



7 Erdogan threatens 'imminent' Turkish operation in Syria



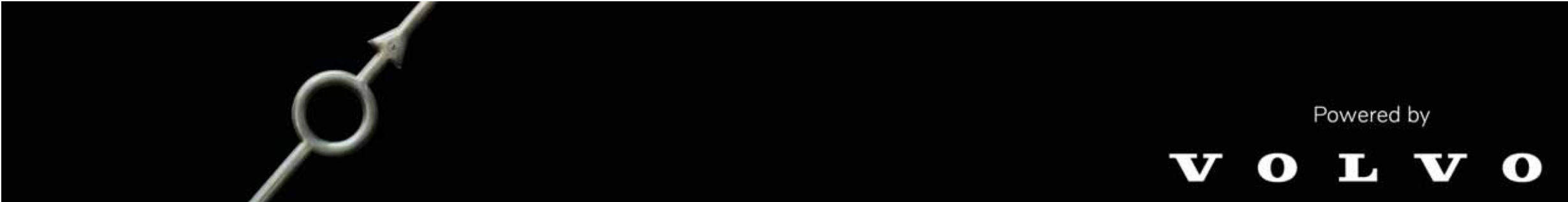
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28 Pens top Leafs, jump Caps for first place



Assembly launches probe into Airbus deal in subdued session

Finance minister says govt keen to protect public money, fight corruption

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: In a quiet session yesterday - contrary to the previous day - the National Assembly formed a fact-finding committee to investigate allegations of bribery in a deal Kuwait Airways signed six years ago with aircraft manufacturer Airbus. The move comes as Airbus faces a string of allegations from several countries of having paid kickbacks to secure deals, three weeks after agreeing to pay a \$4 billion fine for a settlement in a British court over allegations of bribery.

Kuwait Airways in 2014 signed a multibillion-dollar deal with Airbus for the purchase of 15 Airbus 320neo aircraft and 10 Airbus 350-900. The deal was later modified to include a number of A-330neo aircraft. Delivery of the planes began in September last year and is expected to continue until next year. The deal also included leasing 12 small and large planes for several years until the new aircraft are delivered.

Opposition MP Riyadh Al-Adasani, who was the first

to raise the issue, said the names of Kuwait and a number of personalities were mentioned in the British court judgment, and accordingly "we must investigate the allegations". "The Airbus deal case involves suspected financial crimes, conflict of interests, financial transactions and a suspicious involvement of an Arab middleman with Kuwaiti officials. Therefore we have to investigate and probe with all government bodies related to the deal," Adasani told a special debate held at the Assembly.

The Assembly selected MPs Saleh Ashour, Bader Al-Mulla and Khalil Al-Saleh as members of the fact-finding committee and gave it three months to complete its mission. MPs also voted to ask the Audit Bureau, the state accounting watchdog, to launch a comprehensive investigation into the deal and report back to the Assembly within one month. MPs called for obtaining a copy of the British court verdict on alleged kickbacks by Airbus. MP Mohammad Al-Dallal said the Assembly must also launch its own investigation into the deal.

Finance Minister Barak Al-Shitan stressed the govern-

ment's keenness to protect public money and fight corruption. He added if the probe results revealed any suspicions, the government will not hesitate to take all legal measures and refer all those responsible to face justice.

In the settlement struck by Airbus in the British court, it agreed to pay €3.6 billion (\$3.9 billion) in fines to Britain, France and the United States to settle corruption probes into some of its aircraft sales. Days after the settlement, Sri Lanka ordered an investigation into a multibillion-dollar aircraft purchase from Airbus after the deal was named in the settlement. The former chief of Sri Lankan Airlines, Kapila Chandrasena, was arrested on Feb 6 for allegedly receiving bribes relating to the deal.

Earlier this month, two senior officials of the Malaysia-based AirAsia stepped aside while authorities probe unusual payments at the carrier, as the fallout from the Airbus scandal reverberated across the industry. Kuwait has also initiated criminal investigations into two large

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KUWAIT: Finance Minister Barak Al-Shitan speaks during a National Assembly session yesterday. — KUNA

UAE loads fuel rods at Arab world's first nuclear plant

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates has started loading fuel rods into the first reactor at its Barakah nuclear plant, operators said yesterday, two days after regulators gave the green light. On Monday, the national nuclear regulator announced it has issued the operating license for the first of the plant's four reactors, opening the way for commercial operations to begin. The plant, the first in the Arab world, had been due to go online in late 2017 but faced a number of delays that officials attributed to safety and regulatory requirements.

"The Nawah Energy Company has commenced loading the first nuclear fuel assemblies as the initial step in the process towards safely and gradually commencing operations and subsequent generation of clean electricity," Nawah said in a statement. The statement added that Unit 1 will begin commercial operations after a "series of tests" leading to the start-up process.

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Infertile cancer patient has baby using frozen egg

PARIS: In a world first, a woman rendered infertile by cancer treatment gave birth after one of her immature eggs was matured, frozen, and then - five years later - thawed and fertilized, researchers in France reported. A study in the journal Annals of Oncology published yesterday describes how the baby boy was born to a 34-year-old French woman who had been treated with chemotherapy for breast cancer.

Before the treatment began, doctors removed seven immature eggs from her ovaries and used a technique called in vitro maturation (IVM) to allow the eggs to develop further in the laboratory. Up to now, there have been no successful pregnancies in cancer patients with eggs that have undergone IVM and freezing.

Some children, however, have been born as a result of IVM immediately followed by fertilization and transfer to the patient. Michael Grynberg, head of the Department of Reproductive Medicine and Fertility Preservation at Antoine Beclere University Hospital near Paris, recalled becoming aware of the 29-year-old patient's case.

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Jet 'downing' stirs alarm over Houthi arsenal

RIYADH: Claims that Yemeni rebels shot down a Saudi warplane have spotlighted the increasingly potent Houthi arsenal - cause for alarm in Riyadh as fighting escalates amid faltering efforts to end the five-year conflict. The Iran-aligned Houthi rebels said they downed the Tornado aircraft on Friday over the volatile northern province of Al-Jawf, in a setback for the Riyadh-led military coalition that has always enjoyed air supremacy in the conflict. The fate of the two Saudi crewmen who ejected from

the plane remains unknown.

The rebels, once dismissed as a rag-tag militia, said they hit the jet with an "advanced surface-to-air missile". The claim followed recent UN reports that the Houthis had received weapons bearing signs of Iranian origin. Tehran has long denied arming the rebels. Following the crash, a Houthi spokesman said Yemeni airspace was off-limits and not a "picnic" spot for its enemies.

"This is definitely a cause for alarm for the coalition," Becca Wasser, a policy analyst at the US-based RAND Corporation, told AFP. "They need to plan as though this is the new normal and that the Houthis have the capability to shoot down more aircraft, which is going to affect their operations and how

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SANAA: This file image grab taken on July 23, 2019 shows ballistic missiles on display during an exhibition of various missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles. — AFP

Woman asks Putin: 'Could you live on \$170 a month?'

SAINT PETERSBURG: Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday faced what appeared to be a rare unscripted grilling from a Russian woman who asked him how much he earns and whether he could live on her income of \$170 a month. While visiting his native city of Saint Petersburg, Putin had laid a wreath at a political mentor's grave and was approached by peo-

ple passing nearby, who filmed him on cell phones.

A woman in a hooded coat pushed through and immediately asked Putin: "Please tell me, is it possible to live on 10,800 rubles (\$170)?" "I think it's very hard," Putin said quietly in video footage posted by Russian media. "Your pay is probably about 800,000 rubles, I imagine," she says. "Well yes," Putin says, while adding that some in Russia earn far more and "the president doesn't have the highest salary."

The woman, who said she is studying book-keeping and lives on disability benefits, went on to talk about everyday costs, apparently doubting Putin knew the figures. A trip to the grocery store costs at least 1,000 rubles, she said, while utility bills for a flat cost at least 4,000 rubles. While Putin shines at

public speaking in large auditoriums with usually carefully orchestrated questions, he rarely goes out on the street for unpredictable encounters with members of the public.

Yesterday, Putin referred to recent policy initiatives to improve lives of families with children, including enhanced child benefits and payouts for the birth of a child. "Of course you are right, we still have a lot of social problems that the government has to solve," he said. "Why don't you solve them then?" the woman retorted. "We are solving them," Putin said. The woman then asked Putin to pose with her for a photo. Putin was in Saint Petersburg to mark twenty years since the death of his early political mentor, former city mayor Anatoly Sobchak. — AFP

Syrian dad and daughter laugh off the shelling

SARMADA, Syria: In Syria's Idlib, there's no escaping the war, so Abdullah Al-Mohammed says the only way he found to reassure his daughter Salwa was to turn the shelling into a game. A video in which she laughs every time an explosion goes off was widely shared on social media in recent days as a heartening but grim reminder of Idlib residents' daily lives. "Is it a plane or is it a mortar?" he asks, as a whizzing sound grows in the background. "A mortar," the three-year-old answers. "When it comes, we will laugh."

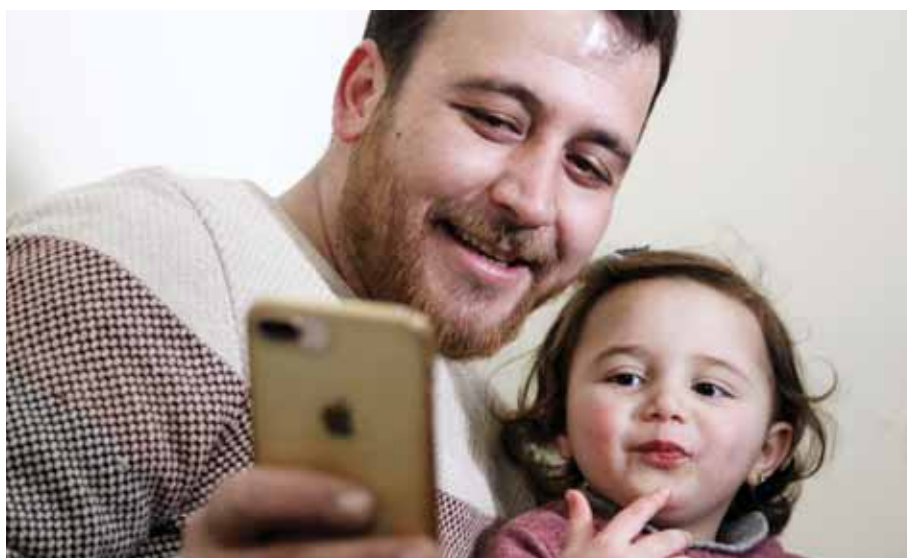
In another video, Salwa is standing on her father's lap in their living room and

her hearty laugh is set off by the sinister thunder of a bomb dropped by a warplane. "Tell me Salwa, what did the plane do," the father asks his daughter. "The plane came and I laughed a lot. The plane just makes us laugh, it tells us: Laugh at me, laugh at me," she says.

An AFP reporter met the 32-year-old father in Sarmada, a town in Syria's last rebel pocket, which Russian-backed regime forces are trying to crush. He and his family fled from Saraqeb, another town in Idlib which has already been retaken by regime forces and has been partly levelled by air raids. Now as the regime presses its northwards offensive and continues to push civilians ever closer to the Turkish border, the air strikes are back.

Mohammed explains that when Salwa was still 12 months old, she started crying when she heard fireworks in the neighborhood.

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SARMADA, Syria: Syrian father Abdullah Al-Mohammed checks a phone with his three-year-old daughter Salwa at their home in this town in Syria's last rebel pocket in Idlib province yesterday. — AFP

Local

Kuwait's Amir congratulates Afghan President on re-election

Amir, Crown Prince receive senior state officials

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, congratulating him on his re-election to serve a new term in office. His Highness the Amir in the cable wished the president wellbeing and his country prosperity and promotion. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah addressed cables of identical content to the re-elected president.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, as well as the newly appointed Ambassadors of Georgia Konstantin Zhgenti, Japan Masato Takaoka, Bahrain Salah Al-Maliki, and the United States Alina Romanowski. Head of protocols at the Diwan of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah attended the meetings with the new ambassadors. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Japan to Kuwait Masato Takaoka.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Bahrain to Kuwait Salah Al-Maliki.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of the US to Kuwait Alina Romanowski.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Georgia to Kuwait Konstantin Zhgenti.

Kuwait PM meets Egypt Minister of Int'l Cooperation

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace the visiting Egypt's Minister of International Cooperation Rania Al-Mashat and her accompanying delegation.

The head of His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikha Itimad Khalid Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development Director-General, Abdulwahab Al-Bader also attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and Egypt's Minister of International Cooperation discussed boosting bilateral ties and issues of mutual concern. Senior officials from Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Tariq Al-Qouni attended the meeting. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Egypt's Minister of International Cooperation Rania Al-Mashat. —KUNA



Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Egypt's Minister of International Cooperation Rania Al-Mashat.

NBK welcomes new batch of 'Yalla Watani' trainees

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) welcomed its 3rd batch of trainees in 2020 attending the 'Yalla Watani' program. The trainees were welcomed by executives from the Consumer Banking Group and Group Human Resources. The program that will be delivered to 13 participants extends over a period of three weeks and covers various aspects of technical

and soft skills including among others: banking principles, banking products (credit cards, loans, account types, etc), communication skills, business ethics, risk management principles and anti-money laundering, business etiquette and system training. The Yalla Watani program reflects NBK's vision to support sustainable human capital development as one of its top strategic priorities. Indeed, this program is one of the most important career developmental programs held in the private sector for fresh Kuwaiti graduates. The program is an integral part of NBK's frequent training programs aimed to provide participants with professional training through various banking aspects while equipping them with the necessary skillset required to work in the branch network.



ABK participates in Service Hero excellence seminar

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently participated in the 'Service Hero Excellence Seminar 2020' which took place on February 16, 2020 at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Cultural Center. Stewart Lockie - General Manager - Retail Banking at ABK, who represented ABK on the executive panel titled: 'Winning Hearts - Where Heroic Behavior Thrives'

said: "At ABK, we strive for consistency in every customer interaction. Whatever role you play in the bank, you have a role to deliver service excellence."

The panel discussed the importance of achieving exceptional customer experience through successful engagement, dynamic staff, and fundamentals of the customer excellence journey from a customer's perspective, as well as the importance of coaching and mentoring our future leaders.

ABK has heavily invested in its human capital, and has worked hard to ensure consistent high levels of customer service. In line with the bank's strategy on 'simpler banking' ABK has improved processes by providing a fast, more streamlined banking experience.



Local

Kuwait celebrates 14th anniversary of Crown Prince's assumption of post

Half century of tremendous efforts to place Kuwait among advanced nations

KUWAIT: The 14th anniversary of His Highness the Crown Prince's assumption of the state's second ranking post falls today, an occasion of recognition for a top leader who has served the homeland with great devotion and faithfulness. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah issued the Amiri Decree naming His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as the Crown Prince for the latter's traits as a man of piety, competence and qualifications that render him entitled to occupy the senior post. In addition to these traits, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf meets all terms stipulated by Kuwait Constitution and rules of the 'Emirate succession law.'

Tremendous efforts

The record of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf in politics and tasks spans more than half a century, a period of time during which he had exerted tremendous efforts to place Kuwait among advanced and developed nations. His Highness' contributions and expertise in sectors under his leadership have drawn much admiration and respect from various quarters. His Highness, since Kuwait Independence on June 19, 1961, has had contributions in politics. On February 12, 1962, he was named by the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah as Hawally Governor. He had retained that position until March 19, 1978, when he was named minister of interior, during the era of the

late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, until January 26, 1988.

After the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi occupation in 1991, Sheikh Nawaf took the portfolio of social affairs and labor ministry, effective April 2, 1991, until October 1992. On October 16, 1994, His Highness became Deputy Chief of the National Guard, holding the post until July 13, 2003, when he was named minister of interior. On October 16, 2003, an Amiri Decree was issued appointing him as the first deputy prime minister and minister of interior, retaining this position until he was proclaimed the Heir Apparent in 2006.

His Highness the Crown Prince has had major accomplishments before becoming the Crown Prince - such as transforming Hawally from an unpopular village into a civil district teeming with businesses. Sheikh Nawaf, during his service as minister of interior, was preoccupied with preserving the country's security and stability, staying abreast of modern time developments namely in sciences and security. He was architect for overhauling various security and police sectors, a strategy for combating crime. Moreover, he was keen on obtaining state-of-the-art technology to upgrade the national security apparatuses as he had done in the various departments he had served in.

His Highness engineered a full scale, meticulous security strategy for protecting land and marine borders, whereby networks had been installed to monitor all national

territories including the Kuwaiti islands. Border checkpoints were staffed and equipped to abort infiltrations or evil bids by any saboteur against the national security and stability. Furthermore, his contributions were explicit when he served as the minister of social affairs, taking rapid resolutions to care for the widows, the orphans and the elderly. He also proved to be an ideal supporter for children, women, namely the widows, the old citizens and the workers.

Decisive decisions

When Kuwait was invaded in 1990, Sheikh Nawaf helped in taking decisive decisions to face the occupation, placing all military and civil resources at the disposal of liberating the State of Kuwait, playing a role in commanding the resistance, securing the legitimate leadership in Saudi Arabia and commanding the army. His far-reaching vision proved fruitful, particularly with respect of facing terrorist events that happened in the country in January 2005. He had personally resisted the terrorists, was present at the scenes, bent on nipping terrorism in the bud. His Highness believes that powers and posts should be employed for aiding the underprivileged, the oppressed, that people are equal under laws and that all should be responsible for the country.

He was a supporter of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in his efforts to attain inter-GCC conciliation and reconciliation in Yemen, in addition to his keenness on backing the



KUWAIT: In this file photo, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah swears in in Parliament as Kuwait's Crown Prince.—KUNA

Arabs' top cause, the Palestinian issue, thus earning in 2018 the 'Grand Collar of the Canaanites' given by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas during an official visit to Kuwait. Sheikh Nawaf is quite keen on pro-

moting values of piety, obedience to Allah Almighty, unity of the people of Kuwait, stressing that Kuwait's progress hinges on the people's unity and faithfulness for its service.—KUNA

Crown Prince fundamental pillar in Kuwait's civilization

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Guard's Deputy Chief Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah affirmed that His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is a fundamental pillar in Kuwait's civilization. Marking the 14th anniversary of His Highness' assumption to the post, Sheikh Meshaal said Sheikh Nawaf has always been a main supporter of much success achieved during era of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The Kuwaiti people will always remember with appreciation and gratitude the extended journey of giving and sacrifices made by His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Meshaal added. His Highness the Heir Apparent, throughout his service in the senior posts, was keen to develop administrative and technical authorities and keep pace with all developments at various levels, he said. Kuwait's stability, security and fighting terrorism are among His Highness the Crown Prince's priorities, as he is always a symbol of diligence and devotion.

Meanwhile, Minister of Information Mohammad Al-Jabri congratulated His Highness the Crown Prince on the 14th anniversary of His Highness assuming office as Crown Prince. In a press release, Jabri assured that the Kuwaiti people will always remember actions taken by His Highness towards main-

taining peace, security, development, law and sovereignty of Kuwait in every position he held during five decades of serving the country, during which he was one of the most prominent and contemporary figures in building modern Kuwait. His Highness was able to draw attention since he assumed responsibility for Hawally Governorate in the early 1960s and made it the largest tourist and commercial governorate in Kuwait, Jabri noted.

Jabri praised His Highness the Crown Prince's efforts, work, and keenness to the interest of Kuwait and its people and preserving their security and comfort. Kuwaitis appreciate the experience of His Highness; a living example of a patriotic leader who spares no effort in supporting the aspirations of his people towards a prosperous future, Jabri noted. He pointed to the deep and rooted efforts spent by His Highness the Crown Prince in all positions he occupied, and ministries he chaired and the developments he made to the ministries of Interior, Defense, Social Affairs, and others. He also reaffirmed His Highness the Crown Prince's humbleness and generosity, wishing him great health and longevity in serving His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people.—KUNA

Deputy FM meets Palestinian Ambassador



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub.—KUNA

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah and Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub discussed, during a meeting yesterday, means to boost relations and the recent

regional and international developments. Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar attended the meeting.—KUNA

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Local

History of Awazem in Arabia



KUWAIT: Awazem is a genuine Arab tribe with lineage to the well-known Arab tribe of Hawazen. The Awazem are a purely Arab tribe mentioned in many history books by writers, who all agree on tracing its lineage to the Hawazen; a major pre- and post-Islamic tribe.

According to Abdul Rahman Abdul Kareem Al-Obaid's book *THE AWAZEM TRIBE*, their original home is the north-eastern parts of Arabia. They also have family connections with the Awazem in Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Yemen and Bahrain.

In a paper published in *Al-Kuwait Magazine* in 1928, Abdul Aziz Al-Rasheed spoke about the Awazem's Arabism, genuineness and Bedouin nature. He also confirmed their lineage with the Hawazen.

Dr Jamal Zakariya Qassim believes that the Awazem originally came from Ahsa, Najd, Kuwait and Qatar, while the Awazem outside these regions have roots in Arabia.

Non-Azmi and Azmi historians believe that the Awazem are the descendants of Aal Atta of Hozan and that Azem and Atta are both the descendants of Kelab ibn Rabe'e ibn Amer ibn Hozan.

This was confirmed by Hamad Al-Jassir in *Al-Arabi magazine* in 1416 AH, Jamal Zakariya Qassim in his book *THE ARABIAN GULF*, Dr Hamad Rasheed Al-Feel in his book *KUWAIT POPULATION*, Abdullah Nasser Al-Sane in a preface for poet Salem Al-Dawi's poetry book, Dr Ahmed Al-Muzaini in his book *KUWAITI TRIBES AND FAMILY LINEAGE*, Fayeze bin Moussa Al-Badrani Al-Harbi in his book *NAJD TRIBES NEWS*, Mohammed Sulaiman Al-Tayyeb in the *ARAB TRIBES ENCYCLOPEDIA*, Ibrahim Jarallah Al-Shareefi in his book *GOLDEN MASTERPIECE IN ARABIA LINEAGE*, Orientalist Georg Wallin in his book *AN IMAGE OF NORTHERN ARABIA* and the Royal British Navy's book about Arab countries.

●●●
Awzen clans lived and roamed Najd, Aliya, Hijaz all the way to Kathema (Kuwait) to the north

Ever since the early days of Islam, the Awazem inhabited the area between Ahsa in the south and Kathema (Kuwait) to the north. When the Qarmatians ruled this region, the Awazem extended their power to Bani Amer. In the second and fifth centuries after the hegira, the Qarmatians' power faded and Bani Amer ruled the region until the Ottomans invaded it in the mid-10th Hijri century. Mention of the great-grandfather Hozan kept being repeated by regional historians and it was proved that Awazem clans used to dwell and move to Hijaz and Najd between the 11th and 12th Hijri centuries.

Awazem's Bedouin Nature

The Awazem were nomads travelling in search of food and water for their sheep. The majority roamed the entire area of Kuwait, while in Saudi Arabia, they travelled around the area surrounding the eastern and northern water valley and some of them went further into Qateef and Ahsa.

They are widespread in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to the west of Madinah, in Sader and near Hael. Some of them live in Qatar, Jordan, Yemen and Egypt, though the majority lives in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Migration and Forays

As nomads, the Awazem were known for moving throughout Arabia and surrounding areas, making the tribe's history. Tribal poets, namely Lafi Al-Jeeha Al-Azmi, also contributed to documenting this history in detail, including travels and heroism. Various poems were written about the Awazem's might, multitude, dominance, ability to alter incidents and defeat their enemies or occupants of their lands and achieve safety, security and stability.

●●●
Awazem participated in many events and incidents, and were known for loyalty to the Al-Sabah family

Since its inception, the ancient Awazem tribe has been loyal to Al-Sabahs and has taken part in building Kuwait in various political, social and economic fields side-by-side with other tribes and families. The Awazem tribe descends from the famous Arab Hawazen tribe of Bani Qais Eilan bin Modhar bin Nizar bin Ma'd bin Adnan.

It is currently known that Hawazen races were divided into three main parts throughout Arabia:

1- Hijaz Hawazen including Bano Jasham, who are currently represented by the Otaiba tribe.

Ever since the early days of Islam, the Awazem inhabited the area between Ahsa in the south and Kathema (Kuwait) to the north

2- Yamamah Hawazen including Bano Amer ibn Ouf, who are currently represented by the Subaei tribe.

3- Ahsa Hawazen including Bano Kelab, who are currently represented by the Awazem tribe.

In his book *KUWAIT HISTORY*, Kuwait's prime historian Abdul Aziz Al-Rasheed said the Maliki doctrine was dominant in Kuwait and was followed by some of Kuwait's rulers and some known urban and desert-dwelling families.

Both ancient and modern Arabic history is full of mentioning scores of genuine Arab tribes and clans that had had a great impact and played a great role in pre- and post-Islamic history.

One of these tribes is the Awazem, geographically living in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, while others, less in number, live in other countries.

In this humble research, we will review Awazem lineage, highlights of their history and that they are known for as nomads who had contributed to setting nomad principles and created them. They were also knights and skilled horsemen who made history while mounting them.

●●●
Awazem enriched Arab poetry with poems and lexicon expressing life style items such as swords, horses, coffee, camels and others

In addition to the details of the Awazem and other tribes' Bedouin way of life in both peace and war, social life and socializing with others is also significant in terms of preserving Arabic heritage. Arabic readers can clearly realize that poetic phrases they used speak for themselves using lexicon of the time such as swords, horses, coffee, camels and other desert Bedouin life details. Horses and camels were highly thought of by the Awazem because they needed them in daily life, wars and transport.

The Awazem were famous for breeding Arabian horses. They are also known as knights, using horses in sport and battles. The most famous equine names are Khehailah, Abbiya, Hamdaniya, Kroush, Swaitiyya and Sabha.

These genuine Arabian horse names are still used nowadays. Breeds of these Arabian horses are found in the Arabian Gulf, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Bahrain, and have been mentioned in many poems.

Camels also had the same significance and were men-

tioned in poetry. A number of historians dealing with Awazem history mentioned this. In an article published in *Al-Arabi magazine* in 1961 (issue # 37), Al-Alousi said that the Awazem had fortunes of camels.

In *Lughat Al-Arab Magazine* published in 1911, it was mentioned that "the Awazem dwelled in the vicinity of Kuwait (the Land of ibn Sabah) and had lots of camels". "The Awazem are a Kuwaiti clan of the oldest who had ever lived in Kuwait. They worked in trade, especially that of camels and sheep," says the *Kuwait Encyclopedia*. "Awazem have many kinds of camels they call as Wadhha, Mejaheem, Sha'al, Moghatheir and Wasem Al-Awazem, which the mark X burned on animal bellies or left, and sometimes right, thighs" it adds.

●●●
Modern Awazem spread in Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain and are linked to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia with family ties, genuine Arab traditions

Nowadays, Awazem are found in the Levant, Egypt, Yemen and Bahrain, and have genealogical ties with those living in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. They share the same history, values, traditions and interests. They have family ties and deep communication in the form of tribal judiciary or allied with other tribes in those countries.

●●●
Awazem had major role in defending Kuwait, and protecting marine borders with Iraq. They are known for morality, piety and contributions to societies they live within

A number of books have tackled Awazem history through Lafi Al-Jeeha's poem, which included indications about the nature of life in Arabia and Awazem's status there.

The poem refers to Awazem numbers, might, control over their lands and capability to manage errands there, especially defending and stopping any aggression and imposing their own terms of peace or surrender.

According to Lafi's poems, the Awazem managed to control the area between Kuwait to the north and Qateef to the south after several battles with tribes dwelling there such as the Dasma battle in 1854, Al-Sabeeha battle in 1878, Al-Tareefa battle in 1895, Meraikh battle in 1915, Al-Noqair battle in 1924 and the Redha and Noqair battles in 1929, which were the most famous and most mentioned in poetry.

According to men who actually witnessed the last two

battles in 1929, they verbally testified that they were the most important in protecting the tribe's existence when strangers decided to occupy Ahsa and its surrounding areas. On the way, they came to a well known as Redha Spring, where they wanted to defeat the Azmis living there and take over the well, which they failed to do and were routed. Two months later, the invaders remobilized troops to retaliate, but the Awazem waited for them by a well known as Noqair, where they again defeated them.

According to historical resources, those two battles were behind mentioning the Awazem in history books, and had the enemy defeated them, they would not have been mentioned by historians afterwards.

Al-Sabah's Testimony About Awazem

The late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah said that: "Awazem tribe played a great role in building and developing Kuwait's economy. Since ancient days, they have been playing major roles in both local and foreign trade and there are many proofs to that".

Al-Sabah added that Salman Bin Rashdan Al-Azmi had built a large dhow in Naibar, which he named after himself and sailed back to Kuwait loaded with goods as an example of supporting the Kuwaiti economy.

Further, Sheikh Abdullah also noted that Awazem were the first to inhabit the area now known as Salmiya when it was known as Al-Demnah. When more Kuwaitis resided in it, its name was then changed to Louthan before Abdul Aziz and his brothers changed the name to Salmiya. "The area originally belongs to Awazem who have benefited Kuwait a lot and been so loyal to its people", he added, pointing out that Awazem had a significant role in pearl diving and shipbuilding, that their history dates back to Kuwait's inception and that they had worked in honest jobs and earned their bread with dignity and Halal methods.

First Azmi Officer in Kuwait Armed Forces

Abdullah Ayedh Al-Melaihan, of Al-Kharma family from the Sawaber clan was the first Azmi officer in Kuwait's Armed Forces. He initially joined the Jordanian army on formation and was, then, known as 'Abdullah, the Kuwaiti'. He fought in Palestine liberation wars in 1945 and 1948. He was decorated for public service in Palestine, for taking part in the operations in 1948 and received the Military Duty medal of first order. He joined Kuwait Army on January 6, 1954 and was promoted up to a colonel, which was a very high rank then.

He assumed the 15th brigade commandship and was very merciful with personnel. Despite age difference, I have known the man and travelled with him and would need endless pages to write about his life.



Article 18 visa online renewal starts March 1: Interior Ministry

Unlicensed pharmacy warehouse found in Mahboula

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Residency Affairs Maj Gen Talal Maarafi said his sector is getting ready to launch the new service of renewing article 18 residencies online from Sunday, March 1. He said a hall at the residency department will be designated to receive applications from companies and establishments, where explanations will be given on how to renew article 18 residencies online. He said company representatives must bring the application form from the company, the unified number and an email address. Maarafi said the article 17 residencies for government workers will be launched online next, and the iqama affairs directorate will be connected to all ministries. He called upon citizens and expats to take advantage of the online services.

National holidays

Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Essam Al-Naham met yesterday with Saad Al-Abdullah Security Sciences Academy officials and conveyed to them greetings of Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh, lauding their role in facilitating all that is necessary to enhance the capabilities of the students with the most recent sciences to have a modern security team. As the Interior Ministry is preparing for the 59th National Day and 29th Liberation Day,

Naham met concerned security leaders to discuss security and mobilization. He said everyone must stay vigilant by coordinating between the field sectors in order to reach the sought after goal, and guarantee protection of the country's security and safety of citizens and expatriates.

Unlicensed pharmacy

The Ministry of Health (MoH) announced busting an unlicensed pharmacy warehouse in a Mahboula building containing different kinds of medicines, including some belonging to the ministry. The ministry added that a pharmacist was arrested for selling antibiotics without doctors' prescriptions and providing delivery services without getting a MoH license to do so. The ministry also noted that the same pharmacy was fined the previous week when the pharmacist was not present and left the cashier to deal with customers. The MoH statement also noted that the medicines found in the warehouse are not licensed and that the pharmacy will be subject to relevant legal measures.

