelchair, speaking with a faint voice. The former pope no longer celebrates mass himself in his monastery within the Vatican gardens, decorated with family photos and Bavarian souvenirs.

The former pope - who has given himself the title of "emeritus" pope - has now substituted monk's sandals for his red mules of the past, but he continues to wear a white cassock within the Vatican walls. Gaenswein, who lives with Benedict in the same monastery, is quoted in the documentary as saying: "You can see when he walks that his strength has weakened." Three years ago, Gaenswein explained the "two pope" phenomenon: "There are not two popes, but a de facto expanded ministry, with one active and one contemplative member".

Such statements have fuelled a traditionalist fringe within the Vatican which considers Francis illegitimate and interprets all writings of Benedict as criticism of his successor. But last week, the second most powerful person in the Vatican, Cardinal Pietro Parolin sought to put the affair to rest, saying Francis was the one



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis (left) greets chairman of the German Bishops' Conference, Archbishop of Munich and Freising, German Cardinal Reinhard Marx during a private audience at the Vatican. Cardinal Marx announced yesterday that he renounces running for a second term as head of the German Bishops' Conference. —AFP

and only pope. "Let's stop talking about two sovereign pontiffs, because there is only one pope, the one who is invested with papal authority, that is, Francis," Parolin said.

Francis too tried to stamp out any ambiguity in 2016, saying Benedict was "a pope emeritus and not the second pope," comparing his 10-year-old elder to "a

grandfather at home". Still, popular culture has run with the idea. "The Two Popes," a film by Brazilian director Fernando Meirelles, imagines an oratorical joust between an authoritarian German pope played by Anthony Hopkins and a future Argentine pope, played by Jonathan Pryce, who likes to watch soccer and who wants to teach the pope to tango. —AFP

US, German spies plundered global secrets via Swiss encryption firm

WASHINGTON: US and German intelligence services raked in the top secret communications of governments around the world for decades through their hidden control of a top encryption company Crypto AG, US, German and Swiss media reported yesterday. The Swiss company was a top supplier of devices for encoding communications to some 120 countries from after World War II to the beginning of this century, including Iran, South American governments, and India and Pakistan, the Washington Post, German television ZTE and Swiss state media SRF reported.

Unknown to those governments, Crypto was secretly owned by the US Central Intelligence Agency together with Germany's BND Federal Intelligence Service, who rigged Crypto's equipment to be able to easily break the codes and read the government's messages. The Washington Post said a classified internal CIA history of the top-secret program identifies the CIA officers who oversaw the operation and the Crypto executives who enabled it.

And it noted that the company took in millions of dollars while giving Western intelligence access to the secrets of its clients. "It was the intelligence coup of the century," the history says, according to the Washington Post. "Foreign governments were paying good money to the US and West Germany for the privilege of having their most secret communications read by at least two (and possibly as many as five or six) foreign countries."

The arrangement has long been suspected and was alluded to, but never proven, in documents that surfaced decades ago. The media reports note that while scores of countries made use of Crypto's products, the top Western adversaries, Russia and China, never did. The CIA had no immediate comment on the story. Crypto, based in Zug, Switzerland, was reportedly broken into two companies in 2018, with its Swiss client business remaining in that country and the international business and company name being taken over by Swedish investor Andreas Linde.

The Swedish company, Crypto International, called the news reports "very distressing." "We have no connections to the CIA or the BND and we never had," the company said in a statement on its website. "We are currently assessing the situation and will be commenting once we have a full picture." —AFP

The rise and fall of Merkel's 'mini-me'

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: In the end, the "mini Merkel" nickname was perhaps too big to live up to. Barely a year after replacing her mentor as head of Germany's CDU party, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer has thrown in the towel - unexpectedly upending Chancellor Angela Merkel's succession plans. Kramp-Karrenbauer, best known by her initials "AKK", said she was standing down as CDU leader and would not seek to become the centre-right party's new chancellor in a general election slated for next year. She said her stint as party leader had been "a difficult time" as mainstream parties grapple to respond to the rise of the far right.

It's a swift fall from grace for AKK, whose spell in the spotlight was marred by high-profile blunders and weak showings by the CDU in regional polls. A political fiasco in the small state of Thuringia last week cast further doubt on her leadership skills and proved the final blow. Not only did AKK fail to persuade rebellious CDU lawmakers there against siding with the far-right AfD in a key vote, she couldn't get them to back snap polls afterwards in the face of nationwide outrage.

Merkel had to weigh in from South

Africa to condemn the vote as "unforgivable" - breaking an unwritten rule not to comment on domestic rows from abroad. Even before the Thuringia debacle, critics had long argued that AKK, who is also defence minister, had not lived up to expectations. "She acted and manoeuvred in such clumsy ways that she must have realised herself: this can't go on," the centre-left Tagesspiegel wrote.

Rival Merz

A popular premier in her tiny home state of Saarland, the Catholic mum-of-three was catapulted into the big leagues in early 2018 when Merkel tapped her to become the CDU's number two as general secretary. The move was read as a sign that the veteran chancellor was preparing her exit and AKK, dubbed "mini Merkel" by German media, was the chosen heir to continue her centrist policies.

When Merkel later announced she was stepping down as party chief after 18 years and would not seek reelection when her fourth term ends in 2021, it was her protegee who took the reins of the CDU in December 2018. But AKK, 57, only narrowly fended off a strong challenge from the ambitious Friedrich Merz, an old Merkel rival backed by the CDU's more conservative and pro-business wings. Once in the job, AKK sought to carve out her own profile in a party thirsty for change after years of Merkel's moderate course in a loveless coalition with the centre-left Social Democrats.

She championed a tougher stance on



BERLIN: Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (right), leader of the conservative Christian Democratic Union party, shares a laugh with parliamentary manager Michael Grosse-Broemer (center) and CDU/CSU parliamentary group leader Ralph Brinkhaus as she arrives for a meeting with the CDU/CSU parliamentary group at the Bundestag (lower house of parliament) in Berlin. —AFP

asylum seekers and floated the idea of reintroducing compulsory military service. She also spoke out against gay marriage. But Merkel's decision to abandon the party leadership while staying on as chancellor made it difficult for AKK to impose her authority. In an implicit rebuke, AKK on Monday said the separation of the roles was "weakening the CDU" and the same person should hold both positions in future.

AKK's standing in the party was badly weakened by a string of bruising elec-

tions, particularly in eastern Germany's former communist states where the CDU bled support to the anti-immigrant AfD. Several blunders further eroded confidence in her ability to turn the tide. A transgender bathroom joke backfired badly, while an ill-judged retort to a YouTube star's criticism of the government's climate policies left her looking out of touch. Born into a large, Catholic family, AKK grew up a self-described nerd who adored reading and never dared to cut class. —AFP

Fish fight clouds Scottish leader's EU visit

BRUSSELS: Scottish leader Nicola Sturgeon visited EU officials in Brussels on Monday, her usual warm welcome partly overshadowed by the upcoming dispute on fishing quotas - and a Brexit Night political stunt. Scotland left the European Union on January 31 with the rest of the United Kingdom, and the first minister was visiting to underline it wants to come back one day to rejoin as an independent state.

There is sympathy for Scotland in Brussels - MEPs sang Auld Lang Syne at the last parliamentary session attended by British colleagues, and some here have promised to "leave a light on" for its return. But in practi-

cal and legal terms, future cross-Channel relations will be negotiated by the EU's Michel Barnier and pro-Brexit UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government. Sturgeon said Scotland would try to exert political influence on the process, and that she favors close alignment between UK and EU rules to allow trade to continue seamlessly.

But the very first item on the trade agenda could show up contradictions in the Scottish stance. While most Scottish voters backed the "Remain" campaign in the 2016 Brexit referendum, Scotland's fishermen are just as keen as their English neighbors to escape Brussels' rules. Johnson has vowed to "take back control" of UK waters and to negotiate access for EU vessels as an "independent coastal state" - presumably meaning bigger catches for Scottish boats.

But France, Denmark, the Netherlands and some other EU members have urged Barnier not to proceed with trade talks unless London continues to give their fleets

access and "upholds" the current system. On the one hand, Sturgeon wants Britain to align with EU rules to ensure continued market access - and on the other her government has also called for reform of EU fisheries policy.

In Brussels, she said this was a dilemma for Johnson to sort out. "I think Boris Johnson has to find a way of delivering on the promise to the fishing community on the independence and control of access points, while also securing access to markets," she said. "I don't pretend that is an easy circle for him to square but it was his party that made the promises and I think there will be lots of people in Scotland looking to see how he delivers on that. "So it's not either or, it's both and it's over to him." Sturgeon was also quizzed about a stunt that her Scottish National party carried out on Brexit night, when the words Scotland and Europe and a red love heart were projected onto the wall of EU headquarters.

China denies US allegations over military 'hackers'

BEIJING: Beijing said yesterday it "never engages" in cybertheft, following US indictments of four Chinese army members for alleged involvement in the massive 2017 hacking of credit rating agency Equifax. The US Justice Department on Monday accused the hackers of stealing the sensitive personal information of some 145 million Americans, in one of the world's largest-ever data breaches.

Four members of the Chinese army's 54th Research Institute were charged with multiple counts of hacking, computer fraud, economic espionage and wire fraud. US officials said it took well over a year to track them through the 34 servers in 20 countries they allegedly used to hide their tracks. "This was an organized and remarkably brazen criminal heist of sensitive information of nearly half of all Americans, as well as the hard work and intellectual property of an American company, by a unit of the Chinese military," Attorney General Bill Barr said.

Beijing firmly rejected the claims yesterday, saying it is a "staunch defender of cybersecurity". "The Chinese government and army... never engage in or participate in

activities of trade theft through the internet," said foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang at a regular press briefing.

Intelligence gathering

The hack stunned US intelligence officials, following a similar intrusion on the civil service database of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), also blamed on the Chinese. Since then, as well, hotels giant Marriott lost data on some 500 million global customers to hackers believed to be Chinese. US officials believe the Chinese military and security service are collecting personal data on Americans for strictly intelligence purposes.

After the OPM hack there were worries

that Beijing could use the information to identify US spies working under the cover of non-intelligence jobs. FBI Deputy Director David Bowdich said there was no evidence yet of the Equifax data having been used, for example to hijack a person's bank account or credit card. But he added: "If you get the personal identifying information of people, you can do a lot with that."

Atlanta-based Equifax is one of three giant, little-regulated credit-raters who sweep up financial data on all Americans - their credit cards and banking activity especially - that necessarily comes with identifying data like their addresses and social security numbers. The hackers allegedly took advantage of a vulnerability in the Apache

Struts web-application software that Equifax had on its systems. While Apache notified clients of the problem in March 2017, Equifax did not fix it for months, allowing the hackers to enter their systems with relative ease.

They infected Equifax's computers with "web shells" that gave them the ability to remotely manipulate the systems and to steal identities that expanded their access. Investigators said the Chinese, using encrypted channels, ran some 9,000 queries through Equifax's computing systems to obtain, divide, compress and exfiltrate the data, bit by bit. The US believes the suspects - Wu Zhiyong, Wang Qian, Xu Ke and Liu Lei - are currently in China. —AFP

International

Mystery and murder intrigue 'traumatize' volatile Lesotho

Small southern African kingdom rocked by scandal

MASERU: Murder, mystery, suspense and political drama - the cocktail of events playing out in Lesotho belong in a best-selling thriller. But it is the lived reality of a small southern African kingdom teetering on the brink. Lesotho's picturesque mountains and ski resorts have earned it the moniker of Africa's Switzerland. But lately the country has been rocked by scandal, with the first family sucked into the long unresolved murder of the prime minister's previous wife.

In 2017, 58-year-old Lipolelo Thabane was gunned down near her home, just two days before Prime Minister Thomas Thabane was sworn into office. The premier and his then wife were engaged in a bitter divorce at the time. Two months after Thabane assumed office, he married Maesaiah, now aged 43. Last week, she was charged in connection with the murder of her rival. Thabane's election had brought hopes of stability to Lesotho, which has a long history of political turmoil.

He first came to power in 2012 as the head of the country's first coalition government, formed after an inconclusive vote. But the start of his second term was rocked by Lipolelo's murder, which sent shock waves through the tiny kingdom of 2.2 million people. The now 80-year-old prime minister was also questioned last month after investigations revealed that communication records from the day of the murder picked up his cell phone number. "That put a personal crisis on top of a political crisis that had been going on for almost a year," said Nqosa Mahao, the deputy president of Thabane's ruling All Basotho Convention (ABC). Mahao, who has been at odds with Thabane since he was elected deputy last year, has said Lipolelo's murder had "foredoomed this government". A faction of the troubled party has since asked Thabane to resign. He agreed to go on the grounds of his advanced age, but has yet to give a date for his departure. It has been more than a decade since a prime minister served out a full five-year term in Lesotho.

'Battered image'

Thabane has already fled the country once. His 2012

coalition government was marred by political bickering, which culminated in an army-led coup in August 2014. The prime minister sought exile in South Africa after soldiers attacked police posts and surrounded his official residence.

He returned home in 2017 and successfully ran for re-election. Yet once again, his party has been rocked by ructions and is split down the middle. The alleged link to the murder of his previous wife has only added to his woes. "We as a country have never had to sink so low, the second highest office in the country (after King Letsie III) linked to crime," Mahao said. "We as a nation are traumatized." He said the scandal, which sparked headlines both at home and abroad, "has battered the image of the country".

"We were already the region's mischievous boy even before this crisis," he told AFP in the capital Maseru. "Whoever imagined that the (murder) crime would reach the prime minister's office, he asked. The Democratic Congress - the main opposition party founded by Thabane's predecessor Pakalitha Mosisili - could not agree more. "The rule of law in this country has collapsed and the executive has become the law unto itself," said its current leader Mathibeli Mokhothu. He said Thabane's link to a murder "brings shame on us... He is the face of the country". "We are all disgruntled, and instability is at levels never seen before," Mokhothu told AFP, backing calls for the "old and tired" Thabane to step down. Parties in Thabane's coalition also want him gone. "In other democracies once there is such an allegation against a head of state, (he) automatically would voluntarily resign," said Machesetsa Mofomobe, deputy president of the Basotho National Party speaking from his party headquarters. "We are also calling on him to call it a day," Mofomobe said.

Successor unknown

Thabane's party has yet to agree on a successor to serve out his term after he leaves office. The next national



MASERU: A picture taken in Maseru, Lesotho shows the exterior of the Palace of Justice of Lesotho. Lesotho's first lady Maesaiah Thabane was charged with murder for alleged links to the brutal 2017 killing of the prime minister's previous wife. — AFP

elections are due in 2022. On the streets people are jaded. "We don't know what is going on in our country," said civil servant Dineo, 38, declining to give her full name. "We keep on electing these people and they keep on disap-

pointing us. This is the last straw." "(Thabane) is one person who we had so much faith in," she added, vowing "never ever" to vote again as she left a Sunday morning church service. — AFP

Coronavirus clips wings of Asia's biggest air show

SINGAPORE: Asia's biggest air show opened in Singapore yesterday under the shadow of a deadly coronavirus outbreak that has prompted dozens of companies to withdraw and threatens to hammer the aviation industry. The biennial Singapore Airshow attracts hundreds of global aerospace firms and airlines to the financial hub, where they negotiate multi-million dollar deals and watch spectacular aerial displays by fighter jets.

But the virus - which has killed hundreds in China and spread to more than two dozen other countries - looks set to overshadow this year's event. Over 40 cases have so far been reported in Singapore, and the city-state last week raised its health alert level to the same as during the deadly 2002-2003 SARS outbreak. The number of exhibitors deciding to skip the show has now climbed to over 70.

Among them is US aerospace giant Lockheed Martin, which makes warplanes and defense equipment used by militaries



SINGAPORE: Visitors stand next to a static display of the US Navy aircraft the Poseidon P-8 (left) and the USAF Boeing C-17A Globemaster III on the tarmac during the Singapore Airshow in Singapore yesterday. — AFP

around the world. "We determined that this was in the best interest of our employees," the company said in a statement. Other withdrawals include Canada's Bombardier and plane maker De Havilland, while a major aviation conference normally held on the eve of the air show was also cancelled. In addition, at least 10 Chinese companies have pulled out after Singapore imposed a ban on people travelling from China in a bid to stem the spread of the virus.

Bows, but no handshakes

Organizers insist the show will go on, however. They are taking precautions such as limiting the number of public tickets and advising participants to greet one another by waving from a distance or bowing, instead of shaking hands. "The safety and well-being of all attendees is our priority," said Leck Chet Lam, the managing director of organizer Experia Events. There will still be over 930

exhibiting companies and 45,000 trade attendees from more than 45 countries, including the top two global aviation players, Boeing - seeking to recover from a crisis sparked by fatal crashes involving its 737 MAX model - and Airbus.

Both are banking on growing numbers of orders from carriers in the booming Asia-Pacific, where air travel is growing fast. But with reduced participation and airlines feeling the impact after many nations barred Chinese travelers over the outbreak, the mood will be subdued and major deals are not expected. The International Air Transport Association told AFP it was a "challenging time" and airlines would be "impacted negatively", but added it was too early to assess the full damage.

The association, however, noted that during the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) - which, like the current virus, spread from China and killed hundreds - Asia-Pacific airlines lost an estimated \$6.0 billion in revenues. The tourism industry as a whole will suffer "a massive negative blow" due to bans on arrivals from China, said Rajiv Biswas, Asia Pacific chief economist at IHS Markit, adding outbound Chinese travelers rose from 20 million in 2003 to 150 million in 2018. — AFP

Bat meat still popular in parts of Indonesia, despite virus fears

MANADO: Bat meat is still popular in some parts of Indonesia, despite research suggesting the coronavirus spreading from China might have originated in bats before being passed on to humans. Bats are traditionally eaten by the Minahasan people from North Sulawesi in the form of a curry-like dish called Paniki. Whole bats are used in Paniki, including the head and wings.

"It (the coronavirus) has not affected sales," said bat seller Stenly Timbuleng at his stall in Tomohon, a city in North Sulawesi, south of the provincial capital of Manado. "In fact... sales continue. It is always sold out." On an average day, Timbuleng sells 50-60 bats and during festive periods, he can sell up to 600.

"Bats are the favorite indigenous protein, particularly in North Sulawesi," Indonesian culinary expert and author of half a dozen cookbooks, William W. Wongso said. "My favorite part is the wings," Wongso added. Glands from the armpits and the neck of the bat are first removed to get rid of the bad smell. It is then grilled or torched to get rid of the bat's hairs before being chopped and cooked in a stew of herbs, spices and coconut milk.

The coronavirus is believed to have originated in a food market in the Chinese city of Wuhan that was illegally selling wildlife. Health experts think it may have originated in bats and then passed to humans, possibly via another species. In China, the virus has killed more than 1,000 and infected more than 42,700. There are 319 coronavirus cases in 24 countries and territories outside of China, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) and Chinese health officials.

None has been reported in Indonesia, but the outbreak has prompted many Manadonese restaurants in the capital, Jakarta, to take bats off the menu. For Manadonese Jufry Mantak, the links between the coronavirus and his favorite dish have not put him off. "We have not found any (coronavirus) cases in Manado. Up till now, there are still many people eating these bats. Because bats are good, especially when cooked with coconut milk." — Reuters



NAKHON RATCHASIMA: Guns are set up in a window display at the Ratchasima Gun Shop, located near the Terminal 21 shopping mall where a mass shooting took place in the northeastern Thai city of Nakhon Ratchasima. — AFP

Guns and social media: The soldier behind Thai deadly mass shooting

NAKHON RATCHASIMA: The "pings" from the metal targets at a gun range ring out as a baby-faced shooter smiles for the camera - a chilling prelude to the mall massacre by a Thai soldier who shared his prowess as a marksman on social media. But more than a day after he was shot dead following a near 17-hour shooting spree that killed 29 people and left dozens more wounded, the killer - Jakrapanth Thomma - remains something of an enigma.

The Thai army, powerful yet reliant on conscripts and the projection of discipline, has released few details about the 31-year-old, blaming his meltdown on a "personal dispute" over debt. "He didn't have a bad record, only this time," army spokesman Colonel Winthai Suvaree told AFP. Even Thailand's gossip-prone local media has so far shied away from sharing rumors about him, while Facebook was swift to shut down his account as the shooting unfolded.

What is known is the gunman was a Sergeant-Major from Chaiyaphum province with a penchant for posting photos and videos with weapons and combat gear on

Facebook - a social media obsessive with no filter for his love of guns. One photo has the caption "Call of Duty" - the name of a popular immersive first-person shooter game - while another is of a revolver with a Buddhist amulet wrapped around it. After graduating from high school, Jakrapanth joined the Suratthani military camp in the northeastern city of Korat, officially known as Nakhon Ratchasima.

Deadly accuracy

On Saturday he went on a rampage, turning the city into an urban warzone and chronicling the carnage in live Facebook updates that drew comparisons with the 2019 attacks on mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. He first stole weapons from the camp's arms depot, killing a soldier as he raided the arsenal - a place he knew well after working as a squad leader there.

During his rampage he appeared to have picked off victims with deadly accuracy, including shots to the head that left some survivors needing brain surgery. To add to the horror of the attack, he live-streamed slivers of it on Facebook where he also mused callously about the fate of his victims. "Damn I got a cramp," he posted. "However, no one can avoid death." One of his last posts screams with fury at being wronged. "Getting rich from cheating, taking advantage from others, they must think that money can be spent in hell," he wrote. — AFP

5 dead in suicide attack on Afghan military academy

KABUL: A suicide attack targeting a military academy in the Afghan capital killed at least five people early yesterday, the first major assault in the city in months. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the dawn attack, which comes after nearly three months of relative calm in Kabul. The ministry of defense said five people were killed and at least six injured in the attack. The interior ministry, however, said six people died - two civilians and four military personnel - after the suicide bomber detonated the device at around 7:00 am. Twelve others were wounded, spokesman Nasrat Rahimi said in a statement.

The blast happened near the Marshal Fahim military academy, where the country's security officers are trained. "It was a big explosion that rocked our house. We also heard gunfire afterwards. Ambulances rushed to the area quickly," resident Samiullah, who like many Afghans goes by one name said. A security source speaking on the condition of anonymity said that the attacker was on foot when he targeted a vehicle near a checkpoint as it was entering the academy.

President Ashraf Ghani slammed the attack, calling the bombing "a crime against humanity" while repeating his call for a nationwide ceasefire. "The great nation of Afghanistan wants an end to violence, a ceasefire and a lasting peace," he said in a statement. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said he was unaware of any claim for the bombing, adding that the insurgents were "investigating" the incident. The Islamic State group are also active in Kabul.

Taliban talks

In recent weeks the Taliban have refrained from attacking major urban centers in an effort to keep talks with the US on track, but violence in the provinces has continued. The last major attack in Kabul was in November, when at least 12 people were killed after a minivan packed with explosives rammied into a vehicle carrying foreigners during morning rush hour. Four foreign nationals were among those wounded in the attack.

The military academy has been the scene of several attacks in the past, including one claimed by the Islamic State group last May. Yesterday's blast comes as Washington and the Taliban wrangle over a possible deal that would see US troops begin to leave Afghanistan in return for security guarantees. There appears to have been little progress in reaching a deal in recent weeks, however, prompting the insurgents to saddle blame on the White House and what they say are a growing list of demands.

The US and Taliban had been negotiating for a year and were on the brink of an announcement in September 2019 when President Donald Trump abruptly declared the process "dead", citing ongoing violence. Talks were restarted in December in Qatar, but paused again following an attack near the US-run Bagram military base in Afghanistan. As talks have fluctuated, violent attacks in the country have raged, with the number of clashes jumping to record levels in the last quarter of 2019, according to a recent US government watchdog report. — AFP

Analysis

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
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Facebook's 'double edged sword' in Thailand carnage

Facebook celebrity doctor Parkphum Dejhuatsadin said his phone suddenly started pinging on Saturday - scores of his two million followers in Thailand were desperate and they needed his help. With nowhere to turn as they covered in a shopping mall from a rogue soldier who had already killed more than two dozen people, they looked to Facebook and other social media to send their pleas and to try to find escape. Parkphum could help - and said for the next 16 hours that's all he did: living up to his panda-eyed Facebook persona as sleepless doctor "Mor Lab Panda".

"They told me where they were and sent me pictures of their hiding places. Authorities didn't know where anybody was hiding. But I knew everything," said Parkphum. "I didn't sleep a wink. I didn't want them to die." While social media have been accused of exacerbating or even encouraging mass shootings such as last year's mosque massacre in Christchurch, New Zealand, in Thailand they were also crucial to pulling off a safe and dramatic rescue from the shopping mall in Nakhon Ratchasima city.

