

Friday Times

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Local

Is CCTV safe?



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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CCTV refers to closed circuit television, a surveillance system that includes cameras and recorders for monitoring activities in a company, house or even a small grocery shop. The aim of this system is to prevent and detect crimes when they occur to keep the public and properties safe. But the question remains - is it safe enough? Are surveillance cameras useful or a violation of freedoms?

This question was a matter of debate on social media due to a recent incident that occurred in Kuwait. A woman discovered that someone violated the privacy of her house, especially after cameras filmed her while she was arguing and screaming at one of her kids.

Some people considered the leaked video an act of child abuse, while some said that no one has the right to publish such videos in public without the woman's permission, because what happened is a violation of privacy and whoever did this act deserves punishment.

I think the issue has different viewpoints. No person has the right to violate the privacy of a person in their home without permission; therefore the woman has the right to take legal actions.

I think surveillance cameras should not be a cause for concern, but some people do not like to see them as they



A woman discovered that someone violated the privacy of her house

consider them against privacy and freedoms, while some people prefer the idea of installing surveillance cameras as a source of security and safety.

Of course, misuse of surveillance systems can happen by recording some embarrassing situations of public figures and using these videos to end their careers and humiliate them in public, and this is something that can happen. I think surveillance cameras are absolutely necessary to stop abuse, and at the same time, deterrent laws should be enacted in case of misuse, with severe legal penalties for those who misuse them or hack others' privacy.

In fact, I believe that surveillance cameras are the best solution not only to stop any possible criminal activity, but some working mothers are using cameras to monitor their domestic workers at home, especially those with infants. But, this also has caveats, and possibly threats.

For example, a friend who has a baby girl and a new worker was worried about leaving the little one alone for a long time, so she placed a camera in the child's room. But after a while she discovered that the system was exposed to penetration and hacking, and therefore the girl could be at risk. So she canceled the setup, but her anxiety did not end.

I know that cameras are the ideal solution to maintain safety and also help provide visual records to the police as evidence for conviction. Choosing a monitoring system may be difficult, and there is a need to be careful and only select a monitoring system from a well-known company to avoid possible breaches of privacy. At least, it will be easy to demand the company for clarifications and investigations, because security companies do not allow such tampering.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Lampposts on Gulf Road seen at sunset. — Photo by Mustafa Albader/KUNA

Losing a pet



IN MY VIEW

By Nawara Fattahova

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A pet is not just an animal - it's a member of the family. When a pet dies, it hurts and those who don't understand this, who don't have pets can seem heartless or cruel for lacking empathy.

I fell in love with sugar gliders even before adopting them. I always wanted one, though they are not really meant to be pets. But my mom refused, she did not want pets in the house. Then one day a friend told me her brother was leaving the country and wouldn't take his two sugar gliders with him. So I ended up adopting them, telling my mom I had saved their lives. I explained that otherwise they will be thrown on the streets and die, as they can't tolerate the weather of Kuwait.

As soon as my mom saw them and looked at their cute faces, she forgot her anger and objections and welcomed them home. She fell in love with them, and she even fed them when I wasn't at home or early in the morning before I woke up. She especially liked to share her croissants. Even when one of them escaped from the cage and I was hunting for him in the house and he bit me, I was never mad at him.

I was always worried who would take care of my lovely sugar gliders Mango and Mishmish when I planned to travel. I had to make sure I gave them to trusted friends who would take good care of them and who didn't have

small kids or animals who might possibly harm them, which wasn't always an easy job.

After having them for four years and two months, I lost the female, Mishmish. It was so hard watching her die without being able to help. I took her to different veterinarians, but they just gave her vitamins and said they didn't know what else to do. When I finally found a good vet who had some knowledge of these exotic animals, it was too late, and Mishmish passed away. The vet said she most probably had kidney disease as she was drinking too much in the last three days. When sugar gliders get old, the kidney is the organ that gets damaged.

I guess she was old. The lifespan of sugar gliders is short, as they only live between five to eight years. The vet told me that I was doing well as they lived with me for over four years, as she had met people whose sugar gliders died in less than a year. I buried her with a broken heart and much pain.

I know Mishmish was old, but it is so hard to lose her after more than four years and so many memories. I feel bad for Mango, who is very lonely now. I'm not sure what to do. I thought of placing him at the zoo with other sugar gliders to keep him in a collective, but the staff told me that they don't have space for him and no one to take care of him.

I was shocked by some negative and emotionless comments of people on her death, as if it was a broken glass or some unimportant thing. Only those who had a pet and lost it understood my great pain and loss. It's not just an animal - it's a living soul and breathing creature like humans, but more precious than most humans on this planet.

May you rest in peace, my lovely Mishmish - I will never forget you.

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PHOTO FEATURE



Green veggies of various kinds available in Kuwait



Story and Photos by Ben Garcia

At a farm in Jahra, a Kuwaiti farmer grows leafy greens of various kinds like lettuce, coriander, spinach, rocca, parsley, dill and mint. According to Abul Kalam, a salesperson at a small shop on the farm, the owner has several other farms, which he visits once in a while. "My sponsor has several farms in Kuwait, particularly in Wafra and Abdaly - we are supplying the entire market of Kuwait," he said, gesturing towards stacked cartons of freshly har-

vested vegetables. "These boxes contain vegetables from this farm only - they will be delivered tomorrow to supermarkets around Kuwait." People tending the farm are mostly from Bangladesh, directly hired by the owner. "We have several workers in the farm for ploughing, planting and harvesting," Abul Kalam said. The farm is cultivated regularly and can produce multiple harvests. "Most of our leafy greens are cultivated twice or thrice a year. For example, rocca is harvested three times," he told Kuwait Times.





The best time to plant vegetables is always during winter, when the weather is cooler. But the farm is utilized the whole year round since free irrigated water is supplied. "Winter here is not that harsh compared to other countries, so we can plant at any time; however, most of the greens need cooler climates, which is why we have more of these veggies during winter. We plant even in summer, but they are not as healthy compared to winter planting," Abul Kalam said.

Vegetables are also imported from other countries. "We have competitors in various countries. So the market price is dictated by the supply," he said. In the small shop, a bunch of leafy greens usually sold for 50 fils is sold at 25 fils or cheaper. "We have displays of produce here from our farms in Jahra, Wafra and Abdaly. We hope to supply the entire market, but we need to cultivate more to meet local demand," Abul Kalam concluded.



Local

On thin ice: Ice Skating Rink to close for good



KUWAIT: People skate at the Ice Skating Rink in this July 30, 2015 file photo. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Fans of the Ice Skating Rink have a final chance to enjoy skating at the rink as it will be closed for good by the beginning of next week. This is the last weekend for this historical building to welcome visitors, especially those who have childhood memories of the place. Since last year, reports have been swirling that the Ice Skating Rink on First Ring Road will be demolished as part of the expansion project of Shaheed Park's third phase. But it was later confirmed that there were some problems with the project and

that the rink and the next-door Discovery Mall will be saved from demolition, especially since the Ice Skating Rink is a historical landmark of Kuwait.

When a new ice skating rink opened in Bayan two weeks ago, where the Arab Hockey Championship was held, people started saying that this will be the new rink to replace the Ice Skating Rink, and unofficial reports said it will be closed. Yesterday, Kuwait Times contacted the Ice Skating Rink and an employee there confirmed that it will be closed for good either on Sunday or Monday, as the management told them it would be their last day of work.

"I'm sad to leave the place where I have worked for the past five years and where I have many colleagues whom I really love. The management told us not to worry about losing our jobs, as we will be shifted to another location," he told Kuwait Times. "I think this time it's really over. I saw the delegation of the Amiri Diwan when they said they will close this rink soon. Also, some construction works have already started outside the rink. I'm very sad by this decision as I have many memories here since I was a child, when I used to enjoy skating here. But I think that the new generation is not attached to this place as we are. It

really is a pity to lose this place," added the employee.

Currently there are a few smaller privately-owned ice skating rinks in Kuwait, such as those at the Promenade, Avenues and other malls, but all are suitable only for kids. The new rink in Bayan that hosted the championship is not yet open to the public. Also it's not completely ready yet and is much smaller than the Ice Skating Rink.

The Ice Skating Rink is open this weekend from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm for KD 3 per person for 90 minutes of skating, including the rental for skating shoes.

Dutch official 'inspired' by Kuwaiti women

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The rights of Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis, more women in the parliament and honor killings were among the subjects discussed during a brief meeting with Secretary General of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs Yoka Brandt as she visited the Kuwaiti Women's Cultural and Social Society (KWCSS) on Wednesday. She met members of the board of trustees and discussed issues related to rights of children and women.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the event, Brandt lauded Kuwaiti women for their energy and enthusiasm concerning very relevant and important issues of the society. "I am inspired talking to the women of Kuwait. I think it's amazing that women here are putting so much energy into issues affecting them. This is positive impression and we would like to congratulate them," she said.

Brandt noted that issues about women are almost similar in most countries worldwide. "We still have a long way to go and I have

always noticed the fact that wherever you go, in the Netherlands or elsewhere including Kuwait, the issues are almost the same but the context is different," she noted. "It's always great to share how we can help each other and how we can encourage each other. But the truth of the matter is that we also need the man, and I hope men will join us in the struggle, because both will benefit," she said.

KWCSS Chairperson Lulwa Al-Mulla said most of the activities of the society are related to women empowerment, education, care for women and their families, which includes children and the stability of the family. "The society has raised several women's issues in the parliament and the Cabinet," she said. "We are committed to changing the perception about us, and we will continue the struggle until all rights are equally granted to us. We want more women in decision making too."

Mulla argued there are far more educated women in Kuwait compared to men. "We are committed to helping the society and raising our head high; we still have many issues in



KUWAIT: Secretary General of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs Yoka Brandt meets members of the board of trustees of the Kuwaiti Women's Cultural and Social Society (KWCSS) on Wednesday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait and we want to bring all of them in the open so people will be aware," she said. The society has conducted several projects abroad, mostly in occupied Palestinian territo-

ries. "We are helping women in Palestine and Kosovo to be more resilient and proactive. We help through monetary assistance from Zakat House or charity events," she added.

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Local

Kuwait banks can withstand domestic, external challenges

BEIRUT: Kuwait banking sector is solid and capable of withstanding domestic or external financial challenges that might have impacts on national economy, the country's top banker said. "The history of the banking sector in Kuwait reflects its ability to confronting different challenges, enabling it to overcome consequences of global financial crisis in 2008 ... when many countries around the world suffered huge losses because they wanted to rescue their banks, which was a burden on their budgets and thus impacted citizens' living conditions," said Mohammad Al-Hashel, Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK).

He was speaking in an interview with Al-Bayan, a monthly Lebanese magazine specialized in banks, insurance and freight in the Middle East. CBK, he added, implemented a policy enabling national banks to withstand ramifications of oil prices' nosedive in the second half of 2014. "The banking sector, based on CBK's policies, continues its service of the national economy

with high efficiency," to ultimately contribute to addressing the state budget deficit, said Hashel.

He cited a 2017 report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that affirmed Kuwait's banking sector was implementing wise regulations put in place by CBK, which strengthened supervision and management. Kuwaiti banks, according to IMF report, were following Basel III that was based on a set of reforms designed to improve regulation, supervision and risk management. Hashel said another IMF report, issued in March 2019, welcomed solid foundation of Kuwait banking sector and commended CBK's management and supervision regulations. Credit rating agencies, like Fitch and Moody's, also commended CBK's regulations which contributed to strengthening financial conditions of local banks.

Hashel was asked about growth and job creation, and said the government of Kuwait had adopted a set of financial and economic reforms aimed at boosting growth and creating jobs.

"This aims at diversifying economy and promoting private sector to play a further role in economic activities," said Hashel. "Having a greater involvement of the private sector will ease burden on state budget. This can happen through privatization and establishing genuine partnership between the private and public sectors," he said. He called for improving quality of education and training to meet private sector's demands. Development of private sector's role, diversifying economy and supporting SMEs will certainly promote growth, said the CBK Governor.

Hashel, meanwhile, said CBK's next five-year strategy aimed at cementing monetary and financial stability, in addition to ensuring safety and strength of the banking sector. CBK also seeks to maintain stability of the exchange rate of the local currency, the Kuwaiti dinar, and manage interest rate in line with national economy and international interest rates, with the objective of having sustainable growth. The Central Bank, said Hashel, was enforcing strict supervi-



Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait
Mohammad Al-Hashel

sion measures in line with international standards, developing infrastructure of information technology to facilitate clearing operations, developing human resources and using technology to further improve supervision. — KUNA

Kuwait remains in grip of cold wave, Saudi shivers too

KUWAIT/RIYADH: Kuwait continued to remain in the grip of a rare cold wave yesterday with subzero overnight temperatures in desert areas of the country. Meteorologists however expect weather conditions to improve in the coming days. Kuwait International Airport recorded a minimum temperature of 1 degree Celsius yesterday and in some areas of the country like Abdaly, Salmi and Jahra, the temperature fell below 0 degrees Celsius. However, Salmiya and Ahmadi recorded a maximum temperature of 19 degree Celsius in the afternoon.

Meteorologists predicted cold with light to moderate northwesterly wind to variable wind with speeds of 6-26 km/h by day yesterday and cold with light to moderate variable wind to southeasterly wind with speeds of 6-26 km/h by night.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia is experiencing its coldest weather since 2016, meteorologists said yesterday, with overnight temperatures dropping below zero in the country's north over the past two days.

In Tarif, on the border with Jordan, the temperature hit minus 5 degrees Celsius, according to the weather services. It dropped to minus three in Hail further southeast, and minus 2 in Arar on the border with Iraq. In the capital Riyadh, the temperature dipped close to zero and the streets were deserted Tuesday and Wednesday nights.

The desert kingdom is known for its extreme heat, particularly during summer. "The country is experiencing its most intense cold snap since 2016," Hassan Abdallah from the Wasm meteorological centre said yesterday. In neighboring Iraq, where summers are also scorching, Baghdad residents woke up Tuesday to find the city carpeted in white from only its second snowfall in a century. The last recorded snowfall in the city was in 2008. — Agencies

Palestinians name roads in Gaza after Amir, Speaker

GAZA: Palestinian officials in Gaza have named a road in the south of the strip after HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in recognition of his efforts in support of Palestinian rights. The road, located east of the city of Khan Younis, is part of a series of Kuwaiti-funded projects worth \$8 million intended for Gaza's reconstruction. The move also saw another road named after Kuwait National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. The initiative was taken as a "message of gratitude and appreciation from the Palestinian people for the ongoing financial and diplomatic support of His Highness," Municipal minister Majdi Al-Saleh told KUNA. In relation to Kuwait's chief lawmaker Ghanem, the Palestinian official praised his "honorable and sup-



GAZA: Palestinians unveil a plaque naming a road after HH the Amir of Kuwait. — KUNA

portive positions towards the Palestinian people", particularly with regards to the US plan on the Middle East. The Kuwaiti government, through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, handed out a \$200 million grant to the Palestinian people for the rebuilding of homes and infrastructure damaged after the Israeli bombardment of Gaza in 2014. — KUNA

Jabri visits KUNA, lauds its efforts

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Nasser Al-Jabri visited yesterday the headquarters of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) in order to be acquainted with the agency's modus operandi. KUNA Board Chairman and Director-General Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij Al-Ibrahim Al-Sabah and Deputy Chairman for Administrative and Financial Affairs Abdulhameed Malik received Jabri.

The Minister took a tour of the agency's departments and was briefed on the latest KUNA operations. Jabri praised KUNA's big role in journalism and news broadcasting, adding that it was one of the key media entities in Kuwait. Sheikh Mubarak expressed his and the agency's employees' gratitude to the minister's keenness to develop the capabilities of KUNA. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Nasser Al-Jabri meets KUNA Board Chairman and Director-General Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij Al-Sabah yesterday. — KUNA

Kuwait suspends Caracal deliveries; calls to probe Airbus aircraft deal

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Adel Al-Damkhi said yesterday that he has withdrawn a threat to grill the defense minister after a quick and positive response from the ministry in which it suspended taking delivery of Caracal military helicopters until adequate technical examinations are carried out. The ministry of defense confirmed in a statement that it will not take delivery of any Caracal helicopter before making sure they are

technically sound.

The ministry's move came after Damkhi on Wednesday said he will grill the defense minister if the ministry takes delivery of any Caracal after the first two Caracals encountered technical problems in their engines. Damkhi raised the issue after he came across a letter from a senior defense ministry official ordering that six ready Caracals be received without making the necessary check-ups. The lawmaker said yesterday that he was informed by the defense ministry that an assistant

undersecretary will be probed in the case.

In its statement, the ministry insisted that it will pay great attention to the safety of Kuwaiti pilots and personnel. In 2016, Kuwait signed a €1.2 billion deal to purchase 30 Caracal military helicopters from Airbus Helicopters. The deal is already under investigation in Kuwait after a Lebanese middleman demanded commissions worth €70 million from Airbus for mediating the deal with Kuwait.

In another aircraft sale with Airbus, MP

Riyadh Al-Adasani yesterday called for investigating a deal to purchase 25 passenger jets from Airbus after a British court fined Airbus some £3.5 billion over corruption allegations, adding that the verdict mentioned names of Kuwaiti officials. Adasani told reporters that a fact-finding panel must be formed to investigate the deal over irregularities, corruption and bribes. Several MPs had already demanded investigation into the Airbus deal, claiming illegal commissions and bribes were paid in the deal.



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah meets Philippine Presidential Advisor on OFWs Abdullah Mamao yesterday. — KUNA

Manila lifts ban on deployment of workers to Kuwait

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Philippines Department of Labor And Employment Secretary Silvestre Bello III announced lifting the ban on sending all categories of Filipino workers to Kuwait. "Thanks to the efforts exerted by the foreign ministry, the labor ministry and the domestic helper agencies' union in Philippines, the problem was resolved," he said during a meeting with the domestic helper agencies' representatives in Manila.

Earlier, Kuwaiti Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah and Philippine Presidential Advisor on Overseas Filipino Workers Abdullah Mamao discussed several key issues in a meeting in Kuwait yesterday, including bilateral

ties and the ban imposed by the Philippines on sending domestic workers to Kuwait following the murder of a Filipina worker. The two sides hailed the positive outcome of the recent meetings of the Kuwait-Filipino joint committee on domestic workers held in Kuwait. Moreover, Mamao affirmed his country's intentions to lift the ban.

Kuwait's foreign ministry asserted that the meeting with the Philippine side was very positive and that a memo of understanding had been signed in this regard. "The ban is expected to be lifted soon and Minister Bello is expected to visit Kuwait after he was briefed on the transparent and legal measures taken in various cases related to Filipina workers," the ministry had explained.



KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti man holds a heart-shaped balloon outside a shop in Kuwait City yesterday ahead of Valentine's Day. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Mutlaa death toll rises to 6, Amir sends condolences

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The fire department yesterday announced six workers had died and three were injured in the earth collapse in Mutlaa residential city, noting that the three injured men were saved minutes after the collapse and retrieved by search and rescue personnel. The public authority for housing welfare announced halting all constructions at the site until official investigations are over. The authority stressed all measures will be taken to investigate the accident upon direct instructions from Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Rana Al-Fares.

HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable of condolences to President of Nepal Bidhya Devi Bhandari over the death of the Nepalese workers in the Mutlaa accident. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent



similar cables to Bhandari.

Meanwhile, director general of Al-Huraiti law firm, the legal representative of the Chinese company responsible for the project - Gezhouba, expressed deepest sympathies and condolences to the families of the deceased workers and wished the speedy recovery of those injured. Hussein Al-Huraiti hailed the quick response of rescue and medical emergency forces as well as Fares for her immediate presence at the site.

Kuwaiti Embassy distributes melons for free in Vietnam

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: In a bid to help farmers affected by the spread of the coronavirus and save their crops, the Kuwaiti embassy in Vietnam purchased two tons of watermelons and distributed them free to passersby, said the Vietnamese thoidai.com.vn website. In this regard, Nguyen Thu Ha, secretary of the Embassy of Kuwait in Hanoi, said the embassy had received reports about difficulties the farmers have been facing in exporting their crops after the spread of the coronavirus, and accordingly, the embassy decided to purchase the watermelons and distribute them for free.

Autopsies not MoH responsibility

Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah stressed performing autopsies is the responsibility of the public prosecution. "Our job is to



hand over the bodies and they do their work," he underlined, adding that the case currently discussed by the parliamentary health affairs committee is still in court. Notably, the National Assembly had urged the health affairs committee to investigate the causes of the deaths of Abdul Aziz Al-Rasheedi, a child who died in Fahaeel polyclinic dental clinic, and Kuwaiti citizen Hanan Al-Adwani.

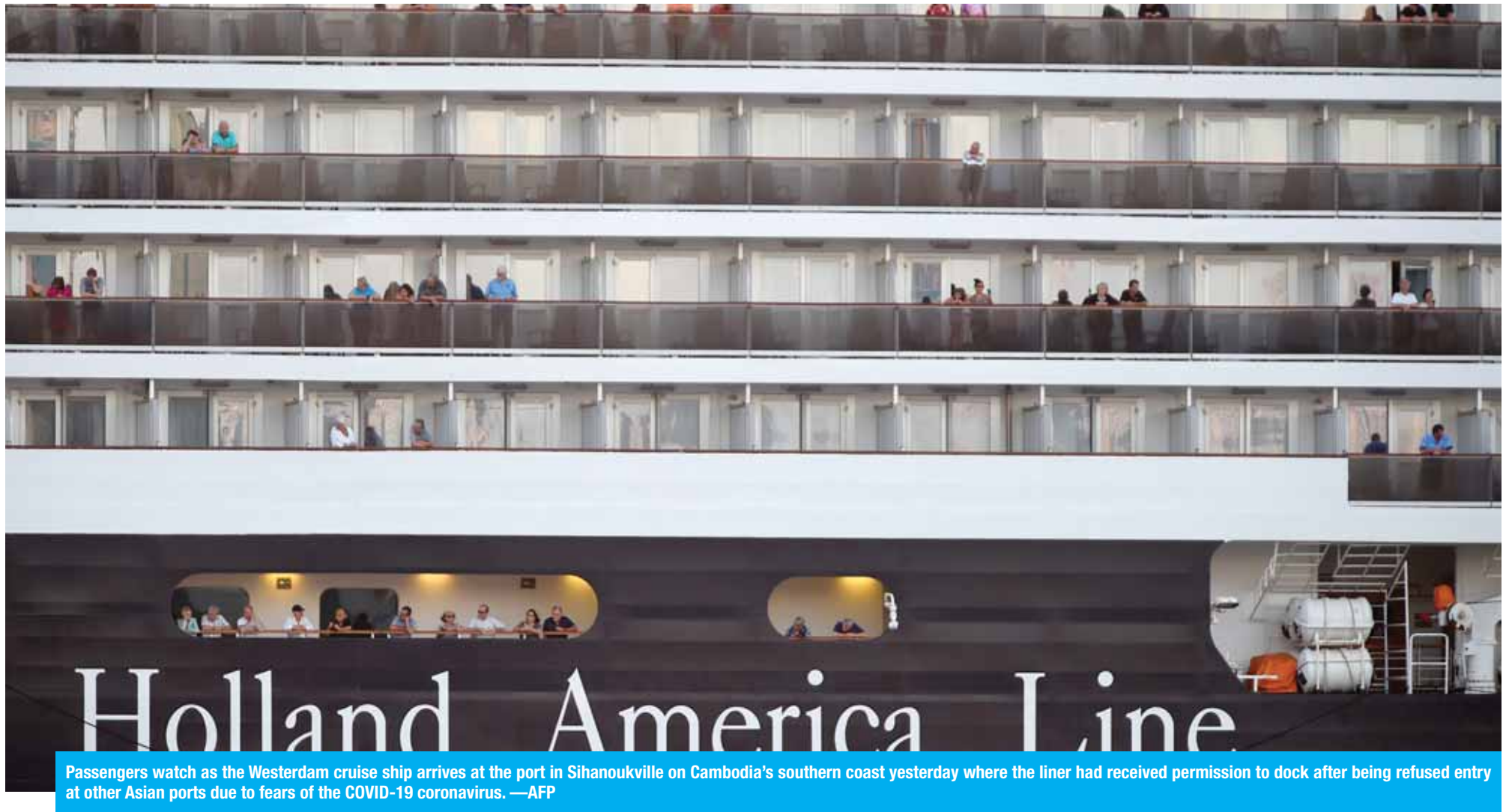


British finance minister
quits in reshuffle upset

Joe Biden seeks reboot after new upset in New Hampshire

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Passengers watch as the Westerdam cruise ship arrives at the port in Sihanoukville on Cambodia's southern coast yesterday where the liner had received permission to dock after being refused entry at other Asian ports due to fears of the COVID-19 coronavirus. —AFP

Virus toll soars as China changes counting methods

Japan records first COVID-19 death, Vietnam places 10,000 under quarantine

BEIJING: China's official death toll from the new coronavirus spiked dramatically yesterday after authorities changed their counting methods, fuelling concern the epidemic is far worse than being reported.

As the figures soared in China, a troubling new front opened abroad as neighboring Vietnam placed 10,000 people under quarantine after six COVID-19 cases were discovered in a cluster of villages—the first such lockdown overseas. Under criticism at home over the handling of the crisis, China's Communist Party sacked two top-ranking officials in Hubei province, the epicentre of the outbreak.

Meanwhile, a woman has died from the coronavirus in Japan, the first such death in the country since the epidemic spread from China, the health minister said yesterday. Two taxi drivers, one of them in the capital Tokyo, have also tested positive, raising the possibility that it could be passed on through their passengers. On the Diamond Princess cruise liner quarantined in the port of Yokohama, 44 new cases were confirmed.

In China, Xi Jinping claimed "positive results" from efforts to contain an epidemic that has now officially killed 1,367 people and infected nearly

60,000. But the World Health Organization warned it was too soon to declare victory. "I think it's way too early to try to predict the beginning, the middle or the end of this epidemic right now," said Michael Ryan, head of WHO's health emergencies program. In Hubei and its capital Wuhan, where tens of millions of people are trapped as part of an unprecedented quarantine effort, 242 new deaths were reported yesterday. Another 14,840 people were confirmed to be infected in Hubei alone, with the new cases and deaths by far the biggest one-day increases since the crisis began.

Outside Hubei, there were 12 more deaths but the number of new cases fell for a ninth day in a row, with 312 extra patients. Hubei authorities said the increases were because they had broadened their definition for infection to include people "clinically diagnosed" via lung imaging.

Up until now, they had been documenting cases using a more sophisticated laboratory test.

Health officials said they looked into past suspected cases and revised their diagnoses, suggesting older cases were also included in yesterday's numbers.

China had been praised by the WHO for its

transparent handling of the outbreak, in contrast to the way it concealed the extent of the deadly SARS virus epidemic in 2002-2003.

But it has faced continued skepticism among the global public, with fears that there may be similarities to the way it dealt with SARS. Authorities in Hubei have been accused of concealing the gravity of the outbreak.

Transparency

Analysts said Hubei's new counting methodology might be a legitimate attempt to be more transparent, but the immediate impact was to sow more distrust. "Oddly, this now is a moment of greater transparency," Sam Crane, political science professor at Williams College in Massachusetts, told AFP. "It is not clear if the problem up to now, on this issue, was lack of transparency or simply bad medical practice," Crane said.

Global havoc

In Vietnam, authorities announced they were locking down the commune of Son Loi, a farming region about 40 kilometers (25 miles) from Hanoi, for 20 days. Checkpoints were set up around the commune, according to AFP re-

porters in a district on the outskirts of Son Loi. Health officials wearing protective suits sprayed disinfectant on vehicles. The biggest cluster of cases outside China is on a cruise ship quarantined off Japan's coast, where 44 more people tested positive for COVID-19, raising the total number of infections on the Diamond Princess to 218.

Several countries have banned arrivals from China, while major airlines have halted flights to and from the country. Hundreds of people in some two dozen countries are infected.

