



# Protesters attack US embassy in Baghdad over deadly air strikes

## US to send Marines to embassy as Trump blames Iran

### NOTICE

Happy New Year to all our readers! Kuwait Times will not be published on Thursday, January 2, 2020 and Friday, January 3. Our next issue will hit the newsstands on Sunday, January 5. However, readers can stay updated on breaking news and events on our digital media channels including our website [www.kuwaittimes.net](http://www.kuwaittimes.net) and on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

### News in brief

#### Amir exchanges greetings

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday exchanged cables of congratulations with heads of Arab and friendly countries on the advent of 2020, wishing stability, peace and prosperity for all countries. The Amir also exchanged cables with leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states to greet them on the New Year. In his cables, HH the Amir wished them and all Gulf peoples a happy New Year, praying to Allah Almighty to bestow more progress, welfare and prosperity on all GCC states. — KUNA

#### Sultan Qaboos in 'stable condition'

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos, who has ruled Oman for almost half a century, is in stable condition after recently travelling to Belgium for a medical check-up, his royal court announced yesterday. "The sultan is in a stable condition and following a scheduled treatment program," the official ONA news agency cited the royal court as saying, without giving details. The court announced on Dec 7 that Sultan Qaboos was travelling to Belgium for "a limited period of time". In his first comments to the country since returning, the statement from the royal court said Sultan Qaboos thanked his people for the good wishes they had sent him. — AFP

#### 6 kidnapped children killed

ADDIS ABABA: Six children who were kidnapped in northern Ethiopia have been shot dead by their captors after their families failed to come up with ransom money. Unidentified "bandits" abducted eight children near the Gondar zone of Amhara regional state on Dec 20 and demanded that their families each pay ransom of 120,000 Ethiopian birr (around \$3,700), the Amhara Mass Media Agency reported. "Failing to secure the ransom money, the kidnapers tied the children with ropes in pairs and shot the children on December 29," the report said. One of the children managed to break free of the rope and flee before the kidnapers had a chance to shoot him, while another was found alive despite having been shot, it said. The victims were between the ages of 10 and 16. — AFP

## Ghoss flees to Lebanon from 'rigged' Japan

BEIRUT: Former Nissan chief Carlos Ghoss said yesterday he had fled to Lebanon to escape injustice in Japan, where he was on bail awaiting trial on financial misconduct charges. The auto tycoon's abrupt departure was the latest twist in a rollercoaster journey that saw him fall from boardroom to detention center and sparked questions over an embarrassing security lapse in Japan.



Carlos Ghoss

In a statement, the 65-year-old said he would "no longer be held hostage by a rigged Japanese justice system, where guilt is presumed, discrimination is rampant, and basic human rights are denied".

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BAGHDAD: Iraqi supporters of pro-Iran factions attacked the US embassy in Baghdad yesterday, breaching its outer wall and chanting "Death to America!" in anger over weekend air strikes that killed two dozen fighters. It was the first time in years protesters have been able to reach the US embassy, which is sheltered behind a series of checkpoints in the high-security Green Zone. A stream of men in military fatigues, as well as some women, marched through those checkpoints to the embassy walls with no apparent reaction from Iraqi security forces.

US President Donald Trump in a Twitter message accused Iran of "orchestrating" the attack and said it "will be held fully responsible", but he also said he expected Iraq "to use its forces to protect the embassy". The Washington Post reported that inside the embassy, US diplomats and staffers were huddled in a fortified safe room, according to two reached by a messaging app.

The demonstrators waved flags in support of the Hashed al-Shaabi, a mostly Shiite network of Iraqi armed groups that has received training and weapons from powerful neighbor Iran. They threw rocks and wrenched security cameras off the walls, ignoring calls over megaphones to leave the embassy compound. In response, US guards fired an initial volley of bullets, then switched to tear gas and flash bang stun grenades to disperse the crowd. The Hashed said at least 62 people were wounded.

US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Reuters that a small number of additional

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BAGHDAD: Members of the Iraqi pro-Iranian Hashed al-Shaabi group and protesters set ablaze a sentry box in front of the US embassy building to protest against the weekend's air strikes by US planes on several bases belonging to Hezbollah Brigades. — AFP

## Filipino FM wants 'head' of woman who killed maid

MANILA: Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr yesterday demanded justice to be served for a Filipina maid who was allegedly murdered by her employer's wife in Kuwait. The Philippine Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) also slammed the death of Jeanelyn Padernal Villavende, Philippine media reported.

"The friendship between your country which gives our people the jobs they cannot find at home and our people whose faithful service makes the life of your people easier depends on justice being done the murdered maid. An eye for an eye, a life for a life," Locsin told Kuwait's Ambassador to Manila Musaed Saleh Ahmad Al-Thwaikh during their

meeting yesterday.

"In short. She bashed her head. So I want the head of the employer's wife who murdered their Filipina maid," Locsin later said in a tweet. The minister also vowed to go after Filipino recruiters and government officials for putting the slain Filipina "in harm's way". "I beg you to give her justice. We will go after the Filipino recruiters and government officials who put her in harm's way," Locsin told the Kuwaiti ambassador.

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III said the Philippine government is offended over the killing. "The labor department is deeply saddened and outraged over the violent death of Filipino

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MANILA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Manila Musaed Saleh Ahmad Al-Thwaikh meets Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr in this photo posted by Locsin on his Twitter account.

## World ushers in New Year

SYDNEY/HONG KONG: The world rang in the New Year yesterday with spectacular firework displays from Sydney to Tokyo, though celebrations in Australia were overshadowed by deadly wildfires and the festive mood in Hong Kong and India was dampened by protests. Around a million revellers thronged Sydney harbor and nearby districts to watch more than 100,000 fireworks explode above the city, even as thousands of people along Australia's eastern seaboard sought refuge from the bushfires on beaches.

Sydney decided to press ahead with its

fireworks despite calls by some members of the public for it to be cancelled in solidarity with fire-hit areas in New South Wales, of which the city is the capital. Sydney mayor Clover Moore said planning had begun 15 months ago and that the event also gave a boost to the economy. Some other towns in eastern Australia cancelled their new year celebrations as naval vessels and military helicopters helped firefighters rescue people fleeing the fires, which have turned swathes of New South Wales into a raging furnace.

Elsewhere, revellers from Auckland in New Zealand to Pyongyang, capital of isolated North Korea, welcomed the new year with firework displays. In Japan, people took turns to strike Buddhist temple bells, in accordance with tradition. — Reuters ( See Page 19)



SYDNEY: New Year's Eve fireworks erupt over Sydney's iconic Harbour Bridge and Opera House early today. — AFP

## Scores trapped in Australia by dangerous fires

SYDNEY: Thousands of holidaymakers and locals were bedding down at beaches in fire-ravaged southeast Australia on New Year's Eve after fleeing deadly blazes that ripped through popular tourist areas and cut off several towns. In seaside communities along a 200-km strip of coast, terrified crowds - wrapped in blankets and wearing makeshift facemasks - sought refuge

from the inferno near the water.

Some with boats earlier took to the sea in near-darkness, hoping to find safety, as one of the worst days yet in Australia's months-long bushfire crisis prompted a military deployment to help relief efforts. Three people have died, five more are unaccounted for, and scores of properties were feared destroyed after a brutal 24 hours in which flames reached well-populated towns like Batemans Bay, normally bursting with visitors during Australia's summer holidays.

"We've got literally hundreds, thousands of people up and down the coast, taking refuge on the beaches" and in

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COBARGO, Australia: A man stands amidst rubble after fires devastated this New South Wales town yesterday. — AFP

## Local

# Seoul National University to operate new Jahra Hospital: Health Minister

**Kuwait's Cabinet committed to democracy, constitution**

**KUWAIT:** Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah has revealed that the relevant state bodies had approved a bid of the Seoul National University to operate the new Jahra Hospital. The announcement was made by the health minister during the Cabinet's weekly meeting on Monday, of the ministry's plans for operating the newly-built Jahra Medical City, according to a Cabinet statement. The minister has informed the government that the joint committee for coordination and follow-up of procedures of the Jahra Medical City administration in coordination with the Amiri Diwan and the Ministry of Finance had studied bids submitted by a number of specialized international institutions for the management and operation of the new Jahra Hospital. They concurred that the best and most comprehensive offer was the one submitted by the Seoul National University, he pointed out. He stated that the hospital operation contract would be hammered out by the governments of Kuwait and South Korea.

The new Jahra Medical City is one of the largest healthcare development projects in the Middle East. The project forms a key part of the state's ongoing plans to upgrade national health care and raise the capacity of hospitals by 60 percent. The layout of the new internationally standardized medical complex comprises of eight separate buildings. The most prominent is the main hospital building, which has a total built-up area of 440,000sqm, and rises to 15 floors. The project is valued at 365 million Kuwaiti Dinars (\$1.18 billion) and includes a fully equipped 1,234 bed hospital, a fully equipped dental facility with 115 treatment rooms and a regional health administration building. Furthermore, the hospital will feature a women's center, trauma center, 32 operating suites including two hybrid operating rooms, a hybrid CT operating suite, and a hybrid MRI operating suite. The outpatient facilities have 22 departments with 135 clinics with state of the art equipment which includes a 10 seat hyperbaric chamber, the first multi-seat facility of its kind in Kuwait. Other service buildings include a public car park and staff car park, both accommodating 5,000 cars and two emergency shelters, each for 300 people.

## New year

At the beginning of its meeting at Seif Palace chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Cabinet congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the advent of the new year. The ministers extended sincere congratulations to His Highness Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people on advent of new year. The Cabinet members prayed to God the Almighty to make 2020 a happy year for Kuwait, Arab and Muslim nations. They also wished that in 2020 peace and stability would prevail in the whole world.

## Commitment to democracy

Meanwhile, the government reiterated its commitment to democracy and provisions of Kuwait's constitu-



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

tion in dealing with parliamentary grilling motions. In a press statement following the meeting, the Cabinet said it had studied the grilling motion filed by lawmaker Dr Adel Al-Damkhi against Minister of Social Affairs Ghadeer Aseeri. It noted that it had also assessed the motion's adherence to the relevant constitutional provisions, National Assembly regulations, and the previous constitutional court verdicts. As government believed that ministers' grilling was a right guaranteed by the constitution for each member of the National Assembly, it was fully committed to a democracy that promotes interests of the state and embodies cohesion and unity among all Kuwaitis, the Cabinet stated. MIP Dr Adel Al-Damkhi on Sunday addressed Acting National Assembly Speaker Essa Al-Kandari with a motion to grill Minister of Social Affairs Dr Aseeri, accusing her of disrupting cooperation among authorities and dishonoring her oath. The motion will be on the agenda of the parliamentary session on January 7.

## Neutral zone

In the meantime, the Kuwaiti Cabinet hailed the recently inked agreement with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to resume joint oil production from the partitioned neutral zone on the Kuwaiti-Saudi borders. The Cabinet greatly welcomes the two sisterly countries signing — in Kuwait City on December 24, 2019 — of an appended agreement to agreements of partitioning the neutral zone and delimiting the submerged zone adjacent to the partitioned neutral zone as well as a memorandum of understanding for resuming joint oil production from the neutral zone. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said in a press statement following the Cabinet meeting.

Saleh, also minister of interior, pointed out that the Cabinet noted that these agreements had embodied the distinctive and special fraternal ties between the two Arabian Gulf nations as well as their leaderships and peoples' deep believe in their shared destiny. It affirmed

that the agreements had come in implementation of directives of His Highness the Amir of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his brother the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud as well as His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and his brother Crown Prince of the Kingdom Saudi Arabia, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

The government expressed admiration of the great level of cooperation, understanding, and harmony among political, legal and technical negotiating teams from both sides and their special efforts which helped materialize the vision of the two countries' leaderships. On this occasion, the government congratulated the political leadership in the two countries and their peoples on this milestone, and prayed to God Almighty to help them continue the march of cooperation for achieving common interests, Saleh said. Earlier, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel briefed the Cabinet about the outcome of last week's visit to Kuwait by Saudi Minister of Energy Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al Saud. They pointed out that during this visit the appended agreement to the partitioned neutral zone agreement and the submerged area agreement as well as the MoU of resuming oil production from the neutral zone were hammered out.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet lauded the Saudi security forces' success in derailing a plot to carry out a terrorist operation in the eastern Saudi city of Dammam. Kuwait also backs the measures taken by its sisterly neighbor to maintain its security and stability, the Cabinet said in a press statement following its weekly meeting. On Sunday, the Saudi security command announced killing two terrorists and arresting a third as well as seizing an amount of explosives and live ammunition during a security operation that took place in the eastern city of Dammam a few days ago.