Before 32-year-old killer Jakrapanth Thomma was cornered in a basement and shot dead, Thai commandos managed to coordinate raids into the mall to spring hundreds of people to safety. "We were communicating on Facebook with the people inside to exchange information," Pongpipat Siripornwiwat, deputy commander of Nakhon Ratchasima police, told Reuters. "Without it, our work would've been very difficult and we wouldn't have had any idea how many were trapped and what was going on inside."

Facebook life

The tragedy underscored the extent to which Facebook is the communication platform for daily life in the country of 69 million which has about 56 million active users a month and where the average person spends three hours a day on social media. Most social media activity is on mobile phones. And it was on Facebook that the killer, apparently angered by a property deal gone sour, first signalled his intentions.

"Do they think they can spend the money in hell?" his post ended, roughly three hours before he opened fire at a house, then moved to an army camp, a temple and then the shopping mall - leaving a trail of murder behind him. At one point he posted a selfie in front of a fire. His last message before his Facebook account was shut down - "Should I give up?" - came nearly four hours after the first shot.

But after facing criticism for failing to take down the Christchurch shooter's livestream quickly and when a Thai father murdered his child on Facebook Live in 2017, the world's biggest social media company moved faster once it heard what was happening. It shut his Facebook and Instagram accounts and then worked to remove anything that he had posted and was being shared by others - including by spoof accounts apparently set up in his name by other people after his own was blocked.

"There is no place on Facebook for people who commit this kind of atrocity, nor do we allow people to praise or support this attack," a Facebook representative said in a statement, adding that it worked closely with Thai authorities to take down content that violated its policies. "We also responded to emergency requests from the Royal Thai Police to share information related to the shooter to prevent further harm," it said, without giving further details.

Twitter, where graphic videos of the incident were circulated, said it also took action - a company representative said it monitored its platform to remove video content of the attack and to shield graphic content from view. But police said the shooter, who killed at least 29 people and wounded 57 before he was stopped, had not only used social media to publicize what he was doing but also to track police movements through online news sites. "Social media was a double-edged sword. It helped police rescue people, but it also helped him keep up with our movements," said Pongpipat.

'Panda eyes'

Parkphum, a medical technologist working for Thailand's National Blood Center, is so famous he even has his own set of stickers for social media messaging apps with his trademark "panda eyes" and white coat. "Every message from the people about where they were hiding and how many were with them all turned out to be true when police got there. People were hiding in (fashion store) H&M, Eveandboy (a cosmetics shop), a gym. I now know the entire floor plan of the mall," he said.

Other Facebook celebrities with millions of followers also stepped in to coordinate and reassure. "I told them to stay as quiet as possible and mute their phones, to send their locations and phone numbers," said Witawat Siriprachai, 36, known by Thais as the "Sergeant" of the social commentary page "Drama-addict". — Reuters

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Partially cut trees are seen on a street in Heliopolis in the Egyptian capital Cairo on Jan 27, 2020. — AFP

Cairo green lung razed for roads to new capital

In the traffic-choked megacity of Cairo, the historic Heliopolis district has long stood out for its leafy boulevards, but now construction crews are cutting new highways through it and uprooting its century-old trees. As Egypt announced yesterday its burgeoning population has passed the milestone of 100 million, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's government is pushing on with building a colossal new capital in the desert.

And at least six new highways leading there cut right through Heliopolis, an upmarket district with tree-lined streets laid out in the early 1900s in the style of a mini-European metropolis. At least 390,000 sq m of green space - or more than 50 football fields - have been razed in the past four months, said activist group the Heliopolis Heritage Initiative (HHI).

One local writer decried what she graphically described as "the razing of a suburb ... with its guts spilling out" in a column shared widely online. Since last August, the military's engineering arm has been building highways worth about 7.5 billion pounds (\$450 million) to link Cairo with the pharaonic new capital that is under construction about 45 km to the east.

Known as the New Administrative Capital, it is set to boast skyscrapers, a new presidential palace, dozens of ministries and flats for tens of thousands of civil servants, with the aim of easing Cairo's chronic overcrowding and air pollution.

'Act of sabotage'

The first victim of the mega-project, however, is Heliopolis, built in 1906 by Baron Edouard Empain, a wealthy Belgian entrepreneur who settled in Cairo while working on modernizing its nascent railways. He designed the area with wide streets and elegant buildings that meld various design motifs, as embodied in his impressive palace, which is still standing. As one of Egypt's most expensive suburbs, Heliopolis also houses powerful institutions including the presidential palace, the military academy and several other armed forces facilities.

There are plenty of green spaces, a rarity in the city of about 20 million. But now Triumph Square and the lush arterial avenues of al-Nozha and Abou Bakr al-Seddik, marked by palm trees and ficus plants, have become sites for about a dozen routes out of the suburb. Many residents have been vocal on social media about fatal traffic accidents in recent weeks on new bridges that lack pedestrian crossings or clearly marked speed limits.

Cairo University urban design professor Dalila Al-Kerdany slammed the re-zoning of the capital's green lung as "an act of sabotage". That view was shared by Choucri Asmar, a resident and founding member of HHI, who voiced regret that more cars would choke up the road, instead of the old tramline. "We have been presented with a fait accompli," he told AFP, sitting in the courtyard of Chantilly, a chic cafe and a venerable institution in the

area. Asmar said no local community consultations were conducted during the planning stages, and that the urban planning decision came "straight from the presidency". Kerdany also charged that the re-districting was launched "illegally", without approval from Egypt's top heritage body, the National Organization for Urban Harmony. AFP contacted Cairo's Governorate several times to ask for comment without success.

'Monstrous mega-city'

"Heliopolis was founded for pedestrians, not for cars - they were always meant to come second", said Alia Kassim, 33, an incensed resident who works in the media. Kerdany said "the result is frightening... creating a monstrous and unmanageable" mega-city at the expense of green spaces. Developments are also planned in other historic neighborhoods with millions of residents, such as Al-Matariya and Nasr City. With many Heliopolis residents going on with their daily lives and adjusting to the new routes, HHI has remained active online, documenting the district's vanishing heritage. Asmar said the initiative will keep up the protest because "if we keep quiet, everyone will be quiet". But given Egypt's fast-growing and youthful population, pressure for urban expansion is unlikely to ease anytime soon. Kerdany predicted that, at the current rate, greater Cairo will eventually extend all the way to Suez, about 130 km from Heliopolis. — AFP

In fire-hit rural Australia, climate debate burns deep

Returning from a morning feeding his sheep, Jeff McCole, a 70-year-old farmer, paused to take in the bittersweet scene - a few droplets of rain falling onto the remains of his fire-ravaged home. "Nothing like the sound of rain on a tin roof," he said, as he scanned the residue of a lifetime of memories scattered before him. By the old front door was a charred metal toy truck his grandchildren once raced down the verandah. Under the remains of the tin roof, a collection of books, his wife's "pride and joy", had been reduced to layers of feathery ash. And out back, the skeleton of a Valencia orange tree, planted by his mother 65 years ago, was now laden with baubles of charcoalized fruit.

Seasonal bushfires have struck Australia in a way like never before, making for months of monster blazes and toxic haze, and fuelling a polarizing debate over climate change. But in Buchan, a conservative-voting farming town in Victoria state that is home to the McCole farm, most locals said they believed the catastrophic fires had nothing to do with global warming. Climate change was "a load of crap," said McCole, an idea pushed by city folk with "no experience in the bush" and no understanding of Australia's punishing, cyclical climate. "We've had severe droughts and everything like that, 70 years ago," said McCole, a Vietnam war veteran with sky-blue eyes. "It just keeps going around in circles. If you wait, it's going to change."

Rising risks

For decades scientists have warned that climate change would increase the risk of extreme bushfires in Australia. This year, there was the perfect storm - record-breaking drought and heat coalescing on tinder-box land. Before rains slowed their spread in recent days, the fires had burned through almost 12 million hectares, destroyed more than 2,800 homes, and claimed the lives of 33 people. An estimated one billion native animals are also believed to have died.

Australia has one of the world's highest carbon footprints per capita and is one of the largest exporters of coal and gas, making successive governments reluctant to adopt climate change policies they say could undermine the economy. But with these unprecedented bushfires, the government has come under increased pressure from environmental groups, scientists and broader swathes of the Australian public to address the climate change issue.

"People are more fearful of the future because they glimpsed the future this summer," said Lesley Hughes, a professor and climate scientist at Macquarie University. "I think it has been really wounding of the Australian psyche." Polling by the Australia Institute, a Canberra think tank, in January found that 79 percent of

Australians said they were concerned about climate change, up five percentage points from last July, with 47 percent "very concerned", a jump of 10 points.

But there remains widespread skepticism that the severity of the fires is due to climate change, with many conservative politicians and media suggesting that factors such as arson, the length of cyclical droughts or poor management of flammable vegetation are more responsible. Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who had previously declined to discuss the link between climate change and the fires, recently acknowledged the connection, but said his priority was managing the economic impact.

Morrison last week cited "hazard reduction" - which includes the practice of controlled burns to reduce the amount of flammable vegetation in the bush, as a key to mitigating fires in the future, saying it was just as important as reducing emissions. Climate scientists say that the bigger problem for Australia are longer droughts and increasingly hot summers. The issue of controlled burns is a deeply emotional one in Buchan, where at least 20 homes were lost in the fires that struck in December. "Climate change or not," said Donald Graham, a farmer who survived the fires huddled in his concrete bunker with a stack of cheese and vegemite sandwiches. "These fires were a disaster waiting to happen."

A death trap

The road from Melbourne to Buchan winds past a series of small country towns, pie shops and historic churches and, after a weekend of rain, verdant green fields with dairy cows. But closer to Buchan, population 385, the road is eerily burnt out, lined by rows of black tree trunks sticking out of ashy ground. When the bushfires hit the town on Dec. 30, they roared in on three fronts with a ferocity that no locals had ever seen.

For more than a month, fires had raged ominously in nearby bushland, finally bellowing in with "one heck of a red glow", McCole said. From the verandah of his home, nestled on a 400-hectare property of rolling hills, gum trees and Merino sheep, he watched a giant orange plume crest over the hill and rain down fiery embers. "We only had ten minutes to get out and I think that was the best call I ever made," he said with a wry laugh. "It was a death trap."

The town of Buchan is a single main street with a general store and a pub - the kind of place where locals have time to discuss the pressing issues of the day with a stranger. "The issue of climate change and the fire is a dead duck as far as I'm concerned," said Graham, an animated 68-year-old cattleman with a shock of gray hair. "What is the most significant thing, is the changing structure of the forest."

Minutes before he watched his house go up in flames from the peephole of his bunker, Graham raced inside to grab a picture from the wall, a colonial lithograph featuring the magnificent valley below overlooking the confluence of the Snowy and Buchan rivers. The picture is significant because it shows how much the land has changed, he said. "We've got an accumulation of vegetation. Our area was burned 50-70 years ago and it has

not burned since, and at some point it will burn," he said. "It just needs a few things to come together, a few dry years and some lightning and neither of those are peculiar to the Australian landscape."

His neighbor John Coates, a 76-year-old cattle farmer, said that decades of vegetation growth had turned the land into a "timebomb". Walking through their property overlooking the Snowy River National Park, Coates and his wife Janice shook their heads at the destruction - bald, blackened hills and the devastated gorge below, once filled with ferns, lyrebirds and platypus in the creek. Many locals in Buchan recall the days they would carry a box of matches in their pockets so they could carry out their own hazard-reduction burns.

But regulations subsequently put in place aimed at protecting state forests and bushland mean they are now dependent on government agencies for carrying out controlled burns. For years, local farmers had urged the government to carry out burns to reduce the "fuel load", or the accumulation of trees, underbrush and dry grass that can turn a small bushfire into an inferno, Coates said. But it never happened.

Chris Hardman, the chief fire officer for Forest Fire Management Victoria, said in a statement to Reuters that his agency had planned to burn 246,396 hectares of the state's public land last year, but was "unable to do so because it would have been unsafe". Scientists also say the drought and increasingly hot weather means there are fewer days that vegetation can be safely burned.

Commenting on the issue in New South Wales, Richie Merzian, climate and energy program director at the Australia Institute, said it was not a case of failing to implement techniques that had worked in the past, but that such techniques were "insufficient to address the scenario now". "You can't blame the dry conditions and say it has no relevance to climate change," he said. "It's a combination of many different climatic changes that can be linked back to the overall trend."

Seasons 'out of sync'

In Buchan, not everyone in town was averse to talk of climate change - a few spoke of the seasons being "out of sync", the lack of rain or the demise of fragrant yellow box flowers in the valley. But the fires have mainly reinforced pre-existing views and gripes, reflecting the polarizing rhetoric of the national climate change debate. Last November, Australia's Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack - who heads the party that won in the electorate that includes Buchan - described climate change concerns as those held by "inner-city raving lunatics".

That messaging appeared to resonate in Buchan, far from the skyscrapers and the lights of Melbourne or Sydney, with a strong sense that people here were living far greener lives. "They blame our cows," said McCole, referring to recent attention on the earth-warming methane produced by belching or flatulent cattle. But, he said, "they are all jumping on electric trains and cars and god knows what in the city and there are millions of them, flying around the world in jumbo jets." "It takes a good cow to put out that many emissions," he said. "I can tell ya." — AFP

Business

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14 KFH wins 'Top Private Sector Recruiter for National Talents' in 2019 from PAM



Jazeera Airways profits soar to KD 14.9m in 2019

Number of passengers up 20.6% to 2.4m • Operating revenue up 25.9% to KD 103.7m

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways yesterday announced a net profit of KD 14.9 million, up 124.1 percent from last year, supported by a 20.6 percent increase in number of passengers, reaching 2.4 million, and a 25.9 percent increase in operating revenue to KD 103.7 million. Operationally, the airline registered an increase in operating profit by 108.7 percent to KD14.2 million, a 2.3 percent increase in load factor to 77.5 percent and an aircraft utilization of 13.3 hours.

In the last quarter of the year (Q4 2019), the Company reported a net loss of KD1.2 million (including profit from sale of engine), up from a net loss of KD1.8 million in Q4 2018. Number of passengers increased by 28.5 percent, while operating revenue increased by 11.8 percent to KD20.9 million and aircraft utilization stood at 13.8 hours during Q4 2019.

- FY 2019 financial and operational highlights:**
- Operating revenue: KD 103.7 million, up 25.9 percent from FY 2018
 - Operating profit: KD 14.2 million, up 108.7 percent from FY 2018
 - Net profit: KD 14.9 million, up 124.1 percent from FY 2018
 - Passengers: 2.4 million, up 20.6 percent from FY 2018
 - Load factor: 77.5 percent, up 2.3 percent from FY 2018

- Aircraft utilization: 13.3 hours Q4 2019 financial and operational highlights:
- Operating revenue: KD 20.9 million, up 11.8 percent from Q4 2018
- Operating loss: KD 2.8 million, increased by 31.9 percent from Q4 2018
- Net loss: KD 1.2 million, up 34.8 percent from Q4 2018
- Passengers: 614 thousand up 28.5 percent from Q4 2018
- Load factor: 77.5 percent, up 6.8 percent from Q4 2018

Commenting on the results, Jazeera Airways Chairman, Marwan Boodai, said: "We are proud to be announcing our best set of operating results in the airline's history. The significant leap in profitability is the result of profitable growth coupled with an aggressive cost focus. Our airline continues to grow and expand its footprint in the Middle East, Europe and Asia, while our Jazeera Terminal T5, which is the only example of an airline-owned terminal in the region, significantly contributed to the strong results. Today, Jazeera Airways continues to enjoy a strong balance sheet, backed by solid and expanding operations that serve the demand of a growing customer base in the regions where we operate."

Dividend payment

Jazeera Airways' Board of Directors pro-

posed a dividend distribution of 67.5 percent of share capital, which is equivalent to 67.5 fils per share. The proposal was made following a meeting of the Board held on February 11, 2020 and is subject to ratification by Jazeera Airways' shareholders at the Company's upcoming annual general meeting.

Expanding in Europe, Middle East and Asia
Jazeera Airways continued to expand in 2019, opening new low cost options to serve passengers. The expansion was marked by a milestone launch of a direct service to London Gatwick in October. The airline also launched services to Istanbul's Sabiha Gokcen International Airport, the Turkish coastal city of Bodrum in May, the Nepalese capital Kathmandu, Osh in Kyrgyzstan, the second largest city of Pakistan, Karachi in Pakistan, UAE's family leisure destination, Al-Ain, and Dammam in Saudi.

Taking delivery of A320neos, new orders
Jazeera Airways took delivery of three new Airbus A320neo aircraft in Q4 2019, bringing the number of aircraft in its fleet to 13, including nine of the A320 model and four of the A320neo. Another five A320neos are expected to be delivered in 2020. The airline moved to orders of A320neos which incorporates the CFM LEAP-1A engines and fuel-saving wingtip devices known as

Sharklets, to support its endeavors in significantly reducing fuel consumption, engine noise and CO2 emissions to below the current industry standard.

Jazeera Terminal 5 performance

In May 2019, the airline marked the first year of operations out of its Jazeera Terminal 5 (T5) at Kuwait International Airport. The Terminal's contributed to the Company's earnings with an operating profit of KD1.2 million for the year 2019. T5 served 1,187,258 departing passengers, 969,999 arriving passengers and 325,135 transiting passengers. The Terminal has a capacity exceeding 3 million passengers annually and state-of-the-art check-in facilities.

New service agreements

In November 2019, Jazeera Airways signed an agreement with Airbus to provide the airline with components support for up to 29 A320neos and A320neo aircraft as part of the Airbus Flight Hour Services (FHS). The agreement enables the airline to benefit from world-class services to maintain its operational excellence, giving it access to efficient and effective availability of spare parts to its young and growing fleet, as well as improving its reliability and on-time performance. The airline also signed earlier in the year a long-term Rate Per Flight Hours (RPFH) agreement with CFM International to support the

LEAP-1A engines that power the airline's fleet of Airbus A320neo aircraft. The agreement, which is valued at \$1.3 billion, covers a minimum of 20 aircraft and five spare engines, with the option of including additional aircraft as Jazeera Airways continues to expand its fleet.

Industry awards

Also in 2019, Jazeera Airways was named the "Aviation Company of the Year 2019" by the Arabian Business Kuwait Awards, and was selected winner of the Transport Project of the Year and Small Project of the Year awards by the 2019 MIED Quality Projects Awards in recognition of the Jazeera Terminal 5.

2020 outlook

Following its milestone launches in 2019, Jazeera Airways is planning new direct services from Kuwait to Sharjah in UAE, Chittagong and Dhaka in Bangladesh, and Qassim and Hail in K.S.A. The airline is also looking into opportunities to continue its expansion in the European market within the 6.5-hour flight radius. Boodai concluded: "We look forward to continue our expansion in the coming years with a focus in our home region, the Middle East, Europe and Asia. The expansion will be supported with a growing fleet and a customer-centric offering in which our customers choose to fly the way they prefer."

EU urges UK to go for trade deal

STRASBOURG: The EU wants a uniquely close post-Brexit relationship with the UK, but is "fine" if London opts to walk away without one, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said yesterday.

The blunt language mirrors that being used by Britain, which formally left the EU two weeks ago but which still trades like a member under a transition period ticking down to the end of this year. The government of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson insists it will not seek to extend the transition. This week it stepped up warnings to British business to prepare to operate outside the single market from 2021.

At the same time, the EU is putting the final touches on its negotiating mandate, which is to be fixed on February 25 ahead of talks with the UK scheduled to start from next month.

Speaking to the European Parliament, von der Leyen responded to Britain's moves bracing for a possible no deal on trade by saying: "If this is the British choice, well, we are fine with that without any question." She added however that "I personally believe that we should be way more ambitious" and reiterated

Europe's conditions Britain would have to abide by if an accord were to be struck.

No 'business as usual'

The EU insists on a "level playing field" so that Britain does not try to get an unfair trading advantage by getting rid of costly EU standards on labor, the environment and taxes. It also wants oversight on UK state aid decisions, and says giving EU fishing boats continued access to British waters is crucial for a trade deal. At the same time, the EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier warned that Britain's big financial sector would lose its automatic right to operate in EU countries, and checks would be carried out on British goods.

"Brexit cannot be business as usual," he told the MEPs. "Brexit has mechanical and logical consequences. We have to find a new way of cooperating with them, and we are seeking that." In the lead-up to Britain's January 31 exit from the EU, London had said it wanted an ambitious and comprehensive accord with the European bloc. But since then, Johnson has dialled back on that scope and his government has signalled it is willing to accept trade friction as the cost of exercising sovereignty.

Seeking 'equivalence'

A senior British minister, Michael Gove, on Monday said EU imports would from next year face the same checks as those from the rest of the world. Yesterday, Britain's finance minister, Sajid Javid, spread much the

same message, writing in London's City AM newspaper that "from next year, we will have the freedom to make our own rules outside the constraints of the (EU's) single market and customs union".

He also said "there will be differences" between future British financial regulations and EU ones-though he repeated a desire for regulatory "equivalence" under which British financial firms would be deemed compatible enough to maintain access to the EU market.

The EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier yesterday warned Britain against any unrealistic expectations for its prized financial services sector during post-Brexit trade talks with Europe. "There must be no illusion on this issue: there will be no general, global or permanent equivalence on financial services," Barnier told MEPs during a plenary session of European Parliament in the eastern French city of Strasbourg.

His unusually firm statement came after British finance minister Sajid Javid vowed yesterday to build a "durable relationship" for financial services in a post-Brexit trade deal, under plans he will outline in the coming months. This would address "the long-term needs" of the financial industry and "would provide the certainty on which internationally mobile businesses can depend," Javid added.

Britain left the European Union on January 31 after nearly half a century of membership-and the post-Brexit transition period ends on December 31. During the transition, the fate of the City of London financial hub will be a major concern in trade talks with Brussels



STRASBOURG: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen speaks flanked by EU chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier during a debate on an ambitious new EU-UK partnership following Brexit, at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France, yesterday. —AFP

expected to grant Britain access to the European market in term-limited deals known as "equivalence".

Barnier insisted that equivalence would be a one-way street decided by Brussels based on a regular assessment of whether British rules on finance were sufficiently compatible with those of the EU. "We will keep control of these tools and we will retain decision-making autonomy," the former French minister insisted. —AFP

Business

Watani Financial Brokerage wins fastest growing company award in Kuwait for 2019

Honor from International Finance for second consecutive year

KUWAIT: Watani Financial Brokerage Company (WFBC) won the award for the fastest growing financial brokerage company in Kuwait for the year 2019 for the second year in a row. It was awarded by "International Finance," one of the most prominent specialized institutions in the field of evaluating investment and financial institutions that aim to promote a set of standards in the financial sector.

The award was received by Tariq Abdullatif Al-Shehab - Vice Chairman of Watani Financial Brokerage Company (WFBC) and Director of Watani Investment Company (NBK Capital) and CEO of the (WFBC) Qutaiba Al-Adsani - during a ceremony held in Dubai, in the presence of a crowd of senior officials, businessmen and economists and with the participation of investment sector leaders and financial in the region.

"International Finance" based its evaluation on a set of international standards, when selecting the fastest growing company at the level of the brokerage sector in Kuwait, as the Watani Financial Brokerage Company was able to win the lead in licensed financial brokerage companies after evaluating the trading activities and services provided by the company.

Al-Shehab expressed his pride in choosing "Watani Financial Brokerage" as the fastest growing company for the second

year in a row, noting that winning this award confirms Al-Watani's leadership in the local market. He added: "The fact that we obtained this distinguished award is clear evidence of the continuous success achieved by Watani Financial Brokerage Company, the steady steps it is taking and the effort of the team that has extensive experience and a record of achievements in trading operations, in addition to the wise strategy that derives from the NBK approach in order to achieve the best results, which reflects our clients' confidence in the distinctive trading services that we offer them."

He said: "The Company continues in its relentless pursuit of development and innovation in the financial brokerage sector and in various trading activities, with the aim of providing more distinctive and professional services that establishes the company's position locally as a company capable of keeping pace with developments on the Boursa Kuwait."

He emphasized that winning this award comes as a culmination of the company's efforts to provide the highest level of brokerage services to clients, which contributed to the advancement of work in the mediation sector. Al-Shehab thanked the employees of the company for their dedicated efforts and competence, which have long distinguished the company and cemented its name and



Tariq Abdullatif Al-Shehab and Qutaiba Al-Adsani receive the award.

position locally.

It is worth noting that the International Finance Awards program selects the winners based on an annual survey of the opinions of analysts and investors around the world in addition to the technical analysis of the performance of companies that have met the conditions of nomination by a qualified and professional research team.

The Watani Financial Brokerage Company licensed by Capital Markets Authority of Kuwait and registered on Boursa Kuwait is one of the 93.3 percent companies owned by the National Bank of Kuwait and managed by Watani Investment Company, where the company provides a service to buy and sell shares on Boursa Kuwait, and the company's systems allow its clients to directly trade on

Boursa Kuwait and providing integrated brokerage services to clients in circulation through a selection of professional and specialized financial intermediaries, as well as through the six branches of the company located in the branches of National Bank of Kuwait located in Shamiya, South Surra, Salwa, Al-Andalus, Fahaheel in addition to Jahra commercial branch.