Drug possession

Farwaniya detectives arrested two Filipinas in possession of drugs. When they were searched, a bottle containing the remains of a newborn was also found. The two were found to be wanted since 2012, while four unidentified children were found with them.



KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Essam Al-Naham meets with Saad Al-Abdullah Security Sciences Academy officials yesterday.



KUWAIT: A vehicle burst into flames yesterday on the Sixth Ring Road's exit to Gazali Road towards Farwaniya. Firefighters were called to fight the blaze and rescue the driver, who was not harmed in the incident. A case was filed for investigations. — Photo by Sameh Omar

Minister Aqeel to face grilling in April?

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources said despite being in office for only a few days, Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel will face a grilling motion soon. The sources added that lawmakers who had been threatening to grill the minister when she was minister of finance are the same ones making the recent threats. "The motion is expected to be filed by the beginning of April," the sources said, pointing out that some lawmakers, including Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei and Mubarak Al-Hajraf have some issues with the social aid and disability payments currently supervised by Aqeel. "Those two files are expected to reappear strongly, although they had been discussed during the tenure of the former minister of social affairs Saad Al-Kharraz," the sources underlined.

The sources added that as minister of finance, Aqeel had strong opinions on cutting social aid and giving them only to those who deserve it. She also demanded reviewing the lists of disability aid recipients to hold those faking disability accountable.

Vegetable outlets closed

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) announced closing seven vegetable outlets at the fruit and vegetable market for violating related regulations. A statement issued by the ministry explained that the shuttered stores had been previously warned and fined for the same violations. Separately, Kuwait Municipality rejected applications to issue independent licenses for massage centers, noting that the licenses are only issued for spas providing massages as part of their services.

KUNA website hacking suspect in custody

KUWAIT: An informed source said state security sent a suspect to the public prosecution, accused of hacking the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) website and broadcast an item falsely quoting the defense minister that American forces announced they will pull out of a base in Kuwait. The suspect, Egyptian, became ill while being questioned and was taken to hospital. The source said he was scared and seemed exhausted, so he was taken for treatment. The source said the suspect's charge will be "dangerous", because his actions wanted to cause a major crisis locally and abroad by making the false news be circulated by news agencies around the world. — Al-Qabas

Student threatens teacher

A Syrian university student gave her teacher an ultimatum to either have a relationship with her or she would kill him and commit suicide. The teacher informed the College of Education administration out of fear she might commit a crime. A police source said the administration called police and detectives arrested the student, who was taken for questioning. Meanwhile, the teacher was summoned to question him and check the exchanged messages. He did not want to file a complaint so that his phone would not be transcribed. The girl was handed to her parents. — Al-Rai

Fahaheel fire

An Indian woman was killed in a fire that started in her Fahaheel room. Fahaheel fire station responded to a call about the fire and found the woman was dead. Forensic experts were called in after the fire was put out. — Al-Rai

Nurse, dentist assaulted

A patient insulted and beat a nurse at Daiya health center, then escaped. The nurse lodged a complaint at the police station and gave them the license plate number of the suspect's car. Investigations are underway. Meanwhile, a dentist in Jahra told police he was insulted by a patient, who then left the clinic. The dentist gave police details of the suspect. — Al-Rai

Fugitive caught

Criminal detectives arrested a Kuwaiti man wanted on theft charges. He smashed the glass of a co-op phone shop and stole several sets. Mubarak Al-Kabeer detectives succeeded in identifying the suspect and arrested him, but he denied the charges. Detectives reviewed the security camera footage and several workers identified him, so he was sent to concerned authorities. — Al-Rai

Teacher beaten

A female teacher was beaten inside a private school by two women she does not know. The teacher went to Jahra police station with a medical report and lodged a complaint about the incident. — Al-Rai

stc announces strategic partnership with 'KALD'



Danah Al-Jasem

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its strategic partnership with the Kuwaiti Association for Learning Differences (KALD) to sponsor a series of effective programs that support and assist students with learning difficulties.

The company stated that its sponsorship of KALD's educational and entertainment filled initiatives was launched at the Manarat School-Kuwait (MSK) and Kuwait English School (KES), where stc's corporate communications team visited the campuses of each school and participated in the events organized for the students.

During the events, the Company stated, stc's team attended the music and performing art initiatives where participating students sang verses, recited poems and expressed their artistic talents to their favorite telecom provider. Students also sang national songs



in celebration of Kuwait's upcoming national holidays and a special song that was dedicated to stc.

stc's corporate communications team and representatives from other departments visited the schools. Hadeel Al-Abdullah lead the visits where representatives distributed gifts to the students showing stc's appreciation of the challenges the students had to overcome in school in order to pursue their studies. Executive Manager of KALD, Noria Al-Amiri also attended the events and joined stc's team in taking photo sessions in memory of the successful outcomes.

Commenting on stc's participation, Danah Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc said "We are proud to have sponsored and participated in these constructive and educational initiatives. We believe that these programs help raise awareness and support young students in overcoming the conditions that impact their ability to gain knowledge and

skills at the same level as their peers. Education is a key pillar in stc's social responsibility agenda and our corporate culture, specially by participating in platforms that assist individuals who face learning difficulties."

She added, "Through our role as strategic sponsors and with the participation of the students' and the Kuwaiti society, we got to feel a sense of the national pride and joy portrayed by all participants in celebration of our national holidays. It is events like these that reflect stc's goals and core values when implementing our CSR agenda with a focus on enhancing and developing the learning curve for students of all ages."

Jasem expressed her sincere appreciation and gratitude towards KALD for organizing a life changing initiative that has made a difference in the lives of many students that have so much to offer to our society. She also said that stc's support towards this program stems from the firm belief that equip-

ping the youth with the proper guidance, tools and knowledge they need will amplify their capabilities to achieve their ambitions and personal goals, positively impact our society and making the world a better place.

Jasem concluded by saying, "It is imperative that students, families and teachers work hand in hand to achieve the results that will improve and change the lives of individuals for the better. In its role, stc will continue to support such initiatives that, without a doubt, will only make Kuwait's future brighter and better." It is worth mentioning that the Kuwaiti Association for Learning Differences (KALD) is a non-profit organization established in 2007 that collaboratively works towards helping all individuals, especially students in private schools and special education in Kuwait, who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder 'ADHD' and learning difficulties through setting up awareness programs, training courses, and other educational activities.

Environmental campaign for Yarmouk students

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality's public relations department announced that in collaboration with the Yarmouk mayoral office and the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Capital municipality organized a special awareness campaign for Yarmouk school students on the occasion of celebrating the national anniversaries. The head of the municipal environment awareness affairs department Rajaa Al-

Saffar said such campaigns aim at boosting public awareness about the significance of protecting the environment during the celebrations.

Saffar also explained the different colors of garbage bags and what each color is used for. "Yellow is used for medical waste, black for household and solid municipal waste and red for water closet waste," she explained while telling the students how to protect wildlife. Capital cleaning department manager Meshaal Al-Azmi said his depart-

ment has prepared all materials and equipment needed to remove waste. Meanwhile, Hawally municipality branch announced that its emergency teams have been touring Hawally governorate areas round the clock to impose the law, adding that the campaign resulted in filing 30 citations and removing 12 metal rails, seven outdoor flower basins and 20 meters of metal chains used to secure parking spaces. The teams also filed eight warning notices for violating public property.

<div> <div>ESSAR POWER</div> <div>INVITATION FOR FLUE GAS DESULPHURISATION SYSTEM INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING</div> </div>		
SUPPLY & INSTALLATION at EXISTING 1200mw POWER PLANT		
Location	Tender No.	Tender Closing Date
Essar Power MP Ltd, Mahan, Bandhora, MP, India	EP/MP/HAZ/760-MET/0220-03/223399	10/03/2020
Essar Power Gujarat Ltd, Salaya, Jamnagar, Gujarat, India	EPGL/SAL/760-MET/0120-05/223166	13/03/2020
Interested parties may visit official sourcing website of Essar (https://sourcing.essar.com/E_Tender) for more details. <div> Essar Power MP Ltd. Essar Power Gujarat Ltd. Essar House (Corporate Office), 11, K K Marg, Mahalaxmi Mumbai 400034, India. Phone: 022 66601100. </div>		



UK faces backlash over new immigration plans

Mission impossible for disabled Hong Kongers hunting face masks

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ISLAMABAD: Parents and relatives of Pakistani students in the Chinese city of Wuhan, where the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus began, hold placards during a protest to demand Pakistan's government the evacuation of their loved ones yesterday. — AFP

Passengers depart coronavirus ship

In China, death toll climbs above 2,000

TOKYO: Hundreds of people began disembarking a cruise ship in Japan yesterday after being held on board for more than two weeks under quarantine, as criticism mounted of Japan's handling of the biggest coronavirus outbreak outside China. Even as patients trundled off the Diamond Princess cruise liner with their suitcases, Japanese authorities announced 79 new cases had been discovered on board, bringing the total above 620, well over half the known cases outside mainland China.

In China itself, the death toll from the coronavirus climbed above 2,000, but the tally of newly reported cases fell for a second day to the lowest since January, offering hope and helping Asian shares and US stock futures rise. China is struggling to get its economy back on track after imposing severe travel restrictions to contain a virus that emerged in the central province of Hubei late last year. Beyond mainland China, six people have died from the disease, and governments around the world are trying to prevent it from spreading into a global epidemic.

The Diamond Princess has been quarantined at a dock at Yokohama near Tokyo since Feb 3, initially with 3,700 people aboard. From yesterday, passengers who

tested negative and showed no symptoms were free to leave. Around 500 were expected to disembark yesterday, with the rest of those eligible departing over the next two days. Confirmed cases were to be sent to hospital, while those who shared cabins with infected passengers may still be kept on board.

Around half of the passengers and crew are Japanese, and are free to go home once cleared to leave. Other countries have said they will fly passengers home and quarantine them on arrival. The United States flew more than 300 passengers to air bases in California and Texas this week. "I am very keen to get off this ship," Australian passenger Vicki Presland told Reuters over a social-media link. She was among a group of Australians getting off to catch an evacuation flight back to 14 days of quarantine in the city of Darwin.

Matthew Smith, an American passenger who remained on board after declining the US evacuation earlier this week, tweeted video of passengers departing with their suitcases. "Captain wishes 'Arrivederci' to the guests departing the ship today but omits his usual 'Buon Appetito' to those of us who are still awaiting our fates. Hey, what are we - chopped liver?!" he wrote.

'Completely inadequate'

The rapid spread of the disease aboard the ship has drawn strong criticism of the Japanese authorities, just months before Japan is due to host the Olympics. Infectious disease specialist Kentaro Iwata of Japan's Kobe University Hospital, who volunteered to help aboard the ship, described the infection control effort on board as "completely inadequate", and said basic protocols had not been followed.

"There was no single professional infection control person inside the ship and there was nobody in charge of infection prevention as a professional. The bureaucrats were in charge of everything," he said in a YouTube video. Health Minister Katsunobu Kato defended Japan's efforts: "Unfortunately, cases of infection have emerged, but we have to the extent possible taken appropriate steps to prevent serious cases," Kato said in a report by state broadcaster NHK.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said Japan's efforts "may not have been sufficient to prevent transmission among individuals on the ship." From the start, experts raised questions about quarantine on the ship. Passengers were not confined to their rooms until Feb 5. The day before, as passen-

gers were being screened, onboard events continued, including dances, quiz games and an exercise class, one passenger said.

Better day in China

The promising sign out of China came from the National Health Commission, which reported 1,749 new confirmed cases, the lowest tally since Jan. 29. Hubei - the epicenter of the outbreak - reported the lowest number of new infections since Feb. 11, while outside of Hubei there were just 56 new cases, down from a peak of 890 on Feb 3.

The latest figures bring the total number of cases in China to more than 74,000 and the death toll to 2,004, three-quarters of which have occurred in Wuhan, Hubei's provincial capital. On top of tough steps taken to isolate Hubei, where the flu-like virus originated in a market illegally selling wildlife, state media reported the province would track down anyone who visited doctors with fever since Jan. 20 or bought over-the-counter cough and fever medication. Chinese officials have said the apparent slowdown in infection rates is evidence that the strict measures are working. — Reuters

Pakistan probes link between soybean dust and deaths

KARACHI: Authorities in Pakistan are investigating if exposure to soybean dust, which can cause severe allergic reactions, is responsible for at least 14 deaths and dozens of illnesses in the southern port city of Karachi. More than 200 people have been hospitalized or treated for breathing problems since Sunday as authorities try to determine if a leak of toxic gas was to blame, after many patients complained of an unfamiliar odor.

"While we are working on this complex bioanalytical problem, we think this may be due to overexposure to soybean dust," Pakistan's International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences told authorities in a letter on Tuesday. Although it was still testing blood and air samples, the agency urged extreme care during the unloading of soybean containers at the port, adding that exposure to soybean dust had been known to cause breathing ailments and deaths.

Karachi Commissioner Iftikhar Shallwani told the Dawn newspaper that a ship offloading a shipment of soybean had been removed from the port terminal. Many schools in the area were closed for a third straight day yesterday as the authorities investigate. On Tuesday, several dozen residents of the port area staged a protest to demand an impartial inquiry into the deaths, and blamed authorities for not doing enough to prevent them.

Pakistan State Oil (PSO) is temporarily closing its storage terminal in the port area to help safeguard the health and safety of its staff, the country's largest oil marketer said. The company would turn to backup sources to ensure the move did not affect 24-hour supplies of petroleum goods, it added. — Reuters

Crisis drives Lebanese abroad in search of better future

BEIRUT: Sick of Lebanon's political instability, Habib Rahhal had been mulling leaving since 2018 to seek a better future. But the final straw came in November when he was unable to get money out of the bank because of a national financial crisis. He stepped up his job search abroad and found one in Germany. The digital product designer left Beirut for Berlin this month, intending to build a new life and joining a growing wave of Lebanese driven abroad by the crisis.

"Typically, if someone is leaving, you would be upset and try to persuade them not to. In Lebanon, it is the opposite... The first thing they say is 'Congratulations!'," Rahhal, 27, said as he packed his bag. "This is what makes Lebanese happy these days - leaving the country." Lebanon's economic crisis is widely seen as the most acute since independence from France and worse than any it endured during the 1975-90 civil war. Long in the making, the crisis came to a head last year as flows of capital into the country slowed down and protests erupted against a ruling elite that has overseen decades of state corruption and bad governance.

Banks have imposed tight limits on access to cash and transfers abroad, the Lebanese pound



DAHR EL BAIDAR: Fog covers the skies in the region of Dahr Al-Baidar east of Beirut in Lebanon on the main road linking the capital to Damascus. — AFP

has slumped and firms have shed jobs and slashed wages. The economy shrank by 7% last year, according an estimate by the former economy minister. With no end in sight to the crisis, many people are considering where they might be able to go. Many Lebanese, including some of the most highly skilled, already have second passports, making it easier for them to leave.

Hoping for change, Rahhal joined the protests that erupted in October when the heavily indebted government tried to levy a tax on WhatsApp phone calls. But he did not pack the scarf he wore to demonstrations. "I am turning the page," he said. Rahhal's brother already lives in Germany and his father lives in Nigeria. His sister is applying to emigrate to Canada and his mother also wants to leave. As she saw him off at the airport,

Rahhal's girlfriend said she planned to join him in Germany. "Our future is going to be abroad," said Dana Nehme, 27. "It is heart-breaking that we have to take such steps to continue our lives."

Lebanon is already known for large diaspora communities in countries including Brazil, Canada and Australia in addition to many African countries, many of them descendants of Lebanese who left previous crises or conflicts in the area. "Emigration has been part of the history of Lebanon, and authorities have not done anything to reverse or contain this trend," said Nassib Ghobrial, chief economist at Byblos Bank. There are no official figures on emigration, he said. "The concern is that the youth here, or some of them, consider there is no future for them in this country," he said. — Reuters

International

Russia-backed offensive pushes towards border; Turkey threatens action on Syria

Prospect of direct Turkey-Syria confrontation looms

ANKARA: Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday a Turkish military operation to push back a Syrian government offensive against rebel strongholds in northwest Syria was now "a matter of time" after talks with Russia failed to halt the assault. Turkish troops have already massed inside Syria ready to act and more were heading to the border area. The Kremlin, which backs Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, said a confrontation between Turkish and Syrian forces would be a "worst-case scenario" and Russia would keep working to prevent the situation from worsening.



Humanitarian crisis grows; Turkish troops flood border

Syrian troops supported by Russian warplanes and special forces have been battling since December to eradicate the last rebel bastions in Idlib and Aleppo provinces in what could be one of the final chapters of the nine-year-old civil war. Nearly one million civilians have fled from air strikes and artillery barrages towards the frontier, overwhelming relief agencies and alarming Turkey, which is struggling to cope with the 3.6 million Syrian refugees already camped inside its borders.

Speaking to lawmakers from his ruling AK Party yes-

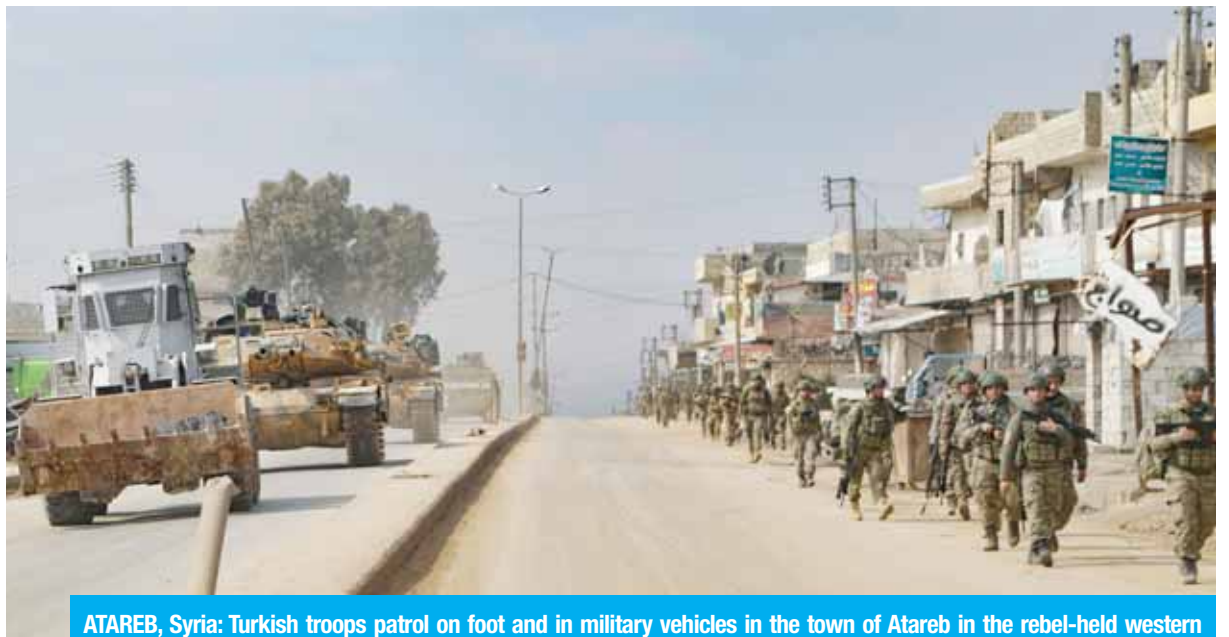
terday, Erdogan said Turkey was determined to make Idlib a secure zone even while talks with Moscow continued. Several rounds of diplomacy had failed to reach an agreement so far, he said. "We are entering the last days for the regime to stop its hostility in Idlib. We are making our final warnings," said Erdogan, whose country has the second-largest army in NATO.

"Turkey has made every preparation to carry out its own operational plans. I say that we can come at any point. In other words, the Idlib offensive is only a matter of time." The Turkish leader on Saturday appeared to move forward the end-of-February deadline for a Syrian withdrawal from Idlib that he had previously stated. Assad, whose family dynasty has ruled Syria for nearly half a century, has showed no sign of bowing to the demand, saying on Monday that his military gains presaged the eventual defeat of his foes. They include Turkish-backed rebels and jihadist militants.

An opposition military source told Reuters that 15,000 Turkish soldiers were now in northwest Syria after numerous convoys of reinforcements and weaponry had poured into the territory in recent days. "You can't imagine the scale of Turkish reinforcements, half of Reyhanli is now full of Turkish commandoes ready to enter Syria," he said, referring to a Turkish border town. "They are readying their forces for zero hour, operations are expected to start any time."

Worst case

Ankara and Moscow signed an agreement in 2018 to establish a de-escalation zone in Idlib allowing both sides to set up observation posts. Since the escalation in the conflict, both sides have accused each other of flouting the agreement.



ATAREB, Syria: Turkish troops patrol on foot and in military vehicles in the town of Atareb in the rebel-held western countryside of Syria's Aleppo province yesterday. — AFP

In Moscow yesterday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Syrian forces were upholding previous agreements but also reacting to provocations. Kremlin spokesman Peskov also said: "If we talk about an operation against legitimate Syrian authorities and armed forces, it is of course a worst-case scenario." Russia has a naval base at Tartus and an airbase at Hmeimim. Its war planes launched an air campaign in Syria in 2015, turning the tide of the war in Assad's favor.

The recent air strikes in the northwest have hit hospitals and camps for displaced people, the United Nations has said. Close to 900,000 people, most of them women and children, have fled their homes in dreadful winter conditions since December in the biggest displacement of the war. In the past week the Syrian army has taken full control of dozens of towns in the Aleppo countryside and the M5 highway linking Damascus to Aleppo. — Reuters

Indonesia's bill targets surrogacy, 'sexual deviations'

JAKARTA: Politicians from four Indonesian parties are backing a so-called "Family Resilience" bill that would outlaw surrogacy and require LGBT people to seek treatment at rehabilitation centers, prompting outrage on social media and criticism from activists. Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority country, is seeing a shift towards greater conservatism including growing state and public hostility against the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

One of the bill's proponents, Ledia Hanifa of the opposition Prosperous Justice party, a conservative Islamic party, said in a statement posted on parliament's website that the proposed bill was intended to foster "family-based development." According to a draft reviewed by Reuters, the family is defined as the smallest unit of society composed of married couples, married couples with children, and single parents. The bill states that wives must "take care of household-related matters" and "treat the husband and the child well."

The bill is also seeking a maximum penalty of seven years in prison for surrogacy. Under the bill, homosexuality, incest and sado-masochism are defined as "sexual deviations" and it wants people to report themselves to government-sanctioned rehabilitation centers for treatment. The bill has been included on parliament's priority list for the 2020-2024



JAKARTA: Buildings and transportation infrastructure are seen under construction in downtown Jakarta yesterday. — AFP

period, though proponents have yet to discuss it with the government's related ministries.

Parties supporting President Joko Widodo currently control 74% of seats in parliament so any bill would likely need government blessing to gain traction. Supratman Andi Agtas, a member of parliament who heads a body overseeing the agenda of lawmakers, said a draft would be sent to the president before any deliberation between MPs and related ministries could start. Fadjoel Rachman, a spokesman for the president, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Discussion about the bill has been trend-

ing on social media in Indonesia this week with many of the posts critical of the draft, which has also been condemned by rights groups. "It's a very patriarchal bill and it will set back progress in gender equality and women's rights protection," Usman Hamid of Amnesty International Indonesia told Reuters. Tunggal Pawestri, a gender rights activist, said the bill would be harmful for anyone who did not have a marriage certificate. "What about those who hold traditional beliefs who can't register their marriages?" she said. "And also people who can't afford to register the marriages?" — Reuters

Libya's UN-backed government halts talks

TRIPOLI: Libya's unity government has announced it is halting its participation in UN talks aimed at brokering a lasting ceasefire in the war-torn country where a fragile truce has been repeatedly violated. The pull-out came after a barrage of rocket fire hit a port in the capital Tripoli - the target of a months-long operation by eastern military commander Khalifa Haftar to oust the Government of National Accord (GNA).

"We are announcing the suspension of our participation in the military talks taking place in Geneva until firm positions are adopted against the aggressor (Haftar) and his violations" of the truce, the GNA said late Tuesday. "Without a lasting ceasefire... negotiations make no sense. There can be no peace under the bombing," it added. The port strikes were the latest violation of a tenuous truce that came into effect in January, brokered by Russia, which supports Haftar, and Turkey, which supports the UN-recognized government in Tripoli.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack. "It is clear the objective of the systematic bombardments of the residential areas, the airport and the port, in addition to the total blockage of the oil installations, is to provoke crises for the citizens in all the aspects of their life," the GNA statement said. It added that Haftar's forces were "trying in vain" to destabilize the state, having failed to seize power.

UN Libya envoy Ghassan Salame had earlier on Tuesday launched a second round of talks in Geneva, with five senior officers from the GNA and five appointed by Haftar's forces taking part. A first round of talks ended with no result earlier this month but Salame said there was "more hope" this time, mainly because of the approval of a UN Security Council resolution calling for a "lasting ceasefire".

The UN Support Mission in Libya said in a statement yesterday that it hoped the talks could resume. "The Mission calls for an end to the escalation and provocative actions, especially expansion of the conflict area, and urges all parties to resort to dialogue as the only means to end the crisis," it said.

EU to launch naval mission

Libya has been in turmoil since a 2011 NATO-backed uprising killed longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi, with rival armed factions still vying for power. In the latest outbreak of fighting, Haftar launched his offensive on Tripoli last April but after rapid advances his forces stalled on the edges of the capital. The fighting has left more than 1,000 people dead and displaced some 140,000 according to the United Nations. Further talks were planned to start in Geneva on February 26 on finding a political solution.

World leaders had agreed at a Berlin summit last month to end all meddling in the conflict and stop the flow of weapons, but little has changed on the ground since then. EU foreign ministers agreed on Monday to launch a naval mission to enforce an arms embargo, which the UN said was being violated by air, land and sea. The naval operation will be authorized to intervene to stop weapons shipments into the North African state. States including Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt support Haftar, while the UN-recognized government led by Fayeze Al-Sarraj is backed by Turkey and Qatar. — AFP

Uganda army fights voracious desert locusts

OTUKE, Uganda: Under a warm morning sun scores of weary soldiers stare as millions of yellow locusts rise into the northern Ugandan sky, despite hours spent spraying vegetation with chemicals in an attempt to kill them. From the tops of shea trees, fields of pea plants and tall grass savanna, the insects rise in a hypnotic murmur, disappearing quickly to wreak devastation elsewhere. The soldiers and agricultural officers will now have to hunt the elusive fast-moving swarms - a sign of the challenge facing nine east African countries now battling huge swarms of hungry desert locusts.

They arrived in conflict-torn South Sudan this week, with concerns already high of a humanitarian crisis in a region where 12 million are going hungry, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). "One swarm of 40 to 80 million can consume food" for over 35,000 people in a day, Priya Gujadhur, a senior FAO official in Uganda, told AFP.

In Atira - a remote village of grass-thatched huts in northern Uganda - some 160 soldiers wearing protective plastic overalls, masks and goggles sprayed trees and plants with pesticide from before dawn in a bid to kill the resting insects. But even after hours of work they were mostly able to reach only lower parts of the vegetation. Major General Kavuma sits in the shade of a Neem Tree alongside civilian officials as locusts sprayed with pesticide earlier that morning fall around



OTUKE, Uganda: Swarms of locusts land and feed on shea trees, which are a big source of food and income for local farmers, on Feb 17, 2020. — AFP

them, convulsing as they die. An intense chemical smell hangs in the air.

'They surrounded me'

Zakaria Sagal, a 73-year-old subsistence farmer was weeding his field in Lopei village some 120 km away, preparing to plant maize and sorghum, when without warning a swarm of locusts descended around him. "From this side and this side and this side, they surrounded me," Sagal said, waving his arms in every direction. "We have not yet planted our crops but if they return at harvest time they will destroy everything. We are not at all prepared."

East Africa's regional expert group, the Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC), warned Tuesday that eggs laid

across the migratory path will hatch in the next two months, and will continue breeding as the rainy season arrives in the region. This will coincide with the main cropping season and could cause "significant crop losses... and could potentially worsen the food security situation", ICPAC said in a statement.

Since 2018 a long period of dry weather followed by a series of cyclones that dumped water on the region created "excessively ideal conditions" for locusts to breed, says Gujadhur. Nevertheless, governments in East Africa have been caught off guard and are currently in "panic mode" Gujadhur said. The locusts arrived in South Sudan this week after hitting Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti, Eritrea, Tanzania, Sudan and Uganda. — AFP

Iran bars candidates as campaign ends

TEHRAN: Iran's electoral watchdog yesterday defended its decision to disqualify thousands of candidates for a crucial parliamentary election in two days, as a lacklustre campaign neared its end. Conservatives are expected to make an overwhelming resurgence in Friday's election, which comes after months of steeply escalating tensions between Iran and its decades-old arch foe the United States.

Their gains would be made at the expense of those who back President Hassan Rouhani, a moderate conservative who was re-elected in 2017 promising people more freedoms and the benefits of engagement with the West. But many people in Iran feel their lives have been crippled by an economic slump exacerbated by harsh US sanctions since President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of a landmark nuclear deal with the Islamic republic in 2018.

A week of campaigning, which has seen posters go up but only a few low-

key gatherings, came to an end yesterday, before a day of silence on the eve of polling day. Thousands of hopefuls, most of them moderates and reformists, were barred from standing by the Guardian Council, the powerful body that vets election candidates in Iran. But the Council said it was "neutral" in its dealings with all political camps and acted in accordance with the law when it blocked their candidacy. "The Guardian Council follows the laws and regulations parliament has passed at different times," said its spokesman Abbas Ali Kadkhodaei.

"This time, just like at previous (elections), we have tried to properly follow the law," he told a news conference. "The Council has never had a political view... It approaches political factions with closed eyes. "What it does judge is the evidence in the cases of the candidates and then it only acts in accordance with the law passed by parliament." Commentators expect disillusionment among voters in the sanctions-hit country to result in a low turnout. Many people on the streets of Tehran have expressed dissatisfaction with politicians ahead of the election, saying they failed to keep their word or to raise living standards. Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei appealed on Tuesday for a strong showing on Friday, saying it was a "religious duty". —AFP

UK faces a backlash over new post-Brexit immigration plans

Government aims to ‘reduce overall migration numbers’

LONDON: Britain's government yesterday faced a backlash over its new post-Brexit immigration plans, which are designed to cut “cheap Labor from Europe” in favor of high-skilled English speakers. The points-based system is due to start on January 1, 2021, and was billed as “taking back control” of Britain's borders - a key demand of anti-EU campaigners in the divisive Brexit debate.

Interior minister Priti Patel called the sweeping reforms “firm and fair” and said it would make it easier for higher-skilled workers to get visas, and harder for low-skilled migrants to do so. “We need to shift the focus of our economy away from a reliance on cheap labor from Europe and instead concentrate on investment in technology and automation,” she said. The plans are the biggest change to immigration policy in 50 years and will go before parliament, where Prime Minister Boris Johnson has a comfortable majority.

But the Conservative government was accused of failing to assess the impact of the reforms on the economy, while businesses heavily reliant on foreign labor questioned the feasibility of the policy. The main opposition Labor party said some sectors' reliance on foreign workers would force the government to make numerous exceptions, rendering the new rules “meaningless”. Its home affairs spokesman Diana Abbott called it a “salary threshold system”, which would hit the already hard-pressed state-run National Health Service and social care sector.

“If they are all short-term visas, only the most desperate workers will come, and will have the effect of creating a two-tier workforce,” Abbott said. Her opposite number at the smaller Liberal Democrats said the policy was “based on xenophobia, not the social and

economic needs of our country”. “Too many businesses are already struggling to hire the workers they need. Now the Tories want to stop them recruiting all but the highest-paid employees from abroad,” said Christine Jardine.