Japan is one of the counties worst affected by the epidemic outside China, with 251 confirmed cases, including those on the Diamond Princess. Health Minister Katsunobu Kato told a news conference yesterday that a woman in her 80s living in Kanagawa prefecture, which borders Tokyo, had died. She was the first fatality in Japan, and the third outside mainland China. The woman fell ill in January but only later showed symptoms of pneumonia and was hospitalised, then transferred to another hospital when her condition worsened. Her infection with the coronavirus confirmed after her death, Kato said. The route of contagion was being investigated. — Reuters

International

Friday, February 14, 2020

Sudan says deal signed with families of victims of USS Cole bombing

Khartoum meets a condition for removing Sudan from terrorism blacklist

KHARTOUM: Sudan said yesterday it has signed a deal with the families of the victims of the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen, meeting a key condition for removing the country from Washington's terrorism blacklist. The United States has set certain benchmarks that Sudan has to meet to be removed from its state sponsor of terrorism list, which also includes North Korea, Iran and Syria.

For months now, Sudanese and US officials have been in talks to remove the northeast African country from the blacklist. Compensating the victims of the USS Cole attack had been a key condition imposed by the US administration.

Sudan's justice ministry said a deal had been signed with the families of the victims of the attack, but it did not specify the amount of compensation agreed. "As part of the transitional government's effort to remove Sudan from the terrorism list, a deal has been signed on February 7 with the families of the victims of the USS Cole incident," the ministry said in a statement.

"The deal clearly specifies that the government of Sudan was not responsible for the incident or any such terrorist incident and it is doing this deal only to... fulfil the condition put by the American administration to remove Sudan from its terrorism list." On October 12, 2000, a rubber boat loaded with explosives blew up as it rounded the bow of the guided-missile destroyer, which had just pulled into Aden, Yemen, for a refuelling stop.

Seventeen American sailors were killed as well as the two perpetrators of the attack claimed by Al-Qaeda, in an early success for the terror group and its founder Osama bin Laden.

Blacklisting impacting economy

A US court then ruled that Sudan, where the two bombers were trained, was responsible for the attack—a claim Khartoum always denied. In 2012, a Washington judge ordered Sudan to pay more than \$300 million to the victims' families. Other judges went on to order certain banks to make Sudanese assets available to start paying the sum.

But in March 2019, the US Supreme Court overturned on procedural grounds a lower court's ruling ordering Sudan to pay damages to the families of the victims. Sudan's justice ministry did not specify the structure or any other details of the deal signed last week. In 1993, Washington listed Sudan on its terrorism blacklist for its alleged support of Islamist groups. Bin Laden used to reside in Sudan from 1992 to 1996. Sudan's new authorities have made it a key priority to get the country removed from the blacklist.

Officials in Khartoum say the country's economic revival has been stunted primarily due to its blacklisting, which deters global investors. In October 2017, the US lifted its decades old trade embargo imposed on Sudan, but kept the country on the terrorism blacklist.

Sudanese businessmen and officials complain



In this file photo taken on November 07, 2019 a life ring from the USS Cole is displayed at the new exhibition Revealed: The Hunt for Bin Laden at the 9/11 Memorial Museum in New York City. Sudan's justice ministry said early yesterday it had signed a deal with the families of the American servicemen killed in the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen. — AFP

that the blacklisting has restrained international banking and transfer of funds, in turn severely impacting the country's economy.

Sudan's chronic economic trouble-led by high inflation as well as shortages of fuel and foreign currency—was the main trigger for na-

tionwide protests against now ousted leader Omar al-Bashir.

Bashir was removed by the army in a palace coup last April, but the country's economic woes persist as the new authorities battle to rein in inflation and unemployment. —AFP

Hundreds of Iraqi women defy cleric to protest authorities

BAGHDAD: Hundreds of Iraqi women of all ages flooded central Baghdad yesterday alongside male anti-government protesters, defying an order by powerful cleric Moqtada Sadr to separate the genders in the rallies. Some were veiled, others not, still more wrapped their faces in black-and-white checkered scarves. Most carried roses, Iraqi flags or signs defending their role in the regime change demonstrations.

They marched through a tunnel and spilled out into Tahrir Square, the epicenter of the youth-dominated movement in a country where vast regions remain socially conservative. "We want to protect women's role in the protests as we're just like the men. There are efforts to kick us out of Tahrir but we'll only come back stronger," said Zainab Ahmad, a pharmacy student. "Some people were inciting against us a few days ago, seeking to keep women at home or keep them quiet. But we turned out today in large numbers to prove to those people that their efforts will end in failure," she said. Ahmad appeared to be referring to controversial cleric Moqtada Sadr, a powerful figure who first

backed the rallies when they erupted in October but who has since sought to discredit them.

On Saturday, the militiaman-turned-politician had alleged drug and alcohol use among the protesters and said it was immoral for men and women to mix there. And a few moments before yesterday's women's march began, Sadr once again took to Twitter to slam the protests as being rife with "nudity, promiscuity, drunkenness, immorality, debauchery ... and non-believers". In a strange turn, he said Iraq must not "turn into Chicago," which he said was full of "moral looseness" including homosexuality, a claim that was immediately mocked online.

'Freedom, revolution, feminism'

While the numbers in Tahrir have dwindled in recent weeks, many Iraqi youth say the past four months of rallies have helped break down widespread conservative social norms. Men and women were seen holding hands in Tahrir and even camping out in the square together. Yesterday, men linked arms to form a protective ring around the women as they marched for over an



BASRA: Iraqi women raise placards as they take part in an anti-government demonstration in the southern city of Basra yesterday.—AFP

hour. "Revolution is my name, male silence is the real shame!" they chanted, then adding "Freedom, revolution, feminism!" Some of their chants were snide remarks at Sadr himself.

"Where are the millions?" some said, referring to the cleric's call for a million-strong march several weeks ago that saw much smaller num-

bers hit the streets. The rallies have slammed Iraqi authorities for being corrupt, incompetent and beholden to neighboring Iran. "They want us to be a second Iran, but Iraqi women weren't born to let men dictate to them what to do," protester Raya Assi told AFP yesterday. "They have to accept us the way we are." —AFP

International

Turkey threatens force against ‘radicals’ in Syria’s Idlib province

Russia accused Ankara of failing to ‘neutralize’ jihadist groups

ISTANBUL: Turkey yesterday threatened to use force against “radicals” in Syria’s Idlib province after Russia accused Ankara of failing to “neutralize” jihadist groups under a 2018 deal. “Force will be used in Idlib against those who do not abide by the ceasefire, including the radicals,” Defense Minister Hulusi Akar was quoted as saying by the official Anadolu news agency. “Any form of measure will be taken,” he said. Idlib—the last opposition bastion in Syria—is held by an array of rebels dominated by the Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) jihadist group, which is led by members of the country’s former Al-Qaeda franchise. President Bashar al-Assad’s forces have pressed ahead with an offensive in the region since December, killing more than 380 civilians, according to the monitoring group the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The killing of 14 Turks in Idlib in government shelling has fuelled tensions between Ankara and Damascus, while raising stakes with Russia—a key ally of Assad.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday accused Russia of committing “massacres” in Idlib and threatened to strike government forces anywhere in Syria if the slightest harm is done to Turkish troops. In return, Moscow accused Ankara of failing to honour the 2018 deal, with Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying the Turkish side “had taken upon itself an obligation to neutralise ter-

rorist groups” in Idlib. Under the bilateral agreement, radical groups were required to withdraw from a demilitarised zone in the Idlib region.

‘No military victory’

As Turkey and Russia traded accusations over the escalation in Idlib, US special envoy for Syria James Jeffrey held closed-door talks with Turkish officials in Ankara on Wednesday. Washington has thrown full support for its NATO ally’s response to the Syrian government fire in Idlib. Jeffrey, in comments published Thursday on the official Twitter account of the US Embassy in Turkey, voiced US support for Ankara’s “legitimate” interests in Syria.

“Our job is to convince (Russia, Iran and the Assad government) that they are not going to have a military victory,” he said. “The United States totally agrees with Turkey on the legal presence and justification for Turkey defending its existential interests against refugee flow and dealing with terror and finding a solution to the terrible Syrian conflict with the war criminal regime of President Assad,” he said.

Turkey, which already hosts more than 3.7 million Syrians, fears a further influx of refugees fleeing violence in Idlib. The two countries have been on a collision course over US support for Kurdish militants fighting against the Islamic State in Syria, deemed as terrorists by Ankara.

Under the bilateral deal with Russia, Turkey



IDLIB: Displaced Syrians flee the countryside of Aleppo and Idlib provinces towards Syria’s northwestern Afrin district near the border with Turkey yesterday as regime forces push on with their offensive in the country’s northwest. — AFP

has also set up 12 observation posts in Idlib—three of which were encircled by Assad’s forces, according to Turkish officials.

Erdogan has now given Damascus until the end of the month to push back its forces outside the military locations. Turkey has sent reinforce-

ments including troops and artillery to beef up its observation posts in recent days following the series of exchanges with the Syrian army.

Akar said: “We are sending additional units to establish a ceasefire and make it long-lasting. We will control the field.” — AFP

Iran starts poll campaign with thousands barred from standing

DUBAI: Iran’s week-long parliamentary election campaign started yesterday, state TV reported, a vote seen as a popularity test for the clerical establishment at a time when relations with Washington are at their worst since the 1979 Islamic revolution. The Guardian Council, which must approve candidates, has rejected around 6,850 moderate or conservative hopefuls in favor of hardliners from among the 14,000 applicants seeking to contest the Feb. 21 vote.

About a third of lawmakers have also been barred from standing again. “The 7,150 candidates who are running for parliamentary elections have started campaigning yesterday,” state TV reported. Pragmatist President Hassan Rouhani has criticized the disqualifications, but like supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei he has called for a high turnout as the country faces challenges over its disputed nuclear program. Khamenei, the final authority in Iran’s complex system of clerical rule and limited democracy, backed the Guardian Council, saying the next parliament was no place for those scared of speaking out against foreign enemies.

Tensions with the United States have spiked

since 2018, when President Donald Trump withdrew from Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal with major powers and reimposed crippling sanctions. The crisis worsened when Iran’s most prominent military commander, Qasem Soleimani, was killed by a US drone in Baghdad in Jan. 3, which led to Iran retaliating against U.S. targets in Iraq on Jan. 8. The vote will have no major influence on foreign affairs or Iran’s nuclear policy, which is determined by Khamenei. With the disqualification of moderate and leading conservative figures, hardline loyalists of Khamenei are likely to dominate the parliament. Pro-reform politicians said in January that they had no candidates to stand for 230 of the 290 seats in parliament, saying Iranians’ demands for a “free and fair” election were not met because of the large numbers disqualified.

The Council has cited various grounds for the rejections, such as “corruption and being unfaithful to Islam”. Some 58 million Iranians out of 83 million are eligible to vote. While supporters of the establishment will vote for hardline candidates, moderates are struggling to mobilize their supporters, who are disappointed with Rouhani’s failure to ease social and political restrictions.

Leading pro-reform parties have been either dismantled or banned since a presidential vote in 2009, in which hardliner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was re-elected. His rivals alleged the vote was rigged. In Tehran, which accounts for 30 seats in the assembly, hardline candidates are headed by Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, a former mayor of the capital who once commanded the elite Revolutionary Guards. — Reuters

Yemen patients finally treated in Jordan after years of war

AMMAN: Mohammed Hussein looks sadly at his wife as she lies in bed in a Jordanian hospital where she is being treated for cancer—far from the devastating war back home in Yemen.

Dawla, too sick to talk, is one of a handful of critically ill Yemenis transported by the United Nations from the rebel-held capital Sanaa to Jordan for treatment. A year and half ago, Yemeni doctors diagnosed the 40-year-old with thyroid cancer. The news was devastating, more so given the state of the health system in a country rocked by a war the UN says has caused the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

“They told us she had had the disease for about four years,” said Hussein, a 50-year-old farmer from Hajja, northwest of the capital, which is under siege by a Saudi-led coalition backing the government.

“We couldn’t get her treated in Yemen because of the war, the siege, the lack of medical personnel and treatment, and I couldn’t take her outside the country because I could barely afford to feed our six children,” he said with tears in his eyes. “Life in Yemen is harder than you can possibly imagine.”



AMMAN: Yemeni Aymen, who is suffering from a congenital spinal malformation, receives treatment at a private hospital in the Jordanian capital Amman following a United Nations medical evacuation from Yemen’s capital Sanaa. — AFP

The couple waited four months in a small hotel in Sanaa before they could leave Yemen.

They arrived in Amman on February 8, on a flight from Sanaa airport organized by the World Health Organization and carrying 24 patients, including children. It was the second of what the UN agency hopes will be many “mercy flights”. Houthi rebels have controlled Sanaa since 2014, when they seized much of the country’s north from the government of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi.

The war escalated when the Saudi-led military coalition intervened on Hadi’s side the following year. Since then, the conflict has left tens of thousands dead or wounded, including many civilians, according to humanitarian groups. The coalition, which controls Yemen’s airspace, has closed Sanaa airport to commercial flights since 2016. — AFP

International

Two years on, 'Ramaphoria' for S Africa's president is fading

President's reform plans fail to deliver jobs, spur growth

JOHANNESBURG: When Cyril Ramaphosa took office as South African president two years ago, the media coined the term "Ramaphoria" to describe the giddy expectations he had stoked. Those heady days now seem firmly in the past. Ramaphosa, 67, has been praised for turning the page on the scandal-tainted era of his predecessor, Jacob Zuma.

But many South Africans are frustrated, disenchanted or angry that his rhetoric of a "new dawn" in a country bedeviled by joblessness, inequality and crime has fallen so far short. "We have all been disappointed... at the performance of the president over the past two years," said Dawie Roodt, chief economist at the consultancy firm Efficient Group.

"We are worse off because we are poorer than two years ago in terms of per capita GDP," he said. "But we do not have the same levels of incompetence and corruption that we experienced under Zuma." Ramaphosa was a trade union leader who played a key role in the apartheid struggle.

After it, he became a hugely wealthy businessman but kept his political contacts bright, and at one point was seen as being groomed to succeed Nelson Mandela.

Instead he became vice president, a largely low-profile role that he held until he landed the top job in February 2018. That came after an internal wrangle in the ruling African National Congress (ANC) saw Zuma, stained by years of corruption allegations, forced to resign.

Fifteen months later, Ramaphosa won a popular mandate in elections where the ANC suffered its worst result since apartheid was overturned a quarter of a century earlier. The party's electoral support dropped below the

psychologically significant mark of 60 percent, falling to 57.5 percent.

Economic headache

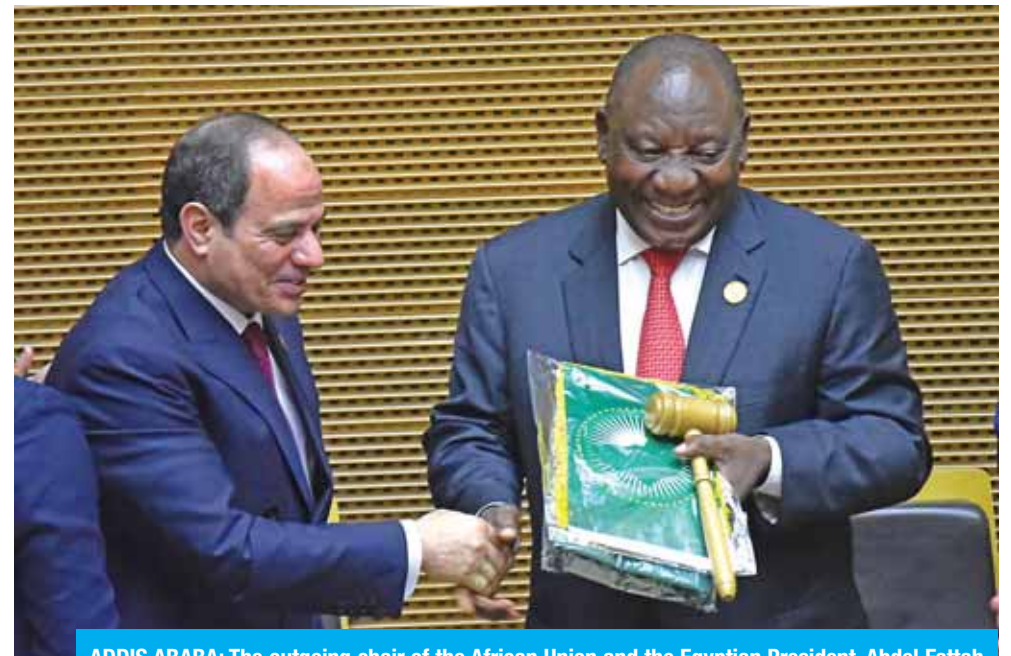
The slump reflects the failure of Ramaphosa's reform plans to deliver the jobs and sunnier life that he promised. In short order, his presidency has had to battle escalating electricity outages, rising unemployment—now at 29.1 percent and the highest in 11 years—and a national airline struggling to stay afloat. "It is quite clear that he is facing a much bigger challenge... than had been expected," said Nedbank economist Isaac Matshego.

Ramaphosa's leadership style is now under cold scrutiny. Sifiso Skenjana, chief economist at a management consulting firm, IQ Business, said Ramaphosa was having to navigate the "political complexity" of a divided ANC.

"He has tended to try to be inclusive and as a result he has come under a lot of criticism for having some level of indecision." The head of the opposition Democratic Alliance, John Steenhuisen, acidly described Ramaphosa as "stuck in his own quicksand of warring factions and crippling indecisiveness. The incapable head of an incapable state".

Julius Malema, leader of the firebrand opposition the Economic Freedom Fighters, asked: "What is that Cyril has done since we removed Zuma... except him becoming president?"

"Ramaphosa is certainly not a disaster but he is really a disappointment," said Roodt. "He is a weak president," he said. "His personality is not a very strong leader because he doesn't take decisions, he is always waiting for somebody to tell him what to do." Ramaphosa was to make a state-of-the-nation address yesterday in which



ADDIS ABABA: The outgoing chair of the African Union and the Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (left), hands over the chairmanship to the incoming chair for the African Union and south African President, Cyril Ramaphosa, at the 33rd Ordinary session of the assembly of the African heads of States at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa in this file photo. — AFP

he is likely to admit to the country's problems but also emphasize the positive.

"We believe we have laid a very good foundation and a basis for our country to move forward," he said last week when asked to rate his performance. He urged the need "to look forward so that we are not beaten down by the moment that we are in." Expectations that yesterday's

speech will deliver more of the same have met with scorn in some quarters. "Why should we waste more time on listening to Ramaphosa's empty promises yesterday when it is clear that things in SA are only getting worse?" asked Johannesburg's former mayor Herman Mashaba. Despite his problems, Ramaphosa still enjoys public backing. — AFP

Sinn Fein seeks talks with Fianna Fail on forming new Irish govt

DUBLIN: Left-wing nationalist party Sinn Fein said yesterday it had formally requested talks with center-right rival Fianna Fail to discuss options for forming a new Irish government following an inconclusive election last weekend. The request puts pressure on Fianna Fail leader Micheal Martin, whose party has 38 seats in the 160-seat parliament, to clarify his position on a possible tie-up with Sinn Fein, which has 37 seats. Sinn Fein, Fianna Fail and the center-right Fine Gael Party of Prime Minister Leo Varadkar secured just under a quarter of seats in parliament each, meaning it will be hard to form a government unless at least two of the three cooperate.

Surveys showed that voters rejected the traditional parties over the key campaign issues of healthcare and the high cost and low availability of housing, won over by Sinn Fein's high-spending promises and a pledge to freeze residential rents. During the election campaign, Martin ruled out doing a deal with Sinn Fein, the former political wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), but in the immediate aftermath of the vote, he refused to completely exclude the possibility.

"Micheal Martin has said 'I am a democrat, I listen to the people and I respect the decision of the people', so he knows



Britain's Northern Ireland Secretary Julian Smith

that the people have voted for change," Sinn Fein leader Mary Lou McDonald said in a statement to announce that the formal request had been made. "There is an obligation on all of us to act urgently," she added.

Fine Gael and Fianna Fail have long shunned Sinn Fein, citing policy differences and the party's historic links to the IRA, which fought British rule in Northern Ireland for decades in a conflict in which some 3,600 people were killed before a 1998 peace deal. Both parties are also opposed to Sinn Fein's high-spending promises, its pledge to scrap property tax and plans to hike income taxes on high earners they say would discourage foreign multinationals that employ one-in-10 Irish workers. There are open divisions among Fianna Fail lawmakers over talking to Sinn Fein. Two members of parliament, one a senior member of Martin's front bench, strongly ruled it out yesterday ahead of the party's first meeting since the election. The Irish Times newspaper said Martin was expected to rule out such a coalition. The two lawmakers, Niall Collins and newly elected Cathal Crowe, suggested that Fianna Fail could instead lead a minority government similar to the previous administration Varadkar led via a co-operation deal with then main opposition Fianna Fail. — Reuters

Greek islanders take anti-camp protest to Athens

ATHENS: Greek officials and residents from islands harboring thousands of asylum-seekers staged a protest in Athens yesterday against plans to build new camps. Dozens of demonstrators from the islands of Lesbos, Chios and Samos gathered outside the interior ministry, brandishing banners against the camps project.

The new conservative government which came to power in July has announced that the present camps, which are stretched several times beyond capacity, are to shut down this year.

They are to be replaced with new, smaller facilities that are to be operational by mid-2020.

But authorities and residents on the five Aegean islands with camp facilities, which include Leros and Kos, have opposed the initiative. The islanders demand the immediate removal of most of the asylum-seekers and accuse the EU of abandoning them.

"If we accept a (new) camp for 7,000 people, unofficially it could be 20-25,000 people," said Georgios Stantzios, the mayor of eastern Samos. The ongoing deadlock, five years after the height of the migration crisis, has caused exasperation among both island residents and asylum-seekers.

Outbreaks of violence are frequent in the overcrowded camps, and last week seven people on Lesbos were arrested on suspicion of forming a vigilante group to attack migrants. — AFP

British finance minister quits in reshuffle upset

Shock move deals blow to Johnson’s government

LONDON: British Finance Minister Sajid Javid resigned yesterday, in a shock move that deals a blow to Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s government just weeks after Brexit and a month before the annual budget. The chancellor of the exchequer stood down after Johnson tried to use a reorganization of his cabinet to get rid of some of Javid’s aides, a source close to the departing minister said.

He was immediately replaced by senior Treasury official Rishi Sunak. Javid’s departure is a major upset at a turbulent time for Britain, just weeks after leaving the European Union on January 31, a process that has left the country with an uncertain future.

Johnson was yesterday carrying out a cabinet reshuffle, his first since winning a comfortable parliamentary majority in the December general election. Javid, a former City of London banker born into a working class Muslim family, was considered safe in his job despite reports of tensions between him and Johnson’s senior aide, Dominic Cummings. But rumors began to circulate after his meeting with the prime minister went on longer than expected.

“He has turned down the job of chancellor of the exchequer,” a source close to Javid said. “The prime minister said he had to fire all his special advisers and replace them with Number 10 special advisers to make it one team. “The chancellor said no self-respecting minister would accept those terms.”

Belfast minister out

Earlier, Johnson sacked his Northern Ireland minister despite his role in restoring devolved government to Belfast after a three-year suspension last month. Julian Smith had helped end the political vacuum in Northern Ireland by persuading the two main parties to return to a power-sharing government last month. The British province had no government since Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) fell out in January 2017 over a renewable energy scandal.

Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar led tributes to Smith’s efforts, saying he was “one of Britain’s finest politicians of our time”. But The Times newspaper said Johnson felt “blindsided” by the deal because it includes an investigation into alleged crimes by British soldiers during decades of sectarian violence known as The Troubles.

Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney, who was also closely involved in the power-sharing talks, said that without Smith’s leadership there would be no government in Belfast.

“You have been such an effective secretary of state for Northern Ireland at a time of real challenge and risk,” he wrote on Twitter. Arlene Foster, who as DUP leader was restored as first minister of Northern Ireland under the deal, also hailed his “dedication to the role”. Smith said it had been “the biggest privilege”, adding that he was “extremely grateful” to Johnson for giving him the chance to serve. Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom, Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers and Attorney General Geoffrey Cox were also shown the door.



LONDON: Britain’s Chancellor of the Exchequer Sajid Javid walks at 10 Downing Street in central London yesterday. British Finance Minister Sajid Javid resigned yesterday in a shock move that deals a blow to Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s government just weeks after Brexit and a month before the annual budget. — AFP

But Foreign Minister Dominic Raab and Michael Gove, Johnson’s de facto deputy, are staying. Johnson held off from carrying out a cabinet reshuffle immediately after his December victory, choosing to wait until Britain left the EU. After years of political turmoil over Brexit, he wants to focus this year on domestic issues, including investments in police, healthcare and in-

frastructure. Johnson also named former aid minister Alok Sharma as the new minister in charge of the COP 26 UN climate summit, which is being held in Glasgow in November. The former president, Claire O’Neill, was sacked last month. She responded with a blistering attack on his leadership, and warned that planning for the summit was “way off track”. —AFP

Growing bill to fix Britain’s Big Ben

LONDON: The bill to repair London’s iconic Big Ben clock tower has increased by millions of pounds after the discovery of World War II bomb damage, pollution and asbestos, Britain’s parliament said yesterday.

The cost of renovating the Elizabeth Tower housing the famous clock, which began in 2017, is now set to rise to nearly £80 million (\$104 million, 95 million euros). The extensive damage requiring an extra £18.6 million was only revealed once the project team was able to begin intrusive surveys for the first time ever on the 177-year-old structure.

However, the efforts to restore the tower “to its previous splendor” remain on track for completion in late 2021, according to officials. A spokesperson for the House of Commons Commission, which is overseeing the project, called the spiralling costs “very frustrating”.

Ian Ailles, director general of the House of Commons, said the task of restoring the Elizabeth Tower “had been more complex than we could have anticipated”. “With a 12m square (130 square feet) footprint and a prime location right in the middle of a busy working Parliament, understanding the full extent of the damage to the tower was impossible until the scaffolding was up,” he added.



LONDON: In this file photo taken on January 28, 2020 the clock face of Elizabeth Tower, known after the bell Big Ben, shows the hands at eleven o’clock as a Union Flag flies in front of it in London. - AFP

The work is to repair the clock faces and mechanism, cracks in the tower’s masonry and corrosion in the roof, as well as to restore the edging around the clock faces to its original 19th-century color.

A lift will also be installed as an alternative to the steps up the tower, and the lights illuminating the clock will be replaced by low-energy LEDs. Completed in neo-Gothic style in 1856 by parliament architect Augustus Pugin, the tower has suffered from considerable degradation over time, and now even leans 46 centimeters (18 inches) off the vertical. The renovations have meant Big Ben—whose chimes feature on British television and radio news bulletins—has been largely silent since 2017. — AFP

German far right reopens wounds of Dresden bombing

FRANKFURT: Germany marks 75 years since the destruction of Dresden in World War II yesterday, an anniversary seized upon by the far right to inflate victim numbers and play down Nazi crimes. President Frank-Walter Steinmeier will give a speech at Dresden’s Palace of Culture, walking a fine line between remembering those killed in the Allied air raids on the eastern city and stressing Germany’s responsibility for the war. Afterwards, he will join thousands of residents in forming a human chain of “peace and tolerance” as church bells ring out.

Dresden mayor Dirk Hilbert began the commemorations in the morning by placing white roses at a memorial for the victims. As in past years, the commemoration events are set to attract neo-Nazis, while the far-right AfD party will man an information booth to tell the supposed “truth” about the bombings. Police are also bracing for a large demo by right-wing extremists on Saturday, as well as counterprotests.

“The myth of the ‘city of innocence’ lives on,” the regional Saechsische Zeitung daily wrote, accusing the far right of using the commemorations “to minimize German war crimes”.

Martyrdom

Hundreds of British and American planes pounded Dresden with conventional and incendiary explosives from February 13-15 in 1945. The ensuing firestorm killed some 25,000 people, historians have calculated, and left the baroque city known as “Florence on the Elbe” in ruins, wiping out its historic center. The devastation came to symbolize the horrors of war, much like the heavily bombed city of Coventry in England. But in Germany, Dresden also became a focal point for neo-Nazis who have held “funeral marches” for the dead and given the city a martyrdom status that experts say is belied by historical facts.

