



**5** Kuwait's main bazaar is adorned with murals



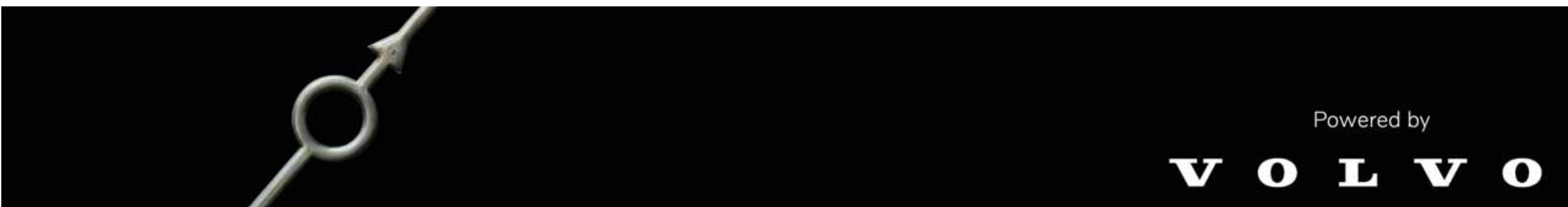
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**25** Uzbekistan's 44-year-old gymnast heads for 'last' Olympics in Tokyo



# 2 MPs threaten to grill defense minister over Caracal choppers

## Prime minister updates his financial disclosure statement

### Zain Group 2019 revenues soar to \$5.5bn, profit up to \$715m

#### Dividend policy of 33 fils per share for 3 years

KUWAIT: Zain Group announced its consolidated financial results for the full-year 2019, and fourth quarter ended Dec 31, 2019. Zain served 49.5 million customers, reflecting a 1 percent increase year-on-year (Y-o-Y). For the full-year 2019, Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 1.66 billion (\$5.5 billion), an impressive 26 percent Y-o-Y growth, while consolidated EBITDA for the period rose by 40 percent Y-o-Y to reach KD 728 million (\$2.4 billion), reflecting a healthy EBITDA margin of 44 percent. Consolidated net income reached KD 217 million (\$715 million), up 10 percent and reflecting earnings per share of 50 fils (\$0.17).

The Board of Directors of Zain Group recommended a cash dividend of 33 fils per share for 2019, and also as a first by a corporate entity in Kuwait, made another recommendation to implement a minimum cash dividend policy of 33 fils for the forthcoming two years, both subject to the Annual General Assembly and statutory approvals.

Zain Vice-Chairman and Group



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi

CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi commented, "Our Group financial performance across all operations, especially the robust profit growth in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Sudan operations, and sound performance by our highly profitable Kuwait operation, tops off an incredible operational year and gives us enormous confidence going into 2020 and beyond."

Meanwhile, in a regional first, Zain Group, the leading mobile

telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces that its flagship operation in Kuwait has completed the sale and leaseback of the passive physical infrastructure of its 1,620 mobile tower portfolio for \$130 million (KD 40 million) to IHS Holding Limited (IHS). The transaction is the first sale and leaseback of telecom towers in the Middle East region by a licensed mobile operator. (See Pages 11 & 13)

### Zain concludes sale and leaseback of its telecom towers in Kuwait to IHS

## Erdogan threatens Syria, slams Russia over Idlib massacre

ISTANBUL: Turkey's president accused Russia of committing "massacres" in its support of the Syrian government yesterday, escalating a war of words as more Turkish reinforcements arrived on the ground. Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened to strike Syrian regime forces "everywhere" if its soldiers come under renewed attack, but Russia hit back and accused the Turks of failing to "neutralize terrorists" in the north-western province of Idlib.

Turkey has shored up its positions in recent days in Idlib - the last rebel bastion in Syria - with hundreds of vehicles carrying artillery and soldiers. And a new convoy of Turkish armored vehicles arrived yesterday in the town of Binnish, northeast of Idlib city, in a new deployment, an AFP correspondent said. Turkish officials say they have lost 14 soldiers in the past nine days and claim to have killed scores of Syrian government troops as they try to push back forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad.

Syrian forces backed by Russian air strikes have pressed ahead with an offensive to retake Idlib from rebel groups that began in December, despite a 2018 deal agreed between Turkey and Russia in Sochi. The offensive - which has retaken numerous towns and a crucial motorway - has killed hundreds of civilians and sent hundreds of thousands fleeing for safety in harsh winter conditions.

Erdogan's direct criticism of Russia is a rare move since 2015 when Turkey shot down Moscow's fighter jet that had strayed into its airspace. The tensions over Idlib



ANKARA: President of Turkey and leader of the Justice and Development (AK) Party Recep Tayyip Erdogan speaks at the party's group meeting at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey yesterday. — AFP

highlight the complexity of ties between the two countries, whose rivalry stretches back into their imperial pasts and has been characterized by centuries of mistrust. "The regime, backed by Russian forces and Iran-backed militants, are continuously attacking civilians, committing massacres and shedding blood," Erdogan told a meeting of his ruling party in parliament.

He said Turkey would do "whatever necessary" to push Syrian forces back behind the 12 observation posts it set up in Idlib under the Sochi deal. "I hereby declare that we will strike regime forces everywhere from now on regardless of the Sochi deal if any tiny bit of harm comes to our soldiers at observation posts or elsewhere," he added.

In return, Russia accused Turkey of failing to honor the 2018 deal, with Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying the Turkish side "had taken upon itself an obligation to neutralize terrorist groups" in Idlib. But "all these

Continued on Page 24

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Two opposition lawmakers said yesterday they will file to grill the defense minister if Kuwait takes delivery of a number of Caracal military helicopters without making sure they have been technically tested. MP Adel Al-Damkhi said the ministry of defense promised the National Assembly's budget committee to issue a statement to clarify the ministry's position on the controversial \$1.2 billion deal, which is already under investigation by the Anti-Corruption Authority and the Audit Bureau.

In Aug 2016, the defense ministry signed a deal with Airbus helicopters to purchase 30 Caracal military helicopters, 24 for the air force and the remaining six for the National Guard. In Aug 2018, former prime minister HH Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah ordered that the deal be probed by the Anti-Corruption Authority and the Audit Bureau after a Lebanese middleman demanded commissions worth €71 million for the deal from the manufacturer. The deal came to the limelight again when the first two choppers for delivery to Kuwait encountered some technical problems and had to be re-examined.



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah submits his updated financial disclosure statement during a visit to the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) headquarters yesterday. — KUNA

Damkhi said yesterday that while discussing the defense ministry budget at the assembly budgets committee, they came across a letter from a senior defense ministry commander asking the concerned department to take delivery of six ready Caracal helicopters from

Continued on Page 24

## At least 4 workers killed in Mutlaa earth collapse

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: At least four workers were killed and three others were injured in an earth collapse at the Mutlaa City project yesterday. Firefighters rushed to the scene after receiving an emergency call reporting that 10 workers were trapped in a deep sinkhole that opened up due to the sand collapse. Firemen managed to rescue six people from the hole, but three of them were pronounced dead at the scene. Another worker was later pulled out dead.

HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah late yesterday sent condolences to the families of the deceased and wished a speedy recovery for the injured. Rescue operations were still ongoing at press time to rescue the three remaining workers. Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Rana Al-Fares visited the site to oversee rescue operations. She gave instructions to form an investigation committee to probe the circumstances behind the incident, and hold accountable those found responsible for any neglect.



KUWAIT: Rescue workers are seen at the site of an earth collapse in Mutlaa yesterday. (Inset) Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Rana Al-Fares visits the site of the collapse. — KUNA photos

## UN identifies 112 firms linked to Israel settlements

GENEVA: The UN has released a list of 112 companies with activities in Israeli settlements, which are considered illegal under international law, including Airbnb, Expedia and TripAdvisor. The move was cheered by the Palestinians but slammed as "shameful" by Israel, where officials fear the list could be used to boycott firms with ties to the settlements. The UN report comes in response to a 2016 UN Human Rights Council resolution calling for a "database for all businesses engaged in specific activities related to Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory".

The UN rights office said that listing companies in the database was "not, and does not purport to be, a judicial or quasi-judicial process". Among the businesses on the list are a range of large international companies, including Airbnb, Alstom, Booking.com and Motorola Solutions. "I am conscious this issue has been, and will continue to be, highly contentious," UN

rights chief Michelle Bachelet said. But she added that the findings had been subject to an "extensive and meticulous review process" and the report "reflects the serious consideration that has been given to this unprecedented and highly complex mandate".

Israel, which routinely accuses the UN and especially the Human Rights Council of bias against it was quick to slam yesterday's publication. "It is a shameful surrender to pressure from countries and organizations who want to harm Israel," Foreign Minister Israel Katz said in a statement. His Palestinian counterpart Riyad Al-Malki meanwhile described the publication as "a victory for international law and diplomatic efforts."

The database was scheduled to be released three years ago, but has repeatedly been delayed. The rights office initially evaluated more than 300 companies. But the final report published yesterday cited 112 business entities that the office had "reasonable grounds to conclude have been involved in one or more of the specific activities referenced" in the 2016 resolution. It said 94 of the listed companies had their headquarters in Israel, while 18 others were spread across six other countries. The UN agency said compiling the database had been a "complex process" involving "widespread discussions" with states, think tanks, academics and the companies themselves.

Continued on Page 24



## Local

# Kuwait's participation in Munich conference depicts keenness on global security: Envoy

## Crown Prince meets Prime Minister at Bayan Palace

**KUWAIT/BERLIN:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, a Kuwaiti envoy said that His Highness the Prime Minister's participation in the upcoming Munich Security Conference is part of bids by the State of Kuwait to attain its outlook on resolving conflicts. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's partaking in one of the most significant and broadest security conferences at the global level comes as part of the State of Kuwait's attempts to realize its vision on means for resolving strife and alleviating tension, particularly in the Arab and Arabian Gulf regions, said the State of Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Najib Al-Badr. The ambassador was alluding to the Munich Security Conference, scheduled on February 14-16. It would group 135 heads of state, governments, ministers of foreign and defense affairs, prominent personalities representing international and civil society organizations.

Ambassador Badr added that His Highness the Prime Minister would hold, during the conference, bilateral meetings with presidents, prime ministers and senior officials to discuss challenges facing global security, particularly concerning the Middle East, in addition to diverse defense and economic policies. This conference has become an important and basic international platform for discussing diverse international issues at the political, security

and military levels, namely crises and strifes throughout the globe, Ambassador Badr said. This year's session will address plenty of regional and international issues, in light of military, political strife and security challenges in the Middle East, in addition to topics concerning immigration and refugees in Europe, he said. The convention will be an opportunity for Kuwait to present its vision on means for tackling strife and tapering off tension particularly with respect of the Arab region affairs.

Kuwait will draw conferees' attention to the necessity for "listening to the voice of reason" and political will to solve and settle conflicts in the Middle East and other regions, he said, noting that it coincides with political developments related to the Palestinian cause and the Berlin process on the political solution for the strife in Libya. The State of Kuwait was keen in the past on active participation in this conference sessions; always boosting international diplomatic efforts to find solutions to the crises and strife in the world and the region, the Kuwaiti Ambassador added. Inviting the State of Kuwait to participate with such a high ranking level depicts the world appreciation and praise for its effective stances and foreign policy based on moderation, balance and wisdom toward various political, humanitarian and security issues.

The State of Kuwait's policy was demonstrated with its distinguished performance during its (expired) membership as member of the United Nations Security Council, recently. At the forthcoming conven-



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

tion in Munich, His Highness the prime minister will shed light on the State of Kuwait's stances toward international challenges and affairs. He will also affirm necessity of unifying international efforts to tackle current crises. Kuwait has taken part regularly in the past five sessions of this conference, expressing its stances toward international developments. At the regional level, it has played a "wise mediation role to

resolve disputes." The Kuwaiti envoy cautioned that threats against stability in the region would lead to a regional-global crisis, repercussions of which could not be assessed, thus Kuwait advocated dialogue and diplomacy as sole avenues for resolving disputes in the region. The diplomatic approach at these levels is particularly advocated by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. —KUNA

## Kuwait's FM meets UN resident representatives

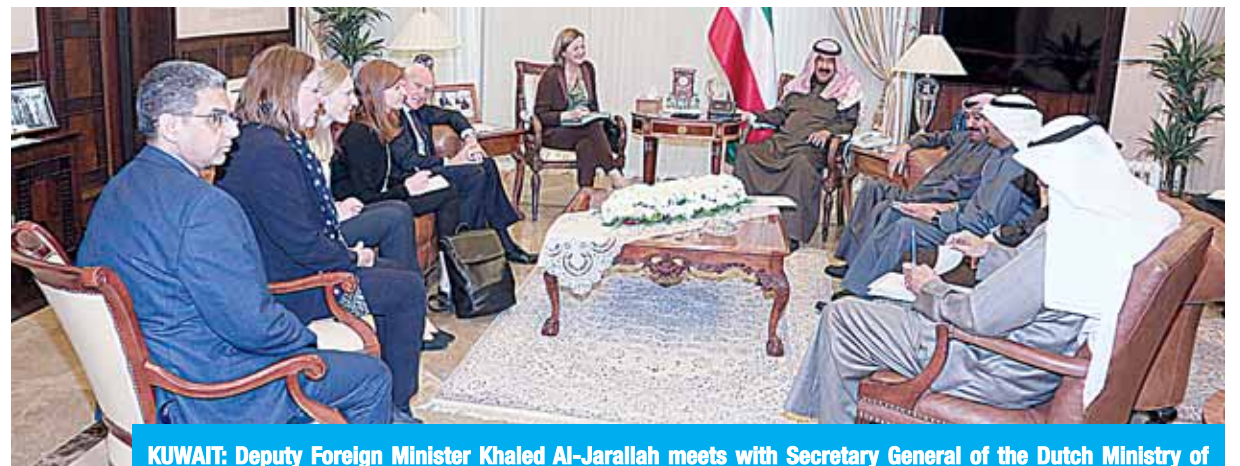
**KUWAIT:** Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received senior UN resident representatives yesterday to discuss boosting cooperation between Kuwait and UN agencies. The officials included UN Secretary General's Representative and Resident Coordinator Dr Tareq Al-Sheikh,

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Resident Representative Hideko Hadzialic, UN High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Office in Kuwait Samer Haddadin and head of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Iman Erekat. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nasser affirmed Kuwait's continuous efforts to boost coordination with all UN bodies and facilitate the work of UN offices in the country. The UN representatives, on their part, hailed Kuwait's prominent humanitarian role around the world and the generous support of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The meeting was attended by senior officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with senior UN resident representatives. —KUNA

## Deputy FM meets Dutch official, ambassadors



**KUWAIT:** Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Secretary General of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs Joke Brandt. —KUNA



**Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with German Ambassador to Kuwait Stefan Mobs.**



**Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina Romanowski.**

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah and Secretary General of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs Joke Brandt discussed bilateral ties and recent regional and international developments yesterday. The meeting was attended by senior officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait Frans Potuyt.

In the meantime, Jarallah met the new German Ambassador to Kuwait Stefan Mobs. During the encounter, they tackled bilateral relations between both friendly countries and the latest regional and international developments. Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Affairs Ayham Al-Omar and Minister Plenipotentiary Hamad Al-Mashaan attended the meeting. Furthermore, Jarallah met the new

US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina Romanowski. During the encounter, they tackled bilateral relations between both friendly countries and the latest regional and international developments. Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Affairs Ayham Al-Omar and Minister Plenipotentiary Hamad Al-Mashaan attended the meeting. —KUNA

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# Diplomat appreciates Kuwait's support to Palestinian cause

Tahboub thanks Amir for supporting Palestinians' drive to restore rights



KUWAIT: Palestine's Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub speaks during the gathering. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



A general view of the audience.

KUWAIT: Palestine's Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub said Tuesday the leaders and people of the State of Kuwait maintain their supportive stance towards the Palestinians' struggle to regain their legitimate rights in full. Tahboub expressed deep gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his firm support to the Palestine cause and the Palestinians' drive to restore their right to establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital. The brotherly people of Kuwait, represented by the National

Assembly, have also supported the Palestine question selflessly, he said during a gathering hosted at the Palestinian Embassy in protest against US President Donald Trump's proposed peace plan, dubbed the 'Deal of the Century.' The Palestinian diplomat cited as a manifestation of the supportive Arab stances the behavior of Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem during the 30th extraordinary conference of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union. During the conference, held recently in Amman,

Jordan, chief Arab lawmakers vehemently rejected "the so-called US plan for peace in the Middle East," according to the statement. "Similarly, the foreign ministers of the sisterly Arab countries have expressed, during their emergency meeting in Cairo last week, unanimous opposition to the US plan and any attempts to liquidate the Palestine cause," he pointed out. "The principled stand of the Arab countries, as well as the stance adopted by the foreign ministers of the member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) during their

recent meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, provide a firm backing for the Palestinian's future moves whether at the UN Security Council."

The Palestinian diplomat also commended the decision adopted by the African Union summit in Addis Ababa yesterday to reject the US plan. He reiterated the Palestinians' resolve that peace would be unlikely without the Palestinians' regaining their legitimate rights foremost among which is the right to the holy city of Jerusalem as capital city of Palestine. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Palestine's Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub yesterday visited Kuwait Times where he met with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## ICRC lauds Kuwait's humanitarian tasks



GENEVA: Kuwait's Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim (right) meets with ICRC Diplomatic Advisor for the Near and Middle East Nicholas Hawton. — KUNA

GENEVA: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has lauded the humanitarian role undertaken by Kuwait in dealing with humanitarian crises in the region and throughout the globe. Nicholas Hawton, the ICRC Diplomatic Advisor for the Near and Middle East, praised the Kuwaiti humanitarian record in remarks to the press as he emerged from a meeting with the State of Kuwait Permanent Representative at the UN and International Organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim. Hawton admired the crucial Kuwaiti humanitarian role in all regions throughout the globe that have witnessed humanitarian crises. Relations between the ICRC and Kuwait have been extremely distinctive and have been

evolving gradually, he said, adding that his talks with the ambassador were quite positive, addressing the humanitarian situation in the Middle East and various other areas.

Meanwhile, the ambassador said that during the meeting, Kuwait's voluntary financial contribution, worth \$3 million, was delivered, affirming that it was intended to back up the international agency global humanitarian tasks. Kuwait and the ICRC hold annual dialogue to discuss relevant issues, he said, also noting that Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has inked an agreement to support some of the ICRC humanitarian programs. Moreover, he admired the ICRC role in dealing with the issue of missing Kuwaitis. — KUNA

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## Local

# Salam Palace represents historical value for Kuwait's rulers, people

## Media delegation invited to restored landmark



KUWAIT: Members of the media delegation pose for a group photo during their visit to Al-Salam Palace. — Amiri Diwan photos



**KUWAIT:** As the opening of Al-Salam Palace to the public draws near, a media delegation visited the palace and was received by Amiri Diwan's Head of Administrative and Financial Affairs Abdelaziz Ishaq, Head of Media and Cultural Affairs Yousuf Al-Roumi, Head of Historic Documents, Museums and Libraries Sheikha Muna Al-Jaber, Sheikh Jaber Fahd Al-Sabah, as well as Information Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Foreign Information Faisal Al-Mutallaqim.

The delegation included editors-in-chief of local papers, including Kuwait Times' Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, Ahmad Al-Jarrallah (Al-Seyassah), Waleed Al-Nisif (Al-Qabas), Yousuf Al-Marzouq (Al-Anbaa), Waleed Al-Jassem (Al-Rai), Emad Bukhamseen (Annahar) and Adnan Al-Wazzan (Al-Wasat), Head of Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) Fatima Hussein, KJA Secretary Adnan Al-Rashed, Al-Jarida Managing Editor Nasser Al-Otaibi and KJA members Jassem Kamal, Duhairan Aba Al-Khail and Owayed Al-Saleeli.

Al-Salam Palace represents a historical and patriotic value for Kuwait's rulers and people. It was built in the sixties during the reign of the late Abdullah Al-Salem, and was known as the Guests Palace, because it was designated to receive kings, presidents and VIPs. The number of visits to

the palace reached 166, and it is one of the country's landmarks due to the diplomatic events that took place in it.

The idea of turning it into a museum came in 2013 to document the history of this palace and of Kuwait through its rulers, and reflects the civilizations that resided on this land and shows its geographic importance. The Amiri Diwan, at the instructions of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, rehabilitated this historic landmark, which remained steadfast against the heinous occupation in 1990 and challenged the vandalism and destruction that took place in it.

The palace was renovated using the same original materials, shapes and dimensions. Internal preparations were made to transform the palace to a museum, showcasing the history of the palace and the history of Kuwait's rulers, to bring back a historic landmark that witnessed an important period in Kuwait's political history. We have an icon that represents the state during the eras - an architectural edifice with unique engineering.

The reconstruction of the palace and transforming it into a museum took six years of hard work to become the official museum of the state. Al-Salam Palace Museum is considered a landmark documenting the history of Kuwait in a modern and innovative method. The design of the

museum agrees with the new generation, using the most modern technological displays to become a museum that presents the history of Kuwait and the civilization that went through it in a creative form that is not void of the joy of fascination.

Al-Salam Palace has a vast history that represents a major historical and national value to Kuwait's rulers and loyal people, and it was rehabilitated at the instructions of HH the Amir, so the idea of transforming it to a museum was materialized. Its design and reconstruction came

within new principles and ideas with cultural inclination and historic dimensions that reflects its importance, through transforming it into a museum that matches the most prestigious world museums in quality, content and high standards. The museum comprises of four floors (basement, ground, first and second). The basement contains electronic library linked to the central library of the Amiri Diwan, in addition to areas designated for scientific research, employees' offices, stores, service rooms and others.



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# Interior Minister invited to Assembly panel meeting to discuss bedoons' issue

## Delay in report's discussion could lead to minister's grilling

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** The parliamentary human rights committee officially invited the Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh to attend its next meeting to discuss the situation of bedoons (stateless people) and the report submitted by the Kuwaiti government during the UN meeting in Geneva. Committee member Mohammed Hayef described the report as one that "embodies administrative corruption and lack of credibility of the central apparatus for illegal residents." Informed sources said the committee opened the meeting to all lawmakers and urged Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem to hasten the report's discussion by March at most to avoid grilling Saleh if the report is not discussed. The sources said the committee members believe that bedoons' rights are not related to the mere issue of security IDs to help

them get employed, receive medical care and lead normal lives. Notably, the committee had stressed the need to discuss the problem of bedoons holding fake passports. "We do not want to exchange accusations, but rather want to save a large segment of our society comprising of 100,000 souls for whom the central apparatus did nothing," the committee stressed.

### Kuwaiti women's children

Rapporteur of the parliamentary women and family committee MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei stressed that the committee's call to employ Kuwaiti women's children applies to all ministries and not only the Ministry of Education (MoE). "A total of 4,000 will be appointed by April and ministers who do not comply will be grilled," he warned. He added that during a meeting with Education Minister Saud Al-Harbi, the latter said

MoE will employ 770 teachers and 262 social workers, prioritizing Kuwaiti women's children.

### Funding IS

The criminal court yesterday indicted two stateless people with supporting and funding IS in Yemen, and acquitted a citizen and a Yemeni from the same charges. The court sentenced one of the indicted suspects to five years in jail suspended on paying KD 1,000 bail, sentenced the other to five years in jail with labor and fined them both KD 9,000.

### Teacher's case

The court of appeal yesterday referred the case filed against Egyptian teacher Najla Mohammed, who had been accused of beating pupil Essa Al-Bloushi, leading to his death, to another judge after she filed an appeal

against sentencing her to two years in prison suspended on paying KD 1,000 bail. In her appeal, the defendant requests full acquittal especially after the public prosecution excluded the charge of beating the boy to death due to a lack of medical reports proving it.

### Indians in Kuwait

The Indian Express newspaper said the total number of Indian community members in Kuwait is 1.029 million and that Kuwait is Indians' fourth top destination worldwide. According to Indian foreign ministry statistics, 13.6 million Indians live abroad, including over 3 million in the UAE, over 2 million in Saudi Arabia and over a million in the US. Moreover, the Reserve Bank of India announced that remittances by Indians from around the world to their home country totaled \$76.4 billion in 2018-2019 and \$41.9 billion in 2019-2020.

## Senegal honors KFSD chief



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** Director General of Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) Lt Gen Khalid Al-Mikrad was dec-

orated with the Senegal Republic National order of the Lion by Senegal Ambassador to Kuwait Abdoul Ahad Mbacke on behalf of the Senegalese President. Mikrad said he was honored by being given this medal which



comes as an appreciation of the bilateral cooperation between the two sides. Meanwhile, Ambassador Mbacke appreciated the support of KFSD to the Fire and Civil Protection Department in Senegal.

## Farwaniya gynecology department performs 'difficult' surgeries

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** Head of Farwaniya Hospital obstetrics and gynecology department Dr Amal Khedher said 28 successful endoscopic uterus and fibroid removal surgeries had been conducted in the department on difficult cases. Speaking on the sidelines of a five-day workshop organized by the department with participation of the visiting Lebanese laparoscopy professor Dr Zaki Othman, Khedher said laparoscopic surgeries helped reduce patient hospitalization periods and accelerated healing.

### Property expropriation

The expropriation committee held its first meeting yesterday under the leadership of Minister of Finance Mariam Al-Aqeel. The meeting resulted in approving the expropriation of the remaining area of a property in Mahboula for public interest. The committee added that the expropriated property's estimated value is KD 1,494,000 and that whoever objects to the decision should apply to the expropriation department within one month effective on publishing the decision in the official gazette, Al-Kuwait Al-Youm. The expropriation

department accordingly urged the owners to show up with their deeds to complete the procedures pending expropriation.

### Collection points

Municipal Councilmember Hassan Kamal filed an inquiry about the spread of unlicensed collection points for clothes and other materials in residential areas and the measures taken by the municipality and the Public Authority for Industry to regulate it and hold violators accountable.

## NBK sponsors Science, Engineering Competition

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) sponsored Kuwait Science Club's eighth Science and Engineering Competition for developing skills and scientific research for youth. It has 22 fields and is held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. NBK's sponsorship comes in line with the Bank's keenness on adopting and encouraging youth to innovation and scientific research, referring to the event's importance in investing in Human capital.

NBK Public Relations Manager, Talal Al-Turki, said that NBK believes in the importance and value of this

competition in encouraging and developing young talents. "It is important to encourage scientific research and support students' creativity," he said.

Turki noted that the competition goes in line with the bank's vision and strategy towards national talents and youth. NBK believes in the importance of developing the spirit of creativity among students and youth in the science and technology fields, by encouraging them to do more research and develop themselves through competitions. "Our students need to do more researches and innovate in a competitive environment that saturates their interests," Turki added.

The competition is considered the biggest competition of its kind in Kuwait. It contains 22 participating researches and projects. It targets male and female students of high schools to practice scientific research and innovation.

Students will be presenting a scientific project in science or technology, engineering, or mathematics field, which contributes in solving one of the society's problems through scientific research or engineering design. A competent jury will evaluate all submitted projects. In the end, an awarding ceremony was held to honor the participants and winners. The registration of the competition continues throughout the year.



Talal Al-Turki

### News in brief

#### 'Major' human trafficking net busted

**KUWAIT:** Efforts by the interior ministry to combat trafficking in persons and residencies revealed the existence of three Bangladeshi suspects who formed a major network in human trafficking and money laundering. One was arrested and two left the country. Sources said the three had high-ranking and sensitive jobs in three major companies and brought in more than 20,000 Bangladeshi laborers on government contracts in exchange of huge amounts of money exceeding KD 50 million. The sources said one of the culprits became a member of the Bangladeshi parliament lately, besides being on the board of directors of a major bank. His visits to Kuwait last 48 hours only, although he is a partner in the company he works for in Kuwait. The MP left the country when he learned about the investigations, while his company's file was suspended. —Al-Qabas

#### Honor crimes

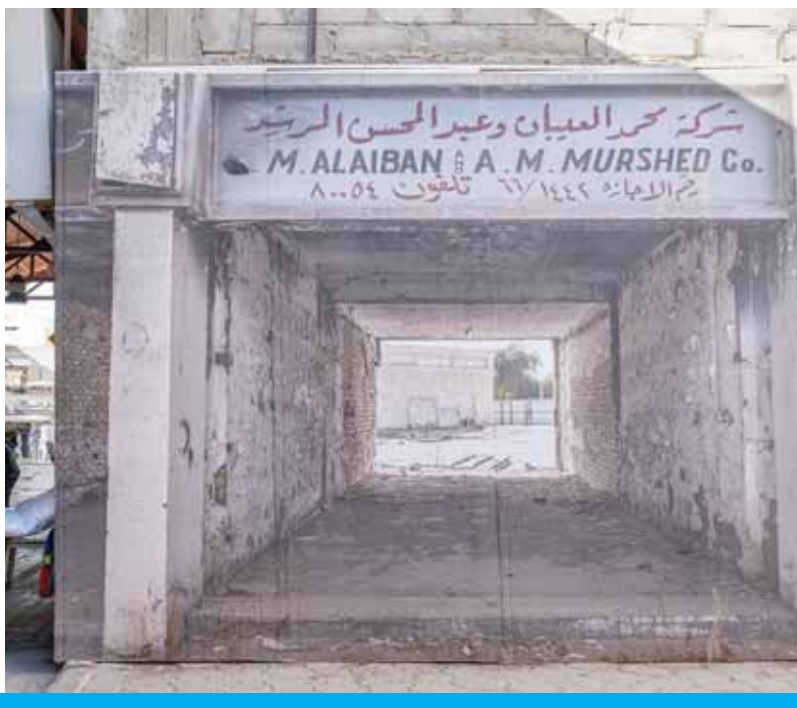
**KUWAIT:** In a historic ruling that agrees with demands by MPs and civil society to amend article 153 of the penal code related to honor crimes, the criminal court said a person who kills his female relatives will be sentenced to death, charged with premeditated murder. It also said that the "door cannot be open completely for the law that allows a man to kill in such crimes, and sentences him for three years in jail". While the court sentenced a man to death lately for killing his daughter after having suspicions about her behavior, its ruling was due to the many positive results that came from the judicial side, most notably stopping the bloodshed and send a message to all those who clung to article 153 of the penal code, which most legal people is a legalization of honor crimes, and that it is not the right of a man who has doubts about his wife, daughter, mother or sister to kill them, and then spend only three years in jail. —Al-Qabas

#### 60% absent

**KUWAIT:** Parallel to the announcement of the education ministry to authorize school principals to cancel the morning assembly during severely cold days, education sources revealed that the percentage of absent students in government schools was nearly 60 percent on Tuesday, especially in the elementary and intermediate stages. —Al-Jarida

#### Traffic policeman hurt

**KUWAIT:** A driver ran over a traffic officer while he was issuing a traffic ticket to a bus driver yesterday. The officer was taken to hospital for treatment of severe injuries he sustained. Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti driver was taken to the proper authorities for further action. —By Hanan Al-Saadoun



**KUWAIT:** Roads and alleys of Souq Al-Mubarakiya are adorned with murals depicting old commercial stores. The walls' drawings bring to mind the past status of the old bazaar as part of a plan to promote it.—KUNA





Philippines president terminates troop pact

## Anglican leader calls his Church ‘deeply institutionally racist’

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MAARAT AL-NAASAN: An aerial view shows the village of Maarat Al-Naasan in Syria's Idlib province yesterday following a weeks-long regime offensive against the country's last major rebel bastion. Syrian regime forces pushed on with their offensive in the country's northwest, securing areas along a key national highway they seized, as tensions spiraled with Turkey which supports rebel groups. —AFP

# Remnants of Islamic State in limbo

## Widowed, imprisoned, detained in Syria

**QAMISHLI:** In northeastern Syria, prisons and detention camps hold thousands of men, women and children whose lives are in limbo nearly a year after the final defeat of Islamic State to which they once belonged. The area around Qamishli city is mainly controlled by Kurdish fighters who helped defeat the Islamist militant group. They have since been pushed into a small pocket of northeastern Syria by Turkish-led forces who consider them a security threat. Kurdish forces bear the brunt of looking after those captured as Islamic State collapsed, including hundreds of foreigners who fought alongside local militants to create a self-declared caliphate in the Middle East.

What to do with the remnants of Islamic State, whose fighters tortured and executed thousands of people during its zenith from 2014, is a thorny issue for countries whose citizens went to fight with the group. Many European countries, for example, have hesitated to repatriate nationals, fearing a public backlash if they do. Europeans comprise a fifth of the roughly 10,000 Islamic State fighters held captive in

Syria by Kurdish militias.

Kurdish officials say they lack the resources to properly detain, investigate and prosecute the large number of prisoners as well as their families in camps. They have called repeatedly on foreign nations to take back their citizens. “We want to know what our fate is,” said Mahmoud Mohammad, an IS fighter from Syria held by Kurdish forces in a prison near the town of Hasaka, south of Qamishli.

“We don’t know anything about our families,” he told Reuters in an interview arranged and supervised by Kurdish security forces during a sanctioned visit to the jail. “We don’t know if they’re alive or dead, in Syria or outside. I want to know my sentence and my fate.” Mohammad, whose nom de guerre is Abu Hamza, was one of nine men interviewed by Reuters in two prisons – one located near Hasaka and the other the town’s central jail.

Most were from Syria or Iraq, one was from the United States and another from Belgium. Some were fighters, others said they were corralled into working for Islamic State as the movement won territory

across Syria and Iraq. “I worked with (Islamic State) as a civilian,” said Abdurrahman Mustafa Al-Jomaa, a 32-year-old Syrian from Raqqa, who was being held at the central Hasaka jail. “My sentence is 2 years. I’m married and have two children. My family is in Raqqa and they come and visit me.”

### Crowded prison, sprawling camp

Conditions in the prison near Hasaka, which used to be a school before being transformed to cope with the influx of captives, were markedly worse than those at the central jail. Reuters reporters saw more than 50 men lying head-to-toe across the floor of one cell, leaving virtually no room to move. Natural light was minimal and the air was heavy with the smell of sweat and dirt.