NBK Global Markets Report

Coronavirus fears hit markets, China growth prospects

KUWAIT: Fears over the impact and spread of the Coronavirus in late January hit financial markets, which had until then enjoyed a largely upbeat start to the year on brightening economic prospects helped by the US-China trade deal. The US S&P index for example finished January -0.2 percent m/m having been up 3 percent mid-month, while global government bond yields also fell back sharply. While the full implications of the outbreak are still not clear, it is expected to have a large impact on Chinese growth in Q1 just as activity in the world's second largest economy appeared to be stabilizing. Worries over the impact on Chinese and global oil demand also hammered oil prices, with Brent crude plunging 20 percent from its January peak.

US growth steady in Q4

Economic growth in the US stood at an annualized 2.1 percent in 4Q19, unchanged from Q3 and in line with expectations. Consumer spending moderated to 1.8 percent from Q3's very strong 3.1 percent, and a slowdown in inventory growth also weighed on activity. These negative factors were offset by stronger government spending (2.7 percent) and especially a sharp drop in imports (-8.7 percent) - the latter perhaps due to the unwinding of strong imports in Q3 when firms had looked to beat September's tariff hikes on Chinese goods. Growth overall in 2019 slowed to 2.3 percent from 2.9 percent in 2018 and was the softest since 2016.

Latest high-frequency data suggests that activity may now be picking up, with in particular the housing market recovering (price increases accelerating after a two-year slowdown), the ISM manufacturing index turning positive (50.9) in January for the first time since July and job growth maintaining a strong pace of 225,000 in January. This has eased immediate concerns over a downturn, but uncertainty over trade, the coronavirus and indeed the mature stage of the economic cycle is set to limit the potency of any upswing.

In a relatively low-key January meeting, the Federal Reserve kept policy rates at their current 1.50-1.75 percent range, citing the strong labor market, moderate consumer spending growth but core inflation - at 1.6 percent y/y on the PCE measure in December -below the 2 percent target. Futures markets are pricing in a more than 80 percent chance of at least one 25 bps cut by year-end. Fed chairman Jay Powell said that the bank could cease pumping extra liquidity into the market - currently at a rate of \$60 billion per month - sometime in Q2. The move

was originally portrayed as a technical measure to help keep policy interest rates within their target range, and has pushed the Fed's balance sheet back up to nearly \$4.2 trillion from \$3.8 trillion last September. But some analysts claim it has been a factor in the strong stock market rally and that the Fed will at least have to manage the phasing out of injections carefully to avoid market disruption.

Eurozone growth slows

Eurozone GDP growth slowed to just 0.1 percent q/q in 4Q19, below expectations and down from 0.3 percent in Q3. The decline was driven by falls in output in both France (-0.1 percent) and Italy (-0.3 percent) - the former affected by ongoing strike action related to President Macron's pension reforms. (Chart 2.) Figures for Germany have not yet been released, but growth was negligible in Q3 and recent optimism over a cyclical recovery helped by falling global trade tensions may now be tempered by the impact of the Coronavirus on exports. The Eurozone PMI index edged up in January to a still-modest 51.3, and analysts continue to expect a tentative pick-up in regional growth later this year, with the further decline in unemployment to a 12-year low of 7.4 percent in December underpinning the outlook for domestic demand.

The European Central Bank as expected left policy on hold in January, with the deposit rate at -0.5 percent and quantitative easing of euro 20 billion per month. It stated that risks to the outlook were now 'less pronounced' than before (due to reduced trade tensions) but still 'tilted to the downside', though this was before concerns over the Coronavirus outbreak intensified. Inflation ticked up to 1.4 percent y/y in January from 1.3 percent in December, but the rise was mostly due to energy prices and core inflation fell back to just 1.1 percent.

Policy is expected to remain on hold going forward and indeed the threshold for a near-term change in policy may now be high as the bank mulls a possible change in the inflation target (currently 'below or close to 2 percent') as part of its recently-launched strategic policy review. Moreover, bank officials have been vocal on the need for fiscal policy to take on a greater role in supporting the regional economy.

Nearly four years after its 'in-out' referendum, the UK finally departed the EU at the end of January following 47 years of membership. The UK has now entered an 11-month transition period under which regulations on trade, travel and business with the EU are unchanged, while both sides try to agree a trade deal that will govern the relationship beyond 2020. Although there is a range of possible outcomes, initial signs are that PM Boris Johnson will seek a loose relationship that provides for UK regulatory autonomy even at the expense of fresh trade barriers or potentially a return to basic WTO trading arrangements next year. Largely as expected, the event passed with minimal market impact. The Bank of

England kept interest rates on hold at 0.75 percent, though said it would monitor the impact of improving sentiment on hard data over coming months. It did however revise down its 2020 growth forecast to 0.8 percent from 1.2 percent before.

BoJ upgrades growth outlook

The Bank of Japan kept monetary policy on hold last month, maintaining its short-term interest rate at -0.1 percent and its pledge to keep 10-year government bond yields at around 0 percent. The bank also upgraded its growth outlook for the fiscal year starting in April from 0.7 percent to 0.9 percent on the back of planned fiscal stimulus measures amounting to \$121 billion. Both headline (0.8 percent) and core (0.9 percent) inflation rates remain well below the bank's elusive inflation target of 2 percent, leaving it ample room to ease monetary policy to support the economy if need be. Meanwhile, both exports and imports continued to fall in December, with exports declining 6.3 percent y/y (its 12th consecutive month of decline) and imports retreating by 4.9 percent (albeit an improvement from a 16 percent drop in November). While the US-China trade deal should offer global trade growth and Japanese exports some support going forward, the economic effects of the rapid spread of the Coronavirus, which has led to the shutdown of various manufacturing plants, may lead to supply-chain disruptions that ultimately hamper global trade growth.

Chinese economy hit

The death toll in China from the Coronavirus outbreak topped 490 by early February with more than 24,000 confirmed cases, much higher than during the 2002-2003 SARS outbreak. This has and will continue to have negative ramifications on the economy, as both local and international authorities take further urgent measures to limit the spread of the virus. The government extended the Lunar New Year holiday and a number of international firms including Starbucks, Apple and Hyundai have halted operations indefinitely.

This will weigh on economic activity in 1Q20, coming soon after data showing that growth stabilized at 6.0 percent y/y in 4Q19, unchanged from the previous quarter. For 2019 as a whole however, growth slowed to an almost three-decade low of 6.1 percent in 2019 from 6.6 percent in 2018, though still within the government's target of 6-6.5 percent. The slowdown was led by a weaker external sector and as investment and consumer spending came in softer. The official PMI for January showed manufacturing activity stagnating at 50.0 versus 50.2 in December, but it may not yet be reflecting the full impact of the virus outbreak. Meanwhile, in a bid to provide support to the economy, China's financial regulators announced \$242 billion in liquidity injections and an ease in lending restrictions to help business. The authorities are also reportedly seeking some flexibility on pledges made under the 'phase one' trade deal with the US. The

stock market fell 7.7 percent - its largest daily drop in years - the day markets reopened after the extended holiday and the yuan fell back towards RMB7/\$1.

In its 2020 budget on February 1, the Indian government unveiled a series of modest reforms aimed at boosting spending and investment, in a bid to support a faltering economy. The reforms include a personal income tax cut and proposed amendments to the definition of income tax residency in India, aimed at boosting tax revenues. The Indian government is also planning a \$30 billion public asset sale program to help curb the fiscal deficit. Import tariffs were also proposed on certain goods, including furniture and footwear.

The growth rate has been in decline for six consecutive quarters and stood at 4.5 percent y/y in 3Q19, despite a combined 135 bps of interest rate cuts and considerable corporate tax cuts in 2019. Growth was weighed down by weaker investment, stemming from tighter credit conditions and a banking sector burdened with bad debt, which could impede lending going forward. Private spending has also been relatively weak, despite a modest recovery in 3Q19, and may remain subdued under rising inflationary pressures. However, there are some promising signs: industrial production increased for the first time in four months in November, and the composite PMI hit a seven-year high in January. Looking forward, the consensus view is that growth will pick up to a downwardly-revised 6 percent in FY20/21, from an estimated 5 percent in the current fiscal year, an 11-year low.

Oil prices slide

The Chinese Coronavirus epidemic has pushed international benchmark Brent crude into bear-market territory as fears grow about the likely impact on Chinese consumption and, by extension, energy demand. As of 5 February, Brent had fallen 20 percent from its January peak to \$55.3 and its lowest in over a year. Indeed this is possibly oil's worst start to a year since 1991, with Chinese oil consumption estimated to have dropped by at least 20 percent (3 mb/d) - the biggest oil demand shock since the financial crisis - as the country remains in lockdown and international flights suspended.

Oil's precipitous decline has prompted the OPEC+ group to consider bringing forward its scheduled March meeting to formulate a response to the crisis, perhaps through further production cuts. Talks among an OPEC+ technical panel in early February recommended additional oil production cuts of 600,000 bpd.

All indications are that with oil demand weaker, global supply and stock levels are only going to get larger; the Brent forward curve structure has already slipped into contango (where futures prices trade above spot prices) for the first time since last July. Oil's bearish move has occurred despite the loss of an estimated 1 mb/d of crude from Libya, as forces loyal to General Haftar blockaded the country's ports. Libya's production is reportedly below 0.3 mb/d, its lowest level since the ousting of Gaddafi in 2011.

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.780
Indian Rupees	4.288
Pakistani Rupees	1.975
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.681
Nepali Rupees	2.677
Singapore Dollar	221.020
Hongkong Dollar	39.332
Bangladesh Taka	3.557
Philippine Peso	6.030
Thai Baht	9.816
Malaysian Ringgit	78.120

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.508
Qatari Riyal	83.949
ani Riyal	793.892
Bahraini Dinar	811.610
UAE Dirham	83.218

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	22.270
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	19.451
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.227
Tunisian Dinar	113.970
Jordanian Dinar	431.090
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.204
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.426

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	305.250
Euro	336.230
Sterling Pound	395.600
Canadian dollar	230.730
Turkish lira	51.650
Swiss Franc	314.370
US Dollar Buying	297.800

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.590
Canadian Dollar	230.005
Sterling Pound	396.755
Euro	336.485
Swiss Frank	299.425
Bahraini Dinar	810.020
UAE Dirhams	83.330
Qatari Riyals	84.570
Saudi Riyals	82.120
Jordanian Dinar	430.890
Egyptian Pound	19.321
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.677
Indian Rupees	4.272
Pakistani Rupees	1.971
Bangladesh Taka	3.556
Philippines Peso	6.006
Cyprus pound	18.120
Japanese Yen	3.770
Lebanese Lira	1.595
Nepalese Rupees	2.667
Malaysian Ringgit	74.835

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.205
Thai Bhat	10.780
Turkish Lira	51.370
Singapore dollars	220.428

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.387024	0.400924
Czech Korune	0.005288	0.014588
Danish Krone	0.040496	0.045496
Euro	0.325513	0.339213
Georgian Lari	0.106037	0.106037
Hungarian	0.000893	0.001083
Norwegian Krone	0.028894	0.034094
Romanian Leu	0.052892	0.069742
Russian Ruble	0.004769	0.004769
Slovakia	0.009148	0.019148
Swedish Krona	0.027555	0.032555
Swiss Franc	0.305414	0.316414
Australia Dollar	0.196731	0.208731
New Zealand Dollar	0.188933	0.198433
Canada Dollar	0.224230	0.232330
US Dollars	0.301350	0.305900
US Dollars Mint	0.301850	0.305900
Bangladesh Taka	0.002883	0.003684

Chinese Yuan	0.042286	0.045786
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037248	0.039988
Indian Rupee	0.003636	0.004408
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002693	0.002873
Korean Won	0.000248	0.000263
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070148	0.076148
Nepalese Rupee	0.002604	0.002944
Pakistan Rupee	0.001324	0.002094
Philippine Peso	0.005857	0.006157
Singapore Dollar	0.214671	0.224671
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001319	0.001899
Taiwan	0.010054	0.010234
Thai Baht	0.009459	0.010009
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.804052	0.812128
Egyptian Pound	0.019315	0.022056
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000200	0.000260
Jordanian Dinar	0.425917	0.434917
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000102	0.000252
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021125	0.045125
Omani Riyal	0.788240	0.796156
Qatar Riyal	0.083243	0.084079
Saudi Riyal	0.080367	0.081667
Syrian Pound	0.001295	0.001515
Tunisian Dinar	0.103549	0.115449
Turkish Lira	0.044565	0.054410
UAE Dirhams	0.082529	0.083357
Yemeni Riyal	0.000993	0.001073

Business

Ooredoo Kuwait strategic partner with the Global Biking Initiative

Biking Initiative will take place from 5th till 7th of March



KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, first to launch innovated digital services in Kuwait announced its strategic partnership of the Global Biking Initiative at a press conference held 10th of February at its headquarters in Kuwait City as a testament to its support of Kuwaiti youth and athletes. The Global Biking Initiative will take place from the 5th till 7th of March. There will be more than 200 cyclists and 100 Volunteers from different countries and communities in Kuwait that will be cycling from the North to the South of Kuwait within 3 days.

Commenting on this, Manager, CSR & Sponsorships at Ooredoo Kuwait Mohammad Mirza said: "This strategic partnership goes in tandem with our belief in supporting youth initiatives and athletes in Kuwait. We have been witnessing a great deal of demand for such sports in

Kuwait, especially among the youth. We are proud to be sponsors of the Global Biking Initiative, and we wish all the participating athletes the best."

Also commenting on this partnership, General Manager at Global Biking Initiative, Sarah Al-Hubail



said: "The Global Biking Initiative is a fast-growing, worldwide cycling community that has been established in Germany since 2008 with a mission to raise funds for charities globally under the slogan "we cycle for chari-

ty." Al-Hubail further added, "We consider the strategic partnership between Ooredoo and Global Biking Initiative as ideal due to its leadership position in the private sector and its support towards athletic initiative with a charitable cause."

Nojoom ('Stars' in Arabic) Loyalty Program is Ooredoo's Rewards Program that allows you to earn points based on your Ooredoo spending. You will benefit from an attractive range of rewards, services and experiences. The Program is free to join and open to all Ooredoo Kuwait customers (except business plan customers) who are legal residents of Kuwait having a valid Civil ID.

The Program has 4 main tiers - Red, Silver, Gold and Al-Nokhba. Upon your Nojoom enrollment, you

will be allocated to one of the mentioned tiers based on your spending over the span of 6 months. You can earn points through spending on Ooredoo's eligible services as well as by spending with Nojoom Earn Partners. As you advance to the next tier, the more you can earn points.

Nojoom members have a wide array of options to benefit from their points. They can redeem their points for Cash Vouchers at the Partner's Network covering all industries in Kuwait, Exchange their Points to Miles with top airline companies, select specific Ooredoo Services and top-ups. Transfer their points to friends or charity donations. A new redemption option will soon be released by Nojoom to unlock instant merchant discounts and deals.

UK set to back high-speed railway despite soaring cost

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was expected yesterday to announce his support for the HS2 high-speed railway, despite concerns about soaring costs and opposition from his own MPs.

Johnson had ordered a review of the viability of the line, the largest current infrastructure project in Europe, after years of delays and ballooning costs.

But he is set to announce to the House of Commons his support for the project, which aims to connect London to central and northern England. Preparations for the first stage of the line to Birmingham are already well advanced, but the BBC said he would also back the second phase to Manchester and Leeds, while seeking changes to rein in the cost. Some projections suggest HS2 could cost more than £100 billion (\$129 billion, 118 billion euros), double an official 2015 estimate, and far more than was suggested when HS2 was first mooted in 2009.

HS2 claims that its trains will connect around 30 million people when it is complete - almost half the UK population - delivering faster journeys and taking pressure off existing rail networks. It also says that the project will tackle climate change, by taking cars off the roads. Many MPs, including in Johnson's



In this file photo, a worker walks past a sign outside a construction site for a section of Britain's HS2 high-speed railway project, at London Euston train station in London. —AFP

Conservative party, have said the money could be better spent on other transport services.

There are also concerns about the impact of building the line on wildlife and the environment, as the line goes through numerous sections of ancient woodland. However, the prime minister is known for his enthusiasm for infrastructure projects, and promised in the December election to rebalance Britain's London-centric economy by investing in northern England.

Ahead of the HS2 announcement, he unveiled funding to improve bus networks for every region outside London, including a new fleet of zero-emissions vehicles.

Stop debating

The main opposition Labour party said the scheme should go ahead, but transport

spokesman Andy McDonald said the government must "get a grip with the spiraling costs". The British Chambers of Commerce also welcomed the news, but said it was important that the whole line be built to ensure benefits across the north of England. "It's time to stop debating and start delivering the new capacity and connections that HS2 will bring to our communities and businesses," said director general Adam Marshall.

But the right-wing Institute of Economic Affairs said it was "deeply disappointing".

"The costs are now likely to exceed the benefits," said the think tank's head of transport, Richard Wellings. The previous government last year noted that HS2 costs had soared owing to the complexity of building in densely populated cities and challenging ground conditions. —AFP

Xi warned officials efforts to stop virus could hurt economy

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping warned top officials last week that efforts to contain the new coronavirus had gone too far, threatening the country's economy, sources told Reuters, days before Beijing rolled out measures to soften the blow. With growth at its slowest in nearly three decades, China's leaders seem eager to strike a balance between protecting an already-slumping economy and stamping out an epidemic that has killed more than 1,000 people and infected more than 40,000.

After reviewing reports on the outbreak from the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and other economic departments, Xi told local officials during a Feb 3 meeting of the Politburo's Standing Committee that some of the actions taken to contain the virus are harming the economy, said two people familiar with the meeting, who declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the matter.

He urged them to refrain from "more restrictive measures", the two people said. Local authorities outside Wuhan - where the virus is thought to have first taken hold - have shut down schools and factories, sealed off roads and railways,

banned public events and even locked down residential compounds. Xi said some of those steps have not been practical and have sown fear among the public, they said. China's state council information office did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The official Xinhua News Agency, reporting on the Politburo meeting last Monday, called the coronavirus outbreak "a major test of China's system and capacity for governance." It added, without details, that "party committees and governments of all levels were urged to achieve the targets of economic and social development this year."

Since the meeting, China's central bank has vowed to step up support for the economy and prepared policy tools to offset the damage. The NDRC said at a weekend briefing that it was urging companies and factories to resume work, especially in "key industries" such as food and pharmaceuticals.

"In the context of the epidemic and the downward pressure on the economy, it is more important to maintain economic growth," Pan Gongsheng, vice-governor of China's central bank, said on Friday.

On Monday, Zhejiang province, an economic powerhouse in eastern China, ordered local authorities not to overreact by restricting everyday movement or shutting down "shops of chain stores and convenience stores that sell daily necessities such as vegetables, cooking oil as well as meat, eggs and dairy products," according to a government release. China has unveiled new tax policies as it tries to reduce the burden on industries hit heavily by the epidemic. — Reuters

As Trump takes aim at EU trade, European officials brace for fight

WASHINGTON: An emboldened President Donald Trump has set his sights on restructuring the more than \$1 trillion US trade relationship with the European Union, raising the specter of another major trade war as the global economy slows and he seeks re-election.

Trump, who recently signed a Phase 1 trade deal that cooled a bitter trade war with China, has called the EU's position on trade "worse than China" and threatened to impose tariffs on its cars and other products. European officials say they're willing to work with Trump to address some irritants in the relationship, but they warn that they'll retaliate against any US efforts to punish the trading bloc.

"In the economic realm, we're evenly matched. And we will defend ourselves," Norbert Roettgen, a senior German conservative lawmaker, said on Friday after meetings with White House and State Department officials. "We will respond to US tariffs, and we know how to structure them to be effective."

On Friday, two days after Trump was acquitted in his impeachment trial in the US Senate, the United States ambassador to the EU, Gordon Sondland, said he was being recalled from his post, making the path of any



WASHINGTON, DC: US President Donald Trump holds up the signed United States - Mexico - Canada Trade Agreement, known as USMCA, during a ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, DC. —AFP

future negotiations even more uncertain. Sondland had testified during the impeachment inquiry in the US House of Representatives. The near-term outcome may be a "mini-deal" like the Phase 1 agreement signed with Beijing last month that doesn't solve bedrock issues but will allow both sides to declare a truce, trade experts say.

Disputed and deficits

The United States, the world's largest importer, and the 27-member block EU face entrenched conflicts over airline subsidies, agricultural trade barriers, and EU plans to tax big US digital companies, among other issues.

The EU was the top US export market in 2018, before the United Kingdom left the bloc, led by aerospace products and computers. After scotching a free-trade agreement with Europe, the Trump administration is focused on shrinking its growing deficit in goods, which hit billion in 2019.

"That can't continue," United States Trade Representative (USTR) Robert Lighthizer said in December. In December, the World Trade Organization's appellate body, which acts as a supreme court for international trade disputes, became paralyzed after the Trump administration repeatedly blocked the appointment of new judges. — Reuters

UK economy stalls in fourth quarter of 2019

LONDON: Britain's economy saw zero growth in the final quarter of last year as manufacturing shrank heading into the country's general election that unlocked Brexit, official data showed yesterday. "There was no growth in the last quarter of 2019 as increases in the services and construction sectors were offset by another poor showing from manufacturing, particularly the motor industry," said Rob Kent-Smith at the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

UK manufacturing contracted 0.8 percent in the October-December period, the ONS said. Britain finally departed the European Union on January 31 after Prime Minister Boris Johnson in December led his Conservative party to victory in national polls. "We've broken the deadlock and left the EU - now we need to seize this moment to level up and prepare our great nation for long-term success," finance minister Sajid Javid said in a statement Tuesday following release of the growth data.

"In my budget, exactly one month from today, I'll set out how we will move

forward, with more ambition and new thinking, and empower our people and businesses so everyone has the opportunity to thrive." Chancellor of the Exchequer Javid added. On the eve of Brexit however, the Bank of England slashed its UK economic growth forecasts for this year and next, as the country faces tough negotiations with the EU on striking a new trade deal.

The British economy would expand by only 0.8 percent this year, the BoE said last month, down sharply on its previous 1.2-percent forecast. In 2021, gross domestic product was expected to grow 1.4 percent, down on the central bank's estimate of 1.7 percent given in November.

The ONS yesterday added that the UK economy grew by 1.4 percent last year after gross domestic product expanded 1.3 percent in 2018. GDP grew 0.5 percent in the third quarter of 2019. "The UK economy faced headwinds from domestic political uncertainty and softening global growth last year," said Ian Stewart, chief economist at Deloitte. "Under the circumstances a 1.4-percent growth rate wasn't bad - and after all it was marginally better than 2018 and last year's euro area growth rate." The pound was steady versus the euro and dollar following the latest GDP figures, while London's benchmark FTSE 100 stocks index was up 0.75 percent. — AFP

Business

KFH wins 'Top Private Sector Recruiter for National Talents' in 2019 from PAM

Bank platinum sponsor for 'Because You Deserve 3' event

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has won the "top private sector recruiter for national talents" award for the year 2019, from the Public Authority of Manpower. This award comes in recognition of the bank's exceptional efforts in recruiting national employees, specifically during the season "because you deserve 2". The award was during the participation of KFH as a platinum sponsor in the press conference that announced the launch of the event of employment of national youth in the private sector, "because you deserve 3". The press conference was hosted by the Public Authority of Manpower at its headquarters in Al-Riggaa.

During his speech at the press conference, Deputy General Manager HR Operations and Rewards at KFH, Talal Al-Mutairi, expressed his pride in winning the award, stressing that it reflects KFH's leading role in localizing employment and raising the efficiency of national talent.

He pointed out that the participation of KFH in the event "because you deserve", which has achieved great success in previous years, comes within the framework and keenness of KFH to offer job opportunities for national talent sought to work in the private sector. He noted that KFH is one of the leading banks in attracting and training national employees and qualifying them to work in the banking sector in cooperation with the

Public Authority of Manpower.

Al-Mutairi added that the interest in youth talents is one of the main pillars of the bank's strategy, and therefore the bank is committed to providing an integrated system of services in various fields, whether in terms of human resources and employment, banking and social fields, supporting and empowering entrepreneurs and intellectuals. He explained that KFH has a proven track record of initiatives aimed at supporting youth, including "Forsah" program for outstanding young national graduates with the aim of developing their skills and preparing them with the highest standards to enter the employment market.

Al-Mutairi said: "As a continuation of KFH's plan for digital transformation, we have been attracting outstanding national graduates in Information Technology majors through "Forsah" program to develop their skills and prepare them with the highest standards in collaboration with the University of California, Berkeley, USA." Al-Mutairi concluded by thanking the Public Authority of Manpower, Organizers, Participants and Attendees. He stressed that KFH will continue its leadership in attracting and qualifying national youth talent, with a commitment to support nationalizing employment efforts and implementing an integrated strategy for training and talent development.