## Deadly attacks

The Cabinet strongly condemned the past few days bloody terror attacks and shootings which left many casualties in several countries across the globe. The Cabinet denounced the Houthi militia Sunday's missile attack on a military parade in the southern Yemeni city of Daleaa, which resulted in the killing and wounding of a number of innocent soldiers and civilians. The Cabinet also strongly condemned the terrorist attack that targeted a military base in northern Burkina Faso, and left dozens of soldiers and civilians dead or injured. It also denounced a stabbing incident near a temple in New York and a shooting inside a church in Texas which left several casualties. Moreover, the Kuwait government condemned the terrorist blast near a checkpoint in the Somali capital of Mogadishu on Saturday, which resulted in the death of a large number of people. It reiterated Kuwait's firm stance against violence and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations regardless of its motives.

Furthermore, the Cabinet extended condolences to leaders of a number of friendly countries for the loss of many lives in the past few days due to natural and man-made disasters. The Cabinet offered sincere condolences to Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi for losing of dozens of lives in a road accident on Saturday. It also condoled with President of Indonesia Joko Widodo for the lives lost in the tragic bus crash in Sumatra Island, in which scores were killed and several others were injured. The Kuwaiti government also expressed its deep sorrow over the death of dozens by the Phanfone typhoon that struck the Philippines last Wednesday. It also extended condolences to Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune for the death of the deputy minister of defense and chief of staff Gaid Saleh. The Cabinet recalled Saleh's prominent role in helping his country regain security and stability. It offered condolences to Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev for the recent passenger plane, in which 12 people were killed and several others were injured. The Cabinet expressed sympathy with families of the victims of all the incidents and wished the wounded people speedy recovery. —KUNA



**RIYADH:** Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah in a group photo with Kuwaiti forces participating in 'Operation Restoration of Hope' in Saudi Arabia. —Defense Ministry photos

## GCC security integral part of Kuwait's security: Minister

**RIYADH:** Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said the security and stability of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are an integral part of the security and

stability of Kuwait. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour made his remarks yesterday while addressing the Kuwaiti forces participating in 'Operation Restoration of Hope' in Saudi Arabia, according to a statement issued by the moral guidance and public relations department of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense. He stressed the importance of harnessing all the capabilities to serve the brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He considered the participation of the Kuwaiti army in the armed forces in Saudi Arabia as a source of pride for every Kuwaiti citizen, and affirming the concept of common destiny, expressing sincere pride and appreciation to them. He also conveyed greetings and appreciation of the Kuwaiti political leadership to the Kuwaiti forces

involved in the 'Operation Restoration of Hope' in Saudi Arabia. He stressed that the political leadership pays great attention to the members of the Kuwaiti army, through its support for everything that would enhance the level of training and qualification, in order to raise the level of performance and readiness. The statement added that Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour and his accompanying delegation have returned to Kuwait, where they were received upon arrival by Chief of the General Staff of the Army Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Khodhr, Deputy Chief of staff of the Army General Sheikh Abdullah Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and Acting Undersecretary of the Defense Ministry Sheikh Fahad Jaber Al-Ali Al-Sabah. —KUNA



**RIYADH:** Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah greets Kuwaiti forces participating in 'Operation Restoration of Hope' in Saudi Arabia.



**RIYADH:** Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah addresses Kuwaiti forces participating in 'Operation Restoration of Hope' in Saudi Arabia.

Local

# Amir receives state officials, Kuwait Airways Chairman

Six new airplanes to start arriving Jan 15, Kuwait Airways chief told Amir

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness also received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Moreover, His Highness Sheikh Sabah received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness then received Kuwait Airways Board Chairman Youssef Al-Jassem, who noted that he was honored to meet His Highness and convey greetings of the corporation's board members and employees to His Highness. Jassem also briefed His Highness the Amir with achievements of Kuwait Airways, including winning awards for the most accurate flight timings in the Middle East, Africa and Europe for three months in 2019. Kuwait Airways, added Jassem, won another award for seat comfort from Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX). The Chairman also told His Highness the Amir that six airplanes of the new fleet will arrive to Kuwait starting January 15, and will continue arriving in May, June, July, August and September. —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.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.— Amiri Diwan 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 Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Kuwait Airways Board Chairman Youssef Al-Jassem.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

## Prime Minister receives officials

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received Dr Meshari Al-Mutairi at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness also received member of

Kuwait jet ski team Major Mohammad Burbayea. Moreover, His Highness received head and members of the National Union of Kuwait Students (NUKS), USA branch. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Dr Meshari Al-Mutairi. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with head and members of the National Union of Kuwait Students (NUKS), USA branch.

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## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A vendor decorates his gift shop ahead of New Year's eve in Kuwait City yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Investments in Turkey, a Kuwaiti success story

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**KUWAIT:** Investors from Kuwait have been vigorously seeking business opportunities in Turkey with most ventures turning out lucrative for both sides. Turkey is a vital destination for Kuwaiti tourists and investors, with 300,000 visiting annually, according to recent Turkish reports. A trip, organized by the Investment Office of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey saw a number of Kuwaiti media outlets to document Kuwait's success in the field of investment and development in Turkey. In a meeting held by the office, on the event of receiving the Kuwaiti media delegation, Project Director at Investment Office of the Presidency of Turkey Abdullah Deniz said that the Turkish economy achieved a huge leap in recent years, ranking 13th worldwide in global development.

Deniz said that Turkey falls within the upper segment of middle-income countries with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$799.54 billion annually, making it a distinct country for investment. He added that his country is a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Group of 20 (G20), which is the eighth largest producer of foodstuffs worldwide and the sixth most popular tourist destination.

Turkey's exports jumped by a huge percentage in recent years, as the Turkish economy shifted from controlling traditional agricultural activities in rural areas to major cities, Deniz mentioned. The incentives for investment in Turkey are in its distinguished strategic location, as it is a bridge of East-West communication and a gateway to European and Central Asian markets, he noted. The continuation of the state in the reform process, especially in the labor law, was a strong attraction for investors, he pointed out.

Meanwhile, Country Advisor at Presidency of Republic of Turkey Investment Office Rahim Albayrak said in a statement that the infrastructure of the Turkish economy was strong, despite the failed coup attempt and the Syrian war that left about 4 million refugees entering Turkey. One of the successes was Kuwait investing in Kuwait Finance House (KFH) in Turkey and the Ritim Istanbul project of Al-Mazaya Holding Company, in addition to Gulf Insurance Group (GIG) in Turkey, he said. Albayrak was grateful for Ambassador of Turkey to Kuwait Aisha Hilal and her embassy staff for organizing this trip, stressing that such visits would enhance cooper-

ation ties between both sides. In turn, Head of Investment Office of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey Arda Ermut stressed in a statement, on the sidelines of a business lunch organized by the Kuwaiti delegation, that temporary political fluctuations do not affect the long-term investment projects of 30 or 40 years. Long-term investors looking for strong basic data in the country, such as geographical location, was a vital advantage to Turkey, Ermut said. Turkey has one of the largest airports worldwide with Turkish Airlines, that can travel to any place, he added. Many international companies take Turkey as the headquarters for management, manufacturing and distribution not only for the Turkish domestic market but for the surrounding markets, especially in the EU, Middle East and North Africa, he explained. Turkey's diverse demographic distinguishes it from other countries, as young people represent most of the population: 30 million, he indicated. Turkey currently is a model for economic development despite the challenges it faces, including the trade deficit, he underlined.

Kuwait Finance House Turkey CEO Ufuk Uyan said that the bank was considered the first Kuwaiti investment and the pioneer of digital banking, celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. Uyan added in a statement, on the sidelines of a meeting with the Kuwaiti media delegation, that the bank provides various Islamic banking services to its Gulf customers, Kuwaitis in particular, as it provides them with 50 percent financing and other facilities. The bank's assets are about \$16 billion, noting that it is currently the 11th among Turkey's banks, he explained.

The percentage of foreign deposits in the bank amounted to 20 percent, half of which is for Kuwaitis, adding that the bank provides its customers with a gold account service, he mentioned. He called on those who wish to buy real estate in Turkey, to do so through the banks in order to prevent fraud or enter into a spiral of problems, as the bank guarantees the completion of the project in case the buyer fails to implement his obligations. Accordingly, General Manager of GIG in Turkey Suleyman Sagiroglu said, on the sidelines of the delegation's visit to the company, that they succeeded despite the global competition in the Turkish insurance market due to the availability of the product and distribution channels. — KUNA



The media delegation attends one of the meetings.

# Kuwait allocates KD 6 million to provide sclerosis, other diseases' medications

## Around 2,000 MS patients in Kuwait, including 500 expats

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** The health ministry allocated nearly KD 6 million to make available multiple sclerosis medicines, in addition to medicines for other diseases, with the aim to provide the best medicines and medical supplies all year round and make sure no shortages occur. The MS medicines cost KD 2.5 million, while KD 1.8 million is for blood disease, hypertension and stroke drugs, in addition to KD 1.4 million for skin and rheumatoid disease medicines as well as those for premature babies. The number of MS cases in Kuwait according to sources is around 2,000, 500 of whom are expats, adding that MS is the most widespread nerve disease in the world and among the main causes of physical disability.

In other news, the health ministry yesterday transferred salaries of its employees who work on an ad hoc basis to the Central Bank of Kuwait to be deposited in

their accounts in various banks. Official sources at the health ministry expected the payments to be made on Sunday due to the New Year holiday. The sources said there is a new procedure to pay workers on the reward system - payments are transferred to banks two days after regular employees receive their salaries. They added the financial department at the health ministry will start this procedure from February.

The sources said salaries of ad hoc workers are related to the ministry's departments, and delays are from their side and not the financial department. They added the reward system is being curtailed to rationalize the health ministry budget. The

reward system mostly concerns administrators, mandoubes and laborers, and they are not in technical jobs.

### Housing projects

Minister of Public Works and State Minister for Housing Affairs Dr Rana Al-Fares met residents of several housing cities yesterday morning to seek their opinions about the current projects with regards to infrastructure and public service buildings in each city, in addition to hearing their complaints and inquiries about the dates of completing contracts. The meeting discussed the demands related to service and occupational aspects, and

requests to extend rent allowances in new Wafra.

As for Mutlaa City, the delayed contracts for public buildings were discussed, along with water towers, sewer stations and the date for receiving construction orders. As for South Sabah Al-Ahmad Residential City, dates for signing infrastructure contracts and coordination with the government department to ensure all services are available when construction is complete were discussed. The number of plots distributed in South Sabah Al-Ahmad is 12,163, and the number of remaining plots are 8,217.

### Embassy safe

Diplomatic sources said the situation around Kuwait Embassy in Baghdad is calm and normal, following the gathering of thousands of protesters in front of the US Embassy's main gate in Baghdad, protesting attacks against bases of the Iraq Hezbollah group. Sources said the Kuwait Embassy is located 4 km away from the US Embassy.



**Kuwait Embassy in Baghdad safe**

local spotlight

## A clean year



By Muna Al-Fuzal  
Muna@kuwaittimes.net

Every New Year, people exchange cards and messages with their friends and families. But we rarely think of those who keep our streets clean - the cleaners who do a lot for us daily throughout the year for little money and appreciation. To all street cleaners, I wish a Happy New Year! I wish you all a better year, and this article describes your condition and my wishes for you in 2020.

The cleaners on the streets work day and night in various places and maintain the clean image of Kuwait. They come to Kuwait through cleaning companies that contract them for meager wages despite the difficult weather.

We see cleaners all day and night in their yellow clothes - they clean the streets and work from dawn until late at night. These are indeed long hours and in different types of weather conditions - extreme heat, cold and rain. Yet, I am surprised by some people who do not see the important work that is being done by street cleaners, and sadly they hunt the opportunity to criticize them or offend them, knowing that if they stopped working for two days, garbage would accumulate in the streets.

I believe that the root of the problem of hygiene in streets and public places is not only in the cleaning process or the cleaners, but the ill manner of people and permissive behaviors and habits of throwing trash or cigarettes from car windows or leaving leftovers in gardens and beaches, as well as neglecting the importance of segregating waste in different boxes.

These are among the habits that are hostile to the cleanliness of public places, so cleaners will continue to suffer a lot, especially during the so-called national holidays, when too much rubbish is thrown and large quantities of water is wasted.