In a hospital on the ground floor, about 100 men crowded on to around half the number of beds suffering from ailments and injuries. Several were in orange jumpsuits, similar to those often worn by IS captives before they were executed. Beyond the prisons, thousands of mostly woman and children are detained in

camps in the area. The Al-Hol facility in Hasaka province is the biggest and holds tens of thousands of people in a sprawling camp of white canvas tents that provide minimal shelter from the winter cold and rain.

Children play on muddy paths and large puddles full of refuse collect in open spaces. Women wearing black robes and niqabs move around in small groups, chatting or carrying out daily chores. Most women approached by Reuters for an interview declined and some were verbally hostile. One who agreed to talk did not give her name, but spoke in broken English and said she was originally from Hong Kong before coming to the Middle East to join Islamic State.

“I have one child and my husband died in Baghouz,” she said, flanked by her toddler son. The town of Baghouz, Islamic State’s last enclave in eastern Syria, fell to US-backed Kurdish forces in spring last year. The woman said she was in touch with her family in Hong Kong but did not want to return. “I know here the situation is very difficult. This is not home, it’s just a tent ... But we all live to (the wishes of) Allah, so God-willing, all is good.” — Reuters

## Daulatdia brothels: Sex workers to get ‘honorable’ funeral

**DAULATDIA:** Often treated as less than human in life, there has been little dignity in death for the sex workers of one of the world’s biggest brothels: their bodies frequently tossed into unmarked graves or dumped in the river. Until now. On Thursday, Hamida Begum became the first sex worker from Bangladesh bordello Daulatdia to receive a formal Islamic funeral, breaking a longstanding taboo in Muslim majority Bangladesh where prostitution is legal but regarded by many as immoral.

Scores of women gathered at the graveside, weeping for the 65-year-old’s passing but also because of the symbolic breakthrough her burial represented. “I never dreamed that she would get such an honorable farewell,” said Begum’s daughter Laxmi, who followed her mother into the trade. “My mother was treated like a human being,” she added. Islamic spiritual leaders have for decades rejected funeral prayers for sex workers because they view prostitution as immoral.

When Begum died, her family planned to put her in an unmarked grave – standard practice for women like her – but a coalition of sex workers persuaded the local police to talk religious leaders into giving her a proper burial. “The Imam was initially reluctant to



DAULATDIA: Photo shows Jhumur Begum (left), who heads a sex workers group, walking with other members next to a graveyard used for the burial of sex workers in Daulatdia, Rajbari District, 110 kms west of Dhaka. — AFP

lead the prayers. But we asked him whether Islam forbids anyone from taking part in the Janaza (funeral prayers) of a sex worker. He had no answer,” said local police chief Ashiqur Rahman, who oversaw negotiations.

### Stigma and shame

Bangladesh is one of the few Muslim countries in the world where prostitution is legal for women aged 18 or older and workers are required to hold a certificate stating they are adults, and consent to the work. The reality is more murky, charities have reported finding girls as young as seven being groomed to sell sex, and warn that trafficking

of children for the trade is on the rise.

The police are often accused of being complicit – taking bribes from pimps and brothel owners to provide certification for girls much younger than 18. Begum was just 12 years old when she began sex work in Daulatdia, where more than 1,200 women and girls cater for up to 5,000 clients a day. The site, one of around 12 legal brothels operating in the country, is a series of shacks spread across a warren of alleyways some 100 kilometers west of Dhaka. Close to a busy road and rail junction, its frequented by both local and long haul drivers and travelers passing through. — AFP

## Facebook purges more accounts linked to Russia in new crackdown

**WASHINGTON:** Facebook said yesterday it purged dozens of accounts linked to Russian military intelligence in the latest effort to root out manipulation and disinformation of the huge social network. Other accounts originating in Iran, Vietnam and Myanmar were also blocked on Facebook and Instagram for “engaging in foreign or government interference,” Facebook head of security policy Nathaniel Gleicher said. The Russia-based network which included 78 Facebook accounts and four on Instagram focused mainly on Ukraine and neighboring countries and posted content about the conflict in Syria, ethnic tensions in Crimea and the downing of a Malaysian airliner in Ukraine in 2014.

“Although the people behind this network attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to Russian military intelligence services,” Gleicher said in a blog post. The move is the latest by social networks seeking to crack down on foreign manipulation including efforts to artificially promote certain political messages, often with misinformation. Facebook said it

also took down separate networks in Iran, Vietnam and Myanmar.

Six Facebook and five Instagram accounts from Iran that were focused on the United States and US-Iranian relations were removed for “coordinated inauthentic behavior,” and apparent links to a similar network taken down by Facebook in January 2019. “They shared posts about political news and geopolitics including topics like the US elections, Christianity, US-Iran relations, US immigration policy, criticism of US policies in the Middle East and public figures as well as video interviews with academics, public figures and columnists on issues related to Iran and US elections,” Gleicher said.

An additional 13 Facebook accounts from Myanmar and Vietnam were removed for using fake accounts to manage pages “posing as independent telecom consumer news hubs,” which disparaged business rivals, according to the Facebook statement. These pages turned out to be linked to telecom services Mytel in Myanmar and Viettel in Vietnam, and Gapit Communications, a communications firm in Vietnam. — AFP



International

# Britain and United States asked to investigate UAE ‘war crimes’

## Law firm requests investigation of war crimes in Yemen

LONDON: A British law firm filed requests on Tuesday with the authorities in Britain, the United States and Turkey to arrest senior officials from the United Arab Emirates on suspicion of carrying out war crimes and torture in Yemen. The complaints were filed by law firm Stoke White under the ‘universal jurisdiction’ principle that countries are obliged to investigate breaches of the Geneva Convention for war crimes wherever they may have been carried out.

The firm filed the complaints to Britain’s Metropolitan police and the US and Turkish justice ministries on behalf of Abdullah Suliman Abdullah Daubalah, a journalist, and Salah Muslem Salem, whose brother was killed in Yemen.

Lawyers for the men said in the complaint that the UAE and its “mercenaries” were responsible for torture and war crimes against civilians in Yemen in 2015 and 2019. It named senior UAE political and military figures as suspects.

A spokeswoman for the UAE declined immediate comment, as did a spokesman for London’s Metropolitan Police. There was no immediate reply to emails to the US Justice Department and the

Turkish embassy in London. “The suspects reside in the UAE and the United States, and are not resident in the UK or Turkey,” said Hakan Camuz, head of international law at Stoke White.

“However, they travel to the UK regularly.” “It is requested that the police monitor their entry into the mentioned countries,” Camuz said. The UAE is a leading partner in a Saudi-led coalition that intervened in Yemen in March 2015 to restore ousted President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi’s government after it was toppled by the Houthi movement in late 2014. In July the UAE said it was withdrawing its troops from Yemen but remained part of the coalition.

The counter-terrorism command of London’s Metropolitan police has a war crimes unit tasked with investigating alleged war crimes and torture. Britain has prosecuted foreigners for war crimes committed in other countries twice this century, under the principle of universal jurisdiction. Afghan national Faryadi Zardad was jailed for 20 years in 2005 for torture and hostage-taking. In 2016, a Nepalese colonel, Kumar Lama, was acquitted of torture charges in a trial at London’s Old Bailey criminal court. —Reuters



SWEIHAN: Photo shows security forces taking part in a reception to celebrate members of the UAE Armed Forces who served in the Arab coalition in Yemen, at Zayed Military City in Abu Dhabi. —AFP

## Somalia executes 2 men by firing squad for girl’s gang rape

NAIROBI: Somalia executed two men by firing squad on Tuesday for the gang rape and murder of a 12-year-old girl, a government official said, adding it would serve as a warning to others in a country where crimes against women have rarely been punished. Aisha Ilyes Aden was abducted

at a market in northern Puntland’s Galkayo town in February last year. Her body was found the next morning near her home. She had been gang-raped, her genitals mutilated, and strangled to death. The brutal nature of the killing triggered public outrage and demonstrations calling for authorities to enforce a landmark 2016 law to secure justice in the east African nation, where rape victims are stigmatized and forced to marry assailants.

Three men were convicted and sentenced to death in May last year. The decision was upheld by an appeal court in June. “This is a clear indication that justice is served in Puntland,” Puntland’s Justice Minister Awil Sheikh Hamid told a

news conference. “It is a worrying alert for those who try to carry out crimes against women and girls.” The third man’s execution has been delayed, he said, but did not give further details.

Adeer Ilyas, the victim’s father, who witnessed the execution of the two men in the port city of Bosasso early on Tuesday, said he was happy that justice had been served. “This case will serve as a lesson learned,” Ilyas told local reporters. “It will help to ensure that all Somali girls will be safe.”

Somalia’s semi-autonomous Puntland region passed the country’s first law criminalizing offences such as sexual harassment and rape in 2016. Convictions under the law are rare, as police are either

News in brief

3,250 hotel cancellations

TOKYO: Japanese police have arrested a mother-and-son duo for allegedly making more than 3,200 no-show hotel cancellations, costing the hotels \$1 million while collecting reward points worth \$22,000, reports said yesterday. Police in the western region of Kyoto confirmed to AFP yesterday they had taken into custody a 51-year-old mother and her 31-year-old son in connection with making fake reservations in November at three hotels, causing damage worth about 95,000 yen (\$864). But the charge might be the tip of the iceberg, with local media reporting the duo made 3,250 no-show hotel cancellations across Japan over a year via an online booking service, causing damage totaling 115 million yen (\$1.04 million) to those hotels. Through the transactions, they collected digital loyalty points worth 2.5 million yen, according to national broadcaster NHK and other major media. —AFP

## Four months into the revolt, who are Iraq’s protesters?

BAGHDAD: Since October 1, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have protested against a ruling system they see as corrupt, inefficient and beholden to neighboring Iran. Who are they, and where is the movement headed?

**An unprecedented movement**

Everything started on October 1. Crowds gathered in the capital’s usual protest spot of Tahrir Square after calls on social media to rally against corruption, lack of services and unemployment. The first protester was shot dead that evening and as the death toll soared past 150 in the first week, the number of outraged Iraqis in the streets spiraled. The rallies spontaneously mushroomed into the biggest grassroots uprising Iraq has seen in decades, with crowds hitting the streets of Baghdad and the Shiite-majority south almost daily, except for a three-week pause in October to allow for an annual Shiite religious pilgrimage. But they were also the bloodiest, with nearly 550 killed in protest-related violence.

**For all, but led by none**

Although most protesters are young, the cause has united a vast range of Iraqis: university students skipping class, clerics in robes thumbing prayer beads, old-school communists and families waving Iraqi flags at their first-ever protests. The rallies are relatively decentralized with each city organizing its own marches and chants, but tent camps have sprung up across public squares to pressure authorities. Some protesters spent weeks on end sleeping in the tents and marching during the day, as others came in to drop off free food or mattresses to keep the sit-ins going. The protests have seen women participate in and even lead rallies, which is extremely rare in conservative areas.

No single leader has emerged, a fact authorities have used to discredit the movement but which activists say is a way to protect it, as prominence may expose them to threats. The demonstrations have not reached the Sunni-majority west, where most fear a protest would be cast as a revival of Saddam Hussein’s Sunni-dominated regime or the Islamic State group’s ultra-conservative reign. Nor have they gripped the Kurdish north, where a separate ruling system governs daily affairs.

**Demands partly met**

As the response to demonstrations grew increasing-



BASRA: An Iraqi demonstrator dressed in a Joker outfit holds a placard that reads in Arabic: “I’m a joker for my country, I’m not a politician, I’m not someone’s tail and I’m not a Baathist,” during an anti-government demonstration by Basra University students in the southern city of Basra. —AFP

ly violent, demands escalated from an end to corruption and unemployment to electoral reform, an independent prime minister and a total government overhaul. In December, they scored two partial victories: then-premier Adel Abdel Mahdi resigned and parliament passed a new voting law.

But the bill fails to meet many of the protesters’ demands, including smaller voting districts, and it has yet to be signed into law by the president. And after two months of political stalemate, parties finally named a replacement to Abdel Mahdi - Mohammad Allawi, a two-time communications minister. Protesters rejected Allawi, saying he was selected by the very parties they had spent four months demonstrating against.

**A cleric’s followers**

But one controversial Shiite cleric, Moqtada Sadr, immediately endorsed Allawi’s nomination. Sadr, who has a cult-like following across Iraq, backed the protests early on and his supporters were known as the best organized among the protesters. But as protesters opposed the new premier, Sadr’s diehard followers - identifiable by the blue caps they wear - have waged deadly attacks against anti-Allawi camps.

On Tuesday though, Sadr announced he was dissolving the “blue caps”, the organized unit of his supporters accused of those deadly attacks. The other clerical

voice is Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the top religious authority for most of Iraq’s Shiites, who bolstered the movement when he called for political factions to drop support for Abdel Mahdi. But many demonstrators complain he has not gone far enough in calling out the perpetrators of violence.

**No end in sight?**

Over the last four months, activists have faced a growing campaign of arrests, kidnappings and assassinations which they say is aimed at snuffing out their movement. After Sadr peeled away, the movement lost much of the logistical support that had kept it going for months. Protesters also fear their cause could be overshadowed by the threat of a proxy war between Baghdad’s two main allies, Tehran and Washington, which could play out on Iraqi soil.

Already this year, the US killed Iranian general Qasem Soleimani and top Iraqi commander Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis in a drone strike on Baghdad, and Tehran responded with ballistic missiles on an Iraqi base hosting US troops. Struggling for relevance, discouraged by the authorities’ intransigence and now facing a new enemy in Sadr, the protest movement has seen its numbers dwindle. “I’m staying in Tahrir. Iraq is more important than my studies,” said Mustafa, a university student who has vowed to carry on. —AFP

non-aligned status, “was hosting a quasi ally intelligence agency,” the Tribune de Geneve daily said in an editorial. Swiss officials “very likely” knew what was going on but “closed their eyes” in the name of neutrality, it added. Home to the United Nations European headquarters and the International Committee of the Red Cross, Switzerland is recognized worldwide for its standing as an honest broker.

But media revelations Tuesday told how for decades the US and West German intelligence services raked in the top-secret communications of governments around the world. The Trojan horse they used was their hidden control of Swiss encryption company Crypto AG. The company supplied devices for encoded 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. Unknown to those governments, Crypto was secretly acquired in 1970 by the US Central Intelligence Agency together with the then West Germany’s BND Federal Intelligence Service.

**Vital intelligence over decades**

Together they rigged Crypto’s equipment to be able to easily break the codes and read the government’s messages, according to reports by the Washington Post, German television ZTE and Swiss state media SRF. Citing a classified internal CIA history of what was originally called operation “Thesaurus” and later “Rubicon,” the reports said that in the 1980s the harvest from the Crypto machines supplied roughly 40 percent of all the foreign communications US code-breakers processed for intelligence. —AFP

Australia admits ‘shame’

SYDNEY: A pledge to close the health and wellbeing gap between Aboriginal and other Australians is failing, the government admitted yesterday, describing the situation as a source of “national shame”. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said just two of seven key targets to improve the lives of Australia’s indigenous people were on track - unchanged from last year. More Aboriginal children were enrolled in early education and graduating from high school than ever before, he said, but attendance rates were still lagging behind other groups. Other targets to halve the gap in child mortality, literacy, life expectancy, and unemployment rates were not being met. Morrison called the failure to give indigenous children equal opportunities to other Australian kids “a national truth and a national shame”. The admission comes 250 years since Captain James Cook’s first voyage to the vast continent, a journey that led to British colonization and upended indigenous communities. —AFP

Crowd expected for Trump

AHMEDABAD: More than 100,000 people are expected to pack into the world’s biggest cricket stadium later this month when it is formally opened during a visit to India by US President Donald Trump, officials said. Workers in Ahmedabad are rushing to finish the 110,000-capacity Sardar Patel Stadium, which will overtake the 100,000-seater Melbourne Cricket Ground as the world’s biggest cricket venue. Trump is due for a two-day visit to India on February 24, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to host him in his home state of Gujarat. The spectacle has been dubbed “Kem Chho Trump”, or “How Are You Trump”, according to officials. Last year Trump was guest of honor at Houston’s NRG Stadium in Texas at a rally for the Indian premier called “Hello Modi”, attended by 50,000 people from the sub-continent’s vast diaspora. —AFP

Man threatens to torch self

BEIJING: A man in southwest China doused himself with petrol and tied firecrackers around his waist because authorities cancelled his birthday banquet as a precaution against spreading the coronavirus. The Chongqing resident, a 59-year-old surnamed Wang, had planned to hold a banquet with 10 tables late last month, state news agency Xinhua reported yesterday. But with authorities across China restricting public gatherings to contain the outbreak, officials told Wang to cancel the party. Hundreds of millions of people across China face restrictions and interruptions to their lives due to efforts to contain the coronavirus outbreak, which has now infected more than 44,600 people and killed over 1,100. Beijing’s municipal authorities announced last week that parties and group dinners at restaurants would be temporarily forbidden in the Chinese capital to prevent the spread of the virus. —AFP

## Swiss neutrality tarnished by spy scandal: Critics

GENEVA: Outraged commentators warned yesterday that revelations the CIA and Germany’s intelligence service had for decades used a Swiss encryption company for spying had seriously damaged Switzerland’s cherished reputation for neutrality. Critics voiced particular concern that Bern may have been at least tacitly complicit in the secret operation.

Switzerland, which takes pride in its neutral and



## International

# Pope dismisses proposal to ordain married men as priests in Amazon

## October synod voted 128-41 for exploring possibility

**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis, in one of the most significant decisions of his papacy yesterday dismissed a proposal to allow some married men to be ordained in the Amazon region to ease an acute scarcity of priests. The recommendation, put forward by Latin American bishops last year, had alarmed conservatives in the deeply polarized 1.3 billion-member Roman Catholic Church, who feared it could lead to a change in the centuries-old commitment to celibacy among priests.

Francis delivered his response in an Apostolic Exhortation, three months after the proposal passed by 128 votes to 41 at a contentious Vatican assembly, or synod, of Roman Catholic bishops. Apostolic Exhortations are used to instruct and encourage the Catholic faithful but do not define Church doctrine. Yesterday's 32-page document did not even mention the proposal, which was for older married deacons who are proven leaders of remote Catholic communities and have stable families to be ordained as priests.

Conservatives balked, fearing that even a circumscribed change would be a slippery slope leading to a married priesthood throughout the Church. They branded a pre-synod working document as heretical. In what some viewed as a strategically timed appeal to Francis not to approve the Amazon proposal, a book published last month by Church conservatives defended the tradition of priestly celibacy. "From the Depths of Our Hearts" was co-authored by Cardinal Robert Sarah and Former Pope Benedict, though Francis' predecessor subsequently disassociated himself from the project.

Vatican officials said the pope completed the document on Dec 27, before the book controversy, and handed it in for translations. They said no changes were made after that. In the Exhortation, the 82-year-old Argentine pope wrote, new ways must be found to encourage more priests to work in the remote region, and allow expanded roles for lay people and permanent deacons, of whom the Amazon needed "many more".

Deacons, like priests, are ordained ministers. They can preach, teach, baptize and run parishes, but they cannot say Mass. Married men can become deacons. Because only priests can say Mass, people in at least 85% of Amazon villages cannot attend the liturgy every week and some cannot do so for years. "This urgent need leads me to urge all bishops, especially those in Latin America... to be more generous in encouraging those who display a missionary vocation to opt for the Amazon region," he wrote.

He used the first three chapters of the document to defend the rights and legacies of indigenous people and the environment in the Amazon, which had to be protected because of its vital role in mitigating global warming. Conservatives feared that if Francis had taken up the proposal, other areas with a shortage of priests would follow, even in developed countries such as Germany, where the issue is being discussed. —Reuters



**VATICAN CITY:** In this file photo, representatives of one of the Amazon Rainforest's ethnic groups (front) take part in Pope Francis' mass at St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, for the opening of the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region. —AFP

## Migrants raped and trafficked as US and Mexico tighten borders

**MEXICO CITY:** Central American migrants are being kidnapped, raped and trafficked in Mexico as they seek to enter the United States amid a migration crackdown, a medical charity said on Tuesday. In Mexico's Nuevo Laredo city - separated from the United States by the Rio Grande - almost 80% of migrants treated by Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) in the first nine months of 2019 said they had been victims of violence, including kidnapping.

"They're treated as if they aren't really people," Sergio Martin, Mexico coordinator for MSF, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "They've suffered violence ... and what they find on their journey is more violence." Mexico has ramped up efforts to stop Central American migrants, often fleeing violent crime and poverty, reaching the US border under pressure from President Donald Trump who threatened to put import tariffs on its goods.

It has deployed the National Guard to stop migrants crossing northwards and increased detentions and deportations. Mexico's immigration authority and interior ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment. President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has said he wants to apply immigration laws while respecting migrants' human rights.

The United States has sent 57,000 non-Mexican migrants back to Mexico to await their US asylum hearings, restricted asylum criteria and limited the number of claims it receives daily at each port of entry. A US Department of Homeland Security spokesperson said the program to keep asylum seekers in Mexico, known as Migrant Protection Protocols or MPP, was supported by both governments and had given due process to more than 57,000 migrants. "MPP is one of the most important and effective tools we have implemented to confront the crisis on the border and we will continue to strengthen and expand," the spokesperson said. In September, 18 of 41 patients in Nuevo Laredo who had been sent back to Mexico to wait for US asylum processing told MSF they had recently been kidnapped. "We think that as a direct result of many of these policies there are people who are suffering more violence," said Martin. "It's easier for them to fall into human trafficking networks or into extortion networks, and no one look for them."

MSF found 78% of almost 3,700 patients in Mexico who sought mental health care in 2018 and 2019 showed signs of exposure to violence, including assault, sexual violence and torture. Some patients said they had been kidnapped in Mexico for long periods for forced labor, sexual exploitation or recruitment to work for criminal groups. Almost one in four female migrants told MSF they had experienced sexual violence on their journeys. The MSF data was based on some 26,000 health consultations with migrants in 2018 and 2019, testimonials and a survey. —Reuters

## Anglican leader calls his Church a 'deeply institutionally racist'

**LONDON:** The Archbishop of Canterbury has called the Church of England "deeply institutionally racist" and apologized for Britain's treatment of black people and other minorities since World War

## Joe Biden: From frontrunner to edge of collapse

**MANCHESTER:** Once the confident frontrunner for the Democratic nomination, America's centrist senior statesman meant to invigorate his party's effort to oust Donald Trump and reclaim the White House. But the electability candidate, the one who insists he has the best chance at defeating Trump in November, has seen his political fortunes plunge in a single week.

After what he called a "gut punch" of a fourth place finish in the opening contest in Iowa, on Tuesday he faced a second straight drubbing, on track for a shock fifth-place finish in New Hampshire, early results showed. The former vice president saw the writing on the wall and abruptly scrapped plans to spend primary night in New Hampshire, jetting to his stronghold of South Carolina, where a diverse Democratic electorate votes later this month.

With the rise of leftist Bernie Sanders, a senator from neighboring Vermont, Biden faced a severe uphill climb in New Hampshire. But in an embarrassing turn, the 77-year-old Biden was also beaten by Pete Buttigieg, a moderate former small-city mayor less than half his age, and pragmatist Senator Amy Klobuchar. Senator

Elizabeth Warren was eclipsing him too.

No one in the modern history of the Democratic nominating process has performed so poorly in the first two statewide contests and gone on to win the nomination. The hemorrhaging of support is coast to coast. A Monmouth University poll released Tuesday shows Biden's nationwide score dropping by nearly half, from 30 percent before Iowa's caucuses to 16 percent this week.

In the RealClearPolitics aggregate of recent nationwide polls, Biden has now relinquished the top spot that he has held for more than a year, with Sanders at 23 percent and Biden at 20.4 percent. "I don't know that I've seen a sadder week in a campaign than Joe Biden's in New Hampshire," political science professor Dante Scala, of the University of New Hampshire said. "Voters liked Joe Biden well enough, but there was no measure of devotion," he added. "So when he disappointed in Iowa, they went shopping for other candidates."

### 'Come on, man!'

It all marks a stunning decline for the party establishment favorite who is deeply respected among Democrats for his eight years as wingman to popular president Barack Obama. Biden has argued credibly that neither Iowa nor New Hampshire, whiter and other than most of the other 48 states, is a good barometer for the Democratic race and the party's electorate.

## Political ad spending surges as Facebook dominates digital

**WASHINGTON:** Political ad spending is surging for the US election, with digital campaigns-led by Facebook-accounting for nearly one-fifth of the total, researchers said yesterday. A report by eMarketer predicted total campaign media spending jumping 63 percent from four years ago to \$6.89 billion, attributing the rise to the "intensity" of the presidential race as well as many congressional contests.

The forecast for the 2019-2020 election cycle covers spending on federal, state and local ads, including political action committee ads for candidates and lobbying activities. Political ad spending, which is generally highest during presidential campaigns, is likely to be a record, according to eMarketer. "The highly partisan political environment is driving more Americans to donate money to their preferred candidates than in past election seasons, which in turn is funnel-

ing more money into advertising," the eMarketer report said.

Television will account for the largest share of political advertising at \$4.5 billion or 66 percent of the total, taking away some dollars from print and radio, the survey found. "Despite cord-cutting and declining viewership, TV still offers strong reach, particularly among older Americans who are likely to vote," said eMarketer analyst Eric Haggstrom. Digital political ad spending meanwhile is expected to grow more than 200 percent from the past presidential election to \$1.34 billion, and will account for 19.4 percent of the total.

"One of the key benefits of digital advertising over TV is its targeting capabilities," Haggstrom said. "Granular demographic, audience and list-based targeting allows political advertisers to efficiently reach the right people with the right message." Facebook is expected to take in nearly 60 percent of digital dollars, according to eMarketer, with 18 percent for Google and 22 percent for other online services.

"Facebook offers reach, targeting capabilities and ease of use that appeal to political advertisers," Haggstrom said. "Candidates can more quickly and easily send ads to potential supporters compared with TV or radio. In a competitive



**COLUMBIA:** Democratic presidential candidate former Vice President Joe Biden addresses the crowd during a South Carolina campaign launch party in Columbia, South Carolina. —AFP

But bouncing back from a double disaster will take remarkable persistence and focus. His campaign energy has come under scrutiny. He spent Thursday huddling with advisors instead of earning votes. He has stumbled on the trail, often responding to questions with "Come on, man!" In the last debate he conceded he would lose New Hampshire, violating the unwritten rule of eternal optimism.

And he recently lashed out at a voter who questioned him, calling her a "lying

dog-faced pony soldier." Biden, speaking Tuesday from South Carolina where he sought refuge from his New Hampshire beating, insisted he was still in the game, saying the first two states signaled the "opening bell" of the race. "Two of them. Not all the nation, not half the nation, not a quarter of the nation, not 10 percent," he said, adding he still wanted "the most committed constituency in the Democratic Party," African Americans, to weigh in at the ballot box. —AFP



**NANTES:** Photo shows the logo of the US online social media and social networking service, Facebook. —AFP

election, timeliness, efficiency and relevancy are incredibly important." Online platforms have faced pressure to curb political misinformation-including from candidate ads-but have taken different approaches.

Twitter has banned all political candidate ads and Google has placed limits on "microtargeting" of specific demo-

graphic groups, while Facebook has taken a mostly hands-off approach to political advertising. Most of the money spent on Google is for YouTube video ads, according to eMarketer. "YouTube is popular because campaigns can run the same or similar ads that they are running on TV, while reaching a different audience," Haggstrom said. —AFP

criminals from being deported to Jamaica. Campaigners argued that Britain was sending back some people who came to Britain as young children and had no links to the Caribbean island state.

But Prime Minister Boris Johnson insisted on Tuesday that "these individuals should have taken the precaution of not being serious criminals". The Court of Appeal ruled that 25 of the 50 people up for deportation had been denied proper legal advice because the phone signal in their Heathrow detention centre did not work. Eight of the 25 cases are now being reviewed by the Home Office after campaigners filed fresh legal appeals. —AFP

told the General Synod there was "no doubt" the Church of England was still "deeply institutionally racist". "We did not do justice in the past, we do not do justice now, and unless we are radical and decisive in this area in the future, we will still be having this conversation in 20 years' time," the archbishop said. "We have damaged the Church, we have damaged the image of God and most of all, we have damaged those we victimized."

The Times newspaper separately quoted him as saying: "I'm ashamed of my lack of urgent voice to the Church... It's shaming as well as shocking." The resolution was adopted the same day as a last-minute court ruling kept 25 convicted foreign-born

II. Anglican clerics adopted a motion late on Tuesday seeking forgiveness from the so-called Windrush generation that moved to Britain from former Caribbean colonies since 1948.

The mass migration was promoted by the government to help rebuild the United Kingdom from the ruins of war. Yet none received documents confirming their UK citizenship and the Caribbean countries' subsequent independence saw many denied basic rights. Dozens were also wrongly deported in a scandal that rocked the government of former prime minister Theresa May.

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, the highest-ranking cleric in the Anglican communion,



## International

# Duterte terminates Philippines troop pact, US calls the move ‘unfortunate’

## ‘Serious step with significant implications’: Washington

**MANILA:** Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday announced the termination of a two-decade-old Visiting Forces Agreement with the United States (VFA), delivering on threats to downgrade an alliance important to US interests. US Defense Secretary Mark Esper called the decision “unfortunate” and said it would be a move in the wrong direction at a time when Washington and its allies were trying to press China to abide by “international rules of order” in Asia.

The mercurial Duterte, who has clashed with the United States over several issues, decided to pull the plug on the troop rotation pact with the former colonial ruler to enable the Philippines to be more independent in its relations with other countries, his spokesman Salvador Panelo said. “The president will not entertain any initiative coming from the US government to salvage the VFA, neither will he accept any official invitation to visit the United States,” Panelo said.

The decision, sparked by the revocation of a US visa held by a former police chief who led Duterte’s bloody war on drugs, could complicate US military interests in the Asia-Pacific region as China’s ambitions rise. It would also limit Philippine access to US training and expertise in tackling Islamist extremism, natural disasters and maritime security threats. Panelo said Duterte’s decision was a consequence of US legislative and executive actions that “bordered on assaulting our sovereignty and disrespecting our judicial system”.

Given the importance of the alliance with the Philippines in broader US strategy, Washington hopes the decision will be reversed or delayed before it takes legal effect in 180 days. Esper told reporters travelling with him to Brussels for a NATO meeting he only received notification of the move late on Monday.

“We have to digest it. We have to work through the policy angles, the military angles. I’m going to hear from my commanders. But ... in my view, it’s unfortunate that they would make this move,” he said. While he said he did not think the step was necessarily tied to China, it was a

move “in the wrong direction as we both bilaterally with the Philippines and collectively with a number of other partners and allies in the region are trying to say to the Chinese ‘You must obey the international rules of order...’”

### Sets out rules

The VFA is important to the overall US-Philippines alliance and sets out rules for US soldiers to operate in the Philippines. It underpins what Washington has called an “ironclad” relationship despite Duterte’s complaints about US hypocrisy, ill treatment and ageing weapons. Duterte says the United States uses the pacts to conduct clandestine activities like spying and nuclear weapons stockpiling, which he says risk making the Philippines a target for Chinese aggression.

Ending the VFA could hurt Washington’s future interests in maintaining an Asia-Pacific troop presence amid friction over the presence of US personnel in Japan and South Korea and security concerns about China and North Korea. Some Filipino senators sought to block Duterte’s move soon after news of it broke, arguing that without Senate approval he had no right to unilaterally scrap international pacts it had ratified.

“We must have a say on this important matter,” said Senator Richard Gordon. Some lawmakers are concerned that without the VFA, two other pacts would be irrelevant, namely the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement made under the Obama administration, and a 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty.

Those cover dozens of annual military training exercises and broaden the access of US forces and equipment to the Philippines, as well as bind the two countries to defend each other from external aggression. Supporters of the agreements argue they have deterred Chinese militarization in the South China Sea and \$1.3 billion of US defense assistance since 1998 has been vital in boosting the capabilities of under-resourced Philippine forces.

Philippine nationalists, however, say the United States



**FORT MAGSAYSAY:** Philippine soldiers and a US Army soldier from the 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat unit of the 5th Infantry Division based in Hawaii take their positions after disembarking from a C-47 Chinook helicopter during an air assault exercise inside the military training camp at Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija province. — AFP

did nothing to stop China building islands in the South China Sea equipped with missiles, and say the VFA is lopsidedly favorable to Americans, including the granting of immunity from prosecution for US servicemen. Duterte, who

favors closer ties with China and Russia, pressed ahead with the termination despite a Senate hearing on the VFA last week during which his senior generals and defense and foreign ministers spoke in favor of it. — AFP

## US-Taleban breakthrough appears closer

**KABUL:** The US and the Taleban appeared closer yesterday to a breakthrough in talks over an American troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said there had been “notable progress” in negotiations. Washington and the insurgents have been locked in grueling discussions that have stretched over more than a year for a deal that would see the US pull thousands of troops out of Afghanistan. In return, the Taleban would provide various security guarantees and launch eventual talks with the Kabul government.

In a series of tweets late Tuesday, Ghani said US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had called him to inform him of developments in the talks, which are taking place in Doha. “Today, I was pleased to receive a call from @SecPompeo, informing me of the notable progress made in the ongoing peace talks with the Taleban,” Ghani said on his official Twitter account. “The Secretary informed me about the Taleban’s



**KABUL:** Afghan soldiers gather on a road following a suicide attack near the Marshal Fahim Military Academy base in Kabul. — AFP

proposal with regards to bringing a significant and enduring reduction in violence.” A Taleban source in Pakistan told AFP that insurgent and US negotiators would meet again Wednesday in Doha.