This year’s anniversary is especially charged as Germany reels from a political scandal that erupted in neighboring Thuringia state last week, where an AfD-backed candidate was elected state premier for the first time. Although he swiftly resigned, the drama marked a coup for the AfD—laying bare mainstream parties’ struggle to maintain the firewall against a party that has called for Germany to stop atoning for its Nazi past. “Resurgent nationalism and right-wing populism are increasingly endangering the democratic remembrance culture,” mayor Hilbert told local radio.

Some observers have questioned whether the indiscriminate bombing of Dresden was justified so late in the war, an argument hijacked by neo-Nazis eager to shift the focus onto atrocities committed by the victors of WWII. The Allied forces however saw Dresden as a legitimate target on the eastern front because of its transport links and factories supporting the German military machine. — AFP

International

Friday, February 14, 2020

In Minnesota, the Kafkaesque existence of Haylee Ann Rucker

No passport, no driver's license, no insurance

EVELETH, United States: Haylee Ann Rucker lives in a rural Minnesota town. The 19-year-old was born in the United States to American parents. But legally, she did not exist for 19 years.

No passport, no driver's license, no insurance. Rucker had none of the vital paperwork needed to lead a regular adult life. Why? Because she didn't have a birth certificate. And without that, she could not get a Social Security number, and everything got more complicated from there. The story is an absurdist tale of administrative ping-pong involving two US states, the federal government and a hospital that did not register her paperwork from the outset.

But as bizarre as it sounds, it's not unheard of in the United States, a country that offers nationality to anyone born on American soil. "It really hit me when I turned 16 and I couldn't get a license like everyone else," Rucker says in a soft and trembling voice.

When AFP met Rucker in Eveleth-population, roughly 3,700—in mid-January, she was working as a home health aide for the bedridden wife of the town's mayor. Of course, she has to work under the table. Mayor Robert Vlasisavljevich repeatedly calls Rucker's situation "the nuttiest thing." Rucker was a good student in high school and wants to become a nurse, but she could not register for college classes without identification documents. The frustration in her voice builds: "I mean, I can't do anything. I'm kind of just stuck."

'She's mine'

It all started one Thursday night in December 2000 at a hospital outside Los Angeles. A very

pregnant April Booth, Rucker's mother, went to the hospital convinced she was about to give birth. But nurses sent her away and told her to return when her contractions were closer together. Booth, however, didn't make it. She gave birth at home with the help of her baby's father. An ambulance then came and took her back to the hospital. But the father did not want to sign any paperwork, perhaps so he could avoid paying child support.

Without his signature, there were no official witnesses to the birth, and the hospital did not follow through with the usual procedures to have a birth certificate issued. At the time, Booth did not worry about the birth certificate formalities, and her baby's father disappeared from her life. But years later, when she was ready to file a tax return after heading back to work, Booth realized she could not claim Rucker as a dependent, because her daughter had no Social Security number. By that time, the family was living in Minnesota. In 2009, Booth applied for a Social Security number for Rucker. But her request was rejected because of the lack of a birth certificate. Social workers helped Booth get a paternity test proving the identity of Rucker's father. The hospital certified that Booth had been admitted in December 2000.

There was a bill for the ambulance, and medical records. Booth spreads all the papers out on a coffee table in her home. She even has a copy of one of her ultrasound exams. "In the beginning, I thought maybe they thought that I had stolen her, and I could respect that," says the 56-year-old Booth. "But I think I have enough documentation to prove that she's mine." In 2018,



EVELETH: Haylee Rucker is seen helping the Eveleth mayor's wife, at the mayor's home in Eveleth, Minnesota. — AFP

thanks to a friend, Booth finally got a lawyer to take the case pro bono. For months, there was no progress. Booth saw a certain irony in the situation. She works in a call center that has the Democratic Party as a client, and often conducts polls about the regularization of those in the US without papers. "I didn't cross a border in the back of a truck. I didn't hide her as a stowaway,"

Booth said. "I had her in the United States, and I've never left the country. I'm an American citizen. And I can't get her legal."

As Rucker was not born in Minnesota where she currently lives, and doesn't live in California where she was born, the two states have repeatedly punted to the other side on the case, says her attorney Bryan Lyndsay. — AFP

US commander warns Philippines rift could hurt terrorism fight

SYDNEY: A top US commander warned ending a security pact with the Philippines would hurt counter-terrorism efforts in the country's restive south yesterday, putting him at odds with commander-in-chief Donald Trump.

Washington's top military officer in Asia-Pacific Admiral Philip Davidson said he hoped Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's decision to scrap a deal allowing US forces to be based in the country would be rethought. Manila has given "180 day notice so we have some time for diplomatic efforts," Davidson said at an event in Sydney. "I hope we can get to a successful outcome."

Trump has said he would be "fine" with the end of the visiting forces agreement as it would save the United States "a lot of money".

But Davidson insisted the move would hamper military operations in Duterte's home island of Mindanao—where separatist and Islamist violence has killed some 100,000 people. "Our ability to help the Philippines in their counter-violent extremist fight in the south, our ability to train and operate within the Philippines and with Philippines armed forces would be challenged without that visiting forces agreement," he warned. — AFP

Just 'Mayor Pete'? Trump struggles for killer nickname

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump likes to coin disparaging nicknames for his political opponents—but so far, he hasn't quite hit the mark with rising young Democrat Pete Buttigieg.

Presidential hopefuls "Crazy Bernie" Sanders, "Sleepy Joe" Biden, "Mini-Mike" Bloomberg and "Pocahontas" Elizabeth Warren all crop up frequently in Trump's Twitter feed.

But Buttigieg—a 38-year-old gay military veteran—has received surprisingly little presidential abuse despite his rapid emergence as a leading contender for the right to take on Trump in November. "Bootedgeedge (Buttigieg) is doing pretty well tonight. Giving Crazy Bernie a run for his money. Very interesting!" Trump tweeted after the New Hampshire primary on Tuesday, in which Buttigieg finished a close second to Sanders. Is it perhaps that Trump doesn't see "Mayor Pete" as a credible opponent? Or is he just struggling to craft a neat epithet for the centrist former mayor of South Bend, Indiana who is reaching out to independents and "future former Republicans"?

For Julian Zelizer, a political history professor at Princeton University, there is no doubt that Buttigieg will soon become a more serious target for Trump if his stellar ascent gathers pace. "Whenever Trump sees a threat, he attacks the threat. He will be watching and will unleash, should this intensify," Zelizer told AFP.

What's the angle?

But what will be his line of attack? Buttigieg's difficult-to-



WASHINGTON, DC: US President Donald Trump (second left) and First Lady Melania Trump (left) pose with President of the Republic of Ecuador Lenin Moreno (second right) and his wife Rocio Gonzalez de Moreno after a meeting at the White House in Washington, DC, on Wednesday. — AFP

pronounce name? The president has so far only made passing reference to the tricky surname, pretending to stumble on it when whipping up loyal supporters at rallies. But the moderate Democrat has already blunted that gambit by joking about it himself, offering voters funny ways to remember how to say it.

Will Trump mock Buttigieg's relative lack of experience? After all, South Bend is a city of 100,000 people, not the world's largest economy. Buttigieg dismisses criticism of his short political resume by raising his military service in Afghanistan. "I've seen a lot worse 'incoming' (fire) than a tweet full of typos," he said, ridiculing Trump's sometimes less-than-stellar spelling on social media. In a Democratic debate in January, Buttigieg slammed Trump's Vietnam draft deferments for medical reasons. — AFP

International

Joe Biden seeks reboot after new upset in New Hampshire

Back-to-back stumbles create a difficult situation for Democratic aspirant

NASHUA, New Hampshire: Joe Biden's campaign held a victory party in a New Hampshire hotel ballroom on Tuesday evening. But there was no victory. And there was no Joe Biden. Before the polls had even closed, the Democratic presidential hopeful had left New Hampshire, where he ultimately posted a fifth-place finish. The dismal performance came just eight days after the Iowa caucuses, where Biden finished fourth. The back-to-back stumbles have created a difficult situation for Biden, who must perform well in upcoming contests in Nevada and South Carolina this month to show voters and donors that his candidacy remains viable.

David Hopkins, an expert in presidential campaigns at Boston College, said no candidate has ever gone on to win the Democratic nomination who finished lower than third place in Iowa and New Hampshire. "Does Biden have the resources to sustain a comeback?" said Hopkins. "It's hard to tell in this trajectory whether you are going to bounce back or just keep going downhill."

Vermont US Senator Bernie Sanders won New Hampshire, followed by South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg, Minnesota US Senator Amy Klobuchar and Massachusetts US Senator Elizabeth Warren.

Biden, the affable former vice president, has tried to downplay his early struggles. Iowa and New Hampshire are small states with few delegates whose populations are overwhelmingly white and unrepresentative of the country overall, his campaign has argued. The candidate is looking to Nevada and South Carolina, the next two states on the nominating calendar, to revive his fortunes. Nevada boasts large numbers of unionized workers and Latino voters. South Carolina has a heavy concentration of African-

American voters, who have shown a strong affinity for Biden, the former running mate of Barack Obama, America's first black president. While Sanders, Buttigieg and a suddenly surging Klobuchar celebrated their strong showings in New Hampshire on Tuesday night, Biden headed to a rally in South Carolina.

"Up 'til now we haven't heard from the most committed constituency in the Democratic Party, the African-American constituency," Biden said in Columbia, the capital. While Buttigieg and Klobuchar have emerged as formidable rivals to Biden in attracting moderate Democratic voters, they so far have attracted little support among Latinos or African Americans, whose votes will be critical to defeat incumbent Republican President Donald Trump in November. Sanders has attracted Latino support, but has yet to gain traction with black voters.

Biden has touted himself as the only candidate in the race capable of harnessing the Democrats' diverse coalition. But that claim is being challenged by Mike Bloomberg, the billionaire former mayor of New York, who is skipping the four early contests to compete starting on Super Tuesday on March 3.

A national poll this week from Quinnipiac University showed Biden's support among black Democrats, which stood at 51 percent in late January, has slid to 27 percent, while Bloomberg's black support has climbed to 22 percent from 7 percent over the same period.

On a campaign strategy call on Wednesday, US Representative Cedric Richmond, a co-chair of the Biden campaign, blasted Sanders, Buttigieg and Bloomberg, a former Republican, as too risky to trust with the nomination. "We cannot afford to take a chance with a self-de-



COLUMBIA, SC: Democratic presidential candidate former Vice President Joe Biden addresses the crowd during a South Carolina campaign launch party on Tuesday in Columbia, South Carolina. Biden skipped a primary-night event in New Hampshire after the count there showed a distant finish to front runner Sen. — AFP

fined socialist, the mayor of a very small city, a billionaire who all of the sudden is a Democrat," Richmond said.

Bloomberg, who has spent more than a quarter-billion dollars of his personal fortune on the campaign, is gunning for the same voters Biden will need in later contests in states such as California, Texas and North Carolina. Biden has relied on traditional fundraisers more than his rivals, who have vibrant digital operations. Biden wrote a plea to donors on Wednesday that said

"the donations I get today are the most important, most symbolic ones of the campaign." He was expected to hold fundraisers in New York yesterday. Unite the Country, a political action committee supporting Biden, last week sent a memo to its donors urging them to stick with him. The memo said the party cannot afford a situation where moderate Democrats split their ballots between several centrist candidates, allowing Sanders, a self-described democratic socialist, to win the nomination. — Reuters

Another wall goes up for Trump, this time in India

AHMEDABAD: US President Donald Trump will be shielded from the sight of slums by a newly built wall when he visits the city of Ahmedabad during a visit to India this month. A senior government said the wall was being built for security reasons, not to conceal the slum district.

But the contractor building it told Reuters the government "did not want the slum to be seen" when Trump passes by on the ride in from Ahmedabad's airport. "I've been ordered to build a wall as soon as possible, over 150 masons are working round-the-clock to finish the project," the contractor said, speaking on condition of anonymity. The government official conceded that the wall was part of a "beautification and cleanliness" drive.

Whatever the reason, the 400-meter-long and seven-foot-high wall will prevent the US

leader from getting a glimpse of a slum district that houses an estimated 800 families. Trump, who has made his pledge to build a wall along the United States' border with Mexico a feature of his presidency, will visit India on Feb. 24-25 to reaffirm strategic ties that have been buffeted by trade disputes.

He is expected to attend an event dubbed "Kem Chho Trump" ("How are you, Trump") at a stadium in Ahmedabad along the lines of the "Howdy Modi" extravaganza he hosted for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Houston last September. Speaking at the White House on Tuesday, Trump quoted Modi as saying "millions and millions of people" would attend the rally.

The event provides Trump, who was impeached in December, with the opportunity to woo the support of hundreds of thousands of Indian-American voters ahead of the US presidential election in November. But some slum dwellers whose homes will be cordoned off by the wall in Ahmedabad - the largest city in Modi's home state of Gujarat - said the government was wasting tax-payer money to hide the poor. "Poverty and slums are the reality of our life, but Modi's government wants to hide the poor," said Parvatbhai Mafabhai, a day worker who has lived there with his family for more than three decades. — Reuters

Venezuela's Guaido defends sanctions against Maduro regime

CARACAS: Venezuela's opposition leader Juan Guaido on Wednesday defended foreign sanctions against his country 24 hours after he was attacked at Caracas international airport by state airline employees shouting "fascist". Guaido returned on Tuesday from a three-week international tour that took him to the US, Canada, Colombia and Europe. He was met by some angry Conviasa workers enraged that last Friday the US placed sanctions on the state airline company.

The US action criminalizing transactions with the flag carrier is the latest of many sanctions by Washington aimed at toppling leftist President Nicolas Maduro's regime, particularly by cutting his government's oil revenue. One protester appeared to douse Guaido with a fizzy drink. But speaking to

journalists after a legislative session held in a Caracas plaza, the National Assembly speaker defended the use of sanctions. He said they are "the free world's tools to confront regimes (that) violate human rights, torturers and murderers."

He said the sanctions imposed on the top officials in Maduro's government were an "effective" form of pressure. Guaido's uncle Juan Marquez, who vanished after flying back with him, had been arrested, top Maduro ally Diosdado Cabello said, accusing him of smuggling explosives. On his state television programme, Cabello said Marquez was detained for allegedly carrying C-4 explosives hidden inside flashlights and perfume refills, and was wearing a bulletproof vest.

Guaido had denounced the "disappearance" of his uncle at the airport and said he would hold Maduro responsible for whatever happened to him. Maduro retains the support of Venezuela's powerful military and has resisted Guaido's challenge, even as the United States ramps up the pressure. "Yes, there will be more sanctions for the criminals and everyone that supports the dictatorship," warned Guaido, who on Tuesday had told supporters to "look out for new announcements." — AFP

International

Japan cruise ship virus cases jump to 218 as elderly offered escape

US ship blocked over virus fears to dock in Cambodia

YOKOHAMA: Japan said yesterday it would allow some elderly passengers off a quarantined cruise ship and into government-designated lodging, as the number of new coronavirus cases on the vessel jumped to 218. Thousands of passengers and crew on the Diamond Princess—the single largest cluster of infected people outside China—face several days more of quarantine, with many taking to social media to voice their concerns.

Those working on the ship have been reluctant to speak to reporters for fear of losing their jobs, but two crew members broke their silence in a video broadcast by Indian media yesterday. “The situation on board is getting worse day by day,” 24-year-old ship security officer Sonali Thakkar told AFP. “This morning they told us that 44 people have been infected and everyone is really scared and wanting to get off as soon as possible,” she added. “All we want is tests to be done and to be separated from those who are positive. We don’t want to stay on board.” With passengers mostly confined to their cabins, crew members have to go door-to-door to deliver food and other supplies, and some fear this has reduced the effectiveness of the quarantine.

Health Minister Katsunobu Kato said yesterday there were 44 new cases—including one crew member—from an additional 221 tests. He said also that some elderly passengers would be allowed off the ship if they test negative for the COVID-19 virus.

Those who opt to leave will be moved to government facilities to wait out a quarantine that is set to last until February 19. “If they test negative, those

who wish to disembark can go and live in a lodging facility that the government will prepare,” Kato said. The captain informed the passengers of the new plan via ship broadcast. “The Ministry of Health has already tested guests 80 years or older who are staying in a cabin without a balcony, and those 80 years or older with chronic medical conditions,” he said.

Quarantine questions

Kato said five people from the ship were in serious condition in hospital—four who have tested positive for the virus. Test results for the fifth are still being processed. With dozens of new cases diagnosed almost daily, questions have been raised about the pace of testing and whether the quarantine is working.

Thakkar said that while passengers were confined to quarters, the crew were eating together, working together and sleeping two to a cabin with shared washing facilities. “I haven’t got the virus yet, but I don’t want it to be so late that I catch the virus. I don’t want to wait to find out that I’m the one that has it.” Japan initially tested around 300 people who had close contact with the first infected passenger, or have displayed symptoms, but has gradually widened the net as new cases were detected. Officials saying they can only process 300 people a day, but hope eventually to expand this to 1,000.

Meanwhile, a US cruise ship blocked from several Asian ports over concerns that a passenger could have been infected with the new coronavirus



YOKOHAMA: Passengers are seen on the deck of the Diamond Princess cruise ship, with around 3,600 people quarantined onboard due to fears of the new coronavirus, at the Daikoku Pier Cruise Terminal in Yokohama port yesterday. —AFP

arrived off Cambodia yesterday, as frustrated holidaymakers expressed hope that their ordeal may soon be over.

Cruise operator Holland America has insisted there are no cases of the SARS-like virus on board and Cambodia announced Wednesday that the boat would be able to dock in Sihanoukville, on its southern coast. By morning, the ship could be seen on the horizon off Sihanoukville, dwarfing the small fishing vessels that usually ply the waters. “First land sighting from the #Westerdam as the sun rises

over Cambodia,” passenger Christina Kerby tweeted. But the ship would dock early Friday, said provincial governor Kuoch Chamroeun.

“(Holland America) have asked to delay docking until tomorrow because they could not arrange for planes (from Sihanoukville to Phnom Penh),” he said. By mid-day, buses were lined up by the pier ready to transfer passengers to Sihanoukville’s airport, where they would fly to Phnom Penh before traveling home—a return trip that Holland America will pay for. —AFP

Foreigners in Wuhan tell of fear and rations

HONG KONG: Hunkered down at the epicenter of China’s virus epidemic and cut off from the world, the remaining foreigners in Wuhan are eking out a life in fear. A coronavirus outbreak that has killed more than 1,300 people and locked down the central Chinese city has left thousands of foreigners trapped as authorities impose an unprecedented quarantine. “We want to go back. We can’t survive anymore,” said Gaurab Pokhrel, a Nepali doctoral student in Wuhan and one of 200 from his country yet to be evacuated.

He said food was in short supply and foreign students were competing with locals at the few stores that were open. As of Monday, 27 foreigners in China had been infected with the virus — 22 of whom were in quarantine, officials said. Two of those have died—an American and a Japanese man. While many have managed to escape on government-chartered planes, a dwindling group of the unlucky—or in some cases hardy—remain, either adapting to life or still seeking a way out.

They told AFP of their plight via phone, email, text messages and social media. Ruqia

Shaikh, a Pakistani postdoctoral researcher stranded at Wuhan’s Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, said most students at the school were confined to their dormitories, watching TV. She said the university was providing students with essential commodities, but at double the usual price. “We are fed up of eating the same food-boiled rice and vegetables—over and over again. The only physical activity we have is a walk on the terrace, and that exposes us to the risk,” Shaikh said.

“Last week I went to Walmart. It was the first time I had gone out in weeks. It was scary... “Since I came back I have been counting the days until I was very sure I didn’t have any virus.”

No plans for evacuation

She added that while many Pakistani students wanted to leave, there were risks in returning to their country. “We are worried about how the authorities are going to treat us when we go back to Pakistan—some students who went back told us the officials treated them very badly,” she said.

Pakistani authorities say more than 500 students from the country are in Wuhan, but they have not announced any plans for an evacuation effort. Unlike many countries, Islamabad has maintained flights to and from other cities in China. The health ministry justifies the move with assurances that all passengers are screened on landing in Pakistan. —AFP

Indonesian volcano spews ash and lava

JAKARTA: Indonesia’s Mount Merapi, one of the world’s most active volcanoes, erupted yesterday as fiery red molten lava streamed down from the crater and it belched clouds of grey ash 2,000 meters (6,500 feet) into the sky.

Authorities did not raise the rumbling volcano’s alert status after the early-morning eruption, but they advised commercial planes to take caution in the area. But any activity at Merapi raises concern and local residents were ordered to stay outside a three-kilometer no-go zone around the rumbling crater near Indonesia’s cultural capital Yogyakarta.

Volcanic ash rained down on a 10-square kilometer area, according to the Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation Centre. Mount Merapi’s last major eruption in 2010 killed more than 300 people and forced the evacuation of some 280,000 residents.

It was Merapi’s most powerful eruption since 1930, which killed around 1,300 people, while another explosion in 1994 took about 60 lives.

The Southeast Asian archipelago has more than 17,000 islands and islets—and nearly 130 active volcanoes. It sits on the Pacific “Ring of Fire”, a vast zone of geological instability where the collision of tectonic plates causes frequent quakes and major volcanic activity. —AFP



YOGYAKARTA: Two kilometers ashes spews from Mount Merapi mount during an eruption as seen from Yogyakarta yesterday. —AFP

International

Duterte says travel ban stays even as Taiwan plans countermeasures

Primary concern is citizens' health and safety: Philippines

TAIPEI/MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte rejected yesterday Taiwan's appeal to lift a ban on its citizens visiting the country, saying his primary concern was the safety of Filipinos. Taiwan said it was considering countermeasures if the Philippines did not lift the ban it imposed this week to contain the spread of the coronavirus, but Duterte said the restriction stays "until the danger persists".

"My primary concern is the health and safety of our countrymen", Duterte was quoted by his spokesman, Salvador Panelo, as saying. Taiwan is governed entirely separately from China, but Beijing claims the island as its own and the World Health Organization (WHO) clubs its virus cases in the category for China, which has led some countries to impose the same restrictions on Taiwanese as on Chinese citizens.

More than 115,000 Philippine citizens live and work in Taiwan, mainly in factories and employed as household help. The Philippines' decision to include Taiwan as part of a ban on people from China visiting the country had "nothing to do with" the One China policy, Panelo said, quoting Duterte.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Joanne Ou told reporters in Taipei that Taiwan had a planned response if the Philippines maintained its ban, but she declined to elaborate, saying a decision was awaited from the Philippines government.

"We will continue to communicate with the Philippines and explain that this is a one-sided

and wrong decision by the Philippines' health ministry, which has already affected the relationship between the two countries of Taiwan and the Philippines," Ou said.

In a statement following the Philippines announcement that the ban would stay, Taiwan's Foreign Ministry said it was still considering its response, and that it was hoping Manila made the "correct decision". Taiwan and the Philippines have close economic and cultural ties, but no formal diplomatic relations, as the Philippines, like most countries, only recognizes the government in Beijing, and not in Taipei.

Taiwan has repeatedly complained that, with its 18 virus cases compared with some 60,000 in China, it is unfair for the WHO to lump them together with China and mislead other countries into believing Taiwan faces an equally dire epidemic.

The Philippines, more than 115,000 of whose nationals work in Taiwan in factories and as domestic helpers, said this week it had included Taiwan as part of a ban on people from China visiting the country. Taiwan is governed entirely separately from China, but Beijing claims the island as its own and the World Health Organization (WHO) clubs its virus cases in the category for China, which has led some countries to impose the same restrictions on Taiwanese as on Chinese citizens.

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MANILA: Members of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) wearing biohazard suits display placards with slogans during a protest in front of the department of health yesterday amidst the COVID-19 coronavirus scare which has infected thousands of people in China. — AFP

saying a decision was awaited from the Philippines government. Ou said "we will continue to communicate with the Philippines and explain that this is a one-sided and

wrong decision by the Philippines' health ministry, which has already affected the relationship between the two countries of Taiwan and the Philippines." — Reuters

Fires contained in Australia state, but now floods threaten

SYDNEY: All the blazes in Australia's hard-hit state of New South Wales have been brought under control, firefighters said yesterday, signalling the end of a "black summer" that claimed 33 lives nationwide. But heavy rains that helped extinguish the blazes that have raged along the east coast since September are causing flash floods in parts of the state, posing new problems for some residents.

"Not all fires are out, there's still some fire activity in the far south of the state but all fires are contained so we can really focus on helping people rebuild," the state's fire service deputy commissioner Rob Rogers said on Twitter.

"It is very good news," a Rural Fire Service spokesman told AFP. Bushfires scorched more than 10 million hectares in the country's east and south, killing at least 33 people and an estimated one billion animals, while destroying more than 2,500 homes.

The crisis cloaked major cities including Sydney in smoke for weeks on end, saw towns cut off and prompted the deployment of the military to rescue stranded citizens. Beleaguered volunteer firefighters have fought the blazes day-in-day-out in what has been described as Australia's "black summer". The fires were exacerbated by prolonged drought and worsened by climate change in the country's hottest and driest year on record. Days of recent rainfall have extinguished the largest fires and brought those that remain under control. — AFP

Vietnam quarantines area with 10,000 residents over coronavirus

BINH XUYEN, Vietnam: More than 10,000 people in villages near Vietnam's capital were placed under quarantine yesterday after six cases of the deadly new coronavirus were discovered there, authorities said. In the first mass quarantine outside of China since the virus emerged there in late December, the Son Loi farming region about 40 kilometers (25 miles) from Hanoi will be locked down for 20 days, the health ministry said. Checkpoints have been set up around the six villages that make up Son Loi, said an AFP team on the outskirts of the area in Binh Xuyen district.

Health officials wearing protective suits sprayed disinfectant on vehicles. Police warned people wanting to enter the quarantined area that while they would be allowed in, they would not be able to leave. The order comes after the health ministry reported that five people have been infected with the virus. It later announced a sixth case.

They all originated from a female worker who was sent to Wuhan in central China—where the virus originated—for training. The disease then spread to her family and her neighbors, including a three-month-old baby. So far, only the female worker has fully recovered and been discharged from the hospital, according to updates from the ministry, while the others remain in a "stable" condition. The Son Loi area of roughly 1,000 hectares (2,500 acres) is made up of farmland. Many of the 10,600 residents also commute to nearby factories for short-term labor jobs. Villager Tran Van Minh told AFP that authorities had already advised them to avoid large gatherings, though the cluster of infections in his village likely began due to Tet lunar new year celebrations last week.



HANOI: Residents wearing protective facemasks amid concerns of the COVID-19 coronavirus ride in vehicles along a street inside the quarantined Son Loi commune in Vinh Phuc province yesterday. — AFP

"The woman infected her family and neighbors after Tet visits," he said, adding that he and his family remain in good health. But "life has been badly affected," he told AFP by phone, adding that much of the labor force is reliant on jobs in construction and house painting. "Now we cannot get out and even if we do, clients don't welcome us that much as before." Authorities in Son Loi began handing out face masks after the Tet holiday ended on January 30. Since then children and elderly have largely been confined to their homes. Minh said he was not worried about running out of food, but he hoped "the epidemic will end soon". More than 1,350 people have died in China from the virus, and nearly 60,000 others have been infected, since it was first detected in Hubei province in December. While thousands have recovered, scientists and pharmaceutical companies are racing to test a vaccine and treatment to better target the virus—though health experts say it could be months before it is readily available. — AFP

Lifestyle

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**The matchmaker
of Beijing: Grandfather
plays cupid for generations**

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**Love, lust, heartache: Secret
dating lives of young Saudis**

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Pictures show young Saudis gathering at the Riyadh Season Boulevard in the Saudi capital. — AFP photos

LOVE, LUST, HEARTACHE: SECRET DATING LIVES OF YOUNG SAUDIS

In Saudi Arabia's rigid past, religious police once swooped down on rose sellers and anyone peddling red paraphernalia around Valentine's Day, but now a more open-albeit risky-dating culture is taking root. Pursuing relationships outside of marriage in the conservative Islamic kingdom once amounted to a death wish, and would-be Romeos resorted to pressing phone numbers up against their car window in hope of making contact with women. Now a sweeping liberalization drive—which has rendered the religious police toothless and allowed gender mixing like never before—has made it easier for young couples to meet in cafes and restaurants. Well-heeled millennials also hunt for romantic liaisons via Twitter and Snapchat, and apps such as Swarm—designed to log places the user visits but often repurposed to look for dates. “Selling red roses was like selling drugs,” one young Saudi filmmaker told AFP, sitting in a music-filled Riyadh cafe with his girlfriend while a courting couple gazed into each other's eyes on the next table.