Therefore, the solution lies in the ability to effect change in the behavior of people, and this change comes by increasing environmental awareness and constantly reminding the people of the necessity of discarding waste in the right places designated for it through large and clear warning signs, especially in public parks and streets, while providing a sufficient number of collection containers.

Imposing fines in the event of a violation is important through field monitors. This will lead to good results. In fact, many countries in the world have implemented such punishment by imposing heavy financial penalties on litterers and have achieved great success, such as Singapore, which is one of the cleanest countries in the world because of its laws, in addition to the high level of environmental awareness.

Cleaners' salaries in Kuwait are very low, so kindness of people by giving them a little money or clothes will bring happiness to their hearts. Voluntary campaigns are carried out by the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society and a few NGOs, and some local banks hold annual campaigns to distribute winter clothes, hats and gloves to cleaning and construction workers on the streets and at their workplaces.

These are good efforts, but they need more. The government must improve the conditions of these workers. Workers have to be given specific equipment like masks and gloves to protect them from diseases and germs in the garbage. Also, the cold winter needs heavy clothes, especially since these workers start their work from dawn.

Can you imagine if the cleaners are not present? Garbage will accumulate and bad odors will spread due to the non-removal of waste, and diseases and harmful insects will spread too. All this because of a lack of sanitation workers, who maintain the country's hygiene and health. To these workers, I say Happy New Year, and I hope that your conditions will improve in the New Year.



## Firecrackers sold to New Year celebrators

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** Many countries around the world welcome the New Year in a festive way with noisy parties and fireworks displays. But for many in Kuwait, it is just a simple celebration of food and friendship. Most companies give a holiday to their workers on Jan 1, and fami-



lies, individuals or groups celebrate in their own ways, mostly with sumptuous food, games and parties. Some establishments host fireworks displays, but they are not very elaborate, maybe because the sale of firecrackers is prohibited here. However, Kuwait Times witnessed some vendors selling firecrackers outside the pet market in Rai, mostly to youths.

## Three passengers held for drug smuggling



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** Customs officers at Kuwait International Airport arrested a passenger arriving from London who attempted to smuggle marijuana into Kuwait. Meanwhile, officers at Terminal 5 (T5) found illicit tablets with a female passenger arriving from London, and she was arrested. Another female passenger was arrested at the same terminal after 12 liquid hashish ampoules were found in her possession. The three were taken to the proper authorities for further action.



## Firemen battle feed store blaze



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** Firefighters tackled a blaze reported yesterday in Al-Wafra farms area. Wafra fire station men rushed to the scene



in response to an emergency call, and extinguished the flames which had started in a feed store. No human casualties were reported. Meanwhile, an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.

## KPC sells first shipment ever of 10 ppm diesel

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) announced yesterday its International Marketing Sector has concluded the sale of its first ever shipment of low sulfur diesel with a sulfur content of 10 ppm to be shipped during January 2020. This shipment is considered the first shipment to be sold to the international market concurrent with the start-up of the Clean Fuel Project units in its KNPC refineries. KPC said in a press statement. KPC aims to supply its clients worldwide with the latest specifications that comply with international and environmental requirements.

Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) had announced yesterday that it has completed all operational and logistical preparations to produce low-sulfur ship fuel that meets international specifications. KNPC's executive vice president for projects and spokesman Abdullah Al-Ajmi said that the company will start from Wednesday, the application of a set of requirements and stan-

dards set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), which makes the material compatible with the requirements of the global market.

Ajmi said that IMO had recently decided to reduce the percentage of sulfur in ship fuel from 2.5 percent to 0.5 percent, which is a sharp reduction, the first of its kind in years. He added that this decision put the producers in front of a major challenge, as they had to carry out extensive development of production units to be able to keep pace with the required specifications. He confirmed that KNPC achieved a professional achievement by its success in developing its facilities and making it capable of producing low-sulfur fuel with high environmental and technical specifications that exceeded the required specifications. He stated that the company is considered one of the first global producers who announced their manufacturing ability to produce this type of fuel of high quality and high price value. — KUNA

Legalese

## Happy New Year



By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

I really wish everyone that is celebrating (or not) a Happy New Year. May this New Year be the beginning of good deeds, better connections and a more balanced work life. I know many people are going on a quick holiday to celebrate the New Year; if you are, then enjoy. Those working on New Year's Day, thank you. Here is a brief on questions that are repeated this time of the year.

### Working on New Year's

**Question:** I am working on New Year and New Year's Eve. Am I entitled to overtime?

**Fajer:** Article 68 of Kuwait labor law states: "Fully-paid official holidays are as follows:

- a- Hegira New Year: 1 day
- b- Isra' and Mi'raj day: 1 day
- c- Eid Al-Fitr: 3 days
- d- Waqfat Arafat: 1 day
- e- Eid Al-Adha: 3 days
- f- Prophet's Birthday (Al-Mawlid Al-Nabawi): 1 day
- g- National Day: 1 day
- h- Gregorian New Year: 1 day

In the event where a worker is required to work during any of the above-mentioned holidays, he shall be entitled to double remuneration and an additional day off."

I think the law is extremely clear that you should be compensated with double your daily wage, which is your monthly salary divided by 26, as well as an additional day off. With that said, should you agree to two days off or three days off for working on Eid, it is up to you. The court always looks at what is best for the employees, and some employees prefer off days instead of overtime.

### One day off

**Question:** I understand that in Kuwait, we only have one day off for New Year and not New Year's Eve. Is this correct?

**Fajer:** Yes, as mentioned above, the Gregorian New Year is one day off, but because this year the day off is on a Wednesday, and because Thursday is a day between two off days, many private and public corporations and organizations gave the day off.

I hope the above was helpful. Again, I hope you have a wonderful New Year.

For questions or queries, please email us at [info@tl-legal.com](mailto:info@tl-legal.com).



Captain, 7 crew abducted from Greek tanker in Cameroon port

## India prepares for New Year with new protests against disputed law

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This undated handout image received courtesy of Jung Byung-joon shows damage caused by Typhoon Phanfone outside Kalibo International Airport in Kalibo, the capital of Aklan province. — AFP

# Philippines typhoon toll climbs to 50

## At least 80,000 remain in emergency shelters on New Year eve

**MANILA:** The number of people killed by a powerful storm that pummeled the central Philippines over Christmas has risen to 50, authorities said yesterday, making it the nation's deadliest storm of 2019. Typhoon Phanfone's destructive winds and heavy rains brought down flimsy homes and destroyed commercial buildings mainly in the central island of Visayas, affecting more than two million people.

At least 80,000 remain in emergency shelters and might have to stay until the New Year, given the scale of destruction. "We're sad that some of our countrymen are still in evacuation centers, but we assure them they will continue to receive support until they get back on their feet," national disaster agency spokesman Mark Timbal told AFP. Five people are still

missing after the storm, which also left 143 injured.

The death toll-up from 41 on Sunday-included three sailors who died after their vessel capsized, a policeman electrocuted by a toppled post, and a man struck by a falling tree. Typhoon Phanfone, locally called Ursula, was the 21st cyclone this year to hit the storm-prone Philippines.

Many of the storms wipe out harvests, homes and infrastructure, keeping millions of people in perpetual poverty.

It was the seventh typhoon to strike the Philippines this year and came as millions of people in the predominantly Catholic country were heading home to celebrate Christmas with families.

There was widespread travel disruption with 115

flights cancelled and thousands of people stranded by the suspension of ferries due to storm surges. It was unclear how the deaths occurred, but officials said some were hit by trees, electrocuted or drowned.

"People did not expect that the storm would be that devastating," said disaster agency spokesman Mark Timbal. Though less powerful than other typhoons this year, Phanfone made landfall in some of the country's poorest and least-developed islands. Among them was the island of Samar, which bore the brunt of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, the Philippines' most powerful and deadliest storm on record. It killed more than 6,300 people.

Residents there were clearing debris, with wooden pillars and sheets of corrugated iron roof that were

once homes, scattered across the ground. Men pulled tried to recover fishing boats with tangled or damaged outriggers. Samar resident Virgilo Catayas, whose sibling was among those killed by Haiyan, said he lost another to hypertension when Phanfone hit.

"We can't really do much if that's what happened, we'll have to accept it," he told broadcaster ABS-CBN. "The important thing is to stay strong," he said, sitting next to a casket. Television showed minor damage to the airport at Kalibo, an alternative gateway to the holiday island of Boracay, while the disaster agency said 55 schools had suffered some damage. The agriculture department estimated initial damages of 569 million pesos (\$11.17 million) mostly to fish farms. — Agencies

## Thatcher approved Aquino asylum request: Archives

**LONDON:** British prime minister Margaret Thatcher granted Corazon Aquino's request for asylum at the height of the uprising that swept her to power in the Philippines, according to newly declassified files released yesterday.

Aquino headed the four-day 1986 People Power Revolution that ended the 21-year rule of totalitarian president Ferdinand Marcos. He had declared victory in a snap election tainted by fraud allegations.

During the turmoil, Aquino sought sanctuary in the British embassy or the ambassador's residence in Manila, files released by Britain's National Archives indicated. But Britain's protection was ultimately not needed as Marcos stepped down the following day and the Aquino government was officially recognized. The asylum request was in a Downing Street file on Britain's relations with the Philippines spanning from 1981 to 1995.

### Urgent request

On the evening of February 24, 1986, Foreign Office diplomat Len Appleyard wrote to Charles Powell, Thatcher's private secretary for foreign affairs. He said Aquino had asked whether Britain would be prepared to offer sanctuary in the British embassy or residence at 8:00 am local time the following morning-midnight in Britain. Appleyard said Aquino had rejected sanctuary with the Americans and the Japanese but turned to the British "because they are friendly and reliable".

It was thought the request was a contin-



MANILA: In this file photo taken on January 26, 1988 Philippines President Corazon Aquino (center), outgoing armed forces chief General Fidel Ramos (left) and new armed forces chief General Renato de Villa attend the turnover rites on June 26, 1988 at the Philippine military headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo in Manila. — AFP

gency in case the situation turned ugly. Appleyard said Aquino had widespread support and was "almost certainly deprived of the presidency by fraud", while the move would ensure warm relations with the likely next government. But Britain feared it could not effectively guarantee her safety and the ambassador's residence would be "impossible to defend" against government forces.

"The residence would become the focus for 'massive demonstrations of support' by her backers and opponents alike, with the risk of armed clashes, Appleyard wrote.

Aquino would in effect try to conduct a provisional government from the residence and therefore Britain would be involved in the country's internal politics. Britain's foreign minister at the time, Geoffrey Howe, considered any offer of sanctuary as an "illusory gesture" which could drag Britain

into Philippine internal affairs.

### Thatcher approval

But Powell swiftly replied later that evening, with Thatcher's approval "to offer such refuge as we have", but warned: "For obvious reasons we cannot guarantee Mrs Aquino's safety. 'But we would not deny her what refuge we can offer if, on reflection she maintains her request.' Ultimately, Marcos quit at around 9:00 pm on February 25. Relations between Aquino and Thatcher appeared to be warm in the following years.

The files contained a September 25, 1987 letter from the president to the prime minister thanking her for the "thoughtful gift" of a book on the history of Downing Street.

Thatcher, who left power in 1990, died in 2013 aged 87. Aquino remained as president until 1992. She died aged 76 in 2009. — AFP

## Islamist militants kill 20 in attack in eastern Congo

**GOMA, Democratic Republic of Congo:** Islamist militants have killed 20

people in an attack on a village in eastern Congo, a regional official and a local human rights group said on Monday, the latest in a 60-day counter-offensive that has killed nearly 200 civilians. The attack occurred in Apetina, in a remote forested area a few miles from the Ugandan border where attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a Ugandan Islamist group, have increased since Oct 30, when the army launched a campaign to root them out.

Democratic Republic of Congo President Felix Tshisekedi has said the campaign has dismantled nearly all of the ADF's sanctuaries, but attacks continue unabated. Earlier this month, 22 were killed in ambushes on two villages in the same region.

"There was a raid by ADF rebels in Apetina on Sunday night. These rebels killed 20 people and burned down eight houses," said Donat Kibwana, the administrator of Beni territory.

He said that the army was alerted to the attack but arrived after the killings had occurred. CEPADHO, a human rights group, also said that 18 had been killed. The Congolese government has blamed the ADF for attacks going back years, including dozens of night-time

massacres since 2014 that have killed hundreds of civilians. But repeated military operations have failed to fully eradicate the group.