Talal Al-Mutairi receiving the award

Burgan Bank launches its new online and mobile banking platform

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank is pleased to announce the launch of its new online and mobile Banking platform. The new and improved digital inter-

face that went live today is part of a broader digital initiative to provide our esteemed customers with an enhanced omnichannel customer experience via the web and within a mobile app. The redesigned platforms are now fully accessible from computers, tablets and mobile devices, and is designed to be visually appealing and user-friendly.

Constructed to enrich the user experience, the innovative platforms incorporate a modern design and responsive technology to seamlessly optimize viewing capabilities for all devices and screen sizes. Among the many new features and improvements offered, the new platforms have a consistent look and feel across all devices: a quick view dashboard; services such as eZpay and a faster and easier Bill Pay functionality. Commercial entities can now view POS transactions, trade related transactions, send payment instructions domestically or interna-

tionally directly from their mobile device, and much more improved functionalities to help manage their business better.



Raed Al-Haqhaq



Venkat Menon

In line with the bank's aim to ensure optimal customer satisfaction through the introduction of new services and products, Raed Al-Haqhaq, Deputy Group CEO & CEO - Kuwait stated, "As we introduce our modernized platforms, we present Burgan Bank customers with the option to carry out their transactions and do just about everything they want to do in our branches more seamlessly through our upgraded online offering and at their convenience."

"While developing the new platform experience, client engagement was the key. The platform redesign was based on feedback from our clients who will start to see visual changes and a new unified design as part of an overall evolution of our digital banking experience. Future planned releases will enable us to provide more personalization based on the client's relationship with us," said Venkat Menon, Group Chief Operations & Technology Officer.

Boubyan Bank's Deputy CEO to attend Service Hero's conference

KUWAIT: Abdulla Al-Tuwajri, Boubyan Bank's Deputy CEO, will participate in Service Hero's conference to be organized to mark 10 years since the launch of its customer service excellence awards. The conference will be held at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre on Sunday, February 16th 2020.

Boubyan Bank will participate in the conference since it testifies to one of the most prominent success stories over the recent years not only at the level of the banking sector, but also the private sector, owing to the achievements made by the bank over a short period.

In addition to the bank's success story, Al-Tuwajri will speak during his session about the importance of customer service and the success that can be achieved by any institution in case of focusing on this important aspect in its services and products. Al-Tuwajri will further dwell on the path followed by Boubyan Bank to become an example to follow on the regional level in terms of digital banking, investment in technology, and acquiring significant market shares.

Service Hero is organizing this conference for the first time to celebrate 10 years since the launch of Service Hero Awards to recognize customer service excellence. Over the past years, Boubyan Bank has been named the Best Islamic Bank in Customer Service in Kuwait in addition to being named the Best in customer service in Kuwait atop all institutions in the private sector.



Abdulla Al-Tuwajri

Huawei enters top 10 list of most valuable brands

KUWAIT: Huawei has been named as one of the top 10 most valuable brands for the first time ever in the reputed Brand Finance Global 500 2020 report. The report estimates that Huawei's brand value is now worth over \$65 billion, which is up 4.5 percent year on year.

According to Brand Finance, the global transition to 5G connectivity beginning in 2019 saw fierce competition amongst technology companies. In this environment, Huawei successfully expanded into markets traditionally covered by Western providers, and despite some controversy in the US, the company made clear headway. Overall, the report notes that global consumers continue to hold the tech sector in high regard.

The recognition from Brand Finance follows Huawei overtaking Apple to become the world's second bestselling smartphone brand in 2019, according to reports from Strategy Analytics, Counterpoint Research, and Canalis. Its smartphone business shipped 240 million units globally throughout 2019.

Huawei also remains the world's leading maker of telecom networking equipment in addition to providing end-to-end solutions in computing and device technologies. The company is an active member of more than 400 standards organizations, industry alliances, and open source communities, and last year ranked fifth on the 2019 EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard as one of the biggest investors in research and development worldwide.

This focus on innovation enabled Huawei to expand its solutions portfolio across enter-



prise and consumer segments in 2019. Dominance in the 5G space was bolstered by new AI capabilities and chipsets. Huawei brought many of these capabilities to the Middle East as a partner of choice to telecom operators, governments, and enterprises. Globally, more than 700 cities and 228 Fortune Global 500 companies have chosen Huawei as their digital transformation partner.

Daimler profits plunge in 2019 on costs from 'dieselgate'

STUTTGART: Daimler's chief executive Ola Kallenius suffered a grim first year in 2019 as profits tumbled at the Mercedes-Benz parent company due to billions in costs from the "dieselgate" scandal while thousands of job cuts lie ahead. "We cannot be satisfied with our bottom line," Kallenius said yesterday, pointing to "measures to cut costs and to increase cash flows" after net earnings slumped 64 percent to 2.7 billion euros (\$2.9 billion).

Top of Stuttgart-based Daimler's list of problems is dieselgate, a cash black hole that sucked in some 4.0 billion euros last year in provisions for "governmental and legal proceedings and measures". The total charges mounted to 5.5 billion euros when counting in a mass recall of vehicles fitted with faulty airbags from supplier Takata. On top of those costs, massive investments in new technology such as battery-powered and automated cars weighed on profitability.

"Daimler is under more pressure than ever after the catastrophic results for 2019," NordLB bank analyst Frank Schwope commented. "It's five minutes before midnight, high time to make

some changes." One bright spot for the carmaker was robust sales.

Against the backdrop of softer demand in global auto markets, Daimler was able to maintain unit sales at around the previous year's level of 3.3 million vehicles, while boosting revenue 3.0 percent to 173 billion euros. Those figures are the foundation for Daimler's more positive 2020 outlook, calling for revenue "stable" at last year's level, with operating profit "significantly above" 2019's 4.3 billion euros.

First loss in a decade

In July, Daimler reported its first quarterly loss in a decade for April-June, while last month it warned that its full-year results would come in below expectations. Germany's KBA transport authority has ordered more than a million Daimler-built vehicles recalled, mostly over dieselgate. The firm still contests whether "motor control functions" cited by regulators are in fact illegal.

But it agreed to pay an 870-million-euro fine for selling infringing vehicles, weighing on both the cars and vans divisions. Daimler's vans unit was especially hard hit, reporting an operating loss of 3.1 billion euros, while at the flagship cars division operating profit was slashed in half, to 3.4 billion euros.

With performance flagging, bosses plan to offer shareholders a dividend of just 90 euro cents, down from 3.25 euros in 2018 and well short of the 1.53 euros forecast by analysts.

Just after midday in Frankfurt (1105 GMT), Daimler's shares had given up an early morning rally, trading down 0.1 percent on the day at 43 euros against a



STUTTGART: Ola Kallenius (center), CEO of Daimler AG, Harald Wilhelm, (left) CFO of Daimler AG and Martin Daum (right), member of the executive board and CEO of Daimler Trucks AG pose during the company's annual press conference in Stuttgart, southern Germany, yesterday. — AFP

DAX blue-chip index up 0.8 percent.

Cost-cutting

Like carmakers across the sector, Daimler has ambitious plans to slash carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from its vehicles, aiming to avoid swingeing fines under tighter EU regulations that come into force this year. "It is possible" to meet the greenhouse limits, although "2020 and 2021 will be the toughest years," Kallenius said.

Daimler should have pushed into battery and hybrid power sooner, he added, but now "aims for very fast growth" from two percent last year to nine percent "in 2020". Tight margins on newer models and a bleaker economic outlook mean the funds to power

investment must come from cost savings, with Kallenius aiming to find "over 1.4 billion euros" from job cuts. A reduction of more than 10,000 posts from Daimler's worldwide staff of 300,000 has already been announced, mostly via non-replacement of departing employees, early retirement schemes and voluntary redundancies.

Aside from the slimmer headcount, the firm will also "simplify" its model range, eliminating little-sold or low-margin cars and slashing investment where it sees little prospect of them turning profitable.

"We are determined... to significantly improve profitability," said Kallenius, who took the reins at Daimler after the 13-year reign of Dieter Zetsche. — AFP

Intel, Vivo drop out of key mobile fair over virus fears

MADRID: US chip giant Intel and Chinese phonemaker Vivo withdrew from the Mobile World Congress over coronavirus fears yesterday, adding to a lengthening list of industry heavyweights pulling out of the world's top mobile fair. The annual Barcelona-based congress normally draws more than 100,000 people from all over the world, but this year, participation has been badly hit by the outbreak of the virus, which emerged in China at the end of the year and has since claimed more than 1,000 lives.

Over the past week, a string of major tech names have dropped out, among them Sony, Sweden's Ericsson, South Korean giant LG and Japan's NTT DoCoMo, raising questions as to whether the event would be cancelled. "The safety and wellbeing of all our employees and partners is our top priority, and we have withdrawn from this year's Mobile World Congress out of an abundance of caution," said an Intel statement sent to AFP.

Vivo, which is one of the world's top five smartphone manufacturers, also confirmed it would not be present at the show, a key date in the tech calendar where firms unveil their latest gadgets and innovations. "In light of the current situation, we have taken the decision not to attend MWC 2020 or any other associated event in Barcelona at the same time" it said, pledging to postpone the presentation of its latest mobile offering. "The health and security of our employees and the wider public are a priority for us," it said.

Vivo is the second Chinese firm to withdraw from the show after Umidigi, a smaller handset maker, pulled out on Monday. For now, China's top smartphone manufacturer Huawei as well as its smaller rival ZTE are still set to attend and have said their executives and staff would undergo a self-imposed two-week quarantine period before appearing at the show. — AFP

What's On

Ahmadi governorate holds Um Al-Khair festival

Under the auspices and with the attendance of Ahmadi governor, Sheikh Fawwaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Ahmadi governorate recently organized its two-day Um Al-Khair festival; one of the ceremonies held to celebrate the national anniversaries. The celebration was attended by thousands of Kuwaiti and expat families.

Speaking on the occasion, Al-Sabah extended his congratulations to the leadership and the people of Kuwait and expressed gratitude to all participants, supporters and sponsors from CBK, local companies and news papers.

Further, Al-Sabah said that a concert would be held at Al-Shabab club stadium next Friday (February 14) for singers Nabil Sho'ail, Abdullah Al-Rowaished and Angham adding that a special festivity would be also held on February 24 at the Nuwaiseeb land border exit to receive GCC national arriving to witness the national anniversaries celebrations.



NBK, Creative Confidence launch 'TAMAKAN' training program



NBK organized a special welcoming ceremony for the trainees. The ceremony was attended by NBK Executive Management, along with other officials from NBK and Creative Confidence. The program runs until 20 April 2020. TAMAKAN is a full-time commitment for 10 weeks, 5 days a week, from 8:30pm-3:30 pm. NBK will be hosting the program which will be providing a real business challenge that participants will work on into the final stages of the training sessions.

"TAMAKAN' is an innovative training experience especially tailored for fresh Kuwaiti university graduates," said Emad Al Ablani, NBK General Manager

Group Human Resources. "It aims to support young Kuwaiti graduates to develop their skills, expand their capabilities and grow their knowledge in a way that will make them compelling candidates for employment".

"NBK is looking forward to the outcome of the program and to seeing the participants moving into key leadership roles in their near future." "NBK believes that investing in human resources is investing in our future. TAMAKAN program goes along with NBK's initiatives to invest in Kuwaiti youth and support their aspirations," Al Ablani noted.

In her turn, Rana Al Rasheed - the Strategy director in Creative Confidence, said, "We are pleased to

announce the kick off of this program, it is one of these initiatives that help invest and support young nationals. With NBK, we are confident that TAMAKAN program will achieve its goal and support around 30 fresh Kuwaiti graduates realize their potentials."

"32 trainees were selected from among more than 650 applications submitted", stated Al Rashaid. "This stands as an excellent indication of the youth's interest in developing their skills, in a way that will make them compelling candidates for employment".

Al Rasheed added that graduates will gain real, relevant experience and develop their skills without the commitment of a job. They will get exposed to the latest

methods and tools that will help them in designing solutions and shaping ideas in any field.

NBK's sponsorship and participation in the program comes as a part of its strategic partnership with Creative Confidence. NBK is dedicated towards supporting talented young graduates and empowering Kuwaitis TAMAKAN Program offers recent graduates a unique development opportunity before starting their first job. TAMAKAN is organized by Creative confidence in collaboration with NBK. Creative Confidence is a Kuwaiti based consulting and training company that specializes in creativity, innovation and collaboration training.

LAPA seeks applicants for SPAA arts program

LOYAC Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA) hosted a press conference for the Sharjah Performance Arts Academy (SPAA) at its headquarters at Al-Qibliya school in a bid to cement relations and cooperation between both academies in the field of supporting higher education of performance arts as well as regional theatrical and performance talents. Holding first auditions, both academies' officials met talented applicants for the 2020 batch of students. Applicants will have a chance to meet SPAA executive manager Peter Barlow and the head of the production arts program Jacqui George, who are both international theatre experts and part of SPAA's team.

Speaking on the occasion, Barlow said SPAA is the perfect place to nurture and enhance the skills



of gifted individuals and pave their way towards a bright future within and outside international theatre. "SPAA is the first and only educational facility specialized in theatrical arts in the region," he said, noting that SPAA's curriculums focus on utilizing all creativity concepts to develop the best theatrical and performance talents.

Barlow added that after its official opening for university students in Sept 2019, SPAA announced registrations for the 2020 semester to provide a four-year fulltime course to get a BA in acting, production arts and musical theatre, as well as scholarships. "Our academy includes a 432-seat

theatre, a studio for 126, a backstage rehearsal hall, 12 studios for singing, acting and dancing classes, 12 studios for audio and song recording and many other facilities," Barlow explained.

LOYAC Chairperson Farea Al-Saqqaq welcomed Barlow and George, stressing the importance of cooperating with relevant bodies in presenting all forms of performance arts with the aim of creating new economic structures and job opportunities for talented youth. LAPA's executive member Khalifa Al-Hajri stressed that LAPA is keen on providing its students with high-level training through cooperation with successful local, Arab and international facilities.

TIES Center

The TIES Center cordially invites you to another session of our course on Purification and Prayer today Wednesday, February 12th, at 11 am.

In this class, we will learn why physical purity is necessary before ritual prayer, some methods and techniques to purify our hearts and minds, and the eventual benefits.

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1. Why is it forbidden to eat dead animals or any flesh cut from a live animal? And what did the Prophet (PBUH) tell the residents of Madinah when they cut humps off camels and tails off sheep and goats?
2. Why did Abu Huraira (RA) hide from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) although he almost always sought his company?
3. What two types of blood and dead animals are permitted for consumption?
4. What can we learn from Umar bin Al-Khattaab (RA) when he was stabbed in the back while leading the Muslims in prayer?

Come and learn the hows and whys of physical and spiritual purity to perfect your prayer.

Health & Science

Half-a-million insect species face extinction

PARIS: Half of the one million animal and plant species on Earth facing extinction are insects, and their disappearance could be catastrophic for humankind, scientists have said in a "warning to humanity". "The current insect extinction crisis is deeply worrying," said Pedro Cardoso, a biologist at the Finnish Museum of Natural History and lead author of a review study published Monday. "Yet, what we know is only the tip of the iceberg," he told AFP.

The disappearance of bugs that fly, crawl, burrow, jump and walk on water is part of a gathering mass extinction event, only the sixth in the last half-billion years. The last one was 66 million years ago, when an errant space rock wiped out land-based dinosaurs and most other life forms. This time we are to blame. "Human activity is responsible for almost all insect population declines and extinctions," Cardoso told AFP. The main drivers are dwindling and degraded habitat, followed by pollutants—especially insecticides—and invasive species.

Over-exploitation—more than 2,000 species of insects are part of the human diet—and climate change are also taking a toll. The decline of butterflies, beetles, ants, bees, wasps, flies, crickets and dragonflies has consequences far beyond their own demise. "With insect extinction, we lose much more than species," Cardoso said. "Many insect species are vital providers of services that are irreplaceable," including pollination, nutrient cycling and pest control.

Biodiversity 'hotspots'

These "ecosystem services" are worth \$57 billion (52 billion euros) a year in the United States alone, earlier

research has found. Globally, crops that require insect pollination have an economic value of at least \$235-577 billion annually, according to the UN biodiversity science panel, known as IPBES. Many animals rely on abundant insects to survive. A sharp drop in bird numbers across Europe and the United States, for example, has been linked to the collapse of insect populations decimated by pesticide use.

Scientists estimate the number of insect species at about 5.5 million. Only a fifth of them have been identified and named. "The number of threatened and extinct insect species is woefully underestimated because so many are rare or under-described," Cardoso said. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species has evaluated only some 8,400 species of insects out of one million known to exist. Five to 10 percent of all insect species have died out since the industrial era kicked into

high gear some 200 years ago. Half of indigenous species of plants and vertebrates are found exclusively in some three dozen biodiversity "hotspots" that cover on 2.5 percent of Earth surface. "These hotspots likely harbour a similar percentage of endemic insect species," said the study titled "Scientists' warning to humanity on insect extinctions," published in Conservation Biology. A quarter century ago conservation scientists issued a "Warning to Humanity" about the collapse of Nature. In 2017, they issued a second warning, signed by 15,000 scientists. The new study, titled "Scientists' warning to humanity on insect extinctions", was published in the journal Conservation Biology. — AFP

“ The current insect extinction crisis is deeply worrying ”

UK team tests China virus vaccine on mice

LONDON: A team of UK scientists believe they are one of the first to start animal testing of a vaccine for the new coronavirus that has killed more than 900 people and spread around the world. Researchers at Imperial College London said their ultimate goal was to have an effective and safe way of halting the SARS-like strain's spread by the end of the year. "At the moment we have just put the vaccine that we've generated from these bacteria into mice," Imperial College London researcher Paul McKay told AFP in an interview on Monday. "We're hoping that over the next few weeks we'll be able to determine the response that we can see in those mice, in their blood, their antibody response to the coronavirus." Scientists across the world are racing to develop a way to stamp out a new strain of a well-known virus that has been successfully combated in the past.

Imperial College London said it cannot be sure how advanced other teams' research is at the moment, but the animal tests they began running Monday were one of the first. Britain has recorded eight cases and been forced to shut down two branches of a medical Centre in the southeast city of Brighton where at least two staff members tested positive. But coming up with a vaccine is a laborious process that usually involves years of animal testing and clinical trials on humans. Regulators must then make sure that the vaccine is both sufficiently

safe and effective to be mass produced. Imperial College London hopes that research on the SARS coronavirus nearly two decades ago can speed things up. "We're hoping to be the first to get this particular vaccine into human clinical trials, and that perhaps is our personal goal," McKay said. "Once the phase one trial is complete—which can take a few months to complete—it can be immediately started into an efficacy trial in people, which will also take a few months to complete," McKay added. "So, perhaps by the end of this year there will be a viable tested vaccine that would be suitable for use in people."

'Collaborative race'

Much of the world's current research into the new strain is being funded through the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). The group was formed at the 2017 World Economic Forum in Davos to help drug companies and universities join forces and stamp out dangerous and preventable diseases. Imperial College London is not working with any of the current teams partnering with CEPI and requires its own sources of funding.

Its scientists hope that successful animal testing can help secure investments that allow clinical trials to start sometime between June and August. McKay said it would be unfair to say that the various universities and companies are competing to become the first to develop a vaccine. "There's been so much cross-sharing with all of this information—I mean the Chinese, as soon as the genome was sequenced, they shared it freely with everyone in the world," he noted. "So to put it in a competitive sense is probably not accurate. I would say that it's a collaborative race." — AFP

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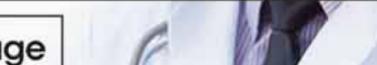
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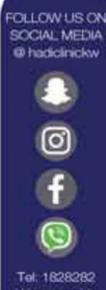
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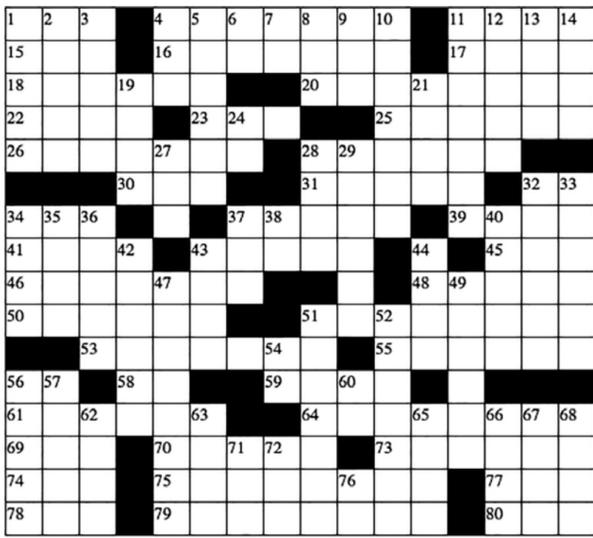
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ACROSS

1. A hotel providing overnight lodging for travelers.
4. Rigidly formal.
11. A small ball with a hole through the middle.
15. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on the sea or ships.
16. Attribute to a source or cause.
17. Avatar of Vishnu.
18. A large fleet.
20. Having a bottom of a specified character.
22. Report or maintain.
23. The compass point that is one point west of due north.
25. Doglike nocturnal mammal of Africa and southern Asia that feeds chiefly on carrion.
26. A native or inhabitant of Rio de Janeiro.
30. (informal) Of the highest quality.
31. Infections of the skin or nails caused by fungi and appearing as itching circular patches.
34. Piece of solid food for dipping in a liquid.
39. A Christian holiday celebrating the birth of Christ.
41. (informal) Valuable goods.
45. Electronic warfare undertaken under direct control of an operational commander to locate sources of radiated electromagnetic energy for the purpose of immediate threat recognition.
46. Wearing a wig popular for men in the 17th and 18th centuries.
48. A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
50. Antiarrhythmic drug (trade name Enkaid) used to treat life-threatening arrhythmias but increases the risk of sudden death in heart attack patients.
53. A red ochre formerly used as a pigment.
55. A major waterfall in southern Africa.
56. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
58. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
59. An edge tool used to cut and shape wood.
61. An archaic name for Easter or Passover.
64. Providing legal power or sanction.
69. A vinyl polymer used especially in paints or adhesives.
70. Someone whose business is advertising.
73. A deceitful and unreliable scoundrel.
74. Aromatic bulb used as seasoning.
75. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
77. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
78. The upper side of the thighs of a seated person.
79. City in central Iran.
80. An informal term for a father.

DOWN

1. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
2. Emperor of Rome who introduced a degree of freedom after the repressive reign of Domitian.
3. A person who gives a name or names.
4. Having undesirable or negative qualities.
5. (commerce) The period of time permitted by commercial usage for the payment of a bill of exchange (especially a foreign bill of exchange).
6. Being ten more than one hundred ninety.
7. A colorless element that is one of the six inert gasses.
8. Support resembling the rib of an animal.
9. A dark-skinned member of a race of people living in Australia when Europeans arrived.
10. A colorless odorless gas used as a fuel.
11. A large ax with a broad cutting blade.
12. United States designer noted for an innovative series of chairs (1907-1978).
13. A primeval personification of air and breath.
14. An informal term for a father.
19. An elaborate song for solo voice.
21. A river in northern England that flows east to the North Sea.
24. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
27. The month following September and preceding November.
28. A thrusting blow with a knife.
29. In a tidy manner.
32. Lacking in body or vigor.
33. The capital of Eritrea.
35. Welsh industrialist and social reformer who founded cooperative communities (1771-1858).
36. United States civil rights leader who refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man in Montgomery (Alabama) and so triggered the national civil rights movement (born in 1913).
37. Experiencing or showing sorrow or unhappiness.
38. A hemoprotein composed of globin and heme that gives red blood cells their characteristic color.
40. English economist noted for his studies of international trade and finance (born in 1907).
42. Hard greenish-brown wood of the lignum vitae tree and other trees of the genus Guaiacum.
43. Make anew.
44. A married German woman.
47. The capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Congo river opposite Brazzaville.
49. Socialist who wrote The Communist Manifesto with Karl Marx in 1848 (1820-1895).
51. Filled with a great quantity.
52. An ester of glycerol and stearic acid.
54. A state in midwestern United States.
57. Type genus of the Caviidae.
60. A bluish-white lustrous metallic element.
62. Minute floating marine tunicate having a transparent body with an opening at each end.
63. A system of one or more computers and associated software with common storage.
65. A small cake leavened with yeast.
66. Made agreeably cold (especially by ice).
67. Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
68. Showing or causing joy and pleasure.
71. A diagrammatic representation of the earth's surface (or part of it).
72. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
76. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

It seems as if your sexual needs are one of the issues you seem to place great focus on today. You desire power and control. These desires may lead to greater interest in healing and investing. The great mysteries of life and death seem to intrigue you. You may feel much support and harmony in your life now. Surrounded by friends and loved ones is the place for you. You may find yourself having a great time this evening surrounded by the children and younger people in your life. It seems these younger people look at you with much admiration and strive to be more like you.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You know who and what are the priorities in your life. Your sense of appreciation is heightened. This is a time you are able to beam with pride when you look at your life situation. You are highly respected and others admire you for what a success you have become. Be sure to appreciate the fact that others seem to always look to you for advice and guidance. Remember to take time for you. You may tend to take the problems of those you love to personally. You can not carry the weight of the world on your shoulders alone. Spend time this evening to unwind. This could prevent you from becoming overwhelmed.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This seems to be a time of great focus on your relationship. You may find yourself searching for and discovery all of the beauty this world has to offer. You find beauty in your surroundings each today, but today you seem to have a greater appreciation for it. This is a very satisfying experience for you. Peace and harmony are great desires in your world and you are entering a phase where you will feel this way often. You may find that your relationships are the key to your emotional success. You may find yourself surrounded with love and support today. Focus on your loved one today and you may find this is where your needs will be fed.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Things really seem to be going your way. It is your time to shine. You may feel as if the world is revolving around you. Enjoy each breath you take. Live life to the fullest and seek the beauty in all that surrounds you. You are beaming with pride and a sense of accomplishment and others will be drawn to you today. Enjoy this feeling and spread joy wherever you go.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Legal documents that concern your business may need to be executed today, Leo. There might be a lot of paper to wade through, not to mention jargon that appears indecipherable. Don't get too impatient, however, as this is important. Instead, find someone more familiar with this sort of thing and get him or her to explain it all to you. Then, assuming it's agreeable, take care of it and move on. The results should be well worth it!