A Saudi couple attending a football match at King Abdullah Sport City Stadium in Jeddah.

“Even this was once unthinkable—a woman sitting next to an unrelated man,” said the girlfriend, a media professional. “Now women are asking men out.” Pre-marital relationships remain a cultural minefield though in a country steeped in Islamic tradition and where matchmaking is typically overseen by family elders, forcing couples to keep unsanctioned romance under wraps. Covert dating operations illustrate how Saudi Arabia's mainly young population is often compelled to lead dual lives in the pursuit of social liberties that may outstrip the kingdom's capacity for change.

Secrets and lies

Samirah, a 27-year-old finance executive in the Saudi capital, felt a flutter of nerves when her boyfriend's mother stumbled upon

a handwritten birthday card and gift she gave him—and that risked her own family finding out. In a society where family honor is often tied to female chastity, the revelation would have provoked fury from her family and jeopardized their months-long courtship that began through common friends.

Her boyfriend managed to deflect his mother, but the scare prompted the young couple yearning for more freedom to plan a forbidden rendezvous—a long weekend in Dubai disguised as a business trip. “Saudi society is more open, but everyone lies about relationships because people are judgmental,” said Samirah, who like other interviewees requested that her real name be withheld.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the millennial heir to the Saudi throne, has loosened social norms in a seismic cultural shift away from hardline Islam, allowing cinemas and parties while reining in clerics opposed to events like Valentine's Day. In scenes unimaginable until just two years ago, women have been seen swaying on the shoulders of men at music concerts as the kingdom tears down the walls of sex segregation. But while the religious police have stepped back, the internal policing within Saudi families and society at large has not stopped, highlighting the limits of a Western-style liberalization drive in a deeply conservative country.

A Saudi woman in her late 20s told AFP she suspected her “control freak” brother, who works in the military, had deployed official spyware to track whether she was meeting men. “Young Saudis are caught between the old and new,” said Nour, another woman who works in social development. “Many suffer from the Madonna-whore complex. Just because you are willing to go on a date does not mean you have a loose character.”

‘Full of risks’

Saudi women also bridle at pervasive sexism in a society that—despite undergoing change particularly in urban areas—some say reduces them to their future role as wives and mothers. Sex outside of marriage remains a criminal offence in most of the Arab world, and the restrictions also fuel the risk of blackmail. “It is a big concern if you break up on bad terms,” said Samirah. “Women live in terror: What if he recorded photos and videos of me? What if he tells my father? What if he lands up at home?”

Modern romance is also perilous for men—getting a hotel room can cause huge anxiety as couples are often expected to prove they are married at check-in. Nasser, a 25-year-old advertising professional, said last year one of his friends was caught kissing his girlfriend inside a private booth in a Riyadh restaurant. The restaurant manager threw open the screens and started filming them while shouting: “This is haram!” or un-Islamic. “Sometimes the only safe place to date is in your car,” Nasser told AFP. “Dating is full of risks.” — AFP



The matchmaker of Beijing:

Grandfather plays cupid for generations

Zhu Fang's living room walls are plastered with hundreds of headshots of hopeful singles, some of them faded and featuring bouffant hairstyles and outdated outfits. For almost 50 years he has been one of Beijing's most popular matchmakers, and even now-aged 75 — he remains in as much demand as ever. In his time uniting lonely hearts, China has undergone dramatic social change. Marriage, which has traditionally been key in the patriarchal society, is in decline and the country's birth rate fell to its lowest level in 70 years in 2018.

But Zhu insists people are still looking for love, and his phone rings often with matchmaking requests. "It's meaningful, and that's why I've continued," he says, but concedes it is not a lucrative business, and he relies on the financial support of his children. Zhu says he's inspired by late Chairman Mao Zedong's political slogan, "Serve the People". "When I help others to find happiness, I also get some happiness myself," Zhu says. He charges a one-off 200 yuan (\$29) membership fee and his clients are mainly elderly people hoping to find spouses for their adult children. On a cold December morning, his from-home "office" is full of middle-aged parents huddling around binders of printed dating profiles, searching for a suitable son- or daughter-in-law. Retiree Huang Guiyun says she's worried about her widowed daughter. "We have our own house in Beijing, and she has money," Huang said. "Everything is going smoothly—except for the loneliness."

Love at first sight

Zhu's matchmaking career has spanned decades of breakneck economic growth and social change in China. When he first started out, China had not yet opened its economy to the rest of the world, and most of his clients were male factory workers. A few colleagues at his sandblasting factory in Beijing had approached Zhu to ask if he could introduce them to potential girlfriends. After a few successful matches, Zhu was hooked. "I thought it was fun, so I kept going, and now 50 years have passed."

He used to arrange dates "in parks, or on the roads or at stations." Zhu himself was introduced to his wife by a neighbor, and they married in 1969. "In the past people fell in love at first sight," he says. "I didn't think that deeply about it. I thought that as long as I could find someone to pass the days with it would be fine." As China has changed, Zhu has also noticed a big change in his clientele. He says that in recent years his clients have become more status-conscious and are often embarrassed about using a matchmaker. "Some (clients) work in the industrial and commerce bureau or tax bureau, and fear that others will say, with such a good job why do you need a matchmaker to help you find a boyfriend or girlfriend? In his time as matchmaker, Zhu has brought more than 1,700 couples together. But he admits that he can't find a partner for everyone, and "some photos have been up for a long time".

Women's world

There are far more women on Zhu's books now, but he says they have high standards. "They have three 'high's: they're highly educated, have high salaries, and they are tall," Zhu explains, adding they won't settle for anyone they deem unworthy. "Single women say, I'd rather have no boyfriend than have someone who's not good enough," he adds. "But no one is perfect," Zhu says. "If you don't have the right attitude, you'll never find someone." There's also a growing trend for intimacy on-demand, with some people opting for virtual boyfriends and girlfriends, so they can still have companionship without the pressures and commitments of real life dating.

And while China does not allow single women to use sperm



This photo shows matchmaker Zhu Fang smiling at his house with walls covered with images of single women who have come to him over the years in Beijing. —AFP photos



Photo shows matchmaker Zhu Fang (bottom center) talking to parents and grandparents of single people at his house in Beijing.



Photo shows the walls of the house of matchmaker Zhu Fang covered with the images of single women who have come to him over the years in Beijing.

donors, a growing number of affluent older women are opting to find foreign sperm donors so they can start a family in their own time, and on their own terms. Sandy To, a sociologist at the University of Hong Kong, said China's one-child policy—which was in force from 1979 to 2016 and limited the size of most families—has created "a generation of self-confident and resourceful women."

Dating apps and online agencies like Momo and Baihe have also taken off in China but Zhu believes his way is better. "No matter how good the internet becomes, I still don't trust it," he says. And his matchmaking club continues to attract clients hungry for face to face connection—of all ages. One woman, a septuagenarian, calls frequently to complain he has not found a partner for her yet. Joyce Gao, a finance professional in her early thirties and one of Zhu's clients, said she hopes to find an "energetic" man with "strong work ethic". At a recent group dating event organized by Zhu, she was the only single who had come on her own, without her parents. Gao says she still prefers Zhu's old-fashioned meetups to online dating. She says: "Offline, things are more real, and you can feel what someone is like." —AFP



Photo shows matchmaker Zhu Fang (right) talking to women taking part in a matchmaking event at a restaurant in Beijing.



Photo shows matchmaker Zhu Fang (second left) looking at notebooks with details of single people, at his house in Beijing.

No marriage, no problem: Indian apps offer couples privacy for a price

A new raft of Indian apps which offer rooms to unmarried couples are helping overturn traditional norms in a country where premarital sex remains taboo. From StayUncle and BreviStay, which offer hourly packages, to Softbank-funded Oyo, which allows users to search for couple-friendly hotels via its 'Relationship Mode', young entrepreneurs are tapping into a previously neglected market to lucrative effect. The development is good news for Pooja, a Mumbai-based PR executive who tried to check in to a hotel with her then boyfriend in 2016 and found that the romantic experience quickly turned ugly as staff enquired about her marital status.



In this photo a staff member arranges a packet of 'love kit' as he prepares a room at the Dragonfly hotel in Mumbai. — AFP photos

"I could feel them judging me," Pooja, whose name has been changed on her request, told AFP. Stung by their questions, she decided to lie. "We were both above 18 — they had no reason to deny us a room, but it was all just so awkward," she said. Her experience is not unusual in a country where many people live with their parents until they marry—either because of high housing costs or conservative cultural norms—leaving courting couples desperate for a shred of privacy.

On any given evening in Mumbai, dozens of canoodling love-birds can be spotted along the city's famous seafront, their backs to the slow-moving traffic as they seek out personal space in the world's second-most populous nation. Sometimes the consequences can be dangerous: police raid hotels and demand bribes from unmarried guests, while Hindu hardliners attack couples celebrating 'Western' holidays like Valentine's Day.

'Supply and demand'

"People have a hard time accepting the idea that being in a relationship is a natural thing," said Rahul Taneja, co-founder of LuvStay, one of several apps seeking to shake up the hospitality industry with services aimed at unmarried couples. "It is a simple

case of supply and demand. The rooms are there, the customers are there: the challenge is to bring them together," LuvStay's 29-year-old Taneja told AFP. StayUncle founder Sanchit Sethi initially planned to target business travellers with his app focusing on hourly rentals but when he began fielding enquiries from couples he realized he was targeting the wrong customer.

Soon the former engineer found himself handing out business cards to young people hanging out in coffee shops—advertising his new venture with the tagline: "Couples need a room not judgment". When the app went live in 2016, hardline groups threatened to beat up Sethi and his colleagues, but "no one ever went beyond a phone call", the 30-year-old told AFP. Getting hoteliers on board proved a tougher sell, with many worried about police raids and offending the sensibilities of traditional clients.

In one case, a hotelier signed up only to get cold feet and refuse guests at check-in, prompting Sethi to decide that he would not spend any more time trying to "convince reluctant hotels". He need not have worried, given the soaring demand. The app currently has 800 hotels in 45 towns and cities and plans to add another 1,500 by the end of the year. And it's not shy about pursuing new customers, with a YouTube channel offering dating advice to anxious singles. At nearly 700 hotels, LuvStay is not far behind, with ambitions to raise that number to 2,000 within three years. So-called love hotels are also popular in Japan and South Korea, with couples either seeking extramarital liaisons or private time away from demanding families.

Love kits

Mumbai's Sahar Garden hotel, which signed up with StayUncle in 2018, said the tie-up added 150,000 rupees (\$2,100) to their coffers each month as bookings surged. "Business just keeps going up," said Satya Shankar Rao, the hotel's sales and marketing manager. With free StayUncle-branded 'Love Kits' in each room—a silky red pouch containing condoms, lubricant and chocolate—and staff under strict instructions to respect unmarried guests, the hotel has seen repeat business, according to Rao.

Sunil Kyal, sales director of Mumbai's Dragonfly boutique hotel, which is preparing for a boom in bookings ahead of Valentine's Day on Friday, told AFP that StayUncle's success reflected a generational shift. "People used to feel that it's a sin or it is not right (to be in a relationship before marriage)," he said, remarking on changing beliefs. For young women like PR executive Pooja, 27, the apps are "a blessing". "We can't expect Indian society to grow up overnight," she said, adding: "But I hope that in the future we don't need such apps." — AFP

World's oldest man crowned in Japan aged 112

A 112-year-old Japanese man has been crowned the world's oldest male, claiming that smiling is the key to longevity. Chitetsu Watanabe, who was born on March 5, 1907 in Nigata, north of Tokyo, was officially given the title at his nursing home in the city, Guinness World Records said Wednesday. The previous record holder, Masazo Nonaka, also Japanese, died last month at 112 years and 266 days. Watanabe, who is married with five children, said the secret to longevity is to "not get angry and keep a smile on your face." He admitted a penchant for sweets such as custard pudding—but it appears to have done him no harm.

The oldest living person is also Japanese, Kane Tanaka, a 117-year-old woman. Japan has one of the world's highest life expectancies and has been home to several people recognized as



In this handout picture Japanese Chitetsu Watanabe, aged 112, poses next to the calligraphy reading in Japanese 'World Number One'. — AFP

among the oldest humans to have ever lived. They include Jiroemon Kimura, the longest-living man on record, who died soon after his 116th birthday in June 2013. The oldest verified person ever—Jeanne Louise Calment of France—died in 1997 at the age of 122, according to Guinness. — AFP



Bronze sculptures adorned with woolen hat and scarf to 'guard against the cold' are displayed in the garden of the National Art Museum of Romania (MNAR) in Bucharest, Romania. — AFP photos

Statues in winter woolies as Romanian museum bids to aid homeless

Statues at Romania's national art museum sported colorful hats and scarves Wednesday as part of an "appeal against indifference" towards homelessness in one of the EU's poorest member states. The winter woolies adorned a dozen bronze sculptures in the garden of the National Art Museum of Romania (MNAR) in the campaign set to run through February. "A museum must protect works of art but also people, especially those in need," museum director Liviu Constantinescu told AFP. The goal is to "send an artistic message but also an appeal against indifference," Constantinescu added.

The "Sheltered by Art" exhibit in the former royal residence in central Bucharest includes information panels on how to help the homeless. "We will stop to admire a sculpture, but when we encounter a homeless person we pass by quickly, often visibly annoyed," reads a write-up about the initiative on the museum's website. No official estimates of the number of homeless among Romania's nearly 20 million people are available, but activists say several thousand are affected in the capital alone. "Their number remains almost unchanged: some of them reintegrate, but new ones arrive," said Sabina Nicolae, head of Samusocial Romania, which co-organized the exhibit. The group helps around 1,600 homeless people a year, including families with young children. — AFP



Dogg apologizes for attacking TV anchor over Bryant story

Rapper Snoop Dogg apologized on Wednesday for an obscenity-laced tirade in which he appeared to threaten a CBS news anchor over an interview about late basketball star Kobe Bryant. Snoop Dogg's harangue on social media had followed an interview that "CBS This Morning" anchor Gayle King had with former women's basketball star Lisa Leslie which referenced a 2003 sexual abuse allegation against Bryant. "Two wrongs don't make no right. When you're wrong, you gotta fix it," Snoop Dogg said in an Instagram video apologizing for his outburst.

"So with that being said, Gayle King, I publicly tore you down by coming at you in a derogatory manner based off of emotions, me being angry at questions that you asked," Snoop Dogg said, adding that he "overreacted" to the interview. "I should have handled it way different than that—I was raised way better than that. So I would like to apologize to you publicly for the language that I used and calling you out of your name and just being disrespectful." Snoop Dogg said he felt he had to defend his friend Bryant. "A lot of people look up to me and they love me ... so I want to let them know that anytime you mess up, it's OK to fix it, it's OK to man up and say that you're wrong," he said. "I apologize. Hopefully we can sit down and talk privately. Have a good day." Bryant died, along



In this file photo Rapper Snoop Dogg attends the 21st Annual InStyle And Warner Bros Pictures Golden Globe After-Party in Beverly Hills, California. —AFP photos

with his daughter and seven other people, in a helicopter crash on January 26 in California. Since then, references to the 2003 sexual abuse allegation against him have drawn a



In this file photo Gayle King speaks during the 62nd Grammy Awards Nominations Conference at CBS Broadcast Center in New York City.

furious reaction from fans. After her interview, King received multiple death threats, according to her good friend, media mega-star Oprah Winfrey. —AFP

The elite S Korean businesswoman behind Oscar-winning Parasite

The woman who stepped up to make the final acceptance speech when Bong Joon-ho's satire Parasite—about the gap between rich and poor—won the Oscar for Best Picture is herself a member of South Korea's wealthiest family. Miky Lee, an heiress turned media mogul, is the executive producer of the first non-English-language film to secure the Academy Awards' top prize in their 92-year history. The film has been praised at home and abroad for its critique of inequality, but Lee is the granddaughter of Lee Byung-chul, the founder of the giant Samsung group—by far the largest of the family-controlled, often-controversial conglomerates known as chaebol that dominate business in the world's 12th-largest economy.

She is the vice chairwoman of the CJ Group, a food and entertainment giant that was spun out of Samsung in the 1990s as the empire was divided between different arms of the family. Chaebol families are often intimately connected with South Korea's political class, and her cousin is Lee Jae-yong, the Samsung Electronics vice-chairman currently on trial for bribing former president Park Geun-hye in a corruption scandal that saw her ousted from power. But Miky Lee herself was secretly blacklisted by Park's conservative government after she invested in a film based on the life of left-leaning president Roh Moo-hyun.

A diminutive Harvard graduate, she is known as a cinematic connoisseur, with previous collaborations with Bong including "Memories of Murder" (2003), "Mother" (2009), and the Tilda Swinton-starring "Snowpiercer" (2013). Among those she praised in her Oscars speech were Korean filmmakers, who she said "never hesitated to give us straightforward opinion", driving directors and creators to "keep pushing the envelopes". She also thanked her brother, the CJ chairman Lee Jay-Hyun—a controversial figure who was convicted in 2014 on charges ranging from embezzlement to tax evasion.

Her address "ultimately made for a very meta ending to Parasite's award season," said Keung Yoon Bae, a PhD candidate researching film and media at Harvard University. "It speaks to the parasitic relationship Korea as a whole has with

chaebol conglomerates," she told AFP. "The films pointing out the broken system are made within that system themselves."

DreamWorks deal

The unprecedented Oscars haul for "Parasite" is the culmination of a corporate push into Hollywood that Lee has spearheaded for years. In 1995 she invested \$300 million in the DreamWorks studio as it was set up by Hollywood heavyweights including Steven Spielberg.

She is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the powerful organization that awards the Oscars, and has connections throughout showbusiness in the US, where she moved after her blacklisting. Lee supervises CJ ENM, one of the South's biggest media groups, which has operations in television, K-pop, film studios and multiplexes, subsidiaries in at least six countries, and a market capitalization of 3.7 trillion won (\$3 billion). —AFP



(From left) Executive producers Min Heoi Heo and Miky Lee accept the Best Picture award for "Parasite" during the 92nd Annual Academy Awards at Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California. —AFP



Photo shows Rose McGowan (right) and Natalie Portman.

McGowan blasts Portman Oscars cape

US actress and #MeToo activist Rose McGowan has dismissed as a "fraud" Natalie Portman's Oscar dress embroidered with the names of female filmmakers overlooked for best director nominations. In a post on Facebook, the actress said she found Portman's red carpet Oscar protest "deeply offensive to those of us who actually do the work." "I'm not writing this out of bitterness," she added. "I am writing this out of disgust."

McGowan said that while the black Dior cape stitched with the names of the snubbed directors got "rave reviews from the mainstream media" it was nothing more than "an actress acting the part of someone who cares." "Natalie, you have worked with two female directors in your very long career—one of them was you," McGowan wrote. "You have a production company that has hired exactly one female director—you." In a statement to AFP, Portman agreed with McGowan that she didn't deserve to be called brave. "I agree with Ms McGowan that it is inaccurate to call me 'brave' for wearing a garment with women's names on it," Portman said. "Brave is a term I more strongly associate with actions like those of the women who have been testifying against Harvey Weinstein the last few weeks, under incredible pressure," she added in a reference to the disgraced Hollywood mogul on trial in New York charged with predatory sexual assault. —AFP

Celebs, rugs and rock 'n' roll: New York Fashion Week highlights



Models walk the runway for Gabriela Hearst during New York Fashion Week.



Debbie Harrys attends the Coach 1941 fashion show during New York Fashion Week.

From recycled cashmere and protective clothing for uncertain times to singer Debbie Harry and tennis star Maria Sharapova, AFP takes a look at the latest highlights from New York Fashion Week.

Dressing responsibly

Gabriela Hearst cemented her reputation as the flag-bearer of high-end responsible fashion with a stunning fall-winter collection that focused on sustainability at New York Fashion week Tuesday. Hearst's designs were all made from natural fibers, including recycled cashmere and remnants of antique Turkish rugs that were pieced together to form long coats. Many of the sweaters, cardigans, shawls and dresses had been hand knitted by Manos del Uruguay, a non-profit cooperative of female artisans from Hearst's home country.

The collection had a distinctly 1970s vibe with hand-painted leather coats and designs chosen from mandalas or abstract shapes asso-

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ciated with dreams. Any carbon footprint from the show will be offset via a donation to a project that aims to save the Cardamom forest in Cambodia. "True luxury is knowing where everything comes from and how it is made," said Hearst, who grew up on a sheep farm in Uruguay.

Vera Wang's ace

Tennis star Maria Sharapova served up a celebrity appearance in all black at Vera Wang's show held in a plush Upper East Side mansion just off Central Park Tuesday. The multiple grand slam winner sat front row alongside Vogue editor-in-chief Anna Wintour and English fashion journalist Hamish Bowles. Models glanced at themselves in the grand residence's elaborate mirrors as they walked through the house's various rooms wearing black silk chiffon paired with thick platform heels.

Seventy-year-old Wang's evening wear also included a neon yellow French tulle corset and a green floral featherweight stretch long sleeve bodysuit. "I wanted to bring a kind of importance but a lack of formality, a kind of ease, youth, charm and delicacy to the evening," Wang told AFP.

Debbie Harry in NY tribute

Rocker Debbie Harry rolled back the years as Coach 1941 paid tribute to New York's past, present and future Tuesday. The Blondie lead singer, 74, performed alongside Atlanta band The Coathangers as they added a 1970s touch to a collection that celebrated "New York's unique creative energy."

More than six years after taking over as creative director, British designer Stuart Vevers continues to evolve Coach, which will notch its 80th anniversary next year. After shifting to a more urban collection last season, Vevers accelerated that movement with a distinctly vintage streetwear look this time around.

The flat sneakers, large socks and hipster hats were straight from the streets of Brooklyn while several designs were inspired by the paintings of local artist Jean-Michel Basquiat. "New York was the ultimate muse for this collection," Vevers told AFP.

Gigi Hadid

If jury selection had gone differently than US model Gigi Hadid would have been in court for Harvey Weinstein's rape trial instead of walking the runway for Proenza Schouler Monday. Hadid, 24, was last month excused from serving as one of the jurors in the high-profile case owing to her fame after appearing for the first round of pre-screening. On Monday, she lined up for Proenza Schouler's 2020 fall-winter collection, which, after a spring show that evoked the 1980s, approached the present and near future head-on.

The New York duo of Lazaro Hernandez and Jack McCollough showcased a series of large, thick coats complemented by big shawls, designed to provide protection in an "unpredictable decade." "For us it's always a mood, an attitude. We just take it from the world around us," Hernandez told AFP, following the late Monday show. "Things are falling off, falling apart, unraveling but then held together. It's just like how people feel right now," he added. New York Fashion Week ended Wednesday. —AFP



Models walk the runway in Coach 1941 fashion show during New York Fashion Week at Spring Studios in New York City. —AFP



Model Gigi Hadid walks the runway for the Proenza Schouler fashion show.

Dreamers and Dracula

as New York Fashion Week draws to a close

From Michael Kors' snug knitwear to Rodarte's nod to Count Dracula, AFP wraps up the latest highlights from New York Fashion Week, which ended on Wednesday.

Chic wool

Michael Kors reminded everyone to stay warm during the winter months with a "cozy glamor" 2020 collection on Wednesday that mixed comfort with chic. Thick knitted sweaters, cashmere ribbed turtlenecks and herringbone tweed skirts evoked curling up beside a log cabin fire with a mug of hot cocoa. Languid silhouettes, ponchos, mufflers and flat riding boots all featured as the 60-year-old US designer mixed town and country feels. Canadian country music star Orville Peck played live, and actresses Julia Louis-Dreyfus and Blake Lively sat front row at the show, which took place in the American Stock Exchange.

Rodarte

Sisters Kate and Laura Mulleavy had brought their label Rodarte to New York Fashion Week just once since September 2016, opting instead to showcase in Paris and Los Angeles. On Monday, they were back, reminding everyone that—along with Marc Jacobs—they are arguably the closest thing the United States has to haute couture.

At St Bartholomew's Church, the Mulleavys put on a masterful show imbued with the solemnity of the venue that added a Gothic touch and a wink in the direction of Count Dracula. Embroidered crystals, pearls, flowers, hand-painted elements and sequins added a finesse that is sometimes hard to find in ready-to-wear collections. Black lipstick and embroidered cobwebs recalled Dracula and the Gothic style. The parade started "in a very innocent place," with a 1940s polka dot dress worn by supermodel Bella Hadid, and then journeyed "into the unknown," Kate Mulleavy told reporters afterwards. "I like the idea of something seeming very sweet and not necessarily being sweet," she added.

'Misfits, dreamers'

Singapore-born and Nepal-raised designer Prabal Gurung paid tribute to his adopted home of New York with a show on the 65th floor of the famed Rockefeller Center late Tuesday. From eclectic dresses paired with boas and stoles to animal print trousers and thick jackets with white feathers, the collection reflected the mish-mash that is America's largest city. "Tonight I pay tribute to all of you, New Yorkers by name or soul, a cocktail of eight million people," 40-year-old Gurung wrote in the collection notes. "The daring. The misfits. The free. The beautiful, bold, impossible dreamers." —AFP



Models walk the runway at the Rodarte show during New York Fashion Week: The Shows on February in New York City. —AFP



— KUNA photos

Kiteboarding... Harnessed sport for unharnessed thrill

Kiteboarding is a challenging extreme sport that depends mainly on the wind at any season of the year as it is the utmost vital factor to have when up in the air. The kiteboarder combines surfing with paragliding

and other sports, doing tricks and spectacular movements in mid-air for enthusiasts to watch captivating shows on Kuwait's beaches.

Since there are no training centers in Kuwait, thrill-seekers travel abroad to

obtain certificates and expertise from specialized organizations. A team of professionals established a center to train those who wish to practice it, giving them the skills that will allow them to enter international tournaments. — KUNA





Coffee with milk.— www.196flavors.com

A guide to

Vietnamese coffee

Strong and flavorful Vietnamese coffee makes converts as quickly as it raises pulses. French colonists might have introduced coffee to Vietnam, but the morning cup of *ca phe* soon became a local habit. With variations that make use of yoghurt, eggs and even fruit, Vietnamese coffee has developed a style of its own.

The secrets of Vietnamese coffee

The preparation process, as well as the blend of beans, helps give Vietnamese coffee its particular style. Most of the Vietnamese coffee bean plantations are located in the area of Da Lat, nicely nicknamed ‘Europe of Vietnam’ because of its fresher climate and hilly landscape. Most of the tea, coffee and even the flowers sold across the country are originally grown there in the south.

But what makes Vietnamese coffee so flavorful? Some will argue it’s the filter drip, but the traditional roasting way actually makes for its special intense taste: the Vietnamese can roast it with rice wine, a pinch of salt, and butter. This last ingredient is the reason why slow-drip coffee in Vietnam can sport a slight oily texture. Some roasteries add flavors such as chocolate or caramel, all very much to the taste of local coffee drinkers.

Coarsely ground beans go into a French drip filter (called a *phin*), which sits on top of the cup. The beans are weighted down with a thin lid, hot water is added to the *phin*, and then the water slowly trickles through into the cup. This operation should be repeated at least twice before the drip actually produces enough coffee to be enjoyed.



Yoghurt coffee.
— Image by Elisabeth Rosen

Different types of coffee in Vietnam

In Vietnam, coffee has long overtaken its nature of simple drink. Below are some of the most famous recipes you can try while traveling across the country. Far from being fancy, it is common to find many of them in most traditional coffee places.

Coffee with milk (*ca phe nau* or *ca phe sua*)

Most people drink the dark, strong brew with sweetened condensed milk, a practice that began because the French couldn’t easily acquire fresh milk. Up to this day, fresh milk is not a common ingredient found in traditional coffee shops. You could ask but shouldn’t count on it. In the north of Vietnam, the mixture of



A rich and frothy egg coffee. — Image by Elisabeth Rosen



An avocado-and-coffee shake.— Image by Elisabeth Rosen

black coffee and sweetened condensed milk is referred to as ca phe nau (brown coffee), while in the south it's called ca phe sua (milk coffee). While it is mostly served cold with ice, you can also order it hot.