The recent surge in violence has complicated efforts to stamp out an Ebola outbreak in the area. Infections have started to rise in areas health workers have been unable to access because of insecurity.

The US Treasury this month imposed sanctions on six members of the ADF, including its leader Musa Baluku. Islamic State has claimed some ADF attacks this year, but researchers say there is a lack of hard evidence linking the two groups.

There have been demonstrations in the city of Beni, where local people accuse the UN peacekeeping force MONUSCO of failing to protect them. The ADF began as an Islamist rebellion hostile to Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. It fell back into eastern DRC in 1995 and appears to have halted raids inside Uganda. Its recruits today are people of various nationalities. In a separate incident in eastern DR Congo on Monday, "armed bandits" attacked a base used by a Chinese-owned gold mine, killing four people, the military said.

The raid happened in Irumu district in the northeastern province of Ituri, said Lieutenant Jules Ngongo, the army's provincial spokesman. Two soldiers, a policeman and a driver for the mine were killed, he said. "The assailants have not been completely identified but they must be armed bandits who look for supplies during the year-end festivities," Ngongo said. — Agencies

International

# Syrian refugees facing tough winter conditions in Idlib

## Turkey repeats it will not evacuate posts in Syria's Idlib

**IDLIB, Syria:** Displaced Syrians escaping from attacks on civilians by the Bashar Al-Assad regime and Russian forces are facing harsh winter conditions in Idlib, a de-escalation zone in northwestern Syria.

Sarot camp's residents struggling with flooding and mud due to heavy rainfall, are waiting for their area to be cleaned and their basic needs to be met. Aerial footage of the camp taken by Anadolu Agency Video News shows people trying to cope in the water, mud and cold.

Sarot camp's director said that it was the best place they could find to locate the camp. Complaining about the situations in the camp, one of the residents, Subhiyye Birro said: "We didn't know where the bombing came from. Everywhere was bombed. We ran away with the clothes on us. We need everything here. We want everything we need from our God. Stoves, diesel oil, clothes, food and some drink. We need everything." "I have two children. Nights are freezing. We need a stove and diesel oil," Birro added.

In September 2018, Turkey and Russia agreed to turn Idlib into a de-escalation zone in which acts of aggression are expressly prohibited. Since then, more than 1,300 civilians have been killed in attacks by the regime and Russian forces in the de-escalation zone as the cease-fire continues to be violated.

It is "out of the question" for Turkey to evacuate its military observation posts in Syria's Idlib, Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said yesterday, after Russian and Syrian forces intensified their bombardment of targets in the northwestern province. Turkey has 12 such posts in Idlib, and at home it hosts some 3.7 million Syrian refugees, the largest refugee population in the world. It fears another wave from the region, where up to 3 million Syrians live in the last significant rebel-held swathe of territory after a nearly nine year civil war. Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad has vowed to recapture Idlib, prompting a recent wave of refugees towards Turkey's border. —Reuters



**IDLIB, Syria:** Members of the Syrian Civil Defence, also known as the White Helmets, search for survivors following an air-strike on the flashpoint town of Maaret Al-Numan in Syria's southern Idlib governorate on Monday night. —AFP

## Lebanon neighbors welcome Ghosn, activists in uproar

**BEIRUT:** Lebanese neighbors of embattled former Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn have welcomed his sudden return from Japan, but anti-government protesters accused the ex-tycoon of belonging to a corrupt elite. In an upper-class district of the Lebanese capital, traffic appeared normal in front of the pink-colored town house said to be the ex-auto tycoon's base in the country.

AFP was not immediately able to confirm whether Ghosn was inside the house, where the pale blue shutters had been flung open but a black steel gate was firmly shut. The 65-year-old Brazil-born businessman has said he escaped "injustice" in Japan, where he was on bail awaiting trial over financial misconduct charges. On the street corner, a shop owner in his fifties named Rene said he was delighted Ghosn had returned for New Year's Eve.

"Injustice is unacceptable," said Rene, who said the business tycoon had been a guest of honor at his son's high school graduation.

"They did him wrong. A person is innocent until proven guilty, not the other way around," he added quietly as his wife sat nearby. "Japan cannot treat like this a person who took over an indebted auto company and turned it around to make profits and become one of the world's leading firms."

### 'Huge respect'

Many Lebanese view Ghosn as a symbol of their country's large diaspora and a prime example of Lebanese entrepreneurial genius, and were shocked by his sudden arrest in November 2018. Ghosn was out on bail after 130 days in a Japanese detention center, but his flight to Lebanon has dumbfounded even his chief lawyer in Japan. He faces charges of deferring part of his salary until after his retirement and concealing this from shareholders, as well as syphoning off millions in Nissan cash for his own purposes. Journalists gathered in coats and woolly hats outside the pink house in Beirut yesterday saw a security guard rushing out of the premises on a motorbike.

An unidentified man with greying hair approached the house and slipped a letter through the bars of the gate. And soon after, two vehicles belonging to the security forces pulled up and a high-ranking officer



**BEIRUT:** This picture taken yesterday, shows a Lebanese internal security forces vehicle parked outside a house identified by court documents as belonging to former Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn in a wealthy neighborhood of the Lebanese capital Beirut. —AFP

stepped inside the premises briefly before returning to the street.

In the building next door, a blonde woman in her fifties who asked to remain anonymous said she was appalled at the handling of Ghosn's case in Japan.

"They cannot treat him this way," she said. "We, his neighbors, have huge respect for him. For the Lebanese, he is a prime example of success." On Twitter, television show host Ricardo Karam defended the former auto executive.

"Carlos Ghosn is back to freedom on New Year's Eve," he said. "Every human being deserves human rights and a chance to tell the truth out loudly. Congrats to humanity!"

### 'Enough thieves'

Ghosn has consistently denied all charges against him, while he and his lawyers have repeatedly voiced fears he would not get a fair trial in Japan. But elsewhere on social media, Lebanese activists said Ghosn's return was the last straw for a country suffering a twin political and economic crisis.

Lebanese are facing a grinding dollar shortage even as politicians argue over a new cabinet, six weeks into unprecedented protests against a political elite deemed inept and corrupt.

Protesters of all political and confessional backgrounds have accused the country's leaders of syphoning off public funds. "Carlos Ghosn has suddenly befallen us, as if the country didn't already have enough thieves," Ali Mourad, an assistant professor at the Beirut Arab University, wrote on Facebook. Film director Lucien Bourjeily said he was not surprised Ghosn had sought out Lebanon's justice system.

Ghosn "said in his statement that he escaped the 'rigged' Japanese justice system," Bourjeily wrote on Twitter. "He then came to the comfort of the 'efficient' Lebanese justice system that never ever put a politician in jail for corruption even though billions of public funds are embezzled yearly," he said.

Musician Ziyad Sahhab wrote on Facebook that Ghosn had returned to "an environment incubating thieves." "We're demanding the return of stolen funds, not those who stole it," he said. —AFP

## N Africans claiming to be innocent migrants held in Yemen prison

**TAIZ, Yemen:** Dozens of would-be North African migrants held in the central Prison in Taiz, south of Yemen, want to return to their homeland, saying that poverty forced them to leave. 78 Africans including three women who set out from the Horn of Africa, mainly from Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, hoping for a better life ended up in al-Dabab district jail in western Taiz.

The migrants have been held in prison for three months and say they travelled through Yemen seeking refuge and work in other countries. The Yemeni authorities said they had to put the migrants in Taiz prison as there was no other appropriate shelter for them. They migrants share their food with other Yemeni prisoners. One north African migrant said they did not commit any crime that requires them to be imprisoned.

"We receive daily promises to get us out of prison without interest. We are tired and want to return to our families and homes," Abu Zaid said. "We came to Yemen as a transit station to Saudi Arabia, in search of livelihood, and dreamed of a life of comfort and reassurance, before we ended up in this prison," he added. An African woman who is also being held in Taiz prison said they were unaware that there is a war in Yemen. She said "Our goal was to enter Saudi Arabia in search of work."

"I want nothing but to return to my country and embrace my family," she added. War-ravaged Yemen is suffering from the conflict between regional powers. It also sees an irregular influx of migrants trying to reach Saudi Arabia. Authorities claimed the African migrants illegally entered Yemen to join Houthi rebels fighting Yemeni government forces. —Reuters

## Congo's veteran president set to run anew in 2021

**BRAZZAVILLE, Congo:** Congolese President Denis Sassou Nguesso has been chosen by his party to run again for the top job in 2021, having already led the central African country for a total of 35 years. During its congress in Brazzaville overnight Monday, his Congolese Party of Labour (PCT) unanimously named Sassou Nguesso, 76, as its candidate for president. His re-election in 2016 sparked violence in a country where most of the five million people live below the poverty line despite huge oil reserves.

"We said the choice of Denis Sassou Nguesso is an inevitable choice," top ally Leonidas Mottom told AFP.

"It's the choice of change in continuity, it's the choice of stability and the choice of peace," said Mottom, the party's deputy leader. The party's outgoing secretary general, Pierre Ngolo, said the 2,588 PCT congress participants reappointed Sassou Nguesso as head of the central committee in addition to naming him as their candidate in the 2021 presidential elections. According to the constitution, which was changed in 2015, Sassou has the right to run again for the presidency in 2021 and for a last time in 2026. On Thursday, the main opposition group, the Pan-African Union for Social Democracy (UPADS), said conditions were not right for Congo to organize elections in 2021.

UPADS instead proposed a transition and an election in 2023 without Sassou Nguesso on the ballot. The PCT, which on Tuesday marked its 50th anniversary as a party, named 727 new members to its central committee during its congress from December 27-30. They in turn elected Pierre Moussa, 78, as secretary general for a five-year term, replacing Ngolo, 65, who is also president of the Senate. Moussa is an economist by training who worked for international financial institutions such as the World Bank.

Moussa, who served as cabinet minister several times between 1997 and 2012, was also president of the CEMAC, the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa, between 2012 and 2017. Sassou Nguesso first came to power in February 1979 and headed a single-party regime for 12 years. Under pressure, political pluralism was introduced in 1991 and the following year Sassou Nguesso lost presidential elections. —AFP

## Turkish archeologists continue excavation work on oldest shipwreck

**ANKARA:** Turkish archeologists are continuing excavation work with the participation of international scientists on a sunken merchant ship dating back to the bronze age. The shipwreck was found in 2018 lying on the bottom of Turkey's southern coast near Antalya.

Turkish officials said it is the oldest commercial shipwreck that has ever been discovered in the world. The striking find in the depths of the Mediterranean Sea has been described as "the Gobeklipe (the world's oldest known temple) of underwater archaeology" by archaeologists. The 14-meter (46-foot) shipwreck was discovered by an underwater research team from Akdeniz University in Antalya, southern Turkey.

Initially, a scientific article about the 3,600-year-old wreck was published with evidence. The discovery was later announced by Governor Munir Karalioglu in April 2018. Within the scope of a five-year project related to the shipwreck, excavations are being carried out with the participation of international archaeologists from the International Institute of Nautical Archeology, Texas A&M University and Oxford University under the supervision of underwater physicians.

Historical findings extracted from a depth of about 50 meters were taken to the Antalya Conservation and Repair Laboratory in the Antalya Museum. The historical artifacts which also excites foreign scientists will be exhibited in the underwater archeology museum planned to be built in Kemer district.

Dr. Hakan Oniz, head of Akdeniz University's Underwater Research Center said the shipwreck



dates back to 200 years before the previous oldest wreck in the world.

"After the scientific works, it has been confirmed to be the oldest excavated shipwreck in the world carrying commercial cargo," said Oniz. The Professor said excavation works started this summer after being given permission by Turkish authorities. "We identified the location where the remains of the wreck spread, or rather the area where the shiploads spread. The area was unearthed, we reached the historical artifacts," he noted. "We have found more

than 100 pieces mostly dating back to 1600-1500 BC and which consist of copper ingots probably extracted from mines in Cyprus," he added.

The Merchant ship is believed to have sunk due to a storm it hit while sailing from Cyprus to the island of Crete or the Aegean Sea 3600 years ago.

According to the first findings, the main load of the shipwreck was copper ingots.

At the same time, the ship was probably carrying one of the world's first and earliest industrial products. —Reuters

## International

# Captain, 7 crew abducted from Greek tanker in Cameroon port

## Five Greeks, two Filipinos and a Ukrainian part of a 28-member crew aboard

**ATHENS:** Armed men staged a night raid on a Greek oil tanker anchored in a Cameroonian port and abducted eight crewmen, including the vessel's Greek captain, the merchant marine ministry and the ship's owner said yesterday. The five Greeks, two Filipinos and a Ukrainian were part of a 28-member crew aboard the Happy Lady in the port of Limbe, near the economic capital Douala, the ministry said in a statement.