Citing Afghan and US officials, the New

York Times reported that US President Donald Trump had given conditional approval to a deal with the Taleban. The two foes have been on the brink of a breakthrough before, with a deal all but complete in September before Trump nixed it at the last moment amid

continued Taleban violence. The Times said Trump would only give final approval to the deal if the Taleban stick to a reduction in violence of “about seven days later this month”. The Taleban source in Pakistan said the group has agreed to the proposal.

He said to all intents and purposes, this would be a ceasefire, but it could not be named that because of various “complications”. Despite ongoing talks between the US and the Taleban, Afghanistan’s war has raged on, with the number of clashes jumping to record levels in the last quarter of 2019, according to a recent US government watchdog report. Afghans living in a Pakistani refugee camp were skeptical any deal could lead to real peace, with one, 60-year-old Hazrat Hussain, warning that a US withdrawal could see the country plunge into civil war – as it did after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union in 1989.

“People are afraid of infighting and a new war,” he said at the camp on the outskirts of the northwestern city of Peshawar. In his annual State of the Union address on February 4, Trump renewed his vow to negotiate a troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. “We are working to finally end America’s longest war and bring our troops back home,” he said, offering his blessing for the negotiations with the Taleban. —AFP

## ‘Exhausted’: Doctors at China’s coronavirus epicenter unprotected and overworked

**BEIJING:** Doctors on the frontline of China’s new coronavirus epidemic are facing a daunting task: treat an ever-growing number of infected patients and risk getting infected themselves due to a drastic shortage of masks and other protective equipment. Tired and understaffed, medical workers have had to deal with thousands of new cases per week in Wuhan, the city at the epicenter of the outbreak that first emerged late last year. Many doctors have had to see patients without proper masks or protective body suits, resorting to reusing the same equipment when they should be changed regularly.

Some have even worn diapers to avoid having to take off the equipment and make it last longer, according to a health official. One doctor at a community clinic in Wuhan said he and at least 16 other colleagues were showing symptoms similar to the new virus, including lung infections and coughing. “As doctors, we do not want to work while being a source of infection,” he told AFP, requesting anonymity for fear of reprisals.

But “right now, there is no one to replace you,” the doctor explained, adding that all medical staff without a fever are expected to work. “What would happen if there was no one working on the frontline?” Some 44 percent of the 42,600 cases nationwide – and the majority of more than 1,100 deaths – have been in Wuhan, home to a wild animal market where the virus is suspected of having originated before spreading between humans.

The risks medical staff are facing was highlighted on Friday after Li Wenliang, a whistle-blowing doctor in Wuhan, succumbed to the disease more than a month after he first raised alarm about a new SARS-like virus in the city. His death unleashed an outpouring of grief and anger on Chinese



**ISLAMABAD:** Parents and relatives of Pakistani students studying in the Chinese city of Wuhan, where the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus began, stand behind a banner during a protest to demand the government the evacuation of their loved ones in Islamabad yesterday. — AFP

social media, with 10 academics in Wuhan circulating an open letter calling for political reform and freedom of speech.

### Mask deficit

The deputy mayor of Wuhan said on Friday the city faced a daily shortage of 56,000 N95 masks and 41,000 protective suits. Medical staff in protective suits will “wear diapers, reduce how much water they drink, and reduce how many times they use the bathroom,” said Jiao Yahui, a top official at China’s National Health Commission. Some of them will wear the same protective suit for six or even nine hours, when they should not be worn for more than four hours in a quarantined ward, she said last week. “Of course, we don’t advocate this method, but medical staff really have no alternative,” she admitted.

The Chinese government has

responded by mobilizing the entire country to increase production of masks and suits. As of Monday, three-quarters of mask and suit producers had resumed work following an extended Lunar New Year holiday, said Cong Liang, an official at China’s top economic planner. China has also imported more than 300 million masks and about 3.9 million articles of protective clothing since January 24, an official said last week.

The Red Cross Society of China too has received over 900 million yuan (\$129 million) in donations for epidemic relief — though it has drawn scrutiny for its lack of transparency and efficiency. “Even if we receive more masks, the number of patients increases even faster,” said a doctor at a major Wuhan hospital, who requested anonymity because she was not authorized to speak with media. — AFP

## All-at-sea cruise ship finally gets permission to berth

**PATTAYA:** Aboard a US cruise ship that was rejected at Asian ports over coronavirus fears, stoic passengers kept their spirits up with poolside yoga, spin classes, comedy shows and a few drinks. But the 1,455 passengers and 802 crew members of the Westerdam really rejoiced yesterday after learning Cambodia had given permission for the cruise liner to dock at Sihanoukville, on its southern coast.

The scheduled arrival today will bring an end to what was meant to be a dream 14-day cruise across Asia – beginning from Hong Kong on February 1, and disembarking on Saturday in Yokohama, Japan. Japan, Guam, the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand all refused to allow the ship to dock, despite Holland America insisting there were no cases of the deadly disease – which has killed over 1,100 – on board.

Several other cruise ships have been refused entry at ports across the Asia-Pacific region – from Singapore to Tonga – as fears over the virus spike. Cambodia’s decision to receive the Westerdam comes as its strongman leader has voiced vocal support for China – with premier Hun Sen going so far as to travel to Beijing last week in a show of solidarity.

The Southeast Asian nation – with just one confirmed case of the SARS-like virus – has been the recipient of billions of dollars in soft loans, infrastructure and investment from its superpower ally. “Guests will be able to go ashore,” operator Holland America said in a statement. “We are extremely grateful to the Cambodian authorities for their support.” Even with their holiday plans in tatters, passengers made the most of the extraordinary circumstances – some taking to social media to share amusing asides on life unwanted and at sea. “Not a bad place to be captive. I’m in the salon having my hair done right now and getting ready to hit the buffet,” Christina Kerby said on Twitter, where her photos of yoga or posts on morning spin classes have bounced around. Speaking to AFP after hearing of their final destination, her reaction was one of elation – “Thrilled! Thank you, Cambodia!” she said, adding a heart emoji. The mood on board was “relieved and upbeat”. “At this point we’re just happy to have a destination,” she said.

### Barred from docking

The atmosphere is in stark contrast to the gloom aboard the Diamond Princess, a quarantined Japanese cruise ship riddled with the virus which has forced passengers into a depressing lockdown in cabins. “We’re all good. The mood is positive... there’s no tension on board” said Lorraine Oliveira, from Ireland, on the ship with her husband and two children.

Before it was barred from docking, boat operator Holland America Line initially said the cruise will disembark today at Thailand’s Laem Chabang port, a few hours east of Bangkok. With no idea of where they would make land or when, passengers cancelled onward flights, travel plans scrambled by events – and governments – beyond their control. Holland America said yesterday that all onward travel from Sihanoukville will be arranged and paid for, and full refunds will be given to guests.

“All guests on board are healthy and, despite erroneous reports, there are no known or suspected cases of coronavirus on board,” it added. Passenger Stephen Hansen confirmed to AFP that there was “no sickness on board”. He also believes Thailand’s refusal to let Westerdam dock was “a political situation, not a health one”. Health authorities in Tonga have refused entry to three cruise liners – CMV Astor, CMV Columbus and Crystal Serenity —due to dock in the Pacific island nation yesterday.

A fourth passenger ship Wind Spirit, which had been set to arrive on Saturday, was also told to stay away. The diversion notice did not say where the ships were headed but online trackers suggested the Astor was steaming towards Auckland, Columbus and Serenity were Fiji-bound and Wind Spirit was still near Tahiti. — AFP

## Pakistan jails alleged mastermind of 2008 Mumbai terror attack

**LAHORE:** The alleged mastermind of a deadly attack on India’s financial capital over a decade ago has been jailed in Pakistan for nearly six years on separate terror charges, his lawyer said yesterday. Hafiz Saeed was found guilty of “being part of a banned terrorist outfit” and for “having illegal property”, his lawyer Imran Gill said. He is wanted in India for allegedly planning the shocking 2008 attack in Mumbai, when 10 Islamist militants armed with assault rifles, hand grenades and other weapons killed 166 people and injured hundreds more. It took the authorities three days to regain full control of the city.

Lawyer Gill gave no details about Saeed’s conviction apart from saying he would be kept in prison in the eastern city of Lahore. The firebrand cleric – declared a global terrorist by the United States and United Nations, and with a \$10 million bounty on his head – is the leader of the Jamaat-ud-Dawa Islamist charity. Its militant wing Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) is believed by Washington and Delhi to be responsible for the Mumbai attacks. India has long said there is evidence that “official agencies” in Pakistan were involved in plotting the attack – a charge Islamabad denies.

Saeed has denied involvement, but has spent years in and out of varying forms of detention in Pakistan, sometimes under house arrest, on various charges. For the most part he has been free to move at will around the country, enraging India which has repeatedly called for his prosecution. His most recent arrest came in July last year. At the time, US President Donald Trump tweeted that he had been detained “after a ten-year search”, prompting derision from cynical Pakistanis. The US Foreign Affairs Committee also noted then that Saeed had been arrested and released eight times since 2001. Islamabad, which is widely believed to use jihadist groups such as LeT as proxies against India, has long been under international pressure to crack down on militancy. Saeed’s jailing comes as Pakistan faces potential blacklisting by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) – an anti-money-laundering monitor based in Paris – for failing to combat terror financing. — AFP



## Analysis

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## New Hampshire result clogs up moderate lane for Democrats

Bernie Sanders may have established himself as the standard-bearer for the Democratic Party's leftist wing with his strong showing in Iowa and New Hampshire, but for moderates looking to rally around a candidate to fend him off, the picture just got even murkier. Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, seemed well positioned to be the early favorite of the party's moderates after his narrow win in Iowa's first-in-the-nation caucuses - until a surge by Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar largely split the moderate vote between them in New Hampshire.

And while former Vice President Joe Biden lagged badly in both Iowa and New Hampshire, as the only moderate with substantial backing from African-American and Latino voters, he has vowed to fight on until Nevada and South Carolina, both with significant non-white populations, render their verdicts. The three are also bracing for the entry of former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who is skipping the early contests but has built an unprecedented self-funded campaign machine to compete in expensive states such as California and Texas, which vote in March.

The outcomes of the first two nominating contests suggest that the battle for the Democratic nomination to beat Republican President Donald Trump in November could go on for weeks or even months, and who ends up the champion of the party's moderates is shaping up to be key. At the end of Tuesday night's primary, the votes amassed by Buttigieg, Klobuchar and Biden - a combined total of 53 percent with 91 percent of precincts reporting - easily outpaced the votes received by Sanders and his fellow liberal, Senator Elizabeth Warren, who together won 35 percent in a possible sign that voters still prefer a centrist candidate who could appeal to a broader electorate, including independents and Republicans.

Sanders "is still a ways from taking much of a lead in delegates," said David Hopkins, an expert on presidential politics at Boston College. "If the other candidates do well enough that no one is forced out of the race, we sort of move on." Iowa and New Hampshire award just 65 out of the 3,979 pledged delegates who will help select a Democratic nominee.

### Panic

While Sanders, a senator from neighboring Vermont, got less than 30 percent of the vote in New Hampshire on Tuesday - compared to the 60 percent he won in 2016 in a two-way race with Hillary Clinton - there was no denying that his slim victory gave him the opportunity to build momentum. Much of the Democratic mainstream worries that the unapologetically liberal Sanders would lose a match-up with Trump.

"There is some panic that is really starting to settle in with establishment Democrats with the idea of Bernie Sanders being at the top of the ticket," said Joel Payne, a Democratic strategist who worked for the Clinton campaign in 2016. "The chatter I hear is higher than ever on that." Sanders supporters, like Democratic Congressman Mark Pocan from Wisconsin, the co-chair of Congressional Progressive Caucus, believe the party will rally behind Sanders if he keeps winning and proves that his message is connecting with voters. "I think everyone understands that he's got a message that is appealing to a lot of people," said Pocan, who joined Sanders on the campaign trail in Iowa.

### Next phase

The next two nominating states have diverse electorates and could provide a different verdict from Iowa and New Hampshire where whites account for more than 90 percent of the population. Sanders, who has focused on turning out voters of color, young voters and irregular voters, has a strong chance to win Nevada, with its large Latino population, while Biden is still hoping to call upon South Carolina's African Americans to resuscitate his campaign.

While a new national poll this week from Quinnipiac University showed Biden support among black Democrats sliding from 51 percent to 27 percent, that's still ahead of 22 percent for Bloomberg and 19 percent for Sanders. "Up 'til now we haven't heard from the most committed constituency in the Democratic Party, the African-American constituency, 99.9 percent. That's the percentage of African-American voters who have not yet had the chance to vote yet in America," Biden said in Columbia, South Carolina, on Tuesday night. "When you hear all these pundits and experts on TV talk about the race, tell them, it ain't over, it's just getting started," he argued after his disappointing fifth-place finish in New Hampshire. Both Buttigieg and Klobuchar face challenges over the African-American vote. Neither has shown inroads with black voters, with Buttigieg especially hampered by criticism of his tenure as mayor of South Bend, largely over his management of the police department and his economic development priorities. — Reuters

**All articles appearing on this page are the personal opinion of the writers. Kuwait Times takes no responsibility for views expressed therein.**



Egyptian laborers work at a charcoal factory in Egypt's Sharkia governorate, in the fertile Delta north of the capital Cairo, on Jan 29, 2020. — AFP



## Smoke, soot and sweat: Egypt's charcoal workers

To fuel Egyptians' love for shisha pipes and barbeques, Said Mahrous and his men toil in an open-air furnace, inhaling thick plumes of smoke day in, day out. Covered in soot and sweat, their faces blackened, they labor in a village near Cairo over burning mounds of charcoal, without gloves, facemasks or health insurance. Health and environmental concerns fall by the wayside when lumps of charcoal must be bagged at the end of the day and transported across the country.

"The smoke doesn't really affect me - I've gotten used to it working here for over 35 years," says Mahrous. "I'm an old fahham from way back," adds the 48-year-old, using the local term for a coal worker. "My father

plucked me out of school, and I have continued the tradition because he was one too." The site in Inshas, in the fertile Nile River delta north of the Egyptian capital, employs dozens of men working for about 2,000 pounds (\$125) a month.

The workers take tree trunks sourced from nearby towns, clear them of branches and stack them according to their girth. They then throw them on 40-square-metre (430-square-feet) patches of field that become smoldering furnaces. The trunks must be dried out first, a task that takes about a year, says Mahrous. "Then we build the furnace, add rice straw and start the fire, which burns for about 10 to 15 days."

Dirt and rice stalks trap the heat and stop the fire from

spreading. Mahrous explains that different trees produce specific types of charcoal. Wood from mango and orange trees is charred for smoking shisha, while the charcoal from casuarina, camphor and olive trees is used for barbeques. The mounds are then hosed down with water to cool them, but the tinders still smolder underneath as smoke rises up into the air.

Using shovels, the workers dig down and break up the charcoal, sifting and then bagging it. About two tons of wood produce one ton of charcoal. Mahrous admits the work is taking a toll, telling AFP that "the heavy lifting of tree trunks sometimes hurts my back". "For my kids, I hope they can get well paid jobs," he says. "But if they can't find any, then they will work with me." — AFP

## Draft US law seeks to make plastic industry responsible for waste

Carry your own cup to the coffee shop. Recycle that soda bottle. Say no to straws. The growing global crisis of plastics waste is often framed as a problem stemming from careless consumers, but a new bill introduced in the US Congress Tuesday seeks to shift the responsibility back to industry. The proposed "Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act," introduced by Democratic lawmakers, would be the most ambitious regulation the US plastics industry has ever seen. It would require producers to collect and recycle their own waste, create a nationwide drink container refund scheme and phase out certain single-use plastic items.

Permitting of new plastic production would be paused for up to three years under the proposal. But it has little chance of passage in the Senate where a Republican majority opposes curbs on an industry that generates about \$400 billion in sales and maintains almost a million manufacturing jobs. Still, observers say it signals the growing sway of environmental groups on mainstream politics. "The plastics industry has convinced everybody if you put your (recycling) bin out on the corner, you've done everything you can do," Democratic Senator Tom Udall of New Mexico, one of its co-sponsors, told AFP. "We needed the industry to change the whole model."

For decades, the industry has sponsored initiatives to encourage consumers to leave their plastics out for recycling.

cling in blue bins. Yet the United States recycles only around eight percent of its plastic waste each year, with the rest - some 32 million tons - landfilled, incinerated or shipped overseas to other countries that are poorly equipped to handle it. That's representative of the global history of plastic itself: 90.5 percent of the 6.3 billion metric tons of plastic waste that has accumulated since the man-made material was first produced in the 1950s until 2015 has never been recycled.

### Growing climate issue

The bill would require producers of certain plastic products to design, manage and finance programs that collect and process product waste - normally the purview of state and local governments. Beginning in 2022, they would have to phase out many single-use items like carryout bags, and polystyrene containers. It would also create a 10-cent national refund program for all beverage containers, schemes that have proved highly successful at the state level.

Alan Lowenthal, a congressman from California and another co-sponsor, told reporters he was especially proud the bill would prevent plastic waste being exported to less developed countries where it ends up in landfills and waterways, harming human health and endangering wildlife. But perhaps most ambitiously, it would place a hold on new plastic production, which the oil and gas industry sees as its next growth area as demand for fossil fuel energy tapers down in the coming decades.

Global plastic production is set to triple by 2050, accounting for 20 percent of global oil consumption, according to an estimate by the World Economic Forum. That makes it a growing climate issue too. A report for the Center for International Environment Law found that

in 2019, the production and incineration of plastic pumps more than 850 million metric tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere - equal to the emissions of 189 coal power plants generating 500 megawatts each.

### Pushback

Mark Spalding, CEO of the Ocean Foundation, told AFP the bill was the result of a growing public push, with consumer-led boycotts or local-level bans of items like straws, plastic bags and polystyrene cups helping to raise new levels of awareness. He added the bill signified a relatively new policy approach, known as "extended producer responsibility" that the European Union has taken a lead on with its ban on certain single-use plastic items by 2021. Canada has announced a similar move.

"This bill would finally tackle the plastic crisis at its source by reducing the amount produced in the first place, and encouraging a shift to refillable and reusable alternatives," added Jacqueline Savitz, chief policy officer of Oceana, a non-profit ocean conservation organization. But it was denounced by the Plastics Industry Association, which lobbies for the industry and has a political action committee that contributes to lawmakers' election campaigns - overwhelmingly to Republicans.

"The title of this bill suggests it is more interested in garnering headlines than it is in finding solutions," said the group's President Tony Radoszewski. "Furthermore, this legislation's efforts to shut down plastics manufacturing would hurt the nearly one million hard-working men and women in our industry and the nation's economy as a whole." Udall told AFP that while his bill was unlikely to become law soon, it was intended as a model "so that when we have an administration and a Senate that's more receptive, that we can get something done." — AFP

## Beyond UN: Conflict mediators go where others fear to tread

David Gorman knew early on he wanted to help resolve conflicts and make peace, but he was wary of becoming a diplomat tethered to the interests of a single country. Instead, he entered an expanding sector of non-governmental organizations and independent actors serving as peace mediators around the world. "If you are not attached to a government, you can be impartial, you don't have to subscribe to a certain policy view," said Gorman, regional director for Eurasia at the Geneva-based Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD).

"You are more independent, and you can be more creative," the 50-year-old, one of nearly 60 peace mediators at HD, told AFP. With the United Nations often restrained by competing interests and many governments treading cautiously, independent actors are increasingly taking over. There are cases where you realize that "the UN can't do this, states can't do this, they need something else", Gorman said.

### 'Like a laboratory'

As a teenager growing up in an Irish-Catholic family in the US city of Boston in the 1970s, Gorman was keenly aware of conflicts in Northern Ireland, as well as in the Middle East, and the 1979 Iran hostage situation. He said he realized early on that "grave misunderstandings" could lead to "unnecessary conflict" and had a "sense it did not have to be this way". After training as a mediator in Washington, he went on his first mission to Israel at just 24.

He has been globe-trotting from conflict to conflict ever since and joined the HD Centre in its infancy two decades



David Gorman

conflict for 15 years before finally acknowledging their role and declaring success. Gorman said the public triumph was important to demonstrate "that these types of processes can work". And yet, before a process reaches the final stage, the greatest value HD mediators add is discretion, he said.

Mediators unattached to a specific policy agenda or the UN can host informal discussions between people who might not be ready to acknowledge publicly they are in contact. "It can almost be like a kind of laboratory," Gorman said. But HD and its peers are considered "weak mediators" as they have less leverage than someone with the weight of a state or the UN behind them. They can also face greater suspicions of being spies. "People wonder what your motive is here, your agenda for getting involved in a conflict," Gorman said.

### 'The long haul'

HD receives funds from the likes of the European Union, Norway, Germany and Switzerland, but none from the United States or other countries that might have an interest in the conflicts it mediates. "So much of this is about credibility, and if we lose credibility, we lose that

trust with the parties then our whole edifice comes crashing down," Gorman said. Since joining HD, he has been involved in mediating around 20 different conflicts - including in the Philippines, Myanmar, Libya, Sierra Leone and Myanmar.

When he begins a project, he is often signing up for years of following an ever-shifting situation, often in dangerous settings. Currently, he has a hand in mediation efforts in 10 situations, including the conflict in Ukraine. "We are not in a diplomatic posting where we do it for four years and then we are out. We are in it for the long haul," he said. Carving out some private space can be difficult in this line of work. Gorman travels every week but tries to spend weekends with his wife and three children at their home on Cyprus. For the children, "conflict is about their problems with their siblings or their parents, which I don't get involved in mediating because I am a party to those," he said.

### 'Handing the baton'

Gorman and other independent mediators can spend years quietly doing the groundwork for peace talks only to have more official teams steer the process across the finish line and take the credit. The first project Gorman worked on with HD was the drawn-out conflict between the Indonesian government and Aceh separatists. After years of work, HD stepped back and the Finland-based Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) secured a final peace agreement in 2004.

CMI's founder, former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari, won the 2008 Nobel Peace Prize in part for his efforts in Indonesia. Gorman acknowledged it was sometimes frustrating "if you do all the work and someone else ... gets the medal". But, he said, mediation work is about "handing the baton". "It is like a puzzle," he said, adding that he sometimes tells himself he may not have crossed the finish line, "but I did get that key middle piece there that was critical to the success of the process". "That feels good." — AFP



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2020

# Business

## Zain concludes sale and leaseback of its telecom towers in Kuwait to IHS

\$130 million deal approved by Kuwait’s CITRA and supported by KDIPA

**KUWAIT:** In a regional first, Zain Group, the leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces that its flagship operation in Kuwait has completed the sale and leaseback of the passive physical infrastructure of its 1,620 mobile tower portfolio for \$130 million (KD 40 million) to IHS Holding Limited (IHS). The transaction is the first sale and leaseback of telecom towers in the Middle East region by a licensed mobile operator.

The transaction valuation was aimed at helping Zain to maximize efficiency in its operating model, taking into account future lease terms and the expansion of 5G towers across Kuwait. Under the terms of the transaction, Zain is selling only its passive, physical infrastructure to the new entity and will retain its intelligent software, technology and intellectual property with respect to managing its network. The transaction has been formally approved by Kuwait’s Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA), whose pro-active policies for the telecom sector are in line with new Kuwait Vision 2035. Furthermore, the deal was championed by the Kuwait

**Bader Al-Kharafi:** “This historical transaction unlocks value for shareholders as it gives us greater flexibility to focus on higher yielding digital investments, 5G expansion and operational efficiencies”

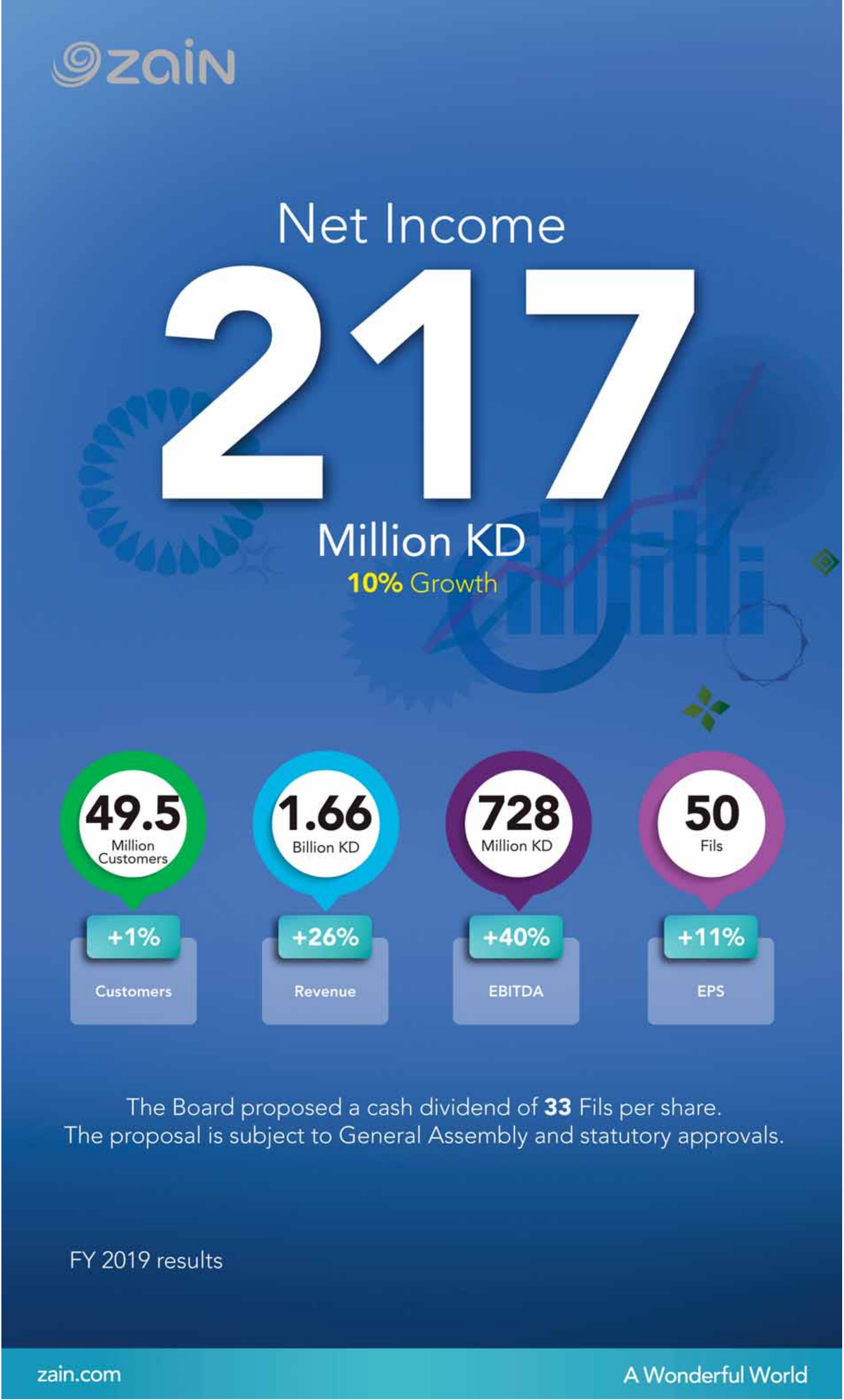
- A regional first, transaction involves only the physical infrastructure

Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), which played a key role in attracting the foreign investment and facilitating the transaction process.

Bader Al-Kharafi, Vice-Chairman and Group CEO of Zain said, “This historical transaction unlocks value for shareholders as it gives us greater flexibility to focus on higher yielding digital investments, 5G expansion and operational efficiencies in Kuwait. It also supports Zain’s transformational strategy in becoming a digital lifestyle provider through optimizing service delivery and enhancing customer experience.”

Al-Kharafi added, “I’m very proud of the Zain team for its professionalism in completing this first agreement of its kind in the MENA region. I’m also very appreciative of the positive support of both CITRA and KDIPA which were instrumental in making this deal happen. We are confident we have chosen the right partner in IHS, a company that possesses high caliber expertise with sound operational experience in diverse markets.”

Sam Darwish, Chairman and Group CEO of IHS commented, “We are delighted to have successfully concluded this transaction with Zain and look forward to a long and successful partnership over the coming years in Kuwait and potentially beyond.”





## Business

# Peugeot, Al Shaya & Al Sagar, closes in on best-ever year in Kuwait market

## 168% sales growth during 2019 • KAICO leads the charge for the French brand



**KUWAIT:** Peugeot is continuing to buck the automotive market trend across the GCC, as new figures released by the French vehicle manufacturer show that the company has enjoyed a year-on-year sales increase of 62 percent over the first ten months of 2019.

Customers in Kuwait have purchased 68 percent more cars and vans than by this stage last year, while Oman is already experiencing strong demand for the brand's products, having only been relaunched in the Sultanate at the end of 2018.

Peugeot's range of stylish and innovative cars are proving ever more popular amongst motorists across the GCC. Leading the charge this year is the company's award-winning flagship SUV, the 3008, followed by the

7-seat SUV, the 5008. Peugeot's recently launched premium saloon, the 508 is also finding a growing number of new homes. In October Peugeot launched its elegant Traveller 'CombiSpace', with room for up to nine occupants, at a time when the brand's range of robust Light Commercial Vehicles (LCVs) continue to gain traction. Just over half of all Peugeot LCV sales are of the versatile Expert, with the Boxer and Partner models accounting for around 20 percent each.

Ashish Tandon, General Manager at Kaico, said: "Despite the challenging market conditions, the brand's resurgence in the region continues apace, as more and more customers discover the many benefits of owning a Peugeot. We aim to finish 2019 at close to

double the number of vehicles sold when compared to 2018. It's an ambitious target, but we are confident that the brand is perfectly positioned to continue to go from strength to strength."

As well Nader Salmeh, Senior executive manager added "2019 was a defining year for Kaico. The achieved results reflect the trust we have from clients in the Kuwaiti market & is the hard work of a dedicated team that aims to prevail. The success we achieved will be our new benchmark for more prosperity."

With a firm focus on the 'Push to Pass' strategy - Groupe PSA's vision to become a global carmaker on the leading edge of efficiency and a benchmark supplier of mobility services - 2019 has seen major steps

taken to establish the Peugeot brand in the region. Key recent appointments have included a new Executive Vice President of Middle-East Africa region, a new Head of Dealer Operations and a new Head of Quality and Training at Groupe PSA GCC.

Stimulating, rewarding driving, sleek design, and uncompromising quality form the brand's pledge to its customers and help produce the emotion provided by each Peugeot vehicle. Operating in around 160 countries with more than 10,000 points of sale, the brand sold more than 1,740,000 vehicles in 2018. Peugeot combines exacting standards, allure and emotion with the goal of being the definitive high-end, broad-based brand with global reach.



## Express your love with a Joyalukkas Be Mine Collection this Valentine's Day

**KUWAIT:** For those who are looking for the perfect gift for their loved this Valentine's Day, Joyalukkas has lined up a range of exquisite designs to special day, under its Be Mine Collection. The limited-edition collection features intimate heart-themed jewelry including pendants, rings, earrings and bracelets in certified diamonds, rose and yellow gold. Keeping up the tradition of celebrating the day of love, Joyalukkas has announced exciting offers to make the day all the more special.

John Paul Alukkas, Executive Director, Joyalukkas Group said "Today, people are getting more creative in terms of the gift they choose for their loved ones. They are seeking something that's more than ordinary. Keeping up with the trend, we have redesigned our whole range of Be Mine Collection, which is trendy, young and eye-catching. You will see a world of change in the patterns as compared to last year's collection. I invite everyone to explore our collection and take advantage of our offers. I wish everyone a Happy Valentine's Day."

During the promotion period, customers will be rewarded with a free 2-gram Gold Coin on purchase of Diamond, Polki and Pearl Jewelry worth KD 400 and more. For similar purchases worth KD 250, customers will be rewarded with a free 1-gram Gold Coin. Customers can also enjoy 0 percent deduction on Gold Exchange. The Valentine's Day offers are valid till 15th February 2020 across all Joyalukkas showrooms.



## Samsung joins the fold with Galaxy Z Flip smartphone

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Samsung on Tuesday unveiled its second folding smartphone, a "Z Flip" handset with a lofty price tag aimed at "trendsetters." The smartphone flips open, like a case, opening into a 6.7-inch screen, and fits in a pocket when folded.

Ultrathin glass used for the screen can be folded and unfolded more than 200,000 times and resists scratches, according to Samsung.

The Galaxy Z Flip will be available beginning Friday at a starting price of \$1,380, head of Samsung product marketing Rebecca Hirst said at a San Francisco unveiling. "It changes everything-space, size, and the very way we use it," Hirst said as she held a Z Flip in the palm of a hand.

"The Z Flip is a statement smartphone; it is for trendsetters and trailblazers." When closed, the Z Flip displays notifications such as time and phone calls, and can still be used to take photos. The new device comes amid growing interest in folding handsets, and a similar "flip" Razr device recently introduced by Motorola. Samsung launched its first foldable handset, the Galaxy Fold, in September after faulty screens forced an embarrassing delay of the release of the \$2,000 device.

Folding smartphones have been introduced by Chinese makers Huawei and Royole. Analyst Patrick Moorhead of Moor Insights & Strategy said Samsung was moving ahead of iPhone maker Apple, which he does not expect to develop foldable screens in a handset for at least three years. "I think that Apple is a bit risk averse when it comes to designs these days," Moorhead said.

### New 5G handset

Samsung also introduced a new Galaxy S 20 Ultra flagship model for its lineup of smartphones synched to new 5G telecommunication networks. "5G will completely change how we communicate, how we game, and how we engage with the world around us," Samsung head of US mobile product management



**SAN FRANCISCO:** Moroccan actress-model Leila Hadoui takes a selfie while holding a Samsung Galaxy Z Flip phone displayed during the Samsung Galaxy Unpacked 2020 event in San Francisco, California yesterday. —AFP

Drew Blackard said during the presentation.