Yoghurt coffee (sua chua ca phe)

Like coffee, yoghurt was originally brought to Vietnam by the French and has been adopted into local culinary tradition. Rich and creamy, it's served with various toppings, from fresh mango to fermented rice - and even coffee. This might sound like an odd combination, but the rich yoghurt pairs amazingly well with a drizzle of black coffee - just stir and sip.

Egg coffee (ca phe trung)

Egg yolk whipped with condensed milk into an airy froth meets dark coffee in this rich concoction: think of it as a Vietnamese take on tiramisu. A Hanoi invention, egg coffee first made the scene in the 1940s, when milk was scarce and egg yolks provided a convenient replacement. Caffè Giang in Hanoi's Old Quarter, where it was invented, still serves the egg coffee but other places now offer their own recipe - sometimes even bettering the original!

Coconut coffee (ca phe cot dua)

It is unsure whether this is a traditional recipe or if it was invented by the Cong Caphe chain of boho coffee shops. What is certain however is that it's become a favorite among the trendy Vietnamese youth in the past couple of years. Black coffee with a tear of condensed milk is mixed with coconut milk and blended with ice in a sort of shake. A more regular version served in some local shops presents a base of ca phe nau (brown coffee) mixed with coconut milk and fresh milk.

Coffee smoothie (sinh to ca phe)

In recent years, coffee has even found its way into smoothies. Popular juice shops perk up creamy blends of fresh fruit with a touch of Vietnamese coffee, sometimes tossing in yoghurt or cashews. In Hanoi, try sinh to ca phe chui bo (coffee blended with banana and avocado). In Ho Chi Minh, go for sinh to ca phe sapoche (coffee blended with sapodilla, a tropical fruit with a custard-like taste). Both are delicious ways to get your caffeine fix and your vitamins at the same time.





Coconut coffee. — rentabikevn.com

Where to drink the best Vietnamese coffee

Hanoi remains the undisputed center of cafe culture in Vietnam. While modern-style coffee shops have grown in popularity, traditional sidewalk cafes still fill up from morning to night with drinkers of all ages, who linger for hours over a single glass. However, you can find quality coffee all over Vietnam.

Singling out only a few places does not do justice to the extensive Vietnamese cafe culture, but below are some addresses that remain landmarks in the two main cities:

For the experience: Trieu Viet Vuong

Known as ‘Coffee Street’, this stretch of Hanoi’s historic Hai Ba Trung District might contain more cafes per block than anywhere else in Vietnam, ranging from family-run shops to more fashionable places popular with teenagers. Hanoian favorite Cafe Tho (117 Trieu Viet Vuong), which has been here for three decades, brews a powerful cup that still draws consistent crowds.

For dessert: Cafe Giang

No trip to Hanoi is complete without a taste of egg coffee at the place it was invented. Cafe Giang (39 Nguyen Huu Huan), on the edge of Hanoi’s Old Quarter, was the first to begin whipping up this drink/dessert in the 1940s. Since then the atmosphere has changed as little as the recipe. While the tiny stools here might not be the most comfortable, the drink itself is top notch. Those who don’t drink coffee can sample the egg foam with sweetened mung beans or cocoa.

For the view: Cafe Pho Co

Accessed via an entrance concealed in the back of a shop, a spiral staircase leads up to Hanoi’s Cafe Pho Co and a stunning view of Hoan Kiem Lake. From the quiet balcony overlooking the lake and surrounding streets, you can enjoy a coffee while watching the seemingly never-ending stream of traffic pass by.

For a blast from the past: Cafe La Tamia

A retro cafe in Ho Chi Minh City, La Tamia (38/05 Tran Khac Chan) offers visitors a glimpse into old Saigon. Relax on a vintage sofa or browse the cafe owner’s collection of antique TVs and gramophones while enjoying your iced coffee.

Drink coffee like a local in Vietnam

A few coffee-drinking tips for your Vietnam trip:

Milky way Don’t even try to ask for decaf. If you prefer your coffee mild, do as the Vietnamese do and order ca phe bac xiu, coffee with lots of extra condensed milk. This will also taste like coffee ice cream and will be a delight for your (very) sweet tooth.

Sweet spot As condensed milk is sweetened, there is no white coffee without sugar. True coffee connoisseurs should opt for ca phe den (black coffee). A touch of sugar will bring out the complex flavors, just as it does with dark chocolate. However, if you want to ensure that your drink isn’t too sweet, ask for it duong (less sugar).



Avoid hunger Cafes in Vietnam don’t typically serve food although some newer cafes do offer quick eats. It is therefore accepted to bring your own snacks and eat on the spot, but you’re better off following the local custom of eating first and then heading to a cafe to relax. In a pinch, you can always nibble on hat huong duong (sunflower seeds). www.lonelyplanet.com

This article was originally published on June 2015 and was updated in February 2020 by Fabienne Fong Yan



Comic

Word Search

Movie Actresses 2

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 Louise Fletcher won an Oscar.

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

- BATES, Kathy

BINOCHÉ, Juliette

BRESLIN, Abigail

BULLOCK, Sandra

BURSTYN, Ellen

CLARKSON, Patricia

CRUZ, Penelope

DELPY, Julie

DESCHANEL, Zoë

DUNST, Kirsten

FARMIGA, Vera

FLETCHER, Louise

HAYEK, Salma

HEIGL, Katherine

HUDSON, Kate
- JOHANSSON, Scarlett

KIDMAN, Nicole

KNIGHTLEY, Keira

LINNEY, Laura

LOHANE, Lindsay

MACLAINE, Shirley

MCADAMS, Rachel

MOORE, Julianne

PFEIFFER, Michelle

PORTMAN, Natalie

REID, Tara

ROBERTS, Julia

RYDER, Winona

SARANDON, Susan

SMITH, Maggie
- SPACEK, Sissy

STEENBURGEN, Mary

STEWART, Kristen

STREEP, Meryl

SWINTON, Tilda

THURMAN, Uma

TOMEI, Marisa

WALTERS, Julie

WATTS, Naomi

WEAVER, Sigourney

WEISZ, Rachel

WINSLET, Kate

WITHERSPOON, Reese

ZELLWEGER, Renee

Yesterday's Solution

Movie Actresses 1

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

- 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

LONG, Jessica

MCDORMAND, Frances

MIRREN, Helen

MOORE, Demi

PALTROW, Gwyneth

PAQUIN, Anna

RICCI, Christina

SWANK, Hilary

THERON, Charlize

THOMPSON, Emma

WATSON, Emily

The hidden movie title is: THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

Crossword 2436

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15				16						17			
18				19			20		21				
22						23		24					
		25			26		27	28					
29	30			31					32		33	34	
35		36		37			38	39			40		
41			42		43		44	45		46			
47			48				49	50		51	52		
53		54					55			56			
57					58	59				60			
				61					62				
63	64		65		66		67	68			69	70	
71					72		73			74			
75				76	77				78		79		
80				81							82		

ACROSS

1. A short labored intake of breath with the mouth open.

5. A computerized data system to provide brokers with price quotations for securities traded over the counter.

11. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.

15. Predatory black-and-white toothed whale with large dorsal fin.

16. Brass that looks like gold.

17. A member of the North American Indian people living in southern Arizona and northern Mexico.

18. The basic unit of money in Paraguay.

20. A parenteral cephalosporin (trade names Fortaz and Tazicef) used to treat moderate infections.

22. A flask that holds spirits.

24. (linguistics) Of speech sounds.

25. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.

26. Of or relating to or shaped like a toroid.

29. A soft yellow malleable ductile (trivalent and univalent) metallic element.

32. Small tropical American tree bearing edible plumlike fruit.

35. Any tropical African shrub of the genus Protea having alternate rigid leaves and dense colorful flower heads resembling cones.

38. A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.

40. In operation or operational.

41. A gradual decline (in size or strength or power or number).

42. Any shape that is triangular in cross section.

45. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
46. The compass point that is one point east (clockwise) of due north.

47. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.

49. Indian religious leader who founded Sikhism (1469-1538).

52. A midwestern state in north central United States.

53. Of or relating to the enteron.

55. Regarded with aversion.

57. (in Gnosticism) A divine power or nature emanating from the Supreme Being and playing various roles in the operation of the universe.

58. The address where a person lives.

60. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.

63. A sudden numbing dread.

66. English statesman and son of Pitt the Elder (1759-1806).

71. Take in, also metaphorically.

72. Thin fibrous bark of the paper mulberry and Pipturus albidus.

74. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.

75. French cabaret singer (1915-1963).

76. A city in southwestern Russia in a valley of the Caucasus Mountains.

79. A barrier constructed to contain the flow or water or to keep out the sea.

80. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.

81. The act of restricting your food intake (or your intake of particular foods).

82. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. Dutch postimpressionist painter noted for his use of color (1853-1890).

2. Wild sheep of northern Africa.

3. Erect leafless flower stalk growing directly from the ground as in a tulip.

4. Layers of ice cream and syrup and whipped cream.

5. The Fate who spins the thread of life.

6. Bristlelike process near the tip of the antenna of certain flies.

7. A gray lustrous metallic element of the rare earth group.

8. An uproarious party.

9. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).

10. Having some resemblance.

11. Southwestern Asian plant widely cultivated for its succulent edible dark green leaves.

12. Stout-bodied insect with large membranous wings.

13. A primeval personification of air and breath.

14. Informal or slang terms for mentally irregular.

19. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.

21. Relating to or included in the zodiac.

23. An ancient Hebrew unit of capacity equal to 10 baths or 10 ephahs.

27. A state in New England.

28. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.

30. Showing a high degree of refinement and the assurance that comes from wide social experience.
31. English monk and scholar (672-735).

33. Filaments from a cobweb.

34. A member of the Iroquoian people formerly living east of Lake Ontario.

36. A Russian river.

37. An open vessel with a handle and a spout for pouring.

39. A large and imposing house.

43. The basic unit of money in Gambia.

44. (prefix) Within.

48. (in Scotland or Ireland) A mountain or tall hill.

50. An officer who acts as military assistant to a more senior officer.

51. Of people.

54. A gate or bar across a toll bridge or toll road which is lifted when the toll is paid.

56. A Dravidian language spoken in southern India.

59. A hostile meeting of opposing military forces in the course of a war.

61. become turned or set on end.

62. A state in the Rocky Mountains.

64. Type genus of the Amiidae.

65. A characteristic state or mode of living.

67. Consideration in dealing with others and avoiding giving offence.

68. A quantity that is added.

69. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.

70. God of love and erotic desire.

73. The 21st letter of the Greek alphabet.

77. The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.

78. One thousand grams.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

			1	7		6		2			
			3					7	8		
						9	4	3			
				4	1		7		2		
2		7			6	3					
	5	4	3								
3	8						9				
	7		2		4	1					

Yesterday's Solution

6	1	5	2	8	9	4	7	3			
7	4	8	5	3	6	9	1	2			
9	2	3	4	1	7	8	6	5			
2	6	9	3	7	4	5	8	1			
5	8	1	6	9	2	3	4	7			
3	7	4	8	5	1	2	9	6			
4	3	7	1	2	8	6	5	9			
8	9	2	7	6	5	1	3	4			
1	5	6	9	4	3	7	2	8			

TV Listings



01:30 The Big Take
03:00 Men In Black II
04:30 Beverly Hills Cop 3
06:15 Solo: A Star Wars Story
08:25 Men In Black II
09:55 Independence Day
12:15 Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time
14:10 A Knight's Tale
16:20 X-Men: The Last Stand
18:00 Men In Black 3
19:50 Kingsman: The Secret Service
22:00 Trespass



00:00 The First 48
01:00 Homicide Hunter
02:00 PD Cam
02:25 PD Cam
02:55 Ghost Hunters
03:45 It Takes A Killer
04:10 It Takes A Killer
04:30 Live PD: Police Patrol
04:55 Live PD: Police Patrol
05:15 The First 48
05:55 Homicide Hunter
06:40 Homicide: Hours To Kill
07:30 It Takes A Killer
08:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
08:25 Homicide Hunter
09:10 Homicide Hunter
09:55 The First 48
10:45 The First 48
11:40 Homicide: Hours To Kill
12:35 The First 48
13:30 Crimes That Shook Britain
14:25 Live PD: Police Patrol
14:55 Live PD: Police Patrol
15:25 Homicide Hunter
16:20 Homicide Hunter
17:15 Homicide: Hours To Kill
18:10 Live PD: Police Patrol
18:40 Live PD: Police Patrol
19:10 Live PD: Police Patrol
19:40 Live PD: Police Patrol
20:05 It Takes A Killer
20:35 It Takes A Killer
21:05 The First 48
22:00 Homicide Hunter
23:00 Crimes That Shook Britain



00:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
00:25 Impractical Jokers
00:50 50 Central
01:15 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
01:40 Comedy Get Down
02:05 Friends
02:30 Friends
02:55 Lip Sync Battle
03:20 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
03:45 Comedy Get Down
04:10 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
04:35 Lip Sync Battle
05:00 Friends
05:25 Friends
05:50 Friends
06:20 Friends
06:45 Friends
07:10 Impractical Jokers
07:35 Impractical Jokers
08:00 Impractical Jokers
08:30 Impractical Jokers
08:55 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
09:20 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
09:50 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
10:15 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
10:40 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
11:05 Friends
11:30 Friends
11:55 Friends
12:20 Friends
12:45 Friends
13:10 Key And Peele
13:35 Key And Peele
14:00 Awkward

14:30 Awkward
15:00 Awkward
15:25 Awkward
15:50 Awkward
16:15 Friendzone
16:40 Friendzone
17:10 Friendzone
17:35 Friendzone
18:00 Friendzone
18:30 Friends
19:00 Friends
19:30 Friends
20:00 Friends
20:30 Friends
21:00 Friends
21:30 Friends
22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
22:30 DL Hugley: Shocked And Appalled
23:30 Roast Battle UK



00:00 People Magazine Investigations
01:00 Relatively Evil
02:00 Shattered
03:00 Homicide City
04:00 Homicide City
04:45 Homicide City
05:30 Reasonable Doubt
06:20 Nightmare Next Door
07:10 Murder Comes To Town
08:00 Shadow Of Doubt
08:55 Shadow Of Doubt
09:50 Scene Of The Crime With Tony Harris
10:45 Last Night In...
11:40 Nightmare Next Door
12:35 Reasonable Doubt
13:30 Reasonable Doubt
14:25 Murder Comes To Town
15:20 Killer Instinct With Chris Hansen
16:15 Killer Instinct With Chris Hansen
17:10 Nightmare Next Door
18:05 Impact Of Murder
19:00 Impact Of Murder
20:00 Murder In The Heartland
21:00 Murder In The Heartland
22:00 Your Worst Nightmare
23:00 Primal Instinct



00:10 Evermoor Chronicles
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Alex & Co.
01:25 Alex & Co.
01:50 Evermoor Chronicles
02:15 Evermoor Chronicles
02:40 Alex & Co.
03:05 Binny And The Ghost
03:30 Binny And The Ghost
03:55 Evermoor Chronicles
04:20 Evermoor Chronicles
04:45 Alex & Co.
05:10 Alex & Co.
05:35 Violetta
06:25 Binny And The Ghost
06:45 Rolling With The Ronks
06:50 Rolling With The Ronks
07:00 Shake It Up
07:25 Raven's Home
07:50 Disney Mickey Mouse
07:55 Bunk'd
08:20 Stuck In The Middle
08:45 K.C. Undercover
09:10 Bizaardvark
09:35 Jessie
10:00 Jessie
10:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
10:50 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
11:15 Bizaardvark
11:40 Bizaardvark
12:05 Liv And Maddie
12:30 Liv And Maddie
12:55 K.C. Undercover
13:20 K.C. Undercover
13:45 Bunk'd
14:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
14:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
15:00 Shake It Up

15:25 Shake It Up
15:50 A.N.T. Farm
16:15 A.N.T. Farm
16:40 Bizaardvark
17:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
17:10 Amphibia
17:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
18:00 Raven's Home
18:25 Raven's Home
18:50 Raven's Home
19:15 Raven's Home
19:40 Stuck In The Middle
20:05 K.C. Undercover
20:30 Shake It Up
20:55 Shake It Up
21:20 Liv And Maddie
21:45 Liv And Maddie
22:10 Jessie
22:35 Jessie
23:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
23:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
23:50 Lolirock



00:00 PJ Masks
00:15 PJ Masks
00:30 The Lion Guard
01:00 Sofia The First
01:25 Music Lullabies
01:30 Gigantosaurus
02:00 PJ Masks
02:30 PJ Masks
03:00 Zou
03:15 Zou
03:30 Henry Hugglemonster
04:00 Henry Hugglemonster
04:30 Paprika
04:40 Zou
04:55 Zou
05:10 Zou
05:25 Paprika
05:35 Paprika
05:45 Henry Hugglemonster
06:00 Gigantosaurus
06:30 PJ Masks
06:45 PJ Masks
07:00 PJ Masks
07:15 PJ Masks
07:30 Gigantosaurus
07:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons
08:00 The Lion Guard
08:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
09:00 Vampirina
09:30 Bluey
09:40 Bluey
09:50 Bluey
10:00 Sofia The First
10:30 Elena Of Avalor
11:00 Fancy Nancy Clancy
11:30 Bluey
11:40 Bluey
11:50 Bluey
12:00 Vampirina
12:30 PJ Masks
13:00 PJ Masks
13:30 Doc McStuffins
14:00 Puppy Dog Pals
14:30 Puppy Dog Pals
15:00 PJ Masks
15:30 PJ Masks
16:00 Mickey Mouse Mixed-Up Adventures
16:15 Mickey Mouse Mixed-Up Adventures
16:30 T.O.T.S.
17:00 Elena Of Avalor
17:25 Vampirina Ghou! Girls Rock!
17:30 Elena Of Avalor
18:00 Bluey
18:10 Bluey
18:20 Bluey
18:30 Mickey Mouse Mixed-Up Adventures
18:45 Mickey Mouse Mixed-Up Adventures
19:00 Fancy Nancy Clancy
19:30 Vampirina
20:00 PJ Masks
20:15 PJ Masks
20:30 The Lion Guard
21:00 Sofia The First
21:25 Vampirina Ghou! Girls Rock!
21:30 Bluey
21:40 Bluey
21:50 Bluey
22:00 Mickey Mouse Mixed-Up Adventures
22:15 Mickey Mouse Mixed-Up Adventures

22:30 Elena Of Avalor
23:00 Fancy Nancy Clancy
23:30 Vampirina



00:15 Dual Survival
01:05 Richard Hammond's Big Abandoned Engineering
02:35 Impossible Engineering
03:20 Kindig Customs
04:05 Kindig Customs
04:50 How Do They Do It?
05:15 How Do They Do It?
05:35 Baggage Battles
06:00 Shed And Buried
06:20 Baggage Battles
06:45 Dual Survival
07:35 Deadliest Catch
08:20 Gold Rush
09:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier
09:55 Salvage Hunters
10:45 How Do They Do It?
11:10 How Do They Do It?
11:30 Kindig Customs
12:20 Kindig Customs
13:05 Shed And Buried
13:30 Baggage Battles
13:55 Salvage Hunters
14:40 Alaskan Bush People
15:30 Contact
16:15 Wheeler Dealers: Dream Car
17:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier
17:50 Gold Rush
18:40 How Do They Do It?
19:05 How Do They Do It?
19:25 Kindig Customs
20:15 Kindig Customs
21:00 Wheeler Dealers
21:50 Wheeler Dealers: Dream Car
22:40 Mighty Truckers
23:30 Deadliest Catch



00:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
00:35 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
01:00 Space Chickens In Space
01:20 Space Chickens In Space
01:45 Counterfeit Cat
02:10 Counterfeit Cat
02:30 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
02:55 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:20 Space Chickens In Space
03:40 Space Chickens In Space
04:05 Counterfeit Cat
04:30 Counterfeit Cat
04:50 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
05:15 Furiki Wheels
05:35 Supa Strikas
06:00 Lab Rats
06:25 Lab Rats
06:50 Phineas And Ferb
07:15 Phineas And Ferb
07:40 Gravity Falls
08:05 Gravity Falls
08:30 Phineas And Ferb
08:55 Phineas And Ferb
09:20 Big City Greens
09:40 Big City Greens
10:05 Phineas And Ferb
10:25 Phineas And Ferb
10:50 Lab Rats
11:10 Lab Rats
11:35 Phineas And Ferb
11:55 Phineas And Ferb
12:20 Gravity Falls
12:45 Gravity Falls
13:10 DuckTales Shorts
13:15 Phineas And Ferb
13:40 Phineas And Ferb
14:05 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
14:30 Phineas And Ferb
14:55 Phineas And Ferb
15:20 Big City Greens
15:45 Big City Greens
16:10 Supa Strikas
16:35 Supa Strikas
17:00 Big Hero 6 The Series
17:25 Disney Mickey Mouse
17:30 Lab Rats
17:55 Phineas And Ferb
18:20 Phineas And Ferb
18:45 Lab Rats
19:10 Lab Rats

19:35 Lab Rats
20:00 Big Hero 6 The Series
20:25 Gravity Falls
20:50 Phineas And Ferb
21:15 Phineas And Ferb
21:40 DuckTales
22:05 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
22:30 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
22:55 Big Chibi 6: The Series
23:00 Furiki Wheels
23:25 Dude That's My Ghost
23:50 Dude That's My Ghost



00:00 Flip It Like Disick
01:00 Flip It Like Disick
02:00 Nightly Pop
02:30 Nightly Pop
03:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
04:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
05:00 Botched
06:00 Botched
07:00 E! News
07:30 E! News
08:00 Pop Of The Morning
08:55 E! News: Daily Pop
09:50 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
10:45 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
11:40 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
12:35 E! News
13:00 E! News
13:30 Pop Of The Morning
14:25 E! News: Daily Pop
15:20 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
16:15 Botched
17:10 Botched
18:05 Very Cavallari
19:00 Very Cavallari
20:00 Very Cavallari
21:00 Generation Me
21:30 Meet The Frasers
22:00 Meet The Frasers
22:30 Meet The Frasers
23:00 Nightly Pop
23:30 Nightly Pop



00:30 Ancient Impossible
01:15 History's Most Hated
02:00 In Search Of Aliens
02:45 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
03:30 The Universe
04:15 Clash Of The Gods
05:00 Ancient Aliens
05:45 Knight Fight
06:30 America's Book Of Secrets
07:15 Ancient Impossible
08:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
08:45 The Universe
09:30 Clash Of The Gods
10:15 Ancient Aliens
11:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
11:45 Heroes Of War
12:30 Ancient Impossible
13:15 In Search Of Aliens
14:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
14:45 The Universe
15:30 Clash Of The Gods
16:15 Ancient Aliens
17:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
17:45 Heroes Of War
18:30 Ancient Impossible
19:15 In Search Of Aliens
20:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
20:45 The Universe
21:30 Clash Of The Gods
22:15 Ancient Aliens
23:00 Cowboys & Outlaws
23:45 America's Book Of Secrets



00:20 Mountain Men
01:05 American Pickers
01:50 Pawn Stars
02:35 Storage Wars
03:00 Storage Wars
03:25 The Food That Built The World
05:05 Forged In Fire

06:00 Ice Road Truckers
06:45 Mountain Men
07:30 American Pickers
08:15 Pawn Stars
09:00 Storage Wars
09:20 Storage Wars
09:45 The Food That Built The World
11:15 Forged In Fire
12:00 American Pickers
12:45 American Pickers
13:30 American Pickers
14:15 American Pickers
15:00 Forged In Fire
15:45 Forged In Fire
16:30 Forged In Fire
17:15 Mountain Men
18:00 Mountain Men
18:45 Mountain Men
19:30 Mountain Men
20:15 Forged In Fire
21:00 Swamp People
21:50 Swamp People
22:40 Ancient Aliens
23:30 American Pickers



00:10 Fish Of The Day
00:35 Fish Of The Day
01:00 Route Awakening
01:25 Peter Kuruvita's Mexican Fiesta
01:50 Warrior Road Trip
02:40 Ultimate Airport Dubai Compilations
03:30 Ugly House To Lovely House With George Clarke
04:20 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
05:10 Ultimate Airport Dubai
06:00 Extreme China
06:50 A House Of Its Time
07:15 A House Of Its Time
07:40 The Food Files
08:05 Miguel's Feasts
08:30 Angelo's Outdoor Kitchen
08:55 Angelo's Outdoor Kitchen
09:20 Heathrow
10:10 John Torode's Malaysian Adventure
10:35 Exploring Malaysia
11:00 Ultimate Airport Dubai
11:50 Extreme China
12:40 A House Of Its Time
13:05 A House Of Its Time
13:30 The Food Files
13:55 Miguel's Feasts
14:20 Angelo's Outdoor Kitchen
14:45 Angelo's Outdoor Kitchen
15:10 Heathrow
16:00 John Torode's Malaysian Adventure
16:25 Exploring Malaysia
16:50 Cradle Of Mandopop
17:45 Extreme China
18:40 A House Of Its Time
19:05 A House Of Its Time
19:35 Warrior Road Trip
20:30 Angelo's Outdoor Kitchen
20:55 Angelo's Outdoor Kitchen
21:25 Heathrow
22:20 John Torode's Malaysian Adventure
22:45 Route Awakening
23:15 Cradle Of Mandopop



00:00 Apocalypse: War Of Worlds
00:55 Primal Survivor
01:45 Locked Up Abroad
02:35 Nazi Megastructures
03:25 Cruise Ship Diaries
04:15 Apocalypse: War Of Worlds
05:05 Primal Survivor
06:00 Locked Up Abroad
06:55 Nazi Megastructures
07:50 Apocalypse: War Of Worlds
08:45 Primal Survivor
09:40 WWII's Greatest Raids
10:35 Brain Games
11:30 Big, Bigger, Biggest
12:25 David Rocco's Dolce India
12:50 David Rocco's Dolce India
13:20 WWII's Greatest Raids
14:15 Airport Security: Peru
15:10 Air Crash Investigation
16:05 Live Free Or Die
17:00 Brain Games
18:00 David Rocco's Dolce India

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Someone close to you could develop some strange symptoms that cause this person to panic. It never hurts to consult a doctor, but when this person does, he or she is likely to find that these problems are probably nothing more than stress, too much work, or overindulgence in food or drink. Therefore, don't you panic, too! You might find yourself making phone calls or running errands to enable your friend to get some rest.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Group activities might prove a little unsettling for you today, Taurus. Animated discussions could turn into angry quarrels and this could offend your desire for harmony. A lot of misinformation could be exchanged today and cause confusion and short tempers. Stay home if you can, but if you must go out, don't be afraid to leave at the first sign of arguments. They aren't likely to accomplish much after that anyway.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

A member of your household is likely to be in a very strange mood today, Gemini. This person has heard some news that is confusing and probably untrue and therefore is wondering what effect this would have on their situation. If he or she discusses it with you, the best advice you could give would be to not panic until there's a chance to check the facts. The truth is probably a lot different from what you've all heard.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Attempts to contact others in different states or foreign countries today could go awry, Cancer, as technology that we tend to take for granted, such as telephones and the Internet, could malfunction, perhaps due to solar flares. There isn't much point in making yourself crazy, as this is beyond human control. The only thing you can do is wait! In the meantime, do something else that you love.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Machines involved in financial transactions, such as ATMs, phone systems, or banking websites could malfunction today, Leo, so you might have to resort to dealing with money in the old fashioned way: by going into the bank or writing checks. Electrical storms or solar flares could be interfering with satellite signals, so there isn't much you can do. Needless to say, this isn't a good day to make any major financial transactions.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This might be a good day to take some time for yourself, Virgo. Contact with others, no matter how much you love them, isn't likely to go well, as most people are probably restless and in uncertain moods. This is a good day to catch up on your reading or web surfing and work on projects of your own that you may have been neglecting for a while. You can always contact your friends tomorrow!