Britain left the EU after 47 years of membership on January 31. EU rules are still in place until the end of the year as London and Brussels thrash out a new trade deal. But Jardine and others warned that 10 months was not enough time for businesses to prepare for the end to free movement of EU nationals to other member states. They warned of potential staff shortages, as well as chaos and confusion through additional red tape.

‘Reduce immigration’

The plans do not affect more than 3.2 million EU citizens who have applied to stay in Britain under the official settlement scheme. The proposals require each foreign worker to earn 70 points to be eligible and a set number of points for each qualification or skill. A maximum 20 points are awarded for prospective migrants who will earn at least £25,600 (\$33,325 or 30,820 euros) and no points for those who will make the required minimum of £20,480.

Twenty points also go to people with an “appropriate skill level” and another 20 for those who speak English “at required level”. Britain's current salary threshold for skilled migrants is £30,000. People who have jobs “in a shortage qualification” will also earn 20 points, and either 10 or 20 points for doctorate degrees in various fields. “Applicants will be able to ‘trade’ characteristics such as their specific job offer and qualifications against a lower salary,” the government proposal says.



LONDON: A handout photograph released by the UK Parliament shows Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson speaking in the House of Commons in central London. — AFP

Overall, the government said the aim is to “reduce overall migration numbers” - another demand of Brexit supporters - but did not give a figure on the expected fall.

The Migration Advisory Committee said last month the end to freedom of movement could have “zero effect” on providing more jobs for British workers. — Agencies

News in brief

Mid-air plane collision kills 4

MELBOURNE: Four people were killed in a mid-air collision between two light planes in Australia yesterday, scattering debris across a rural area north of Melbourne. Police said the two twin-engined aircraft were each carrying a pilot and a passenger when they crashed around 4,000 feet above the town of Mangalore. Images from the crash scene on the ground showed twisted metal and chunks of fuselage scattered in a field and among trees. Police said both planes were flying legally in the area but investigations were ongoing. “We’re not sure why both aircraft were exactly on the same trajectory or why they were in that area but unfortunately they have collided mid-air,” Police Inspector Peter Koger said. One aircraft had just taken off from the nearby airfield but the other plane's origin was still unclear, he added. — AFP

Spain bans ‘sick leave’ layoffs

MADRID: Spain's left-wing government on Tuesday banned companies from firing workers who repeatedly take sick leave, in its first reform of a contested 2012 overhaul of the country's labor laws. “We are sending a message to our society that from now on, nobody will be fired who has a legitimate reason for taking sick leave,” Labor Minister Yolanda Diaz told a news conference after a weekly cabinet meeting. “With this repeal we are correcting an anomaly that differentiated our country from those around us,” she added. An article of the 2012 reform of Spain's labor laws carried out by the previous conservative government made it easier to dismiss a worker on the grounds of repeated absences for ill health, even when an employee produced medical certificates justifying them. — AFP

Israel eases Gaza restrictions

JERUSALEM: Israel has cancelled punitive measures it had imposed against the besieged Gaza Strip after a weekend wave of attacks with rockets and incendiary balloons by militants in the Palestinian enclave. “In view of the relative calm around Gaza in recent days,” the defense ministry said it had decided “to reinstate the civilian measures that were suspended last weekend”. “As long as calm is maintained, Israel will extend the fishing zone to 15 nautical miles (on Wednesday) and issue 2,000 new permits” for Gaza residents to enter Israel, said a statement by COGAT, the ministry's unit in charge of civilian affairs in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Israeli air force had attacked Hamas positions in the Gaza Strip on Saturday in retaliation for rocket fire from the enclave into Israel, a previous army statement said. — AFP

Somali militants kill 12 soldiers

MOGADISHU: Islamist Al Shabaab militants killed at least 12 Somali soldiers and briefly captured a military base southwest of the capital yesterday, officials said, underscoring the insurgents' ability to launch attacks despite a government offensive. A suicide bomber detonated at the El Salini base before gunmen stormed in and briefly occupied it, police said. The military recaptured the base after reinforcements arrived. “They took the base and took weapons and ammunitions, this includes anti-aircraft guns fixed on pickups,” said Nur Ahmed, a police officer from Afgoye in Lower Shabelle region. Military officer Ismail Ali said 12 soldiers were killed and the commander of the base was injured. Al Shabaab claimed responsibility. “We took the base. We took two pickups with anti-aircraft guns hooked on. — Reuters

Trump commutes sentence of corrupt former US politician

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Tuesday commuted the sentence of a former Illinois governor jailed for corruption, as well as pardoning a New York City police chief imprisoned for tax fraud. Pardons were also handed out to Edward DeBartolo Jr, a former owner of the San Francisco 49ers football team, and Michael Milken, a well-known financier dubbed the “junk bond king” who pleaded guilty in 1990 to securities and tax fraud.

The flurry of clemency actions - 11 in total - raised expectations that Trump is considering wielding his power in more controversial cases involving close former associates, including Republican consultant Roger Stone. The most notorious of the current crop is Rod Blagojevich, a Democrat who was removed from his governor's post in Illinois in 2009. He was later convicted of

essentially selling the senator's seat that had been vacated when Barack Obama won the US presidency in 2008.

Trump, a Republican who has often campaigned on his claim to be fighting corruption in Washington, was vague about his reasoning for freeing Blagojevich, who was sentenced to 14 years. The president noted that he'd once performed with Blagojevich during the TV reality show “The Apprentice” and said he “seemed like a very nice person,” but added: “I don't know him very well.”

“He served eight years in jail. He has a long time to go. Many people disagree with the sentence,” Trump told reporters. Trump pardoned Bernard Kerik, who was NYPD commissioner at the time of the September 11, 2001 attacks. Kerik pleaded guilty in 2009 to tax fraud but was released from prison in 2013. Speculation has been building that the president will issue pardons to Stone and fellow Trump associate Paul Manafort, both caught up in the wide-ranging investigation into Russia's attempt to influence the 2016 election.

Either one would stir more controversy than Tuesday's cases and Trump gave only a hint when asked if he is planning to pardon Stone. “I haven't given it any thought,” he said. “But I think he's being treated unfairly.” Discussion of the Stone



OHIO: In this file photo, Edward DeBartolo Jr, former San Francisco 49ers Owner, speaks during his Pro Football Hall of Fame induction speech in Canton. US President Donald Trump has granted a full pardon to the former San Francisco 49ers owner convicted in a gambling fraud scandal. — AFP

pardon in particular is fueling concerns that Trump - himself the subject of multiple legal and congressional investigations - is attempting to weaken the independence of the Justice Department.

Stone was convicted in November last year of lying to Congress, tampering with a witness and obstructing the House investigation into whether the Trump campaign coordinated with

Russia to cheat in the 2016 election. The president caused a stir when he tweeted that the proposed tough sentencing of Stone was a “miscarriage of justice.” Shortly after, Attorney General Bill Barr's Justice Department proposed a lighter sentence and the prosecutors on the case resigned in apparent protest at the intervention. Stone is due to be sentenced on Thursday. — AFP

Rothschild suit revives family's Vienna past

VIENNA: Fuelling Vienna's golden age before being driven out by the Nazis, the Rothschilds seemed to have closed the Austria chapter of their Jewish banking family's saga. That is until Thursday when Geoffrey Hoguet, a member of Europe's most famous banking dynasty, marches into court in Vienna. His suit revolves around a foundation set up in 1907 with the funds of his great-great uncle Nathaniel Freiherr von Rothschild who left the equivalent of about 100 million euros (\$110 million) when he died in 1905 to provide psychiatric help for the needy.

Hoguet, a 69-year-old New York investor, is accusing the city of appropriating the foundation in breach of its founder's will and “perpetuating” Nazi-era laws. At stake is, among others, a neurological hospital dating from 1912 whose elegant period architecture makes it stand out in a 230-hectare park on the capital's outskirts. The lawyer for Vienna argues that the 1956 restoration of the foundation was done “in agreement and according to the initial wishes” of Nathaniel von Rothschild following its dissolution by the Nazis in 1938.

But Hoguet - a financial supporter of Democratic Party presidential nominee Pete Buttigieg - sees this differently and wants to “honor the legacy” of his great-great uncle, according to his entourage quoted by the press. He wants to annul the sale of one of two sanatoriums in the early 2000s - a late-baroque palace that was reportedly one of the world's earliest centers of mental health treatment - and aims to nullify a 2017 clause that determines that if the foundation were dissolved its wealth would go to the city of Vienna.

Ghetto to palaces

The dispute re-casts the spotlight on Austria's ambivalent relationship with the Jewish banking family, whose history goes hand-in-hand with the former Habsburg Empire's financial and commercial success. “The history of the Rothschilds has been repressed” from Vienna's collective memory, said Austrian historian Roman Sandgruber, who authored a 2018 book on the history of the Rothschilds' Austrian branch.



VIENNA: A sign for Rothschild square, named after the Nordbahn founder and financier Salomon Mayer von Rothschild is pictured in Vienna Austria. — AFP

In the early 1800s, the Rothschild patriarch, Mayer Amschel, originally from the Jewish ghetto in Frankfurt, had sent his five sons to develop family affairs in Europe's major capitals. His second son Salomon Mayer von Rothschild set up the first bank in Vienna in 1820 and his son Anselm founded Credit-Anstalt in 1855 — Hoguet served on the executive of the bank before it disappeared in the 1990s.

As in London and Paris, the Rothschild bank of Vienna quickly became a crucial partner for those in power. It helped to finance wars as well as big urban and industrial projects, including mines and railroads — and effectively propped up the monarchy. “When Emperor Franz-Joseph held protracted discussions with Albert Rothschild, the rumor was that the monarchy was crossing a bad financial stretch,” writes Georg Markus, a journalist and specialist on the Austrian monarchy.

In 1887, the emperor gave Albert Rothschild the right to frequent the imperial court, a rare honor for a Jewish person. Upon his death in 1911, he was considered “the richest man in Europe”, according to Sandgruber. It was also during this period that Nathaniel, one of Albert's brothers, a philanthropist more focused on art than finance, made the largest individual donation in Austrian history to create the foundation bearing his name to set up psychiatric hospitals, which were well ahead of the times. — AFP

Germany to tighten screws on online hate speech

BERLIN: With the danger growing from far-right extremists and torrents of threats against politicians, Germany plans to toughen online speech laws and tighten the screws on social networks. Ministers in Chancellor Angela Merkel's government approved a new package of measures yesterday, days after 12 men were arrested for planning deadly attacks on mosques, communicating in part via chat groups. The draft law now passes to parliament for MPs to deliberate. “In future, those who make threats or spread hate online will be prosecuted in a tougher and more effective way,” Justice Minister Christine Lambrecht said on her ministry's website. One headline measure in the bill will step up the pressure on social networking firms such as Facebook and Twitter to quickly remove the offending content. In future, the Silicon Valley giants will also have to report certain types of illegal posts to the federal police, who will be able to pass on actionable data to prosecutors.

‘End up where they belong’

Neo-Nazi propaganda or plans to commit a terrorist attack would be covered under such rules. But people approving crimes, making death or rape threats or sharing child pornography images could also be caught in the widened net. Social media platforms that refuse to cooperate will face fines of up to 50 million euros. “Hate crimes will finally end up where they belong: before a court,” Interior Minister Horst Seehofer said. On top of the new reporting processes, Berlin wants to toughen potential sentences, including up to three years in prison for online death or rape threats. Especially in recent months, there has been a growing spread of anti-Semitic messages online - including a bizarre screed written by the perpetrator of an attack targeting a synagogue in the eastern city of Halle in October 2019. — AFP

International

China expels Wall Street Journal reporters over a ‘racist’ headline

One of the harshest moves against foreign media in years

BEIJING: China yesterday ordered three reporters from American newspaper the Wall Street Journal to leave the country over what Beijing deemed a racist headline, in one of the harshest moves against foreign media in years. The expulsion came as Beijing also slammed Washington's decision to tighten rules on Chinese state media organizations in the United States, calling the move "unreasonable and unacceptable".

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said the Journal op-ed - titled "China is the Real Sick Man of Asia" - had a "racially discriminatory" and "sensational" headline, and slammed the newspaper for not issuing an official apology. "As such, China has decided that from today, the press cards of three Wall Street Journal reporters in Beijing will be revoked," Geng told a press briefing.

The Journal reported that deputy bureau chief Josh Chin and reporter Chao Deng, both US nationals, as well as reporter Philip Wen, an Australian, had been ordered to leave the country in five days. The three journalists are in the Wall Street Journal's news section, which is not linked to the editorial and opinion section.

The op-ed, written by Bard College professor Walter Russell Mead, criticized the Chinese government's initial response to the new coronavirus outbreak - calling the Wuhan city government at the virus epicenter "secretive and self-serving", while dismissing national efforts as ineffective. The phrase "sick man of Asia" originally referred to China in the late 19th and early 20th century, when it was exploited by foreign powers during a period sometimes called the country's "century of humiliation".

The February 3 piece "slandered the efforts of the Chinese government and the Chinese people to fight the epidemic", said Geng. The new coronavirus epidemic has killed over 2,000 people in China and infected more than 74,000, and has spread to at least two dozen countries. "The editors of the Wall Street Journal have

nailed themselves to the pillar of shame," wrote the nationalistic Global Times in an op-ed on Tuesday before the reporters were expelled.

The WSJ's remarks "sound like gloating, and they disgust Chinese people," it said. The expulsions come a day after the United States angered China for classifying five state media outlets, including Xinhua news agency and the China Global Television Network, as foreign missions, with State Department officials saying they were part of Beijing's growing "propaganda" apparatus. Voicing China's "strong dissatisfaction", Geng added cryptically: "We reserve the right to respond further to this matter".

'Darkest picture'

China's move to revoke the credentials of the three WSJ journalists marks a drastic escalation in the country's tightening media landscape, which has seen the effective expulsion of multiple foreign reporters over the past five years. The Foreign Correspondents' Club of China said revoking the press credentials of three correspondents is an unprecedented form of retaliation, adding that the country had not outright expelled a foreign correspondent since 1998.

"The action taken against The Journal correspondents is an extreme and obvious attempt by the Chinese authorities to intimidate foreign news organizations by taking retribution against their China-based correspondents," the FCCC said in a statement. Nine journalists have been either expelled or effectively expelled through non-renewal of visas since 2013, it added. In August, China refused to renew the press credentials of WSJ journalist Chun Han Wong, after he and Wen wrote an article on one of Chinese President Xi Jinping's cousins.

In 2018, Megha Rajagopalan, the Beijing bureau chief for BuzzFeed News, was effectively expelled from China



SHANGHAI: People wearing protective facemasks walk along a street in Shanghai yesterday. — AFP

after she was unable to renew her visa as well. Prior to her expulsion, she had reported extensively from the northwest region of Xinjiang, where China has rounded up an estimated one million Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities in internment camps. And at the end of 2015, French reporter Ursula Gauthier was also forced to leave the country after she criticized government policy in Xinjiang and the authorities refused to renew her credentials.

The three expelled Journal reporters had also reported on Xinjiang, covering forced labor, surveillance, and re-education camps. A 2019 FCCC survey of 109 foreign journalists said many working in China have been threatened with visa delays, or issued with short-stay visas, which they believed were related to their coverage. The FCCC said at the time that the survey "painted the darkest picture of reporting conditions inside China in recent memory". — AFP

Breaking news and barriers: S Korea's first female anchor

SEOUL: Under gleamingly bright studio lights, Lee So-jeong reads straight from a teleprompter, rehearsing her lines ahead of the primetime newscast for South Korea's national public broadcaster, KBS. Five times a week, she is beamed into living rooms across the country leading its "News 9" bulletin, after she broke into a decades-old boys' club in a society that is technologically and economically advanced, but still culturally male-dominated.

South Korean television news broadcasts have long followed the same format: a serious-looking older male anchor announcing the day's major developments, with a much younger female sidekick delivering lighter items later in the line-up. Some of those women juniors went on to marry into the billionaire families who own South Korea's chaebol conglomerates, rather than continue their careers. Lee's appointment at state-funded KBS - the Korean Broadcasting System - upended that model.

At 43, she even has a younger male sidekick of her own. Female newsreaders used to be like "pretty flowers", Lee said. But she had greater ambitions, wanting to transform KBS's conservative style and capture younger audiences turned off by broadcasts that tended to "rather lecture the viewers". The audience share for her program - the most-watched news broadcast in the country - has risen from 9.6 to 11 percent since she started in November.

But Lee feels the pressure of being a trailblazer, knowing - however unfairly - she cannot afford a single mistake. "If I fail in this, it could disgrace other women reporters as a whole," she said. "I have to do well so that other female reporters could have more opportunities. "That sense of responsibility and burden is greater than live-broadcasting primetime news."

Maternity leave

South Korea has transformed itself from the ruins of the Korean War to become the world's 12th largest economy and an industrial and trading powerhouse, but traditional social values still hold wide sway. Its gender pay gap is the highest among developed countries, with women making only 66 percent of what men earn, while working mothers face pressures to excel at both child-rearing and their jobs. Many face promotional barriers at work while carrying heavy childcare burdens, often forcing educated women to give up their careers.



SEOUL: South Korean news anchor Lee So-jeong attends a rehearsal of a primetime newscast at KBS, South Korea's national public broadcaster, in Seoul. — AFP

Those pressures have led many South Korean women to reject motherhood and the country's fertility rate - the number of children a woman is expected to have in her lifetime - dropped to 0.98 in 2018, far below the 2.1 needed to keep a population stable. The trend is all too familiar to Lee, who started in television in 2003 and is herself the mother of a six-year-old son. "I have seen many veteran female journalists whose career was cut short," she said. "It was both disappointing and upsetting."

Such challenges are the subject of a recent hit film, "Kim Ji-young, Born 1982".

Based on a feminist novel that triggered a backlash among men, it centers on a married South Korean woman who has quit her job and struggles to raise her child with limited support. Lee said she had also faced difficulties following her return from a year-long maternity leave. "I felt like I was not good enough as a mother nor a journalist," she said. "Then a senior woman colleague called me in and told me that I should not be too hard on myself. "I wish young women would try their best at work, but not blame themselves for things out of their control." — AFP

Mission impossible for disabled Hong Kongers hunting face masks

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's disabled residents and their carers say they feel increasingly trapped in their apartments and abandoned by authorities as the coronavirus-struck city is engulfed with panic-buying and face mask shortages. For the last fortnight, queues have sprung up across the densely-packed business hub as Hong Kongers jostle for the latest delivery of face masks, toilet rolls and cleaning products.

It is a free-for-all that Steven Yan dreads. Diagnosed with muscular atrophy 14 years ago, Yan uses a wheelchair to get around. He has tried to find face masks near his apartment but has only succeeded once in the last month, queuing for six hours to get his hands on five free masks. "It exhausted me," Yan told AFP. "I dared not move, fearing that I might lose my spot."

With just 40 masks at home to share among him, his wife and teenage son, Yan has started cutting back on going out in public, including to his regular medical check-ups. Public hospitals have stopped supplying masks to visiting patients to save vital equipment for staff in a city where more than 60 people have been diagnosed with the coronavirus. "I have to wear a mask in hospital but we can't afford that now," Yan said,

lamenting that prices for face masks have soared in recent weeks as the government has resisted implementing price controls or rationing.

Entrenched inequality

Despite being one of the richest cities in the world, Hong Kong has a profound wealth gap and a limited safety net for society's most vulnerable. Of the nearly 600,000 people in the city with disabilities, a third live below the poverty line according to government data. Some 200,000 people also act as carers. — Lam Chun, 64, looks after her 19-year-old nephew full time.

He has Pradar-Willi syndrome - a

genetic disorder that makes the person feel constantly hungry and often leads to diabetes and obesity. When she goes out to get groceries, she relies on a makeshift cloth mask to cover her face, even though it offers limited protection. "I always miss the information about masks because I don't really know how to get online," Lam said, noting how many Hong Kongers find out about restocked pharmacies through Facebook or family Whatsapp groups.

Both Yan and Lam said they had received little help from local authorities in securing masks. "It turned out that the government did not do anything to protect people like us and I am deeply disappointed," Lam said. The Social Welfare Department did not respond to requests for comment on what measures it was taking to ensure disabled and other vulnerable residents received masks. Responsibility has largely fallen to volunteers and the charity sector. — AFP



HONG KONG: Muscular atrophy patient Steven Yan (right) waits for a bus as he travels to Sheung Shui to buy face masks in Hong Kong. — AFP

Sick Kashmiris feel deadly consequences of blackout

SRINAGAR: Sanaullah Dar was due to undergo surgery to remove a tumor in his bladder. Four months later, he was dead, with doctors blaming a lockdown imposed by New Delhi on the restive part of Kashmir it controls. In August, India's Hindu-nationalist government stripped the Himalayan region of its semi-autonomous status and imposed restrictions on movement and a communications blackout, virtually cutting it off from the outside world.

Life for Kashmir's seven-million inhabitants came to a standstill, including for doctors and patients who rely heavily on the internet to consult specialists outside the region, communicate with patients and order vital medicine. "To get appropriate healthcare for patients like my father is difficult anyway," Dar's 20-year-old daughter, Sumaya said. The lockdown and blackout "made it impossible" for the family to schedule the surgery Dar urgently needed in Mumbai, 2,000 kilometers away.

By the time the family was able to get him to a hospital in Delhi in late October, it was too late. Dar passed away a week after he returned home. Omar, an oncologist who treated Dar in Kashmir and who only wanted to give his first name said the surgery "probably would have been able to save" Dar if it had gone ahead as scheduled. Dar was not his only patient to die due to the lack of timely specialist treatment, he said, adding he had heard of other deaths from other doctors' patients. — AFP

Malaysia suspected MH370 'downed in murder-suicide'

SYDNEY: Former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott has claimed "very top" level Malaysian officials believed vanished Flight MH370 was deliberately downed by the captain in a mass murder-suicide. The Malaysia Airlines jet vanished on March 8, 2014 carrying 239 people - mostly from China - en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing. No sign of the plane was found in a 120,000-square kilometer Indian Ocean search zone and the Australian-led search, the largest in aviation history, was suspended in January 2017.

A US exploration firm launched a private hunt in 2018 but it ended after several months of scouring the seabed without success. The disappearance of the plane has long been the subject of a host of theories - ranging from the credible to outlandish - including that veteran pilot Zaharie Ahmad Shah had gone rogue. In an excerpt from a Sky News documentary aired yesterday, Abbott claimed he was told within a week of it vanishing that Malaysia believed the captain had intentionally downed the jet.

"My very clear understanding from the very top levels of the Malaysian government is that from very, very early on here, they thought it was murder-suicide by the pilot," he said. "I'm not going to say who said what to whom but let me reiterate, I want to be absolutely crystal clear, it was understood at the highest levels that this was almost certainly murder-suicide by the pilot - mass murder-suicide by the pilot."

Zaharie's family and friends have long strongly rejected such claims as baseless. Malaysia's former premier Najib Razak, who was in power during the tragedy, said suspicions over the disappearance weren't made public and there was no proof that the pilot was responsible. "It would have been deemed unfair and legally irresponsible since the black boxes and cockpit voice recorders had not been found," he told online portal Free Malaysia Today. "There was no conclusive proof whether the pilot was solely or jointly responsible."

Najib said the scenario involving the pilot was "never ruled out" during the search for the plane. Azharuddin Abdul Rahman, the former head of Malaysia's civil aviation regulator, criticized Abbott's remarks and said there was not sufficient proof to support the idea. "It is only a theory," Azharuddin, who led the regulator when Flight MH370 disappeared said. "You do this speculation and it will hurt the next of kin. The family of the pilot will also feel very bad because you are making an accusation without any proof."

In 2016, Malaysian officials revealed the pilot had plotted a path over the Indian Ocean on a home flight simulator but stressed this did not prove he deliberately crashed the plane. A final report into the tragedy released in 2018 pointed to failings by air traffic control and said the course of the plane was changed manually. But they failed to come up with any firm conclusions, leaving relatives angry and disappointed. Six passengers were Australian, including four from Queensland state, where Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk this week suggested authorities may pursue an inquest into their deaths. — AFP

Analysis

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How a teen fightback is helping feminism flourish in Spain

Spanish teenagers Ari and Kalus may still be in school but they are already part of a young feminist collective, organizing talks, performances and protests to fight for gender equality. At 17, they are among a growing number of teenagers at the forefront of Spain's new wave of feminism, fighting for change in the face of a backlash from far right politicians. Like many of their school-age peers, they have joined the mass rallies for gender equality that began two years ago.

Initially triggered by a gang rape verdict that many saw as unjust, the protests have gained momentum, spurred by a range of issues, from sexual violence to unequal pay. "For me, calling yourself a feminist is saying you're not invisible, that you are here, and you have something valuable to say," Ari, who asked to be identified only by her first name, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Both said young women their age faced pervasive sexism, from harassment in the street or on social media to being stared at or followed, the threat of possible attack and the sense their concerns are not taken seriously. The feminist collective at their high school, San Isidro, in central Madrid, is named Sakmis after an ancient Egyptian goddess and has 68 members, some as young as 13. They snatch meetings at break times and organize a range of activities around their studies, including a recent inter-school survey on sexual harassment.

"We are a small group that started in school, but I think we do more than that," said Kalus, who declined to publish her real name, adding that having a space to chat with female students helps her "find peace". It was initially girls only, but three boys have recently joined, reflecting the growth of teen support for the movement. A recent survey by the Reina Sofia Centre on Adolescence and Youth showed the majority of women aged 15 to 29 now call themselves feminists, as do more than a third of young men. Other Western countries have shown similar trends: one 2019 study found more than half of young women in England and Wales identified as feminists. In Spain, young women's anger over enduring cultural and institutional misogyny was ignited by the 2018 case in which five men who called themselves the "Wolf Pack", filmed themselves raping an 18-year-old girl.

Because she did not resist, the judges deemed that the accused had not used violence or intimidation, a prerequisite for rape under Spanish law, and they were jailed for the lesser crime of sexual abuse. That decision was eventually overturned, but outrage was sparked again last year when five men escaped rape convictions because they were not judged to have used force against their unconscious 14-year-old victim. Spain's new equality minister has promised fresh legislation on consent following major protests over the verdicts.

'You have to fight'

Spain has made significant progress on women's rights since it transitioned to democracy in the late 1970s. Half the ministers in the current left-wing coalition government are women and the country was a pioneer in introducing gender-targeted violence legislation. The World Economic Forum ranks Spain eighth globally for gender parity. But some fear such progress is threatened by the rise of the ultra-conservative Vox party, which casts the feminist movement as a radical enemy of traditional family values and is now the third largest force in parliament.

Vox sees Spain's gender violence law as unfair to men. It also wants parents to be able to stop their children taking part in school activities on "socially controversial moral issues" or sexuality, a measure already introduced in one of its regional strongholds. "Since the ultra-right has come up, not only in Spain but also in other countries, people have realized that you have to fight against this," said 17-year-old Nuria Ardid.

She and her friend Lucia Gallego, 16, both at high schools on the outskirts of Madrid, have joined student strikes to march for women's rights. "There's more awareness and more people joining the movement, so people are more confident to say openly 'I'm a feminist'," said Lucia. The surge in teen feminism also comes against the backdrop of the #MeToo movement and young people taking leading roles in social justice campaigns around the world, from gun crime to climate change, said women's rights campaigner Viviana Waisman.

"I've been in Spain for a little over 20 years and I've never seen this strong a teenage movement," said Waisman, founder of rights group Women's Link. "I do think it corresponds to a global movement that's happening." Waisman said debate and education on gender roles from an early age were critical to changing attitudes, a view shared by some teachers who are also calling for a fundamental shift in approach. "There needs to be more focus on human rights within teaching and clearer more specific references to feminism, as women's rights are human rights," said Henar, an arts teacher at San Isidro who declined to give her full name.

More young men also want change, according to university undergraduate Pablo Caraballo, 18, who calls himself a feminist. But he has also witnessed how Spain's ideological divisions continue to play out in the classroom. Pablo recalled a chat with a student from his high school who argued inequality did not exist because women are now government ministers and judges, a view he said is common among young people who disagree with the feminist movement. "They see feminism as a lie, that feminists defend the superiority of women over men," he said. —Reuters

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Peanut traders work at a collection point for local traders in Amath Fall Santhy village near Kaolack on Jan 21, 2020. —AFP

China craving for Senegal peanuts rattles local biz

Large peanut orders from Chinese traders have cut Senegal's traditional selling season short this year, rewarding farmers with fat profits but leaving local buyers with slim pickings. Peanuts are an important export in the West African state of Senegal, with the area around the central city of Kaolack a hive of production. Groundnuts are a "primary source of income for the vast majority of family farms," according to a 2017 World Bank report, and employ about two-thirds of the rural population. But Kaolack's once-brimming peanut warehouses have been poorly stocked this year. Most of the activity normally associated with the peanut trade has shifted to nearby villages, such as Sanguil, where Chinese buyers have set up shop. Baye Niass Fall, a 50-year-old farmer, stands grinning in front of the entrance to the industrial compound in Sanguil, where men pack shelled peanuts into bags for export.

He says he's made a killing this year selling 15 tons of peanuts "to the Chinese" at a better price than the Senegalese firms that transform the nuts into peanut oil. This year Senegal produced some 1.4 million tons of peanuts, according to the government, which are a West African staple used

in "mafe" sauce. Some peanuts are consumed locally, sold on roadsides or by street hawkers. But vast amounts - 200,000 tons last year - go to China alone.

Chinese traders offer 300 CFA francs (\$0.5) for a kilo of unhusked peanuts, or 525 CFA francs for shelled ones, according to farmers and local officials. The local peanut-processing companies have this year struggled to obtain supplies, and several have been forced to lay off staff. They generally offer 210 CFA francs per kilo. Farmers are delighted at the higher prices. Sidy Ba, from Senegal's peanut-growers' association, said prices had never been as high and called the trend a "windfall".

'Peanut manna'

Pushing out the millers has caused tension, however. Chinese traders have been accused of unfair competition by buying peanuts while they are still in the ground, for example. In January, bandits attacked a Chinese-owned peanut warehouse for reasons unclear. Senegalese President Macky Sall connected the attack to Chinese involvement in the peanut sector, however, telling reporters that the Chinese "had done no wrong". AFP was unable to reach any Chinese traders for comment.

China is itself a huge peanut producer, but demand far outstrips domestic supply. Senegalese Agriculture Minister Moussa Balde said China has been the main buyer of Senegalese peanuts since 2014, when the two countries signed a deal. The trade is also rising. Senegal exported 100,000 tons of peanuts to China in 2015, according to China's embassy in Dakar, rising to 200,000 tons last year. But the four Senegalese peanut-processing firms that rely on local production are suffering the fallout.

Sonacos, the largest state-owned processing company, did not manage to buy the 150,000 tons it was hoping for, company head Modou Fada Diagne said. Senegalese essayist Adama Gaye - who has written about Africa-China relations - said the country risked getting stuck as a simple provider of raw materials without profiting from the added value. The government should install oil mills to capture part of the "peanut manna," he said, "instead of the crumbs paid by wild buyers".

But the positive effect on farmers has been undeniable, with Balde pointing to prices that were "never imagined". "One million producers are happy," Balde told local media. "It is true that 1,500 jobs might be threatened in the oil mills," Balde

told local media, adding, however, that the scale did not compare.

Layoffs and export halts

Sonacos has been doubly hit by a poorly timed loan of €47 million (\$51 million), which was meant to finance peanut purchases. Its four factories are now running below capacity. And out of 4,000 staff, Sanocos has laid off 500 seasonal workers, also cancelling the recruitment of 600 more, according to union representative Samuel Ndour. The loan "compromised recovery efforts", said Diagne.