"This is the year of Galaxy 5G, and it begins right here with the Galaxy S 20." Unlike rivals, Samsung has introduced a line of three 5G smartphones instead of just one model, aiming to be in the lead in that market, according to analyst Jack Gold of J. Gold Associates. Galaxy S 20 models boast high definition 8K quality camera capabilities, and the Ultra model zoom magnifies views up to 100 times, according to demonstrations. Galaxy S 20 5G models have a starting price of \$999 and will be released on March 6, according to the South Korean electronics giant, which has been at or near the top of the smartphone market in recent years.

### New collaborations

Samsung also announced new collaborations with streaming television titan Netflix and Xbox video game console maker Microsoft. "We believe this is a significant partnership that will provide millions of Samsung users around the globe the best entertainment experience," said Netflix chief marketing officer

Jackie Lee-Joe. "Great stories come from anywhere and should be loved everywhere." Netflix will be providing Samsung S 20 phones to creators of some of its original shows to make content for the global streaming platform.

An Xbox car racing game, "Forza Street," has been tailored for play on S 20 phones, according to Samsung. "This is just the beginning of or gaming partnership with Xbox," said head of US mobile channel marketing David Park. Samsung also touted working closely with Google to integrate the internet giant's technology into its new smartphones, such as tailoring YouTube content for display on the Z Flip.

"I think the partnership play was very strong today," said Creative Strategies analyst Carolina Milanesi. "Having Google here is a big deal. It seems they are getting closer together; there was a time when Samsung wanted to build its own ecosystem. Barriers put in place by the US government to Google providing its technology to Chinese smartphone maker Huawei might have played into the tighter relationship with Samsung, Milanesi reasoned. —AFP

## EXCHANGE RATES

### Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

#### ASIAN COUNTRIES

|                   |         |
|-------------------|---------|
| Japanese Yen      | 2.781   |
| Indian Rupees     | 4.293   |
| Pakistani Rupees  | 1.979   |
| Sri Lankan Rupees | 1.680   |
| Nepali Rupees     | 2.677   |
| Singapore Dollar  | 221.580 |
| Hongkong Dollar   | 39.332  |
| Bangladesh Taka   | 3.557   |
| Philippine Peso   | 6.048   |
| 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     | 22.280  |
| Egyptian Pound - Transfer | 19.464  |
| Yemen Riyal/for 1000      | 1.227   |
| Tunisian Dinar            | 113.970 |
| Jordanian Dinar           | 431.210 |
| Lebanese Lira/for 1000    | 0.204   |
| Syrian Lira               | 0.000   |
| Morocco Dirham            | 32.426  |

### EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

|                    |         |
|--------------------|---------|
| US Dollar Transfer | 305.450 |
| Euro               | 335.540 |
| Sterling Pound     | 398.150 |
| Canadian dollar    | 231.050 |
| Turkish lira       | 51.420  |
| Swiss Franc        | 35.220  |
| US Dollar Buying   | 298.000 |

### Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

| Rate for Transfer | Selling Rate |
|-------------------|--------------|
| US Dollar         | 305.100      |
| Canadian Dollar   | 230.415      |
| Sterling Pound    | 396.890      |
| Euro              | 334.500      |
| Swiss Frank       | 300.270      |
| Bahrain Dinar     | 811.375      |
| UAE Dirhams       | 83.470       |
| Qatari Riyals     | 84.710       |
| Saudi Riyals      | 82.225       |
| Jordanian Dinar   | 431.615      |
| Egyptian Pound    | 19.452       |
| Sri Lankan Rupees | 1.679        |
| Indian Rupees     | 4.279        |
| Pakistani Rupees  | 1.974        |
| Bangladesh Taka   | 3.560        |
| Philippines Peso  | 6.040        |
| Cyprus pound      | 18.150       |
| Japanese Yen      | 3.775        |
| Syrian Pound      | 1.678        |
| Nepalese Rupees   | 2.678        |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 74.600       |

|                       |         |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Chinese Yuan Renminbi | 46.050  |
| Thai Bhat             | 10.790  |
| Turkish Lira          | 51.115  |
| Singapore dollars     | 220.797 |

### BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

| CURRENCY           | BUY      | SELL     |
|--------------------|----------|----------|
| British Pound      | 0.388639 | 0.402539 |
| Czech Korune       | 0.005345 | 0.014645 |
| Danish Krone       | 0.040509 | 0.045509 |
| Euro               | 0.325604 | 0.339304 |
| Georgian Lari      | 0.105505 | 0.105505 |
| Hungarian          | 0.000892 | 0.001082 |
| Norwegian Krone    | 0.028971 | 0.034171 |
| Romanian Leu       | 0.052875 | 0.069725 |
| Russian Ruble      | 0.004816 | 0.004816 |
| Slovakia           | 0.009148 | 0.019148 |
| Swedish Krona      | 0.027639 | 0.032639 |
| Swiss Franc        | 0.306436 | 0.317436 |
| Australian Dollar  | 0.197280 | 0.209280 |
| New Zealand Dollar | 0.191021 | 0.200521 |
| Canadian Dollar    | 0.224472 | 0.233472 |
| US Dollars         | 0.301350 | 0.305900 |
| US Dollars Mint    | 0.301850 | 0.305900 |
| Bangladesh Taka    | 0.002883 | 0.003684 |

|                   |          |          |
|-------------------|----------|----------|
| Chinese Yuan      | 0.042349 | 0.045849 |
| Hong Kong Dollar  | 0.037239 | 0.039989 |
| Indian Rupee      | 0.003629 | 0.004401 |
| Indonesian Rupiah | 0.000018 | 0.000024 |
| Japanese Yen      | 0.002694 | 0.002874 |
| Korean Won        | 0.000249 | 0.000264 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 0.069924 | 0.075924 |
| Nepalese Rupee    | 0.002604 | 0.002944 |
| Pakistan Rupee    | 0.001324 | 0.002094 |
| Philippine Peso   | 0.005857 | 0.006157 |
| Singapore Dollar  | 0.215028 | 0.225028 |
| Sri Lankan Rupee  | 0.001319 | 0.001899 |
| Taiwan            | 0.010081 | 0.010261 |
| Thai Baht         | 0.009466 | 0.010016 |
| Vietnamese Dong   | 0.000013 | 0.000013 |

#### Arab

|                  |          |          |
|------------------|----------|----------|
| Bahraini Dinar   | 0.804050 | 0.812130 |
| 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      | 0.788238 | 0.796160 |
| Qatar Riyal      | 0.083243 | 0.084079 |
| Saudi Riyal      | 0.080367 | 0.081667 |
| Syrian Pound     | 0.001295 | 0.001515 |
| Tunisian Dinar   | 0.103452 | 0.111452 |
| Turkish Lira     | 0.044391 | 0.054236 |
| UAE Dirhams      | 0.082528 | 0.083358 |
| Yemeni Riyal     | 0.000993 | 0.001073 |



Business

# Zain Group 2019 revenues soar 26 % to \$5.5bn, profit up 10% to \$715m



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi

- **Al-Kharafi:** ‘Board of Directors recommend minimum cash dividend policy of 33 fils per share for three years, commencing 2019’
- EBITDA up 40% to KD 728 million (USD 2.4 billion)
- Profit growth across all key operations especially in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Sudan
- 2019 highlighted by launch of commercial 5G services in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia

**KUWAIT:** Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announced its consolidated financial results for the full-year 2019, and fourth quarter ended December 31, 2019. Zain served 49.5 million customers, reflecting a 1 percent increase year-on-year (Y-o-Y).

For the full-year 2019, Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 1.66 billion (USD 5.5 billion), an impressive 26 percent Y-o-Y growth, while consolidated EBITDA for the period rose by 40 percent Y-o-Y to reach KD 728 million (USD 2.4 billion), reflecting a healthy EBITDA margin of 44 percent. Consolidated net income reached KD 217 million (USD 715 million), up 10 percent and reflecting Earnings Per Share of 50 Fils (USD 0.17).

For the full-year, foreign currency translation impact, predominantly due to the 30 percent currency devaluation in Sudan from an average of 31.9 to 45.8 (SDG / USD), cost the Group USD 140 million in revenue, USD 61 million in EBITDA and USD 20 million in net income.

The Board of Directors of Zain Group recommended a cash dividend of 33 fils per share for 2019, and also as a first by a corporate entity in Kuwait, made another recommendation to implement a minimum cash dividend policy of 33 fils for the forthcoming two years, both subject to the Annual General Assembly and statutory approvals.

For the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2019, Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 439 million (USD 1.4 billion), up 7 percent Y-o-Y. EBITDA for the quarter amounted to KD 191 million (USD 629 million), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 43.5 percent. Net income for the period amounted to KD 64 million (USD 211 million), up 8 percent Y-o-Y, representing Earnings Per Share of 15 fils (USD 0.05).

## Key Operational Notes for 12 months ended December 31, 2019

1. Zain Group consolidated data revenue grew 36 percent Y-o-Y to reach USD 2 billion, representing 36 percent of the Group's revenue for 2019

2. Throughout 2019, Zain Group invested over USD 1 billion in CAPEX, predominantly in expansion of Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) infrastructure; spectrum fees; 4G upgrades and new network sites across its markets, as well as 5G rollouts in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia inclusive of 5G roaming

3. The adoption of new accounting standard IFRS 16 – ‘Leases’ from the beginning of 2019 resulted in a benefit to EBITDA of KD 73 million (USD 241 million), and an increase in net income of KD 7 million (USD 23 million) for the full-year 2019

4. The year was highlighted by the notable 46 percent increase in net income at Zain Saudi Arabia, 28 percent net income growth at Zain Iraq and 11 percent net income growth in Sudan in USD terms

5. The Zain Group Application Program Interface (API) platform, which saw Zain revealing its APIs, removing a barrier to the development of potential digital partnerships globally, witnessed impressive customer uptake and resulting revenue

Commenting on the strong results, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Zain Group, Ahmed Al Tahous said: “The company's performance for 2019 is testament to the successful implementation of the strategic and sustainability-conscious roadmap set by the Board and management. We will maintain our resolve to rollout high quality telecommunication services across our markets in a responsible manner, empowering and improving the socio-economic well-being of the communities we serve. Furthermore, I would like to thank all the government ministries and regulatory authorities across our markets for their wisdom and understanding of the emerging industry dynamics, supporting us in overcoming challenges faced by the telecom sector.”

Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO,

Bader Al-Kharafi commented, “Our Group's financial performance across all operations, especially the robust profit growth in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Sudan operations, and sound performance by our highly profitable Kuwait operation, tops off an incredible operational year and gives us enormous confidence going into 2020 and beyond. Our 4Sight strategy is taking shape, building on our many strengths while seeking value-creating new business verticals that support our vision of becoming a leading ICT and digital lifestyle provider that makes the world a better place.”

On the new cash dividend policy recommended by the Board of Directors committing the company to a minimum 33 fils for the forthcoming two years, a first by any corporate entity in Kuwait, Al-Kharafi elaborated, “This recommendation is a result of the impressive operational performance attained by the Group in recent years and confidence in the future potential of our digital growth strategy in seeking new business verticals. We expect to reap healthy rewards from our investments in 5G, Fiber and network upgrades across key markets that support the ever-increasing demand for mobile and fixed broadband services by individuals and enterprises alike.”

Al-Kharafi continued, “We are focused on optimizing the synergies between the Group, Omantel and all operations as well as making significant investments in fiber combined with 4G and 5G network upgrades to fully exploit our data monetization initiatives. Moreover, we are setting up structures and entering into key partnerships in the FINTECH and e-Health arena, and opening our APIs across key markets to offer appealing entertainment and gaming services, so as to reap the lucrative opportunities in the digital space.”

Al-Kharafi further noted, “The successful mid-year launch of 5G in Kuwait, which was soon followed by Saudi Arabia in the region's largest commercial rollout, is a clear indicator of our passion for this technology and its ability to provide customers a superior mobile experience. Zain is mobilizing resources to capitalize on the enormous opportunity that 5G technology provides, creating vast opportunities in the value chain proposition in numerous industries, especially with regard to Enterprise (B2B) services to government and businesses of all sizes. We believe 5G will push the telecom sector to a new and exciting phase of growth.”

On the point of Zain's corporate sustainability focus, Al-Kharafi said, “Contributing to the socio-economic development of our operating countries, aligning to the climate change target and developing our employees, ultimately leads to a more successful and profitable organization. In our world, digital and technological advancements offer endless opportunities to not only address negative impacts but create positive ones. Through digitization, our wide range of services, and reach, we aim to unlock the many opportunities that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer, as sustainability is an intrinsic part of our DNA. Most recently, for example, Zain became a member of the Climate Disclosure Project (CDP), thus paving the way to a structured reduction of our environmental footprint.”

Regarding the company's internal initiatives, Al-Kharafi said, “I am inspired by the work we are doing inside the organization to foster understanding and offer great life and work opportunities to all employees. Our Diversity and Inclusion program is one of the most progressive of any entity in the region,

with initiatives focusing on Gender Diversity (WE); our aim to be Disability Inclusive by 2022 (WE ABLE), becoming a signatory to the International Labor Organization (ILO) Global Business and Disability Network Charter; Reverse Mentoring and our Generation Z graduate program (ZY); and our internal innovation program (ZAINIAC), have all become central to our development as an organization. The overwhelming success of these initiatives has seen all our operations immediately enjoy many direct benefits as well as being appreciated by our people and all external stakeholders.”

Al-Kharafi concluded, “I would like to express my deep, personal gratitude to the Zain workforce, the Board of Directors, and the government agencies and bodies we cooperate with to deliver the experience we do at such a high level. I believe we can look ahead with confidence as we continue to make considerable progress and help uplift the societies we serve along the way.”

## Operational review of key Zain markets for the 12 months ended December 31, 2019

**Kuwait:** Maintaining its market leadership, the flagship and Zain Group's most profitable operation saw its customer base increase 7 percent to serve 2.8 million in a highly productive year that saw the operator launch commercial 5G services and rollout numerous innovative digital services to enterprises and individual customers. Revenue increased by 1 percent to reach KD 333 million (USD 1.1 billion), EBITDA increased by 10 percent to reach KD 126 million (USD 417 million) and net income up by 1 percent to reach KD 83 million (USD 273 million). Zain Kuwait reported an EBITDA margin of 38 percent, with data revenue growing 7 percent Y-o-Y, to form 37

percent of total revenue. During 2019, Zain Kuwait made substantial progress in its digital transformation launching numerous applications and operational efficiency initiatives to support the expansion of 25 smart branches and further enhancement of its interactive zBot chat digital channel on the WhatsApp platform, that reduced customer waiting times by 90 percent. Notably, as the first operator to launch 5G services in the country in June 2019, Zain attained the largest market share of 5G customers in Kuwait. The operator meticulously prepared itself for the launch of 5G and rolled out commercial services immediately on the availability of 5G smartphones and compatible mobile broadband routers.

**Saudi Arabia:** Zain KSA recorded its highest ever financial results for the year, generating revenue of SAR 8.4 billion (USD 2.2 billion), a 11 percent increase Y-o-Y, while EBITDA for the year increased by 27 percent Y-o-Y to reach SAR 3.8 billion (USD 1.02 billion), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 46 percent. Net income soared to reach SAR 485 million (USD 130 million), reflecting a 46 percent increase Y-o-Y. With the rollout of FTTH services and the largest commercial 5G network in the region, Zain KSA reported total CAPEX investment of SAR 1.9 billion (USD 512 million) for full-year 2019. The operator's total customer base stood at 7.6 million and data revenue represents 43 percent of total revenue.

**Iraq:** Zain Iraq's revenue was stable at USD 1.1 billion despite a competitive landscape and economic and political issues in Zain stronghold regions. EBITDA grew strongly by 10 percent Y-o-Y amounting to USD 465 million (43 percent EBITDA margin) based on the operational transformation program. Accordingly, the operation reported a net profit of USD 63 million for 2019, up 28 percent Y-o-Y. Zain Iraq's focus on customer experience, services expansion across the country and cost transformation combined with growth of data and digital revenue were key drivers of this exceptional performance. Retention and customer loyalty initiatives also resulted in the company serving 15.7 million customers.

**Sudan:** In local currency SDG terms, the operator continues to perform exceptionally well, as revenue grew by 43 percent Y-o-Y to reach SDG 13.9 billion (USD 304 million), down 4 percent in USD terms) for the full-year 2019. EBITDA increased by 52 percent to reach SDG 5.6 billion (USD 122 million, up 1 percent in USD terms), while net income increased 87 percent to reach SDG 2.3 billion (USD 49 million, up 11 percent in USD terms). Data revenue formed 18 percent of total revenue, with an impressive annual growth of 41 percent in SDG terms. The operation serves the largest customer base in the Group with 15.9 million customers.

**Jordan:** Maintaining market leadership, Zain Jordan served 3.6 million customers. Revenue was stable at USD 496 million, with EBITDA up 14 percent Y-o-Y to reach USD 221 million, reflecting an improved EBITDA margin of 45 percent. Net income reached USD 77 million, up 5 percent Y-o-Y. Expansion of fiber and 4G networks and related digital offerings including B2B services, saw data revenue represent 41 percent of total revenue.

**Bahrain:** Zain Bahrain generated revenue of USD 167 million, down 5 percent Y-o-Y. EBITDA for the period amounted to USD 56 million, up 35 percent Y-o-Y, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 33 percent. Net income amounted to USD 14 million, reflecting a 2 percent increase Y-o-Y. The operation recently revamped its 4G network and will soon launch 5G services. Data revenue represented 47 percent of overall revenue.



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi (right) and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Zain Group, Ahmed Al Tahous.

| Group Key Performance Indicators (KD and USD) for the Full-Year 2019 |                 |                     |
|--|-----------------|---------------------|
| Total Active Customers   | 49.5 million    |                     |
| Consolidated Revenue   | KD 1.66 billion | - (USD 5.5 billion) |
| EBITDA   | KD 728 million  | - (USD 2.4 billion) |
| EBITDA Margin  | 44%             |                     |
| Net Income   | KD 217 million  | - (USD 715 million) |
| EPS  | 50 fils         | - USD 0.17          |

| Group Key Performance Indicators (KD and USD) for the Fourth Quarter 2019 |                                    |            |
|---|------------------------------------|------------|
| Consolidated Revenue  | KD 439 million - (USD 1.4 billion) |            |
| EBITDA  | KD 191 million - (USD 629 million) |            |
| EBITDA Margin   | 43.5%                              |            |
| Net Income  | KD 64 million - (USD 211 million)  |            |
| EPS   | 15 fils                            | - USD 0.05 |



## Business

# Lexus announces six Lexus Design Award 2020 finalists

## Shortlist gathers six innovative solutions for a better tomorrow

**KUWAIT:** Lexus has announced the six finalists for the 2020 Lexus Design Award, each of whom will receive mentorship from renowned design leaders together with funding of up to 3,000,000 yen (over \$27,000 US) to create prototypes of their projects. The finalists represent the United States, China, Europe, Pakistan, and Kenya, and were selected from a record-setting group of 2,042 submissions from 79 countries.

Now in its eighth year, the Lexus Design Award provides a unique platform for young creators to demonstrate and further develop their talents. The proposals were selected based on their expression of three key principles of the Lexus brand: Anticipate, Innovate, and Captivate, with an emphasis on design that leads to a better tomorrow.

### Lexus Design Award 2020 Finalists

- **Bio.Scales**, by Sutherland Santo (USA): A modular, carbon sequestering air filtration system assembled from robotically 3D printed biopolymer scales.
- **Feltscape**, by Theophile Peju & Salvatore Cicero (France, Italy / Based in the United Kingdom): A breathing cloud made from felt which interacts with people and space to enhance well-being.
- **Flash Pak**, by Yaokun Wu (China / Based in the USA): A smart survival apparatus that protects young students and helps them stay together in flash floods.
- **Lick**, by Irina Samoilova (Russia): A portable body cleaner for humans with a unique surface similar to a cat's tongue.
- **Open Source Communities**, by BellTower (Kenya): A project exploring the future of smart sustainable communities in developing countries using open-source

home plans.

• **Pursewit**, by Aqsa Ajmal (Pakistan): An accessible sewing machine that incorporates sewing skills to assist in income generation for the visually impaired.

Lexus Design Award 2020 judge John Maeda commented: "This year's Lexus Design Award finalists speak to two main themes: consciousness and the environment, which are increasingly relevant as technological progress impacts our world. As design projects, they go beyond just asking questions to provide concrete answers based on innovative reasoning and practiced opinions on engineering. Narrowing the massive list of entries down to the small set of representative works was not a simple task. In the end, I think we found the right set of captivating projects to represent the themes of mind and body that are critical to our future."

Kei Fujita, Chief Representative of Middle East & Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation said: "We are excited to see that the Lexus Design Award, now in its eighth year, is increasingly becoming recognized amongst creatives from around the world. The submissions this year were exceptional in terms of ideas, and we set a new record of over 2,000 entries from 79 countries. Design and craftsmanship have always been a fundamental part of the Lexus brand. The Lexus Design Award builds on this rich heritage by empowering the next generation of creators by allowing them to develop unique ideas and work under the expert guidance of distinguished mentors to showcase their designs to the world."

He added: "I would like to thank everyone involved in the success of this unique plat-

form, together with our loyal customers whose continuous support fuels our passion to reach beyond the conventional and create amazing experiences."

The six finalists traveled to New York City in January for a life-changing workshop experience with four acclaimed mentors: Joe Doucet, Founder of Joe Doucet X Partners; Bethan Gray, Creative Director at Bethan Gray Design; Philippe Malouin, Director of Philippe Malouin Studio; and Shohei Shigematsu, Partner and Director of OMA New York. The workshop took place at INTERSECT BY LEXUS-NYC, the brand's unique lifestyle space, and kicked-off an ongoing interaction between finalists and mentors that will continue in the lead-up to the judging session in Italy.

The finalists will present their completed prototypes to the world during Milan Design Week in April, with the winner to be selected by the esteemed judging panel that includes Simon Humphries, Head of Lexus Global Design. Appointed to oversee design in 2018, Humphries seeks to define Lexus' unique values in the form of a brand philosophy that incorporates a clear cultural reference to Lexus' Japanese heritage and building a design direction that is relevant to users around the world.

He will be joined by fellow judges Paola Antonelli, Senior Curator of Architecture & Design and founding Director of Research & Development at The Museum of Modern Art in New York; Jeanne Gang, the founding principal and partner of internationally renowned architecture and urban design practice Studio Gang; and John Maeda, a renowned American technologist, designer, engineer, artist, investor, author, and teacher.



Lexus Design Award finalists and mentors



## Boubyan Bank launches new campaign with Harvey Nichols

**KUWAIT:** Boubyan Bank has announced a partnership agreement to launch a new campaign in collaboration with Harvey Nichols (one of the most prestigious and luxurious brands of Al-Shaya Group), including a luxurious and exclusive shopping experience with a special fashion expert at this special department store that harbors the most luxurious and famous international brands in addition to up to KD 5,000 in gift vouchers only for Boubyan Bank's Platinum customers.

Speaking about this campaign, Hamad Haji, Senior Manager - Marketing Department at Boubyan Bank stated: "To continue with the bank's habit to offer new and special products and experiences to its customers, Boubyan Bank has launched a special shopping experience for its Platinum customers as a part of a group of top offers, emanating from the bank's understanding of the needs and requirements of this segment and as a part of the "Your Time Is Platinum" campaign launched recently by the bank."

"The campaign starts in February and will continue until March 15th 2020 in cooperation with Harvey Nichols - Kuwait. Boubyan Bank will reward 20 Platinum customers with gift cards from Harvey Nichols up to KD 5,000 in value in addition to providing them with a premium exclusive shopping experience with a special fashion expert at this special department store which is home to the most luxurious and famous international brands", Haji added.

He further added: "Collaboration with Al-Shaya Group emanates from Boubyan Bank's keenness on cooperating and inking valuable partnerships with famous brands in the Kuwaiti market, which would give the bank's cus-



Boubyan Bank and Harvey Nichols teams pose for a group photo

tomers the great experiences they are looking for."

Haji went on to add: "The coming period will witness more special offers, targeting more segments of the bank's customers to continuously cater for their needs and stand out by innovating the simplest and more convenient solutions, which will reflect positively on our services to customers."

In this context, Nick Walker, Vice President Luxury in Harvey Nichols stated: "We are always happy to cooperate with a prestigious entity such as Boubyan Bank, especially in such a kind of campaigns where we are keen to provide unique and exclusive experiences to our customers. This cooperation embodies the vision of Harvey Nichols - Kuwait based on "Luxury in Everything We Do", and is based on splendor and seeking to build strong relationships with customers."

Harvey Nichols was founded in 1831, and today it has become one of the most prominent international fashion companies in the UK and globally, as it is famous for its diverse and exclusive products. Harvey Nichols is home to many luxurious fashion collections for men and women, fashion accessories, beauty products, and food. It gives its customers a unique and premium shopping experience as it harbors a special collection of prestigious brands in the world of fashion, beauty, accessories and food in addition to providing wonderful service levels to customers at all stores.



Haji and Al-Mutairi during the press conference

Boubyan Bank has also launched a special campaign recently for Platinum customers in cooperation with Souq Safar travel company at the Avenues, where Platinum customers have many winning chances by entering draws for travel vouchers which can be used by customers to travel around the world. This added to the extensive services Platinum customers enjoy, providing them with the highest levels of comfort and luxury that make their lives easier and save their time.

### Boubyan... "A Lifestyle"

Over the past years, Boubyan Bank managed to change a lot of traditional concepts about banking and the banking sector in all ways. This reflected on the level of service and products provided by the bank to its customers since it is more than a bank, or a "Life Style". This comes as a part of the bank's clear

vision and long-term strategy to continue reinforcing its position as an influencer in the banking sector, while strongly fostering the values of transparency, innovation, and excellence in customer service.

During the past year, and due to the bank's achievements at the level of services and products provided to customers, coupled with its customer-service excellence, Boubyan Bank managed to earn a number of international awards, the most prominent of which was being named the Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait by both Global Finance and the Banker, the two international institutions. Additionally, the bank was named the Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait in Customer Service and received the First Place Award in Customer Service as a Country Winner from Service Hero, the international consumer-driven customer satisfaction index.

it, still down from 438.3 billion yen a year earlier.

"We are on course to the black," Son told reporters, forecasting its operating profit would further expand in the further quarter.

"The tide has changed," Son added. Shares in SoftBank have risen recently on news US hedge fund Elliott Management has built a more-than-\$2.5 billion stake in the group. Son said he recently held "frank talks" with Elliott officials and shared concerns with the fund, including plans to improve transparency in SoftBank's Vision Fund.

"I want to sincerely respond to shareholders no matter whether they speak out or not," Son said.

Yesterday, stocks rose another 11.88 percent after news that the T-Mobile and Sprint merger had been approved more than two years after it was first announced. "It was a tough and long path but eventually, Sprint and T-Mobile have entered the final stage of their merger," Son said. — AFP

## Gulf Bank to announce winner of grand prize worth 100 times their monthly salary!

**KUWAIT:** Today, Gulf Bank will be announcing the name of the lucky winner who will take home a grand cash prize worth up to 100 times their monthly salary, as part of Gulf Bank's annual Salary Package draw event. The draw event, which will kick off tonight at 7 pm at The Avenues near the Cheesecake Factory, will be held in the presence and supervision of a representative each from the Ministry of Commerce and Ernst & Young. With multiple surprises in store, the Bank will also be holding another draw to reveal the name of the Salary Package winner for January 2020, who will receive a prize equivalent to 12 times his or her monthly salary. Throughout the day, and in the hours leading up to the draw, attendees can also take part in a variety of activities that Gulf Bank has organized.

Throughout the day, visitors at The Avenues have an opportunity to take part in a variety of entertaining activities and competitive games for the chance to win cash prizes. Everyone is invited to join in the fun from 10 AM to 6 PM, and choose from a variety of fun-filled games, a photowall, and an interactive mupi/advertising banner. After the announcement of the winners and to wrap up the day's celebrations, attendees will also be treated to a live musical performance from the popular musical artist Daffy, who recorded the Bank's annual song celebrating the upcoming national holidays.

Hamad Al-Wazzan, Senior Officer of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "To date, we have had 11 winners from last year's Salary Package draws, each of whom took home a cash prize of up to 12 times their monthly salaries. Today, we have two causes for celebration: The first is that we are going to be celebrating the winner of our largest Salary Package prize yet: a cash prize of up to 100 times the winner's salary! We are also going to be kicking off this new year's Salary Package draws with our first winner of the 2020 Salary Package, who will take home a cash prize of up to 12 times their monthly salary."

Al-Wazzan added: "The Gulf Bank Salary Account offers its clients multiple valuable features. Not only are customers automatically enrolled into the monthly and annual draws, but they can also avail interest-free loans, cash gifts, fee waivers, and many more rewards throughout the year. We encourage everyone to transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank for the chance to take advantage of these features and more." Today's raffle draws will take place on stage at The Avenues at 7 PM as part of a fun-filled draw event that will include a variety of games and activities for attendees.

### About Gulf Bank's Salary Package:

The 2020 Kuwaiti Salary Package automatically enrolls new Kuwaiti customers who transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank in the monthly and annual Salary Account draws. The monthly draws allow customers the chance to win cash prizes of up to 12 times their salary, while the yearly draw gives them the opportunity to win Kuwait's largest salary prize of up to 100 times their salary.

The Salary Account also gives new customers the opportunity to receive either a KD 100 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank or an interest-free loan of up to KD 15,000. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and will be eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank. Customers can also enjoy additional benefits like a Visa or MasterCard credit card free of charge for a year, as well as a chance to apply for a loan of up to KD 70,000 or a consumer loan of up to KD 25,000.



Hamad Al-Wazzan

## SoftBank Group nine-month net profit down nearly 70%

**TOKYO:** Major Japanese technology investor SoftBank Group said yesterday its net profit plunged nearly 70 percent for the nine months to December as investments in sharing economy companies including WeWork and Uber took a hit.

Bottom-line profit fell 69.0 percent to 476.6 billion yen (\$4.3 billion) for the period, as the firm suffered an operating loss of 13.0 billion yen. The operating

loss was largely "due to a decrease in the fair values of investments including Uber and WeWork and its three affiliates," the company said in a statement.

The company did not publish its outlook for the year to March 2020.

The disappointing results follow a turbulent period for the firm and CEO Masayoshi Son has faced criticism over his commitment to start-ups some say are overvalued and lack clear profit models.

SoftBank has taken stakes in some of Silicon Valley's hottest start-ups through its \$100 billion Vision Fund. The group last year announced its long-mooted Vision Fund 2, again targeting around \$100 billion, but investors have been slower to commit this time around. In the second quarter to September, the group reported an operating loss of 704.4 billion yen, the worst in its history.

But it returned to the black for the three months to December, reporting 2.6 billion yen in operating prof-



What's On

# ACK holds World Cancer Day awareness event on campus

The Occupational Health and Safety department at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) organized an event for World Cancer Day to raise awareness regarding early detection and preventions of cancer.

World Cancer Day highlighted the need for urgent action to increase early stage cancer detection, screening, and diagnosis to significantly improve cancer patients' chances of survival. Taking place under the theme of "I Am and I Will," event aimed to inspire and encourage action from individuals and to improve public awareness and access to early detection, screening, and diagnosis.

Among the key attendees to the event were Jonathan Gilbert, Australian Ambassador to Kuwait, along with representatives from Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait and Al-Seef Hospital. Representing Al-Ahli Bank was Ms. Shahad Al Ali, Assistant Manager of Elite Banking, and representing Al Seef Hospital were Anila Nair, Charge Nurse, and Jessy Vargughese, Nursing Supervisor.

Awareness sessions took place to understand cancer from a medical perspective, international statistics, types of common cancers, risk factors and prevention approaches.

These sessions were delivered by Dr. Nadia Al-Mahmoud, Consultant Family Medicine, Head of the Promotion Section of the Ministry of Health, and a member of Cancer Aware Nation (CAN).

A motivational session was also given to the audience by a cancer survivor Ms. Farah Al-Shaikh who told her inspiring story how the health promotion initiatives at the company she works for helped her with early clinical detection.

Besides the sessions with the speakers, various booths were present at the event with various offerings to encourage attendees towards a healthier lifestyle, including a booth by Diet Style with healthy snacks, a booth by CrossFit Forma, and a CAN booth which had giveaway with information booklets on cancer.

Commenting on the purpose of the event and the importance of raising awareness, Mariam Al Maraghi, ACK Health and Safety Business Development Manager, said: "Cancer may have started the fight, but we can finish it together by uniting under one voice to face one of our greatest challenges in history through positive actions, awareness, prevention, early detection, and treatment."



## ICSK immersed in blissful blessings for class 12 students

February 10, 2020, will be marked in the calendar of ICSK that organized a unique blessing ceremony for the outgoing children of class 12, named Aashirvaad. The total turnover of class 12 children for the occasion was 374. The chief guest for the blessing ceremony was the Honourable Ambassador of India to Kuwait, Jeeva Sagar. It was for the third consecutive time that His Excellency had graced the blessing ceremony of The Indian Community School. It was indeed a proud moment for the ICSKians. The other dignitaries who attended the auspicious ceremony were Ms. Shravanthi, daughter of His Excellency Jeeva Sagar, Shaikh Abdul Rahiman Honourable Chairman Board of Trustees ICSK, Vinu Kumar Nair Honourable Vice Chairman Board of Trustees ICSK, Agnello Fernandes Honourable Joint Secretary Board of Trustees ICSK, Principal Amman Branch Rajesh Nair, Vice Principal Dr Mary Isaac, Dr Sam T Kuruvilla Vice Principal Khaitan Branch, Mrs Shirley Dennis Principal ICSK Junior, Vice Principal Mrs Sheeja, Vice Principal ICSK Senior Mrs Susan Rajesh and Deputy Vice Principal Mrs Mini Rajesh were also present in the ceremony.