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Today you might be trying to learn about a new form of modern technology, perhaps computer related, Libra, and you could find it too confusing for words. Your brain could be going into overload, so it's probably best to take it one step at a time! It's also important to remember to take breaks and clear your head. Too much information all at once could result in your not being able to absorb any of it.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Weirdness is the keyword for today, Scorpio. You could be flooded with information from newspapers or the Internet that seems very strange to you. There's a reason for this. It's very likely to be misinformation! Don't be afraid to take it with a grain of salt, even though others take it very seriously. Hang on to your skepticism, and don't pass the information on unless you preface it with your honest opinion.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Rumors may be circulating today, Sagittarius, which could cause a certain panic. Some of your friends and colleagues could be calling you at home to discuss the matter. However, these rumors are probably based on little more than gossip, so don't take them seriously. Someone could have an axe to grind and tend to blow things all out of proportion. Try not to engage in this gossip. Stay calm and let your callers know that, for you, the best strategy seems to be to wait for the situation to grow clearer. That should get you through.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Bizarre news that comes to you from far away, possibly via email or the Internet, could be spreading like wildfire among the people you know and causing a lot of excitement, Capricorn. Take care that you don't get too excited, since this is very likely to be misinformation that some rather weird minds have garbled. Consider it interesting, think about it, but don't take it seriously unless reliable sources confirm it.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Some rather disturbing news about trends in the world economy could have you and everyone around you worrying about your financial future. Have faith, Aquarius. What you're hearing may be total misinformation. The future is probably going to shape up to be far different than the picture you draw from the news. In fact, you might find that your own personal finances take a definite turn for the better.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Get-togethers with friends today could prove a bit unsettling, Pisces, as someone who attends them could throw out an opinion or possibility that seems rather shocking. This opinion, however, is likely to be based on rumor, gossip, and other misinformation, so it would be a good idea to suggest that these concepts be explored in order to ascertain the facts. They'll probably turn out to be far more positive than you hear today.

Country Codes

Afghanistan	0093	Jordan	00962
Albania	00355	Kazakhstan	007
Algeria	00213	Kenya	00254
Andorra	00376	Kiribati	00686
Angola	00244	Kuwait	00965
Anguilla	001264	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Antiga	001268	Laos	00856
Argentina	0054	Latvia	00371
Armenia	00374	Lebanon	00961
Australia	0061	Liberia	00231
Austria	0043	Libya	00218
Bahamas	001242	Lithuania	00370
Bahrain	00973	Luxembourg	00352
Bangladesh	00880	Macau	00853
Barbados	001246	Macedonia	00389
Belarus	00375	Madagascar	00261
Belgium	0032	Majorca	0034
Belize	00501	Malawi	00265
Benin	00229	Malaysia	0060
Bermuda	001441	Maldives	00960
Bhutan	00975	Mali	00223
Bolivia	00591	Malta	00356
Bosnia	00387	Marshall Islands	00692
Botswana	00267	Martinique	00596
Brazil	0055	Mauritania	00222
Brunei	00673	Mauritius	00230
Bulgaria	00359	Mayotte	00269
Burkina	00226	Mexico	0052
Burundi	00257	Micronesia	00691
Cambodia	00855	Moldova	00373
Cameroon	00237	Monaco	00377
Canada	001	Mongolia	00976
Cape Verde	00238	Montserrat	001664
Cayman Islands	001345	Morocco	00212
Central African Republic	00236	Mozambique	00258
Chad	00235	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Chile	0056	Namibia	00264
China	0086	Nepal	00977
Colombia	0057	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Comoros	00269	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Congo	00242	New Caledonia	00687
Cook Islands	00682	New Zealand	0064
Costa Rica	00506	Nicaragua	00505
Croatia	00385	Nigar	00227
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark	0045	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia	00246	Norway	0047
Djibouti	00253	Oman	00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	0092
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Philippines	0063
Eritrea	00291	Poland	0048
Estonia	00372	Portugal	00351
Ethiopia	00251	Puerto Rico	001787
Falkland Islands	00500	Qatar	00974
Faroe Islands	00298	Romania	0040
Fiji	00679	Russian Federation	007
Finland	00358	Rwanda	00250
France	0033	Saint Helena	00290
French Guiana	00594	Saint Kitts	001869
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Lucia	001758
Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
Georgia	00995	Samoa US	00684
Germany	0049	Samoa West	00685
Ghana	00233	San Marino	00378
Gibraltar	00350	Sao Tome	00239
Greece	0030	Saudi Arabia	00966
Greenland	00299	Scotland (UK)	0044
Grenada	001473	Senegal	00221
Guadeloupe	00590	Seychelles	00284
Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala	00502	Singapore	0065
Guinea	00224	Slovakia	00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
Haiti	00509	Solomon Islands	00677
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Somalia	00252
Honduras	00504	South Africa	0027
Hong Kong	00852	South Korea	0082
Hungary	0036	Spain	0034
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sri Lanka	0094
Iceland	00354	Sudan	00249
India	0091	Suriname	00597
Indian Ocean	00873	Swaziland	00268
Indonesia	0062	Sweden	0046
Iran	0098	Switzerland	0041
Iraq	00964	Syria	00963
Ireland	00353	Taiwan	00886
Italy	0039	Tanzania	00255
Ivory Coast	00225	Thailand	0066
Jamaica	001876	Toga	00228
Japan	0081	Tonga	00676

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
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Friday, February 14, 2020

DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY
Canadian Board of Otolaryngology
Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.
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A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases

- ◆ Diagnosis/ Treatment of General Ears, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatrics
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- Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- Referee reviewer of International journal of Dermatology.

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- Hair Transplant & Restoration.
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DR KHALED ALMERRI
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Department: Heart & Vascular Center

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- 4- Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6- Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring

Dr. Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj
ENT Consultant, Laryngologist

- ◆ Kuwait Board of Otolaryngology.
- ◆ Laryngology Fellowship, McGill University- Canada.
- ◆ Fellow of the European Board of Otolaryngology – Head & Neck surgery.
- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery.
- ◆ Member of the British Laryngological Association.
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- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
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Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine
Head of Cardiology department at Dar Al Shifa hospital

- Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
- Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).

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Dr. Hani Haider
General Surgery Consultant

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Health & Science

Friday, February 14, 2020

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Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American Board in Pediatrics-Canadian Board in Pediatric Emergency



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Laprosopic and Bariatric Surgery

Academic Certificates – Training

- Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- (IFSO) member .
- Faculty member of (BEST).
- Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

Scope of clinical Practice.

- Bariatric surgeries.
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Classifieds

Friday, February 14, 2020

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CHANGE OF NAME

I Nilesh Ashok Neve have changed my minor son's name from Pritesh to (as follows) Surname - Neve, Given name - Pritesh Niles, herein after all his documents will be known as above. His Passport No: S0930833. **(C 5636)**
14-2-2020

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**

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Rather cold with light to moderate north westerly wind to variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h .

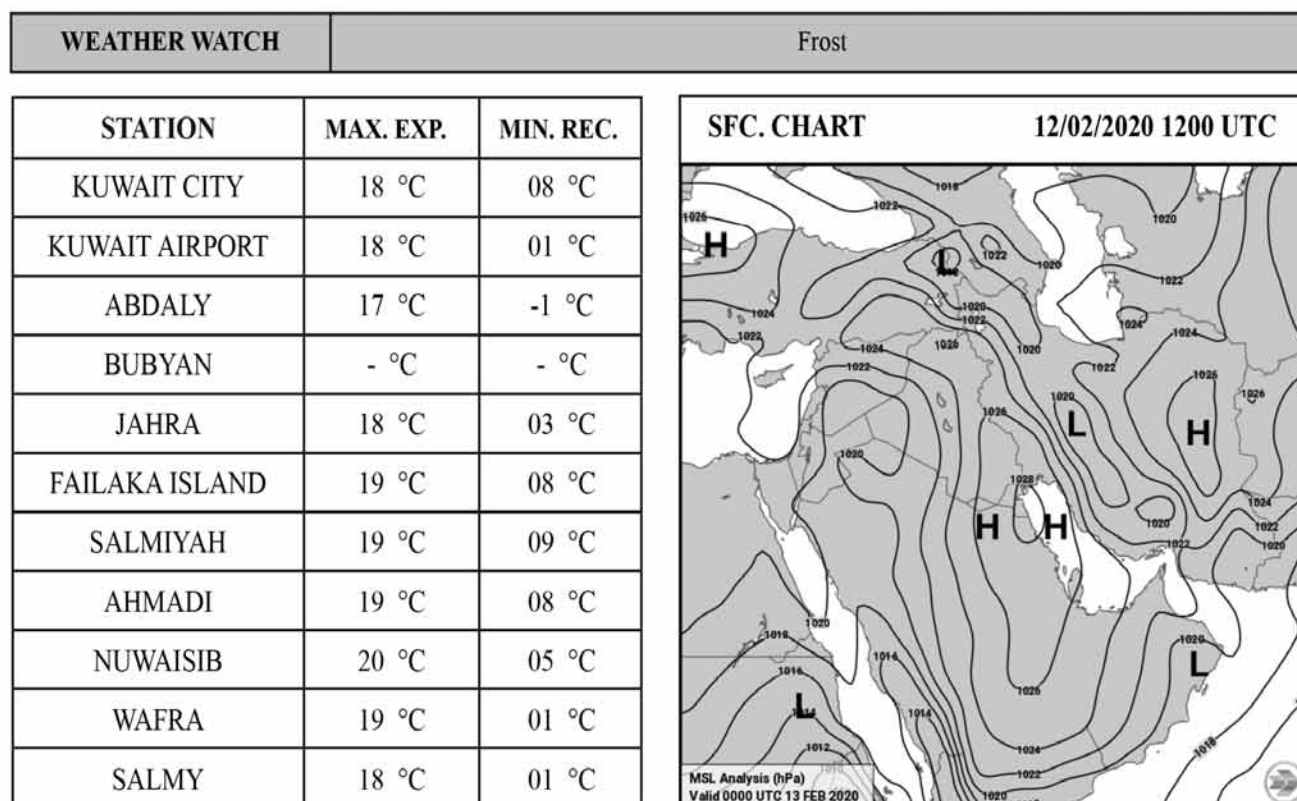
BY NIGHT: Cold with light to moderate variable wind to south easterly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

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
Salimiya	25746401



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	02/14	Fair and Partly cloudy	23 °C	7 °C	SE-VRB	06 - 28 km/h
Saturday	02/15	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	24 °C	11 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Sunday	02/16	Warm and Partly cloudy	26 °C	13 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 40 km/h
Monday	02/17	Warm and Partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	27 °C	15 °C	SE	15 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	05:09
Sunrise	06:29
Zuhr	12:02
Asr	15:12
Sunset	17:36
Isha	18:53

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	13 °C
MIN. Temp.	01 °C
MAX. RH	52 %
MIN. RH	12 %
MAX. Wind	N 39 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Business

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2020

39 World Mobile Congress cancelled over virus fears**40** Nissan downgrades forecasts as 9-month net profit plunges**41** In Norway, bottles made of plastic are still fantastic

GAZA CITY: (Left) A shop employee holds up jars of a Gazan version of a world famous spread, dubbed 'Natalia', on Wednesday. (Right) Workers at Al-Arees sweets factory sort a batch of chocolate-covered biscuits on Feb 5, 2020. —AFP photos

Gazans delight in local chocolate goodies

Exports to lucrative markets are largely banned by Israel

GAZA CITY: Off a bumpy dirt road in Gaza city, a group of children stood outside a half-open factory door, desperate to get their hands on what was being made inside. "We want chocolate!" they shouted at a worker as he left the Al-Arees factory, which despite daunting obstacles churns out treats ranging from chocolate-covered biscuits to a Gazan version of a world famous spread, dubbed here 'Natalia'. Buckling in the face of candy-crazed kids, the man popped behind the door and returned with enough free chocolate to rot their growing teeth.

Al-Arees' products are Gazan but their components are not, as few of the basic raw ingredients are produced in the impoverished Mediterranean coastal strip. The factory relies on chocolate from as far as Argentina, sugar from African countries and dried eggs from the Netherlands, with other essentials imported from Turkey and Israel. Israel controls all goods that enter Gaza, imposing a blockade that tightened after the tiny enclave was seized by the Islamist group Hamas in 2007.

Hamas has fought three wars with the Jewish state, which frequently strikes the strip in response to projectiles fired by militants at Israel. The exchange of fire has

escalated since last month after US President Donald Trump unveiled his Middle East peace plan, angrily rejected by the Palestinians as a capitulation to Israeli objectives. But even last week - amid rockets and mortars from Gaza and late night Israeli air strikes - the chocolate factories kept whirring.

Double customs fees

Gaza has no airport. Goods for the strip are usually brought into Ashdod, an Israeli port around 35 km north of the strip. Getting them into Gaza requires patience and money. "From Ashdod we pay for workers and trucks that take these goods to the Kerem Shalom border crossing (between Gaza and Israel)," said Wael Ai, head of Al-Arees. "Then you take them out of the truck for checks, then onto another truck from Gaza and after about 500 metres you have another checkpoint for Hamas," he added.

"I pay customs twice," he told AFP, meaning once in Ashdod where Israel collects fees on behalf of the official Palestinian government based in the West Bank and then in Gaza to Hamas. Due to Gaza's electricity shortages, Ai has installed three fuel-guzzling genera-

tors. "If you want anything done in Gaza you have to do it yourself," he said.

'Natalia'

Nutella may be a global phenomenon, but Gazans clamor for Natalia, their own version of a chocolate and hazelnut spread. Local factories also make Crimpos, a large marshmallow coated in a thick layer of chocolate. The treats are popular, but not necessarily profitable. Four hundred grams of Natalia sells for just three or four shekels (about a dollar) while Crimpos sell for as little as five shekels per box of 20. With Gaza's unemployment rate at nearly 50 percent, there is little space to raise prices domestically.

And exports to more lucrative markets are largely banned by Israel, which permits some vegetables and clothing to be sold abroad but not processed food. Maher Al-Tabbaa of the Gaza Chamber of Commerce insisted that factories in the strip make attractive products that are "forbidden from leaving Gaza".

First exports of Gaza sweets

"They are banned from being exported even to the

West Bank," he added. "In Gaza we have a limited market, so the banning of exports weakens the industry." Despite ongoing tensions, Israel and Hamas have reached a series of agreements over the past year that have slightly eased tensions. That fragile accord led to an event in December which, for a Gazan producer, could fairly be described as momentous: For the first time in years Gaza exported sweet goods.

Eight tonnes of Crimpos were cleared for export to Bahrain, crossing through Israel and the West Bank to Jordan, and onward to the Gulf Arab state. "What I exported was one day's work only," said Wael Al-Wadiya, chairman of Sarayo Alwadiya company that made the Krembos. "Right now we have 150 employees at the company. If they open the door to exports we will have people working three shifts -each one eight hours. So the number will go from 150 to between 300 and 450."

But in recent days the situation has slipped backwards again. After increased Gaza rocket fire following Trump's peace proposal, Israel again tightened the export rules and cancelled 500 permits for Gazans to work in Israel. But Wadiya remains optimistic. "If you can succeed in Gaza, you can succeed anywhere." —AFP

Business

As China needs virus masks, phone, diaper makers fill void

Country's mask production capacity hits 94 percent

BEIJING: A diaper manufacturer in eastern China was closed for the Lunar New Year holiday when it heard from officials - China needed vast amounts of masks to fight a deadly virus epidemic and factories needed to chip in. In just over two days, New Yifa Group converted a manufacturing line in Fujian province to make face masks, tapping some of its materials that would have gone into hygiene products. "All our staff are working on the masks now," the group's vice president Shen Shengyuan told AFP in a phone interview. He added that the line can produce up to 600,000 mask pieces a day, and the company is looking to convert another nappy production line soon.

Companies across China - from iPhone maker Foxconn to car manufacturer BYD and garment factories - have made similar forays into protective gear as the country grapples with a shortage of medical equipment to prevent the virus from spreading. To date, the virus has killed more than 1,350 people and infected some 60,000, sparking fear across the globe and causing people to stock up on protective supplies. Authorities said this month that China urgently needed masks, especially at the epicentre of the crisis, Hubei, where doctors face a shortage.

At full capacity, Chinese factories can only produce around 20 million masks a day. As of Tuesday, China's mask production capacity hit 94 percent, said Xia Nong, an inspector at the

National Development and Reform Commission. But there remains a need for more resources. At a press conference on Thursday, Xia urged mask companies that are not yet producing at full capacity to do so "as soon as possible".

\$6 million hit

Doctors on the front line in Wuhan - the epicentre of the outbreak - have had to see patients without proper masks or protective body suits, resorting to reusing the same equipment. Manufacturers are stepping up, but this comes at a cost, with New Yifa Group postponing a \$6 million order to focus on mask production. But Shen is confident the local government in Putian city, where the firm is based, will help companies like his tide over.

In other cities such as Ningbo in eastern Zhejiang province, 14 garment manufacturers are looking to produce a million masks in 20 days, reported Xinhua on Wednesday. Chinese automaker BYD said in a statement that it was looking into the design and making of protective gear, to produce masks and disinfectant. BYD expects to make up to five million masks and 50,000 bottles of disinfectant a day by the end of the month.

It plans to start mass production by Monday and told AFP the masks will go to hospitals and seriously-affected areas, among others. Others that have stepped in include a General Motors



WUXI, China: This photo taken on Feb 8, 2020 shows workers producing protective clothing at a factory which previously produced suits and sportswear and switched production for the fight against the deadly COVID-19 coronavirus. — AFP

venture in China, SAIC-GM-Wuling, and China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation (Sinopec). Sinopec said on China's Twitter-like platform Weibo on Sunday that it was setting up 11 production lines with partners and targets making up to over a million masks a day by March 10.

Taiwan tech giant Foxconn, which assem-

bles Apple products, also said in a social media post last week that it started producing masks at a plant in Shenzhen. It expects to make up to two million masks a day by end-February. The masks will be supplied to its own workers, and can be distributed externally where needed. — AFP

IMF sees 'mild' virus impact on global economy

WASHINGTON: It is too early to tell the economic toll from the virus outbreak in China, but the hit to global growth should be "mild", International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva said Wednesday. The death toll from the new coronavirus epidemic in China has climbed past 1,350, but hopes have risen that the outbreak could peak later this month. The IMF is expecting a "V-shaped impact", with a sharp decline in activity in China followed by a sharp recovery, meaning there likely will only be a "mild impact on the rest of the world," Georgieva said on CNBC.

But she cautioned: "It is still too early to make projections," and the global economy is "somewhat less strong" than it was when China faced the SARS virus epidemic in 2003. "China was different, the world was different. This virus is clearly more impactful and the world economy then was very strong," she said. The IMF projects China's economy will grow 6.0 percent this year, compared to 10 percent in 2003.

US officials likewise are reluctant to provide forecasts but say the impact on the American economy probably will be short-lived. "There's no question it's having a significant impact in China," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told legislators Wednesday. But for the US economy "I don't expect that the coronavirus will have an impact beyond this year." He echoed the comments from Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, saying, "we're obviously monitoring very carefully". — AFP

COVID-19 causing first drop in oil use in decade: IEA

PARIS: Global oil demand will suffer its first quarterly drop in a decade as the COVID-19 virus lashes the economy in China and its impact ripples throughout the world, the IEA said yesterday. "Global oil demand has been hit hard by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and the widespread shutdown of China's economy," the International Energy Agency said in its latest monthly report. "Demand is now expected to fall by 435,000 barrels year-on-year in the first quarter of 2020, the first quarterly contraction in more than 10 years" when it dropped during the global economic crisis, it added.

While the IEA still expects demand for oil to grow for this year as the outbreak is contained, it slashed its forecast for the increase in global consumption by nearly a third to 825,000 barrels per day, the smallest increase since 2011. The outbreak of the new coronavirus spurred China to take drastic measures such as placing in quarantine over a dozen cities and extending the Lunar New Year holidays in order to try to stem its spread, nearly shutting down key parts of its economy. Although markets have rebounded in recent days as investors grew confident that China could quickly contain the virus and its economic impact would be short lived, the IEA warned against complacency by comparing today's crisis to the 2003 SARS outbreak.

'Stronger global impact'

"While steps taken in China to reduce its spread were adopted earlier than in the SARS crisis and have been far more extensive, the profound transformation of the world economy since 2003 means China's slowdown today is bound to have a stronger global

impact," it said in the report. The IEA noted that since 2003 China has become more integrated in global supply chains, its tourism sector has dramatically expanded and Chinese are the largest contingent of world tourists, and the country's share of global GDP has jumped from 4 to 16 percent.

With it estimating that China's international air travel having fallen by 70 percent and domestic travel by half in the early part of the crisis, the IEA expects double digit drops in jet fuel demand in the country. A similar drop in diesel demand is expected due to other travel restrictions. The IEA chopped its forecast for China's GDP growth in the first quarter of this year by 1.5 percentage points to 4.5 percent. It also made large cuts of over 0.5 percentage points to its forecasts for China's trading partners in the region, as well as the United States and Russia.

The IEA doesn't forecast changes in oil prices, but said consumers were unlikely to get much of a boost from cheaper petrol and diesel at the end of the day. "The effect of the Covid-19 crisis on the wider economy means that it will be difficult for consumers to feel the benefit of lower oil prices," it said.

Oversupply concerns

With China being a big consumer of oil and the source of most of the growth in oil demand in recent years, the crisis will have a major impact on oil producers. At the end of last year, OPEC and its allies including Russia, called OPEC+, agreed to further cuts in oil production in order to compensate for rising production in the United States and avoid excess supplies that would depress prices. They are now considering an additional cut of 600,000 barrels per day to compensate for the drop in demand due to COVID-19.

The IEA estimates that the demand for OPEC crude has dropped from 29.4 million barrels per day (mbd) in the final quarter of 2019 to 27.2 mbd in the first three months of this year. It noted that this is 1.7 mbd below what OPEC produced in January when the new production cuts came into force. OPEC on Wednesday cut its forecast for growth in global oil demand as well due to COVID-19. — AFP

Business

World Mobile Congress cancelled over virus fears

Decision certain to be major blow for Barcelona

BARCELONA: Organizers of the World Mobile Congress said yesterday they have cancelled the world's top mobile trade fair due to fears stemming from the coronavirus that sparked an exodus of industry heavyweights. The mobile fair is one of the biggest events worldwide to be cancelled so far owing to the virus that has killed more than 1,100 people to date. The announcement came after the GSMA, the mobile trade association that organizes the annual show, met to decide the fate of the event that had been planned to run in Barcelona from February 24-27.

"The GSMA has cancelled MWC Barcelona 2020 because the global concern regarding the coronavirus outbreak, travel concern and other circumstances, make it impossible for the GSMA to hold the event," a statement said. It added that the decision was made with "due regard to the safe and healthy environment in Barcelona and the host country," and that host city parties understood the cancellation.

Just hours before the meeting took place, Vodafone, Nokia, Deutsche Telekom, Britain's BT and Rakuten of Japan had pulled out, following in the footsteps of Intel, Facebook, Cisco and China's Vivo. A source close to the event had said that organizers were wary of being left with a cancellation bill of about euro 100 million (\$110 million). They faced resistance from authorities about declaring a health emergency in Spain which would allow insurance to cover the costs. So far, Spain has only registered two confirmed cases of infection, on offshore islands.

The annual congress normally draws

more than 100,000 people, including between 5,000 and 6,000 participants from China, organizers say. But this year, participation was hammered by the viral outbreak which has infected around 44,600 people.

'Working for months for nothing'

The decision is certain to be a major blow for Barcelona, as the huge trade show was forecast to bring in almost euro 500 million, organizers said. "It's the high point of the year," said Ignacio Arias, manager of the AC Som Marriott hotel which lies very close to the venue where the conference has been held since 2006. "During the four days of the congress, the hotel is fully occupied with the highest rates of the year. There's no other week like it," he said, with his words echoed by fellow hoteliers.

"We were supposed to host the team assembling Sony's stand but they haven't turned up. Ericsson has cancelled 30 rooms, and Intel and LG have cancelled their meeting rooms," said the manager of another nearby hotel who did not want to give her name. "It feels like we've been working for months for nothing. This year has been pretty sluggish so far and this is just going to finish us off."

Ride-sharing firms were also on edge. "This period accounts for 20 percent of our yearly income," said Jose Maria Goni who runs Unauto, a fleet of vehicles for hire with drivers. Trade shows have been hit by the virus on several continents, and while Asia's biggest airshow in Singapore went forward nonetheless, more than 70 exhibitors cancelled.



BARCELONA: A worker takes pictures outside the Mobile World Congress venue yesterday at the Fira Barcelona Montjuic centre. —AFP

'Epidemic of fear'

The cancellations began on Feb 4 when South Korea's LG Electronics, which occupies one of the largest spaces at the show, said it was pulling out to "remove the risk of exposing hundreds of LG employees to international travel... as the virus continues to spread across borders". With the exception of Apple, most major smartphone manufacturers typically present their new products and innovations at the congress. Before the cancellation, China's top smartphone maker Huawei as well as its smaller rival ZTE, had pledged their executives and staff would undergo a self-im-

posed two-week quarantine period, while ZTE said its stand and equipment would be disinfected daily. The organizers had also sought to reassure exhibitors, saying they would step up security measures, impose restrictions on visitors from China and have staff on hand to take visitors' temperatures.

But it wasn't enough, and the trickle of withdrawals quickly turned into a deluge with dozens of companies pulling out of the show. Regional health minister Alba Verges tried in vain to reassure participants on Wednesday, saying that the only epidemic in Barcelona "is an epidemic of fear". —AFP

SAS ad about Nordic traditions sparks furor

COPENHAGEN: A new commercial from airline SAS challenging the authenticity of Scandinavian traditions has provoked furor in the form of cyber attacks, a wave of social media anger, and bomb threats against the ad agency behind it. Yesterday morning, Danish police cordoned off the area around the Copenhagen offices of the ad agency which created the newly released commercial, according to an AFP reporter at the scene.

Copenhagen police said a bomb threat had been emailed to the agency but that they had found nothing of interest to the police. Published to YouTube on Tuesday, the ad asks "What is truly Scandinavian?" and then answers with "absolutely nothing... everything is copied". It then goes on to list the origin of iconic Scandinavian staples like Swedish meatballs - which were originally imported from Turkey.

SAS, founded jointly by Sweden, Denmark and Norway in 1946, said in a statement that the commercial was meant to convey the message "that travel enriches us", but others saw it as an attack on Scandinavian culture. "What complete damn

nonsense and self-loathing," Richard Jomshof, a Swedish member of parliament representing the populist Sweden Democrats, wrote in a post to Facebook.

In Denmark, Soren Espersen, vice president of the anti-immigration Danish People's Party, told Danish newspaper Ekstrabladet that he was shocked. "The government has to say that enough is enough," Espersen said. Both promised never to fly with the airline again. Rival airline Norwegian also seized on the opportunity to poke fun at SAS by posting an image of a cheese slicer to Facebook with the caption: "Luckily, no one can take the cheese slicer from us." SAS, which transports around 30 million passengers every year and employs 10,000 people, is 70 percent controlled by institutional and private investors with the remaining 30 percent shared almost equally by Sweden and Denmark. Contacted by AFP, the Swedish and Danish governments had no immediate comment. Facing a barrage of reactions, SAS on Wednesday temporarily took the commercial down from their social media accounts.

The company said, however, that the "pattern and volume" of reactions meant it suspected "an online attack and that the campaign has been hijacked". When asked by AFP, SAS did not indicate whether it intended to lodge a complaint, and the intelligence services would not confirm if they had opened an investigation. The campaign has since been reinstated and yesterday the video had almost 320,000 views on YouTube. Comments had been disabled but the video had nearly 59,000 dislikes, and only 3,700 likes. —AFP

IMF says new Lebanon govt requested advice

WASHINGTON: A day after receiving a vote of confidence from parliament, the government in Beirut on Wednesday asked the International Monetary Fund to provide advice on its economic plan, a fund spokesman said. However, the IMF statement made no mention of financial assistance for crisis-battered Lebanon. The authorities asked for "advice and technical expertise on the macroeconomic challenges facing the economy," IMF spokesman Gerry Rice said in a statement.