Copeol, a private peanut firm, has similar problems. It has laid off 120 seasonal workers while 19 of the company's 25 full-time staff left under "negotiated departures," Samba Wane, another union rep, said. The government in Dakar has moved to protect the industry, suspending peanut exports in January in an attempt to allow local firms to recover. Longer term, the government wants farmers and peanut processors to sign contracts, the agriculture minister said. But Sidy Ba, from the peanut-growers' association, warned that times had changed. "With the opening of markets and information on social networks, (farmers) know who pays the most and who the least". —AFP

Currency switch in north Syria shows Turkey influence

Last month Hussam Shamo, a baker in northern Syria, stopped selling his bread in Syrian pounds after the latest slump in the currency forced him to push up prices yet again. Taking his lead from the local council in his town of Azaz, which proposed ditching the Syrian currency when it slumped to one-twentieth of its pre-war value, Shamo started charging his customers in Turkish lira. The move is a practical one. The Turkish currency is relatively stable and Shamo's bread now sells for a convenient 1 lira per bundle of flat loaves, instead of a fluctuating price in hundreds of Syrian pounds.

But the switch to Turkish money is also another sign of Ankara's growing influence in a region of northern Syria seized by Turkish troops and their Syrian rebel allies more than three years ago from Islamic State fighters. While Turkish and Syrian troops face off in neighboring Idlib province, the isolated rebel and insurgent-held enclave that is home to an estimated three

million people, Turkey's presence in the Syrian border region further east quietly grows.

In towns like Azaz, Al-Bab and Jarablus, taken over by Turkey in the 2016 military incursion, children study Turkish in school and Turkish universities are opening branches. Turkey has helped rebuild a hospital and train police. Now Syrians in Azaz are paying for their daily bread, the gas to cook their food, clothes and even gold jewelry in Turkish currency after the Syrian pound, which traded at 47 to the US dollar before Syria's conflict erupted in 2011, crashed through 1,000 to the dollar last month.

Bags of cash

While the government in Damascus threatened jail sentences for anyone using foreign currency in commercial transactions, local authorities in Azaz took the opposite view, embracing what they saw as the safety of the dollar and the Turkish lira. "We were suffering in this region... from the rise and fall and the instability of the Syrian pound," Shamo said. "The local councils in and around Azaz took this decision based on the reality that we are experiencing." Customers benefit from the new arrangement because the price of their bread is fixed, Shamo said, while the accounts at the municipal bakery are now more straightforward. "We don't work with the dollar or any currency other than Turkish," he said.

"certain" to vote in the upcoming presidential election rose by 10 percentage points to 67 percent compared with survey responses from 2015.

In smaller upper Midwest communities, the number of people similarly dedicated to voting rose by only about 1 point to 60 percent in that same four-year period. Overall, the number of "certain" voters rose by 7 percentage points nationally from 2015 to 2019. It increased by more than that in the largest metropolitan areas, rising by 9 points in communities with between 1 million and 5 million people and 8 points in metros with at least 5 million people. Smaller and rural communities lagged behind. The number of "certain" voters rose by 5 points in sparsely populated, Republican-dominated "non-metro" areas.

Momentum on both sides?

The rise in urban political engagement helped Democrats win political victories last year, including governor's races in conservative-leaning Kentucky and Louisiana. It may have also contributed to elevated voting levels in some of the more heavily populated communities and college towns in Iowa and New Hampshire, which held their presidential nominating contests earlier this month.

"Democrats are very angry," said Nicholas Valentino, a political scientist at the University of Michigan, who reviewed some of the poll findings for Reuters. "Many see this administration as an existential threat to the constitutional order. They're standing ready to participate to try to change the course of this country."

To be sure, a lot can happen this year to change the public's interest in voting. "Republicans are fired up as well" after the Democratic-led House of Representatives tried to remove Trump through impeachment, said Bryon Allen, chief research officer at WPA

Intelligence, a conservative political consulting firm that works with dozens of Republican congressional candidates.

In last week's New Hampshire Republican primary, 151,011 people showed up to support Trump even though he had no significant competition, a turnout that easily surpassed the number who participated in previous primaries when former Presidents Barack Obama, George W Bush and Bill Clinton sought re-election. "Democrats can't just assume that if they drive up turnout in the suburbs that they'll win," said Joe Lenski, co-founder of exit polling firm Edison Research. "Trump can drive up turnout in small towns and rural areas to counteract that."

'Just want to beat Trump'

While voting has been higher this year in Democratic presidential nominating contests in Iowa and New Hampshire, experts say at least some of that is due to population growth. Michael McDonald, a University of Florida political scientist who studies voter turnout, said a lot of Democrats also may be sitting out the primaries "because they don't see a lot of distinction between these candidates". When Trump gets on the ballot in November, McDonald said: "There will be much sharper interest in voting."

By Election Day, McDonald expects as many as two-thirds of the voting-age population may cast ballots, a record level of participation for a US presidential election. That would be up from 60.1 percent turnout among eligible voters in 2016, and it would surpass a generational high point of 63.8 percent turnout recorded in 1960, according to McDonald's US Elections Project.

Mary Lou Seamon, 67, of Knoxville, Tennessee, will be one of millions who expect to take part after sitting out the last election. The retired social services worker said none of the candidates, especially Democratic presidential

nominee Hillary Clinton, excited her four years ago. Seamon admired Trump, at least initially, for his experience as a businessman. But her opinions soured once Trump took office and she became determined to vote him out around the time Trump attacked former Senator John McCain after the death of the former war hero in 2018. On Election Day, Seamon will vote for any Democrat, no matter who wins the nomination. "I just want to beat Trump."

Measuring the wave

The Reuters/Ipsos poll, which is conducted online and administered throughout the United States, started asking American adults in 2012 to rate their overall level of interest in voting in upcoming general elections. Poll respondents were asked to rate their level of engagement on a scale of one to 10, with one meaning they were certain not to vote and 10 meaning they were certain to participate. It gathered 53,394 responses in the last five months of 2015 and 35,271 responses in the same part of 2019.

Using the zip codes provided by the respondents, Ipsos split the survey by the population size of the community that people lived in. Both regionally and nationally, the analysis showed, political engagement increased the most from 2015 to 2019 in large urban areas and the least in non-metropolitan areas. It was the same when grouping just those states where the margin of victory is expected to be closest this year.

In a "battleground" region that included Florida, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Arizona and Colorado, the number of "certain" voters rose by 9 percentage points in large metropolitan areas that have a population of at least 5 million, and 8 points in areas with 1 to 5 million, while it rose by 4 points in smaller, non-metros. —Reuters

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Business

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SIHANOUKVILLE, Cambodia: A general view shows the Westerdam cruise ship in Sihanoukville yesterday. In the best-case scenario, the economic hit from the epidemic in China will be short-lived, but it comes as the global economy remains fragile, IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said yesterday. — AFP.

IMF: Virus hitting a fragile global economy

Georgieva says IMF sticking to its forecast of 3.3% for global growth this year

WASHINGTON: In the best-case scenario, the economic hit from the epidemic in China will be short-lived, but it comes as the global economy remains fragile, IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said yesterday. Beset by many other risks, including the paused but still-unresolved US-China trade war, the world is not in a good position to deal with a prolonged impact, she wrote in a blog post.

"The truth is that uncertainty is becoming the new normal," she said. The coronavirus "is our most pressing uncertainty... It is a stark reminder of how a fragile recovery could be threatened by unforeseen events."

The virus to date has left nearly 1,900 dead and sickened 72,000 in China, cutting off transportation and forcing many businesses to close their doors. Apple, which relies on Chinese production, warned this week that iPhone supplies will be constrained. Georgieva repeated the fund's view that the new coronavirus is likely to have only a short-term effect, marked by a sharp decline in China's GDP followed by a sharp recovery.

But she warned that the situation could worsen, with

more dire consequences for other countries as the impacts spill over. "A long-lasting and more severe outbreak would result in a sharper and more protracted growth slowdown in China," she wrote.

"Its global impact would be amplified through more substantial supply chain disruptions and a more persistent drop in investor confidence, especially if the epidemic spreads beyond China." The International Monetary Fund yesterday again warned that risks to the global economy "remain skewed to the downside," in its customary report for the Group of 20 finance ministers and central bank governors who will be meeting in Saudi Arabia over the weekend. The Washington-based crisis lender in January downgraded its forecast for global growth this year to 3.3 percent, despite relief over the truce in the US-China trade conflict that led to tariffs on billions of dollars in goods.

The "phase one" US-China deal prevented even more tariffs from taking effect and the IMF estimates it "will reduce the drag from trade tensions on the level of GDP in 2020 by 0.2 percent."

However, it "only addresses a small share of the

recently imposed tariffs and specifies minimum increases in China's imports from the United States," the IMF chief said. In addition, the deal relies on "managed trade arrangements"—with specific targets for China to purchase from the United States—which "have the potential to distort trade and investment while harming global growth."

"In fact, our estimates suggest that the managed trade provisions cost the global economy close to \$100 billion," she said. The G20 Surveillance Note, as the report is known, said the recovery in the member economies is "fragile and likely to be shallow," too low to raise living standards or provide sufficient jobs for young people entering the workforce.

"Even in the best-case scenarios, however, the projected rate of global growth is still modest in too many parts of the world," Georgieva said.

The IMF said it was sticking to its January forecast for 3.3 percent growth in the global economy this year, up from 2.9 percent in 2019, already a downward revision of 0.1 percentage points from its forecast in October. "The recovery could be derailed by a sharp

rise in risk premia, triggered for example by a re-escalation of trade tensions, or a further spread of the coronavirus," the Fund said.

Chinese state television quoted President Xi Jinping as saying China could still meet its economic growth target for 2020 despite the epidemic. But the IMF note cast doubt on that.

"The coronavirus, a human tragedy, is disrupting economic activity in China as production has been halted and mobility around affected regions limited," the Fund wrote in the note. "Spillovers to other countries are likely - for example through tourism, supply chain linkages, and commodity price effects. It said the impact of the virus was still unfolding, and while the current scenario assumed a quick containment of the virus and a bounce-back later in the year, the impact of the epidemic could be larger and longer-lasting. "A wider and more protracted outbreak or lingering uncertainty about contagion could intensify supply chain disruptions and depress confidence more persistently, making the global impact more severe," the Fund said in the note. — Agencies

Aramco shares shed post-IPO gains as oil dives

RIYADH: Saudi Aramco shares have lost most of the gains they made since listing in December in a landmark first offering, as oil prices drop amid alarm over the new coronavirus. China's energy demand has sagged as authorities lock down millions of people to prevent the spread of the disease, with major knock-on effects for a global economy dependent on the Asian powerhouse.

The slump, which has slashed main oil contracts by up to 20 percent since the virus panic began, threatens to undercut Gulf economies that have already been battling both low prices and low demand for energy exports. A high-profile casualty is Saudi Aramco—the world's largest company—which was listed on the Saudi bourse to much fanfare on December 11 in a record-breaking initial public offering (IPO). The company raised \$25.6 billion with the sale of 1.5 percent of its stock, with one-third of the shares sold to some five million Saudi citizens who were promised a 10 percent bonus if they did not sell for six months. The value of the IPO was further raised to \$29.4 billion in early January when the company sold some 450 million extra shares to investors.

The stock surged almost 19 percent in the heady first few days of trading, sending the



company's valuation past the \$2 trillion mark sought by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman when he envisaged the IPO four years before. But over the past weeks, the share price posted gradual but persistent declines, coming close to the IPO price of 32 riyals (\$8.50) a share.

On Sunday, it closed at 32.80 riyals, the lowest price since the listing, which reduced the firm's value to \$1.75 trillion.

April test

Global ratings agency Standard & Poor's said on Monday that the coronavirus may further push down oil prices, especially if the disease which has killed more than 1,800 people is not contained by March, as many hope. "For the (Gulf nations), this could result in a drop in oil prices, economic growth, and real estate prices, alongside a change in gov-

ernment spending, which could put pressure on issuers we rate in the region," the agency said in a report.

China is the top importer of Saudi oil. Aramco has dropped some 13.4 percent since hitting its record high of 38 riyals on December 16, and lost about seven percent since the start of the year, most of it after the coronavirus outbreak. "Part of the initial decline came after the price soared to levels that made the share unattractive to investors and after dealers sold to make a quick profit," said Mohamed Zidan, market strategist at ThinkMarkets in Dubai. The company faces a key test in early April when Saudi shareholders will be able to sell after collecting their 10 percent bonus share issue. Aramco has guaranteed it will distribute dividends of at least \$75 billion every year until 2024 as a way of luring investors. — AFP

Britain heralds end of 'cheap labor from Europe'

LONDON: Britain will prioritize access for high-skilled workers from around the world in its post-Brexit points-based immigration system, the government said on Tuesday, setting out its plans to put an end to a reliance on "cheap labor from Europe".

Concern over the impact of high levels of immigration from the European Union was one of the key drivers behind Britain's 2016 vote to leave the bloc and the government has said it plans to bring overall migration numbers down. The new system, in place from Jan 1, 2021, will assign points for specific skills, qualifications, salaries or professions and only give visas to those who have enough points. It will treat EU and non-EU citizens the same.

It will mark a sea change for businesses who have grown used to having access to a large pool of EU workers, particularly since 2004 when the accession of several former communist states in central and eastern Europe saw a big influx of migrants coming to Britain to work. "We have got a number of routes through the

points-based immigration scheme that will enable people to come here with the right kind of skills that can support our country and our economy," interior minister Priti Patel said.

But business groups said that many firms relied on overseas labor and cautioned there might not be enough domestic workers to tend crops, care for patients and serve food - a deficit that could undermine the world's fifth largest economy. Britain's fruit and vegetable sector, for example, relies on up to 80,000 seasonal workers from the EU each year, but the government said its Seasonal Workers Pilot scheme would have just 10,000 places.

The Home Office said it would follow a recommendation made last month by the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), an independent body which advises the government, to lower the minimum general salary threshold for skilled migrants to 25,600 pounds (\$33,330) a year, from 30,000 pounds.

Skilled workers will need to meet criteria including the ability to speak English and will need to have a job offer. There will be no specific entry route for low-skilled workers, something the government hopes will help reduce the number of migrants. "We need to shift the focus of our economy away from reliance on cheap labour from Europe and instead concentrate on investment in technology and automation. Employers will need to adjust," the government said in a policy document. — Reuters

Business

NBK Economic Report

Kuwait's consumer spending growth expected to remain buoyant in 2020

Consumer confidence appears slightly subdued

Chart 1: Knet IPMS, POS, ATM & Kpay transactions (3-month moving average, mma, % y/y)



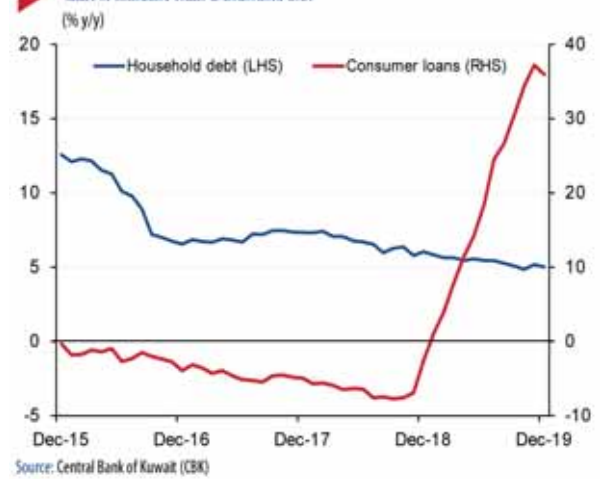
Source: Knet / NBK

Chart 2: Consumer confidence index (index)



Source: Ara research and consultancy

Chart 3: Consumer loans & household debt (% y/y)



Source: Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK)

Chart 4: Employment growth in Kuwait (year-end, % y/y)



Source: Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI)

KUWAIT: Consumer spending growth is expected to maintain its positive momentum going into 2020, thanks to solid employment growth among Kuwaitis and a lower interest rate environment. However, downside risks stemming from softer oil prices and slower growth in government spending are likely to continue to weigh on the spending outlook going forward.

Key consumer-related indicators, including Knet data on point-of-sale (POS) transactions, online payments and ATM withdrawals, showed a solid increase of 9.8 percent y/y (3-month moving average) in 2019, lower than the 11.6 percent recorded in 2018, but still higher than 2017 and 2016's figures of 8.1 percent and 5.8 percent, respectively. We expect growth in Knet transactions to remain strong, led by continued gains in online spending.

The latest trend in consumer confidence appears at odds with the recent strength in consumer spending,

reflecting the softer oil price environment and weaker sentiments among expats to some extent. According to Ara's consumer confidence index, consumer confidence trended lower in 2019, averaging around 104 (as of November), lower than the 112 average recorded in 2018. The fall can be attributed to ongoing weakness in the 'current employment' and 'durable goods' subcomponents, as expat employment prospects have softened amid ongoing Kuwaitization efforts.

Strong consumer lending lifts spending outlook

Healthy increases in consumer lending have improved the outlook for spending. Facilitated by a lower interest rate environment and the Central Bank of Kuwait's (CBK) relaxation of consumer loan limits (to KD 25,000 from KD 15,000 previously) in December 2018, consumer loan (excluding housing loans which account for almost 87 per-

cent of total household credit) growth has since accelerated, reaching a near record high of 36 percent y/y in December 2019.

Despite the sharp rise in consumer credit, however, growth in overall household debt eased in 2019, averaging 5.4 percent y/y, down from the 6.6 percent average recorded in 2018.

Labor market trends supportive of spending

Decent growth in jobs is likely to remain supportive of consumer spending. As of end-2019, employment growth among Kuwaitis was 2.4 percent y/y, which, though down from 3.7 percent in 2018, was still reasonable. This was mainly supported by public sector hiring. According to official PACI data, growth in expatriate jobs, in contrast, recovered to 5.4 percent in 2019 from 4.3 percent in 2018, driven by a pick-up in domestic workers (+15 per-

cent). Excluding domestic workers, the sharp rise of which is unclear yet, expat employment growth slowed from 4.6 percent in 2018 to just 1.9 percent in 2019, led by a sharper decline in hiring activity in the public sector (-2.9 percent).

Separately, average wage growth among Kuwaiti employees appears to be on the mend, rising by a healthier 2.0 percent y/y in 2Q19, versus 1.2 percent in 1Q19 and the 0.8 percent recorded in 2018. In fact, wage growth among Kuwaiti employees (+1.7 percent) surpassed that of expatriates for the first time in three years. This was likely driven by Kuwaitization efforts among higher skilled workers in both the public and private sectors. Given that Kuwaitization targets for low-skilled, lower paid jobs remain low in comparison, we may expect to see more of this downward bias on expat wage growth going forward.

Special Report

The truth behind Kuwait's budget deficits

By Abdullah S Al-Salloum

The state budget of Kuwait has been struggling since the oil-over-supply crisis; ending in very large deficits over the past few years. In a conference held in January 2020, the former minister of finance announced the unprecedented amount of deficit of KD 9.2 billion in the fiscal year 2020/2021. Within the arena where politicians raise their populist speeches in this matter and only criticizing superficial consequences, comes this report to expose the real cause of the significant deficit and show a valid path to conquer such a daunting treasury dilemma.



Economic model of the state - EMS

Understanding the direction to the root of the issue essentially requires a basic visualization of the economic model of the state.

Clearly, there are two main sectors in EMS: (1) government and (2) private. In the government sector (1), there are two main sources of income, oil revenues in return for oil exports and non-oil revenues in return for fees or taxation. The total revenue is translated into wages for government employees as well as contracts with the contract-based private sector.

On the other hand, the private sector (2) has three sub-sectors: (A) consumption-based, whose revenues are sourced by employees of all other sectors, including government; (B) contract-based, whose revenues are mainly funded by contracts with the government; and (C) exports-based, whose revenues are mainly sourced by returns for external exports of goods and services. All the sub-sectors feed their labor forces and act as a government's source of non-oil revenue.

Internal uncontrollability of economic factors

Government's fiscal year budgets are dependent upon yearly revenues and expenses; beginning on the 1st of April to the end of March in the following year.

Total Revenue (TR) = Oil Revenue (OR) + Non-Oil Revenue (NOR)

As shown, the total revenue (TR) of the state is a mixture of oil and non-oil revenues. The value of oil revenue (OR) is dependent upon two factors: the daily fixed production amount set by OPEC (OR1) and the yearly weighted-average price per barrel (OR2). On the other hand, the value of non-oil revenue is dependent upon the amount of fees or taxes collected by the government from the private sector.

Considering the fact that the government has no real effective influence over OPEC's decision-making process, it is very essential to acknowledge that (OR1), (OR2), and therefore (OR), are internally uncontrollable.

Analysis of collected historical observations - starting in 2015 to the end of 2019- gives clear indication that non-oil revenues weigh on average 11.9 percent of the total revenue. This means that oil revenues, which are internally uncontrollable, weigh on average 88.1 percent of the total revenue.

Total Expenses (TE) = Fixed Expenses (FE) + Variable Capital Expenses (VCAE) + Variable Consumption Expenses (VCOE)

The total fiscal expenses (TE) is a mixture of three main expenses: (1) fixed (FE), which are internally controllable by curbs and other governmental policies and reforms, and they can be capital, consumption or both; (2) variable capital (VCAE), which can neither be classified as internally controllable nor uncontrollable as they are swinging expenses between the two scopes based on current strategy implementation led by the government; and (3) variable consumption (VCOE), which cover the

state's whole wages system.

The variable consumptional expenses (VCOE) are governed and protected by the constitution, which strictly obligates the government to provide citizens with proper jobs, including within the private sector by setting private wage incentives or support. And considering the fact that the government has no real effective influence over the average number of increase of newly-born citizens, it is very essential to acknowledge that (VCOE) are internally uncontrollable.

The analysis of collected historical observations - starting in 2015 to the end of 2019- gives clear indication that variable consumptional expenses (VCOE) weigh on average 57.6 percent of the total expenses (TE), and is increasing 4.3 percent every year, at the rate of KWD 512 million.

Real vs book deficit

Every year by the end of March, 10 percent of the total revenue goes to the Next Generations Sovereign Wealth Fund (NGF) as expense with no regards to the final state of budget. If the total revenues exceeds the total expenses, the profit goes to the General Reserve Wealth Fund (GRF). When the total expenses exceeds the total revenue, the national assembly moves to legislate on how to cover the deficit. Legislations in this matter usually consider fund withdrawals from the GRF or local and/or international loans.

Considering the observations of GRF's balance, we see that it has been a main source of covering previous budget deficits, hence roughly decreased in value from KD 63.4 billion in March, 2014 to KD 20.6 billion in September 2019.

As long as GRF is fully capable of covering deficits, such deficits are considered book deficits. Otherwise, they are real deficits. Currently, they are still book deficits; however, with the average observed deficits of the past few years, they will become real deficits after the next two fiscal years.

Next Generations Sovereign Wealth Fund

Many populist speeches have criticized or had no belief in such budget deficits, rationalizing their opinions on corruption incidents and the insufficient utilization of cash resources. Nevertheless, such rationale hasn't gone beyond mentioning the strength of value achieved by the returns on investment in the Next Generations Sovereign Wealth Fund.

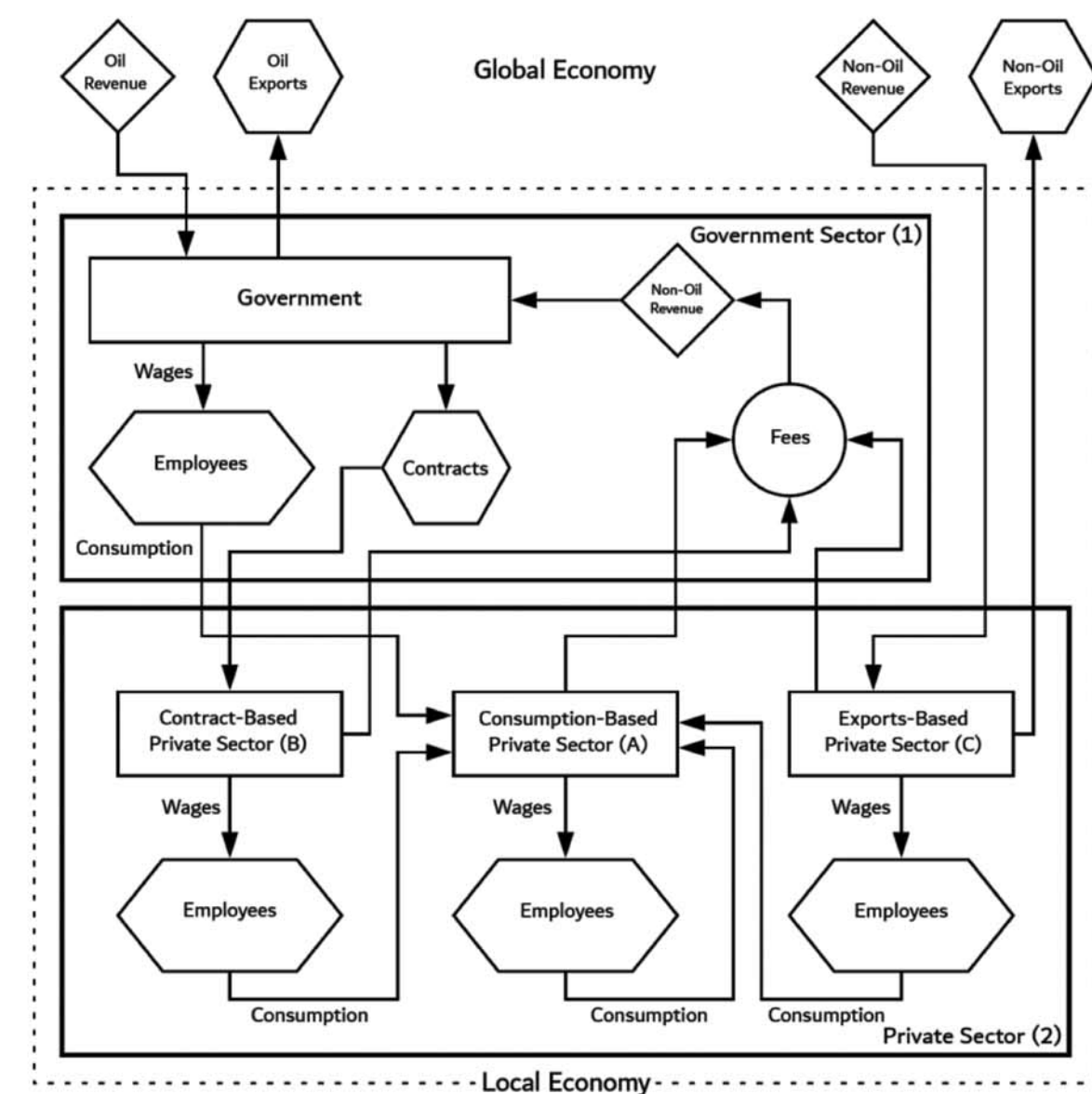
Statistically, NGF's value has exceeded KD 200 billion. Considering the worst-case scenario while operating with insufficient utilization of resources, at least 3 percent can be achieved as a return on investment from NGF, initially incrementing KD 6 billion every fiscal year. This amount is the basis upon which the politicians are building their opinions on: accusing the government of misleading the public with false financial figures and artificial deficit.

However, the public may not be aware that NGF is funded and protected by the law. The fund is fully isolated from the budget, as well as its investments and yearly returns. Breaking into this isolation basically requires a new legislation. Apparently, politicians cannot raise that issue as the likelihood that HH the Amir will approve such a law is very low. Therefore, for politicians, the publicity outcome of raising false accusations in this matter is more beneficial than raising mature, truthful and wise thoughts.

Analysis

Connecting the dots can be quite easier now: considering government's non-oil revenue figures, we are more able to visualize the very tiny weight of the exports-based private sub-sector (c) in the economic model of the state, hence giving it almost ineffective contribution to the related factors in our total revenue formula. Such visualization makes us realize that a very large portion of the state's economy is very dependent on oil revenues.

At the same time, we can see that a very large portion



of the total expenses is continuously increasing at an average rate that will eventually be higher than the average rate of increase in the de facto source of state revenue, oil. Accordingly, whether taxation or curbing policies alone were heavily put in place, the budget deficit will not be eliminated for good, but rather delayed. And the reason is quite simple! Without enhancing the weight of exports-based private sub-sector, although taxation and curbs are considered non-oil revenues, they in fact were sourced by oil revenues, delivered to the public as variable consumptional expenses, and have been partly taken back as non-oil revenues.

The real deficit

The real cause of the state budget deficit isn't just as simple as financial waste, corruption, isolation of returns of sovereign funds or insufficient government operational management. These are just microeconomic and organizational-behavioral consequences of the real macroeconomic cause, which has created the mixture of so many complex problems leading the country towards this continuous financial deficit we have witnessed in the past several fiscal years.

The real deficit is the inability to overcome this macroeconomic cause: by not implementing the real reform in transforming the local rentier economy from a state-led economy to an economy that is fully sustainable and led by itself. In other words, transforming the state economy to an economy that is led by the exports-based private sub-sector, to an economy where internally-controllable factors dominate the budget's formula.

Final thoughts

Overcoming such a macroeconomic issue can be quite straightforward in a dictatorship. However, democracy such as ours in a rentier economy makes the process much more complex as the aspect of conflict-of-interest weighs much in the decision-making process. It is the

role of a supreme entity to set a valid promising macro-economic vision, to list its endless goals and draw the strategies to achieve every single goal. Such strategies do not only involve executive officials in the government, but also members of the parliament to achieve the required legislation.

Conflict of interest in the decision-making process is one of the main obstacles. Hence, one of the main vision's goals is to eliminate that. The strategy to implement so is to introduce bold and smart legislation first, especially the ones that tend to eliminate political corruption, economically. As we live in an economy where someone's self-interest can be achieved without achieving the public's, these new legislations must reverse the notion so whenever a person's self-interest is achieved, public interest adds up. Hence, employing and contracting must be signed based on qualification and efficiency, not loyalty or nepotism. Whenever the decision-making process begins to heal, strategies of other goals can be achieved smoothly.

We're not here to elaborate on the vision, goals and strategies, which would finally swallow almost all superficially raised issues by transforming Kuwait from a rentier state to sustainable. We've already done that in a publication under the name "Kuwait of the Sustainability".

The publication sets three sub-visions with four main connected goals and collaborative strategies. Jabir Fund strategy to eliminate the influence of conflict-of-interest in the decision-making process and to enhance non-oil exports. Triple Economy strategy to accelerate transforming the economy to a non-oil export-based economy. Well-Being strategy to ensure high living-standards for citizens and expatriates. Finally, Knowledge Economy strategy to enhance the existing and upcoming labor force in moderating other strategies to achieve their goals. Following such strategies, the sub-visions named Sustainable Economy, Luxurious Society and Solid Culture can be realistically achieved by 2035.

Note: Abdullah S Al-Salloum is a Kuwaiti economist

Business

EU seeks 'responsible' AI to dispel Big Brother fears

Europe to be main battlefield in the battle for industrial data

BRUSSELS: The EU unveiled its strategy for artificial intelligence yesterday as Europe jumps to catch up to the US and China and dispel fears of Big Brother control. From household robots to facial recognition, AI will be the technology of the future and Europe is eager to play a central role in defining the rules as well as pushing its own champions.

"We want the application of these new technologies to deserve the trust of our citizens," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told reporters. "This is why we are promoting a responsible, human-centric approach to artificial intelligence," she said.

EU officials widely acknowledge that Europe missed the first internet revolution with an online world dominated by Silicon Valley's Google, Facebook and Apple, as well as Chinese players like Tencent.

To avoid repeating the past, the AI roadmap proposed yesterday is the first step in a long road to legislation, with Brussels hoping for draft laws by the end of the year. The far-ranging plans will face furious lobbying from corporate giants and governments and will require ratification by European Parliament. The heads of Google and Facebook already made their views known during recent visits to Brussels.