The ceremony got the carpet rolled with the Islamic prayer followed by the prayer song 'Aradhana' and the Kuwait and Indian National anthems rendered

by the ICSK Senior school choir 'Swaranjali'. The Principal and Senior school Administrator of ICSK Dr V Binumon delivered the welcome address and extended a warm welcome and greetings to the Honourable Chief Guest Jeeva Sagar and other dignitaries. He also welcomed the parents, teaching and non-teaching staff of ICSK and above all the fantabulous children of class 12 and appreciated them for all their hard work and efficiency.

His Excellency Jeeva Sagar lighted the lamp of knowledge to remove the darkness of ignorance and addressed the children of class 12. With his most inspiring words, the Honourable Ambassador of India to Kuwait shared his experiences with them and

advised them to think and proactively. The school choir Swaranjali rendered a mellifluous and inspirational song 'Purane Din Purane Pal'.

The outgoing children of class 12 also were given an opportunity to reminisce their good old memories and emotions related to the school and their teachers. Master Alan D'Silva, Ms. Akanksha Pratap, Master Osama Wangde, Ms. Diya Ajay and Ms. Bhavna Sara John were some amongst the children of class 12 who shared their most cherished memories and experiences with the crowd. They also thanked their parents whole heartedly for making them what they are. To be precise they opened their heart out and thanked each and everyone who was behind their success and

achievements.

His Excellency Jeeva Sagar did the honours of giving away the awards and certificates of Academic Excellence and Centurion to all the meritorious children of class 12. Mr. Shaikh Abdul Rahman Honourable Chairman Board of Trustees, Vinu Kumar Nair Honourable Vice Chairman, Agnello Fernandes Honourable Joint Secretary Board of Trustees, Mr. Rajesh Nair, Mrs. Shirley Dennis gave away the mementos to the children of class 12. Jacob George proposed the vote of thanks. He thanked each and every person who worked behind the curtain to make the programme a huge success.

The school choir Swaranjali showcased a motivational song 'Andhiyara Mann Ka Mit Jaaye' which was quite inspirational and motivational for all those who are proceeding towards their path of success.

The next was the much awaited part of the ceremony, which was the lighting of the candles. The Principal and Senior Administrator Dr. V Binumon lighted the candle and shared the flame with the class teachers, students and parents and the entire auditorium was lit up thereby removing the darkness of ignorance overall. Dr. V Binumon shared a prayer with the children and blessed them all for their success and progress.

The exhortation was conducted by the Vice Principal of ICSK Senior, Mrs. Susan Rajesh. God has the power to give us purpose and to make us purified and holy. Prayer is the pipeline of communication between God and his people. All the children of class 12 with their teachers were immersed in the blessed moment. The children had their exit from the auditorium with the blessings of Dr. V Binumon with the blissful song 'Showers of Blessing'. An evening to be cherished.



## Mega drama 'Shur Shomraat'

Inspired by the biography of acclaimed music director and singer M.S. Baburaj, Future Eye Theatre, Kuwait devised and came up with an enthralling mega drama "Shur Shomraat" which conquered the

hearts of the crowd. Special mention indeed for the delightful rendition of the drama by the phenomenal performance of artists which magnetized the attention of the assemblage. The play was staged in two shows on 24 January 2020 at Boys Scouts Auditorium, Hawalli.

M.S. Baburaj is credited for the renaissance of Malayalam film music and the thick and thin moments of his life was brought to the spectators in a commendable and refined way. This was accom-

plished with the paramount allegiance and toil of Dr Samkutty Pattomkary, one of the well-known celebrated theatre artists in India who wrote and directed this drama. He has more than 350 dramas to his credit done with many well known artists all over the world.

The drama 'Shur Shomraat' which was staged by more than 30 passionate and budding artists in Kuwait, gracefully depicted the socio-political milieu of that time period. Several eminent personalities

of those times like Vaikom Muhammed Basheer, K.T. Muhammad, Kozhikode Abdul Khader, Vayalar were seen live on the stage. The phenomenal light and sound presentation in the play turned it as an added feather in the crown of Future Eye Theatre.

The official ceremony was inaugurated by Dr Samkutty Pattomkary by lighting the lamp. Future Eye Theater President Shemej Kumar presided over the function. Program convener Santosh Kumar Kuttath welcomed the gathering. The founder and

managing director of Izonica Modeling and Grooming School UK, Ms. Michelle Johnson was the chief guest. Souvenir convener Satheesh Varijakshan handed over the first copy of the souvenir to AbdulAziz Al-Shamri. Treasurer Sarath Nair expressed vote of thanks.

The melodious concert, comprised of ever green songs by Baburaj, by the renowned singer of Kuwait Rafi Kallayi and team, made the crowd walk down the memory lane.





## Health &amp; Science

## Air pollution costs \$2.9 trillion a year: NGO

**PARIS:** The global cost of air pollution caused by fossil fuels is \$8 billion a day, or roughly 3.3 percent of the entire world's economic output, an environmental research group said yesterday. The report from the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) and Greenpeace Southeast Asia is the first to assess the global cost of air pollution specifically from burning oil, gas and coal.

"We found that the China Mainland, the United States and India bear the highest costs from fossil fuel air pollution worldwide, an estimated \$900 billion, \$600 billion and \$150 billion per year, respectively," the report said.

Particles thrown off by fossil fuel usage account for 4.5 million premature deaths each year around the globe, including 1.8 million in China and a million in India, the researchers found. The new figure is in line with World Health Organization (WHO) estimates of 4.2 million deaths each year linked to ground-level air pollution, mostly from heart disease, stroke, lung cancer and acute respiratory infections in children.

Living in the New Delhi area of India is like smoking 10 cigarettes a day, earlier research has shown. "Air pollution from fossil fuels is a threat to our health and our economies that takes millions of lives and costs us trillions of dollars," said Minwoo Son, clean air campaigner at Greenpeace East Asia.

The global cost for 2018 was \$2.9 trillion, the report estimated. "But this is a problem that we know how to solve: by transitioning to renewable energy sources, phasing out diesel and petrol cars, and building public transport."

The 44-page report breaks down the global burden of fossil fuel-driven air pollution — measured in economic costs and premature deaths — by type of pollutant and by country. Each year the global economy takes a \$350 billion hit from nitrogen dioxide (NO2) — a byproduct of fossil fuel combustion in vehicles and power plants — and a further \$380 billion hit from ozone, according to middle-ground estimates.



**NEW DELHI:** Migratory birds fly over a boat on the Yamuna River amidst heavy smog conditions in New Delhi on January 21, 2020. — AFP photos



**A boy walks to school amidst heavy fog in Faridabad on January 21, 2020.**

## Deep into the lungs

By far the most costly pollutant is microscopic fine particulate matter (PM 2.5), which accounts for more than two trillion dollars per year in damages, measured in health impacts, missed work days and years lost to premature death.

The global breakdown for premature deaths each year was 500,000 for NO2, one million for ozone, and three million for PM 2.5. Some 40,000 children die every year before their fifth birthday due to PM 2.5, which also leads to two million preterm births annually and twice as many cases of asthma. PM 2.5 particles penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream, causing cardiovascular respiratory problems. In 2013, the WHO classified it as a cancer-causing agent.

Middle-range estimates of the number of premature deaths stemming from fossil fuel pollution include 398,000 for the European Union, 230,000 for the United States, 96,000 for Bangladesh, and 44,000 for Indonesia. Among countries taking the biggest economic hit each year are China (\$900 billion), the United States (\$610 bn), India (\$150 bn), Germany (\$140 bn), Japan (\$130 bn), Russia (\$68 bn) and Britain (\$66 bn).

Globally, air pollution accounts for 29 percent of all deaths and disease from lung cancer, 17 percent from acute lower respiratory infection, and a quarter from stroke and heart disease, according to the WHO. Air pollution is a focal point of social discontent in some parts of the world, leading some experts to speculate that it could

drive a more rapid drawdown of fossil fuel use. "Are we approaching a tipping point where it will no longer be acceptable to shorten the lives of people with fossil fuel pollution?" Johan Rockstrom, head of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, told AFP. The new report used global datasets for surface-level concentrations of the three main pollutants analyzed, and then calculated health and cost impacts for 2018.

Estimates of PM 2.5 and NO2 concentrations were based on Earth observation instruments on two NASA satellites that monitor aerosols in the atmosphere. Deaths, years of life lost and years lived with disability due to PM 2.5 exposure are drawn from the Global Burden of Disease, published in 2018 by PNAS. — AFP

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

**Scope of clinical Practice.**

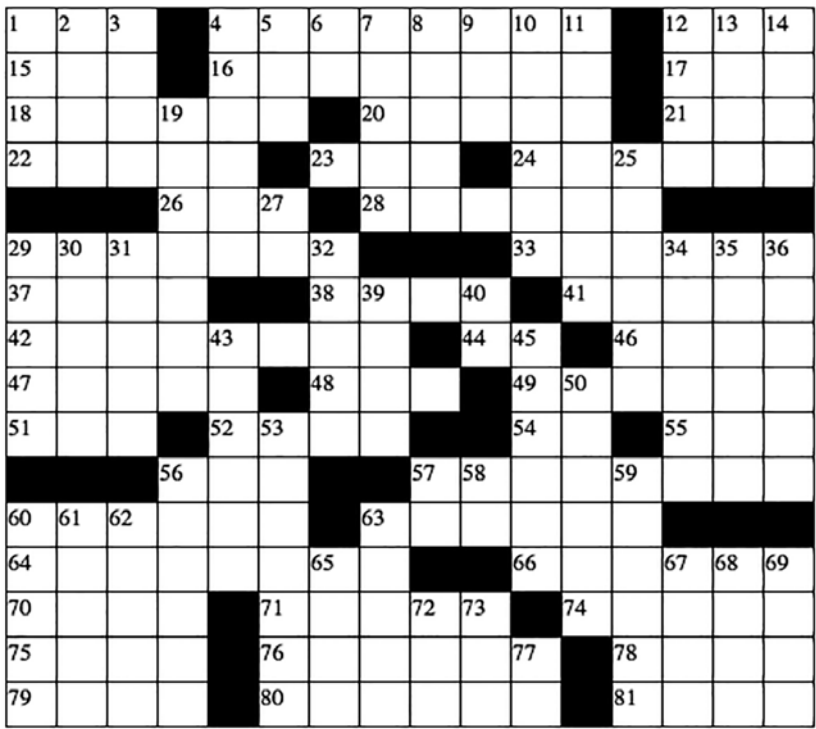
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- ◆ Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- ◆ Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- ◆ G.I. surgeries.
- ◆ Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- ◆ Anal surgeries.

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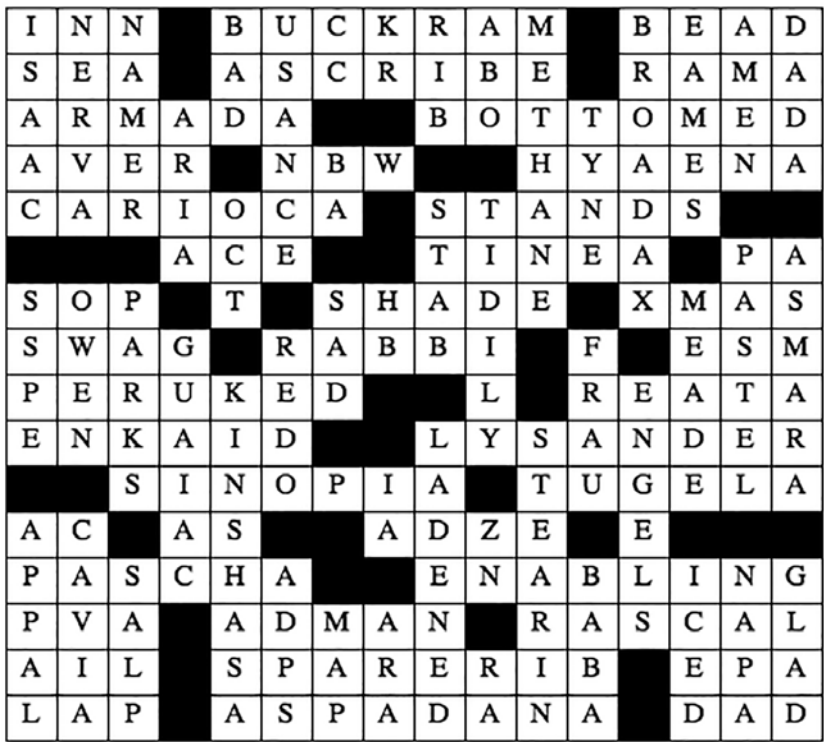
1. Water frozen in the solid state.  
4. Pronounce with a lowered velum.  
12. Electronic equipment that provides visual images of varying electrical quantities.  
15. (informal) Uncomplimentary terms for a policeman.  
16. (formerly) A horse-drawn wagon that delivered ice door to door.  
17. An accidental happening.  
18. English illustrator of several of Dickens' novels (1815-1882).  
20. (Hindu) A manner of sitting (as in the practice of Yoga).  
21. How long something has existed.  
22. A Bantu language.  
23. The bureau of the Treasury Department responsible for tax collections.  
24. A group of related languages spoken in a valley of southern Ethiopia.  
26. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).  
28. An analgesic for mild pain.  
29. Gin (or vodka) with dry vermouth.  
33. Of the appetites and passions of the body.  
37. Affording unobstructed entrance and exit.  
38. Small European freshwater fish with a slender bluish-green body.  
41. Avoid or try to avoid, as of duties, questions and issues.  
42. (of hair) Not combed.  
44. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.  
46. Armor plate that protects the chest.  
47. A long noosed rope used to catch animals.  
48. A resource.  
49. Argentinian writer remembered for his short stories (1899-1986).  
51. A period of time spent sleeping.  
52. The elapsed time it takes for a signal to travel from Earth to a spacecraft (or other body) and back to the starting point.  
54. A soft yellow malleable ductile (trivalent and univalent) metallic element.  
55. Used of a single unit or thing.  
60. The capital and largest city of Greece.  
64. The wife or widow of a czar.  
66. An organism especially a bacterium that requires air or free oxygen for life.  
70. Prong on a fork or pitchfork.  
71. The capital and largest city of Ghana with a deep-water port.  
74. Aroused to impatience or anger.  
75. Small buffalo of the Celebes having small straight horns.  
76. Australasian kingfishers.  
78. A soft heavy toxic malleable metallic element.  
79. Scottish philosopher of common sense who opposed the ideas of David Hume (1710-1796).  
80. A port city in southwestern Iran.  
81. God of the Underworld.

DOWN

1. A ballistic missile that is capable of traveling from one continent to another.  
2. (Greek mythology) Daughter of Zeus and Demeter.

3. A body of poetry that conveys the traditions of a society by treating some epic theme.  
4. Grandson of Amaterasu and first ruler of Japan.  
5. (informal) Of the highest quality.  
6. A toxic nonmetallic element related to sulfur and tellurium.  
7. A grant made by a law court.  
8. The sacred city of Lamaism.  
9. One of the most common of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.  
10. Ground snakes.  
11. An amine containing the double bond linkage -C=C-N-.  
12. An informal conversation.  
13. East Indian cereal grass whose seed yield a somewhat bitter flour, a staple in the Orient.  
14. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.  
19. Miscellaneous curios.  
25. United States jazz musician who influenced the style of Louis Armstrong (1885-1938).  
27. An associate degree in nursing.  
30. Transient cessation of respiration.  
31. A summary that repeats the substance of a longer discussion.  
32. Conforming to an ultimate standard of perfection or excellence.  
34. The larva of the housefly and blowfly commonly found in decaying organic matter.  
35. (psychology) Characterized by acceptance or approach.  
36. A tenant who holds a lease.  
39. A nearly horizontal passage from the surface into a mine.  
40. The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.  
43. Italian poet (1569-1625).  
45. Inability to walk.  
50. A wrongful dispossession.  
53. A flat tortilla with various fillings piled on it.  
56. Read anew.  
57. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.  
58. A colorless and odorless inert gas.  
59. In an unnatural ery manner.  
61. Wild ox of the Malay Archipelago.  
62. The capital city of Vietnam.  
63. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.  
65. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.  
67. Evergreen trees and shrubs having oily one-seeded fruits.  
68. A signal transmitted along a narrow path.  
69. Tropical starchy tuberous root.  
72. Having any of numerous bright or strong colors reminiscent of the color of blood or cherries or tomatoes or rubies.  
73. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.  
77. In operation or operational.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

There are forces working in your favor that you should be sure to latch onto and take advantage of, Aries. You'll find that your sense of duty and ability to plan are paying off in a very positive way. You'll find that you're able to check quite a few things off your list today. Think before you act and take a time-out to rest and regroup if you need to.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Missed connections and unfortunate misunderstandings will happen less frequently if you slow down and focus. Remember that you can do things yourself, Taurus. Don't feel like you absolutely need approval from others before tackling the projects that you wish to complete. Your mind is urging you to take the initiative today, so feel free to do so. Just make sure you aren't too hasty in your actions. You'll be more productive if you think before you act.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Things that require restriction and discipline on your part may be causing tension and opposition in your world today, Gemini. The good news is that your mind is clear and you should feel in tune with the people around you. Know your allies and take care of them. Remind others of how much they mean to you. The most important aspects of your life are your friends and family, so treat them with unconditional love.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your internal fire may be feeling a bit smothered by a fierce reality check today, Cancer. Give people the benefit of the doubt. They are more perceptive than you may think. In fact, it may behoove you to get some honest feedback today from some people you trust. It could be difficult for you to sort out the truth in your present situation, since you're the one caught in the middle of the maelstrom. Consider the perspective of another.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Careful planning on your part is starting to pay off, Leo, but be careful that you don't alienate others in your quest to be the best. You may not realize how your harsh words affect the people around you. Be more sensitive to the feelings of others. Focus and be brave in your actions. Hesitation may cause you to lose control of the situation. Know your boundaries, but push beyond them.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

A little foreign culture could be the thing you need right now to spice things up a bit, Virgo. It could be that you aren't feeling a very strong connection with the environment around you. You could be anxious to spread your wings and explore your freedom. Start small but think big. Get out of your rut and do more exploring on your own. There's a sobering, disciplined feeling to the day that could help you think realistically about your situation and where you want to go with it.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Some days it may be hard for you to get motivated, Libra, but if ever there were a day in which it was easier than others, this would be the day. You'll find that your mind is quite attuned to the situation around you and that your sense of grounding is helping you manifest that which you wish to bring to life. There's a sense of time restriction and limitation to the day that is prodding you to act now.



Scorpio (October 23-November 19)

You may feel a bit of restriction working to hold you back from your current plans today, Scorpio. It could be that your mind is feeling restless and that you're anxious to go, but there's a feeling of discipline and caution nagging you and urging you to slow down. This might not be a bad idea. Discipline and willpower may be exactly the things you need in order to get where you're going.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You'll find that a sensitive mind that's open to everything and every possibility is exactly the thing you need at this time in order to be successful in reaching all the goals you're working toward, Sagittarius. You'll find that your sense of duty and need for plans and solid goals are key elements for getting to where you need to be. Gather information and create a plan of attack that is well thought out.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today is a good day to be receptive to other people's energies, Capricorn. You'll find that a sensitive attitude toward the people around you, combined with a bit of hard work and willingness to fulfill your responsibilities, will make for an unstoppable winning combination. Use this day to collect data and plan your goals. Take responsibility for your actions and don't be afraid to admit your mistakes.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

You'll find that your mind is sharp and penetrating today, Aquarius. Make sure you stay focused and organized. You have the power of discipline behind you that will help you manifest quite a bit on a day like today. Keep in mind that your openness to others and your incredible sensitivity are some of your greatest gifts. Use your power to create prosperity for yourself, but do it without hurting or manipulating others.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

There is a rough stubbornness to the day that you may find hinders your progress, Pisces. There may be undercurrents of opposition that are slowly wearing away at your psyche. Make sure that you don't fall into the trap of feeling guilt or regret. These are useless emotions that you simply can do without. If people are being negative or unreasonable, simply walk away from the situation and find a better one.

Wordsearch Puzzle

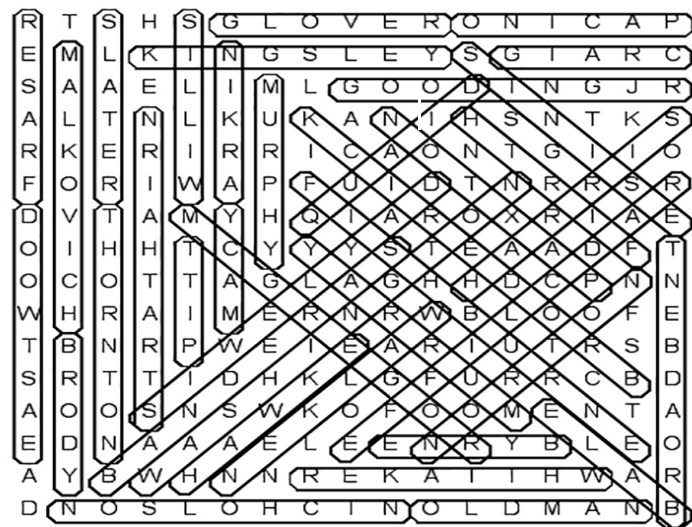
Movie Actresses 1

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



- ADAMS, Amy  
ALBA, Jessica  
ALLEN, Joan  
BARRYMORE, Drew  
BENING, Annette  
BERRY, Halle  
BIEL, Jessica  
BLANCHETT, Cate  
BLETHYN, Brenda  
BLUNT, Emily  
CLOSE, Glenn  
CONNELLY, Jennifer  
CUSACK, Joan  
CUTHBERT, Elisha  
DAVIS, Hope  
DENCH, Judi  
DIAZ, Cameron  
FANNING, Dakota  
FOSTER, Jodie  
GUGINO, Carla  
HATHAWAY, Anne  
HUNTER, Holly  
HUSTON, Anjelica  
JOLIE, Angelina  
KEENER, Catherine  
LANE, Diane  
LANGE, Jessica  
MCDORMAND, Frances  
MIRREN, Helen  
MOORE, Demi  
PALTROW, Gwyneth  
PAQUIN, Anna  
RICCI, Christina  
SWANK, Hilary  
THERON, Charlize  
THOMPSON, Emma  
WATSON, Emily

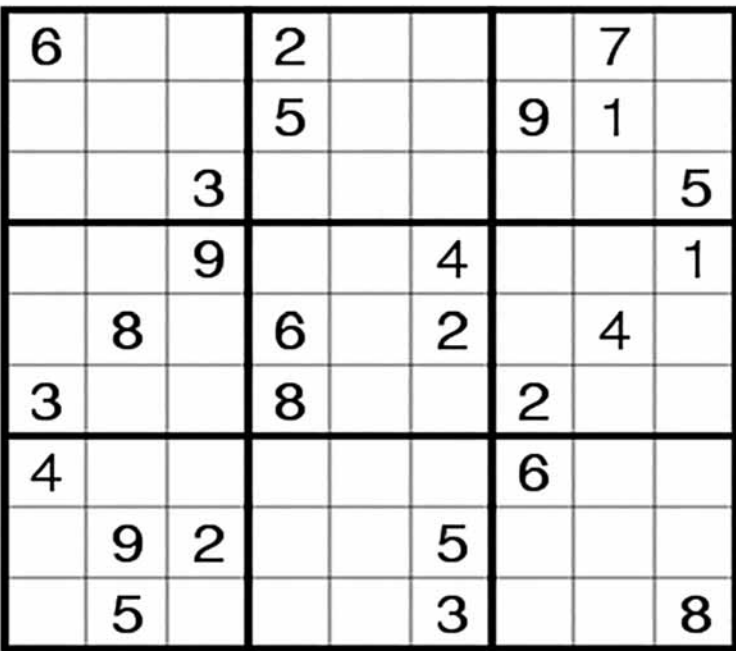
Movie Actors 3



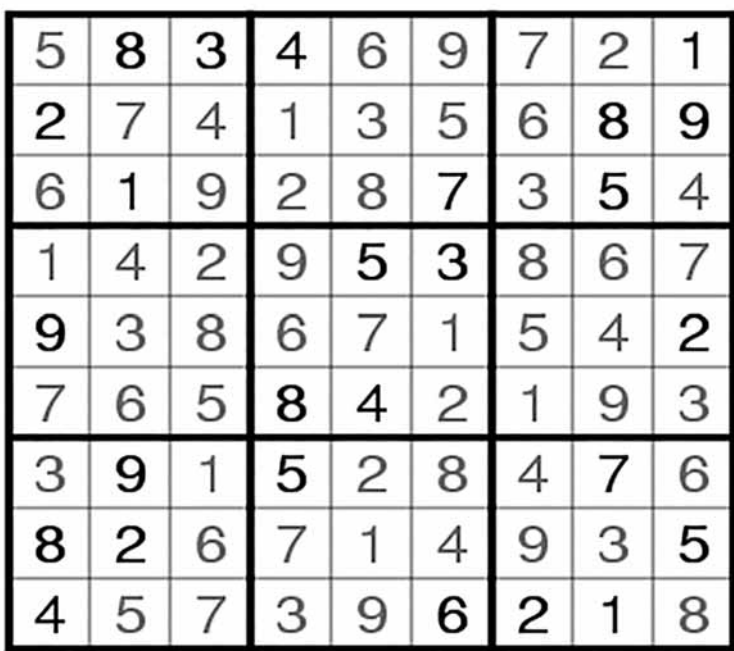
- ARKIN, Alan  
BALE, Christian  
BANDERAS, Antonio  
BROADBENT, Jim  
BRODERICK, Matthew  
BRODY, Adrien  
BYRNE, Gabriel  
CRAIG, Daniel  
DAY-LEWIS, Daniel  
EASTWOOD, Clint  
FIRTH, Colin  
FISHBURNE, Laurence  
FRASER, Brendan  
GLOVER, Danny  
GOODING JR., Cuba  
HARRIS, Ed  
HAWKE, Ethan  
KINGSLEY,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

The hidden movie title is: THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution





# Lifestyle

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2020



An Iraqi demonstrator dressed in a Joker outfit poses for a picture as he sits inside a Tuk-Tuk during an anti-government demonstration by Basra University students in the southern city of Basra, on February 11, 2020. — AFP

## Multilingual robot waitress serves up fries in Afghan capital



In downtown Kabul, a robotic waitress named “Timia” rolls across a restaurant to serve a pizza and fries to a customer. — Reuters photos



In downtown Kabul, a robotic waitress named “Timea” rolls across a restaurant to serve a pizza and fries to a customer. Zahra Barakzai, 30, cheerfully receives her meal from the robot, who has drawn curious diners since she was unveiled at Time Restaurant last month. “It was very interesting to me because it was the first robot to come into a restaurant in Afghanistan and serve food. It was nice to see the robot here, it’s kind of fun,” said Barakzai. Though manufactured in Japan and serving American-style fast food such as cola and burgers, Time Restaurant’s team designed the robot with

locals in mind. The robot speaks Dari and Pashto, as well as English, and her head is designed to appear as though she is wearing a hijab, the headscarf worn by most Muslim women in Afghanistan. Decades of war in Afghanistan have hampered the development of the country’s technology education and innovation sector, though bright spots exist as access to education, including for girls, improves. In 2017, an all-female robotics team from Western city of Herat rose to global fame when they were initially refused and later cleared to compete in a robotics competition in the United States. Their solar-pow-

ered robot later won an award at an international robotics festival held in Estonia. Zuhail, 13, a customer at the restaurant, said she was inspired, having previously only seen robots in cartoons. “I never thought I would see a robot one day in my own town, but now I’m happy to see the robot in my favorite restaurant, it means that Afghanistan is developing,” she said. — AFP







## KANA'S NEW DRAMA 'VYRAM': A TALE OF WRATH AND RETRIBUTION

A two-hour, non-stop play loaded with gripping dramatic sequences

By Sajeev K Peter

Kerala Arts and Nataka Academy (KANA) Kuwait presented its new theatrical production 'Vyram' (The Wrath) before a jam-packed audience at the Indian Community School (Senior), Salmiya. The auditorium resonated with loud cheers and applause as the curtain fell on the third show of the play on Feb 8. Written by eminent Malayalam playwright Hemanth Kumar, the play narrates the tale of a fictitious land called 'Kodumundapuram' and its people.

"Although it is a tale of a people who lived a century ago, their sociopolitical ethos has some relevance to the contemporary society," said Kumar. The drama spotlights the power of a woman as it discusses some of the deep flaws ingrained in the Indian judicial system, leading to wrongful convictions.

Theatre director Babu Chakola has taken painstaking efforts to go beyond the text to give the play a new interpretation that takes the performance to a new level. Despite many limitations as an expat director in producing a drama on a grand scale, Chakola's absolute devotion to theatre and its craft resulted in the

success of the play.

The drama takes theater-buffs on a two-hour non-stop journey through some nail-biting dramatic sequences of tension and suspense. Rather a genre-defying play, 'Vyram' does not fall within the definition of a feminist drama, although its theme centers on feminist ideology. "Even when we wax eloquent about gender equality, we still live in a patriarchal society in which women are not always treated on par with their counterparts," Kumar said.

### Versatility

Demonstrating his versatility as an actor, Chakola deftly handles his twin roles as Sirithi Appan and Karikkan Kammu. The former as a hangman fails in his duty to carry out an execution after an attack on his right hand leaves him incapacitated. The latter as Kammu, a slaughterer by profession, is wrongly convicted and hanged for raping and killing his step-daughter Kanni.

Manju Mathew plays the powerful character Annalakshmi, the protagonist of the play. Annalakshmi takes up the job of a hangwoman from her father Sirithi Appan and carries out



the execution of Kammu. However, it is revealed subsequently that Kammu was wrongly convicted and that Annalakshmi's lover Mandaran is the real culprit who cunningly misleads the people around him into believing that Kammu is the villain.

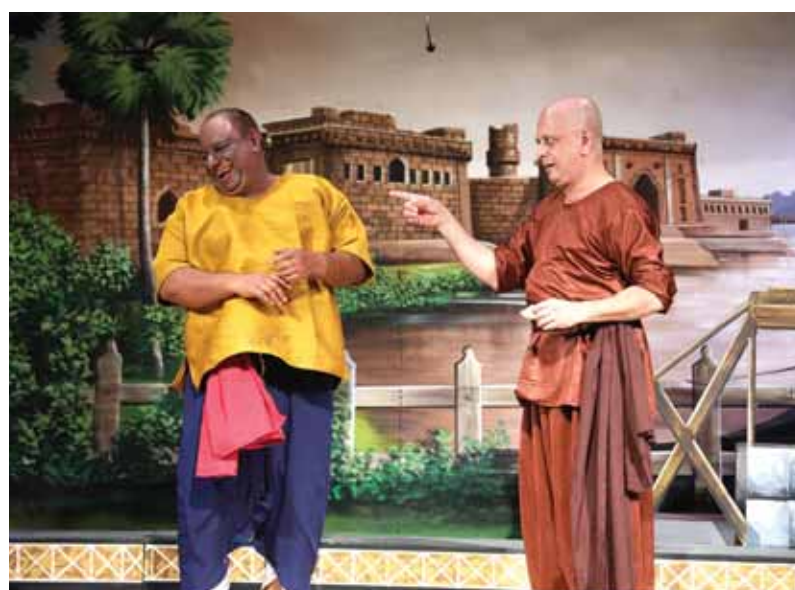
As the true colors of the villain are exposed, Annalakshmi vows to right a wrong, albeit partially. Seeking retribution, she entices Mandaran into her chamber, playfully adorns a hangman's noose around his neck and hangs him to death. Mathew as the female

executioner plays her role brilliantly, demonstrating her ability to switch between emotions swiftly.

Kumar Thrithala as the diabolical villain Mandaran played his role exceptionally well. Dr Abraham Thomas as Cheriyan, Shajahan Kodungalloor as Muni Madayan, Aji Paravoor as Adigar, Treesa Wilson as Veni and Jiya Mariam Jiju as Kanni did justice to their roles. The cast list also includes, among others, Jiju Kalayil (policeman), Punnose Ancheril (district chieftain), Gopakumar Navaikulam (magistrate) and Sajeev Peter (doctor).

Breathtaking settings by well-known stage designer Vijayan Kadamperi created an epic-like ambiance for the play. Vakkom Maheen designed the costumes and did the makeup for the artistes, while Chirakkal Raju provided lighting support. Background music was controlled by Sony V Paravoor.

'Vyram' is the fourth drama produced by KANA Kuwait after the successful performances of 'Othello', 'Abraham' and 'Ningalenne Communistakki'.



## 'Parasite' shares rocket after Oscar wins

South Korean shares linked to director Bong Joon-ho's Oscar-winning movie "Parasite"—a dark comedy about the gap between rich and poor—have soared after investors piled in following its unprecedented Academy Awards. Shares in its production company, distributor and even an instant noodle maker featured in the film have all shot up since "Parasite" became the first non-English-language film to win Hollywood's top prize on Sunday, prompting celebrations in South Korea.

By yesterday's close, Barunson E&A, the company that produced "Parasite", was up 91 percent on Seoul's junior Kosdaq market from Friday, the last trading day before the Oscars ceremony. Nongshim, a top South Korean food and beverage maker that makes the two instant noodles in the recipe featured in the movie, was up 11 percent over the same period. And "Parasite" distributor CJ ENM, already one of South Korea's biggest media companies, was up 4.5 percent in the main KOSPI market. "Parasite" cost a reported 13.5 billion won to make — \$11 million—but since its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in May, it has earned \$130 million worldwide. US media giant HBO has secured the rights to adapt it into a miniseries. — AFP



Bong Joon-ho, winner of the Original Screenplay, International Feature Film, Directing, and Best Picture award for Parasite, poses in the press room. — AFP

## 'Knives Out' director plots whodunit franchise after 'Star Wars'

His murder mystery "Knives Out" is set to become a whodunit movie franchise, with Daniel Craig's Southern gentleman sleuth tackling a brand-new set of suspects, its creator told AFP. The 2019 movie was a massive success for writer-director Rian Johnson, previously best known for the divisive blockbuster "Star Wars: The Last Jedi." An Agatha Christie homage about a family patriarch murdered in his sprawling mansion, "Knives Out" on Tuesday passed \$300 million at the global box office, despite a budget of just \$40 million.