"An armed group boarded the tanker and ordered eight crew members including the 45-year-old captain to disembark," a representative of owner Eastern Mediterranean Athens (EMA) told AFP, requesting anonymity. One crewman, a Greek national, was receiving treatment at a local Cameroonian hospital for a wound to the ankle by a stray bullet, port police said in a statement.

"Merchant Marine Minister Yannis Plakiotakis... is following developments closely, along with the Greek foreign ministry and the oil tanker's operator," the merchant marine ministry statement said.

The attack occurred at around 11:30 pm (2230 GMT) on Monday, the EMA representative said, adding that there was no exchange of fire as the crew was not armed. Cameroonian authorities have not confirmed the attack, the third such incident in a month, of which two targeted Greek vessels.

Piracy has disrupted the operations of sub-Saharan Africa's two main oil producers-Nigeria and Angola-and severely disrupted international maritime transport essential to the continent, costing billions of dollars.

### Third incident in a month

The Gulf of Guinea, which stretches some 5,700 kilo-

meters (3,500 miles) from Senegal to Angola, has become the new world epicenter of piracy, lootings and kidnappings for ransom, especially along the Nigerian coast. Pirates sometimes divert ships for several days, long enough to plunder the cargo and demand huge ransoms before freeing the crew.

From January to September, 82 percent of maritime kidnappings in the world occurred in the Gulf of Guinea, according to the International Maritime Bureau. Few of the attacks are so close to shore as yesterday's, however. Pirates raided another Greek oil tanker, the Elka Aristotele, in November around 10 nautical miles off the Togolese capital Lome, capturing four sailors. They released three of the men on December 13, but one died in captivity. An investigation is still under way, but "it appears his death was not a result of actions by the hostage-takers but of illness," the tanker's shipbuilder said at the time.

Pirates attacked four ships in the harbor of the Gabon capital Libreville on the night of December 21, killing a captain and kidnapping four Chinese workers whose fate remains unknown.

Despite such headline-grabbing incidents, regional navies like Nigeria's point to a decline in attacks since 2018 and say increased international cooperation, better resources and more assertive patrols are helping. Numerous exercises with Western navies have brought some progress along with better cross-border cooperation after leaders from the region agreed to bolster the fight against piracy in 2013. Much of the problem originates in the Niger Delta where the region's vast oil wealth has failed to trickle down to local populations and widespread poverty has stirred unrest. Pirates emerge from the



Armedmen abducted eight crewmen, including the vessel's Greek captain at Cameroonian port, the merchant marine ministry and the ship's owner said yesterday. — AFP

creeks and swamps in high-powered speedboats to raid passing ships, kidnap crews and spirit them back to Nigeria's shores. Tactics have shifted over the past decade

as a fall in the oil price and tighter regulation has seen criminal gangs switch from stealing cargoes of crude to abducting sailors for ransom. — AFP

## Prince William unveils prize for climate innovation

**LONDON:** Prince William yesterday announced what was described as "the most prestigious environment prize in history" to encourage new solutions to tackling climate change.

The Earthshot Prize will be awarded to five people every year over the next decade, and aims to provide at least 50 answers to some of the greatest problems facing the planet by 2030.

They include promoting new ways of addressing climate change and issues surrounding energy, nature and biodiversity, the oceans, air pollution and fresh water. The prize, inspired by US president John F. Kennedy's ambitious "Moonshot" lunar program in the 1960s, promises "a significant financial award", a statement said. William, a grandson of Queen Elizabeth II and second in line to the throne after his father Prince Charles, said the Earth was "at a tipping point" and faced a "stark choice".

"Either we continue as we are and irreparably damage our planet or we remember our unique power as human beings and our continual ability to lead, innovate and problem-solve.

"Remember the awe-inspiring civilizations that we have built, the life-saving technology we have created, the fact that we have put a man on the moon. People can achieve great things. "The next 10 years present us with one of our greatest tests—a decade of action to repair the Earth," he said.

The award, which will be launched later next year and be bestowed from 2021, is open to individuals as well as to communities and businesses. It has the backing of conservation campaigners, groups and scientists, including the veteran British natural history broadcaster David Attenborough.

"The spirit of the Moonshot can guide us today as we confront the serious challenges we face on Earth," Attenborough said in a film to mark the launch. "This year Prince William and a global alliance launch the most prestigious environment prize in history... designed to motivate and inspire a new generation of thinkers, leaders and dreamers to think differently."

Both William's father and his grandfather, Prince Philip, have campaigned for environmental causes and against the illegal trade in wildlife around the world.

The young royal is hoping to build on their work through the prize, which will initially be run by his and his wife's own charitable foundation. — AFP

## Cyprus defends courts after British teen convicted over rape claim

**NICOSIA:** Cyprus defended its judiciary yesterday, after Britain expressed concern over a Cypriot court finding a British teenager guilty of falsely claiming she was gang-raped. The Cyprus "government has full confidence in the judiciary and the courts... which should be strictly left to enforce the laws," government spokesman Kyriacos Koushos said in a statement.

His remarks came after the British Foreign Office said it was "seriously concerned about the fair trial guarantees" of a British woman convicted of "public mischief" in a Cyprus court on Monday. The 19-year-old said she was gang-raped by 12 Israeli tourists at a hotel in Ayia Napa in July. She later withdrew her complaint but said she had been pressured by Cyprus police. The accused Israelis, aged 15 to 18, were released without charge after the woman was arrested on suspicion of "making a false statement about an imaginary crime". The judge discredited her testimony at the Famagusta District Court in Paralimni in

southeast Cyprus on Monday. "Statements you have given were false," he told the woman in remarks translated by an interpreter. Defence lawyers for the woman cited "many violations" in the right to a fair trial and vowed to appeal at the Supreme Court. A British Foreign Office spokesman said the case was "deeply distressing" and that it would raise the case with Cypriot authorities.

British legal aid group Justice Abroad, which is supporting the woman, said the defense would take the case to the European Court of Human Rights if necessary. The woman faces up to a year in prison and a fine of about 1,700 euros. Sentencing was adjourned until January 7.

The Cyprus government would "not intervene in cases heard by the competent courts," said Koushos, adding that authorities would not comment further on a pending case. The case has caused controversy in Cyprus and abroad, with some Twitter users calling for a boycott of the popular holiday destination. Two of the Mediterranean island's former top prosecutors and an ex-justice minister have called on Attorney General Costas Clerides to drop charges against the teenager.

Alecos Markides, a former attorney general, said prosecuting the teenager was not in the public interest and was damaging the image of Cyprus. A European Union member state. "This rigidity of the court has provoked an international reaction," he told local radio. Clerides said in a statement it remained a matter for the courts to decide and any intervention would constitute judicial "interference". — AFP



A British teenager accused of falsely claiming she was raped by Israeli tourists, covers her face as she arrives for her trial at the Famagusta District Court in Paralimni in eastern Cyprus, on Monday. — AFP



TOKYO: Elderly and middle-aged people exercise with wooden dumbbells during a health promotion event to mark Japan's "Respect for the Aged Day" at a temple in Tokyo's Sugamo district, an area popular among the Japanese elderly, Japan. — Reuters

## Rising homelessness to ageing population: Five challenges facing cities in 2020

**LONDON:** The world is seeing the biggest wave of urban growth in history with the United Nations expecting almost 70 percent of people globally to be living in urban areas by 2050, up from 56 percent today. The shift is creating significant challenges for cities around the world, from tackling worsening air pollution in New Delhi to keeping women safe on public transport in Harare.

### Here are five modern-day pressures cities will face in 2020:

**1. HOMELESSNESS IN LONDON** - From London to San Francisco, rising rents and a shortage of affordable housing have fuelled the number of homeless people living on city streets.

In London alone, rough sleeping rose by 18 percent over the last year, hitting a decade high of 8,855 people - the majority of whom were new to bedding down in parks or doorways, according to official data released in June.

The government has pledged to deliver an additional 250,000 affordable homes by March 2022, while in December a global charity appeal saw more than 2,000 people sleep out on London's iconic Trafalgar square to raise awareness of the problem.

**2. SINGAPORE'S AGEING POPULATION** - As people live longer, the World Health Organization predicts that one in five - 2 billion people - will be aged 60 or older by 2050, double that of 2015.

Singapore, the world's second-fastest ageing society after South Korea, according to the United Nations (UN), is being seen as a test case on how to help greying citizens live well.

Through better urban design and friendlier public spaces - like allotment garden schemes - it aims to rekindle a sense of community and boost mental health.

**3. WOMEN'S SAFETY ON TRANSPORT IN HARARE** - Across Zimbabwe, rapid population growth has led to rising demand for public transport but that has come at the cost of women increasingly being harassed on buses and unlicensed taxis, according to police officials.

Many women do not report such incidents for fear of not being taken seriously, campaigners say.

A 2018 Thomson Reuters Foundation survey of 1,000 women in five of the world's biggest commuter cities - London, New York, Mexico City, Tokyo and Cairo - found 52 percent cited safety as their top concern while using transport. In other African cities like Nairobi, women are setting up female taxi companies to ferry women safely around the city and avoid harassment on others forms of transport.

**4. AIR POLLUTION IN NEW DELHI** - New Delhi and other nearby cities in north India have been struggling with some of the worst air pollution levels on earth, prompting local governments to shut schools and declare health emergencies in November.

Emissions from power plants are one of the biggest causes of the chronic smog now seen in New Delhi and some other Indian cities.

Last month India's federal pollution regulator warned local coal-fired plants that they could be shut down for failing to comply with deadlines to meet emissions standards.

**5. FLOODING IN NEW ORLEANS** - By 2050, more than 570 low-lying coastal cities will face projected sea level rises of at least 0.5 meters which could put over 800 million people at risk from storm surges and other impacts, the C40 Cities network estimates.

For example, the Louisiana city of New Orleans loses the equivalent of a football field to rising sea level every 100 minutes, according to its mayor LaToya Cantrell.

A project funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Wetlands aims to build up buffers such as wetlands near the city, to reduce the energy and surges of powerful storms like Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the area in 2005. — Reuters

## Transgender Germans demand compensation for sterilization

**BERLIN:** When German authorities insisted Tsepo Bollwinkel get sterilized in order to be legally considered a man 25 years ago, he was "eager to follow the rules, even if they sounded insane".

Now Bollwinkel, a 58-year-old empowerment coach, wants compensation for himself and potentially thousands of other trans people who underwent mandatory sterilization to change their sex on identity documents before legal reform in 2011. Back in 1994, "I felt grateful for that opportunity because it was important for me to get legal recognition," said Bollwinkel, who is also campaigning for a government apology, backed by Bundesverband Trans\* (BvT), a trans advocacy group.

Today Bollwinkel's goal is to make Germans aware of the country's dark history of sterilisation - dating back to the Nazi era - and to acknowledge the rights of trans people, despite conservative attitudes among many voters and lawmakers. Several European nations still require trans people to undergo surgery and sterilization, or be diagnosed with a mental disorder, to have their new gender legally recognized. Transgender Europe advocacy group says. Sweden became the first country in the world in 2018 to offer compensation of 225,000 krona (\$23,882) to hundreds of trans people who had to undergo sterilization to get their change of gender recognized - and it wants Germany to follow.

"I am not interested in money," Bollwinkel told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "But in Germany, like in other European societies, recognition has to come in the shape of euros to be considered real."

The justice ministry declined to comment. The interior ministry did not respond to requests for comment. One German trans woman who was sterilized almost 30 years ago said the law robbed her of her chance to start a family - a choice being made by a growing number of trans people who have transitioned and retained their reproductive organs.

"They just could not conceive that a man could get pregnant or that a woman could make another woman pregnant," said the woman who is in her late 60s and declined to be named.

"They stole that from us ... There was no justification." Sweden called on Germany last year to set up a national compensation fund for trans people who were coerced into sterilization or unwanted gender reassignment surgery. — Reuters

## Russia, Ukraine mulling new prisoner swap

**KIEV:** Ukraine and Russia are working towards a new prisoner exchange, just two days after swapping 200 captives, Kiev said yesterday after leaders Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky spoke on the phone. The two countries "agreed to immediately start agreeing lists (of names) for freeing Ukrainians, including Crimeans, who are in Crimea and in Russia, as well as Russians in Ukraine," the Ukrainian presidency said in a statement.