"Artificial intelligence is not good or bad in itself. It all depends on why and how it is used," said the EU Commission's executive vice president on digital policy, Margrethe Vestager. AI reproducing "human language

can make a chat bot... and give us a better consumer experience, but it can also be used to create fake news," she told a news conference.

The commission, the EU's executive arm, will first and foremost seek to repeat the success of its landmark GDPR regulation that has become a global standard for protecting data privacy online.

'Battlefield'

The EU said trust would be a guiding principle for AI in Europe, with higher-risk uses in health, security or transport facing stricter demands on transparency and human oversight. Lower-risk users would be largely left alone, but eligible for a voluntary labeling scheme if they apply higher standards.

The other ambition will be to create a single market for data where companies and universities could have free access to the mountain of data that drives AI. Risking the anger of big corporations, the EU is considering forcing tech giants to share their data or face sanctions, which would require a change in anti-trust laws.

"The battle for industrial data starts now and Europe will be the main battlefield," said the EU's Industry Commissioner Thierry Breton. "Europe has everything it needs to be a leader," the former tech CEO added. Even though facial recognition is one of the most controversial examples of artificial intelligence, the EU stepped back for asking for a ban of its use. — AFP



BRUSSELS: European Commission Executive Vice-President Margrethe Vestager (center) and EU Commissioner for Internal Market Thierry Breton (right) give a press conference on Artificial Intelligence (AI) yesterday at the European Commission headquarters at the Berlaymont building in Brussels. — AFP

US takes aim at Rosneft to press Venezuela

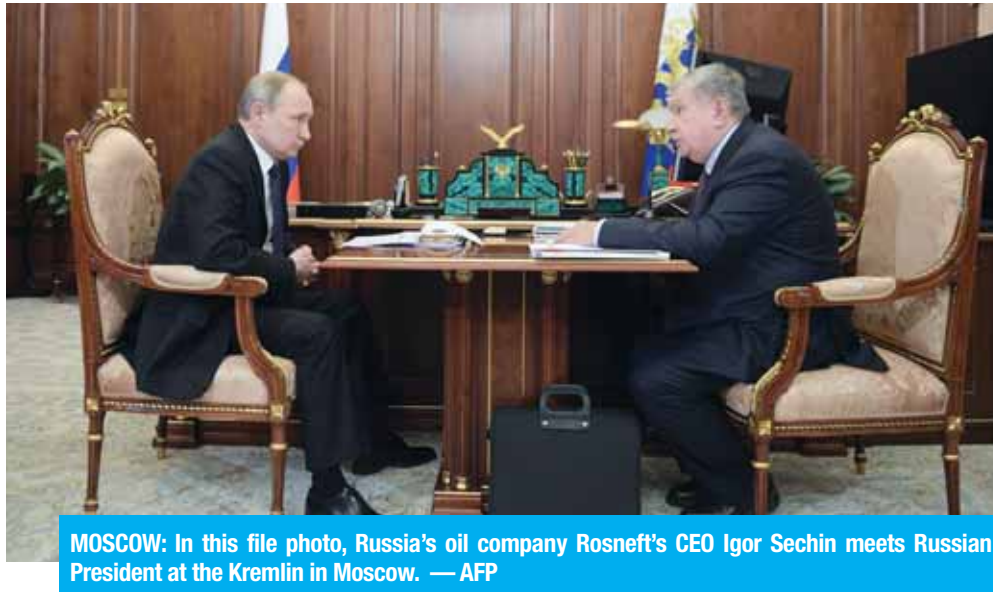
WASHINGTON: The United States on Tuesday imposed sanctions against a subsidiary of Russian state-controlled oil giant Rosneft over its key role in Venezuela, stepping up international pressure to break leftist President Nicolas Maduro's grip on power. Rosneft Trading SA, which has helped sell Venezuelan oil despite unilateral US sanctions, and Rosneft vice president Didier Casimiro were targeted by the US Treasury Department.

"As the primary broker of global deals for the sale and transport of Venezuela's crude oil, Rosneft Trading has propped up the dictatorial Maduro, enabling his repression of the Venezuelan people," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement. Pompeo added in a tweet: "Those who prop up the corrupt regime and enable its repression of the Venezuelan people will be held accountable."

The sanctions will block any assets of Rosneft Trading or the Belgian-born Casimiro that come through the United States. It also makes transactions with them a crime for anyone under US jurisdiction. Opposition leader Juan Guaido, who recently returned from a global tour that included a White House meeting with President Donald Trump, hailed the new US pressure on Maduro's regime.

"This news is a victory!" Guaido tweeted. "Whoever supports the dictator, no matter who they are or where they come from, must bear the consequences," he said. Russia denounced what it described as a US attempt to "bend the world to its will" as well as Washington's "banal desire to create advantages for American businesses that cannot stand up against fair competition from Russian companies on the world stage."

"The destructive US policy of sanctions is increasingly undermining global freedom of commerce, which the Americans say they defend, and raises international tensions," the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement. Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza,



MOSCOW: In this file photo, Russia's oil company Rosneft's CEO Igor Sechin meets Russian President at the Kremlin in Moscow. — AFP

whose government espouses socialism, said the sanctions "violate the rights to free trade and free enterprise."

Seeking to dent Maduro cash

The United States and about 60 other countries recognize Guaido as Venezuela's interim president and not Maduro, who presides over a crumbling economy that has sent millions fleeing for lack of basic staples. But US pressure has failed to oust Maduro who still enjoys the support of the Venezuelan military as well as Russia, China and Cuba.

Washington has already imposed multiple sanctions aimed at toppling Maduro's regime, particularly by cutting his government's oil revenue. Maduro on Monday accused Trump of plotting an invasion and said "we are not afraid of military combat and we are going to guarantee peace."

Elliott Abrams, who is leading the US effort to topple Maduro, voiced hope the latest step would make a significant dent on Maduro's most important source of revenue.

"Today's sanctions are another step in the policy of pressuring the Maduro regime to allow Venezuela to escape from its terrible crisis through free and fair presidential elections," Abrams told reporters. "There will be more steps and further pressure in the coming weeks and months," he warned. Abrams said Rosneft handles around 70 percent of

Venezuela's oil and that the country's top importer has been India, followed by China.

Delhi has promised to cut down purchases because of its strong ties with the United States. Abrams voiced confidence that the global oil market would remain stable, pointing in part to rising US production.

"We're not trying to raise oil prices. We're trying to diminish the amount of money available to the Maduro regime," Abrams said. Rosneft yesterday announced a sharp increase in net profit last year despite a polluted oil incident involving a key pipeline and OPEC's production reduction agreement. — AFP

The state-controlled company posted a net profit of 708 billion rubles last year (\$11 billion), up 29 percent compared to 2018. Rosneft CEO Igor Sechin, who is a close ally of President Vladimir Putin, said the company's financial performance was successful last year despite "a series of negative factors and market uncertainties."

In April, a key pipeline to Europe named Druzhba, or Friendship, was shut down due to contamination with chlorine compounds. The pipeline takes oil to a number of countries including Poland, Germany and Slovakia.

"The restriction of oil intake to the Transneft main pipeline system did not allow the company to fully realize the potential of its production capacity," Sechin said in a statement. — AFP

Despite trade wars, Trump says US 'open for business'

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump said Tuesday that he wants to avoid policies that make it difficult for other countries to do business with the United States—even as his administration has done precisely the opposite. Trump has imposed tariffs on billions of dollars in goods and launched disputes with most key US trading partners over the past three years, but in a lengthy Twitter thread, the president said, "We don't want to make it impossible to do business with us. That will only mean that orders will go to someplace else."

"The United States cannot, & will not, become such a difficult place to deal with in terms of foreign countries buying our product, including for the always used National Security excuse, that our companies will be forced to leave in order to remain competitive," he tweeted.

Trump appeared to be directing his tweets at hardliners in his White House, referring to a proposal to block General Electric from selling jet engines to China. "I want China to buy our jet engines, the best in the World," he said. "I have seen some of the regulations being circulated... and they are ridiculous."

US officials are considering denying a license to CFM International, a joint venture between GE and France's Safran SA, to export more of its jet engines to China, the Wall Street Journal reported over the weekend, citing people familiar with the discussions.

The report said the aim was to cripple

Foreign pilots at Chinese airlines return home

BEIJING/SYDNEY: Foreign pilots at some Chinese airlines have returned to their home countries and are considering other jobs after being placed on unpaid leave as demand falls because of the coronavirus, affected flight crew told Reuters. Meanwhile, Chinese pilots with greater job security said their income has been sharply reduced because most of their pay is based on flying hours.

Data firm OAG estimates about 80 percent of scheduled airline capacity to, from and within China has been cut this week because of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that has killed more than 2,000 people. Chinese airlines have been the hardest hit. Major employers of foreign pilots, including China Southern Airlines Co Ltd and HNA Group's Hainan Airlines Holding Co Ltd, have acted swiftly to cut their losses, according to pilots and industry experts.

China Southern did not respond immediately to a request for comment, and HNA declined to comment. "All the foreign pilots are on leave until the virus situation gets better," said an expatriate captain at China Southern who, like all of those who spoke to Reuters, requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak with media. "For the moment we

development of China's Comac airliner.

National security threat

But Trump has freely used the national security justification in his confrontational trade strategy, imposing tariffs on steel and aluminum worldwide to protect key American industry, and threatening to do likewise for cars from Europe. In the most costly trade conflict, Trump announced tariffs on virtually 100 percent of goods imported from China. A truce signed in January suspended the most damaging of those, but the majority remain in place.

US trading partners have not stood idly by as Trump imposes tariffs, retaliating with punitive duties on American goods like bourbon, motorcycles and farm products, which obliged the government to provide millions in aid to farmers. In the latest dispute—a 15-year-old case over European government subsidies to Airbus—Washington hit out with 25 percent tariffs on a host of goods, including Scotch whisky, French and Spanish wines, and English cheeses.

Trump also slapped penalties on French goods in response to a digital tax. Nonetheless, he said, "I want to make it EASY to do business with the United States, not difficult."

"The united states is open for business!" In fact, US companies have been forced to shift operations or find new sources for components, or plead for exemptions from the trade policies. Likewise, foreign buyers of American goods have gone elsewhere in many cases.

"With each round of cascading tariffs, Trump has bullied more American companies into becoming protectionist," Chad Bown, trade expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said in a recent paper. "For many Americans, the higher costs resulting from his tariffs mean they can no longer compete with foreign firms in either the US or global market." — AFP

are all in our home countries."

Expats are typically paid more than local staff and work on contracts, which means they are more expendable in a downturn, industry experts said. "We have seen pilots heading back to Australia in January and February due to the stand down and seeking new roles," said Kirsty Ferguson, the head of Sydney-based airline interview coaching firm PinStripe Solutions.

As China's airline sector ballooned, it imported foreign experience: the number of foreign pilots flying with Chinese airlines more than doubled to over 1,500 between 2010 and 2019, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China. China will need another 124,000 pilots in the next 20 years, according to Boeing, as an expanding middle class drives demand for air travel. But foreign pilots said being put on leave without pay makes it less likely they'll return when demand recovers.

A foreign captain at Fuzhou Airlines, part of HNA Group, said he was placed on unpaid leave when the virus hit and was concerned it would be permanent. "They hope people will find other jobs as none can go without pay forever," he said. "This way they 'save their face,' and secondly they don't feel obliged to dismiss you properly according to the contract." The pilot said that he was looking for jobs closer to home, but that so far those options paid less than in China. Foreign pilots can make more than \$300,000 a year there, making it one of the best-paying markets in the world. — Reuters

Coronavirus slams Adidas, Puma sales

FRANKFURT: German sportswear makers Adidas and Puma said yesterday store closures in China because of the novel coronavirus outbreak had caused sales to plummet in recent weeks.

"Our business activity in Greater China has been around 85 percent below the prior year level since Chinese New Year on January 25," Adidas said in a statement. Competitor Puma said "business in China is heavily impacted due to the restrictions and safety measures implemented by the authorities."

More than half of its own stores and partner outlets are closed at the moment, it added. Adidas said it faced "a significant number of store closures" in its network of 500 owned stores and 11,500 franchises in China, while fewer people are shopping at those which remain open.

The group's "Greater China" region, which includes Taiwan and Hong Kong, has for years been one of the fastest-growing areas of the world for Adidas sales. And the Asia-



The logo of Germany's sportswear maker Puma is seen during the company's annual press conference yesterday in Herzogenaurach, southern Germany. — AFP

Pacific region as a whole accounted for around one-third of Adidas' 6.4 billion euros (\$6.9 billion) in revenues in the first nine months of 2019.

Despite the novel coronavirus' spread to some other countries in the region, "we have not yet observed any major business impact outside of Greater China," Adidas said. But Puma said "business in other markets, especially in Asia, is suffering from lower numbers

of Chinese tourists".

Looking ahead, neither company could predict how big the impact of the virus would be on their annual results. Adidas said it expected the situation to "normalize in the short term", keeping the company on track to achieve its full-year targets. Adidas bosses will provide an update when the company releases its 2019 earnings data on March 11. — AFP

Business

Gulf Bank celebrates consumer banking employee achievements

Ceremony to honor employees held at bank's Durrat Al-Khaleej Training Center



KUWAIT: Gulf Bank's "Durrat Al-Khaleej" Training Center graduated a total of 154 employees and specifically recognized 33 Consumer banking staff that were the high-flyers during the 2019, Quarter three and four internal certifications and inductions. The ceremony was attended by members from Gulf Bank's Executive Management and leaders from the Human Resources and Consumer Banking departments.

The ceremony was held in recognition of the outstanding achievements made by trainees and employees of Gulf Bank's Consumer Banking Channels department, and in celebration of their overall performance and dedication to customer service.

Commenting on the ceremony, General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, Salma Al-Hajjaj said: "Gulf Bank's Consumer Banking services are at the heart of our work

at the Bank, and it is only in developing each and every one of our employees' capabilities and skills that we can excel as a whole. At Gulf Bank, we are fully committed to providing the utmost levels of customer service, and we are keen on our role in supporting and empowering the youth through various practical training programs as part of our vision to enhance economic and social sustainability in Kuwait."

It is worth noting that Gulf Bank's "Durrat

Al-Khaleej" training center conducts various training programs and courses throughout the year for the Bank's employees and trainees.

Our Direct Sales Academy participants were also recognized during this event for completing the Boot Camp challenge with success. Among the other Certifications offered are: Relationship Officer, Senior Customer Service Representative and Call Centre - Assistant Team Manager.



Salma Al-Hajjaj

stc - Kuwait first to launch 5G E2E SA network in MENA

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc - Kuwait, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced yesterday the deployment of an E2E 5G SA solution from Devices to Network and billing with the ability to simultaneously support both 5G Non-Stand Alone (NSA) and 5G Stand Alone (SA).

This initiative builds on stc's partnership and vision to collaborate with Huawei to deliver an agile, cloud native, next generation 5G network that gives stc the ability to introduce new 5G services and experiences with the shortest time to market. With the best 5G wireless coverage by end of 2019, stc - Kuwait updated its wireless network seamlessly to support the SA & NSA terminals. stc - Kuwait's 5G core network platform is fully designed with containerized & micro service architecture making it truly Cloud Native. The hardware of platform is MENA first running on the innovative & disruptive next generation ARM V8 architecture powered by Huawei servers which have been specifically designed to meet the needs of the ICT industry specifically as we enter the 5G era.

These ARM based servers are able to leverage their abilities in providing a highly scalable, massively dense, power efficient 5G Core to stc - Kuwait based on the industry standard 5G reference architecture ensuring an open and rich ecosystem.

stc - Kuwait also upgraded its billing system to further support multi-dimensional, multi-scenario charging for consumer, home and corporates. Collaborating with 5G SA technology, stc currently has an end to end network ready with an initial focus on eMBB and is looking forward to the industry to standardize mMTC & URLLC.

stc - Kuwait CEO, engineer Maziad Al-Harbi said, "5G is where the aspiration of the enterprising business and the magical consumer use cases will for the first time become reality. We are able to provide guaranteed SLAs through SA, especially the enhancement in uplink to support our "Dedicated Access" offering to enterprises. It is now possible with 5G to see stc pave the way for users to experience low latency and massive connections to become a reality in Kuwait."

He added, "This is why stc has partnered with Huawei to design and deliver a network that considers the latest trends and utilizes evolutionary learning systems to provide an unmatched user experience. We also provide a safe and secure digital ecosystem where industries and consumers can benefit from with services tailored to their needs. We hope to welcome everyone to experience this end to end 5G SA with us."

Deutsche Telekom rings in record profits

BERLIN: German telecom operator Deutsche Telekom yesterday reported record profits for 2019, with US unit T-Mobile gleaming millions more customers ahead of a merger with competitor Sprint.

The bottom line bounded almost 80 percent year-on-year to 3.9 billion euros (\$4.2 billion) making 2019 "the most successful year in the history of the company", Deutsche Telekom said in a statement. The operator was now the "clear number one in our industry in Europe", it added. For 2020, Deutsche Telekom said profit from operations was likely to be stable, and sales on the rise, even without counting in the effects of the Sprint-T-Mobile tie-up.

Years of rapid growth in its American subscriber base meant T-Mobile already accounted for around half of the group's 80 billion euros in annual turnover in 2019, compared with just over a quarter for home market Germany. With the Sprint takeover, recently given the go-ahead by a federal court, the company's US subscriber numbers will leap to over 100 million. —AFP

Huawei Mate 30 Pro 5G's video features are unique!

KUWAIT: Have you ever felt a jolt of inspiration to start working on your next big video project, but then felt disheartened thinking of all the work you have to put in? Or worse, the expensive equipment you thought you would need? Well don't worry you budding director, we have a solution for you! Huawei's latest 5G powered flagship the Huawei Mate 30 Pro 5G, packs some powerful hardware, meaning you won't need to carry big professional cameras or spending hours trying to edit for the perfect shot.

The Huawei Mate 30 Pro 5G has not one or two but four cameras built into the Halo Ring design on the back. The world's first dual 40MP Supersensing Cine Camera setup, this consists of a 40MP Supersensing camera, a 40MP Cine Camera, an 8MP Telephoto lens and a 3D Depth sensing camera. Now that we know what hardware we have, let's look at what we can actually do with it.

Movie-like videos

The biggest advantage of having such a powerful camera setup is movie-like video quality every single time. To begin, all you have to do is turn on the camera and slide to the video option. Shooting it in auto mode will let the AI do all the work, meaning you are guaranteed a stunning movie like video. But if you want to get down to the nitty-gritty details to make your video perfect, there are a few adjustments you can make.

Once you are in the video recording mode, hit the gear icon on the top right to go to settings. Here you can adjust the resolution you will be shooting at and for the best results set it to 4K. You also have additional options that can help you in framing your video, namely the Assistive Grid and Horizontal Level.

You can also slide over to the Pro mode, which allows you to individually adjust and tweak all the settings even further, allowing you to get that perfect shot.

Slow-Mo taken to another level

How about adding some special slow motion effects



for a more dramatic shot? With the HUAWEI Mate 30 Pro you can record slow-motion videos at a shocking 7680fps, a feat that was possible only with powerful and professional camera hardware. Slide over to the "More" section and select "Slow-Mo". Once that's ready, you can swipe up to adjust the speed. We suggest you select 256x, which shoots at 7680fps for gorgeous results. You then adjust the focus range box to your subject and tap the shutter button. You will need to keep your device steady as well. It's as easy as that!

Darkness is not a challenge

Low light? With the HUAWEI Mate 30 Pro 5G, it's no problem. Thanks to its advanced camera setup, the HUAWEI Mate 30 Pro 5G is capable of recording stunning videos even in low-light situations. Simply switch to Pro mode again, and you can adjust your ISO all the way up to 51,200, the highest ever on a smartphone for video.

Get creative with Time-lapse, now in 4K!

Who doesn't love shooting a time-lapse video? The clouds quickly moving along the sky or the rapid blooming of a flower, these are feats possible only



with advanced camera equipment. However, the HUAWEI Mate 30 Pro 5G can do it as well and in 4K nonetheless! You can also manually adjust ISO, white balance and focus, along with other parameters like speed and length. Simply swipe to the More section, hit Time-lapse, frame your shot and start recording. Again, having a tripod here might help for a steadier shot, especially if you are planning long time-lapse videos like the night sky.

A battery to last your whole shoot

Worried all these features will drain out your phone battery? Maybe not enough power banks while shooting the time-lapse video? With the Huawei Mate 30 Pro 5G, you don't have to be stressed about this, thanks to its massive 4500mAh battery. This doesn't mean you are going to spend hours on end charging it back up either, thanks to the 27W Wireless Huawei Supercharge or 40W wired Huawei Supercharge. You can also charge on the go with the 40W In-Car Wired Charge and 27W In-Car Wireless Charge.

So the next time you feel your directorial instincts calling again, don't worry. Just whip out your Huawei Mate 30 Pro 5G, turn on the camera and record what might be your next big masterpiece.

Renault risks 'junk' credit rating: S&P

PARIS: French automaker Renault could see its main long-term credit rating cut to below investment grade by Standard and Poor's, the agency said yesterday, just days after Moody's lowered its own rating to "junk" status. The moves come as Renault is struggling to re-find its footing in the wake of Carlos Ghosn's departure as chief executive last year, following his shock arrest in Tokyo in November 2018.

Both agencies cited the sharp deterioration in the amount of cash Renault can generate to support operations—its so-called free cash flow generation—at a time when sales are declining in its core European market.

This has caused its full-year operating margin—a key yardstick of profitability—to narrow to just 1.7 percent last year from 3.3 percent in 2018. A company's credit rating is an assessment of its creditworthiness and "junk" status means the borrower is more likely to default on their loans.

In addition to the managerial turmoil, Renault needs to spend heavily on electric vehicle technologies as the EU starts imposing stricter limits on CO2 emissions by passenger cars this year. Automakers who fail to decrease average emissions levels across their fleets will face fines that could amount to millions of euros.

In a fiercely competitive market, "we anticipate that volume producers such as

Renault will find it hard to pass on incremental electrification costs to consumers," S&P said. Renault has also been battered by lower earnings at its Japanese partner Nissan, in which it owns a 43-percent stake.

"Historically, Nissan's earnings contribution accounted for more than half of Renault's EBITA" operating profit, Moody's said. "We do not expect that Renault will be able to restore healthy operating margin levels in the medium term," it added.

Moody's dropped its long-term rating by one notch, to Ba1, while S&P said it might also lower its BBB- rating to below investment grade.

Court fight

Both Renault and Nissan were thrown into flux with Ghosn's arrest on charges he under-reported his salary as Nissan chairman and other financial misconduct. In December, he managed to escape from police surveillance in Japan and flee to Beirut, where he vowed to take Renault to court to claim millions of euros in unpaid pension and retirement pay.

On Friday, Ghosn's lawyers will argue in a French court that Renault owes him a 250,000-euro (\$270,000) retirement payout. He also plans to file later a lawsuit seeking his contractual supplementary pension of 774,774 euros (\$862,000) per year, as well as 380,000 shares granted for reaching performance targets.

The automaker has refused to pay, saying Ghosn's alleged misconduct forced him to quit, making him ineligible for any retirement payouts. Last month, the carmaker said former Volkswagen director Luca de Meo, credited with turning around the Spanish brand Seat, would take over as chief executive from July 1. —AFP

Walmart suffers disappointing Christmas hit to results

NEW YORK: American retail giant Walmart did not have a merry Christmas as disappointing toy and clothing sales hit the chain's bottom line, the company announced Tuesday. Massive social unrest in Chile also undermined earnings, but the company has not yet been able to estimate the financial impact of the new coronavirus epidemic in China, where it has a large supply chain. In Chile, "unrest led to disruption in the majority of our stores which... negatively affected operating income by approximately \$110 million," the company said, adding that it "continues to monitor the events" in the South American nation.

Walmart said it also is watching the coronavirus outbreak and "has not included any potential financial effects in its assumptions." Apple cast a shadow over markets on Monday after announcing it would not reach its sales target for the quarter due to the virus outbreak, which has shut down many key manufacturing and transportation links in China. Walmart, which has 11,500 stores located in 27 countries, took advantage of the US trade war to re-organize its supply chain so as not to depend too much on a single country or geographic area.

But the retailer, which is a staple for low-income households, saw sales slow in the fourth quarter ended January 31. With the

consumer instrumental in sustaining US economic growth, the lackluster Walmart results will be a source of concern to analysts and policymakers. But investors on Wall Street did not seem overly concerned, as shares in the retailer gained 0.5 percent to \$118.35 about 30 minutes into the trading day.

"Although Walmart's growth rate softened in the final quarter, the results are nonetheless respectable and reflect a proposition that remains relevant to consumers," Neil Saunders of GlobalData Retail said in an analysis. But he said the company "was not firing on all cylinders during the last part of the year." The retailer has made some key personnel decisions, replacing the heads of Walmart US and buy-in bulk outlet Sam's Club while the head of e-commerce, Andy Dunn, left the company.

Mild winter impact?

Global revenue increased 2.1 percent to \$141.7 billion, below expectations for \$142.5 billion. Comparable store sales in the US market, a key indicator for retailers, rose 1.9 percent, well below the gain analysts had projected and far slower than the 3.2 jump in the prior three months. Revenue generated from the growing online sales component rose 35 percent, but that was also far slower than the 41 percent in the third quarter, despite several promotional operations, such as "Cyber Monday."

Walmart, which also operates the Sam's Club wholesale stores, is fighting to catch up with e-commerce behemoth Amazon. While the quarter started strong, "In the few weeks before Christmas, we experienced some softness in a few general merchandise categories in our US stores," Walmart Chief Financial Officer Brett Biggs said in a statement. —AFP

What's On



Diplomatic spouses meet



Kuwait Foreign Minister spouse and the head of the International Diplomatic Club (IDC) in Kuwait Sheikha Hanouf Bader Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah recently hosted female ambassadors and the spouses of ambassadors, heads of diplomatic missions and international organizations designated in Kuwait at the Shuwaikh Palace for their periodic meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, Al-Sabah hailed the outstanding diplomatic relations Kuwait has with various sister and friendly countries noting that the reception is a manifestation of strong bonds amongst different countries and their peoples.



Students complete internship program on COFE App in cooperation with LOYAC

COFE App, the online coffee-centric marketplace recently completed its internship program for Kuwaiti students in cooperation with LOYAC and celebrated their graduation after concluding the training program designed for youth aged 16-27 to prepare the students for the corporate world by helping them develop their professionals as well as communication skills.

The eight-week development program gave the students the opportunity to gather hands-on experience while working with COFE Shops affiliated to the mobile application. Students gathered practical knowledge and technical know-how while actively working at the COFE Shop branches.

Commenting on the occasion, COFE App Founder & CEO Ali El Ebrahim said, "We believe that it is our responsibility to help build the future work force of the country. At COFE App we recognize the importance of practical, hands-on knowledge and are extremely happy that we were able to work with LOYAC in order to deliver this to the students through this 8-week training program in a number of cafes with the aim of utilizing their free time usefully and help build



their primary skills on dealing with customers".

Ali El Ebrahim further added that training programs such as these are important in helping students determine their career paths early on. Not only does it give them experience but also helps improve their interpersonal skills. As a

Kuwait-based business COFE App considers it their social responsibility to help create an efficient work-force that will help further the country's economic resources and create leaders for tomorrow.



The Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy of Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Zo mung shol hosted a reception on the occasion of 78th birth anniversary of Kim Jong Il at the Embassy. Prominent Kuwaiti and media persons attended the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Sheraton Kuwait and Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait celebrate National and Liberation days



On the occasion of the 59th National Day, the 29th Liberation Day and the 14 years of His Highness the Amir's reign, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince of Kuwait. In honor of these momentous occasions, the Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait pays its highest respect for this country and how thankful we are to have the opportunity to show our appreciation by engaging in the festivals on this meaningful occasions.

On the occasion of more than five decades of the opening of the Sheraton Kuwait Hotel, which has become a real

milestone of its landmarks, bringing up his track record of achievements and a prime location of successes, Fahed Abushaar expressed the pride in the role that the Sheraton Kuwait played, which extended for over 50 years as a pioneer and leader in the world of hospitality for Kuwait and its people. Abushaar the Complex General Manager of Sheraton Kuwait Hotels and Mounir Amer, the General Manager of Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait offer their most heartfelt congratulations and appreciation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and all the people of Kuwait and its residents.



LuLu Hypermarket launches Hala Feb 2020

LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region, launched Hala Feb 2020 celebrations at its Al Qurain outlet on 19 February. The event was inaugurated by the Governor of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Mahmud Abdul Samad Boushahri, in the presence of top officials of Lulu Hypermarket in Kuwait and a large gathering of well-wishers.

A variety of traditional cultural events were organized to mark the occasion, including special performances by the Kuwaiti Saward band and a Jazz band in addition to a show by the Transformers and a fun clown show to entertain the younger crowds.

A range of promotions are also ongoing as part of the shopping extravaganza of Hala

February, that also coincides with the National and Liberation Days in Kuwait. Some of the fantastic promotions during the month-long celebrations include the Trolley Promotion, where lucky winners get everything in their trolley for free, and Digital Fest, which showcases the best electronic products at competitive prices. There is also a 'Brand of the Week' and a 'Product of the Day' promotion that highlights the best products and brands. Also, to lend support to local farmers as part of the celebrations, grocery sections at LuLu outlets will be stocked with farm-fresh fruits and vegetables sourced locally.

As part of its initiative to make shopping an enjoyable and memorable event for customers, LuLubranches will feature a 'LuLu

Selfie Corner' during the promotion period, which will enable shoppers to take photos of themselves or their loved ones against interesting background cutouts.

Aside from the regular promotions, there is the ongoing amazing 'Dream Drive' promotion being held from 29 January to 14 March at all LuLu outlets in Kuwait. During the promotional period, shoppers will receive one e-affle coupon for every KD5 worth of purchases at any LuLu branch, which will entitle them to enter a raffle draw to win one of four Nissan X-Trail 2020 SUVs. In addition to the bumper prize of four Nissan SUVs, 100 lucky winners will also receive KD100 worth of gift vouchers each, for a grand total of KD10,000 in gift vouchers.

Health

Bangladesh kicks off vaccination blitz to eliminate cholera



DHAKA: A child receives an oral cholera vaccine from a health worker during a vaccination campaign in Dhaka yesterday. —AFP



People queue waiting to receive oral cholera vaccines from health workers during a vaccination campaign in Dhaka yesterday.

DHAKA: Bangladesh yesterday kicked off a drive to vaccinate more than a million people against cholera, which infects tens of thousands a year, as part of an international campaign to eliminate transmission by 2030.

The delta nation has sought to reduce the impact of the disease — which causes acute diarrhea and spreads through contaminated food and water — through vaccines and by setting up a dedicated treatment hospital.

“We have brought down the mortality rate in cholera to almost zero in Bangladesh,” said senior scientist

Firdausi Qadri at the Dhaka-based International Centre for Diarrheal Disease Research. But she admitted that the number of infections was still very high. According to the World Health Organization, cholera infects about 1.3 to five million people every year, and kills an estimated 21,000 to 143,000. Bangladesh has an estimated 100,000 cases a year, according to authorities, but plans to immunize half its 168 million people in the next decade.

Daisy Akter, who lost two sisters and a brother to cholera in the 1970s, was one of the first recipients of the

oral vaccine at a Dhaka neighborhoods yesterday. “No villager came to offer funeral prayers for them fearing they might get the disease,” she told AFP. “We had to bury them in the front yard of our home.”

UN agencies and Bangladesh authorities have already carried out a massive cholera vaccination drive in the country's southeast, where nearly one million Rohingya refugees have lived in overcrowded camps since 2017. Some 800,000 Rohingyas and 600,000 locals were vaccinated in that campaign. —AFP

Coronavirus outbreak slashes China carbon emissions: Study

BEIJING: The coronavirus epidemic that has paralyzed the Chinese economy may have a silver lining for the environment. China's carbon emissions have dropped by least 100 million metric tons over the past two weeks, according to a study published yesterday by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) in Finland.