"It's always been in my head that if this one does alright, then it'd be really fun to do more of these," said Johnson. The film was nominated for the best original screenplay Oscar-losing out to history-making "Parasite"—and last week studio Lionsgate confirmed a sequel. "It's really more like another case, another set of suspects, another type of mystery, but with Daniel's Benoit Blanc character there to solve it," said Johnson. He has begun writing the second film, with plot details under wraps—"I'm just starting to fish around... There will be a murder, I can say that!"

But there will be "a whole new cast and whole new location and everything." The first film boasted an impressive ensemble cast including "Captain America" Chris Evans, soon-to-be Bond girl Ana de Armas and veteran actress Jamie Lee Curtis. "That's the other fun thing about

thinking about the next one... what other actors could we rope into this?" said Johnson.

### 'Wood-paneled rooms'

Johnson first came up with the notion of "Knives Out" a decade ago. Having dedicated four years to making 2017's space epic "The Last Jedi" for Disney, Johnson was itching to quickly switch to something galaxies away from that "big filmmaking world." "I had a great time working on 'Star Wars'... I genuinely enjoyed that aspect of it," said Johnson. But the idea of a film "we could make quickly, and just have some fun with actors talking in wood-paneled rooms—you can see how that would be appealing," he added.

Johnson remains linked to a brand new "Star Wars" trilogy, announced in 2017 but plagued by rumors it had been canceled after the experimental "Last Jedi" enraged die-hard fans. "I still have a great relationship with Lucasfilm, and nothing's been announced," said Johnson.

### 'Foghorn Leghorn'

Beyond the traditional detective formula, "Knives Out" earned praise for its comedic aspects, including its satirical look at the wealthy family's prejudices. And, of course, there was British 007 actor Craig's drawing "deep South" accent, based on the late American Civil



War historian Shelby Foote.

"It ended up being kind of Shelby Foote by way of Foghorn Leghorn," joked Johnson. "He would go, 'Was that too much?' And I'd say, 'No keep going!'" The accent drew scorn from some viewers, but Johnson insists Craig's deliberately "humane and clownish" accent was "never just like a joke." "It takes a really, really good actor to go big and stay real."

Although Craig is the only actor resuming his role, social and class themes from "Knives Out" are likely to return. The genre provides the perfect chance to tackle social issues without appearing to lecture or preach, said

Johnson. "In a whodunit, you have this little microcosm of society with your group of suspects," he said. Just as Christie used the genre to turn "the lens on contemporary British society of her time," the franchise offers "a great opportunity to me to set it modern-day in America and turn the lens on ourselves a little bit," he added. "Knives Out" is released on DVD, Blu-ray and 4K Ultra HD by Lionsgate on February 25. — AFP



## Lifestyle | Music & Movies



Participants, actors and anchormen of the new country-wide television channel 'Dikh' TV, the first Hungarian Gypsy TV network, pose in the backstage of their studio of the 19th district in Budapest, Hungary. — AFP photos



Actors and anchormen of the new country-wide television channel 'Dikh' TV, the first Hungarian Gypsy TV network, prepare for a TV record in their studio.



An anchorman (center) of the new country-wide television channel 'Dikh' TV, the first Hungarian Gypsy TV network, is pictured during a recording session in their studio in Budapest, Hungary.

# Romani TV channel plugs media gap in Hungary

The message from a dingy Budapest studio is slick. Grinning staff of Hungarian cable channel Dikh TV shout at the camera: "About the Roma but not just for the Roma!" The promotional slot captures the mission of Hungary's first dedicated Roma TV station: to bring the culture of their marginalized community to a wider audience. At around seven percent of a near 10-million-population, the Roma form the EU member's largest minority group. But more than 80 percent live in poverty, according to EU data, and experts say many suffer from deep-rooted discrimination and accelerating school segregation.

Launched on YouTube in 2015, Budapest-based Dikh TV-whose name means "Look" in the Romani language-is scaling up and could present a rare Roma success story. Since September its blend of light entertainment and youth content-including a Romani-language educational program-is available to millions of households on Hungary's cable networks.

And with a wealthy media investor now ploughing in funds and expertise, the channel will move to a modern studio in April. New

programs, both commissioned and home-made, including a live breakfast show, are also planned. "We started as amateurs but are becoming professional," anchorwoman Fruzsina Balogh, 26, told AFP in a back office that doubles as a make-up room.

### Ignored by mainstream

Her relative, Dikh TV's founder Elek Balogh, 48, grew up as one of nine children in a "Gypsy-settlement", a street of earth-and-straw brick houses in the town of Nagyecsed near the Romanian border. His interest in media began when his father, who worked in Budapest as a laborer, gifted him a camera. After moving to the capital himself, Balogh told AFP he "got bored" of mainstream media "failing" his community.

Public media only broadcasts a short weekly Roma cultural magazine in a little-watched early morning slot. "Most media is not interested in the reality of our lives. We're usually shown in a bad light," Balogh said during a production break. "A crime committed by a Gypsy gets wide publicity; the same crimes by non-Roma don't," he explained.



Elek Balogh, President of the Gypsy Government of the 19th district of Budapest and mastermind of the new country-wide television channel 'Dikh' TV, the first Hungarian Gypsy TV network, gives an interview for AFP in their studio in Budapest.

Self-taught in media skills and borrowing friends' equipment, Balogh began broadcasting Dikh TV online, first with a music request show, then-after encouraging feedback from viewers-a talk show.

A breakthrough came after he made a music clip with a teen talent that attracted millions of views. Next, Balogh wrote and directed a gritty soap opera featuring a Roma

family struggling with debt, a situation endured by many Hungarians. "It had relatable characters, so we got letters from non-Roma fans too," he said. Bernard Rorke of the Budapest-based European Roma Rights Centre says Dikh's "importance lies in presenting a nuanced view of Roma broadcast by Roma". Its success though depends "on the outcome of a broader struggle for media pluralism and for minority voices to be heard and heeded in Hungary," he told AFP.

### Friction

Friction between Roma and non-Roma has been roiled again recently by Hungary's populist premier Viktor Orban. Orban said Hungarians were angry about a court ruling awarding Roma financial compensation over a school segregation case, describing the decision as "deeply unfair". Right groups and Roma community representatives slammed Orban's comments. "We are the scapegoats even if a court defends us," Balogh said while adding that Dikh TV deliberately steers clear of politics. The channel has still attracted negative attention, with some billboards for

its cable launch daubed with racist graffiti and Balogh getting "abusive telephone calls" every week.

Last year an ultra-nationalist politician accused the channel of "anti-Hungarian racism" and said its "foreign funding" could pose a national security threat. Romanian investor Radu Morar, a successful TV and radio magnate, shrugs off such accusations, and says Dikh is plugging a gap in the market. "I've found Hungarians' reaction fantastic generally. They love the cooking program, discovering Roma recipes," Morar told AFP. Dikh's business prospects "look positive so far," said Daniel Szalay, editor of the media.hu news site. "It has serious financial backing, a major advertising sales contract recently signed and can make programs at low cost," he told AFP. With Dikh now employing some 20 staff, mainly Roma, Balogh says he appreciates no longer being a "one-man crew". "Back in Nagyecsed all the Gypsies watch it and are proud of its success. That's a wonderful feeling," he said. — AFP



In this file photo Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School student Emma Gonzalez pauses as she speaks during the March for Our Lives Rally in Washington, DC. — AFP photos



In this file photo Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School student Emma Gonzalez (center) listens with other students during the March for Our Lives Rally in Washington, DC.



In this file photo taken on June 15, 2018 Anti-gun violence advocate and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting survivor Emma Gonzalez (right) is comforted at the 'End of School Year Peace March and Rally' in Chicago.

## Two years on, journey of Florida shooting survivors captured on screen

Two years after a shooting rampage at a school in Parkland, Florida, "the rage, the frustration, the trauma" of the survivors is the focus of a new documentary called "Us Kids" that aims to put gun violence at the heart of this year's US presidential race. The film looks at the ways in which the massacre of 17 people by a former student at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas high school affected the lives of those who survived the attack, and follows their first steps towards becoming high-profile anti-gun violence activists. Of all the survivors, Emma Gonzalez has become the face of frustration among young people at the lack of political response to endemic gun violence in the United States, which last year suffered a record 417 shootings, according to the Gun Violence Archive (GVA).

The teenager, with her distinctive close-cropped hair, caught national attention when she made an impassioned speech at a

rally, laying into President Donald Trump and his campaign contributions from the National Rifle Association (NRA). She called out the constant excuses and prevarications of the political class in tackling gun violence with the memorable put-down, "We call BS!"

"Us Kids" was directed by Kim A. Snyder, who in 2016 made a film about another notorious gun massacre at Newtown, Connecticut, when a 20-year-old with a semi-automatic rifle killed 20 children aged between six and seven years old at Sandy Hook Elementary School. By chance, Snyder was in Florida on February 14, 2018, when the Parkland massacre took place. "I was there in Florida when all of these kids came demanding change at the State Capitol, and I realized that I needed to do this," she told AFP.

### Activism

"Us Kids" is told from the perspective of

the survivors, whose fury, pain and frustration can be seen "transforming... into sheer action and determination and hope," Snyder said. The Parkland survivors are not "unlike a lot of amazing young people that have been the catalyst for movements. You know, great movements have always been led by young people," the director told AFP. "There was a nation of traumatized youth that was ready to be activated, and when Emma (Gonzalez) got up and gave that seminal 'We call BS' speech, it was like a match and the gasoline was there. And so it was a nation of kids that were just ready to be mobilized," she said.

### 'Public health crisis'

She admits it took time for her to win the trust of the teenage survivors and convince them to allow her to film their steps towards becoming activists. "They were traumatized. The media, as well-meaning as it was, can also sometimes be an added trauma," she

said. "So I waited a long time. I followed them across the country all summer, more like a rock band." "You have to really become part of who they are and trusted. I took two years to build that trust." Snyder hopes that the message of "Us Kids" will be absorbed into this year's election campaign and enter into the presidential debates, calling the number of deaths and injuries from shootings a "public health crisis."

The issue is set to be a divisive battleground among voters as Donald Trump stands as a strident gun rights champion, taking on the Democratic Party, which backs tighter gun control. Snyder also hopes that the impassioned activism of the younger generation will resonate among older viewers. "It's a coming-of-age story, and it viscerally reminds us of who we all were, and that we didn't take no for an answer and that apathy cannot stand," she said. — AFP

## Human-hunting film set for release after Trump 'racist' row

"The Hunt," a film in which elites hunt "ordinary Americans" for sport that was pulled last year after sparking outrage, will finally be released next month, Universal Pictures said Tuesday. The movie had been scheduled for release last September, but drew the ire of Republicans including President Donald Trump, who appeared to slam it as "racist." The plot of "The Hunt," pulled after a series of mass shootings across the country, sees people who have been kidnapped from traditionally Republican bastions such as Wyoming, Mississippi and Orlando, Florida waking up in a field surrounded by "elite" hunters, who proceed to gun them down. Wealthy characters in the film refer to their prey as "deplorables," according to the Hollywood Reporter-a term Hillary Clinton used to describe Trump supporters during her presidential run against Trump in 2016. "The most talked about movie of the year is the one nobody has seen... yet," Universal said in a statement announcing its new March 13 release date. Apparently embracing the controversy, a poster for the movie has a quote attributed to Fox News reading: "Shows Hollywood for what it really is... demented and evil."

"Exploitative rather than opinionated," reads another, alongside the film's previous release date, which has been crossed out. Last August, Universal explained its decision to postpone the "satirical social thriller" because "now is not the right time to release the film." The decision came just days after fatal mass shootings in Dayton, Ohio and El Paso, Texas, as well as a gun rampage at a California festival. Adverts for the film had already been pulled following the shootings-but the movie drew Trump's wrath nonetheless. "The movie coming out is made in order to inflame and cause chaos," tweeted Trump at the time, without referring to "The Hunt" by name.

Hollywood creates "their own violence, and then try to blame others. They are the true Racists, and are very bad for our Country!" he added. Producer Jason Blum told The Hollywood Reporter in an interview published Tuesday, "None of us were interested in taking sides with this movie." "The audience is smart enough to know that what they're seeing is a satire and it's preposterous," he added.—AFP

## 'Birds of Prey' tops N America box office but fails to soar

For new Warner Bros release "Birds of Prey," the weekend brought good and bad news: It took in \$33 million to lead the North American box office, but fared poorly for a superhero movie. The three-day gross, reported by industry watcher Exhibitor Relations, marked one of the lowest domestic launches in years for a studio superhero film, according to Hollywood Reporter. The film, starring Margot Robbie as former Joker girlfriend Harley Quinn, has drawn generally strong reviews.

The R-rated movie from young Chinese-American

director Cathy Yan reportedly cost just under \$100 million to produce-the lowest budget of any installment in the DC Extended Universe. Sony's action comedy "Bad Boys for Life," with Will Smith and Martin Lawrence as wise-cracking detectives, slipped just one notch after topping the box office for three straight weeks, taking in \$12 million. Both movies may have suffered from Academy Award weekend, when viewers showed renewed interest in "1917," the pre-show favorite for the best-film Oscar which eventually went to "Parasite" on Sunday.

"1917," the wrenching and technically impressive war film from director Sam Mendes, earned \$9.2 million for the weekend, down only slightly from the week before. In fourth was another Universal picture, "Dolittle," based on the children's book about a veterinarian who can talk to animals. With a cast headed by Robert Downey Jr. and Emma Thompson, the poorly reviewed film took in \$6.5 million. And in fifth, one spot up from the previous week, was Sony's "Jumanji: The Next Level," at \$5.6 million. It has Dwayne ("The Rock") Johnson and Kevin Hart being

plunged back into a dangerous video game world.

Rounding out the top 10 were: "The Gentlemen" (\$4.2 million) "Gretel and Hansel" (\$3.6 million) "Little Women" (\$2.4 million) "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker" (\$2.3 million) "Knives Out" (\$2.3 million)—AFP





French actress Josiane Balasko poses as she arrives for the 2020 Cesar Nominees Lunch in Paris. — AFP photos



French actress Anais Demoustier poses as she arrives for the 2020 Cesar Nominees Lunch.



French film director Arnaud Desplechin poses as he arrives for the 2020 Cesar Nominees Lunch.

### Hockney’s pop art icon ‘The Splash’ sells for £23.1 million

Seminal pop art painting “The Splash” by David Hockney sold for £23.1 million (\$29.8 million) at a London auction on Tuesday, the third highest price paid for a work by the British artist. “The Splash”, which was painted in 1966, depicts the moment just after a diver has broken the surface of a swimming pool, capturing the fantasy Californian lifestyle. “Not only is this a landmark work within David Hockney’s oeuvre, it’s an icon of Pop that defined an era and also gave visual identity to L.A.,” said Emma Baker, head of the contemporary art sale at London’s Sotheby’s auction house.

Sotheby’s also called the work “a quintessential example of Hockney’s lifelong fascination with the texture, appearance and depth of water”. The price, bid by an unknown buyer, is nearly eight times that achieved when the work last sold at auction for £2.9 million in 2006. Yorkshire-born Hockney’s “Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)” sold for over \$90 million in New York in 2018, an auction record at the time for a work by a living artist. The same year, his “Pacific Coast Highway and Santa Monica” sold for \$28.5 million. — AFP

## French film personalities demand change at French Oscars

More than 200 actors, producers, directors and movie personalities on Tuesday demanded “profound reform” of France’s equivalent of the Oscars executive, the Cesar Academy, which they accused of being out of touch. The academy is already under fire after Roman Polanski’s new film “An Officer and a Spy” topped the list of nominations for this year’s Cesar awards which will be handed out on February 28. Polanski has been wanted in the US for the statutory rape of a 13-year-old girl since 1978 and is persona non grata in Hollywood.

But the Cesar Academy has also been widely criticized for allegedly excluding

director Claire Denis and writer Virginie Despentes, both considered feminist activists, from a ceremony to announce the contenders for this year’s Cesars.

In an open letter, dozens of film industry personalities including actors Omar Sy, Berenice Bejo and Jean-Pierre Bacri, producer siblings Eric and Nicolas Altmayer, and director Jerome Salle, denounced “dysfunction” at the academy and an “opaqueness” of its accounts. They also complained that the founding statutes of the Cesars had not changed “for a very long time” and that the academy’s nearly 5,000 paid-up members do not get a vote or a say in its decisions.

The academy’s board, in response to the letter, said it would ask the National Centre for Cinema, a culture ministry agency, to appoint a mediator that will be in charge of “deep reform” of its statutes and governance. It has previously announced measures to boost female representation in its membership and representation. The inclusion of Polanski’s film on the Cesars’ shortlist was condemned by France’s equality minister, women’s groups and film critics, but the Cesar Academy said it could not be expected to take “moral positions” when awarding films.

A number of French feminist groups,

including the Osez Le Feminisme! (Dare Feminism!) collective, published an open letter on the website of the daily Le Parisien late Tuesday urging Cesar voters to snub Polanski’s film, which is titled “J’accuse” in France. “To celebrate an abuser like Polanski is to support the system of impunity for male violence, and silence the voices of the victims,” the letter said. The feminist groups also called for a protest outside the award ceremony, which is to be held in Paris’s Salle Pleyel auditorium. — AFP



In this file photo gallery assistants are pictured posing next to an artwork entitled ‘The Splash’ 1966, by British artist David Hockney, during a photo call at Sotheby's Galleries in central London. — AFP



### New York Fashion Week



Models walk the runway during the Oscar De La Renta Show - February 2020 New York Fashion Week: The Shows at The New York Public Library in New York City.—AFP



# Classifieds

Thursday, February 13, 2020



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 66819 - 66817  
Fax: (+965) 24348714  
www.met.gov.kw

## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Cold with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas north westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

**BY NIGHT:** Very cold with light to moderate north westerly wind to variable wind, with speed of 08 - 35 km/h with a chance for frost forming in agriculture and desert areas.

| WEATHER WATCH  |           |           | Frost |  |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-------|--|
| STATION        | MAX. EXP. | MIN. REC. |       |  |
| KUWAIT CITY    | 14 °C     | 05 °C     |       |  |
| KUWAIT AIRPORT | 12 °C     | 01 °C     |       |  |
| ABDALY         | 11 °C     | -1 °C     |       |  |
| BUBYAN         | 16 °C     | 09 °C     |       |  |
| JAHRA          | 13 °C     | 01 °C     |       |  |
| FAILAKA ISLAND | 13 °C     | 04 °C     |       |  |
| SALMIYAH       | 12 °C     | 06 °C     |       |  |
| AHMADI         | 13 °C     | 04 °C     |       |  |
| NUWAISIB       | 16 °C     | 02 °C     |       |  |
| WAFRA          | 13 °C     | 00 °C     |       |  |
| SALMY          | 10 °C     | -4 °C     |       |  |

SFC. CHART

12/02/2020 0000 UTC

| 4 DAYS FORECAST |       |   |              |       |                |              |
|-----------------|-------|---|--------------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| DAY             | DATE  | WEATHER   | Temperatures |       | Wind Direction | Wind Speed   |
|                 |       |   | MAX.         | MIN.  |                |              |
| Thursday        | 02/13 | Rather cold and some scattered clouds will appear.                                      | 18 °C        | 03 °C | VRB-NW         | 06 - 28 km/h |
| Friday          | 02/14 | Fair and Clouds will increase gradually   | 22 °C        | 05 °C | VRB-NW         | 06 - 28 km/h |
| Saturday        | 02/15 | Rather hot and Partly cloudy  | 24 °C        | 09 °C | VRB-SE         | 08 - 30 km/h |
| Sunday          | 02/16 | Warm and Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at night | 26 °C        | 12 °C | SE             | 15 - 45 km/h |

| PRAYER TIMES |       |
|--------------|-------|
| Fajr         | 05:09 |
| Sunrise      | 06:29 |
| Zuhr         | 12:02 |
| Asr          | 15:11 |
| Sunset       | 17:35 |
| Isha         | 18:53 |

| RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT |            |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| MAX. Temp.                           | 15 °C      |
| MIN. Temp.                           | 02 °C      |
| MAX. RH                              | 49 %       |
| MIN. RH                              | 13 %       |
| MAX. Wind                            | NW 53 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.

## Airlines

|                      |              |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Kuwait Airways       | 171          |
| Jazeera Airways      | 177          |
| Turkish Airlines     | 1884918      |
| FlyDubai             | 22414400     |
| Qatar Airways        | 22423888     |
| KLM                  | 22425747     |
| Royal Jordanian      | 22418064/5/6 |
| British Airways      | 22425635     |
| Air France           | 22430224     |
| Emirates             | 22921555     |
| Air India            | 22456700     |
| Air India EXPRESS    | 22438185/4   |
| Sri Lanka Airlines   | 22424444     |
| Egypt Air            | 22421578     |
| 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](http://www.kuwait-airport.com.kw))

## DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

| Arrival Flights on Thursday 13/2/2020 |      |             |       |     |      |                   | Departure Flights on Thursday 13/2/2020 |          |      |             |       |     |      |      |            |       |
|---------------------------------------|------|-------------|-------|-----|------|-------------------|---|----------|------|-------------|-------|-----|------|------|------------|-------|
| Airlines                              | Flt  | Route       | Time  | FDB | 059  | Dubai             | 14:20                                   | Airlines | Flt  | Route       | Time  | KAC | JZR  | 781  | Jeddah     | 13:30 |
| IGO                                   | 1757 | Kochi       | 00:10 | GFA | 221  | Bahrain           | 14:40                                   | AIC      | 976  | Goa/Chennai | 00:05 | KAC | 541  | 123  | Dubai      | 13:40 |
| AIC                                   | 989  | Mumbai      | 00:10 | FDB | 8065 | Dubai             | 14:40                                   | SVA      | 503  | Jeddah      | 00:05 | UAE | 872  | 507  | Cairo      | 13:45 |
| JZR                                   | 254  | Amman       | 00:45 | KAC | 774  | Riyadh            | 14:40                                   | JZR      | 215  | Jeddah      | 00:05 | AXB | 394  | 1079 | Dubai      | 14:15 |
| JZR                                   | 734  | Cairo       | 00:50 | KAC | 672  | Dubai             | 14:40                                   | MSC      | 402  | Alexandria  | 00:15 | QTR | 1079 | 394  | Kozhikode  | 14:15 |
| THY                                   | 772  | Istanbul    | 00:50 | SVA | 500  | Jeddah            | 14:45                                   | QTR      | 1093 | Doha        | 00:25 | KNE | 382  | 1079 | Taif       | 15:00 |
| PGT                                   | 858  | Istanbul    | 00:55 | KAC | 118  | New York          | 14:50                                   | FDB      | 072  | Dubai       | 00:40 | KAC | 661  | 681  | Abu Dhabi  | 15:00 |
| KAC                                   | 102  | London      | 00:55 | KAC | 618  | Doha              | 15:00                                   | JZR      | 409  | Delhi       | 00:50 | FDB | 060  | 681  | Dubai      | 15:10 |
| KAC                                   | 504  | Beirut      | 01:05 | KAC | 792  | Madinah           | 15:10                                   | AIC      | 990  | Mumbai      | 01:10 | GFA | 222  | 681  | Bahrain    | 15:25 |
| DLH                                   | 625  | Dammam      | 01:30 | JZR | 602  | Baku              | 15:10                                   | IGO      | 1758 | Kochi       | 01:10 | UAE | 878  | 681  | Dubai      | 15:40 |
| RJA                                   | 642  | Amman       | 01:40 | ETD | 303  | Abu Dhabi         | 15:15                                   | JZR      | 111  | Doha        | 01:55 | FDB | 8066 | 681  | Dubai      | 15:40 |
| THY                                   | 764  | Istanbul    | 01:50 | KAC | 788  | Jeddah            | 15:25                                   | PGT      | 859  | Istanbul    | 02:00 | KAC | 775  | 681  | Riyadh     | 15:45 |
| PGT                                   | 828  | Istanbul    | 01:50 | JZR | 222  | Riyadh            | 15:30                                   | KAC      | 677  | Dubai       | 02:10 | KAC | 673  | 681  | Dubai      | 15:50 |
| IGO                                   | 1759 | Delhi       | 01:55 | JZR | 232  | Dammam            | 15:30                                   | THY      | 773  | Istanbul    | 02:20 | JZR | 125  | 681  | Dubai      | 16:00 |
| JZR                                   | 722  | Alexandria  | 01:55 | OMA | 645  | Muscat            | 15:35                                   | KAC      | 417  | Manila      | 02:30 | SVA | 501  | 681  | Jeddah     | 16:00 |
| UAE                                   | 853  | Dubai       | 02:15 | KAC | 412  | Bangkok           | 15:40                                   | DLH      | 625  | Frankfurt   | 02:30 | KAC | 743  | 681  | Dammam     | 16:20 |
| ETH                                   | 620  | Addis Ababa | 02:15 | UAE | 857  | Dubai             | 15:45                                   | PGT      | 829  | Istanbul    | 02:50 | ETD | 304  | 681  | Abu Dhabi  | 16:20 |
| KAC                                   | 211  | Bahrain     | 02:30 | JZR | 732  | Cairo             | 15:50                                   | IGO      | 1765 | Delhi       | 02:50 | KAC | 283  | 681  | Dhaka      | 16:25 |
| KLM                                   | 446  | Amman       | 02:30 | KAC | 562  | Amman             | 15:50                                   | ETH      | 621  | Addis Ababa | 03:05 | KAC | 785  | 681  | Jeddah     | 16:30 |
| QTR                                   | 1086 | Doha        | 02:40 | ABY | 127  | Sharjah           | 15:55                                   | UAE      | 854  | Dubai       | 03:40 | KAC | 646  | 681  | Muscat     | 16:35 |
| OMA                                   | 643  | Muscat      | 02:55 | JZR | 152  | Mashhad           | 16:00                                   | KLM      | 446  | Amsterdam   | 03:55 | OMA | 646  | 681  | Muscat     | 16:35 |
| KKK                                   | 1268 | Istanbul    | 03:05 | KNE | 531  | Jeddah            | 16:05                                   | OMA      | 644  | Muscat      | 03:55 | ABY | 128  | 681  | Sharjah    | 16:35 |
| PGT                                   | 860  | Istanbul    | 03:05 | IRA | 607  | Mashhad           | 16:25                                   | THY      | 765  | Istanbul    | 04:00 | KAC | 615  | 681  | Bahrain    | 16:45 |
| ETD                                   | 305  | Abu Dhabi   | 03:10 | JZR | 212  | Jeddah            | 16:25                                   | QTR      | 1087 | Doha        | 04:00 | JZR | 735  | 681  | Cairo      | 16:50 |
| MSR                                   | 612  | Cairo       | 03:15 | FEQ | 241  | Alexandria        | 16:35                                   | ETD      | 306  | Abu Dhabi   | 04:00 | JZR | 103  | 681  | Bahrain    | 16:50 |
| LMU                                   | 510  | Cairo       | 04:00 | QTR | 1072 | Doha              | 16:35                                   | KAC      | 621  | Doha        | 04:05 | KNE | 532  | 681  | Jeddah     | 16:55 |
| QTR                                   | 1076 | Doha        | 04:00 | JZR | 116  | Doha              | 16:40                                   | MSR      | 613  | Cairo       | 04:15 | KAC | 503  | 681  | Beirut     | 17:05 |
| IGO                                   | 1751 | Chennai     | 04:10 | FDB | 051  | Dubai             | 16:45                                   | PGT      | 829  | Istanbul    | 04:25 | IRA | 666  | 681  | Esfahan    | 17:25 |
| KAC                                   | 418  | Manila      | 04:25 | KAC | 546  | Cairo             | 16:45                                   | JZR      | 713  | Sohag       | 04:30 | KAC | 619  | 681  | Doha       | 17:35 |
| OHY                                   | 352  | Istanbul    | 04:30 | SAW | 705  | Damascus          | 17:00                                   | KKK      | 1269 | Istanbul    | 04:35 | KAC | 357  | 681  | Kochi      | 17:35 |
| KAC                                   | 302  | Mumbai      | 04:40 | SGL | 4131 | IQA               | 17:00                                   | LMU      | 511  | Cairo       | 05:00 | FEQ | 242  | 681  | Alexandria | 17:35 |
| KAC                                   | 796  | Madinah     | 04:40 | NIA | 461  | Sohag             | 17:20                                   | IGO      | 1752 | Chennai     | 05:10 | JZR | 405  | 681  | Kochi      | 17:40 |
| JZR                                   | 406  | Kochi       | 04:45 | FEQ | 341  | Sohag             | 17:20                                   | QTR      | 1077 | Doha        | 05:30 | UAE | 858  | 681  | Dubai      | 17:45 |
| JZR                                   | 540  | KTM         | 04:45 | SVA | 510  | Riyadh            | 17:25                                   | OHY      | 351  | Istanbul    | 05:30 | FDB | 052  | 681  | Dubai      | 17:45 |
| JZR                                   | 702  | Asyut       | 04:50 | GFA | 215  | Bahrain           | 17:30                                   | JZR      | 101  | Bahrain     | 05:50 | JZR | 539  | 681  | KTM        | 17:50 |
| FDB                                   | 069  | Dubai       | 05:00 | JZR | 214  | Jeddah            | 17:45                                   | THY      | 771  | Istanbul    | 06:25 | KAC | 563  | 681  | Amman      | 17:55 |
| KAC                                   | 358  | Kochi       | 05:10 | UAE | 875  | Dubai             | 18:00                                   | JZR      | 121  | Dubai       | 06:30 | QTR | 1073 | 681  | Doha       | 18:00 |
| DHX                                   | 170  | Bahrain     | 05:10 | FDB | 063  | Dubai             | 18:15                                   | JZR      | 251  | Amman       | 06:40 | SAW | 706  | 681  | Damascus   | 18:00 |
| JZR                                   | 404  | Hyderabad   | 05:10 | JZR | 302  | Istanbul          | 18:15                                   | JZR      | 113  | Doha        | 06:40 | KAC | 343  | 681  | Chennai    | 18:00 |
| KAC                                   | 382  | Delhi       | 05:20 | JZR | 124  | Dubai             | 18:20                                   | RJA      | 643  | Amman       | 06:55 | KAC | 675  | 681  | Dubai      | 18:10 |
| KAC                                   | 784  | Jeddah      | 05:20 | KAC | 158  | Istanbul          | 18:25                                   | FDB      | 070  | Dubai       | 07:05 | KAC | 562  | 681  | Asyut      | 18:10 |
| THY                                   | 770  | Istanbul    | 05:25 | MSR | 620  | Cairo             | 18:30                                   | GFA      | 212  | Bahrain     | 07:15 | NIA | 562  | 681  | Cairo      | 18:10 |
| JPJ                                   | 3730 | KSQ         | 05:30 | QTR | 1080 | Doha              | 18:30                                   | KAC      | 413  | Bangkok     | 07:30 | JZR | 733  | 681  | Sohag      | 18:20 |
| KAC                                   | 284  | Dhaka       | 05:35 | JZR | 306  | Istanbul          | 18:55                                   | KAC      | 167  | Paris       | 07:35 | FEQ | 342  | 681  | Riyadh     | 18:20 |
| JZR                                   | 112  | Doha        | 05:35 | RJA | 640  | Amman             | 19:10                                   | IGO      | 1767 | Mumbai      | 08:10 | SVA | 511  | 681  | Bahrain    | 18:20 |
| JZR                                   | 216  | Jeddah      | 05:50 | KAC | 156  | Istanbul          | 19:20                                   | KAC      | 173  | Munich      | 08:20 | GFA | 216  | 681  | Dubai      | 18:35 |
| KAC                                   | 106  | London      | 06:00 | RBG | 555  | Alexandria        | 19:25                                   | QTR      | 1081 | LGW         | 08:30 | JZR | 127  | 681  | Mumbai     | 18:35 |
| JZR                                   | 402  | Mumbai      | 06:05 | ABY | 123  | Sharjah           | 19:25                                   | FDB      | 054  | Dubai       | 08:35 | KAC | 301  | 681  | Hyderabad  | 18:40 |
| KAC                                   | 332  | Trivandrum  | 06:05 | NIA | 161  | Cairo             | 19:30                                   | KAC      | 787  | Jeddah      | 09:00 | JZR | 403  | 681  | Delhi      | 18:45 |
| KAC                                   | 344  | Chennai     | 06:10 | GFA | 217  | Bahrain           | 19:30                                   | KAC      | 163  | MXP         | 09:00 | KAC | 381  | 681  | Alexandria | 18:55 |
| KAC                                   | 362  | Colombo     | 06:30 | QTR | 1090 | Doha              | 19:35                                   | JZR      | 731  | Cairo       | 09:10 | JZR | 721  | 681  | Amman      | 19:20 |
| KAC                                   | 544  | Cairo       | 07:00 | KAC | 744  | Dammam            | 19:35                                   | BAW      | 156  | London      | 09:10 | JZR | 253  | 681  | Dubai      | 19:20 |
| BAW                                   | 157  | London      | 07:05 | KAC | 782  | Jeddah            | 19:50                                   | JZR      | 601  | Baku        | 09:30 | FDB | 064  | 681  | Muscat     | 19:30 |
| KAC                                   | 678  | Dubai       | 07:05 | JZR | 104  | Bahrain           | 19:55                                   | KAC      | 545  | Cairo       | 09:30 | KAC | 691  | 681  | Dubai      | 19:30 |
| IGO                                   | 1766 | Mumbai      | 07:10 | KNE | 531  | Taif              | 20:00                                   | KAC      | 157  | Istanbul    | 09:30 | UAE | 876  | 681  | Cairo      | 19:30 |
| KAC                                   | 206  | Islamabad   | 07:10 | KAC | 662  | Abu Dhabi         | 20:00                                   | QTR      | 1085 | Doha        | 09:30 | MSR | 621  | 681  | Doha       | 19:30 |
| FDB                                   | 053  | Dubai       | 07:15 | OMA | 645  | Muscat            | 20:05                                   | QTR      | 852  | Doha        | 09:35 | QTR | 1081 | 681  | Sharjah    | 19:55 |
| QTR                                   | 1084 | Doha        | 08:00 | KAC | 776  | Riyadh            | 20:05                                   | KAC      | 671  | Dubai       | 09:35 | ABY | 124  | 681  | Alexandria | 20:05 |
| QTR                                   | 8511 | Doha        | 08:05 | OMA | 647  | Muscat            | 20:20                                   | KAC      | 101  | London      | 09:45 | RBG | 556  | 681  | Amman      | 20:10 |
| KAC                                   | 354  | Bengaluru   | 08:10 | KAC | 616  | Bahrain           | 20:30                                   | ABY      | 126  | Sharjah     | 09:45 | GFA | 218  | 681  | Cairo      | 20:30 |
| KAC                                   | 622  | Doha        | 08:30 | QTR | 1088 | Doha              | 20:30                                   | KAC      | 561  | Amman       | 09:45 | GFA | 218  | 681  | Muscat     | 20:45 |
| UAE                                   | 855  | Dubai       | 08:35 | JZR | 126  | Dubai             | 20:40                                   | JZR      | 151  | Mashhad     | 09:55 | NIA | 162  | 681  | Trivandrum | 20:50 |
| ETD                                   | 301  | Abu Dhabi   | 08:55 | KAC | 174  | Munich            | 20:45                                   | ETD      | 302  | Abu Dhabi   | 09:55 | OMA | 648  | 681  | Riyadh     | 20:50 |
| JZR                                   | 102  | Bahrain     | 08:55 | DLH | 624  | Frankfurt         | 20:55                                   | KAC      | 111  | New York    | 10:00 | KAC | 333  | 681  | Mumbai     | 20:55 |
| IRA                                   | 667  | Esfahan     | 09:00 | KAC | 674  | Dubai             | 20:55                                   | KAC      | 797  | Madinah     | 10:00 | KNE | 232  | 681  | Doha       | 21:00 |
| ABY                                   | 125  | Sharjah     | 09:05 | KAC | 542  | Cairo             | 21:00                                   | UAE      | 876  | Dubai       | 10:05 | JZR | 401  | 681  | Muscat     | 21:20 |
| KAC                                   | 384  | Delhi       | 09:30 | ALK | 229  | Colombo           | 21:20                                   | IRA      | 606  | Mashhad     | 10:00 | QTR | 1091 | 681  | Dammam     | 21:45 |
| KAC                                   | 304  | Mumbai      | 09:30 | ETD | 307  | Abu Dhabi         | 21:20                                   | KAC      | 613  | Bahrain     | 10:05 | OMA | 648  | 681  | Bahrain    | 21:50 |
| FDB                                   | 055  | Dubai       | 09:40 | MEA | 402  | Beirut            | 21:20                                   | JZR      | 301  | Istanbul    | 10:05 | DLH | 624  | 681  | KHI        | 22:10 |
| IGO                                   | 1753 | Ahmedabad   | 09:40 | UAE | 859  | Dubai             | 21:30                                   | KAC      | 773  | Riyadh      | 10:15 | JZR | 507  | 681  | Asyut      | 22:15 |
| QTR                                   | 1070 | Doha        | 09:45 | GFA | 219  | Bahrain           | 21:45                                   | KAC      | 155  | Istanbul    | 10:20 | DHX | 171  | 681  | Beirut     | 22:20 |
| NIA                                   | 361  | Alexandria  | 09:50 | KLM | 445  | Amsterdam         | 21:50                                   | FDB      | 056  | Dubai       | 10:35 | QTR | 1089 | 681  | Delhi      | 22:25 |
| IAW                                   | 512  | Riyadh      | 10:00 | KAC | 161  | MXP               | 21:55                                   | KAC      | 617  | Doha        | 10:35 | JZR | 701  | 681  | Lahore     | 22:30 |
| SAV                                   | 157A | Al Najaf    | 10:00 | MSC | 504  | Alexandria        | 22:00                                   | JZR      | 211  | Jeddah      | 10:40 | KAC | 203  | 681  | Beirut     | 22:35 |
| JZR                                   | 410  | Delhi       | 10:00 | RBG | 551  | Alexandria        | 22:00                                   | IGO      | 1754 | Ahmedabad   | 10:40 | MEA | 403  | 681  | Doha       | 22:40 |
| GFA                                   | 213  | Doha        | 10:20 | KAC | 688  | Poha              | 22:00                                   | NIA      | 462  | Sohag       | 10:50 | ETD | 308  | 681  | Colombo    | 22:45 |
| JZR                                   | 714  | Sohag       | 10:50 | QTR | 1082 | Doha              | 22:05                                   | IAW      | 158A | Al Najaf    | 11:00 | ALK | 230  | 681  | Bahrain    | 22:50 |
| JZR                                   | 122  | Dubai       | 11:15 | ETD | 309  | Abu Dhabi         | 22:15                                   | SVA      | 513  | Riyadh      | 11:00 | GFA | 220  | 681  | Bahrain    | 22:55 |
| QTR                                   | 1074 | Doha        | 11:35 | AIC | 981  | Chennai/Ahmedabad | 22:25                                   | JZR      | 305  | Istanbul    | 11:10 | KLM | 445  | 681  | Dammam     | 22:55 |
| KAC                                   | 352  | Kochi       | 11:35 | RBG | 213  | Sohag             | 22:30                                   | KAC      | 741  | Dammam      | 11:20 | UAE | 860  | 681  | Alexandria | 23:00 |
| MEA                                   | 404  | Beirut      | 11:55 | KAC | 786  | Jeddah            | 22:50                                   | GFA      | 214  | Bahrain     | 11:25 | RBG | 552  | 681  | Abu Dhabi  | 23:05 |
| SYR                                   | 341  | Damascus    | 12:00 | BBC | 043  | Dhaka             | 23:00                                   | SGL      | 4130 | IQA         | 12:00 | MSC | 502  | 681  | Sohag      | 23:10 |
| IAW                                   | 157  | Al Najaf    | 12:00 | GOW | 061  | CNN               | 23:00                                   | JZR      | 221  | Riyadh      | 12:00 | ETD | 310  | 681  | Jeddah     | 23:15 |
| JZR                                   | 252  | Amman       | 12:05 | JZR | 002  | LGW               | 23:05                                   | JZR      | 213  | Jeddah      | 12:00 | RBG | 214  | 681  | Delhi      | 23:20 |
| MSR                                   | 610  | Cairo       | 12:25 | QTR | 1092 | Doha              | 23:10                                   | JZR      | 121  | Dammam      | 12:35 | KAC | 783  | 681  | Doha       | 23:25 |
| UAE                                   | 871  | Dubai       | 12:50 | MSC | 415  | Sohag             | 23:15                                   | MEA      | 405  | Beirut      | 12:55 | KAC | 783  | 681  | Cairo      | 23:30 |
| AXB                                   | 393  | Kozhikode   | 13:15 | JZR | 128  | Dubai             | 23:15                                   | JZR      | 115  | Doha        | 13:00 | QTR | 1083 | 681  | Mumbai     | 23:40 |
| QTR                                   | 1078 | Doha        | 13:35 | KAC | 676  | Dubai             | 23:20                                   | QTR      | 1075 | Doha        | 13:00 | KAC | 543  | 681  | CNN        | 23:55 |
| KAC                                   | 614  | Bahrain     | 13:50 | JZR | 736  | Cairo             | 23:30                                   | IAW      | 158  | Al Najaf    | 13:00 | KAC | 303  | 681  |            |       |
| KNE                                   | 231  | Riyadh      | 14:10 | FDB | 071  | Dubai             | 23:45                                   | SYR      | 342  | Damascus    | 13:00 | GOW | 062  | 681  |            |       |
| UAE                                   | 877  | Dubai       | 14:10 | KAC | 564  | Amman             |   |          |      |             |       |     |      |      |            |       |