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

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



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Visitors might come to your home today to discuss business of some kind. Libra, perhaps job related, perhaps about an enterprise you're developing on your own. If you aren't careful, however, you could get caught up in conversations that are more social than practical and thus lose sight of the reasons you got together. Stay focused on the matter at hand and you could be pleasantly surprised at the results.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

All eyes are on you today and that is just what you crave. You have a great desire to be the center of attention. You crave appreciation for your gifts and talents. This will be a time you are able to look back on with pride. You are drawn to romance. This is a great time to spend with a special someone. Share your passion, whether it be cooking a meal together or painting a picture. Involve the one you love in a project tonight. This may bring you closer and the results could be amazing.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

An upcoming visit from someone close may have you working overtime in order to fix up your house, Sagittarius. Therefore, you could be tempted to go crazy buying decorative items. This is fine up to a point, but be careful! Some of the stuff that looks good in the store might not look quite the same once you get it home. Your guest is more interested in seeing you. Decorate in moderation, and have fun doing it!



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Details are important today. Be aware of what you say. Be sure anything you put on social media communicates what you intended. Words can be misinterpreted, and you may not have an opportunity to correct a misunderstanding. Written words are a permanent record, and they can come back to haunt you. Relationships can be permanently damaged because the reader did not get the message that was intended. Choose your words wisely today.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

You may be feeling a need for change. A deep desire for emotional security takes hold now and you feel your most content when surrounded by family and those closest to you. Relationships are a priority in your world now. You feel as if things in your life are monotonous and you are ready to spice things up. This may mean a shiny new car purchase, a vacation, or simply surrounding yourself with a new group of friends. Any direction you choose, this will be a time of excitement and give you a fresh start and a more focused outlook. We all need a bit of change from time to time. Keep life interesting and exciting.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may feel an emotional distance to your loved ones at this time. You are deeply focused on your ideas at this time. Personal concerns are trivial to you as your level of thinking and focus deepens to that which is new, edgy, and unusual. An abstract way of thinking. You are fascinated by the more eccentric things in life. You may find that you are surrounding yourself with like-minded individuals as you have no tolerance for those who do not appreciate your points of views on matters. Within the company of these individuals you find your communication skills to be on point today and feel as if you are in your element.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Movie Actors 3

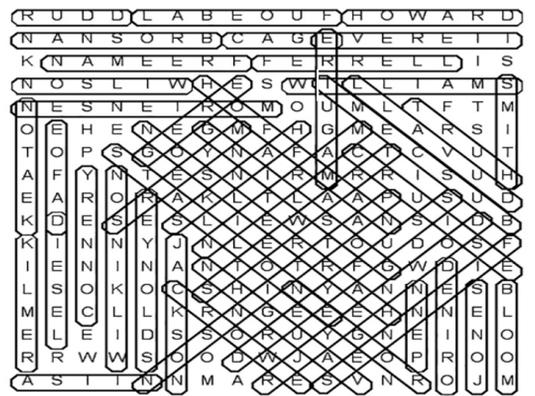
Find and circle all of the Movie Actors that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of a movie for which Forest Whitaker won an Oscar.



- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| ARKIN, Alan | GLOVER, Danny | PACINO, Al |
| BALE, Christian | GOODING JR, Cuba | PAXTON, Bill |
| BANDERAS, Antonio | HARRIS, Ed | PITT, Brad |
| BROADBENT, Jim | HAWKE, Ethan | QUAD, Dennis |
| BRODERICK, Matthew | KINGSLEY, Ben | RADCLIFFE, Daniel |
| BRODY, Adrien | MACY, William H. | SINISE, Gary |
| BYRNE, Gabriel | MALKOVICH, John | SLATER, Christian |
| CRAIG, Daniel | MCGREGOR, Ewan | STRATHAIRN, David |
| DAY-LEWIS, Daniel | MURPHY, Eddie | THORNTON, Billy Bob |
| EASTWOOD, Clint | MURRAY, Bill | WALKEN, Christopher |
| FIRTH, Colin | NICHOLSON, Jack | WASHINGTON, Denzel |
| FISHBURNE, Laurence | NORTON, Edward | WHITAKER, Forest |
| FRASER, Brendan | OLDMAN, Gary | WILLIS, Bruce |

Yesterday's Solution

Movie Actors 2



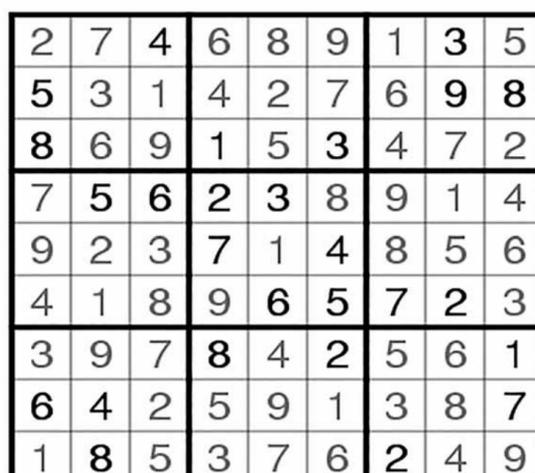
- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| ASTIN, Sean | FIENNES, Ralph | MARTIN, Steve |
| BLOOM, Orlando | FREEMAN, Morgan | MORTENSEN, Viggo |
| BROSIAN, Pierce | GERE, Richard | MYERS, Mike |
| BUSCEMI, Steve | GOSLING, Ryan | PATTINSON, Robert |
| CAGE, Nicolas | HANKS, Tom | PENN, Sean |
| CONNERY, Sean | HARRELSON, Woody | REYNOLDS, Ryan |
| CROWE, Russell | HOFFMAN, Philip Seymour | ROGEN, Seth |
| CRUISE, Tom | HOWARD, Terrence | RUDD, Paul |
| DAFOE, Willem | HURT, William | SMITH, Will |
| DE NIRO, Robert | JACKSON, Samuel L. | STALLONE, Sylvester |
| DIESEL, Vin | JONES, Tommy Lee | STEWART, Patrick |
| DOWNEY JR, Robert | KEATON, Michael | VAUGHN, Vince |
| DREYFUSS, Richard | KILMER, Val | WILKINSON, Tom |
| DJWALL, Robert | LABELL, Shia | WILLIAMS, Robin |
| EVERETT, Rupert | MAGUIRE, Tobey | WILSON, Owen |
| FERRELL, Will | | |

The hidden movie title is: KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2020



The newly wedded couple Hanan and Mohammad are greeted as they enter their temporary home in a school building, transformed into a makeshift shelter for displaced people, on their wedding day in the northern Syrian city of Hasakeh. — AFP photos



Rabbi Meir Rosenboim (center left) of the Premishlan Hasidic dynasty dance in front of his daughter Hana Ritza during the Mitzvah Tantz, a Hasidic custom in which the men dance before the bride on the wedding night after a wedding feast in the Israeli religious city of Bnei Brak near Tel Aviv.



Rabbi Meir Rosenboim (left) of the Premishlan Hasidic dynasty dance in front of his daughter Hana Ritza during the Mitzvah Tantz, a Hasidic custom.



Yemenis dance at a wedding ceremony in the old city of Sanaa.



Hanan, a displaced Syrian woman wears her wedding dress at her temporary home, a school building transformed into a makeshift shelter.

War rocks the Middle East, but love must go on

“Love, we have no aim but to be defeated in your wars,” wrote the Palestinian poet Mahmud Darwish. Despite the armed conflicts devastating the Middle East, occasionally love comes out victorious. From the battlefields of Syria to the ruined cities of Yemen, journalists bear witness to violence and destruction every day—but sometimes they capture glimmers of hope, beauty and even romance. To mark Valentine’s Day, AFP has selected some of its most powerful recent images of love. AFP photographer Safin Hamed recalls accompanying a young couple from Iraq’s Yazidi minority from their tent in a squalid refugee camp to their December wedding at a modest hall in nearby Dohuk city.

“It was a basic party, there wasn’t a meal, just cake,” he said. “But they really wanted to express their happiness and to dance.” The young bride and groom were just children when the Islamic State group stormed through their rugged home region of Sinjar in 2014, kidnapping thousands of women and girls as “sex slaves”, killing men en masse and taking boys as soldiers. But even after six years living on humanitarian aid in a refugee camp, the couple “loved life and wanted to keep going... despite everything that had happened to them,” Hamed said. Guests gathered in bright traditional clothes, and a small band played raucous Kurdish wedding music.

“Even when the music finished, they wanted the band to play on,” Hamed said. “Despite their suffering, they were looking after themselves, getting their hair done in a salon, wearing nice clothes.” Weddings in the shadow of war, whether in squalid refugee camps or bombed-out towns, can be defiant celebrations of life and expressions of hope for a better future. In Yemen’s rebel-held capital of Sanaa, Mohammed Huwais photographed men dancing in the streets to celebrate a marriage in the shadow of a war that has created what the United Nations calls the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.



Yemenis attend a wedding ceremony in the old city of Sanaa on December 19, 2019.

In Syria’s war-torn northwestern province of Idlib, AFP photojournalist Aaref Watad captured chilling images of a wedding dress in the blown-out facade of a bridal shop, on December 8, 2019, the day after a reported Russian airstrike on a market in the village. And in the country’s northeast, Mustafa Ramadan and Luvin Yusuf had to postpone their wedding as Turkey and its rebel proxies launched an offensive against Kurdish forces they view as “terrorists”. When they finally married in the city of Qamishli, the wedding hall was filled with Kurdish patriotic songs, clapping, singing and laughing, said AFP photographer Delil Souleiman. “It was so different from working amid bombardment, displacement and death,” he said. “It was full of music, colours, happiness and dancing.” — AFP



Luvin Yusuf, a Kurdish bride, arrives to her wedding ceremony in the Kurdish-majority city of Qamishli in northeastern Syria.



Wedding dresses are seen in the destroyed window of a bridal shop in damaged building in Balyun in Syria’s northwestern Idlib province.

Snow problem for Japan's ice sculpture festival

Every year, tens of thousands of tourists flock to the snow festival in the northern Japanese city of Sapporo, attracted by some 200 large, but intricate ice sculptures. But this year, there's a problem: no snow. With high temperatures that festival-goers put down to climate change, organizers were forced to truck in powder from distant towns for their signature sculptures in an unheard-of ice crisis. "This lack of snow is unprecedented," said Yumato Sato, an official in charge of organizing the snow festival, which normally uses 30,000 tons of the stuff for sculptures ranging from anime characters to famous racehorses.

"We had to bring in snow from places we had never reached out to before" such as Niseko, a town about 60 kilometers (40 miles) away from Sapporo famous for its skiing, he said. Adding to the problem was the need for pristine snow, perfect for sculpting. "The snow needs to be free of dirt, otherwise the sculptures can break up," he said. "We barely managed to scrape together enough snow." Record low snowfall in Japan this year has also forced many ski resorts to shut their pistes. According to Weathernews, one quarter of the 400 resorts surveyed had been unable to operate. There has been a knock-on effect on one of the snow festival's main attractions—a 100-metre-long, 10-metre-high slide—that had to be reduced in size.

'Once before I die'

Snowfall in Sapporo has been less than half the annual average, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency's local observatory. High temperatures melted the snow in mid-December and the mercury is expected to stay above average. This posed a major challenge for the 125 local Self-Defense Forces troops who painstakingly construct the sculptures each year that can be as high as 15 meters,



This file photo shows a giant snow sculpture supported by Hokkaido Television Broadcasting representing a "kotankoro kamuy" (Blakiston's fish owl) watching over the National Ainu Museum. — AFP

according to commanding officer Colonel Minoru Suzuki.

"Due to record warm weather this year, we didn't have much snow and the snow contained more water which made the statues melt easily," Suzuki told AFP. His troops spent about 100 days planning and building a 15-metre tall, 20-metre wide statue modeled on the palace at Lazienki Park in Warsaw to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Japanese-Polish diplomatic relations in

2019. "We had to keep repairing the statue so we struggled. It was difficult to attach parts because it was so warm," he added. The festival has been running for 70 years and is a major tourist magnet, drawing 2.7 million visitors last year.

Sunao Kinoshita, a 75-year-old who had travelled up from near Osaka, said he "had to see it once before I die". "Northern Japanese cities have been hosting snow festi-

vals every year. It would be a shame if such events ended" due to global warming, he said. A regular festival-goer from the region also laid the blame on global warming. "I was worried the climate was different this year," Ayaka Muto, 31, told AFP. "Usually we have more snow. I think it's strange. I feel global warming is happening," added Muto.

'Serious and a disaster'

The main theme of this year's festival, which runs until February 11, is the ethnic Ainu minority in Hokkaido, as the first Ainu-themed national museum, nicknamed Upopoy or "singing together" in the Ainu language, will open in April. "We've never before had statues with such powerful Ainu characteristics," Sato said. One statue featured a giant Blakiston's fish owl spreading its wings watching over sculptures of the museum and a ship. The owl is considered a god in Ainu culture. Another statue was based on the Ainu myth of a thunder god and a forest princess. And some have been turning to the nature gods of Japan's native Shinto religion to pray for more snow.

In mid-January, a ski resort in western Hyogo prefecture invited a Shinto priest to hold a ceremony to ask the gods for snow, as did the organizers of the Yamagata snow festival in northern Japan. "It's not that we don't have enough snow. We don't have snow at all. It's serious and it's a disaster," Hyogo Governor Toshizo Ido told reporters last month. The Sapporo festival organizers hope they can continue the famed event in the future despite the warming climate. "This year marked the 71st event. It's a festival that we want to carry on for future generations," Sato said. "(But) this is about weather so all we can do is to pray." — AFP

LONDON'S 'CHEWING GUM MAN' FUSES ART WITH RECYCLING



Lyng on a footbridge spanning London's River Thames, Ben Wilson finalizes his latest creation: a miniature painting on chewing gum, stuck to the steel structure. The 57-year-old Englishman has toured the British capital for the past 15 years sculpting and repainting scraps of gum discarded by passers-by. But it's not just an eccentric hobby. Wilson considers the results "a form of art"—as well as recycling. "I'm transforming the rubbish and making it into a form of art, so that's a form of recycling," he told AFP on a sunny morning on the Millennium Bridge in the shadow of Saint Paul's Cathedral. "(It) is taking a thoughtless action and trying to transform it hopefully into something positive." Wilson added, brush in hand.

His colorful creations, barely bigger than a small coin, can be found all along the pedestrian bridge and in the surrounding area. Unless passers-by look closely, they are easy to miss. Many are miniature representations of the famous cathedral nearby, while others are vivid-almost psychedelic—drawings, often signed and dated. Originally from north London, Wilson started out carving wood, before turning to chewing gum. Over the years, his unusual hobby has earned him the nickname "chewing gum man"—a moniker he has fully embraced. His procedure is now well established.

Wilson will spot old gum stuck to steps, streets and other parts of the urban landscape. Then, out comes his equipment: an old paint-stained blanket to sit on; bottles of acrylic paints and varnish; a burner to melt the gum; and, of course, a brush. He is careful to avoid painting on the actual bridge or other surface, in case he is accused of vandalism by the authorities. "The person who spat out the gum is the person that created the criminal damage," he noted.

"It's sad really the impact that humans have on their environment, the amount of rubbish that we create." Pedestrians, some used to the regular sight of Wilson working in his paint-flecked jacket, engage with him, asking questions or sometimes taking photos. He estimates he has painted "thousands and thousands" of pieces of gum, and prides himself on having produced his "hidden art" across central London. Wilson collaborates with galleries and other artists for some income, and refuses any money offered to sign people's pieces of gum. "It's nice to actually create something which evolves out of the environment rather than being imposed on the environment," he said.—AFP



Meet T-Rex's older cousin: The Reaper of Death

Scientists said Monday they had discovered a new species of dinosaur closely related to Tyrannosaurus rex that strode the plain of North America some 80 million years ago. Thanatotheristes degrootorum—Greek for "Reaper of Death"—is thought to be the oldest member of



A handout photo shows an artist's impression of a Thanatotheristes degrootorum, a newly-discovered species of T-Rex.

the T-Rex family yet discovered in northern North America, and would have grown to around eight meters (26 feet) in length.

"We chose a name that embodies what this tyrannosaur was as the only known large apex predator of its time in Canada, the reaper of death," Darla Zelenitsky, assistant professor of Dinosaur Palaeobiology at Canada's University of Calgary. "The nickname has come to be Thanatos," she told AFP.

Whereas T-Rex—the most famous of all dinosaur species, immortalized in Steven Spielberg's 1993 epic Jurassic Park—stalked its prey around 66 million years ago, Thanatos dates back at least 79 million years, the team said. The specimen was discovered by Jared Voris, a PhD student at Calgary, and is the first new tyrannosaur species found for 50 years in Canada. "There are very few species of tyrannosaurids, relatively speaking," said Zelenitsky, co-author of the study that appeared in the journal Cretaceous Research.

"Because of the nature of the food chain these large apex predators were rare compared to herbivorous or plant-eating dinosaurs." The study found that Thanatos had a long, deep snout, similar to more primitive tyrannosaurs that lived in the southern United States. The researchers suggested that the difference in tyrannosaur skull shapes between regions could have been down to differences in diet, and dependent on the prey available at the time. — AFP

Bizarre News

Man charged after using a mobile phone on a horse

A man has been charged after using his mobile phone on a horse. The unnamed man was travelling down a rural road in New South Wales, Australia with a phone attached to his ear when he was stopped by police. He pleaded guilty to the charge. Police prosecutor Kris O'Brien filed the paperwork to the court for the charge of "Driver used mobile phone when not permitted", and noted "it's not made clear in the charge, but the vehicle is a horse". Magistrate David Day said: "Under the road rules a horse is a vehicle... and he didn't have a hands-free device fitted to the horse." He also joked: "I've had someone charged with being drunk on a horse before - but just one." The defendant's solicitor, Tim Cain, said his client pleaded guilty "because he concedes that the horse was in motion" but argued that the matter was "trivial". The magistrate did not record a criminal conviction against the 30-year-old.



Onion bhaji breaks world record

The world's largest onion bhaji has been cooked in East London. The giant snack - which weighs 387 pounds and smashed the previous benchmark by a whopping 162 pounds - was made by Chef Oli Khan with the assistance of his team. The bhaji took eight hours and 500 litres of oil to make. It was cooked at an event, in partnership with Just Eat, held at the East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre. Oli said: "This wouldn't have been possible without my team, who are all present with me today to share in this amazing victory." "This isn't just a win for us, it's a win for our nation Great Britain, which we are proud to represent!" It wasn't the only record to be broken at the event, as the largest samosa in the world was also created.



Man jailed after burning a million dollars

A man has been jailed after burning a million dollars. Bruce McConville - a Canadian businessman - was sentenced to 30 days in prison, after he burned the cash to avoid paying his wife spousal and child support as part of their divorce settlement. Judge Kevin Phillips told Bruce that he did not believe his excuse and accused him of making a mockery of the court. The judge said: "I don't believe you. I don't trust you. I don't think you're honest. You are making a mockery of this court, and its process - something I will not allow in this court." Bruce claimed that his actions were out of the character and that he has "always been frugal". He said: "It's not something that I would normally do. I am not a person that is extremely materialistic. A little goes a long way. I have always been frugal. That's why my business lasted for 31 years."



Fox sneaks into Parliament

A fox sneaked into Houses of Parliament and pooped outside the office of a Labor MP. It is unclear how the animal found its way into the Westminster building and left excrement outside the unfortunate politician's office. Labor MP Kerry McCarthy a picture of the scene, and tweeted: "So apparently there was a fox running around in Portcullis House atrium about half an hour ago, and now I've just found this outside my office (two floors up!) "I can't believe I missed all the drama and just found the poo." Conservative MP Julia Lopez added: "Just leaving Westminster office for the night and see a fox climbing escalator in Portcullis House. We have seen some strange things in Parliament since 2017, but this tops it!" Police eventually captured the animal, escorting it out of the building under a box and releasing it back onto the streets of Whitehall.



Restaurant slammed for ladies fillet steak

A restaurant has been blasted for offering a 'ladies fillet' steak on their menu. The Manhattan Bar and Grill in Liverpool's 8oz steak is smaller than the other meaty offerings on the menu, and it is described by the restaurant as "one for the ladies". The next size up on the grill menu at Manhattan is the fillet steak, which comes in at 10oz. The gendered meal was highlighted by food writer Vicky Andrews on Twitter, who asked: "Would you order a 'ladies fillet'?" The restaurant claimed they created the dish in response to the demand from female customers and insisted they won't be changing the controversial name. An employee, known only as Karl, commented: "We've had this steak on the menu since day one (2015) and due to high demand from a lot of our female customers, we named it, the Ladies Fillet. "It's a very, very popular dish and one of our bestselling steaks from the Grill section. "So, no! I won't be changing the name, why change something that works?"

Twins born in different decades

A pair of twins were born just 30 minutes apart - but in different decades. Dawn Gilliam gave birth to daughter Joslyn at 11.37 pm on December 31, 2019 and brother Jaxon at 12.07 am on January 1, 2020. The mother, from Indiana, was not due to give birth until February but she and partner Jason Tello went to hospital on New Year's Eve due to concern about a lack of fetal movement. Dawn told the Indianapolis Star: "They were like, 'You might have to deliver today.'" She revealed that the pair knew that Joslyn was going to be born first. She said: "She's been in position for most of the pregnancy. Of course, he (Jaxon) was breech. So, it took a while for him to come." Jason added: "We talked about how it would be great to have them born on different dates. But here we are with this surprise - different dates, different years. That was definitely interesting for us for sure."



A Malian masked artists during a performance about identity and migration in occasion of the annual Festival on the Niger in Segou. — AFP photos



A masked man dances during the opening of the Festival.



Three masked men dancing during the Festival.

IN MALI, AN ARTS FESTIVAL DEFIES JIHADIST VIOLENCE

Behind the stage looming over the banks of the Niger River, there came worrying information: Jihadists were poised to attack Mali's most important cultural festival. On stage, everything was calm. Officials lined up to give speeches to usher in the much-loved event while relaxed-looking security guards looked on. But behind the scenes, security chiefs were on the alert. And the calls were stacking up on the mobile phone of Commander Diallo, an official from Mali's security ministry.

(HRW) said this week. That figure does not include soldiers and police officers whom militants have been slaughtering by the dozen in recent months.

Commander Diallo—his full name has been retained for security reasons—had his work cut out to keep the festival running safely. His eyes were fixed on the far bank of the Niger, watching for any threat. Two patrol boats were sent there, sirens blaring. A dozen soldiers disembarked and fanned out on the far bank, "to dissuade anyone who might want to come there," an officer said.



A masked man wearing the traditional costume of Dogon countries dances.



Malian dancers perform with the traditional puppets of the Segou region.



Malian actors perform the traditional legend of the siren during the Festival.

Now in its 16th year, Segou'Art Festival on the Niger is Mali's largest cultural event, a haven of theatre and music in a rising tide of war. It is staged in the town of Segou in central Mali—a region that is now the epicenter of a jihadist revolt that began more than seven years ago. In 2019, militant groups killed over 450 civilians in central Mali alone, Human Rights Watch

Unfazed by the risk, tens of thousands of Malians attend Segou'Art every year. The event ran from February 4-9 this year, covering everything from lectures, to theatre, dance, music and traditional storytelling. Foreign tourists used to regularly attend too. Today, they are now nowhere to be seen, for the threat to their lives has never been greater.