That is nearly six percent of global emissions during the same period last year. The rapid spread of the novel coronavirus — which has killed over 2,000 and infected more than 74,000 people across China — has led to a drop in demand for coal and oil, resulting in the emissions slump, the study published on the British-based Carbon Brief website said.

Over the past two weeks, daily power generation at coal power plants was at a four-year low compared with the same period last year, while steel production has sunk to a five-year low, researchers found.

China is the world's biggest importer and consumer of oil, but production at refineries in Shandong province — the country's petroleum hub — fell to the lowest level since autumn 2015, the report said. Economic activity in China usually picks up after the Lunar New Year holiday, which began on January 25.

But authorities extended the holidays this year — by a week in many parts of the country including Shanghai — in an effort to contain the epidemic by keeping people at home. “Measures to contain coronavirus have resulted in reductions of 15 percent to 40 percent in output across key industrial sectors,” the report said. —AFP

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- Laparoscopic appendectomy
- Laparoscopic hiatus hernia procedures
- Laparoscopic rectopexy
- Procedures for morbid obesity
- Abdominal wall hernia repair
- Colon and small intestine resection



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- ◆ Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
- ◆ Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- ◆ VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastrosocopy
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- ◆ Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- ◆ American Board of Colo – Rectal Surgery
- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care

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Academic Certificates – Training

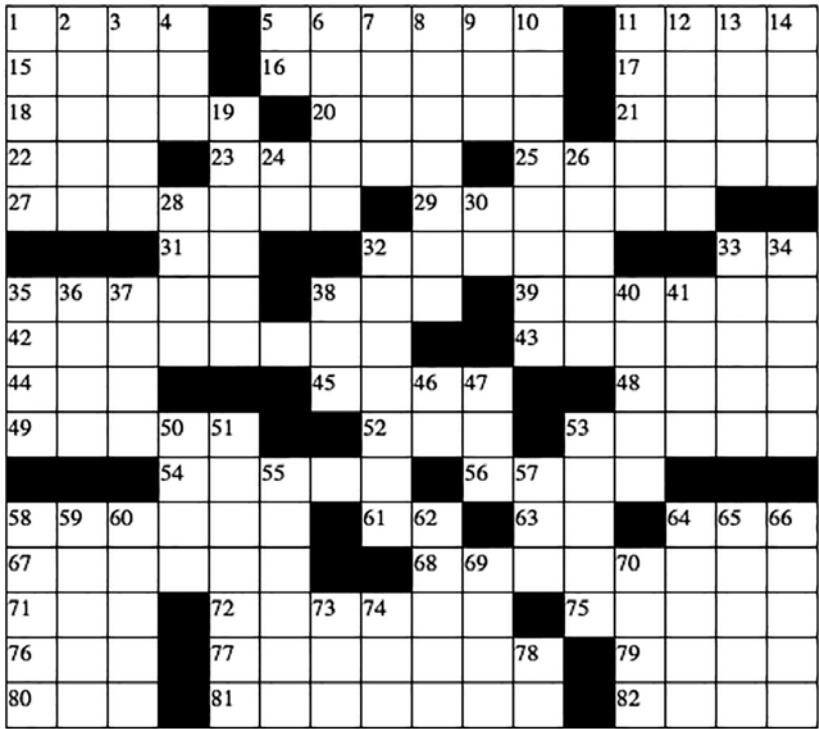
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- ◆ (IFSO) member .
- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
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Scope of clinical Practice.

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- ◆ G.I. surgeries.
- ◆ Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
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CROSSWORD 2441



ACROSS

1. In bed.
5. Someone who drives a taxi for a living.
11. A traditional story accepted as history.
15. Cassava with long tuberous edible roots and soft brittle stems.
16. Sorting and allocating aid on the basis of need for or likely benefit from medical treatment or food.
17. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
18. True firs.
20. A wall hanging of heavy handwoven fabric with pictorial designs.
21. Turn sharply.
22. (British) A waterproof raincoat made of rubberized fabric.
23. Violent and needless disturbance.
25. Having a coating.
27. Brazilian tree with handsomely marked wood.
29. Tropical African herbs.
31. (informal) Being satisfactory or in satisfactory condition.
35. A game in which darts are thrown at a dartboard.
39. The seventh month of the civil year.
42. The state capital of South Australia.
43. As much as a teacup will hold.
44. The cry made by sheep.
45. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
48. (New Testament) The sages who visited Jesus and Mary and Joseph shortly after Jesus was born.
49. A unit of dry measure used in Egypt.
52. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
54. A dramatic work intended for performance by actors on a stage.
56. Avatar of Vishnu.
58. A port city in southwestern Iran.
61. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
63. A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
67. Any of several plants of the genus Camassia.
68. (euphemistic) "he is deceased".
71. The compass point that is one point east (clockwise) of due north.
72. The upper house of the parliament of the Republic of Ireland.
75. Any of numerous low-growing cushion-forming plants of the genus Draba having rosette-forming leaves and terminal racemes of small flowers with scapose or leafy stems.
76. The longest division of geological time.
77. Prohibited by law or by official or accepted rules.
79. A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
80. The federal department responsible for safeguarding national security.
81. A collection of pus in a body cavity (especially in the lung cavity).
82. A small cake leavened with yeast.

DOWN

1. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
2. An imaginary elephant that appears in a series of French books for children.
3. Any plant of the genus Erica.
4. Small cubes with 1 to 6 spots on the faces.

5. A New England state.
6. An anti-TNF compound (trade name Arava) that is given orally.
7. A pen that has a small metal ball as the point of transfer of ink to paper.
8. French mime famous for his sad-faced clown (born in 1923).
9. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
10. Holding that only material phenomena can be known and knowledge of spiritual matters or ultimate causes is impossible.
11. A Nilotic language.
12. A resort city in southern Ukraine on the Black Sea.
13. Consistent with fact or reality.
14. Paying particular notice (as to children or helpless people).
19. A derogatory term used by Jews to refer to non-Jewish women.
24. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
26. A song that was formerly popular.
28. A unit of weight used in some Moslem countries near the Mediterranean.
30. A form of address for a man.
32. Resembling or characteristic of or appropriate to an elegy.
33. A measuring instrument for measuring and indicating a quantity or for testing conformity with a standard.
34. Remove the pins from.
36. The sixth month of the civil year.
37. Having been read.
38. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
40. Silkworm moths.
41. A narcotic that is considered a hard drug.
46. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
47. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
50. Tropical starchy tuberous root.
51. (formerly) A golfing wood with a face more elevated than a driver but less than a spoon.
53. To fix or set securely or deeply.
55. Italian Benedictine monk who was archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 to 1109.
57. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
59. Used as a Hindi courtesy title.
60. Make amendments to.
62. A condensed but memorable saying embodying some important fact of experience that is taken as true by many people.
64. Port city on southern Honshu on Osaka Bay.
65. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
66. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
69. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
70. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
73. Any high mountain.
74. French marshal in the Napoleonic Wars (1769-1815).
78. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

A family member could be feeling a little down, Aries, and you may be tempted to give him or her a pep talk to get them going again. Don't. They won't respond to it, and this could create tension in the home. Your own self-confidence is probably at an all-time low. You tend to be your own worst critic in the best of times, but today you're a bit confused. Try to be fair to everyone around you, especially yourself.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Too much exposure to books, newspapers, and computers today could produce eyestrain headaches, Taurus, so try to exercise a little caution when working with small print or computer text. Thoughts of love and romance could interfere with your ability to do your work effectively. You may be tempted to spend most of your time on the phone. We all have days like this, so don't fight it. Just make sure you're feeling great when the evening rolls around!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

By nature you're a master psychologist, Gemini and you don't need to know someone well to accurately assess his or her thoughts and motives. Today this ability goes far beyond psychology and borders on the psychic. People's feelings may jump out at you. Reading newspaper headlines gives you uncanny ideas about the future. You could also experience some intense and vivid dreams. Make a careful record of the symbols in your dreams. You'll be surprised at what they tell you.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

An emotional issue with a family member could have you wanting to run away and hide, Cancer. Don't fight the urge. This may be just what you need in order to clear your mind regarding the problem and heal your wounded psyche before you face this person again. You might also receive some rather disconcerting revelations about yourself and old traumas that you've long since forgotten. Don't fight these either. Simply release them.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Emotional issues rooted in the past could leave you feeling inhibited today, Leo. You might also be a bit more touchy than usual and see insult where none is intended. Curb the impulse to take offense. Try to confront and release the old issues or at least promise yourself you'll deal with them later. Then be very sweet to your entourage. You should be feeling more positive by day's end.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Friction or other trouble on the job could cause you to want to quit, Virgo, but worries about money might keep you from doing it. You definitely need to reassess your situation. Perhaps a change of position is just what you need now. You may have untapped talents that could make you more marketable, and you might also want to train those talents. Think about this! And if you really think you want a change, go for it.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your self-confidence could well be in the pits today, Libra. Mistakes from the past could come back to haunt you, and you may be momentarily overcome by the fear that you'll make similar errors again. Force yourself to be objective before you drive yourself crazy. It could cause you some unnecessary problems. Try to realize that you're unique and that you have skills and talents that set you apart from everyone.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Generally, you tend to be a very physically oriented person, Scorpio, but today you're more likely to want to look within, perhaps to experiment with your own psychic abilities or study spiritual concepts. You also might find yourself more interested than usual in the arts, particularly that which comes from other cultures. You'll be far more contemplative today than usual. It might prove enlightening to write down your thoughts.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Financial considerations could delay the start of a new project that you've wanted to begin for a long time, Sagittarius. Perhaps you don't quite have the funds you need, or maybe the cost is a bit higher than you expected. Don't sink into despair. This is only another temporary delay. Tighten the budget and make substitutions. Use your innate ingenuity to work around it and the project should be right on schedule.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

The day may be temporarily plagued by scandal of some sort, Capricorn. Some of your entourage, particularly women, may gather in conspiratorial gossip. Your curiosity will definitely be aroused, but don't be tempted to join them. There is more to the situation than meets the eye, and you'll want to know all the facts before jumping to conclusions. Concentrate on your own interests and worry about the scandal later!



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You're intuitive by nature, Aquarius, but today you're likely to have a rush of psychic premonitions. Insights into your own character could bring old traumas to the surface so you can release them. Your dreams could be especially vivid and rather disconcerting, although not in a negative way. Write them down. Your aesthetic sense is also very high. Don't be surprised if you discover that you're rather partial to Impressionist art!



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Sex and romance are very much on your mind today, Pisces. You're feeling especially passionate, and your emotions are rich and deep. At times like this you're likely to want to concentrate on your own pleasure, yet it's important to be sensitive to your partner as well. Racy novels and movies could be especially appealing, and you might toy with the idea of shopping at Victoria's Secret. Go for it!

Wordsearch Puzzle

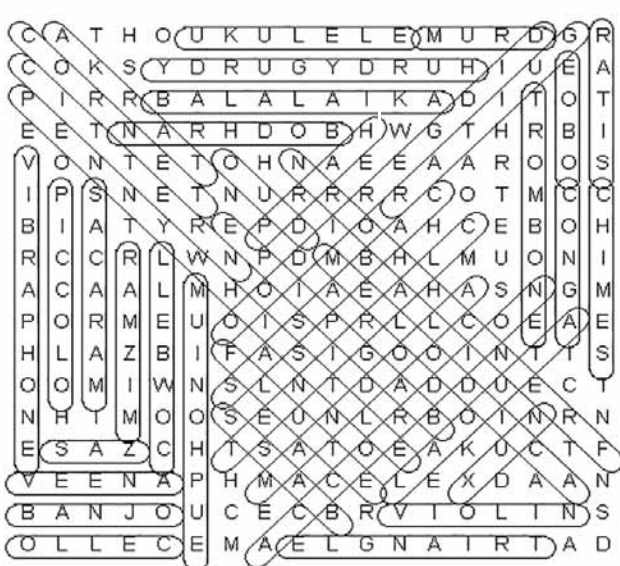
Musical Instruments 2

Find and circle all of the musical instruments that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a G. K. Chesterton quotation.

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

BASSOON FIFE MARIMBAS SHOFAR
BONGOS FLUGELHORN MELODEON SLIDE WHISTLE
BOUZOUKI GONG MOCENO STRUMSTICK
BUGLE HARMONICA NEFER TAMBOURINE
CASTANETS HARMONIUM OCARINA TAMBURA
CONCERTINA HUNTING HORN PIANO TIN WHISTLE
CONCH HORN JEW'S HARP REBEC TRUMPET
CUMBUS KEYBOARD SAROD TUBA
CYMBAL LUTE SAXOPHONE VIOLA
DULCIMER MANDOLIN

Musical Instruments 1



ACCORDION CONGA HURDY-GURDY SAZ
BAGPIPE CORNET LAUTA SITAR
BALALAICA COW BELL MANDOLA TARKA
BANJO DIDGERIDOO MARACAS TRIANGLE
BASS DRUM MELODICA TROMBONE
BODHRAN EUPHONIUM MIZMAR UKULELE
CABASAS FLUTE OBOE VEENA
CELLO FRENCH HORN OUD VIBRAPHONE
CHIMES GUITAR PENNYWHISTLE VIOLIN
CLITTERN HARP PICCOLO XUN
CLARINET

Hidden sentence: THOSE WHO HEAR NOT THE MUSIC THINK THE DANCERS MAD

Daily Sudoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2020



A float entitled 'the Queen of fashion' parades during the 136th Nice Carnival in the French Riviera city of Nice. — AFP



These photos show 19-year-old Afghan artist Robaba Mohammadi painting in her studio in Kabul. — AFP photos



This photo shows Afghan artist Robaba Mohammadi using her mobile phone in her studio in Kabul.

AFGHAN ARTIST BRUSHES ASIDE DISABILITY TO OPEN ARTS CENTRE

Unable to use her hands, arms, or legs, Afghan artist Robaba Mohammadi has defied unlikely odds in a country that routinely discriminates against women and disabled people. Denied access to school, as a child she taught herself to paint by holding a brush in her mouth, clenching it between her teeth to create elaborate and colorful portraits. Today, the 19-year-old's works sell and exhibit internationally, and she is so accomplished that she has launched a dedicated Centre to help train other disabled artists.

"I do paintings mostly about Afghan women, women's power, the beauty of women, the beauty of paintings, love, and the challenges women face," Mohammadi said. Some 50 students attend classes at her center in Kabul, which she opened last year and funds herself with money from selling her paintings. According to a 2015 national survey, about 1.5 million of Afghanistan's approximately 35 million population has some form of disability, including tens of thousands of people suffering from landmine injuries. But despite this, the impoverished country still stigmatizes those that are not able-bodied.

Mohammadi was born with a permanent physical disability that means she cannot use her limbs, and now suffers from a degenerative condition called arthrosis. "Because of my disability, I was never even able to go to school," Mohammadi said, adding that she had looked on enviously as her siblings went to get an education. But with the help of her family, she eventually taught herself to read and write, and can now use social media on her mobile phone as adeptly as any other teenager-by typing with her tongue. "We are so proud of Robaba, she is an inspiration for other disabled people," said her brother, 24-year-old Ali Mohammadi, who hopes to create a literacy course for people with disabilities who have been unable to go to school.

Double prejudice

Ultra-conservative Afghanistan, long considered one of the world's worst places

to be a woman, still often forces disabled women to stay hidden away, even in the comparatively progressive capital Kabul. "I was feeling tired and sick of not being able to leave home," Mohammadi said. "I felt really upset. When our relatives would visit, they would whisper that my parents committed some kind of sin that they delivered a disabled girl."

painting," Azizi said. "I would love to learn to paint professionally, and I also want to become famous like Robaba." Ziaul Haq Fazli, a spokesman for the Afghan ministry for martyrs and disabled people, said more than 320,000 disabled people and relatives of those killed in the war were registered with the ministry, which helps provide jobs and educational opportunities.



Benaisha Yaqoobi, commissioner at the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, said such treatment was because there was often double the prejudice, "due to womanhood and due to disabilities". "All these are the results of discrimination, caused by negative attitudes towards females as so-called, 'second sex', and disability, looked (at) not as a diversity, but as a shame and stigma," Yaqoobi said.

Noor Ahmad Azizi, a 22-year-old disabled student at Mohammadi's painting center, said he had been unable to attend school because of his disability. "I love to do

For Mohammadi, art was a way to release her frustration. She first started drawing by holding a pencil loosely in her mouth, but then realized she could improve details in her sketches by clenching the pencil between her teeth. "It was very difficult and I cried several times," she explained as she coloured a vibrant scene featuring a large tree. "It was hard to do the lighting and shading of the paintings, then my dad encouraged me," she added. —AFP



British rapper Dave collects his award for Album of the Year for 'Psychodrama' during the BRIT Awards 2020 ceremony and live show in London. — AFP photos



British rapper Dave performs during the BRIT Awards 2020 ceremony and live show in London.



British singer-songwriter Mabel collects her award for Female Solo Artist.

LONDON RAPPER DAVE WINS BIG AT MALE-DOMINATED BRIT AWARDS



British grime and hip-hop artist Stormzy collects the award for Male Solo Artist.



US singer-songwriter Billie Eilish collects her International Female Solo Artist award.



US-born British singer-songwriter Celeste collects her Rising Star award.

Breakthrough London rapper Dave won the top gong at a male-dominated Brit Awards on Tuesday after delivering a politically-charged performance at British pop's biggest night. The build-up to the annual awards show was overshadowed by criticism of the lack of female nominees in mixed gender categories, with just four women named in 25 spots—all losing out to men. Twenty-one year-old Dave took home best album for his first offering "Psychodrama", which addresses black identity and institutional racism, and topped the country's music charts last year.



US rapper Tyler the Creator collects his award for International Male Solo Artist.

He earned a standing ovation at London's O2 Arena for his performance of the album's standout track 'Black', to which he added a new verse accusing prime minister, Boris Johnson, of being a "real racist" and calling out the press treatment of Prince Harry's wife Meghan Markle. Dave's rival in the nominations, indie newcomer Lewis Capaldi, beat him to the awards for best new artist and best song for "Someone You Loved" Glasgow-born Capaldi is riding high after his debut album, "Divinely Uninspired To A Hellish Extent," became Britain's best-selling album of 2019.

But both Capaldi and Dave lost out on the best British male award to leading grime artist Stormzy, who delivered an explosive set that involved rain, firecrackers and more than fifty people on stage. Collecting his award, he paid tribute to the



Yannis Philippakis (center) and the British rock band Foals accept the award for Best Group.

women he works with. "To be the best male, I have got the most incredible females in my team," he said.

Billie Eilish has licence to thrill
Other winners included teenage sensation Billie Eilish, who won best international female solo artist and performed her new James Bond soundtrack during the ceremony. The 18-year-old had been up against Lizzo, Ariana Grande, Camila Cabello and Lana del Rey. "I felt very hated recently," she told the audience, after having revealed she no longer reads social media comments. "When I was on stage and I saw you guys all smiling at me it genuinely made me want to cry and I want to cry now."

"No Time To Die" has already racked up nearly 26 million views on her YouTube channel, capping a remarkable few weeks for the singer who is the youngest artist to record a Bond track. The Brit Awards have recognized the cream of British music since they were first held in 1977, but have often been peppered with scandal and farce.

The disproportionately male shortlists come despite the Brits' voting academy undergoing a major overhaul in 2017 to make it more gender balanced and diverse, with hundreds of new members joining the nominating pool. But while women were under-represented in the awards, black artists dominated the nominations in 'best album' and 'best male'. British artists account for an eighth of album sales worldwide, according to figures from BPI, which represents the British music industry. — AFP



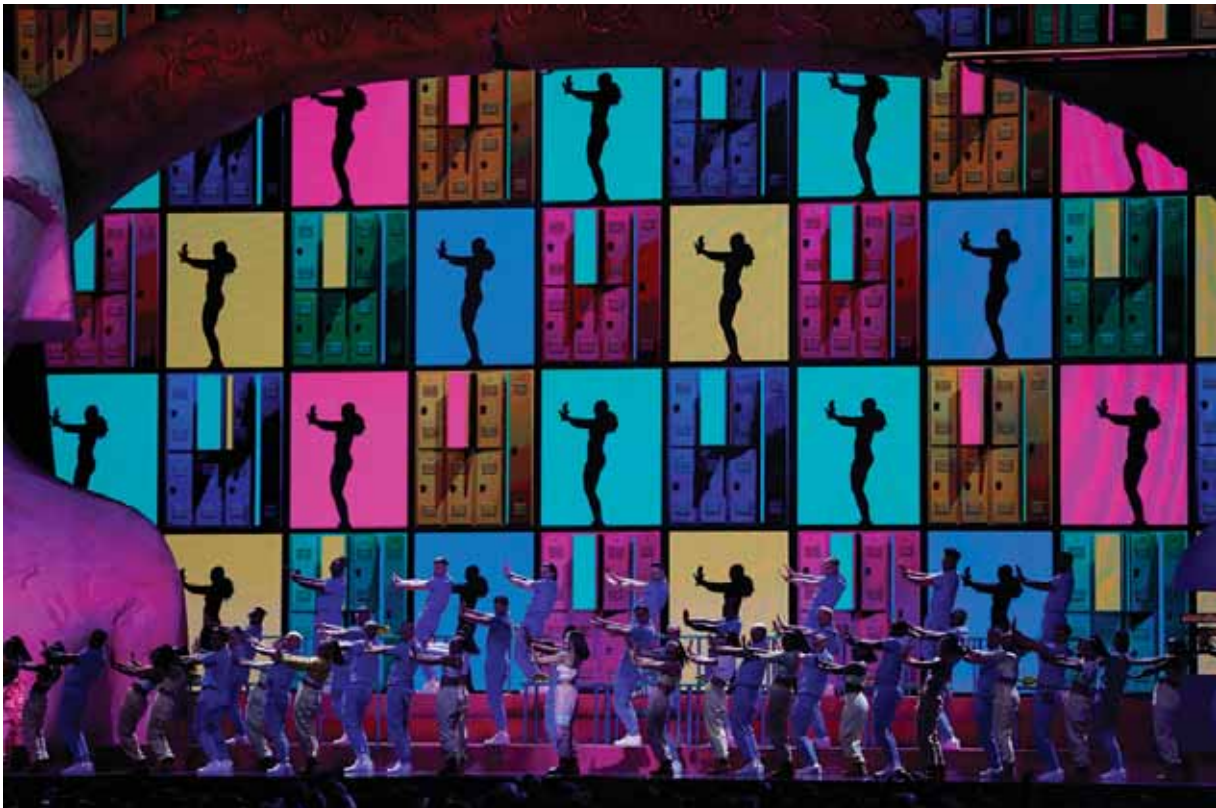
British singer-songwriter Lewis Capaldi (right) collects his award for Song of the Year for 'Someone You Loved' from British singer Tom Jones (left).



British musician Ronnie Wood (left) and British singer Rod Stewart (right) perform during the BRIT Awards 2020 ceremony and live show in London.



British singer-songwriter Mabel performs on stage.





British grime and hip-hop artist Stormzy performs on stage.

Brit Awards 2020 winners	
ALBUM OF THE YEAR	Dave - Psychodrama
BEST BRITISH FEMALE	Mabel
BEST BRITISH MALE	Stormzy
BEST BRITISH GROUP	Foals
BEST NEW ARTIST	Lewis Capaldi
BEST SONG	Lewis Capaldi - Someone You Loved
INTERNATIONAL FEMALE	Billie Eilish
INTERNATIONAL MALE	Tyler, The Creator
RISING STAR AWARD	Celeste



US singer-songwriter Billie Eilish performs on stage.



British grime and hip-hop artist Stormzy performs on stage.



US singer-songwriter and rapper Lizzo performs on stage.



British actress Emily Atack poses on the red carpet.



Television celebrity Amber Davies poses on the red carpet on arrival for the BRIT Awards 2020 .



Musician Tiana Major9 poses on the red carpet.



British model Adwoa Aboah



British actress Michaelle Keegan poses on the red carpet.



US singer-songwriter Ashnikko (center)



British singer-songwriter Joy Crookes



British singer-songwriter Tallia Storm



US singer-songwriter and rapper Lizzo

Lifestyle | Features



This photo shows the “House of Lovers” during the reopening of three “domus” and conclusion of safety work on the archaeological site of Pompeii. — AFP photos



This photo shows a fresco in the “House of Orchards”.



This photo shows the walls of the “House of Orchards”.

Pompeii restoration unearths ‘surprise’ treasures

Vivid frescoes and never-before-seen inscriptions were among the treasures unearthed in a massive years-long restoration of the world-famous archaeological site Pompeii that came to a close Tuesday. The painstaking project saw an army of workers reinforce walls, repair collapsing structures and excavate untouched areas of the sprawling site, Italy’s second most visited tourist destination after Rome’s Colosseum.

New discoveries were made too, in areas of the ruins not yet explored by modern-day archaeologists at the site-frequently pillaged for jewels and artefacts over the centuries. “When you excavate in Pompeii there are always surprises,” the site’s general director Massimo Osanna told reporters Tuesday.

Archaeologists discovered in October a vivid fresco

depicting an armor-clad gladiator standing victorious as his wounded opponent gushes blood, painted in a tavern believed to have housed the fighters as well as prostitutes. And in 2018, an inscription was uncovered that proves the city near Naples was destroyed after October 17, 79 AD, and not on August 24 as previously believed.

That might not be the end of fresh discoveries. “It’s certain that by carrying out other excavation projects in areas never explored before, the discoveries will be extraordinary,” Osanna added. Kicked off in 2014, the restoration enlisted teams of archaeologists, architects, engineers, geologists and anthropologists and cost \$113 million (105 million euros), largely covered by the European Union. The project was initiated after UNESCO warned in 2013 it could strip the site of its World Heritage status after a

series of collapses blamed on lax maintenance and bad weather. But the project has breathed new life into the historic site.

On Tuesday, workers carefully restored ancient frescoes, hues dulled by years of dirt and calcifications, and cleaned off centuries-old tile floors. “You have to be careful not to take off too much,” explained Aldo Guida, who was scratching at the surface of the oxblood walls of the “House of Lovers”, a two-storey home in the complex that was closed for repair after an earthquake in 1980. “Little by little,” he added, with a smile.

The giant eruption of Mount Vesuvius devastated the ancient Roman city of Pompeii nearly 2,000 years ago, covering everything in its path with volcanic ash. That sediment helped to preserve many buildings almost in their

original state, as well as the curled-up corpses of Vesuvius’ victims.

Some of the site has been closed to the public during the restoration, including several “domus”-family residences for the upper classes-that have been since reopened to the public. The House of Orchards domus features intricately detailed frescoes of fruit trees and birds, while the House of the Ship Europa boasts a sketch of a large merchant ship. Though the bulk of the restoration work is now complete, director Osanna said running repairs will never truly be over. “It’s a city in ruins,” he said. “The attention we pay to it must never stop.” — AFP



This photo shows the walls of the “House of Orchards”.



This photo shows the walls of the “House of Orchards”.



This photo shows a fresco in the “House of Orchards”.



This photo shows a fresco in the “House of Orchards”.

Sierra Leone gangster leaves streets for life of poetry

In his poem “Rough Path”, Yousef Kamara reflects on his years selling drugs and stealing as the leader of a street gang in Sierra Leone’s capital, Freetown. “Like a traveller in a rough jungle/Self propelling all alone/Edging through danger sharper than blades/My rough path is a cracked zone,” he writes. After quitting the gang three years ago, Kamara now hopes his journey to acclaim as a poet can offer an example to other wayward youths in Freetown, where increasing numbers are joining gangs modeled on the Bloods and Crips of Los Angeles.



Yousef Kamara holds his daughter Styliya in front of their home in Freetown, Sierra Leone. — Reuters

Kamara has been published in several international poetry magazines and was invited last year to attend the African Writers Conference in Kenya. It is a dramatic turnaround for someone who spent the majority of his life leading Giverdam Gaza, a gang of several dozen members he founded as a teenager on Freetown’s Exodus Lane. “If you were looking for

some thugs ... to beat somebody up, you’d just rush down Exodus Lane and get the Giverdam boys to do the job,” said Kamara, who stands about six-feet tall with short dreadlocks and large biceps covered in tattoos.

Tired of life on the streets, however, he began looking for an exit and found one through Way Out, a media studio founded by an English filmmaker in 2008 that encourages underprivileged young people to enter the arts. Kamara decided to try his hand writing poems after seeing some of his friends enrol in a poetry course. He quickly took to it, tapping out verses on his beat-up cell phone.

“You need to give people ... something they can take back to their communities and say, ‘I’m not the bad guy you used to know,’” said Gibrilla Kamara, no relation to Yousef, Way Out’s office manager and a former member who spent much of his life homeless. Kamara said he would like to establish his own organization to help vulnerable young people build self-esteem and shift “from crime to career”.

The challenge is pressing. Across Sierra Leone, dire economic conditions, including runaway unemployment, have led many born after the country’s devastating 1991-2002 civil war to join gangs, researchers say. Kamara thinks poetry can be a powerful tool in combatting that trend by forcing young people to be honest with themselves. “When writing a poem, if you can be sincere with what you’ve seen, what you feel, what you’ve heard, you’ll never need to fabricate any story,” he said. — Reuters

Los Angeles house parties lose their animal attraction

Los Angeles on Tuesday banned the exploitation of exotic animals for entertainment purposes, effectively ending the lavish Hollywood parties where giraffes, tigers and even elephants are used to amuse guests. “The issue of wild, exotic animals being abused came to my doorstep four years ago, when a baby giraffe and elephant were being marched up the Hollywood Hills for a house party,” said city councilman David Ryu, who led the push for reform that his colleagues approved unanimously. “This is beyond unacceptable, and we must end it,” he added. “It is time that the City of Los Angeles takes action to make clear that treating animals in this way is not in line with our city’s values.”

The issue of wild animals being brought to parties at luxurious homes in the Hollywood Hills has been a problem for years, Ryu’s office said, with neighbors often complaining about noise and massive crowds. A new ordinance, which needs to be approved by the mayor of Los Angeles, prohibits the use of wild or exotic animals at house parties and other live entertainment. It also bans people from riding wild or exotic animals for entertainment purposes.

But it will not affect Los Angeles Zoo, which can still exhibit wild animals for educational purposes. There is already a statewide ban on circuses using wild animals. The law was backed by several animal welfare groups, including People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and the Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) which rescues and cares for animals retired from the entertainment industry.

“Using petrified penguins, bewildered big cats, and other wild animals as party props sentences sensitive animals to miserable, deprived lives in chains, cages and trailers, and can endanger partygoers when the animals get spooked,” PETA official Rachel Mathews said in a statement. —AFP



South Korean director Bong Joon-ho (top center) poses with the cast and crew members of the film Parasite during a press conference in Seoul yesterday, after his film won the Oscar for Best Picture. — AFP

Black-and-white ‘Parasite’ a more intimate film: Director Bong

Watching a black-and-white re-release of his multi-Oscar-winning movie “Parasite” will give viewers a “different” and “strange” experience, director Bong Joon-ho said yesterday ahead of the new version opening next week. The director has always had a fondness for monochrome films, saying they give viewers a more intimate visual experience. “When the colors are gone, you can focus more on the actors’ facial expressions and their eyes” and nuanced details, Bong told reporters in Seoul after his triumphant return from the United States.

The film’s historic Best Picture Oscar-the first ever for a non-English-language movie-and three other statuettes, Best Director, Best International Feature and Best Original Screenplay, have created huge excitement in his home country, whose cultural output has gained popularity around the world. But Bong said he hoped “Parasite” would be remembered for its content as much as its accolades. “I understand that the film will be remembered as a historic affair inevitably,

but I hope the movie can be remembered as a film itself,” he said.