The news comes after a massive exchange of prisoners on Sunday, with 12 Ukrainian soldiers and 64 civilians flown to Kiev. Ukraine also handed over people in its custody to pro-Russian separatists, including five riot police-men suspected of shooting protesters during a pro-Western uprising in 2014.

Zelensky said on Sunday that Kiev is working on returning those detained in Crimea, without elaborating on numbers. Moscow annexed the Crimean peninsula in 2014, shortly after the Maidan uprising ousted pro-Moscow president Viktor Yanukovich. The Kremlin, which also provided a readout of the phone call yesterday, remarked on the "positive" Sunday exchange but made no mention of any similar swap being planned. — AFP



## International

# India prepares for New Year with new protests against disputed law

## Bangladesh shuts telecoms along India border over security

**NEW DELHI:** Thousands of Indians are set to ring in the New Year by holding protests against a citizenship law, despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi's attempts to dampen demonstrations that have run for nearly three weeks. India has been rocked by the protests since Dec. 12, when the government passed legislation easing the way for non-Muslim minorities from the neighboring Muslim-majority nations of Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan to gain Indian citizenship.

Combined with opposition to a proposed national register of citizens, many Indians fear the move will discriminate against the minority Muslim community and chip away at the country's secular constitution. Protesters plan at least three demonstrations in New Delhi, the capital, including the area of Shaheen Bagh, where hundreds of residents have blocked a major highway for 18 days.

Poetry recitals and speeches are planned by organizers at a protest outside New Delhi's Jamia Millia University, which was stormed by police this month. "New Year's resolution to defend the constitution," read the schedule for another protest planned in New Delhi, now in the grip of its second coldest winter in more than a century.

Police said they planned to deploy additional forces in New Delhi on New Year's Eve, with traffic curbs imposed in some parts of the capital. "All precautionary measures are in place," said police official Chinmoy Biswal, who oversees the southeastern part of the city that includes Shaheen Bagh and Jamia Millia

University. "Recently, there have been no incidents. So we hope things will remain fine," he told Reuters.

In the southern city of Hyderabad, at least two small groups of demonstrators have been organizing flash protests, to skirt police restrictions on larger gatherings. Typically, half a dozen demonstrators pop up in public places, such as malls and coffee shops, holding up placards and encouraging passersby to join in, a member of one of the groups, which has held 11 protests, told Reuters.

"Everyday, we are doing something, somewhere," said the person, who sought anonymity for reasons of security, adding that another protest is planned to be staged in the night. Street-side poetry recitals, stand-up comedy, and music performances are also planned in the financial capital of Mumbai and the eastern city of Kolkata.

All three cities have seen large, peaceful protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Citizens' Register (NRC), which were part of the election manifesto of Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist party. But some protests have turned violent, particularly in the populous northern state of Uttar Pradesh, and at least 25 people have been killed in clashes with police since early December.

Initially caught off guard by the scale of the protests, Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has scrambled to douse public anger, with Modi declaring that there had been no discussions on the NRC, contradicting party

colleagues. The BJP has also launched an effort, backed by a social media campaign, to explain that the CAA is not discriminatory and is needed to help non-Muslim minorities persecuted in the three neighboring countries.

Meanwhile, Muslim-majority Bangladesh has ordered telecom operators to shut down services along the border with India, citing security concerns over Modi's new citizenship law which critics say discriminates against Muslims. Mobile network coverage has been suspended for a one-kilometer-wide band along the border with India until further notice "for the sake of the country's security in the current circumstances", officials said in a statement released late on Monday.

The move stems from concerns that Indian Muslims might seek to flee to Bangladesh, two officials told Reuters. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss the measure. The Indian law gives citizenship rights to Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Jains, Buddhists and Parsis from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan who settled in India before 2015 - but not to Muslims. Critics fear it is a prelude to a broader National Register of Citizens in which residents would be asked to prove their citizenship, which activists say could put poor Muslim families lacking documentation at a disadvantage. India's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Bangladesh's move. The two countries share a fertile border of more than 4,000 km (2,500 miles). Millions of Bangladeshis live



**NEW DELHI:** An activist of the Communist Party of India (CPI) holds a placard during a demonstration against India's new citizenship law in New Delhi on Monday. — AFP

alongside the frontier, mainly engaged in cross-border trade of medicines, agricultural commodities, milk and livestock.

"The decision to suspend mobile services could impact about 10 million people living on the border," said a senior official at a mobile phone company in Dhaka.

Indian news website ThePrint on Monday reported that Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had sought a written assurance

from the Modi government that it would not expel illegal immigrants across the border.

Hasina's office was not immediately available to comment on the news report. Earlier this month, Bangladesh's Foreign Ministry said one senior diplomat was attacked during a protest in India's northeastern state of Assam, which shares a border with Bangladesh and has the highest incidence of illegal immigration from its neighbor. — Reuters

## Pakistani media mogul rejects rape charges by filmmaker

**ISLAMABAD:** The chief executive of one of Pakistan's most influential newspapers has denied accusations he raped an acclaimed filmmaker, in a case that has spotlighted sexual abuse targeting men and added momentum to the country's fledgling #MeToo movement.

Director Jamshed Mahmood Raza took to social media over the weekend to allege that Dawn newspaper's Hameed Haroon raped him 13 years ago. In October, Raza first described the assault publicly on Twitter but referred to the alleged perpetrator as a "powerful person in our media world".

Haroon—who hails from one of Pakistan's wealthiest and most influential families—issued a fierce denial in Dawn, the



**ISLAMABAD:** The chief executive of one of Pakistan's most influential newspapers has denied accusations he raped an acclaimed filmmaker, in a case that has spotlighted sexual abuse targeting men and added momentum to the country's fledgling #MeToo movement.

country's most popular English daily, late Monday, calling the accusations "simply untrue and intentionally fabricated". "I categorically deny the allegation of rape leveled

against me," said Haroon in a statement. Raza later slammed Haroon's comments, saying the statement was "nothing but a slap to all us survivors". The allegations have again stirred controversy in the deeply conservative country, where most discussions about sex and abuse are considered taboo.

Some voices have called for accountability, while others dismissed notions of male-on-male sexual assault. "I have a question: how can a grown man be raped by another individual? Couldn't they have fought him off," tweeted writer Salman Rashid. Others disagreed. "Rape is not only about physical power: it is about power in general. If a powerful person coerces you to have sex with them, that is rape," wrote Nida Kirmani on Twitter.

The #MeToo and #Timesup campaigns have gone global since allegations of sexual misconduct by Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein were made in 2017, sparking an avalanche of accusations against other powerful men. However, the movement has been slow to catch on in Pakistan, where women have fought for their rights for years in a patriarchal society where so-called "honor" killings and attacks on women remain commonplace. Cases and allegations involving men assaulting other men have been even more rarely discussed in the country. — AFP

## Local community to build first transgender school in northern India

**MUMBAI:** After dropping out of school aged 12, transgender woman Guddi Kinnar resorted to dancing at weddings and other religious ceremonies to earn money, acutely aware that her lack of education was a major obstacle to obtaining a regular job. To ensure other youngsters don't end up in the same predicament, Kinnar, 40, has pooled funds with about 140 other trans people living in Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh state to build the first trans education center in northern India.

Work on the center began this month in Uttar Pradesh, the state with the highest number of trans people in India, in the hope of creating better job opportunities for trans people, one of the most marginalized groups in India. "People disown trans children, and we look after them. We don't have a school, no employment option," Kinnar told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone from Kushinagar.

Kinnar said she was abandoned as a child and had irregular schooling until the age of 12 when she dropped out, taking up singing and dancing at religious ceremonies that earns her 100 to 500 rupees (\$1.40 - \$7.01) a day in alms.

The education center will initially have a primary school for children up to the age of 10 with plans to develop it into a college and a university in the future. "Here they will get an education, they can choose any profession they want. I am not (investing savings) for my personal gain: it is for my community," said Kinnar.

India has about 500,000 trans people and less than half are literate and even fewer have jobs, according to the country's 2011 census. But campaigners estimate the number is far higher and could be around 2 million, with male-to-female "hijras" the most visible group.

The country's Supreme Court granted trans people "third gender" recognition in 2014, giving them equal rights under the law, but discrimination continues, according to community members and campaigners.

They are often shunned and many survive through begging or sex work. Few have access to education and many trans children who do attend regular schools skip classes or drop out to avoid bullying, jeopardizing their employment opportunities, studies have shown.

"This community is still deprived of the basic right of education. They are discriminated even at primary education level," said Krishna Mohan Mishra of the Kinnar Shiksha Seva Trust, or All-India transgender education service trust, that started the project in Kushinagar. — Reuters

## Five aims for anti-slavery fight in 2020

**LONDON:** With a decade for the world to meet a United Nations target of ending modern slavery, experts say anti-slavery efforts must be guided by survivors, supported by law enforcement and kept at the top of the global activism agenda. About 40 million people globally are estimated to be enslaved - in forced labor and forced marriages - in a trade worth an estimated \$150 billion a year to human traffickers, according to the UN International Labor Organization (ILO). Here are five priorities for the global anti-slavery movement in 2020 as told to the Thomson Reuters Foundation by campaigners, civil servants, and migration and trade experts.

### 1. LET SURVIVORS LEAD

Survivors of modern slavery are increasingly being championed to inform and lead anti-trafficking efforts - from raising awareness to supporting victims and shaping policy. "We must double our efforts to strengthen worker solidarity and survivor-led initiatives, and to open more platforms for meaningful worker participation in policy and practice," said Lucila Granada, head of the charity Focus on Labor Exploitation.

More than 220 survivors have signed up to the Survivor Alliance since its launch in 2018 as an online network that provides a forum, expert contacts and consulting opportunities. "In 2020, the anti-slavery movement needs to put their investment behind survivor leadership, create scholarships for education, and create liveable wage employment opportunities," said Minh Dang, co-director of the Survivor Alliance.

### 2. SECURE JUSTICE

From India to Britain and the United States, authorities and activists alike have voiced concerns about a lack of justice for trafficking victims despite fast-growing awareness of the issue. Governments worldwide carried out 11,096 trafficking prosecutions in 2018 and won 7,481 convictions, according to the US State Department's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report.

Trafficking prosecutions have risen since 2012 - but hit a peak of 19,127 in 2015 - according to the compiled estimates. Obstacles to securing convictions include persuading victims to speak out, tracking traffickers online and tracing their gains, and the complexity and length of cases, experts say. "Slavery thrives when traffickers and slave-owners can brutally enslave people with little fear of any consequence," said David Westlake, head of International Justice Mission UK.

### 3. PROTECT MIGRANTS

Undocumented migrants are particularly vulnerable to slavery but are too often either demonised or overlooked, activists say. "Migrant workers being scapegoated is just going to increase their level of vulnerability to human trafficking," said Neha Misra, anti-slavery specialist at US-based Solidarity Center. More than 70 million people were



**A demonstration against slavery across the world in Westminster.**

uprooted last year by persecution and conflict in a record high, UN data shows, yet this figure does not include migrants seeking a better life.

Without the legal right to work or resettle, many migrants end up trapped in slavery and afraid to speak out or seek help. The discovery of 39 dead Vietnamese in a truck near London in October spotlighted the illicit trade that sends the poor of Asia, Africa and the Middle East on risky journeys to the West. "We need to create laws and policies - globally and in Britain - that would allow people to migrate for work safely," said Jakob Sobik, media manager at Anti-Slavery International.

### 4. ADJUST ATTITUDES

From opinion polls showing limited public awareness to sensationalized images including handcuffs, chains and scars, modern-day slavery is widely misrepresented and misunderstood. Traffickers rely far more psychological methods of coercion and the use of debts than on physical violence to trap their victims, found a recent study by Britain's Nottingham University, which researches the global ill. Modern slavery is too often seen mainly as a criminal issue, according to experts who say this diverts focus from cultural factors such as caste, globalization and the rise of informal work, and attitudes towards and policies around migration. "The idea that modern slavery is somewhere 'out there' perpetuated by evil criminals is only true for a very small percentage of people subject to egregious exploitation and abuse," said Cindy Berman of the Ethical Trading Initiative. "It's in our midst," said the head of modern slavery strategy at the organization, which is a coalition of trade unions, companies and charities promoting workers' rights.

### 5. MAINTAIN MOMENTUM

With a host of political and environmental issues demanding the world's attention, some advocates fear that slavery might fall down the agenda as a crime that mostly occurs out of sight. While teenage activist Greta Thunberg - Time Magazine's Person of the Year - has inspired public action on climate change, people must also be engaged and inspired to consider the human cost of services and products they buy, campaigners say.