'Everywhere and nowhere'

Ten days before the festival began, 20 soldiers were gunned down by about 100 motorbike-riding jihadists, some 100 (60 miles) kilometers north of Segou. Near the site of that attack, three policemen were also killed during an overnight ambush on Sunday morning, just as rappers were entertaining thousands of young Malians at Segou'Art. Authorities had their eyes peeled for an attempt on the festival. Security measures were put in place and reinforcements sent from the capital Bamako—"enough to secure the festival," according to Biramou Sissoko, the governor of Mali's Segou region.

Details, including the number of men requisitioned, remain secret. But several hundred uniformed men were visible in the town during the festival, an AFP journalist saw, and the country's counterterrorism squad was dispatched from the capital Bamako. "The threat is

everywhere and nowhere," said Malick Doumbia, a 26-year-old festival-goer who had travelled from Bamako.

He added that he was "relieved to see the security forces mobilized," and that he was apprehensive about the threat rather than afraid. Security is an issue every year, but attacking such a popular festival would not be in jihadists' interest, a security official who declined to be named suggested. "In terms of messaging, (an attack) would be difficult to justify for groups looking to integrate locally".

Crisis center

Malian security officials have had help from the European Union's police-training mission in the country. Philippe Rio, a general in the French gendarmes and head of the mission, called the festival a "symbol". "When we saw that the lack of security was becoming an obstacle to the festival's survival and

that it was in danger of disappearing, we got involved," he said. Among other things, European police trainers helped establish a crisis center headquartered in a local-government office. They also donated computers and walkie-talkies.

In the crisis center, Malian officers discussed the rumors of jihadist filtration the day after they surfaced. No evidence backed them up. In the meantime, however, an internal government report relating to the rumors had circulated online and several Western embassies urged their nationals to skip Segou'Art. "There haven't been many tourists now for years," sighed Omar Yaffa, the president of the Segou guides' association. "It's a pity." — AFP

'Parasite' Oscar success opens new era

The unprecedented Oscar haul for South Korean director Bong Joon-ho black comedy "Parasite" has shattered a 92-year-old glass ceiling and opened a new era for Korean and other foreign films on the global stage. A genre-defying thriller about a poor family infiltrating a wealthy household, "Parasite" won four Oscars Sunday night, becoming the first non-English language film to win the top prize since the Academy Awards debuted in 1929. The film, shot in Korean and without any international

But the movie's awards—it also took best director and best original screenplay, as well as best international feature—signaled the "arrival of a new era" and created "tremendous potential" for foreign pictures in the US, said Gina Kim, a professor at UCLA and filmmaker originally from the South. Hollywood "still prevails and dominates the film industry worldwide", she told AFP, and "has been notorious for not allowing foreign language film to enter its own 'turf'. With the success of 'Parasite', it is changing".

Korean cinema in 2019. The country boasts the fifth-biggest film industry in the world, and has become increasingly prominent on the festival circuit in recent years and decades. In 2004, Park Chan-wook's action thriller "Oldboy" took the Grand Prix at Cannes, and director Kim Ki-duk's 2012 drama "Pieta"—a violent tale of a loan shark—won the Golden Lion at Venice.

South Korean directors have also made inroads into Hollywood, with Park's 2013 psychological thriller "Stoker" starring Nicole Kidman and Mia Wasikowska, and Bong himself making his English-language film debut the same year with sci-fi action "Snowpiercer", featuring Tilda Swinton and Ed Harris. Unlike its neighbor China, where movies and other creative content are regularly censored, the South has enjoyed diplomatic soft power by virtue of its cultural exports in multiple fields, with K-pop and boyband BTS high-profile examples.

Korean cinema underwent a renaissance in the 1990s with the advent of democracy after decades of military rule. In 2007 the country's left-leaning former president Kim Dae-jung told government officials: "Provide financial support for artists, but never interfere with what they do. Once government intervenes, the creative industry will go broke." Nonetheless thousands of artists, including directors Bong and Park, were later secretly blacklisted by the conservative administration of Park Geun-hye, who was brought down by street protests over corruption and abuse of power.—AFP

Soft power

Bong's historic win comes a year after the 100th anniversary of South



In this handout photo Best Picture Award winners for "Parasite" pose onstage during the 92nd Annual Academy Awards at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California. — AFP

cast members, achieved a feat that could potentially be game-changing. "Not only did director Bong change South Korea's cultural history, he also changed the history of Hollywood," the South's major daily Chosun Ilbo wrote in its editorial yesterday. The Academy had been "obsessed with English-language films made by white people" it said, so that it was harder "for a Korean person to win an Oscar with a Korean-language film than be awarded a Nobel prize for literature".

After his victory, the director told reporters that people around the world were increasingly connected. "So I think naturally we will come to the day when a foreign-language film or not doesn't really matter, and a foreign-language film winning this won't be much of an issue later on hopefully," he said.



Soprano Anna Netrebko, songwriter Diane Warren win Polar prize

Sweden's Polar Music Prize was yesterday awarded jointly to Russian-born star soprano Anna Netrebko and American hit-song writer Diane Warren. The laureates will receive the award, including one million kronor (95,000 euros, \$103,000) each, at a ceremony in Stockholm on June 9 attended by King Carl XVI Gustaf. Known as the "New Callas", 48-year-old Netrebko is a master of both the Russian and bel canto styles as well as big dramatic roles like Tosca in Puccini's classic opera.

"When I get on stage, something happens and the quality of the performance is 10 times better, like I have a voice telling me what to do. It's always been with me," she said in a statement for the prize. Sixty-three-year-old Warren, nominated 11 times for an Oscar, has penned hits for artists such as Celine Dion, Whitney Houston, Justin Bieber and Mary J. Blige. "I don't have confidence in myself as a human being, but I have unshakable confidence in my music," Warren said. "When I know something is right, when I know a song is right for somebody... I believe, and it's unshakable."

The Polar was established in 1989 by the late Stig Anderson, manager of Swedish pop superstars ABBA, and selects two or three laureates each year. The award aims to "break down musical boundaries by bringing together people from all the different worlds of music". Past winners have included Grandmaster Flash, Metallica, the Afghan National Institute of Music, Sting, Bob Dylan, Pierre Boulez, Ravi Shankar and Dizzy Gillespie. — AFP

Founder of S Africa's Ladysmith Black Mambazo dies

Joseph Shabalala, founder of South Africa's multiple Grammy-winning choral group, the Ladysmith Black Mambazo, has died, the choir said yesterday. He was 78. Shabalala passed away at a Pretoria hospital following complications from back surgery that left him wheelchair-bound, according to local media. "Our Founder, our Teacher and most importantly, our Father left us today for eternal peace," the choir said on social media. "We celebrate and honor your kind heart and your extraordinary life. Through your music and the millions who you came in contact with, you shall live forever."

Shabalala had retired in 2014 and handed control to the all-male choral group to his four sons. Founded in the southeastern city of Durban in the 1960s, the Ladysmith Black Mambazo gained iconic status in South Africa. The word "Mambazo" means "axe" in the Zulu language. The group was popularized abroad by Paul Simon's 1986 "Graceland" album. Simon was criticized by some at the time for working with musicians while South Africa was still under apartheid rule.

But his album opened up a global audience to traditional Zulu harmony-driven acapella, known as isicathamiya, and an international following for the Ladysmith Black Mambazo. The group is a decades-old favorite at the Grammys, where it won its fifth award in 2018. It is currently on a US tour. The chorale performed at the inauguration of South Africa's first black president Nelson Mandela in 1994, who was freed from jail exactly 30 years ago. The choir also performed at Queen Elizabeth II's 92nd birthday in 2018 at a star-studded, Commonwealth-themed charity concert that also featured Tom Jones, Kylie Minogue and Shaggy.—AFP





Models walk the runway for Carolina Herrera during New York Fashion Week: The Shows on Monday in New York City. — AFP photos



CAROLINA HERRERA BRIGHTENS UP NY FASHION WEEK... AND THE WORLD



Sweeping gowns in bright monochrome colors, including blues, greens and yellows, were the order of the day at Carolina Herrera's fall-winter 2020 collection Monday. Highlights included a yellow and black strapless ruffle gown with dark green pumps, a zircon blue crinkle chiffon goddess gown and a clementine orange ruffle dress. Colors also included goldenrod, cornflower blue, acacia yellow, garden green and aquamarine blue as creative director Wes Gordon paired vibrant shades and unusual hues.

"My main mission and obsession has been bringing as much color to the house as possible," said Gordon, who took over from Carolina Herrera as creative head of the label two years ago. "A large part of it is a response to times that can often be grey and uncertain," Gordon, 33, told AFP, referring to "very scary issues" in the news. "And so rather than surrendering to that, I choose to make my life and the things I can impact be as colorful as possible," he added.

No mirage
Iowa-born designer Jeffrey Dodd was inspired by a road trip through the southwest of the United States for his latest collection. "For me, the desert is this utopian place where my guard goes away. I'm the most at ease," he told AFP following his show on Sunday. Denim, lacquered wool and a poncho-throw all featured.

Dodd, accustomed to making designs that are stylish without being eccentric, appeared to be experimenting more this season. "I've finally gotten to the point where I'm not afraid to be who I am," he said. New York Fashion Week ends today. —AFP



Classifieds

Wednesday, February 12, 2020



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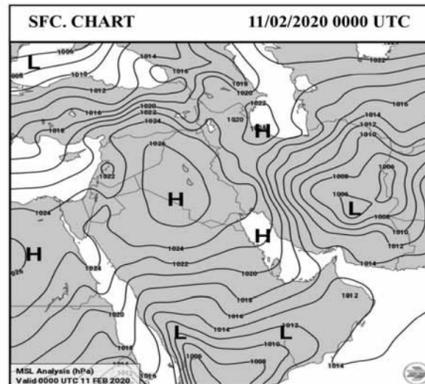
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Cold with light variable wind to light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 42 km/h and some high clouds will appear with a chance for rising dust.

BY NIGHT: Very cold with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 10 - 40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear with a chance for frost

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	12 °C	07 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	13 °C	02 °C
ABDALY	11 °C	-2 °C
BUBYAN	14 °C	09 °C
JAHRA	11 °C	03 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	13 °C	06 °C
SALMIYAH	12 °C	08 °C
AHMADI	13 °C	08 °C
NUWASIB	17 °C	04 °C
WAFRA	15 °C	02 °C
SALMY	10 °C	00 °C



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	02/12	Cold	11 °C	-1 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 32 km/h
Thursday	02/13	Rather cold	17 °C	03 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 28 km/h
Friday	02/14	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	21 °C	06 °C	NW	12 - 35 km/h
Saturday	02/15	Fair and Partly cloudy	23 °C	10 °C	VRB	06 - 22 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:10
Sunrise	06:31
Zuhr	12:02
Asr	15:11
Sunset	17:34
Isha	18:52

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	16 °C
MIN. Temp.	07 °C
MAX. RH	73 %
MIN. RH	31 %
MAX. Wind	N 50 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, Mufaddal Taherbhai Kalol Aka Kalolwala holder of Indian Passport No. J-4559330 with Civil ID No: 288031905238, have change my name to Mufaddal Taherbhai Kalolwala having permanent address at Morning Star fatemi mohalla voharwad Godhra 389001 Panchmahal Gujarat India. (C 5491)

I Syed Reyaz S/o Syedesa holder of Indian Passport No. M8397780 issued at Kuwait on 14/10/2015 & Civil ID No. 269050504727 has changed my name from Syed Reyaz to Syed Riyaz hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Syed Riyaz. (C 5492)

I, KASARAGOD MOHAMED MOHAMMED ANWAR, holder of Indian passport No. R7702989 issued on 23/05/2017 at Kuwait, residing in Kuwait at present, having permanent address: Kinav, Mardali Road, Paduvadukkam, Muttathody,

Kasaragod, Kerala. PIN 671123. Hereby declare that my given name changed as: MOHAMMED ANWAR and surname is KASARAGOD MOHAMED. (C 5634) 12-2-2020

Name: Sayed Nazir Ahmed Sayed Ibrahim, Surname: Kadri, Civil ID No: 260120702964. (C 5632)

Old name, Surname: Challa Jahnavi, given name: Abhijna, new name: Surname: Challa, given name: Jahnavi Abhijna, Passport No: N0434930, Civil ID No: 308030502272. (C 5633) 9-2-2020

I, formally known and addressed as Akalezi John Kelechi, now wish to be known, called and addressed as Akalezi Stephen. The wrong date of birth is 27/12/1983 - and the right date of birth is 27/12/1986. All former documents remain valid. The general public, banks and concerned authorities should please take note.



Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Turkish Airlines	1884918
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Oman Air	22958787

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

Flight Schedule

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 12/2/2020				Departure Flights on Wednesday 12/2/2020			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
ETH	3620	Addis Ababa	00:01	AYH	120	Baku	13:05
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	MSR	611	Cairo	13:25
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	KAC	781	Jeddah	13:30
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KAC	105	London	14:00
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
KAC	102	London	00:55	RBG	218	Asyut	14:25
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	TBZ	6606	Mashhad	14:40
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	KNE	1079	Doha	15:00
MSR	618	Alexandria	01:35	PVV	730	Taif	15:00
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	MSR	576	Sharm el-Sheikh	15:05
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:45
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	CLX	7912	Hanoi	15:50
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	673	Dubai	15:50
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	SVA	501	Jeddah	16:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	563	Amman	16:00
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	KAC	743	Dammam	16:20
PGT	284	Istanbul	03:05	KAC	283	Dhaka	16:25
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:30
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:35
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	IRA	664	Shiraz	16:40
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:45
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:30	JZR	735	Cairo	16:50
KAC	302	Mumbai	04:40	JZR	103	Bahrain	16:50
KAC	796	Madinah	04:40	KAC	503	Beirut	17:05
JZR	540	KTM	04:45	RBG	554	Alexandria	17:10
JZR	702	Asyut	04:55	KAC	361	Colombo	17:30
FDB	069	Istanbul	05:00	KAC	619	Doha	17:35
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	KAC	357	Kochi	17:35
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	JZR	405	Kochi	17:45
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	FDB	052	Dubai	17:45
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:20	JZR	539	KTM	17:50
JZR	654	OSS	05:25	KAC	331	Trivandrum	17:55
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
JZR	502	Lahore	05:35	QTR	1073	Doha	18:00
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	SAW	706	Dammam	18:00
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:35	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:50	FEG	342	Sohag	18:20
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:20
KAC	332	Trivandrum	06:05	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	344	Chennai	06:10	SVA	505	Madinah	18:30
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	KAC	301	Mumbai	18:35
BAW	157	London	07:05	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
JZR	120	Dubai	07:10	KAC	381	Delhi	18:45
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:10	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:55
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
ABY	889	Sharjah	07:50	JZR	253	Amman	19:20
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:10	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
KAC	622	Doha	08:30	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	RIA	641	Amman	20:10
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	08:45	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:35
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	FDB	058	Dubai	20:45
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:35	QTR	1091	Doha	21:00
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	MSC	402	Alexandria	21:30
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45	DLH	624	Dammam	21:45
RBG	553	Alexandria	09:50	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	QTR	1089	Doha	21:55
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	10:00	KAC	205	Islamabad	22:15
JZR	114	Doha	10:20	JZR	701	Asyut	22:15
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
JZR	714	Sohag	10:50	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
JZR	708	Luxor	10:55	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:25
AWB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
JZR	122	Dubai	11:15	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	RBG	214	Sohag	23:00
PVV	730	Sharjah	12:00	OMS	226	Muscat	23:00
KIS	6032	Mashhad	12:00	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	KAC	783	Jeddah	23:15
AHY	119	Baku	12:05	JZR	622	Amman	23:15
GFA	209	Bahrain	12:05	JAV	622	Delhi	23:20
MSR	610	Cairo	12:25	KAC	383	Bangkok	23:25
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	QTR	1083	Doha	23:25
QTR	1078	Doha	13:25	SVA	515	Riyadh	23:25
TBZ	3605	Mashhad	13:40	KAC	543	Cairo	23:30
RBG	213	Sohag	13:45	KAC	795	Madinah	23:30
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:50	KAC	303	Mumbai	23:40
CLX	7912	Luxembourg	14:00	GOW	602	CNN	23:55

Palestinian leader warns UN on Trump's 'Swiss cheese' peace

UNITED NATIONS: Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas yesterday urged the UN Security Council to reject President Donald Trump's Middle East plan, saying it would splinter Palestinian lands and never bring lasting peace. Brandishing a large map of a future Palestine as laid out by Trump, Abbas denounced it as a "Swiss cheese" deal that would give the Palestinians only a "fragmented state" without control of their airspace, sea or East Jerusalem.

"Who among you would accept such a state?" Abbas asked, as he warned that Israel would create an "apartheid" situation if it moves ahead with annexation. "I would like to say to Mr Donald Trump that his plan cannot achieve peace and security as it cancels international legitimacy," Abbas said. "It cancels all the rights of the Palestinians. This does not meet the aspirations of a two-state solution," he said. "If you impose peace it will not last, it cannot last."

The Palestinians have sought to rally international support against the plan, which Trump unveiled alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Jan 28. But in a setback, the Palestinians dropped plans for a vote on a resolution yesterday that would denounce the proposal. Diplomats said that the United States has put heavy pressure, including threats of financial repercussions, on Security Council members and that even some European nations were hesitant. Abbas said that peace with Israel remained "achievable" and said: "I have come to build a just partnership." "This deal is not an international partnership. This proposal was from one state, supported by another state to be imposed."

Israel wants Abbas out

The veteran 84-year-old leader, long considered a moderate among the Palestinians, rejected the use of violence but said that street protests showed the deep

opposition to Israeli occupation. "Our entire people is saying 'No, no, no' to this deal," he said. Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Danny Danon, replied that Abbas stood in the way of a solution. "Only when he steps down can Israel and the Palestinians move forward," Danon said. "He is trying to blame the lack of progress on Israel. Complaining instead of leading is not leadership," he said, calling on the Palestinians to find a "realistic solution."

Trump's plan would establish a Palestinian state but grant Israel sovereignty stretching to the Jordanian border, including over settlements built since the Jewish state captured the West Bank in the 1967 Six-Day War. The plan would recognize contested Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel but allow the Palestinians to establish a capital on the holy city's eastern outskirts. Hours after Trump unveiled the plan, Netanyahu began to move forward with plans to annex much of the West Bank.

Despite the Palestinians' refusal to deal with Trump, Abbas said that his first impressions of the billionaire turned president had been favorable. Trump, whose evangelical Christian base is strongly supportive of Israel, has taken a series of landmark steps such as recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and ending assistance to the UN body that helps Palestinian refugees. "I do not know who gave him this advice. The President Trump I met was not like that," Abbas said.

Europeans critical of plan

The Palestinians previously won support from the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the African Union which have all rejected Trump's plan. Yesterday, the four European Union members of the Security Council - France, Germany, Belgium and Estonia - as well as Poland, which left the council at the end of last year, jointly said that any Middle East solu-



NEW YORK: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas holds up the US Vision for Peace map while speaking at the United Nations Security Council yesterday. — AFP

tion needs to be based on pre-1967 lines.

Trump's plan "departs from these internationally agreed parameters," they said in a joint statement, while applauding "all efforts" to reach a peaceful resolution. The European Union earlier failed to issue a similar joint statement among all members due to resistance from a handful of countries including Hungary, led by right-wing populist Viktor Orban. Kelly Craft, the

US ambassador to the UN, said that Trump's plan amounted to an "opening offer" and called for talks between the Israelis and Palestinians. "My fervent hope is that after the smoke of today's rhetoric clears, Palestinian leaders will see this plan for the opportunity it is, roll up their sleeves, and seize this chance to sit down with the leaders of Israel to begin a new conversation," she said. — AFP

UAE reopens mail link with Qatar; Saudi talks falter

DOHA: The United Arab Emirates has restored mail services with Qatar, the UN postal agency said, after severing them in 2017 as part of a regional campaign to isolate Doha. The UAE, along with its allies Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt, cut all diplomatic, trade and transport ties with Qatar in June 2017. The four governments accused Doha of backing radical Islamists, including the Muslim Brotherhood, and seeking closer ties with Saudi archrival Tehran - allegations Qatar vehemently denies.

Representatives of the four boycott countries met a Qatari delegation at the Universal Postal Union's (UPU) headquarters in the Swiss capital Bern on January 29 to discuss the reestablishment of postal links. Only the UAE has so far agreed. The UPU is a UN agency responsible for coordinating global postal services. "These were constructive discussions, hopefully the countries will now resume their postal arrangements - and they are a positive step in the right direction," a UPU spokesman told AFP late Monday.

The UPU said in a technical notice to postal operators seen by AFP that "effective February 9, 2020, Emirates Post will resume the sending of mails to the State of Qatar, using open and closed transit options via Oman". QPost, Qatar's national

mail carrier, said it was unclear if services to the UAE would resume and that currently "it is not allowed" to send items to the country. An Emirates Post employee confirmed that "it is possible to send (items) to Qatar without any specific restrictions".

Since the embargo began, there have been no direct postal services between the UAE and Qatar with foreign courier services, including DHL and FedEx, similarly affected by the measures. Oman has provided Qatar with respite from the boycott measures, making its ports available to Qatari imports and exports that would have previously transited the UAE. Oman, along with Kuwait, has been involved in so far fruitless efforts to broker an end to the regional rift.

Meanwhile, talks between Saudi Arabia and Qatar to resolve the Gulf dispute broke down soon after starting, six sources said, leaving in place the political and trade embargo of Doha that hampers joint Gulf Arab efforts to counter Iran. The discussions that began in October were the first glimmer of a thaw in the row. Washington has strong ties with all the states involved, including Qatar which hosts the largest US military base in the region, and sees the rift as a threat to efforts to contain Iran. It has pushed for a united Gulf front. — AFP

Sudan to hand Bashir to ICC for Darfur crimes

KHARTOUM: Sudan has agreed to hand ousted autocrat Omar Al-Bashir and others to the International Criminal Court for alleged war crimes in Darfur, a member of Khartoum's ruling body said yesterday. The Hague-based ICC has charged Bashir and three of his former aides with genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Sudan's western region during a devastating conflict from 2003. "Those who have been indicted by the ICC, they have to go there," Mohamed Hassan Al-Taishay, a member of the ruling sovereign council, said in a statement.

"One of them is Al-Bashir and (there are) three others," he later told journalists in the South Sudanese capital of Juba, where a government delegation was meeting rebel groups from Darfur. "We agreed that we fully supported the ICC and we agreed... that the four criminals have to be handed over," Taishay said. "We fully supported the claim that the ICC wanted them and they have to be handed over." He did not specify when the decision would be carried out.

Taishay said the Juba talks, still ongoing, focused on justice and reconciliation in Darfur, where the United Nations says about 300,000 people have been killed and millions displaced since the conflict erupted. Taishay said they had agreed several mechanisms for

achieving peace in Darfur, including the establishment of a special court to investigate crimes in the region. But "first, all those who have been indicted by the ICC should appear before the ICC," he said.

A member of the rebel delegation in Juba also confirmed the move. "We have agreed with the sovereign council in Khartoum to rule Sudan based on justice, especially on issues related to the ICC," Nimir Mohamed Abdurahman told reporters. The conflict in Darfur, the size of France, erupted when ethnic minority African rebels took up arms against Bashir's then Arab-dominated government, accusing it of marginalizing the region economically and politically.

The ICC has charged Bashir with genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity for his role in the conflict. Bashir has denied the charges. The court has also indicted three of his former aides, Ahmed Haroon, Abdulrahim Mohamed Hussain and Ali Kushied. "We cannot achieve justice unless we treat the suffering of the victims because this is a truth that we can't escape from," Taishay said.

Sudanese government spokesman Faisal Mohamed Salih also confirmed that the four would be handed over to the ICC. "Bashir and others will be presented to the ICC court. This is a government decision," Salih told AFP. Bashir was ousted by the army in a palace coup last April after months of protests against his iron-fisted rule of three decades. He was arrested following his ouster and has since been sentenced to two years in a detention center on corruption charges.

Anti-Bashir protesters, residents of Darfur and rebel groups from the region have consis-



Omar Al-Bashir

tently demanded that the ousted ruler be handed over to the ICC. For years before his toppling and despite the ICC indictments, Bashir had regularly visited regional countries as well as Russia and China. Days before the outbreak of mass protests against him in Dec 2018, he visited Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad in Damascus, becoming the first Arab leader to do so since the Syrian conflict began in 2011. In 2018, Bashir helped broker a tentative peace deal in South Sudan after five years of intense conflict in the world's newest country, which won independence from Khartoum in 2011. — AFP

China virus deaths top 1,000; WHO...