The movie is a dark satire tale about the widening gap between rich and poor, following a poor family infiltrating a wealthy household. All unemployed at the start of the story, the poor family members live in a dingy, roach-infested basement flat whose damp odor clings to them beyond its confines.

‘More real’

The black-and-white version, which Bong created along with cinematographer Hong Kyung-pyo, is set to be released in South Korean theatres next week, becoming the director’s second film to be rendered into monochrome after his 2009 thriller “Mother”. It was shown at an international film festival last month, when Bong said a viewer told him: “The black-and-white version makes the odor in the film feel more real.” “I’ve always admired classical movies-there used to be a time period where all movies were made in black-and-white,” he said.—AFP

Classifieds

Thursday, February 20, 2020



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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Relatively hot with moderate to fresh south easterly wind, with speed of 20 - 50 km/h causing rising dust over open areas with a chance for scattered rain.

BY NIGHT: Rather cold and Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind to wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	<div>SFC. CHART19/02/2020 0000 UTC</div>	
KUWAIT CITY	30 °C	18 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	31 °C	14 °C		
ABDALY	30 °C	13 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	31 °C	15 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	23 °C	15 °C		
SALMIYAH	28 °C	16 °C		
AHMADI	23 °C	17 °C		
NUWAISIB	30 °C	13 °C		
WAFRA	30 °C	13 °C		
SALMY	32 °C	16 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	02/20	Warm causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	25 °C	17 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h
Friday	02/21	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear later on	24 °C	12 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 28 km/h
Saturday	02/22	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear	26 °C	10 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 30 km/h
Sunday	02/23	Warm and Clouds will increase gradually with a chance for scattered light rain	27 °C	12 °C	SE	08 - 40 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:05
Sunrise	06:24
Zuhr	12:02
Asr	15:15
Sunset	17:40
Isha	18:57

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	24 °C
MIN. Temp.	16 °C
MAX. RH	95 %
MIN. RH	51 %
MAX. Wind	SE 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

CHANGE OF NAME

Surname: SHAIK Given name: ABDULRASHEED (wrongly recorded in my Passport bearing No: K2091614) Proddatur, Srinivasanagur Door No: 7/4621-a hereby state that my actual & correct name as per my Adhar & voter ID cards is surname: SHAIK Given name: ABDUL RASHEED S/o: SHAIK.MAHABOOB BASHA. (C 5644) 20-2-2020

I, Charesma Kotapati Passport No. K5706852, D/o Kotapati Lingamma Naidu, R/o D. No. 5-20, Medavada, Marripalli Dakshinapu kandriga, Chittoor District, A.P, India. My name was changed as Kotapati Charshima D/o Kotapati Lingama Naidu for the purpose wrong entries occurred in birth certificate SD No: BR/2008/06. (C 5495)

I, Ashiney Merin Joseph D/O Joseph Varghese holder of Indian Passport No. L3857701 issued in Kuwait has changed the given name in Passport from Ashiny Marin Joseph to Ashiney Merin Joseph, permanent resident of Maliyackal Parambil, Chethackal P.O Ranni, Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India. Solemnly declare. (C 5643)

I, Agnelo Basilio Lazaro Lourdes Fernandes, resident of House No. 330, Vass Vaddo, Velim, Salcete, South Goa - 403723, would like to state that, I have changed my name from Basilio Lourdes Fernandes to Agnelo Basilio Lazaro Lourdes Fernandes. Hereafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by the name Agnelo Basilio Lazaro Lourdes Fernandes. (C 5642) 19-2-2020

I, Faith Ann Varghese holder of Indian Passport No. N8633661 having permanent address at Chentthitta house, Keezhukara Rd. Kozhencherry P.O., Pathanamthitta, Kerala 689641, residing at Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under Given name: Faith Ann and Surname: Varghese. (C 5493)

My name in Passport No. T0704504 has wrongly been

mentioned as Shubhan Vimal. But as per all other records, my correct name is Shubham Vimal which should accordingly be corrected in the passport Shubham Vimal S/o Mr. Jeet Bahadur R/o 523 Gandhi Nagar, Unnao. (C 5640)

I, Mohamed Hanif Moosa holder of Indian Passport No. N8640923 would like change my name to Mohamed Hanif Moosa Tambu. (C 5641) 18-2-2020

I, Yaseen Abdur Razzak Rawoot S/O Abdul Razzak Adam Rawoot holder of Indian Passport No. N7013260 issued at Kuwait on 07/03/2016 & Civil ID No. 276061602539 has changed my name from Yaseen Abdur Razzak Rawoot hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Yaseen Abdul Razzak (Given name) Rawoot (Surname). (C 5639)

I, Yaseen Abdur Razzak Rawoot S/O Abdur Razzaque Adam Rawoot holder of Indian Passport No. N7013260 issued at Kuwait on 07/03/2016 & Civil ID No. 276061602539 has changed my name from Yaseen Abdur Razzak Rawoot to Yaseen Abdul Razzak Rawoot hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Yaseen Abdul Razzak (Given name) Rawoot (Surname). (C 5639)

I, J.Yazar Arafath, holder of Indian Passport No. Z5488692 having permanent address No. 95, Maraimalai Nagar, Kadayakudi PO., Pudukkottai - 622003, Tamilnadu, India. Residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under Given Name: Yassermaal and Surname: Jafarulla. (C 5637)

I, Abdul Rahim Banderkar Tawfiq holder of Indian Passport No. Z1923691 having permanent address: Mumbai, Maharashtra, India 400010 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under Given name: Banderkar Tawfiq Abdul Rahim. (C 5638) 17-2-2020



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Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044



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DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 20/2/2020							Departure Flights on Thursday 20/2/2020								
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	KAC	781	Jeddah	13:30
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	KAC	742	Dammam	14:35	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40	SVA	503	Jeddah	00:05	KAC	541	Cairo	13:45
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	FDB	8065	Dubai	14:40	JZR	215	Jeddah	00:05	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KAC	774	Riyadh	14:40	MSC	402	Alexandria	00:15	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	SVA	500	Jeddah	14:45	QTR	1093	Doha	00:25	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	118	New York	14:50	FDB	072	Dubai	00:40	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
KAC	102	London	00:55	KAC	618	Doha	15:00	JZR	409	Delhi	00:50	KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	15:00
KAC	504	Beirut	01:04	KAC	792	Madinah	15:10	AIC	990	Mumbai	01:10	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	JZR	602	Baku	15:10	IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
RJA	642	Amman	01:40	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	JZR	111	Doha	01:55	UAE	878	Dubai	15:40
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:25	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:00	FDB	8066	Dubai	15:40
PGT	828	Istanbul	01:50	JZR	222	Riyadh	15:30	KAC	677	Dubai	02:10	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:45
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	JZR	232	Dammam	15:30	THY	773	Istanbul	02:20	KAC	673	Dubai	15:50
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	OMA	645	Muscat	15:35	KAC	417	Manila	02:30	JZR	125	Dubai	16:00
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	KAC	412	Bangkok	15:40	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:30	SVA	501	Jeddah	16:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45	PGT	829	Istanbul	02:50	KAC	743	Dammam	16:20
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	JZR	732	Cairo	15:50	DELHI	1765	Delhi	02:55	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KLM	446	Amman	02:30	KAC	562	Amman	15:50	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05	KAC	283	Dhaka	16:25
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	ABY	127	Sharjah	15:55	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:30
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	JZR	152	Mashhad	16:00	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	KNE	531	Jeddah	16:05	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:35
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:05	IRA	607	Mashhad	16:25	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:45
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	JZR	212	Jeddah	16:25	QTR	1087	Doha	04:00	JZR	735	Cairo	16:50
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	FEG	241	Alexandria	16:35	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00	JZR	103	Bahrain	16:50
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	QTR	1072	Doha	16:35	KAC	621	Doha	04:05	KNE	532	Jeddah	16:55
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	JZR	116	Doha	16:40	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15	KAC	503	Beirut	17:05
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	FDB	051	Dubai	16:45	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:25	IRA	666	Esfahan	17:25
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC	546	Cairo	16:45	JZR	713	Sohag	04:30	KAC	619	Doha	17:35
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:30	SAW	705	Damascus	17:00	KKK	1269	Istanbul	04:35	KAC	357	Kochi	17:35
KAC	302	Mumbai	04:40	SGL	4131	IQA	17:00	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00	FEG	242	Alexandria	17:35
KAC	796	Madinah	04:40	NIA	461	Sohag	17:20	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10	JZR	405	Kochi	17:40
JZR	406	Kochi	04:45	FEG	341	Sohag	17:20	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
JZR	540	KTM	04:45	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:25	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:30	FDB	052	Dubai	17:45
JZR	702	Asyut	04:50	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30	JZR	101	Bahrain	05:50	JZR	539	KTM	17:50
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	JZR	214	Jeddah	17:45	THY	771	Istanbul	06:25	KAC	563	Amman	17:55
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	UAE	875	Dubai	18:00	JZR	121	Dubai	06:35	QTR	1073	Doha	18:00
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	FDB	063	Dubai	18:15	JZR	251	Amman	06:40	SAW	706	Damascus	18:00
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	JZR	302	Istanbul	18:15	JZR	113	Doha	06:40	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	JZR	124	Dubai	18:20	RJA	643	Amman	06:55	KAC	675	Dubai	18:10
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:20	KAC	158	Istanbul	18:25	FDB	070	Dubai	07:05	KAC	675	Dubai	18:10
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	MSR	620	Cairo	18:30	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15	NIA	562	Asyut	18:10
JPJ	3730	KSQ	05:30	QTR	1080	Doha	18:30	KAC	733	Bangkok	07:30	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:35	JZR	306	Istanbul	18:55	KAC	167	Paris	07:35	FEG	342	Sohag	18:20
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	RJA	640	Amman	19:10	IGO	1767	Mumbai	08:10	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:20
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:50	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:20	KAC	173	Munich	08:20	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	106	London	06:00	RBG	555	Alexandria	19:25	LGW	001	Dubai	08:30	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25	FDB	001	Dubai	08:35	KAC	301	Mumbai	18:35
KAC	332	Trivandrum	06:05	NIA	161	Cairo	19:30	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:00	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
KAC	344	Chennai	06:10	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30	KAC	163	MXP	09:00	KAC	381	Delhi	18:45
KAC	362	Colombo	06:30	QTR	1090	Doha	19:35	JZR	731	Cairo	09:10	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:55
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	KAC	744	Dammam	19:35	BAW	156	London	09:10	JZR	253	Amman	19:20
BAW	157	London	07:05	KAC	782	Jeddah	19:50	JZR	601	Baku	09:30	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	JZR	104	Bahrain	19:55	KAC	545	Cairo	09:30	KAC	691	Muscat	19:30
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	KNE	381	Taif	20:00	KAC	157	Istanbul	09:30	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:10	KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	20:00	QTR	1085	Doha	09:30	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
FDB	053	Dubai	07:53	OMS	225	Muscat	20:05	QTR	8512	Doha	09:35	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	KAC	776	Riyadh	20:05	KAC	671	Dubai	09:35	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
QTR	8511	Doha	08:05	OMA	647	Muscat	20:20	KAC	101	London	09:45	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:10	KAC	616	Bahrain	20:30	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45	RJA	641	Amman	20:10
KAC	622	Doha	08:30	QTR	1088	Doha	20:30	KAC	561	Amman	09:45	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	JZR	126	Dubai	20:40	JZR	151	Mashhad	09:55	NIA	162	Cairo	20:30
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	KAC	174	Munich	20:45	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55	OMS	226	Muscat	20:45
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:55	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:55	KAC	117	New York	10:00	KAC	333	Trivandrum	20:50
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:00	KAC	674	Dubai	20:55	KAC	791	Madinah	10:00	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KAC	542	Cairo	21:00	UAE	856	Dubai	10:05	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	ALK	229	Colombo	21:20	IRA	606	Mashhad	10:00	QTR	1091	Doha	21:00
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20	KAC	613	Bahrain	10:05	QTR	1091	Doha	21:00
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	MEA	402	Beirut	21:20	JZR	301	Istanbul	10:05	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	UAE	859	Dubai	21:30	KAC	773	Riyadh	10:15	DLH	624	Dammam	21:45
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:20	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
NIA	361	Alexandria	09:50	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:50	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35	QTR	1089	Doha	21:55
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	KAC	501	MXP	21:55	KAC	617	Doha	10:35	JZR	507	KHI	22:00
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	10:00	MSC	164	Alexandria	22:00	JZR	211	Jeddah	10:40	JZR	701	Asyut	22:15
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	RBG	551	Alexandria	22:00	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40	KAC	203	Lahore	22:15
GFA	1114	Doha	10:20	KAC	688	Paris	22:00	NIA	462	Sohag	11:00	KAC	203	Beirut	22:03
JZR	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	620	Doha	22:00	QTR	1071	Doha	11:00	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:25
JZR	714	Sohag	10:50	QTR	1082	Doha	22:05	IAW	158A	Al Najaf	11:00	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
JZR	122	Dubai	11:15	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15	SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	AIC	981	Chennai/Ahmedabad	22:25	JZR	305	Istanbul	11:10	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
KAC	352	Kochi	11:35	RBG	213	Sohag	22:30	KAC	741	Dammam	11:20	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	KAC	786	Jeddah	22:50	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25	RBG	552	Alexandria	23:00
SYR	341	Damascus	12:00	BBC	043	Dhaka	23:00	SGL	4130	IQA	12:00	MSC	502	Alexandria	23:00
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	GOW	061	CNN	23:00	JZR	221	Riyadh	12:00	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
JZR	252	Amman	12:05	JZR	002	LGW	23:05	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:00	RBG	214	Sohag	23:10
MSR	610	Cairo	12:25	QTR	1092	Doha	23:10	JZR	231	Dammam	12:35	KAC	783	Jeddah	23:15
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	MSC	125	Sohag	23:15	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55	KAC	383	Delhi	23:20
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	JZR	418	Dubai	23:15	JZR	115	Doha	13:00	QTR	1083	Doha	23:25
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	KAC	676	Dubai	23:20	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00	KAC	543	Cairo	23:30
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:50	JZR	736	Cairo	23:30	IAW	158	Al Najaf	13:00	KAC	303	Mumbai	23:40
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	FDB	071	Dubai	23:45	SYR	342	Damascus	13:00	KAC	303	Mumbai	23:40
UAE	877	Dubai	14:10	KAC	561	Amman	23:55	MSR	611	Cairo	13:25	GOW	062	CNN	23:55

‘Owner’ makes claim to grounded ‘ghost ship’



BALLYCOTTON, Ireland: The abandoned 77-metre cargo ship MV Alta is pictured stuck on rocks near this village southeast of Cork in southern Ireland on Tuesday. — AFP

DUBLIN: The purported owner of a “ghost ship” grounded off Ireland’s south coast after drifting crewless for more than a year has made contact with authorities, a government agency said yesterday. The 77-m cargo ship MV Alta ran aground on rocks outside the village of Ballycotton near the southern city of Cork, during high seas caused by Storm Dennis last weekend. Under Irish legislation, the Revenue service acts as the “Receiver of Wreck” and has administrative responsibility for dealing with wrecked vessels.

“I can advise that an individual purporting to represent the owner has made contact and the Receiver

of Wreck will be pursuing this matter further,” a Revenue spokesman said. Legislation dictates that a person claiming ownership has up to a year to register their case with the receiver, which can then give them the opportunity to salvage the vessel. Cork County Council said Tuesday it was satisfied the Alta was not causing pollution spillage in the surrounding waters.

A marine contractor boarded the vessel and found fuel levels to low. “There is no cargo on board but a number of sealed containers of oil and other materials incidental to the running of a ship were found which may pose a pollution risk in the event of their

spillage,” the local authority said in a statement. “Plans are currently being evaluated in order to have these materials safely removed from the wreck.”

High seas caused by Storm Dennis ended the abandoned ship’s odyssey, which began in September 2018 when she became disabled in the mid-Atlantic en route from Greece to Haiti. Her 10 crew members spent 20 days on board as it floated 2,220 km south-east of Bermuda, before they were taken off by the crew of a US Coast Guard cutter. The US Coast Guard said at the time it was working with the ship’s owner to arrange a tug back to shore but her subsequent

movements are shrouded by mystery.

Maritime news site Fleetmon reported receiving correspondence from the alleged owner, saying the ship had been twice hijacked from Guyana in the process of being salvaged. The 44-year-old vessel came on the radar again in Aug 2019 when British Royal Navy ice patrol ship the HMS Protector found her drifting crewless in the mid-Atlantic. Since then the Alta seems to have continued her crewless voyage which ended on the rocks outside Ballycotton – a traditional fishing village which crops out into the Celtic Sea. — AFP

Mediterranean diet boosts good bacteria, curbs harmful ones

PARIS: Switching in old age from a bland, unvaried diet to a Mediterranean mix of fresh veggies, fruits and fish restores a balance of intestinal bacteria linked to good health, researchers said Tuesday. In a clinical trial with 612 volunteers aged 65 to 79 across five European countries, those who adopted a typical MedDiet for a year showed more “good” microbes linked to better brain function, and a net drop in gut flora thought to trigger inflammation and increased frailty.

The results held true regardless of age or weight,

both of which influence the community of bacteria species – numbering up to 1,000 – that make-up the human microbiome, the scientists reported in the journal Gut. “This diet might act on gut bacteria in such a way as to help curb the advance of physical frailty and cognitive decline in older age,” lead author Paul O’Toole, head of the School of Microbiology at University College Cork in Ireland, told AFP.

In the later stages of life there is a natural decline of bodily functions and a tendency for the immune system to overreact, leading to a clinical condition known as frailty. “In an older person, the immune system is striking at shadows,” O’Toole explained. “It is constantly turned on and firing into deep space.” Cognitive function – especially short-term memory – also “goes downhill as we get older”, he added.

Previous research has suggested that the restricted diet common among older people, especially those liv-

ing alone or in institutions, sharply reduces the range and types of bacteria found in the gut, thus helping to speed the onset of these conditions. “At the same time, we have long known the Mediterranean diet” – rich in fresh produce and olive oil, and fish rather than red meat – “is good for you,” O’Toole noted. This style of cuisine correlates with less frailty and inflammation, and better cognitive function, he added. But researchers didn’t know why this was true.

O’Toole and his colleagues in Ireland were part of a European project that set up an experiment to see if gut microbes might play a role. Coordinating with teams in Poland, Italy, France and the Netherlands, they compared seniors eating a narrow range of mostly prepared foods with those who had switched to eating fresh, MedDiet ingredients delivered to their doorstep every week. In the second group, good bacteria flourished while microbes associated with poor health were

reduced in number by the good diet.

But the strongest evidence of the MedDiet’s impact came in looking at who adhered to the new regimen most closely. “We interviewed everyone in detail to measure compliance,” O’Toole said. A year was long enough to see a measurable change in mix of microbes, but seniors would have to stick to the diet far longer to see “clinically significant” changes in inflammation and frailty scores, the study found. “I would recommend this diet to anyone in that age group, but at the same time I’m realistic,” he said.

“My priority is to find a supplement that contains all the ingredients of a MedDiet to replace the missing microbes in frail and order people. If you have been on a bad diet for a really long time... it’s like the World Wildlife Fund says: ‘extinction is forever’, and it may not be possible to bring the microbes back even with a good diet.” — AFP

Syrian dad and daughter laugh...

Continued from Page 1

He had to explain that it was only the sound of children playing for the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr. “After that, whatever was coming to us from the air, I would take out my phone and tell her: ‘Come, let’s laugh together, these are children playing for Eid,’” he says. “I try not to show her that what is happening as a bad thing but rather show it as something funny,” he explains.

“One day, she will know that this is a sound of death but by then, she will have understood who we are and what our story is,” Mohammad says. The north of the province of Idlib is a dead end for hundreds of thousands of civilians displaced from other former rebel

bastions across Syria. It has been described by aid groups as the world’s largest de facto open-air displacement camp.

Hundreds of people, many of them children, have been killed in recent weeks as pro-regime bombardment spares nothing, from homes to hospitals. According to the United Nations, 900,000 people have been forced to flee their homes and shelters since December alone. Tens of thousands of them are left to sleep rough in the thick of winter, with temperatures dipping to minus 7 degrees Celsius in some areas last week.

More than half of the displaced are children and at least seven of them have died from the cold and the bad living conditions. For those who have a shelter, the trauma of the intensive shelling is an issue that overwhelmed health services and relief organizations can scarcely address. After nearly nine years of a conflict that has killed more than 380,000 people, Salwa’s father says he no longer has dreams or hope. “We are tired of sending messages, we have no aspirations. We just want these children to have a decent life,” he says. — AFP

Assembly launches probe into Airbus...

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military aircraft deals involving Airbus – a \$9 billion Eurofighter Typhoon warplanes deal and a contract for 30 Caracal military helicopters costing \$1.2 billion.

The Assembly also passed a few other laws, including

one on the Central Bank and another on the judiciary. The Assembly saw nothing close to the chaos it witnessed on Tuesday during the debate on the general amnesty law, when MPs quarreled, traded insults and guards pushed crowds outside the chamber. Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said the Assembly office will investigate the events but again blamed opposition MP Mohammad Al-Mutair for triggering the chaos. The Assembly will meet again on March 10 following extended holidays on the occasion of the National and Liberation Days on Feb 25 and 26.

the capital, would start operating within a few months.

The UAE has substantial oil and gas reserves, but with a power-hungry population of 10 million it has made huge investments in developing clean alternatives, including solar energy. The plant is a regional first – Saudi Arabia, the world’s top oil exporter, has said it plans to build up to 16 nuclear reactors, but the project has yet to materialize.

It is being built by a consortium led by the Korea Electric Power Corporation at a cost of some \$24.4 billion. When fully operational, the four reactors have the capacity to generate 5,600 megawatts of electricity, around 25 percent of the nation’s needs. The other three reactors are almost ready. — AFP

Jet ‘downing’ stirs alarm over...

Continued from Page 1

they plan their air missions.” The coalition did not respond to AFP’s request for comment.

Saudi Arabia has long asserted dominance over Yemeni air space. The kingdom has faced repeated international criticism for its aerial bombing raids in Yemen that have often resulted in civilian deaths. But the rebels are countering the threat by bolstering their air defense capabilities, notably with what they call self-made surface-to-air missiles. “While the Houthis claim a self-produced missile shot down the Saudi Tornado, it remains to be seen whether that is truly the case as this has been an area where they have received Iranian assistance,” said Wasser.

Last year, the Houthis claimed to have downed an American drone with a rebel-made missile. At the time, the US military said it was probing reports of the incident, which came amid heightened tensions between Washington and Iran. A UN report seen by AFP earlier this month said the rebels obtained new weapons last year with “technical characteristics similar to arms manufactured in the Islamic Republic of Iran”. The report compiled by a panel of UN experts did not say whether the weapons were delivered directly by the Iranian government.

But earlier this month, Saudi media said coalition air strikes killed four operatives of the Iranian ally Hezbollah, Lebanon’s powerful Shiite movement, close to the rebel-held capital Sanaa. The presence of Iran-backed operatives in Yemen likely boosted “Houthi preparedness in

combating Saudi Arabia’s aerial activity”, Fatima Abo Alasrar, a scholar at the Middle East Institute, told AFP. “They did not have this capacity five years ago,” she said.

The rebel group’s increasingly lethal drones are also a cause for alarm. Some of the components found in Houthi Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) were identical to those in Iranian-made UAVs, said a report released yesterday by the Britain-based Conflict Armament Research. One small instrument – a gyroscope – inside the drone used to attack a Saudi oil facility last year appeared similar to that recovered from an Iranian drone downed in Iraq, it added. Friday’s events followed fresh clashes in northern Yemen after a months-long relative lull as the warring parties showed an apparent interest in de-escalating the conflict.

In November, a Saudi official said Riyadh had an “open channel” with the rebels, with the goal of ending the war. Riyadh had reportedly hoped for a quick win when it led a military intervention in Yemen in 2015, but instead waded into a quagmire that has cost it billions of dollars and devastated the Arab world’s poorest country. The Houthis had also offered to halt all attacks on Saudi Arabia as part of a wider peace initiative. But those efforts appear to be unravelling, with some observers saying the rebels have repeatedly used periods of quiet to bolster their military capabilities.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, which labels the Houthis an Iranian proxy, is looking to extricate itself from the grinding conflict. Friday’s crash triggered coalition air strikes in the area where the plane went down that were widely seen as a Saudi retaliation. The United Nations said 31 civilians were killed and 12 others wounded. But the strikes may have had another motive, some analysts say. “The decision to bomb the crash site was most likely to ensure that key technology did not fall into Houthi hands and increase their ability to better target coalition aircraft,” said Wasser. —AFP

French patient, ultrasound revealed that there were 17 small, fluid-filled sacs containing immature eggs in her ovaries. But using hormones to stimulate the ovaries to ripen the eggs would have taken too long and might have made her cancer worse, leaving retrieval of the immature eggs and freezing as the best option.

After five years, the patient recovered from breast cancer, but she was unable to conceive naturally. The chemo had made her infertile. Six of the eggs that had been frozen five years earlier survived the thawing process, and five were successfully fertilized. One of these fertilized eggs was transferred to the patient’s womb, and she gave birth to a healthy baby boy – named Jules – on July 6, 2019. “This success represents a breakthrough in the field of fertility preservation,” Grynberg said. — AFP

UAE loads fuel rods at Arab world’s...

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During the process, the unit will be synchronized with the power grid and the first electricity produced. “Our teams are trained, certified and ready to safely commence the testing and start-up processes for Unit 1,” said Nawah CEO Mark Reddemann. Abu Dhabi authorities said in January that the plant, on the Gulf coast west of

Sports

From wrestling royalty to MMA for India's Ritu Phogat

'I got a chance to train with the best in Singapore'

NEW DELHI: An Indian wrestler whose family story was immortalised by Bollywood is hoping to create a blockbuster of her own by becoming her country's first world champion in the high-octane sport of mixed martial arts.

Ritu Phogat, who initially followed her father and two elder sisters into wrestling, is now charting a new path after making an explosive MMA debut in November.

Phogat's father Mahavir, and her sisters Geeta and Babita were the subject of 2016 movie "Dangal", telling the story of the wrestling coach who raised his daughters to become Commonwealth champions.

But Ritu, 25, is forging a different career. After winning her first MMA fight in less than three minutes, she will face China's Wu Chiao Chen at this month's ONE Championship fight night in Singapore, which will be held behind closed doors because of the coronavirus.

The youngest Phogat daughter is trading an attempt at an Olympic medal to tackle MMA, but she said she was attracted by the

lure of making history in her new sport.

"I got a chance to train with the best in Singapore and there was no looking back," she told AFP during a promotional event in New Delhi.

"There was the 2020 Olympic Games but I thought that I would do well in mixed martial arts. I have come with an aim of becoming the first girl from India to become a world champion in mixed martial art." The nimble but strongly built Phogat said wrestlers were a good fit for the fast-growing contact sport, which is yet to take off in India.

"Top seven champions in mixed martial arts are wrestlers, so I believe that wrestlers have an edge in this sport with their ability to take down the opponent," she said.

"It is all a matter of skill. You just have to practise hard. I think MMA is not much different from wrestling in terms of preparation." Phogat, who said she was inspired by watching Russia's Khabib Nurmagomedov and Conor McGregor of Ireland, admitted

she was running a risk by switching sports.

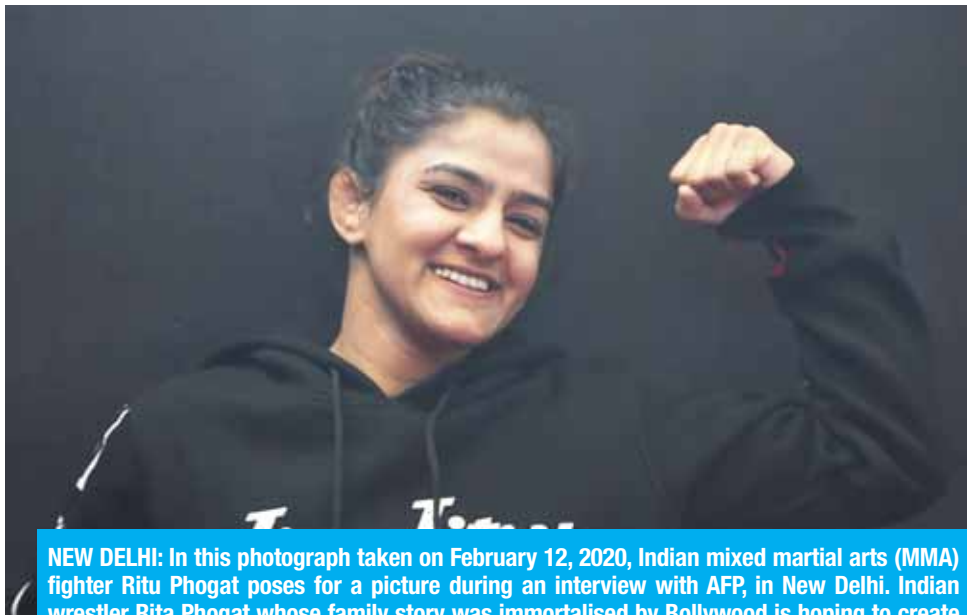
"I had a good career in wrestling so this decision was a big risk for me. But I did not want to miss the opportunity," she said.

"One has to take risks to do something new and as an athlete I am ready to embrace every challenge."

She added: "Without the support of my father and sisters I would not have been where I am. My father always taught me to be far-sighted, hard-working and with strong resolve. Three traits will take you a long way."

Phogat won 48kg gold at the 2016 Commonwealth Wrestling Championship and followed it up with a silver in the under-23 world championships the next year. Her father Mahavir, who is now training his niece Vinesh for the Tokyo Olympics, backs his third daughter to make it big in MMA.

"She used to watch a lot MMA and one day told me that I will win a gold in this game. So we all backed her and the result is there for everyone to see," he said. — AFP



NEW DELHI: In this photograph taken on February 12, 2020, Indian mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter Ritu Phogat poses for a picture during an interview with AFP, in New Delhi. Indian wrestler Ritu Phogat whose family story was immortalised by Bollywood is hoping to create a blockbuster of her own by becoming her country's first world champion in the high-octane sport of mixed arts. — AFP

Burgan Bank concludes sponsorship of the Breeders Cup Kuwait

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank recently concluded its sponsorship of the Kuwait Breeders Cup 2020, which was held for the first time in Kuwait with the aim of encouraging local breeders to improve production and raise the quality and performance of homegrown horses.

The tournament that was organized by the Arabian Horse Center - Bait Al Arab, under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, was held at Bait Al Arab, the official State Stud dedicated to the breeding of purebred Arabian horses.

The long-standing partnership between the Bank and the renowned center fall within the framework of its social responsibility strategy to support Kuwait's sports culture and elevate the sport's legacy in society. The sponsorship included two championships, namely the Arabian Horse Breeders Cup and the Straight Egyptians Arabian Horse Breeders Cup.

Burgan Bank expressed its pride in being an integral part of the prestigious national events that reflect the region's rich heritage. The bank has remained a keen contributor for several years to ensure the preservation of the breeding of Arabian horses, with the objective of advancing the cultural sport and Kuwait's prominence as a leader in the arena.

The Bank's support of this initiative falls under its dynamic full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural and health driven initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a leading Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the community.



Local hero to compete in FIM Motocross Race



KUWAIT: Mohammed Jaffar, local champion, is ready to face a strenuous challenge at round 4 of the FIM Motocross Race. The competition is back in Kuwait with its 4th round on February 21st and 22nd.

Mohammed has collected so far 50 points in the competition, securing 5th position in the MX2 category. Jaffar had participated in round 2 but was unable to join in on rounds 1 and 3. He will be competing among 23 other competitors, all aiming to grasp the top spot on the podium at the competition held by the Federation Internationale de Motocyclisme.