"We must continue to mobilize government action, business engagement and public concern about the exploitation taking place in our local communities and global supply chains," said Sara Thornton, Britain's independent anti-slavery commissioner. — Reuters

## Kim to unveil 'new path' in New Year speech after US misses deadline

**SEOUL:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was set to make a closely watched New Year address today which is likely to offer a glimpse of a "new path" he has vowed to take if the United States fails to meet his deadline to soften its stance over denuclearization.

The New Year address is expected to touch upon a wide range of issues from foreign affairs and military development to the economy and education. In his 2019 speech, Kim said he might have to change course if Washington sticks to its pressure campaign and demands unilateral action, while stressing a "self-reliant" economy, a drive he has launched amid tightening sanctions.

The United States was on track to ignore a year-end deadline set by Kim, which Washington has downplayed as artificial, to show more flexibility to reopen talks aimed at dismantling North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. The upcoming speech is expected to be the culmination of an ongoing meeting of the ruling Workers' Party's 7th Central Committee, a key policy-making body, which Kim convened on Saturday. It was still under way on Tuesday, state media said.

Discussions at the gathering remain largely unknown, but official media KCNA said on Tuesday that Kim spent seven hours during a Monday session discussing state, economic and military building. On Sunday, he called for "positive and offensive measures" to ensure the country's security.

"The Central Committee plenary meeting is meant to legitimize the process behind the policy decisions Kim Jong-un will announce in his New Year speech," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha Womans University in Seoul. "This meeting is to provide political justification for the economic and security policies Pyongyang will pursue in 2020."

North Korea has provided few hints for what the "new path" may involve, but U.S. military commanders said Pyongyang next move could include the testing of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), which it has halted since 2017, alongside nuclear bomb tests.

US national security adviser Robert O'Brien warned Washington would be "extraordinarily disappointed" if North Korea tests a long-range or nuclear missile, while Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he hoped it would choose peace over confrontation. "We still maintain our view that we can find a path forward to convince the leadership in North Korea that their best course of action is to create a better opportunity for their people by getting rid of their nuclear weapons. That's our mission set," Pompeo told Fox News on Monday.

The US Air Force flew an RC-135 surveillance plane over South Korea on Monday and Tuesday, according to military flight tracker Aircraft Spots. Despite mounting speculation over a potential military provocation, any restart of an ICBM test would risk a personal relationship with Trump, which Pyongyang has repeatedly touted while denouncing Pompeo and other aides, analysts say.

Cho Tae-yong, a former South Korean deputy national security advisor, said Kim had few options that can leave the Trump ties intact.

"In any case, North Korea would add a lot of caveats before and after testing to make sure they're not intent on destroying the negotiating table and it was the Americans who betrayed them," Cho told Reuters. — Reuters

## Analysis

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## Trump sets 'red line' for Tehran amid mounting risks

President Donald Trump's order for airstrikes on a Tehran-backed Iraqi militia group, after resisting retaliating against Iran for months, sent a clear message Sunday that killing Americans was his red line. But experts warned that, far from being deterred, Iran might find that line signals there is space for them to continue the kind of provocative activities that fired up tensions across the Gulf region throughout 2019.

And with Trump facing a re-election fight in 2020, some said Tehran could even step up its actions to challenge the president's promise to pull US troops out of the Middle East. US officials said Monday that Trump had exercised "strategic patience" during the past year in the face of Iran's stepped-up military activities in the region challenging the US and its allies. But they said that the death Friday of a US civilian contractor in Kirkuk in a rocket attack by the Hezbollah Brigades, an Iran-supported militia, forced Trump's hand.

At least 25 members of the group were killed in retaliatory US strikes Sunday on five of their bases in Iraq and Syria. "The president has shown a lot of restraint," Brian Hook, the State Department's Special Representative for Iran, told reporters Monday. "We very much hoped that Iran would not miscalculate and confuse our restraint for weakness. But after so many attacks, it was important for the president to direct our armed forces to respond in a way that the Iranian regime will understand."

### Iran 'pushed the envelope'

Trump mulled and then deferred retaliation against Iran several times this year over its attacks on foreign oil tankers, the downing of a US drone and the brash September drone-and-missile assault on oil plants in Saudi Arabia, which took out nearly half of Riyadh's oil output. Each time, the US leader fell back on more economic sanctions, despite them having had little visible impact on Tehran's expansive regional military operations. Since October, the Hezbollah Brigades, which the Pentagon said are supported by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, carried out some 11 rocket attacks on installations in Iraq where US and coalition forces are present. But until this weekend the response has been minimal. What changed was the death of an American, which "pushed the envelope", State Department Assistant Secretary David Schenker said Monday.

"We thought it important to hit a significant target set to send a very clear message to them about how serious we take American lives," he said. "This was a defensive action designed to protect American forces and American citizens in Iraq, and it was aimed also at deterring Iran," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told Fox news. "President Trump has been pretty darn patient, and he's made clear, at the same time, that when Americans' lives were at risk we would respond."

### 'Invidious choice'

With Sunday's airstrikes, Schenker stressed that Washington aims to deter Iran, but does not seek to escalate the conflict between the two countries. But experts warned that Tehran could receive a different message: That, as long as Americans aren't directly injured, it could boost its covert activities. Richard Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, said that Iran's growing political weight in Iraq and Trump's aim to reduce the Pentagon's footprint in the Middle East could well result in Baghdad pressuring the United States to pull out.

Martin Indyk, a former US ambassador to Israel, said Iran could sense an opportunity to further provoke Washington, knowing where Trump's red line is. "The consequences of strikes against Iranian proxies going into a US election year is that the Iranians now believe they own the higher rungs of the escalation ladder," he said on Twitter. "If US troops in Iraq come under attack Trump will have an invidious choice: Another [Middle East] war or backing down." — AFP



Iraqi protesters use a plumbing pipe to break the bulletproof glass of the US embassy's windows in Baghdad yesterday. — AFP

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In this file photo taken on Sept 22, 2012, members of the Al-Qaeda linked Al-Shabaab stand after giving themselves up to forces of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in Garsale, some 10 km from the town of Jowhar, 80 km north of the capital Mogadishu. — AFP

## Shabaab ends bloody decade resurgent, unbowed

In the past decade, Somali Islamist group Al-Shabaab has lost territory, suffered defections and faced mounting US air strikes, but analysts say the group is as strong a threat as ever, flourishing under the country's weak government. Despite years of costly efforts to combat the group, Al-Shabaab managed once again to detonate a vehicle packed with explosives in Mogadishu, slaughtering 81 people on Saturday in one of the deadliest attacks of the decade.

"The real hallmark of Al-Shabaab is its resilience," said Matt Bryden, director of Nairobi-based think tank Sahana. "Leaders of the movement have been killed in drone strikes and commando raids, several master bombmakers have been killed and yet Al-Shabaab continues to wage conventional and guerilla warfare against enemy forces, build bombs, and build an effective underground financial and administrative infrastructure." Bryden said the Al-Qaeda affiliate's ability to inflict mass casualties in Somalia and elsewhere in the region highlights the fragility of a central government mired in feuds and more focused on staying in power than fighting the Islamists.

### Shifting fortunes

At the start of this decade, Al-Shabaab was at its zenith. It controlled major urban centers including parts of Mogadishu while the internationally-backed government clung to a sliver of territory in the capital. Somalia had plunged into chaos after the 1991 overthrow of president Siad Barre's military regime led to famine and decades of anarchic clan warfare. Al-Shabaab emerged from the youth wing of the Islamic Courts Union, a rival to the internationally-backed government established in 2004, which briefly controlled large parts of Somalia.

But in the second half of 2011 the group's fortunes appeared to be waning, as African Union peacekeeping

force AMISOM pushed them out of their last bastions in Mogadishu. Since then they have had to abandon most of their strongholds - but they still control vast rural areas and have maintained a presence in urban centres through an extensive intelligence network.

"They win support through co-optation or coercion. They have a steady supply of finances through a network of taxation and extortion," Murithi Mutiga, a Horn of Africa expert with the International Crisis Group (ICG) think tank, told AFP. A report by a UN expert panel in November said the group's "mafia-style" taxation system allowed it to generate revenue even in areas it does not control, such as Mogadishu port.

In a sign of its capacity to infiltrate government institutions, a female suicide bomber who blew herself up in government offices in Mogadishu in July, killing the city's mayor, turned out to have been an employee working under false identity, their report said. The militants have also turned to making home-made explosives and some of their deadliest attacks have been in recent years, such as the 2017 Mogadishu truck bombing which left 512 dead.

Al-Shabaab has also managed to expand its network in the region, especially in Kenya which has suffered several devastating attacks in retaliation for it sending troops into Somalia in 2011. Most recently in January 2019, 21 people were killed in a siege on an upscale Nairobi hotel, notably carried out by Kenyan-born Shabaab operatives.

### Shabaab not government priority

Since the main AMISOM offensive ended in 2015, control of territory has largely remained stagnant. Mutiga said one of the biggest mistakes that had been made in the fight against Al-Shabaab was that they were often ousted from villages without "a viable plan for what would come next". And with roughly 20,000 African Union peacekeepers set

to leave in 2021, analysts say the ragtag national army is nowhere near ready, with a piecemeal approach seeing Britain, Turkey and the EU holding their own separate training programs. "We see no coherent security force emerging that can credibly challenge Shabaab, especially if AU troops pull out," said Bryden.

However he said the main hurdle to fighting Al-Shabaab was that it was not a priority of the central government. Rather Mogadishu has engaged in political feuds with federal states, focused on gaining control in regional administrations in a bid to boost their chances for re-election with parliamentary polls due in 2020 and a presidential vote in 2021. "The Somalis are fighting this war with one hand and maybe one foot tied behind their backs," said Bryden.

He said more police and national army resources were currently deployed to secure an electoral process in the central region of Galmudug than to offensive operations against Al-Shabaab. "That means that the government that is receiving the vast majority of international support and resources to fight Al Shabaab has at best ranked that battle as a second priority."

Somalia's government is officially transitional, as the country still has an incomplete constitution. Negotiations had been initiated under previous governments on completing the constitution and agreeing the architecture of the country's federation but the present government has halted the talks, said Bryden. "Somalia can't be ruled only from the center - it is too decentralized politically and economically. There are too many powerful forces outside Mogadishu," he said. Despite an increase of US airstrikes under President Donald Trump that have killed more than 800 people since April 2017, observers believe Al-Shabaab will continue to wreak havoc well beyond 2020. "Al-Shabaab appears to be closing the decade in as strong a position as it has been in 10 years," said Mutiga. — AFP

## Ghoshn escape leaves Japan red-faced

How could one of the most high-profile and instantly recognizable tycoons on Earth escape Japan just months before his trial, when his bail conditions strictly forbade him from leaving the country? That's the question being asked in Japan, where Carlos Ghosn's abrupt departure and arrival in Lebanon is being seen as an embarrassing lapse in security. The 65-year-old, who holds Brazilian, French and Lebanese passports, had all three confiscated as part of his bail conditions as he prepared to defend himself against multiple charges of financial misconduct.

One of his lawyers, Junichiro Hironaka, confirmed to reporters that they still had him in their possession, confessing he was "dumbfounded" at the news of his client's flight - which he heard about via the media. Public broadcaster NHK cited an anonymous source as saying the Immigration Services Agency had no record of a Carlos Ghosn leaving the country, and authorities

were reviewing whether he left using another name.

NHK also quoted a foreign ministry official as insisting: "He was not supposed to leave the country. Had we known about it beforehand, we would have reported that to proper law enforcement authorities." "If this development is true, it would be a matter between the legal authorities of the two countries," the official added.

Taichiro Motoe, a lawmaker from Shinzo Abe's ruling Liberal Democrat Party (LDP), said the news had come as a "shock" and called for "swift and effective" improvements. Another LDP lawmaker, Masahisa Sato, said: "If this is true, it was not 'departing the country', it was an illegal departure and an escape, and this itself is a crime. "Was there help extended by an unnamed country? It is also a serious problem that Japan's system allowed an illegal departure so easily," complained Sato, also a former state minister for foreign affairs. Although there is no extradition agreement between Japan and Lebanon, the two have diplomatic ties, with a deputy Japanese foreign minister visiting Beirut 10 days ago.