# Coronavirus crisis threatens to hobble Gulf economies

## China says faces ‘war’ against COVID-19 as death toll tops 1,100

DUBAI/BEIJING: The coronavirus crisis, which has already battered oil prices, threatens to further undercut Gulf economies battling a downturn and struggling to wean themselves from a decades-old energy addiction. The six Gulf states – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates – count China as their main trading partner and crude buyer, which soaks up about a fifth of their oil. But China's energy demand has sagged as authorities lock down millions of people in several cities to prevent the spread of the disease, now named COVID-19, that has killed more than 1,100 people so far.

The knock-on effects for a global economy that is dependent on a buoyant China – the powerhouse which accounts for one third of the growth in oil demand – have seen prices sink to a one-year low. Analysts believe the crisis, which the World Health Organization said this week spells a “very grave” global threat, will undercut the industry and dampen prices. “There is no question that the virus is having a significant impact on Chinese oil demand,” Bill Farren-Price of Petroleum Policy Intelligence (PPI) told AFP. If the lockdowns continue into the year's second quarter,” he said, “then it starts to look more serious and will have deeper impacts on the real economy”.

Non-oil trade between Beijing and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has grown from just several billion dollars two decades ago to nearly \$200 billion last year. One industry that has taken an early hit is tourism. Over 1.6 million Chinese tourists visited the Gulf states in 2018, most of them heading to glitzy Dubai, and the number had been rising fast. In recent weeks, however, Chinese visitors have been rarely sighted even in Dubai as airlines have suspend routes following the outbreak, threatening the ambitious tourism targets.

### Reforms needed

The latest shock comes shortly after the International Monetary Fund warned that Gulf states must undertake much deeper reforms or risk seeing some \$2.5 trillion in accumulated wealth drain away in

15 years as global demand for oil slides. Oil income is highly sensitive to Gulf states as it contributes more than 70 percent of public revenues. Since Jan 30, a month after the disease was discovered, oil prices have dropped by around 20 percent, slashing tens of billions of dollars from GCC revenues.

An oil price crash in mid-2014 had already seen public revenues dwindle and growth rates tumble, forcing borrowing and a drawdown on assets to plug budget deficits. Major energy-producing countries, which had already cut production in an effort to revive the market, now face a “double whammy” of slumping prices as well as more fundamental economic trauma, said Ellen Wald, author of the book “Saudi Inc”. “The declines, coming at a time of curtailed output, threaten economic shocks that, if long-lasting, could lead to the kind of political and regional instability that was avoided during the last steep drop,” she said in a Bloomberg news agency commentary.

London-based research consultancy Capital Economics also warned that a prolonged impact from COVID-19 could trigger a major economic downturn. “Fears about the coronavirus outbreak have weighed on oil prices and clouded the near-term outlook for the Gulf countries,” it said in a report. “Lower oil prices and a possible deepening of oil production cuts will act as a headwind to growth in early 2020.”

As a result of the sharp decline in oil prices, a technical committee for OPEC and its partners last week recommended additional production cuts of 600,000 bpd to add it to the 1.7 million bpd of cuts already in place. Russia is reluctant to commit however, promising a decision soon. Mohammed Al-Sabban, a former senior Saudi energy ministry official, warned in an article in Okaz newspaper on Tuesday that if the so-called OPEC+ group does not cut production quickly, Brent oil prices could slide to as low as \$40 a barrel.

Wald noted that previous price shocks had occurred in 2015 and 2016 because producers were pumping as much oil as they could – a far cry from the current scenario. “In the feared coronavirus scenario, producers such as Saudi Arabia, Russia and the United Arab

Emirates would face low prices in conjunction with lower production,” she said, hitting revenues and ability to deliver services. “If the situation lasted long enough, economic instability could have political consequences.”

### New cases drop

Meanwhile, China's leadership yesterday touted “positive results” from efforts to contain the new coronavirus epidemic, but warned it still faced a “large-scale war” against the outbreak as the death toll climbed past 1,100. President Xi Jinping chaired a meeting of the ruling Politburo Standing Committee after figures showed that the number of new cases dropped for the second straight day, fuelling hopes the epidemic could peak later this month.

Xi said there were “positive results” but warned that the country “must not relax” its epidemic control efforts, according to state media, as authorities have kept tens of millions of people under lockdown. China still faces a “large-scale war” and a “big test”, said state broadcaster CCTV in a readout of the gathering.

Authorities said yesterday another 97 people had died in China, raising the national toll to 1,113, while more than 44,600 people had been infected by the COVID-19 virus. The number of people infected on a cruise ship off Japan, meanwhile, rose to 174 – the biggest cluster outside the Chinese mainland. The World Health Organization has called the epidemic a “very grave threat”. Most of the deaths and majority of cases have been in central Hubei province, whose capital, Wuhan, is the epicentre of the outbreak. Some 56 million have been placed under virtual quarantine in the province.

The epidemic has threatened to harm the world's second-largest economy, with ANZ bank warning that China's first-quarter GDP growth would slow to 3.2-4.0 percent, down from a previous projection of 5.0 percent. It is also disrupting sporting and cultural events in China, with motorsport governing body FIA announcing the suspension of the Formula One Grand Prix in Shanghai that had been scheduled for April 19 due to the “continued spread” of the coronavirus.

## WhatsApp defends encryption as it tops 2 billion users

SAN FRANCISCO: The Facebook-owned messaging service WhatsApp said yesterday it now has more than two billion users around the world as it reaffirmed its commitment to strong encryption to protect privacy. WhatsApp, acquired by Facebook in 2014, has grown into one of the most widely used services in the Facebook “family” of apps, offering free messaging along with voice and video calls. “Private conversations that once were only possible face-to-face can now take place across great distances through instant chats and video calling,” a WhatsApp blog post said. “There are so many significant and special moments that take place over WhatsApp and we are humbled and honored to reach this milestone.”

The statement said WhatsApp remained committed to its “strong encryption” that enables users to connect privately even amid calls by law enforcement in the United States and elsewhere to provide more access. “Strong encryption is a necessity in modern life. We will not compromise on security because that would make people less safe,” WhatsApp said. “For even more protection, we work with top security experts, employ industry leading technology to stop misuse as well as

But in a positive development, the number of new cases has fallen in Hubei for two straight days with some 1,600 reported, according to figures from the National Health Commission. Outside the province, the number of new patients has declined every day for the past week. “In general, the number of new cases is now slowly decreasing,” Zhong Nanshan, a renowned scientist at China's National Health Commission, said in a video conference with medical staff in Wuhan on Tuesday. “When does the turning point occur? I can't say. But I think it's at its peak in mid- to late-February,” he said.

### Cruise ship infections rise

In addition to locking down Hubei, authorities have restricted movements in several other cities far from the epicentre in its unprecedented effort to contain the virus. Authorities have found a cluster in the northern port city of Tianjin, where 39 people were infected in one department store, according to the official Xinhua news agency. The first case was a salesperson who was diagnosed on Jan 31.

Several countries have banned arrivals from China, while major airlines have halted flights to and from the country, as hundreds of people have now been infected in some two-dozen countries. The biggest cluster of cases outside China is on a cruise ship quarantined off Japan's coast. An additional 39 people on board the Diamond Princess have tested positive for COVID-19, raising the total number of cases to 174, while thousands of passengers and crew face a second week in quarantine.

Given China's economic heft and position at the nexus of global supply chains, the virus is affecting companies far and wide and across multiple sectors across the world. International conferences are also being affected, with this week's Singapore Air Show – Asia's biggest – badly hit by exhibitors withdrawing and low attendance. US chip giant Intel, Facebook, Chinese phone maker Vivo, and Cisco, meanwhile, have all withdrawn from the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona over coronavirus fears. — Agencies

provide controls and ways to report issues – without sacrificing privacy.”

Last week, child protection organizations called on Facebook to halt plans for strong encryption of all its platforms, saying that would allow predators to operate freely. WhatsApp employs “end to end encryption” which can in many cases prevent law enforcement from accessing user data even with a court order. The social network is working to extend end-to-end encryption across its messaging applications, including Facebook Messenger and Instagram.

### Back door dilemma

Child protection groups have expressed fears that stronger encryption of online exchanges would facilitate the sharing of child pornography. Backers of strong encryption argue that any special access or “backdoors” allowed for law enforcement would weaken security and could be exploited by criminals, hackers and authoritarian governments. Officials from the US, Britain and Australia late last year called on Facebook to allow authorities to circumvent encryption to better fight extremism, child pornography and other crimes.

The heads of Facebook's WhatsApp and Messenger, Will Cathcart and Stan Chudnovsky, responded in a letter to officials from the three countries that allowing this kind of “backdoor” access “would be a gift to criminals, hackers and repressive regimes” while leaving users vulnerable. Facebook's stance on encryption has been backed by more than 100 activist organizations, security experts and industry groups who warned against efforts to force tech companies to weaken encryption. — AFP

## Sanders, Buttigieg frontrunners after Biden crashes, burns

MANCHESTER, New Hampshire: Bernie Sanders and Pete Buttigieg emerged yesterday as the solid frontrunners in the race to take on President Donald Trump in November after finishing first and second in the New Hampshire primary. The 78-year-old leftist senator from neighboring Vermont and the young former mayor of South Bend, Indiana took 26 and 24 percent of the votes in Tuesday's voting. Last week in Iowa's caucuses, Buttigieg narrowly beat Sanders.

Meanwhile, Joe Biden's sagging campaign took another awful hit on Tuesday night as he finished fifth, behind Elizabeth Warren, the Massachusetts senator whose star also has dimmed. The nine candidates left in the race will now turn their attention to primaries in Nevada on Feb 22 and South Carolina on the 29th. Looming is the big prize of so-called Super Tuesday on March 3, when 14 states hold their primaries.

“This victory here is the beginning of the end for Donald Trump,” Sanders said in a victory speech Tuesday night to a raucous crowd of supporters. Still, Sanders' margin of victory was thinner than polls had predicted. In the 2016 campaign he took a whopping 60 percent of the votes in New Hampshire, finishing far ahead of Hillary Clinton. The race for the nomination is long and unpredictable, but for now Sanders is a source of worry for those in the party who fear that, with his sweeping and expensive healthcare reform proposals, he is too far to the left to beat Trump.

The race to represent the centrist wing of the party is up for grabs among Buttigieg, Senator Amy Klobuchar, who finished a respectable third in New Hampshire, and former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, who entered the race late and is paying for his campaign with his vast personal fortune. Then there is Biden, the onetime frontrunner in the race banking on his instant name recognition as Barack Obama's vice president and his 50 years of public service. He got only eight percent of the votes.

## 2 MPs threaten to grill defense...

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the manufacturer. The lawmaker said the letter clearly stated that the technical problem with the first two helicopters does not prevent the ministry from receiving the six new aircraft.

Damkhi said that he told the ministry officials that more technical tests were needed before taking delivery of the new Caracals, otherwise any technical problem could pose a danger to Kuwaiti pilots. He said that it was reported that one of the pilots who tested one of the two Caracals died after returning to his hotel room, adding that the defense ministry said they were told he died of natural causes. He did not reveal his nationality. The lawmaker said the ministry promised to issue a detailed statement explaining its position today, adding that unless the ministry clarifies its position and makes certain that no delivery will be taken before additional technical examinations, he will file to grill the minister.

MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei, who was among the first to speak about technical problems in the first two helicopters in December, said he will file to grill the

A new Quinipiac University poll said this week Biden has skidded nationally from 26 to 17 percent support since the end of January. Biden insisted Tuesday night – from South Carolina, after all but giving up on New Hampshire – the primaries are just getting started and he is stronger than his rivals among Latinos and blacks. “Now, where I come from, that's the opening bell – not the closing bell,” he said.

Buttigieg is languishing at 10 percent in the latest national polls and has negligible support among African-Americans in upcoming states with more diverse populations. Asked about this yesterday morning on CNN, he said: “Well, certainly there is another hill to climb each time, and we've got more work to do to demonstrate the breadth of our support.”

Iowa and New Hampshire are predominantly white and contribute just a handful of delegates to the nominating convention this summer. But it is not just a numbers game: Early primaries are all about momentum, and a win draws media coverage and stimulates fundraising. A string of defeats and you are probably out.

Liberal Elizabeth Warren finished in fourth place at about nine percent. Her presidential bid looks wounded. Trump is sitting back and watching it all and attacking the Democrats in often nasty Trumpian style. “Elizabeth Warren, sometimes referred to as Pocahontas, is having a really bad night,” Trump tweeted with around half the count completed. “I think she is sending signals that she wants out.” Trump also tweeted: “Bootedgeedge (Buttigieg) is doing pretty well tonight. Giving Crazy Bernie a run for his money. Very interesting!”

Two Democrats dropped out of the race after the New Hampshire primary: Tech businessman Andrew Yang and Senator Michael Bennet. “You know I am the math guy, and it is clear tonight from the numbers that we are not going to win this race,” Yang said. Significantly, the Quinipiac University poll showed billionaire Bloomberg vaulting into third place on 15 percent nationwide – suggesting a possible upset when New York's former mayor, who is skipping the first four nominating contests, throws himself fully into the race. Competing for the support defecting from Biden, Bloomberg is focusing on Super Tuesday on March 3, spending a record \$260 million of his personal fortune on his campaign. —AFP

defense minister if any technical problem is found in Caracal helicopters that Kuwait is scheduled to receive in early March. He said that he learned that Kuwaiti officers have been assigned to travel to France to receive some of the Caracals and will return in early March, adding that in case any technical problem is found, it will mean an immediate grilling of the defense minister.

Meanwhile, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, during a visit to the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) headquarters, updated his financial disclosure statement, said an official yesterday. Nazaha chief Abdulrahman Al-Nemash affirmed that Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled is keen on updating his financial records, adding that the prime minister is deeply interested in supporting the authority in its efforts to combat corruption.

The step, taken by the top government official, encourages transparency within the domain of state entities. Moreover, it will nudge employees to fight against all forms of corruption, Nemash pointed out. Nemash called on the public, including all citizens and expatriates, to heed the prime minister's calls to aid Nazaha in its anti-corruption quest, indicating that government and non-government officials and bodies were encouraged to cooperate with Nazaha to spread transparency and fairness.

## UN identifies 112 firms linked to...

Continued from Page 1

Human Rights Watch's deputy advocacy chief Bruno Stagno celebrated the publication of the database. This “should put all companies on notice: to do business with illegal settlements is to aid in the commission of war crimes,” he said. Yesterday's report meanwhile stressed that companies were not doomed to remain on the database forever. “Where there are reasonable

## Erdogan threatens Syria, slams Russia...

Continued from Page 1

groups are mounting an attack on the Syrian army from Idlib and are acting aggressively towards Russian military installations,” he added.

Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova dismissed Erdogan's claims of attacks on civilians, telling journalists: “We have differing interpretations from Turkey.” Under the bilateral agreements, radical groups were required to withdraw from a demilitarized zone in the Idlib region held by an array of rebels. The Russian defense ministry also blamed the crisis in Idlib on “Turkish colleagues' failure to fulfill their obligations on separating fighters from the moderate opposition from terrorists.”

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Erdogan spoke by phone yesterday, with the Kremlin urging Ankara to implement the Sochi deal. The Turkish presidency confirmed the call but did not provide details. Erdogan's

grounds to believe that... the business enterprise is ceasing or no longer involved in the relevant activity, the business enterprise would be removed from the database,” it said.

The report recommended that the database be updated annually, and urged the Human Rights Council to appoint a group of independent experts to handle this task. Israeli settlements established in occupied Palestinian territory are considered to violate international law, and have long been seen as a major obstacle to peace, since they are built on land the Palestinians see as part of their future state. More than 600,000 Jewish settlers live in the West Bank and east Jerusalem among three million Palestinians, with tensions often high. — AFP

threats also prompted an angry response from the Syrian government, accusing the Turkish leader of being “disconnected from reality”. “The head of the Turkish regime comes with empty... statements only issued by a person disconnected from reality,” state news agency SANA quoted a source at the foreign ministry as saying.

A Russian delegation including military and intelligence officials held two rounds of talks in Ankara this week, but no concrete agreement emerged. Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said a Turkish delegation would now go to Moscow “in the next few days”. “Continuing to work with Russia, we are working to secure a lasting ceasefire. But even if nothing results from this, our determination is clear and we will do what is necessary,” he said.

US special envoy for Syria James Jeffrey held closed-door talks with Turkish officials in Ankara including with Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin. Both officials said the attacks on Turkish army posts in Idlib by Syrian forces were “unacceptable”, the Turkish presidency said. Turkey, which already hosts some 3.7 million refugees from Syria, fears a fresh influx if Idlib falls to the government and has kept its border closed to newly displaced people. — AFP



## Sports

## Uzbekistan's 44-year-old gymnast heads for 'last' Olympics in Tokyo

## Chusovitina continues to be a source of inspiration for the young gymnasts

**TASHKENT:** Aged 44 and readying for her eighth Olympics in Tokyo, Uzbek gymnast Oksana Chusovitina makes light of her record-breaking survival in a sport dominated by teen prodigies.

"I love gymnastics. I tell myself: why not train and perform while you still can?" Chusovitina said during a recent interview in Tashkent. "If I'd stopped, I think I would have strongly regretted it."

But while the desire to compete still burns in Chusovitina, she said she has given her word to her family, whom she calls her "strongest motivation", that the Tokyo Games this year will be her "last Olympics".

Chusovitina started her career competing for the USSR but after it collapsed she got her first taste of the Olympics at Barcelona in 1992 in a team representing the ex-Soviet states. There, she scooped team gold but she had to wait another 16 years — and four Games — for an individual Olympic medal.

That came when she won silver on the vault in Beijing in 2008. At that point, Chusovitina was representing Germany, after moving there in 2002 to get her son Alisher treatment for leukaemia that proved successful.

But Tokyo will be her fifth Olympics representing her Central Asian homeland of Uzbekistan — a nation of 33 million where she is so revered that she has featured on postage stamps. Her appearance at the Rio Games in 2016 made her the only gymnast ever to compete in seven consecutive Olympics.

Chusovitina told AFP during a break from practising vaults that it was Alisher, now 20, who persuaded her to call time on her career in top-level sport. "He worries about me a lot, that I might get a bad injury or fall ill."

Her own favourite Olympic memory remains returning home from Beijing where her vault performance saw her share the podium with gymnasts from China and North

Korea who were both a decade younger than her. "When I got back the doctor gave me the news that my son was finally healthy," she recalled. "I think for a mother that is news that you cannot compare any medal to."

## A NEW CHAPTER

Chusovitina's longevity as a top-level athlete may be no big deal to the star, but it is a continued source of inspiration for the young gymnasts who train with her daily at the Republican Gymnastic Centre in Tashkent.

"She is already an athlete of such a high level," said Lyudmila Li, Chusovitina's trainer. "She knows her body and what it can do. Our only job is to help her maintain those levels." Chusovitina's husband Bakhodir Kurbanov is himself a former Olympic competitor, representing Uzbekistan in Greco-Roman wrestling at the 1996 and 2000 Games.

He sacrificed his own career for his wife's and focused on helping Alisher battle leukaemia, a decision that causes him no regrets.

"We didn't plan for a fourth Olympics, let alone an eighth, but she has made us proud," Kurbanov said during an interview in their modest apartment on the outskirts of Tashkent. "My son and I just try to keep up with her."

For the moment, Chusovitina is focused on Tokyo but she has plenty of plans for retirement. One is to set up a gymnastics academy in Tashkent to bring through the next generation of Uzbek gymnasts.

Another is to take the beam and the vault to the stage in a "gymnastics theatre show" that she hopes will be both a fitting farewell to her career in professional sport and a way of popularising the sport locally.

"I want our people to love gymnastics, to see how beautiful it is," she told AFP. "When people see (the show) they will run to put their children in gym classes." — AFP



**TASHKENT:** Uzbek gymnast Oksana Chusovitina trains in Tashkent on January 15, 2020. Aged 44 and readying for her eighth Olympics in Tokyo, Uzbek gymnast Oksana Chusovitina makes light of her record-breaking survival in a sport dominated by teen prodigies. — AFP

## Chinese F1 postponed

**PARIS:** The Chinese Grand Prix scheduled for April 19 has been postponed because of the "continued spread" of the deadly coronavirus, motorsport's governing body FIA announced yesterday.

FIA said promoters of the Shanghai race had requested a postponement "in view of the continued spread of novel coronavirus", now named COVID-19. "As a result of continued health concerns and with the @WHO (World Health Organisation) declaring the coronavirus as a global health emergency, the FIA and @F1 Formula 1 have taken these measures in order to ensure the health and safety of the travelling staff, championship participants and fans."

The Shanghai race, the fourth of the new season, becomes the latest — but easily the most high-profile — sports event to fall victim to the virus outbreak which has

killed more than 1,100 people in China, where it emerged at the end of last year.

The postponement also throws into doubt the inaugural race in Vietnam, which takes place two weeks before but where there have also been cases of COVID-19. "The FIA and @F1 continue to work closely with the teams, promoter, CAMF and local authorities to monitor the situation," FIA said in relation to the Shanghai postponement.

"All parties will take the appropriate amount of time to study the viability of potential alternative dates later in the year should the situation improve." That could prove tricky with FIA organising a record-breaking 22 Grand Prix this season, including the Shanghai race.

## IMPORTANT PART OF CALENDAR

FIA added: "The Chinese Grand Prix has long been an important part of the F1 calendar with many passionate fans. The FIA F1 community looks forward to racing in China as soon as possible and wishes everyone in the country the best during this difficult time."

"The global situation regarding this virus will continue to be monitored by the FIA with regard to other motor

sport events." Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff, speaking in London on Monday, said not going to Shanghai would be a "shame".

"We had full grand stands last year," he said, adding that China was beginning to become a "really important market in terms of fan followership". "Not going there would not be great for the fans and ourselves, but health comes first."

China has been forced to cancel or put off a host of sporting events due to the coronavirus epidemic, from suspending all football in the country to postponing the first badminton tournament of the 2020 world tour season.

The world's most populous country has increasingly become a powerhouse in hosting international sport in recent years, but has had its sporting calendar thrown into chaos.

Athletics' World Indoor Championships, scheduled for Nanjing in March 13-15, have been postponed for a year. The Chinese Formula E Grand Prix, due to take place in Sanya on the southern island of Hainan on March 21, was called off "after close consultation" with government authorities. — AFP

## Woods weighs in on golf's distance dilemma

**LOS ANGELES:** Tiger Woods says "bifurcation" in the rules of golf to allow recreational players to use different equipment from professionals should be considered in the quest to curb ever-increasing hitting distance in the game.

"It's on the table whether we bifurcate or not," Woods said, noting that differing equipment rules could keep the game more enjoyable for the less-skilled while still limiting the distance professionals could hit the ball in competition. "We want to keep the game enjoyable, we want to keep having more kids want to come play it," he said of the argument for allowing more forgiving clubs and balls designed to maximize distance for recreational use.

Critics of the bifurcation solution argue that amateur golfers like knowing they use the same equipment as the pros. Different equipment standards could make transitioning from the amateur to professional ranks more difficult.

But with advances in fitness and equipment, professionals are hitting the ball further and further. Woods, who has watched — and helped inspire — the evolution over the course of his career believes it can't continue.

"We've come a long way and what's been crazy is that I've been a part of all that," he said.

"When I first started on tour I beat Davis Love in a playoff (in 1996) and he was using a persimmon driver. If you could carry it 270 (yards) you took a lot of trouble out of play."

"Now guys are hitting hybrids and five-woods 270 in the air. "The game has evolved and changed and we're running out of property trying to design courses that are 7,800 to 8,000 yards," Woods said.

Equipment isn't the only reason, he noted. "When I came out it was just Vijay (Singh) and myself in the gyms and now it seems like everyone has their own trainer and physios and guys got bigger, stronger, faster, more athletic like all sports."

Woods was weighing in on the issue after the US Golf Association and the Royal & Ancient, which oversee the world rules of golf, issued key findings of their Distance Insights Project this month.

The governing bodies said they want to break the "ever-increasing cycle of hitting distance" — which threatens to make some established courses obsolete and alters the balance of skills needed to be successful in the game.

Longer courses are also less environmentally friendly, and contribute to longer round times that turn off many, the investigation found. "I've always said that the game of golf is fluid, it's moving," Woods said. "Part of the discussion going forward is do we bifurcate or not. It's going to be probably even well after my career and my playing days that we figure that out." — AFP

## Ferrari unveils SF1000 car for coming F1 season

**REGGIO EMILIA:** Ferrari unveiled its new SF1000 car for the 2020 Formula One season, which they hope will deliver a first world drivers title since 2007, during a glitzy ceremony on Tuesday.

The single-seater's name acknowledges the fact that the Italian team will start its 1,000th world championship race during the coming campaign, which begins with the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne on March 15.

Narrower than last season's SF90, with a deeper red colouring the body, Ferrari is pinning its hopes on the SF1000 car earning them drivers and constructors titles that have eluded them for 12 and 11 years respectively. "I like it very much," said German driver Sebastian Vettel. "It's much narrower at the back than last year and it is also redder, it's even better. I'm impatient to drive it, that will be even more fascinating than looking at it."

The Scuderia broke with tradition and presented its new racing car outside of its stronghold of Maranello, unveiling it instead amid a sea of red on stage at the Teatro Romolo-Valli in the nearby city of Reggio Emilia. "This is a very important place for our country," chairman of the Ferrari group John Elkann explained. "It was in this city that the tricolour flag, which became that of Italy, was created. And Ferrari is proud of Italy and of representing Italy."

"This is a very special year," continued Ferrari Team Manager Mattia Binotto. "It's 70 years of Formula One, we have been there from the start and we are going to reach the figure of 1,000 Grands Prix, which is something incredible."