The FIM is the global governing body for motorcycle racing. It represents over 100 national federations that are divided into six regional unions and covers six disciplines, of

which include motocross, where Jaffar's passions lie. Preparing for the race is no easy feat but Mohammed Jaffar is ready to face the challenge, especially a race that will have him battling it out to grasp the top spot. While he holds 50 points, the racer in the top spot in the MX2 category has already accumulated 134 points. With just two rounds remaining, Jaffar told us exactly what is needed to succeed.

"A competitor's fitness capabilities are put to the test. That is why I am including endurance training in my regiment plan to successfully participate in and complete all races. In addition, and most importantly, a competitor should have the mental strength and determination. Racing is exhausting and

perseverance plays a large role." He continues to explain that despite his disadvantage in terms of points he believes he can overcome the competition through hard work.

However, for Mohammed, the challenge is merely part of the passion he has for the sport. "Motorbikes are something in my blood", he explains. Jaffar began his passion for motocross at 14. Starting to compete at the young age of 19, he was able to achieve competitive greatness, winning 16 motocross championship titles. His passion for the sport grows daily and has become an integral part of his life. He won his first championship in 2011 at the Emirates Motorplex MX2 and has since then been of the best motocross athletes in the Middle East.



ABK CRYcket 2019



DPS team winners of U-12 category



Shakty's Cricket Academy, winners of U-14 group with Chief Guest Balwant Bains.

KUWAIT: Friends of CRY Club, Kuwait (FOCC) organized the annual cricket tournament for children, the "ABK CRYcket 2019" recently, at the Kuwait Oil Company, Ahmadi Park grounds. Our sincere thanks to KOC for providing the facilities.

"CRYcket" is an annual softball cricket tournament, played in 7 overs match format for children in two age groups of under 12 (Juniors) & under 14 (Seniors) for both boys & girls. The tournament is open to independent teams and completed in a single day.

This year FOCC turned 21, and we had 21 team registrations. A big thank you to all the players, team managers, coaches and the parents. We also highly appreciate the umpires and scorers, who are supporting us, year after year. Through Ms Surita Venter, CRYcket had another first, a lady among the umpires. Balwant Bains, Chief Auditor from Ahli Bank of Kuwait graced the occasion as Chief Guest, accompanied by his colleague Sebastian Dais, Executive Manager. Balwant praised the efforts of FOCC and extended his best wishes to FOCC for continued success in future events.

In the U-14 (Senior) category, the

"Shakty's Cricket Academy-City Clinic", "MG Warriors Blue and Dashing Knights" qualified for the Super League. The "Shakty's Cricket Academy-City Clinic" won over both super league opponents and clinched the winners' trophy. "MG Warriors Blue" beat "Dashing Knights" in the Super League and became claimant of the runner-up place. The best player award was claimed by Armaan Ilyas of Dashing Knights, by scoring 31 runs and taking 8 wickets with an economy of 6.5 runs per over.

In the U-12 Junior category, the "Dashing Knights-Panthers", "Cricket Park-GAC", "CCC" and MG Warriors Blue" reached the knockout semi-final stage. "Dashing Knights-Panthers" took the winner's trophy after the finals by defeating "Cricket Park-GAC" who came in second place. And Vyom Mehta of Dashing Knights-Panthers took the best player trophy by scoring 76 runs and taking 3 wickets at an economy of 8 runs per over.

FOCC would also like to thank all the sponsors and the media. FOCC is proud to be partners with CRY - in our joint mission to help the underprivileged children.

Sports

Can anyone stop Australia? Hosts target fifth title at women's T20 World Cup

Australia are widely expected to contest the March 8 final

SYDNEY: Mighty Australia go into their home Twenty20 World Cup this week as overwhelming favourites as they look to cement their superiority in women's cricket and draw a world-record crowd in the process.

Meg Lanning's defending champions, and four-time winners, were rarely tested through the second half of 2019 when they whitewashed an injury-ravaged West Indies and a developing Sri Lanka team in the short format. Giving a glimmer of hope to their rivals, they surprisingly slumped to defeat against major rivals India and England this month, before rallying to win the warm-up tri-series.

"To be put under pressure like this heading into a World Cup is extremely good preparation," Lanning insisted. Despite the recent losses, Australia are widely expected to contest the March 8 final at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, where organisers are hoping to draw a world-record attendance for a women's sporting fixture. The cavernous MCG holds 100,000 fans, while the record stands at 90,185 for the 1999 football World Cup final when the United States beat China on penalties in Pasadena, California.

It is hard to look past Australia — who are paid as much as the men's national team, and play domestic T20 cricket in the popular Women's Big Bash League — as one of the potential finalists. Along with Lanning, Australia boasts wicketkeeper-batswoman Alyssa Healy, all-rounder Ellyse Perry and bowling sensation Jess Jonassen, among the world's best.

They have been dominant since the World Cup was introduced 11 years ago, winning four of the six tour-

naments so far and crushing England by eight wickets in the 2018 final in the West Indies. The only other teams to lift the trophy were England on home soil in 2009 and the West Indies in 2016.

Lanning's side open the 10-team tournament on Friday in Sydney against an Indian side boasting teen batting sensation Shafali Verma. "We play some very different teams in this World Cup who have very different styles of play, so for us it'll purely come down to what we feel the best combination is," Lanning said on how the side might line up. "But I'm extremely confident anyone we put out on the park will do well."

Australia and India are 2-2 across their last four meetings and Indian skipper Harmanpreet Kaur said her side had improved markedly since the last World Cup, when they lost to England in the semi-finals.

"If I look back two years, India's 50-over side was doing well and our T20 was struggling. But in the past two years, we have transformed as a T20 team and are very positive going to Australia," she wrote in a column.

"All of the teams have strengths — but so do we. Our strength is spin," she added, with the dangerous Radha Radav and Poonam Radav among their ranks.

Seasoned West Indies skipper Stafanie Taylor knows what it is like to win a World Cup, having led her team to victory in 2016, when she was player of the tournament. The 28-year-old, who recently notched up her 100th T20 cap and has played at every World Cup, believes her side can repeat the feat, particularly with fellow veteran Deandra Dottin back from injury, along with Shamilia Connell and Shakera Selman.



MELBOURNE: This photo taken on February 9, 2020 shows Australian captain Meg Lanning (R) and all-rounder Ellyse Perry (L) talking during a cricket match against England in Melbourne. Mighty Australia go into their home Twenty20 World Cup this week as overwhelming favourites as they look to crown their superiority in women's cricket and draw a world-record crowd in the process. — AFP

"It's going to be a challenge, we as a team know that, but we need to make sure that we focus on ourselves and not what is going on around us," she said ahead of their opener against debutantes Thailand in Perth on Saturday.

"That will be the way for us to be successful over the next few weeks." England, who play South Africa on Sunday, are also candidates for the knockout phase, with skipper Heather Knight warning: "From 1-15, we've got a squad that can win games of cricket." — AFP

Six to watch at the women's Twenty20 WCup

SYDNEY: Six players to watch when the women's Twenty20 World Cup begins on Friday:

MEG LANNING (AUS)

Known for her silky stroke play and cricketing brain, Australia captain Lanning is one of the game's greats. She made her domestic debut aged 16 and has routinely smashed batting records, while winning praise for her innovative approach to captaincy. Nicknamed "Megastar", Lanning has played 98 Twenty20 internationals, hitting more than 2,600 runs with a top score of 133 not out, and skippered Australia to the 2018 world title.

Heather Knight (ENG)

The England captain is hitting form with the bat at just the right time, stroking a career-best 78 against host Australia in the recent tri-nation series and then crucial consecutive boundaries under pressure to set up a pulsating Super Over win. She also plundered 67 against India to end up as third highest run scorer in the series with 176 runs at an average of 44.00 behind India's Smriti Mandhana (216 at 43.20) and Australia's Beth Mooney (208 at 52.00).

Suzie Bates (NZL)

A multi-talented athlete, Bates represented New Zealand in basketball at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. She has played at every World Cup and has scored a record 22 innings of fifty or more in Twenty20 internationals. One of the game's power hitters, she was captain from 2011 until 2018 when she relinquished the role to Amy Satterthwaite. Bates has played 115 Twenty20 internationals, smacking 3,195 runs and taking 49 wickets. She is ranked the world's leading batswoman in the shortest format.

Shafali Verma (IND)

The youngest woman to play Twenty20 cricket for India, the fearless 16-year-old has the potential to set the tournament alight. An attacking top-order batter, she debuted in September and became the youngest Indian to score an international half-century in her fifth outing against the West Indies — surpassing a 30-year-old record held by Sachin Tendulkar. She recently slammed a 78-ball 124 against Australia A in Brisbane, smashing 19 fours and four sixes.

Stafanie Taylor (WIS)

Acclaimed Jamaican-born Taylor is the West Indian captain and has been the mainstay at the top of the order since 2008, scoring nearly 3,000 runs in 100 Twenty20 internationals. She also bowls dangerous off-spin and is renowned as an athletic fielder. Taylor was the 2016 World Cup player of the tournament, and is the heart and soul of her team. If she fires with bat and ball, the West Indies have a real chance of reclaiming the title they won four years ago.

Ellyse Perry (AUS)

One of the world's best all-round sportswomen, Perry not only plays cricket for her country but has won 18 caps for the Australian football team, including the 2011 FIFA World Cup. Now devoted entirely to cricket, she is one of Australia's pace spearheads, while also proving her credentials as a genuine all-rounder capable of turning any game. She was the first Australian, male or female, to play 100 Twenty20 internationals. — AFP

Kohli not yet ready to ease workload

WELLINGTON: Virat Kohli admitted yestersday that captaining India in all three cricketing formats was grueling but insisted he was not yet ready to ease his leadership burden.

Speaking ahead of the opening Test against New Zealand in Wellington on Friday, Kohli, 31, said stepping back was on his mind, but not for a few years.

"It's not a conversation to hide away from," he told

Pakistan hosts star-studded T20 league

KARACHI: Cricket-crazy fans in Pakistan will be able to enjoy the whole of their Twenty20 league on home soil for the first time when the star-studded fifth edition begins today in Karachi. The month-long Pakistan Super League (PSL) will see top internationals such as Dale Steyn of South Africa, Shane Watson and Chris Lynn of Australia, West Indian Carlos Brathwaite and England's Alex Hales and Jason Roy among 36 overseas players in six teams.

Matches will be shared between Karachi, Rawalpindi, Multan and Lahore after security concerns had caused most games in previous years to be played in the United Arab Emirates, with only the final stages of the last three editions being held at home.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Ehsan Mani believes the willingness of overseas stars to sign up illustrates how security has improved in a country where the army has fought a militant insurgency for years.

"So many players touring Pakistan shows the confidence they have in playing in Pakistan," said Mani, who took over last year with the aim of bringing cricket home. "For the fans, this will be a long-awaited opportunity to see their cricketing heroes live in action and reinforce their love for this great game after being left deprived."

A generation of Pakistan's youth had not watched top-flight cricket at home since a deadly attack on the Sri Lankan Test team's bus in 2009 prompted international sides to shun the country.

Security improved enough by 2015 for limited-overs internationals to be hosted but Test cricket returned only

reporters. "It's been about eight year now that I've been playing almost 300 days a year.

"With the travelling, practice sessions and the intensity being right up there all the time, it does take a toll on you." Asked about fellow players who had dropped one or more forms of the game in order to extend their careers, Kohli replied: "I'm not in that space at the moment." "Periodic breaks for me seem to work pretty OK," he added.

"At a time when the body doesn't respond as well, maybe at around 34, 35, you might have a different conversation, but for the next two or three years I have no issues," Kohli, who took over the Test captaincy in late 2014, said he wanted to ensure the Indian team was in a good place when he finally relaxed his grip on the reins. "The team wants a lot of my contribution in the next two or three years, so that we can ease into another

transition, which is what we faced about five or six years ago," he said.

"The mindset is obviously on the larger picture and from that point of view, I am preparing myself for a rigorous three years."

Kohli backed rookie opening batsmen Mayank Agarwal and Prithvi Shaw to shine at Wellington's Basin Reserve, where India have not won a Test since 1968.

"These guys have no baggage, they're not desperate in any way to perform here," he said.

"They play with a fearlessness that can motivate the whole team and give us the kind of starts we want."

Kohli expected the notorious Wellington wind to play a role in the match, saying it had to be carefully considered when weighing up bowling options. "Wind in this stadium more than any other in the world plays a massive, massive role," he said. —AFP



KARACHI: Pakistan Super League (PSL) Teams captains (L to R back row) Darren Sammy of Peshawar Zalmi, Sarfraz Ahmed of Quetta Gladiators, Shadab Khan of Islamabad United, Imad Wasim of Karachi Kings and Sohail Akhtar of Lahore Qalandars pose with the PSL trophy and cricket officials during the trophy unveiling ceremony at the Karachi National Stadium in Karachi yesterday. — AFP

in December after a decade's exile. "It's important that it goes off well, for the future of Pakistan cricket," said former Australian batsman Dean Jones, who is the coach of Karachi Kings. "All the big boys, who are here from overseas, must bring their countries here and play." Since hosting Zimbabwe in 2015, Pakistan has provided teams with security normally reserved for visiting heads of state, with hundreds of police guarding stadiums and hotels and the PSL is no different.

Roads to stadiums will be blocked and fans will have to go through multiple security cordons. Pakistan hosted only the tournament final in 2017, expanding to four matches in 2018 and eight a year ago. "I am delighted to see the PSL fully staged in Pakistan," former Pakistan captain Sarfraz

Ahmed told AFP. "I welcome all the foreign players and hope they take a good message .. so that in the coming years we have more international teams coming."

Australia's limited overs leg-spinner Fawad Ahmed was born in Pakistan but fled to his adopted country in 2010 after Taliban threats. "Hopefully it goes safe and sound to bring joys for the whole nation, and youngsters get inspired," said Ahmed, who will play for the Quetta Gladiators Six teams — Islamabad United, Karachi Kings, Lahore Qalandars Lutan Sultans, Peshawar Zalmi and Quetta Gladiators — will play each other twice in a round-robin phase with the top four contesting play-offs beginning on March 17. The final will take place in Lahore on March 22. — AFP

the best time in my life. But I've moved on from that and learned a lot.

"I've been back playing for a year now. I'm really enjoying it and I feel like I'm playing well. I'm in a nice place." Smith says there have been no signs of animosity from South African fans off the pitch. In fact, quite the opposite.

"Everywhere I have been the people have been lovely. Guys have come up and taken some photos and been really nice," he said. "It's been normal, the same as compared to when I've been here previously. It's a terrific place to tour and I'm glad to be back."

But he expects that to change once the games begin, especially at one of South Africa's most intimidating venues. "I think they're hostile here at the best of times," he said. "It doesn't bother me too much. (Coach) Justin (Langer) said the other day that we had the dress rehearsal in England (last year). There was a fair bit going on there."

"I don't notice it, particularly when I'm batting. Maybe a little bit when I'm fielding, but then again, it's just words, it doesn't affect me. It's about getting on with the job."

The Twenty20 series starts in Johannesburg, before moving to Port Elizabeth on Sunday and finally Cape Town next Wednesday. The sides will then clash in three ODI matches. — Reuters



Steve Smith

Sports

Liverpool seek home comforts after Atletico wake-up call

‘Defeat was just the Reds’ second all season with a senior team’

LONDON: Liverpool's return to the scene of their Champions League triumph last season was not a happy one. A 1-0 defeat by Atletico Madrid in the first leg of their last-16 tie on Tuesday leaves the European champions relying on another Anfield comeback to progress.

Jurgen Klopp's men famously thrashed Barcelona 4-0 in their last knockout tie at home to overturn a 3-0 deficit in last season's semi-finals. There is no need for such a dramatic turnaround when Atletico visit on March 11. But after being frustrated by how an intense atmosphere at the Wanda Metropolitano affected the performance of Polish referee Szymon Marciniak, Klopp is keen to harness the power of Anfield.

"We speak from time to time (about) the power of Anfield and the power of a stadium and what a stadium can have, tonight we saw it," said Klopp. "The whole stadium only wanted a result, the stadium was not here for seeing sensational football. They wanted a result and they got the result, so they are now happy in this moment and we are not."

Liverpool were unhappy at the award of a throw-in which led to Saul Niguez's fourth-minute opener, while Klopp replaced Sadio Mane at half-time for fear Atletico's play-acting would earn the Senegalese star a second yellow card.

Defeat was just the Reds' second all season with a senior team. A near flawless Premier League campaign has them 25 points clear at the top of the table and romping towards a first league title in 30 years.

The Club World Cup and UEFA Super Cup have also been won along the way, but there is a pattern in the European champions struggling to hit top form on the road in the Champions League.

TROUBLE ON THE ROAD

Liverpool have lost seven of their last 11 away games in Europe's premier club competition — more than they have lost in their last 106 Premier League games. For all its TV-revenue fuelled wealth, that raises questions of the overall quality of the Premier League, particularly with the likes of Manchester United, Tottenham Hotspur, Chelsea and Arsenal at a low ebb.

Yet, even amidst that run, Liverpool have reached back-to-back Champions League finals and have never lost a two-legged European tie in four seasons under Klopp. If travel sickness has been a problem, fortress Anfield has always more than made amends.

Roma and Manchester City were also blown away in the latter stages in recent years before the miracle of Barcelona. "The second half will be played in a different stadium, in our stadium, and that will be different as well," added Klopp. "Atletico will feel that and that's what we are looking forward to."

Three weeks from now Liverpool will also be fully up to speed. They were also sluggish in a 1-0 win at bottom-of-the-table Norwich City on Saturday after a two-week winter break. A similar 11-day break last year due to an early exit from the FA Cup allowed Klopp to take his players on a warm-weather training camp. On their return, they drew five of their next seven games, which ultimately cost them the title.

However, they finished the season in supreme form, winning 14 of their last 15 matches to be crowned champions of Europe and register a club record Premier League points tally of 97. As long as they find their groove in time, Klopp's men will be confident of breaking Atletico's resistance on home soil. — AFP



MADRID: Liverpool's Brazilian midfielder Fabinho (up) and Liverpool's English defender Joe Gomez (C) challenge Atletico Madrid's Spanish midfielder Vitolo during the UEFA Champions League, round of 16, first leg football match between Club Atletico de Madrid and Liverpool FC at the Wanda Metropolitano stadium in Madrid. — AFP

Iniesta sparks Kobe to late win in Asian Champions League

SEOUL: Barcelona great Andres Iniesta set up a last-minute winner as Japan's Vissel Kobe beat Suwon Bluewings 1-0 to stay perfect in the AFC Champions League yesterday.

Elsewhere, Teruhito Nakagawa and Ado Onaiwu plundered two apiece as Yokohama F-Marininos thrashed Sydney FC 4-0 to emulate their J-League rivals Kobe with two wins out of two in the coronavirus-hit competition.

Iniesta, 35, was quiet for much of the night in Suwon but he finally unlocked the defence with a through-ball to Gotoku Sakai, whose cross was met first-time by

Kyogo Furuhashi. It was far from Kobe's swashbuckling Champions League introduction last week, when they became the first Japanese team to score five goals on debut with a 5-1 hammering of Johor Darul Ta'zim.

But it was enough to give Kobe an early grip on Group G in a competition missing most Chinese teams so far after their entry was delayed until April by the deadly coronavirus outbreak. Meanwhile, Onaiwu sparked a home rout for Japanese champions Yokohama after just 12 minutes, turning to smash a deflected, left-foot shot past Sydney goalkeeper Andrew Redmayne from the edge of the box.

Nakagawa bagged the first of his quickfire double with an exquisite chip on the half-hour mark to double Yokohama's advantage before effectively killing the tie in his team's next attack. The pint-sized winger pounced on a clever pass from Thai Theerathon Bunmathan to wriggle free and score with a clinical close-range finish as the visitors, by some distance the A-League's best side, fell apart.

A die-hard Liverpool fan, Yokohama coach Ange

Postecoglou, who led Australia to their first Asian Cup title in 2015, has brought his own version of Reds boss Jurgen Klopp's high, counter-pressing style to the J-League, and his hardworking team squeezed the life out of Sydney. They continued to suffocate the Aussies after the break and Onaiwu grabbed his second of the night five minutes after the restart, tapping home following a slick exchange between Keita Endo and the industrious Marcos Junior.

Yokohama, who beat South Korea's Jeonbuk Motors 2-1 last week in their Group H opener, never seriously looked like conceding as they gave the A-League leaders a reality check in the Asian competition.

In Suwon, neither side could gain the ascendancy in the first half with Douglas and Thomas Vermaelen both heading over for Kobe and Yang Sang-min doing the same at the other end. Kobe's Leo Osaki nearly bundled a cross into his own goal just before half-time and Suwon's Han Eui-gwon fired into the side netting in what were the game's closest chances before Furuhashi's goal. — AFP

Tragic gay trailblazer Fashanu honoured

LONDON: Justin Fashanu, who in 1990 became the first English professional footballer to reveal he was gay, will be honoured on Wednesday by being inducted into the National Football Museum Hall of Fame.

Fashanu will be honoured on what would have been his 59th birthday — he hanged himself in May 1998 — an occasion also marked by a reminder from Manchester United that homophobia still exists in football.

Chelsea had issued a statement on Tuesday saying "a large group of Manchester United fans made unacceptable homophobic chants. "A number of these away supporters were prevented from entering the stadium and others were ejected during the game."

United also issued a statement in response. Anti-gay chants "directed against Chelsea FC — or any other club — by some of our fans runs counter to our values," read the statement.

"We were the first club to sign up to the TeamPride coalition and continue to collaborate with Stonewall and other anti-discriminatory organisations in this area."

Fashanu's niece Amal, who recalls her uncle's tragic death when she was aged nine, will accept the award in Manchester. Fashanu had a sublime talent and a penchant for scoring spectacular goals — one for Norwich against Liverpool in February 1980 was voted goal of the season.

Such efforts earned him a one million pound move to Nottingham Forest in 1981 — the first black player in British football to break that barrier — but he failed to click with the manager Brian Clough. For Amal — who through the Justin Fashanu Foundation combats homophobia, racism and mental health problems in football — the award is long overdue.

"It is something quite important that is happening," she told the Daily Mirror. "It's just like 'wow', he's finally getting recognised and it is very, very impressive. "People forget just how talented he was at football because he was gay."

"I was there at the museum four years ago and in my mind, I know this is bad, I was thinking, 'Why isn't Justin here?' "It is a big move and a big step because they are recognising Justin on a whole new level now."

‘THROW FLOWERS AT YOU’

Amal says there is still no appetite for her friends who play football and are gay to come out publicly. "It would have to be a tough footballer. He would have to have a thick skin," she said. "It is still great, but I can't lie and say it will be a rosy path and they are going to throw flowers at you."

One person who found Fashanu's coming out difficult to handle at the time was his younger brother John, Amal's father, who accused Justin of being an "attention seeker". John — a muscular striker who was part of the 'Crazy Gang' Wimbledon side which stunned Liverpool in the 1988 FA Cup final — has changed his views and is now a trustee of the foundation.

"He (John) is championing the fact that there needs to be a change and we need to do it together to honour Justin," said Amal. — AFP



Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE

Sporting CP v Istanbul Basaksehir FK	20:55
beIN Sports	
Getafe CF v Ajax Amsterdam	20:55
beIN Sports HD 6	
FC Kobenhavn v Celtic	20:55
beIN Sports	
CFR Cluj v Sevilla FC	20:55
beIN Sports	
Club Brugge KV v Manchester United	20:55
beIN Sports	
Ludogorets Razgrad v Internazionale Milano	20:55
beIN Sports	
Eintracht Frankfurt v Red Bull Salzburg	20:55
beIN Sports	
Shakhtar Donetsk v SL Benfica	20:55
beIN Sports	
Wolverhampton Wanderers FC v RCD Espanyol	23:00
beIN Sports	
Bayer 04 Leverkusen v FC Porto	23:00
beIN Sports HD 6	
Apoel Nicosia v FC Basel 1893	23:00
beIN Sports	
Olympiacos CFP v Arsenal FC	23:00
beIN Sports HD 1	
AZ Alkmaar v Lask Linz	23:00
beIN Sports	
VfL Wolfsburg v Malmo FF	23:00
beIN Sports	
AS Roma v KAA Gent	23:00
beIN Sports	
Glasgow Rangers FC v Sporting Braga	23:00
beIN Sports	



DORTMUND: Dortmund's Norwegian forward Erling Braut Haaland (R) heads the ball next to Paris Saint-Germain's French defender Presnel Kimpembe during the UEFA Champions League Last 16, first-leg football match BVB Borussia Dortmund v Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) in Dortmund, western Germany. — AFP

Haaland double gives Dortmund edge over PSG

DORTMUND: Teenage record-breaker Erling Braut Haaland scored twice as Borussia Dortmund sealed a 2-1 win over Paris Saint-Germain, for whom Neymar scored on his return to action, in Tuesday's Champions League last 16, first leg in Germany.

Forward Haaland took his tally to 11 goals in seven games since Dortmund paid Salzburg 20 million euros (\$22 million) for the 19-year-old with second-half goals either side of Neymar's equaliser. Having also scored eight times for Salzburg in the group stage, Haaland now has 10 goals in just seven Champions League games this season.

"These are the moments you play football for. I really enjoyed it," beamed the Norwegian, who insisted Dortmund will still have it all to do in the return on March 11. "We want to go through, but we will have to raise our game again," he warned. "It's going to be a hard game, but we are a good team and we have to keep going."

His performance left Kylian Mbappe and Neymar in the shade, with the latter struggling to truly make his mark having been kept on the sidelines for the last two weeks ahead of this game due to a rib injury.

However, the Brazilian superstar's away goal means PSG remain very much in contention to reach the quarter-finals after three consecutive exits in the last 16.

The presence of the world's most expensive player was a major boost for his team, after he missed last season's surprise last-16 loss to Manchester United with a foot injury. He also sat out the second leg of their defeat by Real Madrid at the same stage in 2018.

However, Dortmund deserved the win as PSG's star-studded attack, with Angel Di Maria supporting Mbappe and Neymar, was repeatedly frustrated by the home side, for whom the midfield duo of Axel Witsel and Emre Can regularly helped snuff out attacks.

There was little to separate the teams in the first half although Dortmund's English winger Jadon Sancho squandered one chance on the counter-attack and then forced a fine save from Keylor Navas just before the half-hour mark. Witsel was calling the shots in midfield, while his midfield partner Can — whose loan deal from Juventus was made into a permanent move earlier in the day — had a penalty appeal waved away by Spanish referee Mateu Lahoz after being cluttered in the area by Marco Verratti. After the goalless first half, Dortmund poured forward and kept finding spaces to exploit down the flanks. Dortmund's Swiss coach Lucien Favre then brought on Giovanni Reyna, who only turned 17 last November, for his Champions League debut midway through the second half.

Moments later Haaland got the breakthrough when he stabbed past Navas from close range after Thiago Silva had blocked a Raphael Guerreiro shot.

The game had now come to life, and with their German coach Thomas Tuchel frantically urging them on, PSG drew level six minutes later when Mbappe unpicked the Dortmund defence and presented Neymar with a straight-forward finish. However, the scene was set for Haaland to continue his phenomenal scoring run with a stunning finish from the edge of the area following a Reyna pass. — AFP

25 From wrestling royalty to MMA for India's Ritu Phogat



26 Can anyone stop Australia? Hosts target fifth title at women's T20 World Cup



27 Liverpool seek home comforts after Atletico wake-up call



Pens top Leafs, jump Caps for first place

PITTSBURGH: Sidney Crosby had a goal and three assists, and Bryan Rust added a goal and two assists Tuesday night as the Pittsburgh Penguins downed the visiting Toronto Maple Leafs 5-2. Pittsburgh won its NHL-best 22nd home game and moved into first place in the Metropolitan Division, overtaking an idle Washington Capitals team that had led the division since Oct. 19. Anthony Angello, Jason Zucker and Teddy Blueger also scored for the Penguins, who built a 5-0 lead in the second period and are 6-1-1 in their past eight games. Goaltender Tristan Jarry won his fourth straight start, making 34 saves.

SENATORS 7, SABRES 4

Artem Anisimov and Jean-Gabriel Pageau each had two goals as Ottawa scored four straight times in the first period to erase a two-goal deficit and beat visiting Buffalo. Pageau also posted two assists for the Senators, who overcame a 2-0 hole by coming alive during a wild first period. They won back-to-back contests for the first time since a three-game run from Nov. 19-22 and also won their third straight over Buffalo to take the season series 3-1-0. Defenseman Brandon Montour recorded two goals with an assist, and rookie Victor Olofsson posted one of each for the Sabres, who had won three in a row.

BLUES 3, DEVILS 0

Ivan Barbashev scored twice, and Jordan Binnington made 17 saves as St. Louis blanked visiting New Jersey. It was Binnington's second shutout of the season and the seventh of his career. Jaden Schwartz also scored for the Blues, who snapped their 0-3-2 winless streak and won for just the third time in 13 games. Louis Domingue stopped 36 of 39 shots for the Devils. He struggled earlier this month, going 0-2-2 with a 4.23 goals-against average and a save percentage of .869 through four games, but he single-handedly kept the Blues from turning it into a rout.

RED WINGS 4, CANADIENS 3

Andreas Athanasiou scored two third-period goals as host Detroit completed its first four-game series sweep of Montreal in franchise history. Mike Green and Robby Fabbri also scored for the Red Wings, who rallied from a 3-1 deficit in the third to snap a four-game losing streak. Jonathan Bernier made 19 saves in the win. Nate Thompson, Jeff Petry and Nick Suzuki scored for the Canadiens, who have lost five straight. Carey Price made 21 stops for Montreal, which led 2-0 after the first period.

FLYERS 5, BLUE JACKETS 1

Travis Konecny collected a goal and two assists to propel host Philadelphia past

Columbus in the opener of a home-and-home series. Kevin Hayes, Sean Couturier, Jakub Voracek and defenseman Philippe Myers also tallied for the Flyers, who leapfrogged Columbus and the idle New York Islanders into third place in the Metropolitan Division. Philadelphia will vie for a four-game season sweep of Columbus on Thursday when it visits Ohio. Flyers captain Claude Giroux set up Voracek's goal midway into the third period for his 235th career power-play assist, passing Hall of Famer Bobby Clarke for the franchise record.

HURRICANES 4, PREDATORS 1

Andrei Svechnikov and Sebastian Aho each scored as Carolina moved back over the play-off line with a win in Nashville. The victory elevated Carolina into the second Eastern Conference wild-card slot. The Hurricanes, who are 7-3-1 in their last 11 games, sit only one point behind the Philadelphia Flyers for third place in the Metropolitan Division. The loss snapped Nashville's three-game winning streak. The Predators missed their own chance to gain ground in the Western Conference wild-card race and dropped to 3-7-0 over their last 10 home games.

JETS 6, KINGS 3

Jansen Harkins, Mason Appleton and Blake Wheeler scored goals in a 5-minute, 20-second stretch of the second period, and



OTTAWA: Craig Anderson #41 of the Ottawa Senators makes a save against Johan Larsson #22 of the Buffalo Sabres as Artem Anisimov #51 of the Senators looks on in the first period at Canadian Tire Centre in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. —AFP

Winnipeg surged to a home victory over Los Angeles. Nikolaj Ehlers, Patrik Laine and Wheeler added third-period goals, while Jack Roslovic, Mark Scheifele and Ehlers had two assists each for the Jets. Goalie Connor Hellebuyck recovered from an early goal

allowed to make 31 saves in the win. Dustin Brown scored two goals for the Kings, including one 35 seconds into the game. Martin Frik added a third-period tally, and goalie Calvin Petersen made 29 saves for Los Angeles in his third game of the season. — Reuters

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