Part of the mission of the Washington-based crisis lender is to offer "advice to its member countries on policies and reforms to restore macro-stability and promote growth." However, "any decisions on debt are the authorities', to be made in consultation with their own legal and financial advisors," Rice said. The country is on the brink of defaulting on its sovereign debt, with a \$1.2 billion Eurobond payment due next month. —AFP

Business

Nissan downgrades forecasts as 9-month net profit plunges

Automaker has filed lawsuit to reclaim •10bn from Ghosn

YOKOHAMA: Crisis-hit Japanese automaker Nissan said yesterday its net profit plunged more than 87 percent for the nine months to December as it struggles with weak demand and fallout from the arrest of former boss Carlos Ghosn. Nissan revised downwards its full-year sales and profit forecasts, but warned that the impact from the spreading coronavirus crisis was not yet included in their figures. "Let me express my sincere regrets to shareholders. The company results are weaker than expected," said CEO Makoto Uchida, who announced there would be no dividend paid.

Net profit for April-December dropped 87.6 percent to ¥39.3 billion (\$358 million), on sales down 12.5 percent at ¥7.5 trillion for the period. On a quarterly basis, Nissan suffered a net loss of ¥26.1 billion for the three months to December, the first third-quarter loss in more than a decade. The profit decline was mainly due to weak sales in the United States as well as Japan, where the impact of the nation's sales tax hike hit auto demand, the company said in a statement.

"Nissan is in a very severe situation at a time when competition in the global auto market is further intensifying," said Satoru Takada, auto

analyst at TIW, a Tokyo-based research and consulting firm. Nissan, which downgraded its annual forecasts three months ago, said its bottom-line profit was now forecast to be 65 billion yen for the fiscal year to March 2020, compared with an earlier estimate of ¥110 billion. Full-year sales are estimated at ¥10.2 trillion, down from a previous forecast of ¥10.6 trillion but Uchida said the latest forecast did not include the potential impact of the novel coronavirus. "The market remains tough due in part to the novel coronavirus outbreak," Uchida told reporters.

Analysts are weighing the possible impact of the virus on production in China. Nissan has already suspended operations at four assembly plants in the country. It aims to resume operations at two plants next week, but has not decided whether to extend the closure at the remaining two. It was Nissan's first earnings announcement since Ghosn dramatically jumped bail and fled Japan, where he was awaiting trial on financial misconduct charges. Ghosn, who was arrested in November 2018 and spent 130 days in detention, denied all the charges and claimed he was a victim of a plot by Nissan and Japanese officials.



YOKOHAMA: Nissan Motor president and CEO Makoto Uchida speaks during a press conference to announce the company's third quarter financial results at its headquarters yesterday. — AFP

'Good and bad aspects'

On Wednesday, Nissan filed a civil lawsuit to reclaim some ¥10 billion from Ghosn for what it called "years of his misconduct and fraudulent

activity". Uchida took the Nissan helm in December as the firm overhauled its leadership after the Ghosn scandal. "Nissan replaced its leaders but has yet to show a roadmap for revival, and is still making an extra effort to settle the Ghosn case," Takada said. Adding to Nissan's woes is continued tension within the three-way alliance with Mitsubishi Motors and Renault.

Ghosn, who created the alliance, wanted greater integration with France's Renault, and says his push for that prompted angry Nissan executives to plot against him. The two firms have made a show of holding the marriage together in the wake of Ghosn's arrest, but tensions have bubbled to the surface. "Ghosn had both good and bad aspects, but Ghosn's leadership was a cornerstone of the alliance and they have yet to find a matching leadership," Takada said.

Last week, rival Toyota reported a surge in net profit on record sales for the nine months to December, and upgraded its full-year profit. Honda revised up its full-year profit forecasts but warned that the impact from the spreading coronavirus crisis was not yet included in their figures. Nissan shares plunged 1.54 percent to ¥568.5 ahead of the third-quarter earnings report. — AFP

France won't bar but may restrict Huawei in 5G network

PARIS: France yesterday said it would not bow to American pressure to exclude Huawei from supplying equipment for its 5G networks, though the Chinese telecommunications firm could be subject to restrictions. Taking a stance echoing those of Britain and the European Union, Economy and Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said Paris could prioritize European operators as it begins preparations to roll out the 5G network.

"There is no discrimination towards Huawei... No, Huawei will not be excluded from the 5G in France," Le Maire told BFM TV. But he added "the French state will take precautions to protect our sovereign interests", especially near nuclear and military installations. Also, "it is understandable that we could prioritize a European operator" such as Nokia or Ericsson, he added. 5G stands for fifth generation, the latest in cellular mobile communications offering vastly higher speeds which could unlock a variety of new applications.

'Protect our sovereignty'

There has been intense debate in Europe about whether or not to exclude Huawei from supplying equipment for 5G mobile networks. Critics, led by Washington, say Huawei is too close to Beijing and its equipment could be used as a tool for spying - a contention the company strongly rejects. US President Donald Trump has already ordered American firms to cease doing business with Huawei, and has urged allies to follow suit. US Attorney General Bill Barr last week said the United States and its allies should take controlling stakes in Nokia, Ericsson or both to battle Huawei's dominance of the 5G market.

Asked if France could give preferential treatment to Nokia of Finland and Ericsson of Sweden, Le Maire replied: "We have two European operators who supply 5G and supply quality equipment. "It is normal if we look first if they can provide the

solution. And I think our Chinese partners can understand that." He insisted: "Huawei will not be discriminated against. If Huawei has a better offer from a technical point of view or price it can have access to 5G in France."

'Secret capability'

Britain last month allowed the use of Huawei equipment in its 5G networks, but excluded the Chinese firm from "sensitive" core infrastructure. The European Union followed suit, limiting but not banning Huawei equipment in 5G networks. Le Maire's comments came as the Wall Street Journal reported that the Trump administration believes Huawei can covertly access mobile networks around the world through "back doors" designed for use by law enforcement. It cited US officials saying the company has had this "secret capability" for more than a decade.

The US kept the intelligence highly classified until late last year, when officials provided details to allies including Britain and Germany, the paper said. However Huawei vehemently denied the report, saying in a statement it "has never and will never covertly access telecom networks, nor do we have the capability to do so." It said that even the WSJ conceded US officials "are unable to provide any concrete details concerning these so-called 'back doors'."

The EU has struggled to find a middle way to balance Huawei's huge dominance in the 5G sector with security concerns pressed by Washington. With Huawei widely viewed as providing the most advanced 5G equipment, British telecoms group BT said it would take a £500-million hit from the UK restrictions and Vodafone about 200 million euros, as it would require changes to their own equipment.

French telecoms operator Orange said last month it had chosen Nokia and Ericsson to supply equipment for its 5G network once authorities make frequencies available later this year. Orange's chief executive Stephane Richard told BFM Business the US should make public any proof it has of Huawei misbehavior, comparing the claims to the 2003 search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. "What is certain is that in the industry Huawei has never been caught red-handed and we don't have the information that the American services seem to have," he said. "But if they have this information it is in everyone's interest that they make it public," he added. — AFP

Barclays board backs CEO despite Epstein links

LONDON: Barclays bank yesterday gave its full backing for Jes Staley to continue as chief executive amid a UK regulatory probe into his historical links with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Based on information already gathered, "the board believes that Mr Staley has been sufficiently transparent with the company as

regards the nature and extent of his relationship with Mr Epstein. "Accordingly, Mr Staley retains the full confidence of the board", a statement said.

The board has "unanimously recommended" US national Staley for re-election at the bank's annual general meeting on May 7. The bank's disclosure of the probe being carried out by the Financial Conduct Authority and Prudential Regulation Authority came alongside news that Barclays' net profit surged 54 percent last year. "In deciding whether to recommend Jes Staley



Jes Staley

for re-election, the board has carried out its usual formal and rigorous performance assessment, which it does in respect of the effectiveness of each of the directors," Barclays added yesterday. It said that following reports that Staley had "developed a professional relationship" with Epstein, the Barclays CEO last summer volunteered information to the chairman and fellow executives at the bank. "Mr Staley also confirmed to the board that he has had no contact whatsoever with Mr Epstein at any time since taking up his role as Barclays Group CEO in December 2015," the statement added. A wealthy financier, Epstein was found dead in a US prison last August while awaiting charges of trafficking minors. Barclays added yesterday that its profit after tax jumped to £2.64 billion (\$3.4 billion) in 2019 compared with net profit of £1.6 billion a year earlier. — AFP

Business

In Norway, bottles made of plastic are still fantastic

1.1 billion plastic bottles, aluminum cans returned in 2018

FETSUND, Norway: One at a time, the elderly lady places her empties into the gaping hole of a machine at the entrance to an Oslo supermarket. With a well-functioning deposit system, Norway recycles almost all of its plastic bottles. “You have to get rid of them, so you may as well do it intelligently,” says the woman in her 70s, as the machine spits out a bar-code ticket that entitles her to around 30 kroner (\$3.25) either in cash or credit at the till.

With its 97 percent recycling rate, Norway is 10 years ahead of the EU’s 2029 target date, by when countries must recycle at least 90 percent of their plastic bottles. That compares to barely 60 percent in France and in the UK, which is considering a deposit system. The deposit system is widely viewed as the key to the Nordic country’s success.

Customers pay a few extra cents when they buy a drink in a plastic bottle, and they’re refunded that amount when they return their empties. “When you have a deposit on the empties, you actually tell the consumers that they buy the product but they borrow the packaging,” explains Kjell Olav Maldum, the head of Infinitum, a company created by manufacturers and distributors to run the deposit scheme.

The concept of returning empties has become so widespread there’s even a verb in the Norwegian language for it – a pante (pronounced Oh pant-uh). As an added bonus, the reverse vending machines give customers the choice of using their refund to buy a lottery ticket that benefits charity.

Unsolvable Rubik’s cubes

More than 1.1 billion plastic bottles and aluminum cans were returned in 2018 at collection points in supermarkets, petrol stations and small shops. In Fetsund, about 30 km northeast of Oslo, a steady stream of trucks dump thousands of empties at a time at Infinitum’s main processing centre. Bouncing along on conveyor belts, the plastic bottles that once contained water, juice or soda are sorted, compacted and placed on pallets resembling enormous colorful Rubik’s cubes, destined for a second life after recycling.

Each new plastic bottle contains around 10 percent recycled materials, a level the country hopes to increase with a regressive tax that would encourage manufacturers to use recycled plastic instead of new plastic, which is currently cheaper.

Valuable waste

“We call it clean loop recycling: if you put your bottles into a machine, they sort of enter a clean loop,” says Harald Henriksen, head of business area collection solutions at Tomra, the world leader in reverse vending machines. “You can use it again and again, and you can make new bottles many, many times,” he says. In this example of a circular economy, what some consider waste becomes a resource, whose value encourages collection and recycling.

The idea has begun to catch on elsewhere. “One example is Lithuania where they had a 34-percent return rate before the deposit system was introduced, and at the end of year number two that had already increased to 92 percent,” says Henriksen. Larissa Copello of environmen-



FETSUND, Norway: Plastic bottles are compacted and placed on pallets at a recycling plant of the company Infinitum in southeastern Norway on Jan 21, 2020. — AFP

tal organization Zero Waste Europe told AFP deposit return systems are “the only way” to meet the EU target. But the organization would also like to see a mixed system that would collect glass bottles for reuse, and extend the deposit system to other types of plastic packaging.

According to WWF, the equivalent of 15 tons of plastic are dumped into the world’s oceans

every minute. While the Norwegian recycling industry acknowledges the planet needs to put an end to the problem, they think plastic – a lightweight, practical and cheap material – still has a promising future. “Is the problem with plastic itself, or is it the way that we the consumers behave ourselves,” asks Maldum. “Plastic is still fantastic but keep it out of nature.” — AFP

Outgoing CEO proud as Credit Suisse profits jump 69%

ZURICH: Credit Suisse boss Tidjane Thiam claimed success yesterday after the bank posted a 69-percent jump in profit for 2019, despite a snooping scandal that is forcing him out. “I am proud of what Credit Suisse has achieved during my tenure,” Thiam said in a statement announcing the results. “We have turned Credit Suisse around and our 2019 results show we can be sustainably profitable,” he said. Thiam, who will step down on Friday, became chief executive five years ago and implemented a restructuring program to put more of a focus on the bank’s wealth management unit.

Wealth management helped push up net profit to 3.4 billion Swiss francs (\$3.5 billion) on revenues of 22.48 billion francs – up seven percent from 2018. But revenues at its investment banking arm declined 23 percent to 1.6 billion Swiss francs due to a drop in mergers and acquisitions activity. Credit Suisse is the second biggest bank in Switzerland.

Since September last year, it has been under a cloud following revelations that it spied on its former head of wealth management, Iqbal Khan, after his unexpected departure to join rival UBS. There were further revelations of spying on a former head of human relations and claims that it had infiltrated the emails of Greenpeace, which has campaigned for Credit Suisse to stop investing in fossil



ZURICH: French-Ivorian Tidjane Thiam gives his last press conference as Credit Suisse CEO during its annual results yesterday. — AFP

fuels. Thiam has repeatedly stated he had no knowledge of the spying. Thiam will be replaced by Thomas Gottstein, who currently heads up all of the bank’s activities for the Swiss market. — AFP

Restructuring and job cuts hit profits at Commerzbank

FRANKFURT: Germany’s second-largest lender Commerzbank yesterday reported sliding profits for 2019, as costs for job cuts linked to its restructuring weighed on the bottom line. Net profits dropped over 25 percent to €644 million (\$701 million), the Frankfurt-based Commerzbank said, although it was able to make a slight improvement in operating profits. Severance charges for some 4,300 employees worldwide struck especially in the final three months of 2019, as the group slashed its payroll to just over 40,000 people.

After a failed bid early last year to merge with crosstown rival Deutsche Bank, Commerzbank is pressing ahead with restructuring and with digitizing more of its internal processes. The lender added almost half a million new retail and business clients last year, hoping the bigger base will make for fatter profits when eurozone interest rates eventually rise. Meanwhile it was able to increase slightly the capital buffer regulators require of banks to withstand financial shocks.

“Our strong capital ratio... provides us with more flexibility in the implementation of our strategy and for focused growth,” chief financial officer Bettina Orlopp said in a statement. With profits weaker, Commerzbank trimmed its dividend this year, to 15 euro cents per share. Looking ahead to 2020, it expects revenues “at least at the level of 2019”, while costs will be inflated by modernization of its IT systems. Bosses hope selling off Polish subsidiary mBank will cover the expenses, although according to German media only one prospective buyer is so far in the running. — AFP

Sports

Ngidi stars as South Africa beat England by one run in T20 thriller

EAST LONDON: Fast bowler Lungi Ngidi took three wickets in his last two overs as South Africa snatched a thrilling one-run win in the first Twenty20 international against England at Buffalo Park on Wednesday. Jason Roy and captain Eoin Morgan hit half-centuries for England and they looked well on the way to chasing down South Africa's total of 177 for eight.

But the match changed dramatically in the last three overs as England lost six wickets for 24 runs to finish on 176 for nine. "You run in as hard as you can and hit your length. All of a sudden their team was on the back foot," said Ngidi who was man of the match for his 3-30.

"It was a very fast-paced game, but it's about how you bounce back. I didn't panic under pressure, they seemed to be cruising but my job was to get wickets."

England needed just seven to win off the last over but Ngidi dismissed Tom Curran and Moeen Ali while conceding only five runs.

Adil Rashid was run out off the last ball, trying for an improbable second run which would have tied the scores. He couldn't beat a calm return from midwicket from veteran fast bowler Dale Steyn. South Africa captain Quinton de Kock pointed out both teams struggled to score

freely towards the end of their innings as the ball got softer and the bounce lower. "We knew if we made sure we kept to our basics that we could win," he said.

"It was an outstanding game of cricket," added Morgan. "Experiences like this, particularly with the (T20) World Cup around the corner, are so valuable. Both teams were under pressure. Both teams gave it everything."

Both innings followed a similar pattern. Both teams scored 68 runs in the first six-over power play and both had scored 113 runs after 12 overs before slowing down in the closing overs.

Opening batsman Roy was brutal in reaching his fifty off 22 balls on the way to scoring 70 off 38 deliveries with seven fours and three sixes. Morgan seemed set to take his team to victory, hitting Beuran Hendricks for two fours and a six in the penultimate over before holing out off the last ball of the over after making 52.

Earlier, De Kock (31) and Temba Bavuma (43) got South Africa off to a fast start, putting on 48 for the first wicket off 26 balls. Rassie van der Dussen (31) joined Bavuma and the pair added 63 for the second wicket off 41 deliveries before Van der Dussen fell to Ben Stokes and the innings lost momentum. —AFP



EAST LONDON: England's Jason Roy (R) plays a shot as South Africa's captain Quinton de Kock (L) looks on during the first T20 cricket match between South Africa and England at the Buffalo Park Cricket Grounds in East London. — AFP

MLB announces rule changes, including three batter minimum

NEW YORK: Major League Baseball made official its rule changes for the 2020 season on Wednesday, implementing a three-batter minimum for any pitcher and an expanded regular-season roster. The new pitching rule is the major change, designed to speed up the game by eliminating some pitching changes. Any starter or reliever must face three batters, or pitch until the inning is over, before coming out of the game. This will, for example, effect the usage of a left-handed specialist out of the bullpen, often brought in to face a left-handed batter before another pitching change. An exception to the three-batter rule is if the pitcher is injured or ill; he could be taken out with the approval of the umpires' crew chief.

The three-batter rule goes into effect during spring training on March 12.

OTHER CHANGES:

ROSTER LIMITS: The active roster through Aug. 31 is increased from 25 to 26, with teams able to carry a maximum of 13 pitchers. All teams must carry 28 players — maximum of 14 pitchers — from Sept. 1 through the end of the regular season. Previously, teams could bring up anybody on the their 40-man roster in September, often carrying 30-plus players. Postseason rosters are set at 26.

TWO-WAY PLAYERS: These players may pitch without counting toward the pitching roster limits. Such players must accrue at least 20 in-

nings pitched in the majors and start at least 20 games as a position player/designated hitter with at least three plate appearances in those games. Stats from 2019 and 2018 can be used to designate such players. This helps address the status of the Anaheim Angels' starter/designated hitter Shohei Ohtani and Cincinnati Reds' reliever/outfielder Michael Lorenzen.

POSITION PLAYERS PITCHING: A position player may pitch only in extra innings or if his team is losing or winning by more than six runs.

EXTRA PLAYER RULE: Teams previously could call up a 26th player for special circumstances — mostly because of a doubleheader. They can still do so, temporarily expanding their roster to 27.

INJURED LIST: Pitchers and two-way players must now spend 15 days on the injured list. The reinstatement period for position players remains at 10 days.

OPTION PERIOD: Pitchers optioned to the minor leagues must stay there for 15 days, rather than 10, which is still the minimum for position players.

CHALLENGE TIME: Managers have only 20 seconds to challenge a play instead of 30. — Reuters

Smith, Warner must 'ride the storm' in South Africa

MELBOURNE: Steve Smith and David Warner will be ready for whatever South African crowds throw at them when the Australia batsmen return to the nation two years after the ball-tampering scandal, paceman Josh Hazlewood has said.

The pair will fly out with the Australia squad on Friday for a limited overs tour in the duo's first visit to the country since serving 12-month bans for their parts in the tampering plot during the Cape Town test.

The pair were jeered relentlessly by English crowds during last year's one-day World Cup and the following Ashes series, and Hazlewood said they would be unfazed by more hostility.

"Steve and Dave have ticked off pretty much every box since coming back," Hazlewood told

reporters in Sydney yesterday. "It's just another one of those and I don't think it'll faze them one bit. "They probably play better when it's like this.

"It's nothing we haven't experienced before ... we'll be fine." Both Smith and Warner have thrived since returning to the national fold after their bans expired last March. Smith played a leading role in Australia's retention of the Ashes while Warner was awarded the Allan Border Medal for the third time on Monday as the country's top cricketer in 2019.

Local media have reported that the head of the national players' union will tour with the side in South Africa to offer extra support for the players. Hazlewood said Smith and Warner would not need to be shielded. — Reuters

Forgotten Australia opener Renshaw to take break from game

MELBOURNE: Matt Renshaw, once tipped as a long-term fix for Australia's opening batting problems, is taking a break from cricket after being dropped by Queensland ahead of the resumption of the Sheffield Shield season.

The 23-year-old left-hander has failed to score a century in Australia's domestic first-class competition since playing the last of his 11 tests in 2018. "As part of our usual review process of player performance, our coaching and support staff spent time with Matthew this week and they all came to the conclusion that he would benefit

from some time away from cricket," Queensland performance boss Bennett King told News Ltd media. "We're confident Matthew will benefit from a break from the game to freshen up, and look forward to working with him once he is ready to resume playing."

Renshaw had been expected to be named in a Cricket Australia (CA) XI to play the England Lions development squad in a four-day game in Hobart this week but he told selectors he had decided to step away from the game, CA's website (cricket.com.au) said. — Reuters

Sports

Chinese Grand Prix, Hong Kong Sevens add to Asia's sports calendar chaos

HONG KONG: The deadly COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak is causing chaos across Asia's sporting calendar. Some of the continent's most prestigious sports events, including Formula One's Chinese Grand Prix and the Hong Kong Rugby Sevens have been postponed although Tokyo has pledged that this year's 2020 Olympics, due to begin on July 24, will go ahead as planned. Here is the latest rundown of Asian sporting spectacles already affected by the outbreak and those that could follow suit:

MOTORSPORT

The Chinese Formula One Grand Prix in Shanghai on April 19 was postponed on Wednesday after the governing body FIA took advice from its partners in China "to ensure the health and safety of the travelling staff, championship participants and fans". Nothing has been announced regarding the inaugural Vietnamese Grand Prix, scheduled for April 5 on a Hanoi street circuit — around 135 kilometres (80 miles) from the Chinese border. The Chinese Formula E Grand Prix on the southern island of Hainan on March 21 has been scrapped.

RUGBY UNION

Sevens World Series tournaments in Hong Kong on April 3-5 and Singapore the following weekend have been postponed, World Rugby announced yesterday. The Singapore tournament will now take place on October 10-11 and Hong Kong a week later on October 16-18, concluding the 10-stop world series. The world-famous Hong Kong Sevens has not missed a year since it was founded in 1976 — it played on during the deadly 2003 SARS outbreak in the city — and it is hoped the 40,000-capacity sell-out, three-day extravaganza can continue that proud run by being played in October instead. The event is a huge revenue-generator for the city, with bars restaurants and hotels booked out months in advance as thousands of players, officials and fans fly in from all over the world.

OLYMPIC GAMES

Tokyo Olympics organisers yesterday hit back at speculation the Games could be scrapped, with less than six months to go until the opening ceremony on July 24. Tokyo 2020 CEO Yoshiro Mori, at a meeting with International Olympic Committee officials, said: "There are many irresponsible rumours but I would like to make it clear again that we are not considering postponing or cancelling the Games."

GOLF

The elite women's US LPGA Tour cancelled all three of its lucrative early-season events in Asia in Thailand, Singapore and Thailand with a combined prize purse of more than \$5 million. The European Tour is expected to postpone its China Open at Shenzhen in April, with an announcement soon. The Asian Tour told AFP Thursday that next month's Malaysia Open and Royal's Cup in Thailand were still going ahead with precautions such as temperature checks and travel declarations. The US PGA Tour's third-tier China Series has postponed two qualifying events, which had already been moved to Thailand and Indonesia, until early May. The China-based circuit has also shelved its first four

regular season events in Sanya, Haikou, Chongqing and Guangzhou and plan a truncated season of 10 tournaments, down from 14, beginning in late May or June.

FOOTBALL

China has suspended all domestic football and postponed indefinitely the top-flight Chinese Super League season which was due to kick off on February 22. The virus has hit Asia's continental competitions, with four Chinese clubs' home group matches in the AFC Champions League, which began this week, being postponed until at least April and May. Home AFC Cup matches for Vietnamese teams have been postponed or moved to away venues after the government banned all sports and entertainment events in February. No decision has been made yet on Asia's World Cup qualifying matches next month. China are due to host the Maldives on March 26 and play in Guam five days later. Fixtures involving Hong Kong and Taiwan could also be in doubt. A women's Olympic qualifying event between China, Taiwan, Thailand and Australia scheduled for last week in Wuhan, the disease epicentre, was moved to Sydney.

ATHLETICS

The World Indoor Championships, scheduled for Nanjing from March 13-15, were postponed for a year. The Hong Kong Marathon, due to take place on Sunday, was cancelled. World Athletics is scheduled to host an elite Diamond League meeting in Shanghai on May 16.

BADMINTON

The China Masters tournament from February 25 to March 1 has been shelved, the Badminton World Federation said, while indicating that the Asia Championships in Wuhan from April 21-26 are likely to follow suit.

BASKETBALL

The Chinese Basketball Association has postponed the second half of its top-flight CBA League, which had been due to start on February 1. Last week's women's Olympic qualifying tournament between China, Great Britain, Spain and South Korea was moved from Foshan, in southern China, to Belgrade.

BOXING

A qualification event for the Tokyo Olympics initially scheduled from February 3-14 in Wuhan was moved to Amman in Jordan and will be held from March 3-11.

CYCLING

The Tour of Hainan from February 23 to March 1 — a second-tier ProSeries race — was cancelled.

HORSE RACING

Hong Kong's famous horse racing industry is staggering on, although all off-course betting shops are shut and twice-weekly meetings are taking place behind closed doors.

Just 122 people attended Wednesday's Happy Valley card, a record low attendance. The meeting on the corresponding week-day 12 months ago attracted more than 17,000 punters.

MMA

The Singapore-based One Fighting Champi-

onship, Asia's largest mixed martial arts promotion, announced Thursday that their card in Chongqing on April 11 would be moved to Jakarta.

TENNIS

The Fed Cup Asia/Oceania Group I event between China, Taiwan, Indonesia, South Korea and Uzbekistan in Dongguan was postponed and will now be played in Dubai from March 3-7.

SKIING

Men's World Cup races in the Chinese resort of Yanqing, the first test events for the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, were cancelled and will run in Saalbach-Hinterglemm, Austria at the weekend.

SNOOKER

The China Open in Beijing, set for March 30-April 5, has been cancelled. — AFP



HONG KONG: File photo taken on April 10, 2016, Japan rugby players cheer the crowd after beating Hong Kong to qualify for the Sevens World Series XVII on the third day of the rugby sevens tournament in Hong Kong. Rugby's Hong Kong and Singapore Sevens were expected to be postponed yesterday as Asian sport reels from the coronavirus, with the Chinese Grand Prix, golf and football fixtures among the long list of casualties. — AFP

All Blacks fan Lindberg tickled by tee-time with Barrett

MELBOURNE: Major-winning Swedish golfer Pernilla Lindberg is looking forward to the "incredible challenge" of competing as the lone woman at the New Zealand Open where she will tee off with two-time World Rugby Player of the Year Beauden Barrett.

The 33-year-old Lindberg will be the first woman to play in the event, with the 101st edition to be staged at the Millbrook Resort and The Hills in Queenstown from Feb. 27 to March 1.

"It's going to be an incredible challenge," she told reporters at the Australian Open in Adelaide yesterday. "I'm not going to set any kind of goals for myself, but I'm really going to soak in the week."

Lindberg said her surprise entry in the Pro-Am event was fixed up by a New Zealand acquaintance who knew the tournament director Michael Glading. Having wed in New Zealand a year ago, Lindberg had planned to visit the country for a holiday with her husband before heading to China for the Blue Bay event on Hainan island, which ended up being cancelled due to the coronavirus outbreak.

"(Glading) said, 'It's the New Zealand Open, it's not the men's Open' ... So he said if we wanted to play, sure you can do it," she said. Lindberg's pairing with All Blacks full-back Barrett is certain to be of major interest in rugby-mad New Zealand.

"I might have mentioned to (organisers)

that I really like the All Blacks, the rugby team," said Florida-based Lindberg, who won the 2018 ANA Inspiration, her sole major triumph.

"(Barrett) sent me a message last night and said he's excited to play with me and I might have been very, very excited when I got that message." Only a handful of women have played in men's golf events since American Babe Zaharias crossed the gender divide to play in the 1938 Los Angeles Open.