Continued from Page 1

every corner. If we don't we could have far more cases and far higher costs on our hands," he said.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable of condolences to Chinese President Xi Jinping over the victims of the coronavirus. The Amir assured him that Kuwait stands by the friendly People's Republic of China in this health disaster, while praising the preventive measures taken by the Chinese government to control this virus, hoping a speedy recovery for those affected. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Chinese president. Chinese authorities have locked down millions of people in a number of cities, while several governments have banned arrivals from China and major airlines have suspended flights in a bid to keep the disease away from their shores. The death toll has now reached 1,016, although the mortality rate remains relatively low at 2.4 percent. But the case of a British man who passed on the virus to at least 11 other people - without having been in China - has raised fears of a new phase of contagion abroad. The 53-year-old - dubbed a "super-spreader" by some British media - said yesterday he had fully recovered, but remained in isolation in a central London hospital.

Most cases overseas have involved people who had been in Wuhan, the quarantined central Chinese city where the virus emerged late last year, or people infected by others who had been at the epicenter. But the Briton caught the virus while attending a conference in Singapore and then passed it on to several compatriots while on holiday in the French Alps, before finally being diagnosed back in Britain.

"The detection of this small number of cases could be the spark that becomes a bigger fire," Tedros said on Monday, urging countries to seize on the "window of

opportunity" to prevent a bigger outbreak. Michael Ryan, head of the WHO's Health Emergencies Program, said it was "way too early" to call the Singapore conference a "super-spreading event".

As the number of cases in Britain doubled to eight, the government called the novel coronavirus a "serious and imminent threat", and said anyone with the disease could be forcibly quarantined if deemed a threat to public health. The biggest cluster of cases outside China is aboard the Diamond Princess cruise ship moored off Japan, where 135 people have been positively diagnosed. The ship has been in quarantine since arriving off the Japanese coast early last week after the virus was detected in a former passenger who disembarked last month in Hong Kong.

More than 100 people were evacuated from a 35-storey Hong Kong housing block yesterday after two residents in different apartments tested positive for the virus. Residents were forced to leave as health officials in masks and white overalls scrambled to work out whether the virus had spread through the complex of some 3,000 people. "Of course I'm scared," a 59-year-old resident, who gave her surname as Chan, told AFP. The US said yesterday it had authorized consulate staff to leave Hong Kong.

Chinese authorities, meanwhile, dismissed two senior health officials from Hubei, the central province where some 56 million people, including in its capital Wuhan, have been under lockdown since late last month. They also tightened restrictions in the city, forbidding people with fever from visiting hospitals outside of their home districts and sealing off residential compounds. Local authorities in Wuhan and Hubei have faced a torrent of criticism for hiding the extent of the outbreak in early January. Most deaths and cases are in Hubei. The death of a whistleblowing doctor from Wuhan has sparked calls for political reform in China.

President Xi, who has described the battle against the virus a "people's war", has largely kept out of the public eye since the outbreak spiralled across the country from Hubei. But he emerged on Monday, pictured wearing a mask and having his temperature taken at a hospital in Beijing. He called the situation in Hubei "still very grave" and urged "more decisive measures" to contain the spread of the virus. — Agencies

Ultra-rare snowfall carpets Baghdad...

Continued from Page 1

been a century since Baghdad saw any flakes, Iraqi young and old said it was the first time they had ever seen snow falling in Baghdad. The city's iconic palm trees were daintily outlined in white, and the tarpaulins of the long-running anti-government protest camp in Tahrir Square in the city center were sprinkled with snow.

People on their way to work stopped their cars to

AAP crushes BJP in Delhi...

Continued from Page 1

excluding Muslims. At least 25 people have been killed in protests over the legislation so far.

But the AAP, which swept to power in 2015 after it was launched three years earlier by former tax officer Kejriwal, retained control in an impressive showing. The defeat in Delhi is the latest in a string of setbacks for the BJP at regional elections over the past two years. Kejriwal, 51, fought the election on local issues such as subsidized water and electricity, as well as the safety of women. "This win has given birth to a new type of politics - the politics of work," he told cheering supporters at party headquarters. "This is the type of politics that will take the country forward in the 21st century."

Yogendra Yadav, an academic who was a member of the AAP executive until 2015 and now has his own party, said the result was a clear rejection of Modi and his party's angry campaign. "The BJP indulged in one of the most vitriolic, communal hate mongering campaigns as a desperate electoral gamble," he told AFP. "If this succeeded, it would have become a template for everywhere else to follow. — AFP

snap pictures or break out into impromptu snowball fights. "Snowfall may continue until Wednesday given the very cold weather," said Amer Al-Jaberi, media head of the Iraqi Meteorological Centre. "This cold wave came from Europe," he told AFP.

The people of Baghdad are more used to heat than cold. The highest temperature recorded in the capital was a searing 51 degrees Celsius, a record it has neared several times in recent years. South of the capital, snow also carpeted the Shiite holy city of Karbala, which draws pilgrims from round the world to its famed shrines, the golden-domed mausoleums of Abbas and Imam Hussein. Snowfall is more common in northern Iraq, where snow covered the war-battered city of Mosul, but in the center and south there is rarely enough precipitation. — Agencies



NEW DELHI: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal gestures towards his supporters at the party headquarters yesterday. — AFP

Sports

Rita Jeptoo urges athletes to take responsibility after serving doping ban

Athletes must know what medicine they take

ELDORET: Disgraced marathon champion Rita Jeptoo has resumed training after serving a four-year doping ban and urged fellow Kenyan athletes to be more vigilant about what goes into their bodies so that they avoid suffering the same fate.

The 38-year-old was initially suspended for two years by Athletics Kenya after she tested positive for the banned blood-booster EPO in 2014. The ban was subsequently doubled to four years in 2016 after the global governing body of the sport (IAAF) successfully argued that the original punishment was too lenient to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

"I have resumed training. As per the rules, I have undergone mandatory dope testing. I hope to make a full comeback soon," Jeptoo, whose ban ended in October 2018, told Reuters in an interview in Eldoret, some 350km north west of Kenya's capital Nairobi.

She said athletes caught in anti-doping violations "are either complicit or very ignorant of the rules of the game." "We were naive then and had very little knowledge on matters doping," she said.

"Athletes must know what medicine they take because they are ultimately responsible for what goes in their body. They cannot blame anybody for their actions and inactions." Kenya, a powerhouse in long-distance running, has had a number of athletes banned in recent years after they failed drugs tests.

In 2016 CAS said it was obvious Jeptoo had used EPO

"as part of a scheme or plan." CAS said the evidence included Jeptoo's long relationship with her doctor, that her EPO use was "consistent with her competition calendar". It added that her conduct was "deceptive and obstructive" throughout the proceedings. Jeptoo was disqualified from all races she had taken part in since April 17, 2014, including first place finishes at the Boston and Chicago Marathons.

Jeptoo said the presence of EPO in her system was most probably because she was given a drip in a Kenyan hospital after a road accident. She also said her blood was drawn for "cleaning" then returned back to her body in Italy.

In 2016 her Italian manager, Federico Rosa, had faced accusations in Kenya of administering banned substances to Jeptoo. But the accusations proved to be unfounded when CAS ruled that she hid visits to her doctor from her coach and manager.

She now admits: "I should have known better." Rosa cut ties with Jeptoo after she failed the doping test. Jeptoo lost several lucrative sponsorship deals and a jackpot in one series of competitions.

"I was hurting, hiding my tears for the sake of my son," she said. "My manager, my husband disowned me. Athletes called a press conference to disown me. Had it not been for my mental strength, I would have died." She blamed "jealous people around me" for her troubles, adding that she has now forgiven her detractors. — Reuters



File photo shows Rita Jeptoo of Kenya celebrates after winning the Boston Marathon title.



Qatar Police team with the cup.

Qatar Police crowned Gulf Clubs champions

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Qatar's Police club won the 37th Gulf Clubs Volleyball Championship that concluded on Monday evening by defeating Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal Club 3-0 in the fifth and final round with the scores of (25-19, 25-23, 25-21).

Kuwait team ended in third place after losing to Dar Kulaib of Bahrain 3-0 during the final match, and the scores were (14-25, 22-25, 21-25), as Dar Kulaib took second place.

Qatar's Police collected 15 points from 5 wins, and was crowned for the first time as Gulf Clubs Champion. Ten clubs were declared champions since the championship started in 1982. Bahrain's Al-Muharraq Club won the championship 10 times, Kuwait's Al-Qadisiya 7 times, Saudi Arabia's Al-Ahly 5 times, Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal 4 times, Qatar's Al-Rayyan 3 times, Bahrain's Al-Najma 3 times, while Qatar's Al-Araby, Bahrain's Al-Naser, UAE's Al-Jazeera and Dar Khulaib won it one each.

Chairman of the GCC volleyball organizing committee handed the cup to Qatar's Police Club captain in the presence of Deputy President of International and Asian Volleyball federations, Essa Hamza, Kuwait Club Director General of Public Authority

for Sport Dr Saqeer Al-Mulla, Deputy Chairman of the organizing Committee Mohammad Al-Nisif and other officials.

AL-SALEEM AMONG THE BEST

Cups for best skills in the tournament were handed, as the best setter was Mahmoud Hussan from Dar Kulaib, best position 2 player Yosuf Aghalf from Qatar Police, best position 3 Othman Adelwahid from Qatar, best second position 3 player Amer Al-Salem from Kuwait, best position 4 player Jo Nitto from Police, best second position 4 player Mohammad Yaqoub from Dar Kulaib and the best Libro Hussein Abdallah from Dar Kulaib and the best all round player Walter Enriki from Qatar Police.

ALL ARE WINNERS

Deputy Chairman of the Higher Organizing Committee (HOC), and Director General of Volleyball in Kuwait Club Mohammad Al-Nisif said the Championship was successful technically as Kuwait hosted all GCC countries, adding all were winners by bringing all Gulf countries together because sports gather us, and we congratulate the Qatar Police team for winning the title with outstanding performance and Dar Kulaib in second place, Kuwait in third. He added "Kuwait succeeded in hosting the championship during a short period, and we thank all working committees, particularly the media for its efforts to present the competition.

RELATIVELY SATISFIED

Kuwait's coach Khalid Baleid said "third place is an achievement, we are looking for a better result but the differ-



Dar Kulaib team of Bahrain claimed second place.



Kuwait volleyball team took the third spot.

ence in experience and playing with other teams deprived us from that".

He said "hosts always have ambition to compete for the title, but our loss to Police put that hope aside early, and our achievement is a true achievement that we should utilize in the future, and work on preparing upcoming players like Abdelaziz Najim and Athby Malek. Baleid was satisfied relatively with Kuwait's performance despite the difference in experience which affected the team all during the tournament".

TOUGH COMPETITORS

Kuwait Club player Sultan Khalaf said he, as well as his teammates, benefited from playing against the strongest Gulf

teams and gained more experience, and promised fans better levels and results in coming events.

He added, "we are satisfied with third place, as we faced tough competitors in a tournament that has high technical level, although we suffered many injuries during preparations.

WE EXPECTED TO WIN

Police Club coach Damian Aredondo said his players were confident during the championship that won of high standard. He said "we had tough competition during the 10 days with fierce players. We expected to win the first title in our history, though we had to work very hard for it, and we succeeded.

Qatar lends China team 2,000 table tennis balls

MUMBAI: China's table tennis federation thanked its Qatari counterpart yesterday for providing training facilities and equipment, including 2,000 balls, to its national team, who are training in Doha to avoid the coronavirus outbreak at home.

More than 42,000 people have been infected by the flu-like virus in mainland China, with authorities confirming more than 1,000 deaths. Almost 30 members of the Chinese squad have been training at Doha's Aspire Academy Arena since the conclusion of the German Open in Magdeburg earlier this month.

With several countries imposing travel bans due to the outbreak, the Chinese Table Tennis Association (CTTA) sought a training facility for its players away from home. It received invitations from Germany, Austria and Japan among others but chose Doha as several of their top players are set to participate in the Qatar Open from March 3-8.

"We didn't expect that they could prepare the venue, tables and facilities for us within such a short period of time," CTTA President Liu Guoliang said in a statement released by the International Table Tennis Federation.

"The tables that we are using for training are those that will be used at the Qatar Open." QTTA has even given us all 2,000 that they had in storage for us to train. It might be a common situation in China but it's very heart-warming, especially during this particular period and we really appreciate all this help from our international friends."

Asian powerhouse China has won 28 out of 32 golds awarded since the sport became an Olympic sport in 1988 and QTTA chief Khalil Al-Mohannadi said he wanted to make sure the world's best would be playing at the Qatar event.

"When I heard about the coronavirus in China, our worry was that the Chinese national team would not be able to play at the Qatar Open," he said. "For me it is not the Qatar Open and not the World Championships without China." — Reuters

China, Hong Kong to miss Asian team event due to coronavirus

MUMBAI: China and Hong Kong have had to withdraw from this week's Badminton Asia Team Championships in Manila due to the coronavirus outbreak, organisers said yesterday. More than 42,000 people have been infected by the flu-like virus in mainland China, with authorities confirming more than 1,000 deaths.

The Philippines has temporarily banned all travellers from China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan due to the outbreak, leaving organisers scrambling to try to arrange visas for players and officials for the Feb. 11-16 event.

"However, the decision to impose the 14 days quarantine period for all travellers coming from China, Hong Kong and Macau has to be respected in view of the health and safety of the Philippines government for its people," Badminton Asia said in a statement.

"It is in this respect that the above event will not see the teams from China and Hong Kong competing. The India's Women Team withdrawal was owing to concerns shown by the parents and players."

India will, however, send its men's team after they agreed to travel to Manila.

The tournament will lose much of its sheen with the withdrawal of China, which has been the dominant force in badminton for decades. The coronavirus epidemic has had a major impact on the sports calendar in Asia. The outbreak has seen Olympic qualifying tournaments for boxing, basketball and women's soccer postponed, rescheduled or moved from China, while badminton, motor sports, hockey and tennis events have also been affected. The world indoor athletics championships, which were due to be held in Nanjing from March 15-18, was arguably the biggest event to be affected by the outbreak. — Reuters

Flash Memory wins horse racing cup

KUWAIT: The Horse "Flash Memory" of Al-Mutairi stable and ridden by Jockey Faisal Al-Farmawi won the cup of Late Sheikh Abdallah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah during the sixth run of the mixed horses for 2,600 meters, within the competitions of the 15th Gathering of Horse Racing at the Hunting and Equestrian Club in 2 minutes 54 seconds. Sheikh Abdallah Khalid Fahad Al-Ahmad, Secretary General and Head of the Higher Committee for horse racing Sheikh Sabah Fahad Al-Nasser handed the winner's cup to Al-Mutairi stable.

In the fifth run of mixed horses for

1200 meters, the horse "Ezzallah" of Al-Mulla stable and ridden by Jockey Esso won the cup in 1.15.2 minutes. While the horse "Daham" of Al-Mutairi, ridden by Jockey Abdallah Al-Zarhan won the Arab Horse Center Cup for the original Arab horses of local production won the race in 2.4.2 minutes in the fourth run for 1,400 meters.

In the third run for the cup presented by the Arab Horse Center for Mixed Arab-Egyptian horses for 1,600 meters, the horse "Sari Al-Adiyat", won the Al-Thafiri stable, ridden by Jockey Faisal Al-Farmawi won first place in 2.7.1 minutes.

In the first run for beginners for 1,600 meters, the horse "Regent" for Al-Suroor Club, ridden by Jockey Raafat, won first place in 1.43.3 minutes, while the horse "Al-Ghali Nasser" by "Nayef Al-Dabous Sons", ridden by Jockey Zarati won first place of the second run for second class horse for 1,400 meters.



Kohli seethes as India let Black Caps sweep ODI series

First time India have been whitewashed in a bilateral ODI series since 1989

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: Indian captain Virat Kohli criticised his team's ability to cope under pressure after they suffered a rare series whitewash yesterday against New Zealand following a five-wicket hammering in the third one-day international at Mount Maunganui.

A KL Rahul century was not enough of a platform for the tourists, who made 296 for seven after being put in to bat. New Zealand, stung by a 5-0 shutout in the recent Twenty20 series, reached the target with 17 balls to spare.

A frustrated Kohli, who admonished his players for poor fielding several times during the match, said it was a fair result. "We didn't deserve to be on the winning side at all in the series," he said.

"We haven't played so badly, but if you don't grab chances at this level then teams are going to hurt you. We didn't show enough composure under pressure. New Zealand did." It was the first time India have been whitewashed in a bilateral ODI series of three or more matches since 1989 and the only time it has ever happened against New Zealand.

Openers Henry Nicholls and Martin Guptill gave the

Black Caps a flying start with 80 and 66 respectively. Colin de Grandhomme then steadied a mid-innings wobble, bludgeoning 58 off 28 balls to see the hosts finish on 300 for five.

Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal was the pick of India's bowlers, taking three for 47.

Earlier, Rahul boosted India's hopes with his fourth ODI century, bringing up the landmark off 104 balls, before departing on 112.

He was supported by a gritty 62 from Shreyas Iyer but most of India's batters failed to live up to Kohli's pre-match exhortation to play positively and post a big total.

Prithvi Shaw and Manish Pandey both reached the 40s but no other batters made double figures, with Kohli out for nine.

Still, Rahul looked set to steer India to a huge total before Black Caps paceman Hamish Bennett slowed the scoring with a late flurry of wickets.

Rahul had a life on 64 when Mitchell Santner's throw at the stumps went wide and the batsman made the most of it to score his fourth ODI century, bring-



MOUNT MAUNGANUI: New Zealand's players celebrate with the trophy after victory during the third one-day international cricket match between New Zealand and India at the Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui yesterday. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard in the third and final one-day international between New Zealand and India in Mount Maunganui yesterday:

India	New Zealand
P. Shaw run out (de Grandhomme/Latham) 40	M. Guptill b Chahal 66
M. Agarwal b Jamieson 1	H. Nicholls c Rahul b Thakur 80
V. Kohli c Jamieson b Bennett 9	K. Williamson c Agawal B Chahal 22
S. Iyer c de Grandhomme b Neesham 62	R. Taylor c Kohli b Jadeja 12
KL Rahul c Jamieson b Bennett 112	T. Latham not out 32
M. Pandey c Santner b Bennett 42	J. Neesham c Kohli b Chahal 19
S. Thakur c de Grandhomme b Bennett 7	C. de Grandhomme not out 58
R. Jadeja not out 8	Extras (bl, lb2, w6, nb2) 11
N. Saini not out 8	Total (5 wickets, 47.1 overs) 300
Extras (bl, w6) 7	Fall of wickets: 1-106 (Guptill), 2-159 (Williamson), 3-186 (Taylor), 4-189 (Nicholls), 5-220 (Neesham)
Total (7 wickets, 50 overs) 296	Bowling: Bumrah 10-0-50-0, Saini 8-0-68-0 (w2, nb2), Chahal 10-1-47-3, Thakur 9.1-0-87-1 (w4), Jadeja 10-0-45-1.
Fall of wickets: 1-8 (Agarwal), 2-32 (Kohli), 3-62 (Shaw), 4-162 (Iyer), 5-269 (Rahul), 6-269 (Pandey), 7-280 (Thakur)	Result: New Zealand win by five wickets
Bowling: Southee 9-0-59-0 (w3), Jamieson 10-0-53-1 (w1), Bennett 10-1-64-4 (w1), de Grandhomme 3-0-10-0, Neesham 8-0-50-1, Santner 10-0-59-0 (w1).	Series: New Zealand win the series 3-0
	Man of the match: Henry Nicholls (NZL)
	Man of the series: Ross Taylor (NZL)

Steyn sets sights on World Cup

EAST LONDON: Dale Steyn is determined to be part of South Africa's squad for the T20 World Cup in Australia in October and November after switching his focus from Test cricket to the shortest form of the game.

South Africa's all-time leading Test wicket-taker will be 37 by the time the global showpiece starts and has not played international cricket since last March. But he said yesterday he was looking forward to his comeback in the first Twenty20 international against England at Buffalo Park today. "I love playing cricket," he said. "I wake up every day and I can't see myself doing anything else right now." Steyn said he had discussed some options for life after cricket but that was something for the future.

"As long as that drive is still there to play at the highest level, to get batters out, fox them and outsmart them and that kind of stuff, if I can do that I'm going to continue to do that."

Steyn was selected for the 2019 Cricket World Cup in England and Wales but didn't play a game before returning home with a shoulder injury. He announced his retirement from Test matches in August and said he would devote the rest of his career to limited overs cricket.

But he didn't play in the three-match one-day series against England which ended on Sunday and he indicated yesterday that his focus had narrowed to the 20-overs format. Steyn said that he planned to play in T20 leagues in Pakistan and India in the coming months. "After that it will be the Proteas and I will give it everything I've got until the World Cup." He said his decision to quit Tests, after taking a South African record 439 wickets in 93 matches, was because of the workload.

"If you're playing Test cricket you could bowl 20 overs in a day. I could play about five T20s in that space." He said that in Test cricket he had prided himself on being able to bowl at high pace throughout a long day. The requirements for T20 cricket were different, "but guys need to know that it's still there and that you can bowl a 90 miles an hour bouncer or yorker." — AFP



DURBAN: File photo taken on February 16, 2019 South Africa's Dale Steyn is about to bowl on day 4 of the first Test match between South Africa and Sri Lanka in Durban. Dale Steyn is determined to be part of South Africa's squad for the T20 World Cup in Australia in October and November after switching his focus from Test cricket to the shortest form of the game. — AFP

England need to manage Archer workload: Coach

LONDON: England coach Chris Silverwood said he may look to limit the number of overs Jofra Archer bowls as he looks for ways of keeping his pace battery fit and fresh. Archer, who is out of action with a low-grade stress fracture in his right elbow, bowled more overs than any of his England team mates in 2019 despite only making his international debut in May.

Test captain Joe Root has denied suggestions Archer has been overworked but Silverwood said England may need to consider using the Barbadian-born quick in short bursts. "Things like (bowling 40 overs in an innings) we have to look at," Silverwood told reporters. "But sometimes, when needs must, you've got to do it."

"We managed Mark Wood through both the Test matches he's played here (in South Africa) and he's bowled in short, sharp spells. Would we look to do that now with Jof? Yes, we probably would." Discussing plans for Archer and Wood, Silverwood added: "Maybe they don't have to play every game." — Reuters

Warner awarded top Australia honour

SYDNEY: David Warner's bid to redeem himself after a damaging ball-tampering scandal has taken another step forward with the opening batsman winning Australia's highest cricketing honour.

The divisive 33-year-old has been awarded the Allan Border Medal for the third time, pipping by one vote Steve Smith, who was also involved in the attempt to alter the ball using sandpaper during a South Africa Test in 2018.

Pat Cummins, the ICC Test Player of the Year, came third in an award voted on by fellow players, the media and umpires. "When it is that close, you really don't know so it's a big surprise to be honest," an emotional Warner said at the ceremony late Monday.

"I had no doubt that I had the capabilities of coming back and being here again. "It was a lot of hard work and commitment to put my hand back up for selection, and to go away and do what I know best which is to try and score as

many runs as I can in any competition I'm playing in," added Warner, who also won the award in 2016 and 2017.

Warner and Smith were both slapped with one-year bans for their roles in the ball-tampering scandal, while Cameron Bancroft was given nine months. They were welcomed back into the Australian fold when their suspensions expired in March last year.

Smith was the undoubted star of their retention of the Ashes in England last year, a series where Warner failed to fire, scoring just 95 runs in 10 innings. But the opener was Australia's best batsman at the one-day World Cup, with 647 runs at an average of 71.88, and excelled in Twenty20 series against Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

He then took apart Pakistan's young bowling attack in the two-Test series that followed, including a career-high 335 not out in Adelaide. Warner joins a select club of multiple winners of the Border Medal, including Ricky Ponting (2004, 2006, 2007) and Michael Clarke (2005, 2012, 2013), who also shared the gong in 2009.

Shane Watson (2010, 2011) and Smith (2015, 2018) have won it twice. Allrounder Ellyse Perry joined Warner as a three-times winner by claiming her third Belinda Clark Award as the outstanding women's player. — AFP

Foakes, Jennings earn England calls for Sri Lanka tour

LONDON: Ben Foakes and Keaton Jennings are back in England's Test squad for the first time in 12 months after being picked for the tour of Sri Lanka. Lancashire opener Jennings and Surrey wicketkeeper-batsman Foakes were discarded after the West Indies tour 12 months ago.

But both of Jennings' Test hundreds in his 17 appearances have come on the subcontinent and Foakes was player of the series in England's 3-0 whitewash of Sri Lanka in November 2018. Foakes won the first of his five Test caps in Galle in November 2018 where he scored a fine hundred.