Barring a forced change in the calendar because of the deadly coronavirus in Asia, the milestone should be reached in June during the Canadian Grand Prix in Montreal. "Maybe it looks a lot like the SF90, but I can assure you it is very different," continued Binotto.

"We still have to make progress, especially on reliability," he added, recalling that Ferrari, like the other teams, had to face "the double challenge" of preparing the next season in parallel with the following one, when new rules will come into force.

## EQUAL FOOTING

Binotto stressed that this season veteran Vettel and 22-year-old Charles Leclerc, who impressed on his debut last season, would be starting on an equal footing. "We have seen that they can both fight for the best results. They are both on the same level. It is up to them to race," he added.

Vettel, a four-time world champion with Red Bull and twice runner-up with Ferrari, insisted it was not a hard decision for him to accept.

"I don't see it that way," said the 32-year-old. "I don't see Charles going up and me going down. We have the same car and, for me, it doesn't change anything. That was also the case last season." Last season, the association between the experienced Vettel and Leclerc often turned into a duel, coming to a head when the two drivers collided during the Brazilian GP.

But 22-year-old Leclerc, who won two races and finished fourth place in the world championship, said lessons had been learned. "We have learned the lesson from Brazil. We are free to race, but we are teammates," he said.

"A lot of people are working behind us, as a team, and things like Brazil should not happen." Both drivers said they were impatient to try out the new car, which will be on track next week for the pre-season testing in Barcelona.

"I felt emotional when I saw it," said Monaco's Leclerc. "Now I can't wait to be out on track and try it and to show all the work that has been done on this car. "It's going to be a great challenge. I'm ready to learn from my mistakes to become an even better driver. "What all of us want at Ferrari is to be world champions." — AFP



**LOS ANGELES:** File photo shows boxers Deontay Wilder (L) and Tyson Fury (R) face-off during a press conference in Los Angeles, California on January 25, 2020, ahead of their re-match fight in Las Vegas on February 22. — AFP

## Wilder mocks 'pillow fists' of Fury ahead of rematch in LA

**LOS ANGELES:** World heavyweight champion Deontay Wilder ridiculed Tyson Fury's punching power on Tuesday as the two unbeaten fighters prepare for their eagerly anticipated rematch in Las Vegas.

Wilder, the reigning WBC champion, climbs back into the ring with British star Fury on February 22, 14 months after the two men battled to a thrilling draw in Los Angeles in December 2018.

Fury, who was knocked down twice by Wilder in the first fight, insists he plans to chase a knockout in the rematch, believing he has little chance of winning a decision in front of Las Vegas judges. However, Wilder on Tuesday poured scorn on Fury's threats of knockout — dismissing his opponent as having "pillows" for fists.

Wilder, 42-0 with one drawn and 41 knockouts, cited his experience from the first Fury fight, revealing he had felt no soreness after the 12-round scrap. "I can't tell you any rounds where I felt like I was threatened by his power," Wilder said on a conference call.

"He has pillows as fists. That's how soft they were. Maybe my adrenaline was too high to feel anything. Sometimes after a fight you feel sore. But even after the fight I didn't feel anything."

"I took all his punches, the ones he landed, and I walked right through them. So I don't respect none of his power. "He's just a tall big man that can move

around the ring. And that's about it. As far as power, there's none there."

## POWER OUTAGE

Fury has switched trainers for next week's rematch, bringing in Javan "Sugarhill" Steward in a move he hopes will boost his knockout power.

Wilder, however, is unimpressed by the changes in Fury's corner. "I don't believe he'll be able to develop (power), no matter what trainer he brings in," Wilder said. "You just don't develop power in a couple of weeks... it's impossible." Fury, who is arguably the most skillful defensive boxer in the heavyweight division and outfoxed Wilder for long periods in the first fight, says he plans a more aggressive approach in the rematch.

But Wilder is skeptical that the self-styled "Gypsy King" plans to go on the attack, and believes that he has already planted doubt in Fury's mind after sending him to the canvas with a crushing combination in the 12th round last time.

Fury miraculously recovered his senses after that knockdown and somehow managed to hang on for the draw. Wilder, however, believes he has inflicted lasting damage on the Briton. "If he brings the fight to me it's going to make the fight that much more interesting," Wilder said.

"Deep down in his heart, I really feel that he's nervous from the first time. When you knock a person out and get a concussion, you never forget that."

"You never forget who did it to you. And when you're going back in the ring with that person a second time it has to be stressful. He knows what the truth was. "He can say he beat me by a wide margin but he honestly don't believe that. If he believed he beat me, he wouldn't have changed up so much." — AFP



Sports

# Blues’ game postponed after Jay Bouwmeester’s collapse

## Gourde scores in OT to lift Lightning over Pens

**ST LOUIS:** Blues defenseman Jay Bouwmeester collapsed on the team’s bench due to a cardiac episode early in St Louis’ Tuesday road game against the Anaheim Ducks, prompting the game to be postponed. Bouwmeester regained consciousness after the incident and was transported to a local hospital. The game, tied 1-1 with 7:50 remaining in the first period, was halted and will be made up at a later date. Blues general manager Doug Armstrong later issued a statement that read, in part, “Thankfully, with the quick response of our medical trainers, Anaheim medical trainers and their team physicians, they were able to stabilize Jay. “He was alert and moving all of his extremities as he was transported to UC Irvine Medical Center. Currently, Jay is conscious and alert as he undergoes further testing by Anaheim’s physicians. We will update Jay’s condition on Wednesday morning.”

### LIGHTNING 2, PENGUINS 1 (OT)

Yanni Gourde roofed a shot from 10 feet at 2:45 of overtime to lift the visiting Tampa Bay to its eighth win in a row, a tight decision at Pittsburgh. It was Gourde’s first goal in 36 games dating to Nov. 25. Tempering the win, Tampa Bay sustained a potentially costly injury. Leading scorer Nikita Kucherov collided with Penguins defenseman Jack Johnson behind the Pittsburgh net in the final minute of the second period. Kucherov was hunched over as he slowly returned to the bench. He did not come out for the start of the third period. The Lightning termed it a lower-body injury. Pittsburgh’s Evgeni Malkin opened the scoring in the first period, and Tampa Bay’s Mikhail Sergachev forged a 1-1 tie in the second period. Lightning goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy made 35 saves while Penguins goalie Matt Murray stopped 36 shots.

### OILERS 5, BLACKHAWKS 3

Leon Draisaitl had a goal and three assists. Kailer Yamamoto scored two goals, and Edmonton pulled away from visiting Chicago. Riley Sheahan and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins also scored for Edmonton, which finished a three-game home-stand with a 2-1-0 record. Draisaitl boosted his league-leading total to 89 points in 56 games. Brandon Saad, Jonathan Toews and Adam Boqvist scored for Chicago. Saad added an assist to finish with a two-point night, which Patrick Kane also achieved

with a pair of assists.

### AVALANCHE 3, SENATORS 0

Philipp Grubauer made 34 saves, Mikko Rantanen, Gabriel Landeskog and Valeri Nichushkin had goals, and streaking Colorado beat Ottawa in Denver. Grubauer earned his second shutout of the season and the 11th of his career. He has allowed just three goals in his past four games. Nathan MacKinnon had two assists to extend his points streak to five games. Andre Burakovsky, Ryan Graves and Samuel Girard also had assists for Colorado, which has won five in a row and eight of nine. Marcus Hogberg stopped 33 shots for the slumping Senators, who lost their sixth consecutive game (0-4-2).

### PANTHERS 5, DEVILS 3

Mark Pysyk and Mike Matheson each notched a goal and two assists as Florida’s fourth line scored three times over New Jersey in Newark, N.J. Noel Acciari, who posted a goal and an assist, centered the line with Pysyk and Matheson — both defensemen by trade — with Matheson playing his first career game at forward. The line scored three times and totaled eight points in its first seven shifts. Brett Connolly and Frank Vatrano also scored and nine players found the scoresheet for the Panthers, who won for the first time in five games (1-3-1).

### ISLANDERS 5, FLYERS 3

Ryan Pulock scored with 41 seconds left to cap a frantic final two minutes of the third period for New York, which squandered a three-goal lead before edging visiting Philadelphia. Pulock scored on a slapshot less than a minute after Sean Couturier tied the score for the Flyers. Leo Komarov added an empty-netter with four seconds left. Josh Bailey, Matt Martin and Jordan Eberle scored in the first period for the Islanders, who won for the fourth time in five games to ensure they would remain in third place in the Metropolitan Division. They are three points ahead of the Flyers, who began Tuesday with sole possession of the Eastern Conference’s second wild-card spot.

### MAPLE LEAFS 3, COYOTES 2 (OT)

Kasperii Kapanen scored at 3:43 of overtime, and Toronto



**EDMONTON:** Matt Benning #83 of the Edmonton Oilers harasses Matthew Highmore #36 of the Chicago Blackhawks at Rogers Place in Edmonton, Canada. — AFP

came from behind twice to defeat visiting Arizona. Kapanen’s 11th goal of the season came on a breakaway after an Arizona turnover. Zach Hyman scored two goals for the Maple Leafs, and Alex Kerfoot added two assists. Christian Dvorak and Carl Soderberg scored for the Coyotes, who defeated the host Montreal Canadiens 3-2 on Monday night.

### SABRES 3, RED WINGS 2

Sam Reinhart scored the go-ahead goal early in the third

period and also had an assist as Buffalo topped visiting Detroit. Reinhart’s 21st goal, a tap-in of a rebound from a Jack Eichel shot, gave Buffalo its first lead of the game 57 seconds into the third. The Sabres, who also got a goal and an assist from Marcus Johansson and 27 saves from Carter Hutton, won for the second time in three games and ended an 0-2-1 home rut. Darren Helm scored twice for the Red Wings, who have an NHL-low 32 points, but had won two of their previous three games, including 4-3 in a shootout at Buffalo on Feb. 6.— Reuters



## KSSC honours shooters

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Shooting Sport Club (KSSC) honored its shooters who made achievements in the name of Kuwait earlier, as well as those who won medals during the Arab Championship that was held

in Morocco lately. President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi said that an ambitious plan was submitted to the Public Authority for Sports (PAS) to prepare shooters who qualified for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, that includes their participation in many major championships.



He said that the shooting club, with the support of PAS will organize camps for Talal Al-Rasheedi, Saud Habib, Mansour Al-Rasheedi and Abdelrahman Al-Faihan leading to the Olympics which starts in July. He said the club is keen to honor Kuwait shooters who made achievements lately to motivate them for

more. He said the shooters’ achievements wouldn’t have been without the support of the political leadership and care of PAS for the shooters and hoped such achievements continue to keep Kuwait’s name in prominence during the most important championships.

# Ferrari F8 Tributo, a celebration of excellence

The F8 Tributo is the new mid-rear-engined sports car that represents the highest expression of the Prancing Horse’s classic two-seater berlinetta. It is a car with unique characteristics and, as its name implies, is an homage to the most powerful V8 in Ferrari history.

The F8 Tributo sets the market benchmark for performance, driving pleasure and ease of handling. It makes the exhilarating performance of the best 8-cylinder in the world accessible to all drivers, with unprecedented handling and superior ride comfort.

With a massive 720 cv and a record specific power output of 185 cv/l, it is the most powerful V8 ever to be mounted in a non-special series Ferrari, achieving new heights not just for turbos, but for engines across the board.

The turbo-charged V8 has already been used in other models in the range with various power output levels, winning “Best Engine” in the International Engine of the Year awards three years running in 2016, 2017 and 2018. In 2018, it was also awarded the title of the best engine of the last two decades.

Designed by the Ferrari Styling Centre, the F8 Tributo is essentially a bridge to a new design language that will continue to emphasise Ferrari’s key characteristics of high performance and extreme aerodynamic efficiency. In fact, the F8 Tributo is the most aerodynamically efficient series-production mid-rear-engined berlinetta ever designed.

### ENGINE

In the automotive world, Ferrari’s V8 engine is seen as the very epitome of sportiness and driving pleasure. This is particularly the case when it is mid-rear-mounted in a two-seater. Ferrari has been honing the scope of abilities of this architecture, which creates an optimal weight balance, and thus delivers unparalleled thrillingly sporty driv-



ing, to perfection for over four decades.

In fact, Maranello made its debut in the 8-cylinder 2-seater berlinetta segment in 1975 with the 308 GTB, a revolutionary car that became a source of inspiration for subsequent models.

The new car offers drivers pure emotions. Instantaneously accessible power is matched by exceptional handling thanks to advanced vehicle dynamics solutions. These include a new version of the Ferrari Dynamic Enhancer (FDE+) which can be activated in the manettino’s RACE position for the first time, a move designed to make performance on the limit easier to reach and control for an even greater number of drivers.

Specific intake plenums and manifolds with optimised fluid-dynamics improve the combustion efficiency of the engine, thanks to the reduction of the temperature of the air in the cylinder, which also helps boost power. Two plenum configurations are available for this car, both identical in performance terms:

### VEHICLE DYNAMICS

Overall performance levels are significantly higher than those of the 488 GTB, thanks to the increase in power, weight reduction and improved aerodynamic coefficient. That performance is also now accessible to a larger number of drivers thanks to vehicle dynamics systems that make driving on the limit an easier and more confidence-inspiring experience. These include a steering wheel with a rim that is smaller in diameter with a thinner rim and the introduction of the new Ferrari Dynamic Enhancer Plus into the integrated SSC concept, now in 6.1 guise.

The 40 kg weight reduction compared to the 488 GTB makes the car sportier and more agile and makes a significant contribution to driver involvement. That said, the weight reduction does not impinge on in-car comfort in the least as it regards engine and bodywork components. Aside from the aforementioned engine components, further lightweight solutions include bumpers made

from a lighter plastic material, a carbon-fibre rear spoiler and a rear window in Lexan(r) which is lighter than glass. The weight reduction measures are topped off by the choice of optional carbon-fibre rims and a lithium ion battery.

### AERODYNAMICS

The F8 Tributo features state-of-the-art aerodynamics, integrating innovations and expertise developed thanks to the company’s involvement in the GT and Challenge championships. The solutions have been honed to create a series-production mid-rear-engined berlinetta with the highest level of performance available.

The F8 Tributo is 10% more aerodynamically efficient than the 488 GTB thanks exclusively to an increase in downforce which does not impact on its drag coefficient. This means that drivers can exploit to the fullest the exceptional performance the car unleashes, including high-speed cornering, as its more efficient road-holding keeps it glued to the Tarmac, delivering an engaging and exhilarating driving experience.

Lastly, the air intake for the intercooler is dominated by a wing profile designed to create an area of suction in the upper part of the channel, which helps direct as much air as possible towards the radiating mass.

The front of the car is dominated by the S-Duct, an innovation aerodynamic solution adapted from Ferrari’s F1 experience and already used on the 488 Pista. Here it has been redesigned in function of the new front end design and accounts for 15% of the increase in overall downforce compared to the 488 GTB.

### EXTERIOR

Designed by the Ferrari Styling Centre, the F8 Tributo is essentially a bridge to a new exterior design language. From the very earliest stages of the design process, the work focused on two goals simultaneously:



designing a stylistic tribute to the Ferrari V8 engine, inspired by the most iconic mid-rear-engined V8 sports cars in Ferrari history, and giving the car a strong personality of its own through an even sportier design clearly inspired by the car’s advanced aerodynamics.

A lot of attention was paid to ensuring that the Maranello marque’s signature styling elements were respected even while seamlessly incorporating the aerodynamic elements into the design and then underscoring them with clean yet decisive lines.

### INTERIOR

The cockpit retains the classic, driver-oriented look typical of Ferrari’s mid-rear-engined berlinettas. Every element of the dash, door panels and tunnel has been completely redesigned specifically for the car. The F8 Tributo also boasts a new generation steering wheel and steering wheel-mounted controls as well as new styling on the standard seats.

New round air vents are set in beautifully sculpted aluminium surrounds (also available in optional carbon-fibre) which cleverly underscore the dash structure. To emphasise the lightness of the whole assembly, the dash now incorporates an aluminium sail panel supporting the central satellite and continuing into the dash itself.



## Sports

# Are UEFA scoring environmental own goal with Euro 2020?

## New format is about showcasing European unity but forgetting climate emergency

**PARIS:** The 2020 European Championship will be the first to be played all across the continent, with 12 different countries hosting matches, forcing teams and supporters to rack up thousands of air miles and leave behind a gigantic carbon footprint.

Sold by UEFA as a one-off to celebrate 60 years since the first European Championship, the format of Euro 2020 may be innovative, and organisers have promised to make the tournament environmentally friendly.

That promise seems to ring hollow, however, when, for example, Polish supporters will have to travel over 6,000 kilometres (3,730 miles) in 10 days to watch their team's group games, to Dublin and Bilbao and then back to Ireland again. Matches will also be played by the Caspian Sea in Baku, nearly 5,000 kilometres from London, where the final will be held. Contrast that with Euro 2016, when the tournament was held in France, and the next Euro in Germany in 2024. Both of those countries are compact enough to travel around easily by train.

"This is a total nonsense from an environmental viewpoint," Karima Delli, a French Green who chairs the European Parliament's Transport and Tourism Committee, told AFP. "They say this new format is about showcasing European unity, but they're forgetting that there is a climate emergency."

However, UEFA insists it has taken this "emergency" into account and says it is "taking steps to ensure that Euro 2020 is our most environmentally conscious tournament to date."

### POLLUTION

The format for Euro 2020 will see several leading nations — England, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands — whose fans "are known to travel in their tens of thousands for major international tournaments," play their group games at home.

"This will significantly reduce the carbon footprint of the tournament," UEFA told AFP. Meanwhile, Budapest's

Puskas Arena will be the only brand new venue for the tournament. This, UEFA says, has spared "a huge environmental cost in energy, concrete and other resources."

In contrast, four new stadiums were built in France ahead of Euro 2016. Andrew Welfle, of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at the University of Manchester, admits that construction is "a major source of emissions" for any major tournament.

That means there is a "huge difference" between the emissions caused by Euro 2020 and, for example, the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, where all eight venues are either being built from scratch or modernised for the competition. Emissions caused by travelling supporters can be "the hardest thing to calculate", according to Welfle. "The estimates will be based on lots of different assumptions which will themselves be more or less realistic." UEFA itself has calculated that travelling fans and teams will produce 425,000 tons of carbon emissions over the duration of the Euro. In comparison, it says, Euro 2016 in France created 517,000 tons of emissions. The 2018 World Cup, held in 11 cities across Russia but with 32 teams instead of 24 at the Euro, produced almost 1.5 million tons of emissions, according to reports produced by organisers.

### CONSTANT EXPANSION

To compensate, UEFA is pledging to invest in "emission reduction projects", and intends to plant 50,000 trees in each of the host countries in order to "leave a lasting legacy". But experts are not convinced. "Planting trees is great, but planting trees and then leaving does not resolve the problem," says Welfle. "At the end of the day that is not going to change the quantity of emissions produced during the tournament."

UEFA is also attempting to reduce emissions, for example giving supporters free use of public transport on matchdays, and recycling more waste. Yet surely the least sustainable aspect of all is the constant obsession with expanding major competitions, with the Euro having



**BUDAPEST:** File photo taken on November 11, 2019 shows an inside view of the Puskas Ferenc Arena football stadium in Budapest. The 2020 European Championship will be the first to be played all across the continent, with 12 different countries hosting matches, forcing teams and supporters to rack up thousands of air miles and leave behind a gigantic carbon footprint. This, UEFA says, has spared "a huge environmental cost in energy, concrete and other resources.—AFP

grown from 16 teams to 24, while the World Cup will soon balloon from 32 to 48 teams.

"If climate change is becoming a priority, there are numerous ways in which these competitions can be organised differently," Welfle says. "Why not base the decision on the host country on the issue of transport? Maybe they can reduce the number of matches, and give spectators

longer to travel to venues."

In September, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin acknowledged that football had "not done much for the environment". The pan-European format is unlikely to be repeated and UEFA has promoted the "excellent transport infrastructure" in Germany, the next host. Maybe 2024 will be the first properly environmentally friendly Euro? —AFP

## CBK lifts Banks Cricket Cup

**KUWAIT:** The Commercial Bank of Kuwait's (CBK) cricket team recently won the Banks Cricket Cup in the championship organized by Kuwait Banks Club (KBC) at Kuwait Sports Club cricket ground.

The conclusion ceremony was held under the auspices of KBC Chairman, Yousif Al-Rowayyeh in the presence of the head of the club's sports committee,

Talal Al-Nassar. Accordingly, CBK's team also received the Cup and was honored by CBK Board Chairman, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Sabah, CEO, Elham Mahfouz.

In this regard, Al-Sabah said that the team was honored within CBK's keenness on caring for its human resources and celebrating the bank's staff achievements both in banking and various sport activities.



## Man Utd seek permission for 1,500 'safe standing' seats

**LONDON:** A Manchester United fans' group says it welcomes the club's application to have 1,500 rail seats installed at Old Trafford, intended to allow supporters to stand in safety. The club applied for permission to the local Safety Advisory Group (SAG) in December and hopes to be given the go-ahead to introduce a safe standing section. United have experienced long-running problems with fans refusing to sit down in parts of their all-seater Old Trafford ground but rail seats are designed to lock into a folded position, giving fans space to stand.

"We hope to see this progress as quickly as possible as we have long argued that rail seats are a safety enhancement as well as popular with many fans whether they prefer to stand or indeed prefer to remain seated throughout the game in other areas with an unobstructed view," a statement from the Manchester United Supporters Trust (M.U.S.T) said on Tuesday.

"The North East Quadrant (lower) was selected initially as it has been an area where persistent standing has been established dating back over more than six years."

Rail seating is hugely popular in Germany's Bundesliga and used by Scottish club Celtic but while Tottenham Hotspur's new stadium is adapted with rail seating and Wolverhampton Wanderers installed some in a stand at Molineux, they are not allowed to operate safe standing areas.

Standing is an option that followers of Premier League and Championship (second-tier) clubs have largely been denied since the 1990 Taylor Report ordered clubs in the top two tiers to convert to all-seater stadiums by 1994 in the wake of the 1989 Hillsborough disaster in which 96 Liverpool fans lost their lives in a crush during an FA Cup semi-final.

However, many decry the loss of atmosphere at grounds as well as the dangers of fans standing in seated areas.

A report from the Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) recently said rail seating could have a "positive impact on spectator safety" while the government said it would work with fans' groups to introduce safe standing areas.— Reuters

## Boult, Ferguson tracking nicely as NZ build pace depth

**WELLINGTON:** Injured New Zealand pace bowlers Trent Boult and Lockie Ferguson are "tracking nicely" as the side begin their preparations for the test series against India, according to captain Kane Williamson.

Bowling spearhead Boult broke his hand in the second game against Australia in Melbourne while Ferguson bowled just 11 overs in his test debut in the first match in Perth before breaking down with a calf strain.

Both missed the Twenty20 and one-day international series against India but Williamson said there were hopes

they could be available for the first match against the world's top ranked test team that starts on Feb. 21 in Wellington. "They're tracking nicely," Williamson said after his side sealed a five-wicket win and 3-0 series sweep of the one-dayers against India at Bay Oval in Mt. Maunganui. "It's an exciting opportunity ... against one of the best sides in the world." The injuries to Boult and Ferguson and regular squad member Matt Henry, who broke his thumb in the third test in Sydney, forced New Zealand to test the depth of their pace bowling stocks against India.



**KUWAIT:** Dr Saqer Al-Mulla holding the press conference.

## Opening ceremony of World Aquabike Grand Prix tonight

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir will patronize the opening ceremony of Kuwait Sea Sports UIM-ABP Aquabike Class Pro World Championship Grand Prix of Kuwait, first round to be held in Kuwait for the first time with attendance of Information Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri, and Public Authority for Sports Deputy Director General for Competitive Sports Sector Dr Saqer Al-Mulla at 6 pm tonight.

The championship will see 80 riders from 26 countries.

This championship is considered the first round of World Aquabike Championships and will be in four categories with two runs, while prizes will be distributed on Saturday. This was announced during a press conference held at the Marina Hotel attended by Dr Saqer Al-Mulla, Chairman of Kuwait Sea Sports Club Mohammad Al-Zanki, Chairman of the International Federation Raymond Ghernano and

Champion Yousuf Al-Abdelrazaq.

Meanwhile Dr Saqer Al-Mulla thanked HH the Amir for patronizing the championship which is held for the first time in Kuwait, he also thanked all those working at the club for the great efforts they exerted in order to convince the international federation to organize the championship in Kuwait.

He said "we at PAS give total support for hosting such events, that strengthens Kuwait presence on the international map through organizing various championships."

Al-Mulla wished all participants in general and Kuwaitis in particular the best of luck.

Meanwhile Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Sea Sports Club Mohammad Al-Zanki said, HH the Amir's patronage is a great honor for us, adding that we seek hosting the first round of the world championship to present the Kuwait youth at their best.

It is worth mentioning that the club was established in March 2019.

|  <b>Matches on TV</b><br>(Local Timings) |  |       |
|---|--|-------|
| <b>ITALIAN CUP</b>  |  |       |
| AC Milan v Juventus FC  |  | 22:45 |
| beIN sports   |  |       |
| <b>FRENCH CUP</b>   |  |       |
| Epinal v Saint Etienne  |  | 23:00 |
| beIN sports   |  |       |
| <b>SPAIN COPA DEL REY</b>   |  |       |
| Real Sociedad v CD Mirandes   |  | 23:00 |
| beIN sports   |  |       |

## Is Leeds' promotion push falling apart again?

**LONDON:** If Leeds United seem nervous that their Premier League promotion bid will unravel as it has done so often, their jitters were embodied by Kiko Casilla's blunder in Tuesday's 1-1 draw at Brentford in the Championship.

On a cold evening at the ramshackle Griffin Park, the former Real Madrid goalkeeper failed to control a pass from a team mate, missing the ball completely then falling over as striker Said Benrahma pounced.

The ball had barely nestled in the net when the soundtrack to Leeds' recent collapses rang out among the home fans. 'Leeds are falling apart', they crowed, delighting in their opponents' misery.

The blow of Casilla's blunder was softened by an error from Brentford keeper David Raya which allowed Liam Cooper to equalise, but the draw was not what Leeds needed after last week's 2-0 loss at Nottingham Forest.

The sense that they could blow their chances of promotion yet again is inescapable. In December they were top of the table and enjoyed an 11-point lead over third-placed Fulham. But a miserable run of two wins from 11 league games means Fulham will leapfrog them into the coveted second place, which offers automatic promotion, if they beat Millwall on Wednesday.

Coach Marcelo Bielsa struggled to explain his side's troubles. "The team are not playing worse than before," said the 64-year-old Argentine, who speaks through a translator while staring at the floor.

"They're running even more, they're as confident as before." Leeds' travails in the second half of a season are not new, but last season was perhaps their most spectacular collapse yet. They lost 10 out of their final 22 games, conceding the second automatic promotion spot to Sheffield United despite leading them by 10 points at one stage.

Their untimely capitulation was just the latest painful episode in a saga of disappointments for Leeds, who consider themselves to be among the biggest clubs in England and worthy of a place in the Premier League.

They won England's top flight in 1992 and reached the European Cup final in 1975 and the Champions League semi-finals in 2000. Their fans have loyally followed their team home and away since they were relegated from the Premier League in 2004, the consequence of their exuberant spending under former chairman Peter Ridsdale, who left them with 100 million pounds of debt.

Leeds even filled their Elland Road ground during their three seasons in England's third tier between 2007 and 2010. They were almost a forgotten force when maverick coach Bielsa took charge at the beginning of last season. The former Argentina manager was a huge influence on top coaches such as Pep Guardiola and Mauricio Pochettino and instantly converted Leeds' fans to his exciting style of play.—Reuters



**25** Uzbekistan's 44-year-old gymnast heads for 'last' Olympics in Tokyo



**26** Blues' game postponed after Jay Bouwmeester's collapse



**27** Are UEFA scoring environmental own goal with Euro 2020?



## Zion scores career-high 31 to lead Pelicans



NEW ORLEANS: Zion Williamson #1 of the New Orleans Pelicans shoots the ball against the Portland Trail Blazers at the Smoothie King Center in New Orleans, Louisiana. —AFP

**NEW ORLEANS:** Rookie Zion Williamson had a career-high 31 points, and Josh Hart scored 12 of his 17 points in a pivotal third quarter as the host New Orleans Pelicans defeated the Portland Trail Blazers 138-117 on Tuesday night. Williamson, returning from a one-game absence caused by a sprained ankle, added nine rebounds and five assists. Hart started in place of All-Star forward Brandon Ingram, who missed his second consecutive game because of a sprained ankle. The Pelicans trailed by as many as 16 points in the first half, pulled within two at halftime and outscored the Blazers 41-21 in the third quarter. Damian Lillard and CJ McCollum scored 20 points apiece for the Trail Blazers.

### PHILADELPHIA 76ERS 110 - LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS 103

Ben Simmons had 26 points, 12 rebounds and 10

assists to lead host Philadelphia past Los Angeles. Simmons' sixth triple-double of the season helped the Sixers win their third game in a row. Philadelphia center Joel Embiid, criticized by some fans for social media tweets and posts, added 26 points and nine rebounds. Josh Richardson scored 21 points and Tobias Harris added 17 points and 12 rebounds for the Sixers, who improved to a league-best 25-2 at home. Kawhi Leonard scored 30 points and handed out nine assists for the Clippers, who fell to 1-2 on their four-game road trip.

### HOUSTON ROCKETS 116 - BOSTON CELTICS 105

James Harden and Russell Westbrook combined for 78 points, and host Houston snapped Boston's seven-game win streak. Harden produced 42 points, eight rebounds and seven assists while Westbrook chipped in 36 points, 10 rebounds and five assists. Harden scored

31 points in the second half, including 19 in succession for Houston in the third quarter en route to his 19th 40-point game on the season. Gordon Hayward led Boston with 20 points and six assists, and he added eight rebounds. Jaylen Brown chipped in 19 points despite battling bothersome ankles. Kemba Walker and Jayson Tatum combined for 29 points on 10-of-32 shooting. That duo finished 1 of 13 from 3-point range.

### WASHINGTON WIZARDS 126 - CHICAGO BULLS 114

Bradley Beal scored 30 points on 12-for-23 shooting, and Washington held on for a win over visiting Chicago. Rui Hachimura finished with 20 points for Washington, which won for the fourth time in the past six games. Ian Mahinmi and Shabazz Napier contributed 15 points apiece. Zach LaVine scored a game-high 41 points on 15-for-21 shooting, drilling 8 of 11 3-point attempts for

the Bulls. Tomas Satoransky had 19 points and eight assists as Chicago dropped its sixth straight game.

### SAN ANTONIO SPURS 114 - OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER 106

LaMarcus Aldridge and Dejounte Murray scored 25 points each as visiting San Antonio beat Oklahoma City. The win snapped the Spurs' five-game losing streak and sent San Antonio into the All-Star break on a winning note. Murray was 9 of 12 from the floor as the Spurs shot 48.8 percent overall and hit 25 of 27 free throws. Patty Mills added 20 points to help the Spurs bench outscore Oklahoma City's 42-19. Chris Paul led the Thunder with 31 points, hitting five 3-pointers and shooting 12 of 18 overall and 5 of 9 from behind the arc. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 17 points for Oklahoma City. — Reuters

## King proud women's tennis leads fight for equality

**LONDON:** American trailblazer Billie Jean King says the revamped Fed Cup Finals taking place in Budapest in April shows women's tennis remains the leader in the battle for equality for women's sport. King, who fought the establishment to create the professional Women's Tennis Association (WTA) in 1973, was present at the Fed Cup draw on Tuesday as the 57-year-old women's team event launched a new chapter.

Twelve nations featuring many of the world's leading women players will descend on the Hungarian capital for a week-long event boasting \$18 million in prize

money. Tennis already sets the bar with equal prize money paid to women and men at Grand Slam tournaments but King says the fact the Fed Cup prize pot matches that of the revamped Davis Cup held in November is "huge".

"This is an unbelievable opportunity for the next three years," the 76-year-old King, a Fed Cup Global Ambassador, told Reuters by telephone after the draw ceremony held in the stunning surrounds of Budapest's Museum of Fine Arts.

"It makes me very proud that women's tennis is showing that it's still the leader in women's sports. That means a lot to me, so we must continue to be that," King, who on the court won 12 Grand Slam singles titles (eight in the professional era) but also fought off court for the creation of a professional Tour and for equal prize money, played in the first edition of the Fed Cup in 1963. That event, started 63 years after the first men's Davis Cup, featured 16 nations in London, with King helping the United

States to victory over Australia in the final.

### WORLDS APART

The new format, featuring 12 nations battling for the title over a week, is something of a throwback to the first edition, but King says it is actually worlds apart.

She was paid daily expenses to cover dinner while the winning team in Budapest will share \$3.2 million with \$1.2 million going to the winning federation. Teams who fail to progress out of the four groups will still share \$500,000.

"That's how it was, we were amateurs," said King, who paired with Darlene Hard to beat career rival Margaret Smith (now Court) and Lesley Turner in a deciding doubles in the final.

"But I was desperate to have our name first on the trophy." "That first Fed Cup featured 16 nations, total. This year 116 started out. That gives you a measure of the huge growth.

"And the new format? It's huge. The players wanted

one less week in the calendar, they got that. And they wanted more money, and the ITF came up with the money. "It's equal with Davis Cup which is a very important message because the ITF has really basically governed themselves to have equality, to make sure they are fighting for equality. They are not just talking, they are showing."

King said women's tennis was an example for other sports, especially in the United States. "We need all women's sport thriving. Baseball is 150 years old, NFL is a 100 years old and NHL is 100 years old this year, and there's no women's leagues! That's another thing on my brain to try and figure out.

"We took our stance 50 years ago. We were going to get suspended. We didn't know what would happen to us but we fought like crazy for three things: to have a place to compete, to be appreciated for accomplishments, not just looks, and to make a living. "That was the dream for future generations and they are living it now." — Reuters