Swede Annika Sorenstam and Americans Suzy Whaley, Michelle Wie and Brittany Lincicome have all featured in men's events this century but only Zaharias managed to make the halfway cut. — Reuters

Sports

Pastrnak's hat trick boosts Bruins

BOSTON: David Pastrnak completed his fourth hat trick of the season and surpassed 40 goals as the Boston Bruins beat the visiting Montreal Canadiens 4-1 Wednesday night. Pastrnak regained the league lead with his 41st goal when he scored his third of the night late in the second period. Patrice Bergeron added an empty-netter and Brad Marchand had two assists as the Bruins won for the seventh time in their past eight games. Tuukka Rask stopped 28 shots to improve to 13-0-6 at home this season. Nick Suzuki scored for the Canadiens, who lost their second straight. Carey Price made 34 saves for Montreal. Pastrnak became the first Bruin to reach 40 goals in a season since Glen Murray scored 44 in 2002-03. He is the first Bruin to register four hat tricks in a season since Phil Esposito and Bobby Orr each did it in 1974-75.

CANUCKS 3, BLACKHAWKS 0

Jacob Markstrom stopped 49 shots for his second shutout of the season as Vancouver blanked visiting Chicago. It was the fifth career shutout for Markstrom, who also picked up his 22nd win of the season. The Canucks improved

to 19-6-3 at home, the most home wins by any Western Conference team, and won for the 11th time in their past 12 games at Rogers Arena. Brandon Sutter had a goal and two assists, and Bo Horvat and Adam Gaudette also scored goals for Vancouver. Corey Crawford finished with 17 saves for Chicago, which saw its winless streak extended to a season-long five games (0-3-2) despite firing a season-high 49 shots on goal.

KINGS 5, FLAMES 3

Calvin Petersen made 35 saves in his second start of the season and the 12th of his NHL career, helping Los Angeles end a five-game losing streak with a win against visiting Calgary. Petersen made 14 saves in the third period, including three during a five-on-three that lasted 1:02. Tyler Toffoli, Austin Wagner, Kurtis MacDermid, Jeff Carter and Sean Walker scored for the Kings, who came in 0-5-0 at Staples Center since Dec. 31. Elias Lindholm scored two goals, Mikael Backlund also scored, and David Rittich made 28 saves for Calgary, which was coming off back-to-back 6-2 wins. — Reuters



BOSTON: Marco Scandella #28 of the Montreal Canadiens clears the puck down ice during the first period of the game against the Boston Bruins at TD Garden in Boston, Massachusetts. — AFP

King says allowing coaching from stands is 'no brainer'

LONDON: American great Billie Jean King believes allowing coaches to signal to players from the stands during matches is a "no brainer" that will create more interest in tennis. Women players are already allowed to summon their coaches during changeover once per set, apart from at Grand Slams, and the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) will trial a new system allowing coaches to interact from the stands. The trial will start at next week's Dubai Duty Free Championships. "They should be able to signal from the stands," King told Reuters by telephone this week. "Look at baseball. They have a first base coach and a third base coach, the coaches are giving all these signals, squeezing their nose or whatever and making all these signals. It's fascinating for people.

"They make documentaries on these coaches. It's just a story to promote our sport and anything we can do to promote it is a good thing, it's a no-brainer." The topic of coaching divides opinion and the ATP do not allow it in men's tournaments.

Players can receive code violations for 'coaching' from the stands. The issue became a hot topic following the 2018 US Open final when Serena Williams's coach Patrick Mouratoglou gestured to the player during her defeat by Japan's Naomi Osaka at Flushing Meadows, leading to a code violation and sparking a heated row between the American great and the chair umpire.

International Tennis Federation chief David Haggerty says he prefers the status-quo as far as on-court coaching, which is allowed in the Davis Cup and Fed Cup team events where the captain sits on court.

He said the ITF will use data from the WTA Tour trial to revisit the issue. Twelve-times Grand Slam singles champion King, a trailblazer for the sport throughout her career and afterwards, said tennis needed to get with the times and make coaches part of the narrative, as in other sports.

"I have always been for it (coaching on the court)", the 76-year-old said. "We want more people to go into coaching, and you have to see it to be it. If they are sitting up in the stands no one knows who they are.—Reuters

Aquabike World Championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Aquabike World Championship (the first round) for 2020 was opened under the patronage of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in the presence of Information Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri, Director General of Public Authority for Sports Dr Humoud Fulaiteh, PAS Deputy Director General for Competitive Sports Affairs Dr Saqer Al-Mulla, Chairman of Kuwait Sea Sports Club Mohammad Al-Zanki, board members and other sports leaders. The opening started with a display of participating countries' flags led by champion Yousuf Al-Abdelrazaq with Kuwait flag. There were also exciting fireworks followed by a display on water by several professionals, and it was concluded by laser displays. Preliminaries of qualifications began yesterday afternoon, as the morning period was for checking engines, and having a training run in the race field. Advanced competition will be completed today with the participation of all world ranked riders who did not go through the preliminaries. Meanwhile, the finals of all four categories GPI sitting, GPI men standing, GPI women standing, GPI free style will take place on Saturday afternoon and will end at 6 pm.

MAJOR PREPARATIONS

Director of Public Relations and Information at the Sea Sports Club Salman Al-Khulaifan lauded the large participation from various countries and wished them success. He said preparation for the championship four months earlier in order to have the best preparations possible and reach maximum success, for the sake of future events, in addition to proving Kuwait Youth ability to organize and manage the best world championships.

FANTASTIC ORGANIZATION

Meanwhile, Marketing Director of



Aquabike Raimondo di San Gernano lauded the organization of Aquabike World Championship 2020 (the first round), being held in Kuwait for the first time under the patronage of HH the Amir. He said preparations by the Sea Sports Club are up to the best preparations for world championships, adding that success will be with the first round. Kuwait's Champion Yousuf Al-Abdelrazaq said he is ready to compete for top place in the world

championships (first round), despite the dislocated shoulder injury which he suffered in the UAE championships. He said Kuwait's current weather is normal and ideal for Aquabike sports, adding that information has it the weather will be ideal during the week-end, and all what we have to do is concentrate in the presence of champions from France, UAE and Denmark who are the highest ranked in the world.

Sports

LeVert scores 20 points as Nets snap Raptors' 15-game winning streak

NEW YORK: Caris LeVert scored 20 points Wednesday night in New York as the Brooklyn Nets recorded a 101-91 victory over the Toronto Raptors, who saw their team-record, 15-game winning streak come to an end. The Nets won their fifth straight home game and headed into the All-Star break with seven wins in their last 10 games. Brooklyn also picked up a rare win over Toronto, beating the Raptors for only the second time in the past 20 meetings since Jan. 6, 2016. Joe Harris added 19 points for the Nets, who led for the final 43:50. Spencer Dinwiddie contributed 17 points, nine assists and six rebounds for Brooklyn. Jarrett Allen collected 10 points and 13 rebounds. Serge Ibaka scored 28 points to lead the Raptors, whose last loss was by one point on their home court to the San Antonio Spurs on Jan. 12.

LOS ANGELES LAKERS 120 - DENVER NUGGETS 116 (OT)

LeBron James had 32 points, 14 assists and 12 rebounds, Anthony Davis finished with 33 points and 10 rebounds, and Los Angeles won at Denver for the second time this season. It was the 12th triple-double of the season for James, tying him with the Dallas Mavericks' Luka Doncic for the NBA lead. Dwight Howard had 14 points and 11 rebounds, and Alex Caruso and Avery Bradley scored 10 points each for the Lakers, who are 5-1 in their last six games overall. Jamal Murray had 32 points and 10 assists, Nikola Jokic scored 22 and added 11 rebounds, and Jerami Grant had 15 points for Denver. Gary Harris and Monte Morris added 13 and 12 points respectively. The Nuggets had their four-game win streak snapped.

INDIANA PACERS 118 - MILWAUKEE BUCKS 111

T.J. Warren scored 35 points as Indiana snapped a season-high, six-game losing streak by defeating Central Division rival Milwaukee in Indianapolis. Warren shot 16 of 19 from the field for the Pacers, who exploited the absence of Giannis Antetokounmpo and shot a sizzling 61.9 percent from the floor (26 of 42) in the first half. Former Buck Malcolm Brogdon collected 17 points and 13 assists. Donte DiVincenzo scored a team-high 19 points and Khris Middleton added 17 for the Bucks, who sustained their first loss in six games without Antetokounmpo in the lineup. The reigning NBA MVP sat out his second consecutive contest following the birth of his first child, Liam Charles.

ORLANDO MAGIC 116 - DETROIT PISTONS 112 (OT)

Aaron Gordon had 25 points, nine rebounds and nine assists, and Nikola Vucevic hit the go-ahead shot in overtime as host Orlando held off Detroit. Markelle Fultz supplied 22 points and 10 assists, while Vucevic contributed 19 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists. Evan Fournier added 19 points for the Magic. Christian Wood led the Pistons with 26 points and 12 rebounds. Thon Maker had 18 points, Markieff Morris scored 14, Reggie Jackson added 12 and Langston Galloway chipped in 11 for the Pistons, who have lost four straight.

DALLAS MAVERICKS 130 - SACRAMENTO KINGS 111

Luka Doncic recorded 33 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists in his return from an ankle injury to lead Dallas to a victory over visiting Sacramento. Doncic

missed seven games with the injury, and the Mavericks went 3-4 without the All-Star point guard. On Wednesday, Doncic shot 10 of 18 — including 3 of 7 from 3-point range — and 10 of 12 from the free-throw line in 31 minutes before exiting with 6:26 remaining. Kristaps Porzingis had 27 points, 13 rebounds, five assists and three blocked shots for Dallas. Buddy Hield posted 22 points and nine assists for the Kings, who have dropped back-to-back games after winning six of their previous eight contests.

MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES 111 - PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS 104

Brandon Clarke scored 27 points and Ja Morant added 20 with nine assists as host Memphis' rookies led the charge past Portland in the last game for each team before the All-Star break. Jonas Valanciunas and De'Anthony Melton each scored 12 points, while Valanciunas added 18 rebounds, as the Grizzlies won for the fourth time in their past five games and the eighth time in their past 10 contests. Damian Lillard scored 20 points for the Blazers, but he left for good with 3:22 remaining with what was later reported as a right groin strain. CJ McCollum scored 23 points and Anfernee Simons added 22 off the bench for Portland.

UTAH JAZZ 116 - MIAMI HEAT 101

Donovan Mitchell scored a game-high 26 points, and Bojan Bogdanovic added 22 points, leading Utah to a win over Miami in Salt Lake City. Jordan Clarkson had 21 points off the bench for the Jazz, who have won four consecutive games. Rudy Gobert added 16 points, two blocks and a game-high 20 rebounds. Gobert and Mitchell, both first-time All-Stars this year, were honored before the game by the Jazz. The Heat, who finished a 1-4 road trip, were led by Jimmy Butler's 25 points.

WASHINGTON WIZARDS 114 - NEW YORK KNICKS 96

Bradley Beal scored 10 of his game-high 30 points in the fourth quarter as Washington pulled away for a win at New York. The Wizards outscored the Knicks 37-23 in the fourth quarter on their way to their fifth victory in seven games. The Knicks lost their second straight following a season-high four-game winning streak. Beal has scored 30 points in back-to-back games, and he has tallied at least 30 in nine of his past 11 games. Davis Bertans had 16 points off the bench for the Wizards. Julius Randle finished with 21 points and 13 rebounds for the Knicks, and Elfrid Payton collected 19 points and eight assists.

PHOENIX SUNS 112 - GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS 106

Devin Booker's 27 points helped host Phoenix hold off Golden State in the final game before the NBA All-Star break for both teams. Kelly Oubre Jr. added 15 points and Mikal Bridges 14 for the Suns, who had lost six of their previous seven games. Forward Jonah Bolden, signed to a 10-day contract before the game, scored six points with seven rebounds in 26 minutes in his Phoenix debut. Andrew Wiggins' 27 points led the Warriors, who have lost four straight and have the NBA's worst road record at 5-24. Former Sun Marquese Chriss added 18 points and 12 rebounds.

CLEVELAND CAVALIERS 127 - ATLANTA HAWKS 105

Tristan Thompson, Andre Drummond and Larry



BROOKLYN: Taurean Prince #2 of the Brooklyn Nets shoots the ball against the Toronto Raptors at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York. —AFP

Nance Jr. each produced a double-double to help host Cleveland end a six-game losing streak with a win over Atlanta. Thompson came off the bench to score 27 points, hitting a season-high three 3-pointers, and grab 11 rebounds. Drummond, playing his second game with the Cavaliers since being acquired at the trade deadline, had 14 points and 15 rebounds to extend his streak of double-doubles to seven straight games.

CHARLOTTE HORNETS 115 - MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES 108

Devonte' Graham pumped in 28 points, and Malik Monk came off the bench for 25 points as Charlotte recovered from a big first-half hole to

defeat Minnesota in Minneapolis, spoiling the home debut of Minnesota guard D'Angelo Russell. Charlotte's Miles Bridges poured in 20 points, Bismack Biyombo supplied 14 points and 10 rebounds, and rookie Jalen McDaniels had 10 points. The Hornets were without guard Terry Rozier, who had a sore left knee. Despite winning their last two games, the Hornets have still lost 13 of their last 16. Malik Beasley led Minnesota with 28 points, and Russell notched 26 points and 11 assists. The Timberwolves also received 16 points and 12 rebounds from Juancho Hernangomez. Minnesota, which was without Karl-Anthony Towns because of a left wrist injury, lost for the 15th time in 16 games. — Reuters

Kobe, daughter buried in private ceremony

LOS ANGELES: Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna were buried last week near their family home in Newport Beach, California, in a private ceremony, according to death certificates.

A death certificate for the basketball legend, who was killed in a helicopter crash outside Los Angeles on January 26 along with his daughter and seven others, states that he was buried last Friday at Pacific View Memorial Park in Corona del Mar, US media reported.

A memorial service for Bryant and Gianna is planned February 24 at the Staples Center in downtown Los Angeles which can hold 20,000 people. The Center, also the home of the NHL's Los Angeles Kings and venue for concerts and events such as

the recent Grammy Awards, has hosted memorials for recording artists Michael Jackson and Nipsey Hussle.

Byrant's wife Vanessa on Monday took to Instagram to express her grief saying "my brain refuses to accept that both Kobe and Gigi are gone." "It's like I'm trying to process Kobe being gone but my body refuses to accept my Gigi will never come back to me," she added.

"It feels wrong. Why should I be able to wake up another day when my baby girl isn't being able to have that opportunity?! I'm so mad. She had so much life to live. Then I realize I need to be strong and be here for my 3 daughters." Bryant had an iconic 20-year career playing with the Los Angeles Lakers. — AFP

Sports

Hertha Berlin in turmoil after Klinsmann's surprise departure

BERLIN: Hertha Berlin have little time to pick up the pieces of their failed collaboration with coach Juergen Klinsmann, who has left the club after only eight weeks in charge, if they are to win their fight to avoid relegation.

The Berliners sit 14th in the Bundesliga table, six points above the relegation playoff spot, despite having pumped more than 70 million euros (\$76 million) into transfers over the winter period as requested by Klinsmann.

The former United States and Germany coach arrived in late November ready to lead a "big club project" and saying Berlin deserved a big team like other major European cities.

He pledged to turn Hertha from a relegation-threatened club to a contender for European spots within two seasons, with the backing of Hertha's major investor Lars Windhorst. But on Tuesday his project crashed before it had even taken flight. Klinsmann claimed there was a lack of trust from the bosses and wanted more control taken away from sports director Michael Preetz and given to him.

Windhorst, who has pledged a total of more than 200 million euros after coming in as an investor last year, said on Thursday he regretted Klinsmann's decision. He called the manner of his departure "unacceptable", saying Klinsmann could no longer keep his seat on the club board.

"Unfortunately the way he left is so unacceptable that a constructive collaboration with him in such a form cannot continue," Windhorst

told a news conference. "It is regrettable to have left so abruptly but we have to live with it." "This is not acceptable. Maybe you can do it as a teenager but in the business world among adults, such things should not happen."

REPUTATIONAL DAMAGE

Klinsmann's decision will no doubt hurt his own reputation in the Bundesliga, given that his only other league experience was a failed brief spell at Bayern Munich more than a decade ago. But it also leaves Hertha with a black eye and in complete turmoil.

Players said they were stunned and confused by the decision but they must now recover in time for their trip to bottom club Paderborn on Saturday as they battle to avoid the drop and earn back the trust of their fans.

Hertha will have some help with the arrival this week of Brazilian forward Matheus Cunha — one of Klinsmann's winter transfers worth a reported 18 million euros — who had been busy with the Brazil Under-23 team for their Olympic qualifiers.

With only five goals in their last seven league games, Hertha need Cunha's goals badly. At the other end of the table, Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich will look to protect their one-point advantage with a win at strugglers Cologne.

The Bavarians, on 43 points, are eager to bounce back from last week's goalless draw against RB Leipzig, who are second and host rel-



BERLIN: File photo taken on November 27, 2019 shows Juergen Klinsmann, former Germany and United States head coach, as he gives a press conference in Berlin after German Bundesliga club Hertha Berlin announced he would take over as head coach. Klinsmann announced on facebook on February 11, 2020, he will leave as coach of Hertha Berlin. — AFP

egation-threatened Werder Bremen. Borussia Dortmund, third on 39, entertain Eintracht Frankfurt, who are unbeaten this year having won three of their four games since the winter break.

Dortmund, who suffered a 4-3 loss to Bayer Leverkusen last week, are also in action against Paris St Germain in the Champions League Round of 16 next week. — Reuters

Liverpool will decide on Salah and Olympics

CAIRO: Mohamed Salah's potential involvement for his country in the Tokyo Olympic Games will be a decision for the player and his club Liverpool, Egypt's Olympic coach told Reuters on Wednesday.

Media reports on Salah's inclusion in a provisional 50-man squad led to speculation that Liverpool could be without Salah for the start of the next Premier League season. But Egyptian Olympic team coach Shawky Gharib said they could not force the player to be involved. "Salah's participation with the Pharaohs team in Tokyo is a decision to be taken only by Salah, his club Liverpool and his coach Juergen Klopp," he said. "We cannot force Salah to participate with us because FIFA regulations do not compel him to participate."

The Olympic tournament is for Under-23 teams but three over-age players are allowed in each squad. FIFA has long acknowledged that clubs are not obliged to release over-age players for the Games.

Salah was part of the Liverpool team which won the Champions League last season and they are now runaway leaders in the Premier League with the Egyptian their top scorer on 14 goals. In response to Salah's inclusion in the squad, the player's agent Ramy Abbas posted on Twitter that "no decision has been made yet" and Gharib said that view was correct.

"The agent's comment does not offend anyone .. What he said is the same truth," he said, noting that Klopp had not ruled out or backed his player featuring in Tokyo. But Gharib clearly hopes a way can be found for the striker, the most successful player Egypt has produced, to perform for his country in the tournament from July 22 to August 8. "Salah is one of the top three players in the world and any team hopes to have a player of his capabilities and skills in the squad ... I have chosen Salah in an expanded list of 50 players to select 18 players heading to Tokyo," he said. "The final list that will include 18 players will be sent next June, so it is too early to talk about the names of the 18 players." — Reuters



Mohamed Salah

Napoli beat Inter Milan

MILAN: Fabian Ruiz scored the only goal as Napoli shocked Inter Milan 1-0 in their Italian Cup semi-final, first leg tie in the San Siro on Wednesday. The Spanish midfielder broke through after 57 minutes to get Gennaro Gattuso's side back to winning ways after their 3-2 league defeat at home to lowly Lecce last weekend.

Ruiz picked up a Giovanni Di Lorenzo cross, beating three Inter defenders to curl in past a helpless Daniele Padelli. "This is the real Napoli. Big compliments to my lads," said Gattuso, whose side are 11th in the Serie A table.

But he warned: "There's no reason to smile, we still haven't achieved anything yet." Antonio Conte's side looked sluggish days after their thrilling 4-2 derby win over AC Milan which put them top of the Serie A table.

Both sides had their chances in the first half with Lautaro Martinez nodding wide with Padelli denying Piotr Zielinski just before the break in front of a crowd of nearly 60,000 in northern Italy. Conte sent on Cristian Eriksen after 65 minutes and the Dane threatened but David Ospina held firm in the Napoli goal. Napoli, who last won the trophy in 2014, now take a slim advantage into the second leg at their Stadio San Paolo on March 5. "The derby certainly took away a lot of energy," said Conte. "But we're talking about Napoli, who beat Lazio, Juventus, Liverpool. It's a team of substance despite its position in the standings."

Record 18-time winners Juventus take on AC Milan in the other semi-final on Thursday, again in the San Siro. The match will be the first clash in Italy between Juventus star Cristiano Ronaldo and Sweden's Zlatan Ibrahimovic. The final will take place in the Stadio Olimpico in Rome on May 13. — AFP

Sports

Six-goal PSG into French Cup semi finals as Lyon knock out Marseille

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain cruised into the semi-finals of the French Cup on Wednesday after thumping Dijon 6-1 in a match that saw the French champions benefit again from comical own goals. PSG were ahead just 47 seconds after kick off thanks to Wesley Lautoa shanking Mitchel Bakker's low cross into his own net to the bemusement of his teammates.

It was the second own goal in a week to be scored for PSG, who also saw Lyon's Fernando Marcal slam a stunning effort past his own goal-keeper at the weekend. However the hosts were level in the 13th minute thanks to a impressive low curling effort from Mounir Chouiar, which squeezed past Kaylor Navas.

While the away side were far from full strength, with Angel Di Maria and Mauro Icardi on the bench and Neymar not even in the squad, Thomas Tuchel's team did include Kylian Mbappe and Edinson Cavani, who was making his first start in over a month after nearly moving to Atletico Madrid in January.

The Uruguayan was left waiting his 200th goal for the club in the 21st minute when he turned home Thomas Meunier's cross, only for the strike to be ruled out for handball by the Belgian after a VAR check. "It's not that bad because he can score his 200th goal on Saturday

(against Amiens) or Tuesday (against Borussia Dortmund). I can feel he's there," said Tuchel.

On the match, he added: "I'm happy because we deserved the victory. It's a huge performance." Mbappe put PSG ahead a minute before the break, punishing Jhonder Cadiz's miss when clean through seconds before by clinically slotting home a similar chance.

Thiago Silva added a third four minutes after the break with a header from a corner before Pablo Sarabia ended Dijon's resistance by pushing home his 11th of the season on the rebound. Senou Coulibaly watched on in horror with five minutes left when Mbappe's cross looped off his thigh over helpless stopper Runar Alex Runarsson, before Sarabia tapped home his second in stoppage time from another Mbappe centre.

Later, Lyon coach Rudi Garcia knocked his former side Marseille out as Houssem Aouar scored an 81st minute winner. The winning goal came 10 minutes after Lyon's Moussa Dembele had a penalty — awarded when Hiroki Sakai handled a shot from Karl Toko Ekambi — saved by Yohan Pele in the Marseille goal.

It was the third time this season that Dembele had missed from the spot for Lyon. On Thursday, fourth division side Epinal — last 16 conquerors of Lille — will look to continue their stunning



DIJON: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe (L) scores a goal during the French Cup quarter final football match between Dijon (DFC) and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) at the Gaston-Gerard stadium in Dijon.—AFP

cup run going when they host Saint-Etienne. They will try to succeed where fellow fourth-

tier outfit Belfort failed following their 3-0 defeat to holder Rennes on Tuesday. — AFP

Tottenham sense chance to put squeeze on Chelsea

LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur have the opportunity to crank up the pressure on Chelsea in the battle for fourth place in the Premier League this weekend as they emerge from their mini mid-season break.

Jose Mourinho's side travel to relegation battlers Aston Villa on Sunday on the back of consecutive league wins, knowing another one will move them one point behind their stuttering London rivals who host Manchester United on Monday. Another slimline Premier League programme also has Arsenal hosting Newcastle United, with the London club hoping to snap a run of four successive draws that have left them meandering in mid-table.

Liverpool's procession towards a first title for 30 years looks likely to continue at bottom club Norwich City on Saturday, when the only other game is Southampton's home clash against Burnley. A victory for either side at St Mary's will go a long way to banishing any lingering relegation worries. With Manchester City enjoying a week off, Leicester City can move second if they win at Wolverhampton Wanderers on Friday.

When Mourinho arrived at Tottenham in November in the wake of Mauricio Pochettino's surprise sacking, the north London club were in 14th place after 12 games, 12 points behind Chelsea.

Seven wins and four defeats in their 13 league games since the celebrated Portuguese arrived is hardly a spectacular turnaround but with Chelsea stalling and other teams falling away it has been enough to push Tottenham back in the

race to secure Champions League football with a top-four finish.

It has not been pretty, with Tottenham scrambling points in unconvincing fashion, although a smash-and-grab 2-0 home victory over Manchester City in their last league game showed much about the galvanising effect Mourinho has had. Tottenham, who remain without injured striker Harry Kane, have lost only once in all competitions in the last 12 years against Villa, a 1-0 home defeat in 2015.

While another win will move them within touching distance of Chelsea into fifth place, Mourinho knows the battle for fourth spot is not just with his old club, with several other sides vying for the spot, none more so than Sheffield United who moved fifth by beating Bournemouth last week.

"Wolves and Sheffield United are fighting for the top four, (the managers) they can say no, and I understand if they say no but the reality is that they are," Mourinho said.

"Not just because of the position that they are in the table, but because of the power and quality." If Saturday's match represents a chance for Tottenham, who have 20 points fewer than at the same stage last season, to advance their top-four claims, Villa know a win would give them some precious breathing space in the relegation scrap. They are one place and one point above the bottom three. The Villa Park clash will see Mourinho come up against his former Chelsea skipper John Terry, who is cutting his teeth in coaching as Dean Smith's assistant.—Reuters

UEFA teams up with Disney in a bid to boost girls' participation

MANCHESTER: UEFA has teamed up with Disney to launch a pan-European project aimed at increasing the number of girls playing football. The biggest-ever attempt to boost girls' involvement in the game will start this spring in seven European countries before being introduced across the continent, European soccer's governing body said yesterday.

The new 'Playmakers' project is aimed at girls aged five to eight years old, who are not currently playing football, and is focused around play and games involving popular Disney characters and storylines.

The first stage of the project will be based around the *Incredibles 2* film and characters. UEFA had already committed to an ambitious target of doubling the number of women and girls playing the sport by 2024 and the youngest age group is seen as key to that change. Nadine Kessler, UEFA's Head of Women's Football, told Reuters that the aim of the programme was to "create an environment for all girls to flourish and develop, whether that be fundamental movement skills, football basics or life skills and values."

"We truly believe that this unique programme can be the spark for a more active generation of football-loving girls." While more teenage girls and women are playing football, girls tend to start later than boys, choosing other sports or activities.

UEFA examined research which showed

that globally 84% of girls under the age of 17 are not meeting the World Health Organization minimum activity guidelines.

When girls reach the age of 15-24, they are half as likely to participate in sport as boys the same age, according to studies by the European Commission for Education, Sport, Youth and Culture. Kessler says that sessions at Playmakers events will be very different from traditional training sessions.

"There will still be football cones and a ball but these sessions will allow girls to play out scenes of their favourite Disney movies, they will be empowered to take on the character and roles of their favourite Disney heroes."

"It is broken down into 10 sessions and the girl will learn basic football skills by completing different tasks," she added. The Playmakers project will launch in Scotland, Norway, Belgium, Poland, Austria, Romania, and Serbia this spring, before a full pan-European roll-out. Disney is not one of UEFA's commercial partners and has joined up with the organisation specifically for the Playmakers project. "It is a completely new agreement we have signed and a very important one," said Kessler.

"If you decided to create a programme based on play-based learning then you want to have the best characters and stories in the world and I think Disney has inspired generations and we are really happy to be able to use some of this magic." — Reuters

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BROOKLYN: Garrett Temple #17 of the Brooklyn Nets shoots the ball against the Toronto Raptors at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York. — AFP

Nets snap Raptors' 15-game win streak

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