England's record wicket-taker James Anderson remains absent as he recovers from a cracked rib sustained during the recent tour of South Africa. Despite his Test struggles since last year's World Cup, Jos Buttler is one of England's most naturally gifted players and he has been given another chance by the selection panel.

However, Buttler will have to compete with Foakes for a place in the starting line-up in the two-Test series. Moeen Ali was England's joint-leading wicket-taker on their last visit to Sri Lanka but his decision to continue his indefinite break from Test cricket means Jack Leach, Dom Bess and Matt Parkinson will be the frontline spinners.

Five players sanctioned after under-19 WCup brawl

DUBAI: Five players have been sanctioned for brawling in the immediate aftermath of Bangladesh's victory over India in the under-19 World Cup final in South Africa at the weekend, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Monday.

Bangladesh claimed the title for the first time with victory by three wickets over India at Potchefstroom on Sunday but an ugly brawl broke out after Rakibul Hasan hit the winning runs and his team mates ran on to the field to celebrate.

Leach, who matched Moeen's 18 wickets in Sri Lanka 16 months ago, has recovered from an illness that meant he played no part in England's recent 3-1 series victory over South Africa.

Yorkshire batsman Jonny Bairstow misses the trip to take a break having been part of the South Africa tour. Joe Denly has been retained despite a modest series in South Africa, where his 210 runs at an average of 30 matches his career average after 14 Tests.

"The selection panel has supported continuity after a successful series victory in South Africa. The South Africa tour marked the emergence of a very exciting group of young players, creating a nice balance with an experienced core of senior players," national selector Ed Smith said.

"That squad is mostly retained, with some tweaks to the squad relevant to injury, rest and the challenges of playing in sub-continent conditions. "Somerset spinner Jack Leach has recovered from his illness he picked up in South Africa and is now healthy and keen to resume his Test career."

"Jonny Bairstow has been in England squads across the three formats without a significant break. This two-Test tour presents a good opportunity for Jonny to be rested. "Moeen Ali is still unavailable for Test selection. The selectors are in consistent dialogue with Moeen and he remains a valued player in England cricket."

England squad for the Test series against Sri Lanka starting on March 19:

Joe Root (capt), Dominic Bess, Stuart Broad, Jos Buttler, Zak Crawley, Sam Curran, Joe Denly, Ben Foakes, Keaton Jennings, Jack Leach, Matthew Parkinson, Ollie Pope, Dominic Sibley, Ben Stokes, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood. — AFP

Towhid Hridoy, Shamim Hossain and Rakibul Hasan of Bangladesh and Indians Akash Singh and Ravi Bishnoi were all charged with breaches of the ICC code of conduct and handed international suspensions of between four and 10 matches.

"The match was hard fought ... but the elation and disappointment experienced by some players after the game spilled over into unedifying scenes that have no place in our sport," said the ICC's Geoff Allardice.

"Respect is at the very heart of the spirit of cricket, and players are expected to show self-discipline, congratulate the opposition on their successes and enjoy the success of their own team."

Indian spinner Bishnoi, who was the highest wicket-taker in the tournament with 17, was handed a further sanction of two demerit points for giving Bangladesh batsman Avishek Das a send-off during the rain-disrupted final. — Reuters

Sports

FIFA to provide safety-net for unpaid soccer players

Top FIFA, UEFA officials head to crisis-hit Greece

ZURICH: A fund has been set up to help footballers who are left without wages when their clubs fall into financial difficulties or go out of business, global soccer body FIFA said yesterday. The world players' union FIFPRO estimates that around 50 clubs in 20 countries — mainly in Eastern Europe and Asia — have shut in the last five years, leaving hundreds of players without pay.

In many cases, FIFPRO says, the clubs have been quickly re-established with only a slight tweak to the name. FIFA said in a statement yesterday that it had reached an agreement with FIFPRO to set aside \$16 million for the fund up to 2022.

"While these grants will not cover the full amount of salaries owed to players, this fund will provide an important safety net," it said. FIFPRO president Philippe Piat said players were "plunged into uncertainty and hardship" when their clubs closed down.

"Many of these clubs have shut to avoid paying outstanding wages, immediately re-forming as so-called new clubs," he said in the statement, describing the practice as unscrupulous.

Roy Vermeer, the head of FIFPRO's legal department, told Reuters that the players — often from Africa or South America — struggled to find new clubs and had to make their own way back to their own country.

"The players are left with nothing and they then have to go out and find a new club, which is not easy because in these cases they are usually not top level players, they are always going from contract to contract," he said.

"In some cases, they will have been to three clubs in a row where they haven't been paid," Vermeer said it was relatively easy for a club to declare itself bankrupt, start afresh in an amateur league and quickly work its

way back up to the top flight.

"You have cases where the club goes to an amateur league for one season, they win it comfortably, they are promoted to the second division the next year, and then first league again," he said.

FIFA said that, since last year, it has clamped down on the practice of new clubs being formed "with the prime aim of avoiding players their overdue salaries." "We are also here to reach out to those in need, especially within the football community, and that starts with the players, who are the key figures in our game," said FIFA president Gianni Infantino.

Meanwhile, senior officials from FIFA and UEFA are scheduled to visit Athens on February 25 to help resolve a crisis affecting Greek football, the government said yesterday.

UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin and FIFA vice president Greg Clarke "are expected to contribute to the consolidation of the framework so that we can reshape Greek football," government spokesman Stelios Petsas said.

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis' government has been drawn into a dispute between two of the country's top clubs, PAOK Thessaloniki and Olympiakos Piraeus.

The Greek professional sports commission had previously recommended the relegation of current Super League champions PAOK over allegations of common ownership of fellow top-flight club Xanthi.

PAOK chief Ivan Savvidis was accused by Olympiakos of acquiring a stake in Xanthi through a family member, a claim which he denies.

The Thessaloniki club have called the accusations a "setup" engineered by arch-rivals and current league leaders Olympiakos.

deadline day last month from Chinese club Shanghai Shenhua. The British government called the novel coronavirus a "serious and imminent threat", and said anyone with the disease can now be forcibly quarantined if they are deemed a threat to public health as the number of cases in Britain doubled to eight.

The death toll from the coronavirus outbreak surged past 1,000 yesterday. Most cases overseas have involved people who had been in Wuhan, the quarantined central Chinese city where the virus emerged late last year, or people infected by others who had been at the epicentre.

United said Saturday in a statement that Ighalo had been left out of the Spain squad to avoid any potential problems related to the killer virus on re-entry to Britain. However, United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer told the club's website Ighalo will be in the squad for a



BUDAPEST: File photo shows FIFA President Gianni Infantino talks with the President of the Association of International Sports Press (AIPS) Giovanni Merlo during a public debate with AIPS members as part of the association's annual congress on February 3, 2020 in Budapest, Hungary. — AFP

In an effort to calm PAOK tempers, Mitsotakis' government amended a law which replaces relegation with points deduction as the punishment for multiple team ownership.

Under the amended law PAOK would be docked

five to 10 points rather than automatically relegated.

But the dispute is still rumbling on and Greek football authorities have yet to meet to discuss the issue, while any changes must be ratified by global body FIFA. — Agencies

Ighalo in Man United squad for Chelsea clash

LONDON: Odion Ighalo will be in the Manchester United squad for the Premier League clash with Chelsea next Monday despite missing a training camp in Spain due to fears he could be denied re-entry into Britain if restrictions against the outbreak of Coronavirus are tightened.

The 30-year-old Nigerian international striker joined United on loan until the end of the season on

Ronaldo, Zlatan set for Italian Cup clash

MILAN: Cristiano Ronaldo and Zlatan Ibrahimovic are set to go head-to-head in tomorrow's Italian Cup semi-final, first leg between Juventus and AC Milan at the San Siro. Both Ronaldo and Ibrahimovic scored at the weekend in defeats as Juventus fell 2-1 at Hellas Verona, while AC Milan threw away a two-goal lead in a 4-2 defeat by city rivals Inter. "It wasn't the result we wanted," said the 35-year-old Ronaldo despite becoming the first Juventus player to score in 10 successive league games, just one game short of the Serie A record.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner has scored 23 goals in all competitions this season. Ibrahimovic, 38, has scored three goals since returning to Milan last month. The Swede headed in the second goal on Sunday after setting up the first, but Inter hit back with four second-half strikes.

"I showed that I can still make a difference, even at 38," he said. But Inter

striker Romelu Lukaku will be looking to upstage the two other former Manchester United players against Napoli in the other last-four first leg today. Gennaro Gattuso's Napoli, despite their current slump, ousted holders Lazio in the quarter-finals.

"There's a new king in town," a jubilant Lukaku wrote on Twitter after scoring the fourth goal for Inter in Sunday's derby. "We run this town."

The Belgian was replying to Ibrahimovic's pre-derby post saying that "lions don't compare themselves to humans". Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri has reason to be worried by his side's away form, with the defending Serie A champions having lost their last two games on the road. "I hope that someone will help me, it's something we have to resolve," Sarri said after the loss to Verona.

"Right now we have a difference in performance between home and away." Juventus are bidding to reclaim the trophy which they held for four seasons until losing to eventual runners-up Atlanta in the quarters last year.

Antonio Conte's Inter are the only one of the four semi-finalists to win in Serie A at the weekend, with Napoli crashing to a 3-2 defeat by lowly Lecce. Inter's victory lifted them ahead of Juventus on goal difference



VERONA: File photo shows Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (C) heads the ball during the Italian Serie A football match Hellas Verona vs Juventus on February 8, 2020, at the Marcantonio Bentegodi Stadium in Verona. — AFP

at the top of the table, as they target their first Scudetto since 2010. The

second-leg ties will take place on March 4 and 5. — AFP

Klinsmann quits as Hertha Berlin coach

BERLIN: Jurgen Klinsmann shocked Bundesliga club Hertha Berlin yesterday by stepping down as coach just 10 weeks after taking the reins at the ambitious capital club. The 1990 World Cup winner announced his surprise decision in a post on his Facebook page, three days after Hertha slumped to a 3-1 home defeat to fellow strugglers Mainz which left them just six points above the drop zone.

"After long consideration, I have decided to give up my position as head coach and return to my original, long-term role on the club board," wrote the 55-year-old. "I am convinced that Hertha will stay up," he added in a message addressed to the club's fans, before suggesting that he felt a lack of trust from the club hierarchy. "In a relegation fight, unity, solidarity and concentration on the essentials are the most important things. If they are not guaranteed, I can't reach my potential and live up to my responsibility as coach."

Klinsmann's decision is a hammer blow to Hertha, who had looked to him to guide them away from rele-

gation and towards the Champions League places. "We were very surprised by what happened this morning. There were no previous indications of this decision," said sporting director Michael Preetz.

The club confirmed that Klinsmann's assistant Alexander Nouri would take over as interim coach with immediate effect. Former Germany boss Klinsmann was brought in as a short-term solution in November after a disastrous start to the season under coaching novice Ante Covic.

Since taking over, he has become the face of Hertha's bold new ambitions to establish themselves among the Bundesliga elite, following a lucrative new deal with investor Lars Windhorst last summer.

Shortly after his arrival, Klinsmann said that Berlin deserved "a super club" and later said Hertha should target Champions League football within three years. According to German daily Bild, Klinsmann may have resigned due to a dispute with the club over his future in the Hertha dugout. The newspaper claimed that Klinsmann was frustrated by the club's reluctance to guarantee his job as coach beyond the summer. The former Bayern Munich, Inter Milan and Tottenham star will retain his place on the club board, a position he held before taking over from Covic last November.

As Germany head coach, Klinsmann presided over the so-called "summer fairytale" of 2006, leading the



Jurgen Klinsmann

national team to the World Cup semi-finals on home soil. He later coached the US national men's team from 2011 to 2016, leading them to the World Cup finals in Brazil in 2014.

Hertha was only his second job in club football, following a similarly ill-fated spell at Bayern Munich in 2009. — AFP

Victory for Melbourne as virus-hit Champions League groups start

MELBOURNE: Melbourne Victory got off to a winning start as the virus-disrupted AFC Champions League East zone began with a curtailed schedule yesterday. Ola Toivonen's first-half penalty secured a 1-0 home win for Victory against Thai debutants Chiangrai United, while Ulsan Hyundai and FC Tokyo drew 1-1.

The Group E games between Beijing Guoan and FC Seoul, and Shanghai Shenhua against Perth Glory in Group F, have both been postponed until April because of travel restrictions aimed at halting the coronavirus.

A swathe of countries have barred arrivals from China to fight the outbreak, which has killed more than 1,000 people in China and infected more than 42,000 in 25 countries. Most Champions League games involving Chinese clubs have been put on hold for two months, extending the group stage and shunting the East zone's round of 16 back to June 16-24.

Also yesterday, Asia's second-tier AFC Cup postponed its East zone games until April, affecting teams from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau and Mongolia. Victory's 1-0 win was far from convincing against Thai champions Chiangrai, who had a man sent off late on as their tournament debut ended on a sour note.

But it was welcome for Carlos Salvachua's side, who have won just four of their 17 A-League fixtures this season to sit third from bottom on the 11-team domestic table. "They made us work for it," said Toivonen. "We controlled the first half but we were a little bit anxious in the second. But it's always important to get a good start in the group."

Victory have only once advanced beyond the group stages in seven previous campaigns — when they were eliminated in the round of 16 under then coach Kevin Muscat. After a slow opening period at AAMI Stadium in Melbourne, Victory began pressing and Toivonen's curling shot was well saved after 22 minutes.

The deadlock was broken three minutes later when Toivonen was pulled down off the ball in the box and the Swedish striker stepped up to convert the penalty. Despite the match being largely played in the Chiangrai half, few other chances were created against a stubborn opposition.

However, Chiangrai's night ended badly with Thirayu Banhan sent off in the dying minutes for a dangerous tackle. In the later kick-off in Ulsan, the hosts had FC Tokyo's Adailton to thank as he headed a late own goal to leave the scores all square at 1-1.

Ulsan striker Bjorn Johnsen smashed a volley against the bar early on, and had a fierce shot tipped over nine minutes into the second half. Diego Oliveira put FC Tokyo ahead with a neat finish on 64 minutes but with eight minutes to go, Adailton gifted Ulsan a point when he headed past his own goalkeeper from a hanging free-kick. — AFP

25 Qatar Police crowned Gulf Clubs volleyball champions



26 Kohli seethes as India let Black Caps sweep ODI series



27 Klinsmann quits as Hertha Berlin coach



Raptors' win streak reaches 15



TORONTO: Pascal Siakam #43 of the Toronto Raptors handles the ball during the game against the Minnesota Timberwolves at the Scotiabank Arena in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. —AFP

TORONTO: Pascal Siakam scored 34 points — 14 in the fourth quarter — and the Toronto Raptors extended their franchise-best winning streak to 15 games Monday night with a 137-126 victory over the visiting Minnesota Timberwolves. Kyle Lowry added 27 points and 11 assists while OG Anunoby added a career-best 25 points and matched his career best with 12 rebounds for the Raptors, who have won 16 straight home games against the Timberwolves. D'Angelo Russell, playing his first game for Minnesota after being acquired in a trade with the Golden State Warriors, scored 22 points. Karl-Anthony Towns had 23 points and 10 rebounds, while Jarrett Culver, Malik Beasley and Juancho Hernangomez each scored 15 as the Timberwolves shot 45.3 percent from the field. The Timberwolves, who added eight new players in three trades last week, had lost 13 in a row before defeating the Los Angeles Clippers on Saturday.

DENVER NUGGETS 127 - SAN ANTONIO SPURS 120

Jamal Murray scored 26 points, Paul Millsap had 22 points, and host Denver rallied from a 23-point, third-quarter deficit to beat San Antonio. Nikola Jokic had 19 points, 13 assists and eight rebounds, Monte Morris added 16 points off the bench, and Torrey Craig had 11 points and seven rebounds to help the Nuggets win their third straight and their eighth in 10 games. LaMarcus Aldridge led all scorers with 33 points, Derrick White scored 15, Dejounte Murray and Bryn Forbes scored 14 each, and Rudy Gay had 13 for the struggling Spurs. San Antonio has lost five straight and eight of 10.

LOS ANGELES LAKERS 125 - PHOENIX SUNS 100

Anthony Davis had 25 points and 10 rebounds and

Rajon Rondo scored a season-high 23, leading Los Angeles to a home win over Phoenix, which played without Deandre Ayton. LeBron James had 17 points, nine assists and eight rebounds, but he also committed a game-high eight turnovers. Dwight Howard contributed 14 points and 15 boards for the Lakers, who have won four of their last five contests. Mikal Bridges had 18 points and six rebounds for the Suns, who lost for the sixth time in seven games. Phoenix guard Devin Booker struggled, scoring 10 points on 2-for-11 shooting and missing all four of his 3-point attempts. Ayton, who averages 18.7 points and 12 rebounds per game, sat out the contest due to a sore left ankle.

MILWAUKEE BUCKS 123 - SACRAMENTO KINGS 111

Eric Bledsoe and Khris Middleton each scored 28 points as Milwaukee got off to a hot start to open the fourth quarter en route to a victory over visiting Sacramento despite not having Giannis Antetokounmpo. Brook Lopez added 20 points as Antetokounmpo missed the game for the birth of his son earlier Monday. The Bucks improved to 5-0 in games where they didn't have the reigning MVP available. Harrison Barnes scored 23 points and De'Aaron Fox added 17 points with 11 assists as the Kings' three-game winning streak ended. Sacramento also had a three-game road winning streak snapped.

UTAH JAZZ 123 - DALLAS MAVERICKS 119

Jordan Clarkson scored 25 points and dished out eight assists off the bench to lead Utah to a victory over host Dallas. Donovan Mitchell and Bojan Bogdanovic added 23 apiece for the Jazz. Rudy Gobert collected 17 points and 16 rebounds as Utah won its third straight

game overall and second consecutive road contest, shooting 59 percent from the field. Tim Hardaway Jr. scored a season-high 33 points and Kristaps Porzingis added 28 to lead the Mavericks, who played without Luka Doncic for their seventh straight game and could not keep up with a potent Jazz offense in his absence.

BROOKLYN NETS 106 - INDIANA PACERS 105

Spencer Dinwiddie scored 21 points and hit the go-ahead jumper with 5.2 seconds remaining as Brooklyn rallied in the final minutes and pulled out a victory over Indiana at Indianapolis. The Nets rallied from a four-point deficit in the final 84 seconds and claimed their sixth win in the past nine games. Joe Harris added 15 points and eight rebounds for Brooklyn, Taurean Prince contributed 14 points, and Jarrett Allen scored 13. Domantas Sabonis recorded his fourth career triple-double with 23 points, 11 assists and 10 rebounds, but it was not enough as the Pacers dropped their season-high sixth straight game. T.J. Warren had 19 points while Myles Turner contributed 15 for Indiana.

MIAMI HEAT 113 - GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS 101

Jae Crowder made three 3-pointers in a 16-0, second-quarter flurry that allowed Miami to build a big lead en route to a victory over Golden State in San Francisco. Jimmy Butler returned from a two-game absence to produce 21 points, tying Crowder for team-high scoring honors, as the Heat won for the first time in four outings on their six-game road trip. Damian Lee scored a career-high 26 points for the Warriors, who lost their third straight. Three-time NBA champion Andre Iguodala contributed two points and a plus-25 rating in 17 minutes for the Heat after injured Warriors star Stephen Curry took

the microphone and welcomed his former teammate back in a crowd-pleasing pregame ceremony.

ORLANDO MAGIC 135 - ATLANTA HAWKS 126

Aaron Gordon scored 26 points to lead four Orlando players with 20-plus points in a win over visiting Atlanta. The Magic snapped their three-game losing streak. Gordon shot 10-for-20 from the floor and added nine rebounds and four assists as the Magic beat the Hawks for the first time in three meetings this season. Orlando posted just its second victory in 10 games overall. Nikola Vucevic added 24 points, making 10 of 15 shots, and had nine rebounds and nine assists for the Magic. Atlanta got 29 points and nine assists from Trae Young. John Collins added 22 points and eight rebounds but his streak of seven consecutive double-doubles ended. Dewayne Dedmon had 14 points, nine rebounds and two blocks.

CHARLOTTE HORNETS 87 - DETROIT PISTONS 76

Miles Bridges had 18 points and seven rebounds, Malik Monk supplied 17 points off the bench and Charlotte snapped a five-game losing streak by pulling away from host Detroit. Devonte' Graham collected 14 points, seven rebounds and 11 assists as the Hornets completed a four-game sweep of the season series. Charlotte, which overcame 37.5 percent shooting, has defeated Detroit 10 consecutive times. Terry Rozier added 11 points and seven rebounds. Thon Maker had 12 points and 12 rebounds for the Pistons. Bruce Brown contributed 10 points, a career-high 12 rebounds and five assists, while Christian Wood added 10 points and eight rebounds and Markieff Morris chipped in 10 points off the bench. —Reuters

Lightning work OT for seventh straight win

COLUMBUS: Nikita Kucherov capped his two-goal night with a marker 31 seconds into overtime, and the Tampa Bay Lightning beat the host Columbus Blue Jackets 2-1 on Monday night for their seventh consecutive win. Knotted after a scoreless third period, the game was decided in the three-on-three session after Brayden Point stole the puck from Columbus defenseman Zach Werenski behind the Columbus net. Point then fed defenseman Victor Hedman in the slot, and the former Norris Trophy winner found Kucherov for the game-winner. Backup goalie Curtis McElhinney made 31 saves, Pat Maroon played in his 500th career game, and the Lightning improved to 19-2-1 in their past 22 contests. Team captain Steven Stamkos (lower-body injury) was scratched, and Mathieu Joseph was recalled from Syracuse of the AHL. Oliver Bjorkstrand had a goal and Elvis Merzlikins made his fifth consecutive start and

recorded 28 saves for the Blue Jackets, who lost for the third time in their past 12 contests (9-1-2).

ISLANDERS 5, CAPITALS 3

Anthony Beauvillier scored two goals while Josh Bailey and Brock Nelson each added three assists as New York scored early and often before hanging on for a win in Washington. Capitals star Alex Ovechkin was held without a goal for the second straight game, leaving him at 698 for his career. New York controlled this one quickly, starting when Beauvillier scored the game's first two goals en route to a 3-1 New York lead after the first period. The Islanders then scored in the first minute of the second period and were in command.

CANUCKS 6, PREDATORS 2

Elias Pettersson and J.T. Miller each had a goal and an assist, and Jacob Markstrom finished with 36 saves as Pacific Division-leading Vancouver jumped out to an early four-goal lead and cruised to a victory over visiting Nashville. Quinn Hughes finished with three assists for Vancouver to become the second rookie defenseman in NHL history to record four three-assist games in a season. Ray Bourque did it for the Boston Bruins in 1979-80.

Zack MacEwen, Brandon Sutter, Jordie Benn and Jake Virtanen also scored goals, and Adam Gaudette and Troy Stecher each added two assists for the Canucks, who snapped a four-game losing streak while winning for the 10th time in their past 11 home games. Craig Smith and Mikael Granlund scored for Nashville.

COYOTES 3, CANADIENS 2

Defenseman Jakob Chychrun scored the go-ahead goal with one minute left in regulation, and Arizona rallied from an early two-goal deficit to snap a six-game road slide with a victory at Montreal. Derek Stepan had a goal with an assist, and Taylor Hall also scored for the Coyotes, who found themselves in a 2-0 hole less than two minutes into the game. Antti Raanta made 26 saves for Arizona, which won for just the third time in 13 games (3-7-3). Jake Evans and Brendan Gallagher had goals, and Carey Price stopped 31 shots for the Canadiens, who were looking for a fourth consecutive victory.

FLYERS 4, PANTHERS 1

James van Riemsdyk scored a goal and added an assist to lift host Philadelphia past Florida. The Flyers improved to 19-5-4 at home. Ivan Provorov, Travis

Sanheim and Claude Giroux each had one goal for the Flyers, who posted their second win in a row and their fourth in five games. Philadelphia goaltender Carter Hart made 30 saves in his first start since Jan. 13 against the Bruins. MacKenzie Weegar scored the lone goal for the Panthers, who dropped to 1-4-1 in their six games since the All-Star break. Florida goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 30 shots in his 500th career game.

FLAMES 6, SHARKS 2

Milan Lucic had a goal and two assists as Calgary recorded a road victory over San Jose. The result puts the Flames back into a playoff position, as Calgary now holds the top Western Conference wild-card slot. The Sharks' two-game winning streak ended. Mark Jankowski, Zac Rinaldo and Mikael Backlund each had a goal and an assist for the Flames. Tobias Rieder and Matthew Tkachuk also scored, and Noah Hanifin collected two assists. San Jose entered the night with the league's best penalty-kill percentage, but the Sharks allowed power-play goals to Lucic, Tkachuk and Backlund. Erik Karlsson factored into both San Jose goals, scoring in the first period, then assisting on Brent Burns' power-play goal in the second frame. — Reuters