### 'Political persecution'

It is also another blow for the reputation of Japan's justice system, which came under widespread fire both at home and abroad during Ghosn's detention for provisions that allow suspects to be held for long periods. Amnesty

International has accused Japan's justice system of creating an environment of "aggressive interrogations" that "risk producing forced confessions and false convictions". Ghosn and his family had repeatedly attacked this "hostage justice system", and he said in a statement released after his arrival in Lebanon that he was not fleeing justice but had "escaped injustice and political persecution". He has now vowed to give his side of the story, and Nobuo Gohara - a former elite prosecutor who now runs his own private practice - told AFP this could pose a problem for the prosecution, accused by Ghosn's defense team of several illegal steps.

"One thing is for sure. For prosecutors, this presents a significant and serious situation. Nissan must be afraid. Prosecutors are also afraid," said Gohara, who has been outspoken in his criticism of the handling of the case. "The defense team have completely lost face. They promised he would stay in Japan as a condition of his bail," added Gohara. The Lebanese government would be unlikely to extradite him even if there was a treaty between the two countries, Gohara said. One of the reasons authorities used to justify his lengthy detention was that he was a potential flight risk. At a hearing on Jan 8 to rule on his continued custody, presiding Judge Yuichi Tada said Ghosn was being detained because he was a flight risk and there was a possibility he would conceal evidence. — AFP

## India's transgender protesters fear stateless future

At 24, Indian transgender Ray has already had to fight many battles for recognition and now faces a new threat - losing her citizenship because of controversial new legislation. The Delhi-based law student whose official documents identify her as male - is among tens of thousands of people protesting against the legislation and a mooted nationwide citizens' register, worried that it will render transgender Indians like herself stateless.

Her fears are not unfounded. In September this year, a petition was filed in India's Supreme Court after around 2,000 transgenders were left off a citizens' register in the northeastern state of Assam, throwing their future into doubt. Despite being legally recognized as a third gender in a historic 2014 Supreme Court ruling, they often live on the extreme fringes of Indian society, with many forced into prostitution, begging or menial jobs.

For a community that already faces severe discrimination in conservative India - much of it from their own families - transgenders feel they are at extra risk from legislation pushed by Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra

Modi aimed ostensibly at tackling illegal immigration. "Many of us are thrown out of our homes, we run away from our homes facing abuse, we don't have documents for ourselves, how do you then expect the transgender community to prove citizenship?"

If Modi's government goes ahead with its 2019 election pledge to draw up a citizens' register, Ray and others will be forced "to go back to our families which are the first places of abuse most often for trans communities and individuals", she told AFP. Transgender make-up artist Tulsu Chandra is among those who dreads having to return to her family in the remote Andaman and Nicobar islands to recover documents.

"The reason I left home and came to Delhi was because my own family looked at me like I was an embarrassment," the 29-year-old said. "After the death of my grandparents, I haven't been in touch with anybody in my family because nobody wants to accept me as their own," Chandra told AFP, as she described what happened to a transgender friend in similar straits. "At first the family promised to give her the documents but once she reached home, (they started)... forcing my friend, who identifies as a woman, to pretend to be a straight male and get married to a woman," she said.

Official estimates for India's transgender population, who are known locally as "hijras", do not exist but the community is thought to number several million. "For trans people it is difficult to even change your existing documents to the gender and name you identify with, from the



In this picture taken on Dec 24, 2019, freelance makeup artist and a member of the LGBT community Asim Math (left) drinks coffee along with his flatmate transgender freelance makeup artist Tulsu Chandra at their flat in New Delhi. — AFP

one you are assigned at birth," queer rights activist Rituparna Borah told AFP on the sidelines of a protest against the law. "We do not even have basic rights... like the right to basic health care, right to livelihood, right to partnership," she said. "So how do we claim those rights as citizens now that we have to prove again that we are citizens of this country?" — AFP

# Business

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**13** Russia and Ukraine finalize gas transit deal just before deadline



**14** UN warns of another poor harvest in Zimbabwe next year



TOKYO: A pedestrian walks past a stock indicator board showing Nikkei 225 share price closing numbers for the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo on Monday. Global equities drifted yesterday while the dollar ended 2019 on a subdued note following a buoyant year of stock market gains. —AFP

## Global stocks end 2019 close to record highs

World markets on track for 24% gain in buoyant 2019, eye US-China trade deal

LONDON: Global equities drifted yesterday while the dollar ended 2019 on a subdued note following a buoyant year of stock market gains, driven in recent weeks by hopes of an imminent US-China trade deal.

Wall Street edged higher yesterday, recovering from a dip at the open, as President Donald Trump disclosed the date and location for the signing of the much-awaited initial US-China trade deal. Trump wrote in a tweet that the Phase 1 agreement would be signed on Jan. 15 at the White House and that he would later travel to Beijing to begin negotiations on the next phase.

Trade-sensitive tech stocks, including Apple Inc., were the biggest boosters to the benchmark S&P 500 index, which is on track for its best year since 2013 and the second-best year in two decades. A relatively loose monetary policy by the Federal Reserve and upbeat economic indicators have also lifted the major US stock indexes to all-time highs this

month. Latest data from China showed manufacturing activity expanded for a second straight month in December, partly driven by seasonal demand. The figures align with other signs of stabilization in the Asian economy, including last week's data that showed profits at China's industrial firms grew at the fastest pace in eight months in November.

At home, data showed a reading of the consumer confidence index was 126.5 in December, compared with a revised 126.8 in November. Trading volumes are expected to remain thin this week, with stock markets shut for the New Year's Day holiday today.

Advancing issues outnumbered decliners by a 2.35-to-1 ratio on the NYSE and by a 2.00-to-1 ratio on the Nasdaq. The S&P index recorded three new 52-week highs and no new lows, while the Nasdaq recorded 36 new highs and 12 new lows. MSCI's global share index was trading water but is on track for a 24 percent rise in 2019 - the index's best performance

in almost a decade. In Europe, equity markets were mixed, with Britain's FTSE slipping 0.4 percent while France's CAC was little changed in thin trading. Germany's DAX was closed.

Bourses in Asia also diverged. China mainland stocks gained 0.4 percent after data showed manufacturing activity in the world's second largest economy expanded for a second straight month in December. China's gains built on Monday's rally, which was driven by a combination of strong retail sales growth and hopes that a new benchmark for floating-rate loans could lower borrowing costs.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong stocks fell 0.5 percent as protesters geared up for pro-democracy rallies on New Year's Eve. Markets in Japan and South Korea were closed for a holiday.

Following losses on Wall Street on Monday, US stock futures showed some optimism ahead of the final session of the year, with S&P 500 e-minis up 0.1 percent.

In currency markets, the dollar index, which

tracks the greenback against a basket of six major rivals, slipped 0.2 percent in its fourth straight session in the red. The dollar continued to weaken against the yen for a third straight session, dropping 0.2 percent to 108.65 and hitting its lowest level since Dec. 12. The euro strengthened 0.06 percent to buy \$1.1204. Sterling hovered around the two-week high it hit on Monday against the dollar, though the possibility of a 'no-deal' Brexit at the end of 2020 kept any gains subdued. China's yuan strengthened 0.3 percent in offshore trading against the dollar.

Oil prices were little changed with US crude at \$61.67 a barrel and Brent crude at \$66.83 per barrel. The global benchmark remains up 24 percent for the year. Gold continued its rally on a weakening dollar. On the spot market, the precious metal was changing hands at \$1,523.14 per ounce, up 0.5 percent. Gold prices have risen nearly 20 percent this year. —Reuters

## US manufacturers see higher 2020 sales despite cloud

NEW YORK: US manufacturers expect a bounce in revenues in 2020 despite lingering unease over trade tariffs that are prompting supply chain shifts, according to an industry survey released Monday.

The semi-annual survey painted a mixed picture for US manufacturers overall, with companies forecasting flat employment and lower capital spending but higher overall sales. That could spell at least some relief for a sector hit hard by President Donald Trump's trade war with China, and that country's slowing economy.

The projected 4.8 percent bump in manufacturing revenues was "one of the more surprising" figures in the semi-annual survey, said Timothy Fiore of the Institute for Supply Management, which released the report. Fiore noted that manufacturers had overestimated sales in the last survey in May, projecting that 2019 revenues would rise 4.0 percent. At this point the increase is expected to come in at 1.9 percent, the report said. The upbeat revenue forecast could reflect manufacturers' belief that they are now "at the maximum impact" as far as items that could be affected by trade conflicts after Trump administration tariffs on steel and aluminum and a series of measures on Chinese goods.

But Fiore also noted that Trump last week reinstated tariffs on metals from Brazil and Argentina and announced new tariffs on French goods. "Trade continues to weigh on the supply community," Fiore said.

Manufacturing has emerged as a vulnerable part of the US economy amid myriad trade tariffs and threats from Trump, with up-and-down talks with China especially worrisome to the business community. Weak US manufacturing figures have also reflected company-specific issues such as the Boeing 737 MAX crisis that has forced the aviation giant to cut production on the plane and the General Motors strike, which ended in late October. The survey showed more than half of the respondents in manufacturing have either changed their production footprint or are evaluating new sources of supply because of US tariffs. The figures were slightly lower among non-manufacturing companies surveyed, with 43.9 percent evaluating new sources of supply and 1.3 percent having already shifted supply. —AFP

## Tencent gets into global groove with stake in Vivendi's Universal

PARIS/HONG KONG: A Tencent-led consortium is taking a 10 percent stake in Vivendi's Universal Music Group, valuing the music label that houses Lady Gaga and The Beatles at 30 billion euros (\$34 billion) and giving the Chinese firm a global backstage pass. The deal allows both companies to expand in a recovering global music market, giving Tencent more access to US artists while UMG can tap into the Asian market, including big-selling "K-Pop" Korean pop stars.

After months of talks, French media conglomerate Vivendi said yesterday it had finalized the sale of an initial 10 percent of the world's largest music label to the Tencent consortium, which also had the option to buy up to 10 percent more by January 2021 on the same price basis.

Vivendi, controlled by French billionaire Vincent Bollore, is seeking to cash in on the music industry's revival, driven by a growing subscription and ad-based music streaming services and the deal gives UMG an enterprise value of 30 billion euros. The initial deal would soon be followed by a second one allowing Tencent Music Entertainment to buy a

minority stake in UMG's greater China subsidiary.

Tencent did not immediately respond to a request for comment, while Vivendi did not disclose the details of the consortium beyond saying they were "global financial investors".

Singapore's state investment firm GIC and Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) were also involved, a source familiar with the deal told Reuters. QIA declined to comment and GIC did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

### Rising tempo

The IFPI federation said in April that global recorded music revenues had risen 9.7 percent in 2019 from last year, while Universal was Vivendi's main third quarter sales growth driver, with revenues rising nearly 16 percent to 1.8 billion euros. "Universal has been enjoying increased revenues for the last 5 years. With the company in a strong position, it can make sense to capitalise on the valuation with a minority sale at this point in the growth cycle," said MB Capital director Marcus Bullus, commenting on the deal. The tie-up between Tencent and Vivendi builds on a partnership struck two years ago, allowing Tencent to license Universal's music for distribution over its streaming platforms.

Vivendi said in July last year it might sell up to half of UMG and any cash raised from a divestment could help finance a share buyback or acquisitions. The transaction should also boost morale among Chinese deal-makers, with China-outbound mergers and acquisitions (M&A) activity plunging to a 10-year low amid trade tensions between the



United States and China. Refinitiv data shows.

In November, Tencent Music Entertainment Group reported better-than-expected third-quarter revenue. Although Tencent Music's user base is nearly three times that of Spotify, which is the world's largest music streaming service, its paying users are comparatively fewer. Spotify, in which the Tencent Holding company itself has a minority stake, had more than 100 million paid subscribers, whereas Tencent Music had about 35 million as of the third quarter.

Vivendi shares closed up 0.3 percent, with the final sale terms in line with earlier guidance from Vivendi. MB Capital's Bullus said it was unclear how Vivendi would use the cash and "how this will increase value for existing shareholders now potentially left with cash in their pocket but a smaller stake in a growing cash generating company". —Reuters

Business

# Huawei says 'survival' top priority; revenue up 18%

## India allows Huawei to take part in 5G trials

BEIJING: Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei said yesterday that "survival" was its top priority after announcing 2019 sales were expected to fall short of projections as a result of US sanctions. Huawei, a global leader in telecom networking equipment has been effectively banned by the United States from working with American firms on the grounds that it poses a national security threat - an accusation the company has consistently denied.

Chairman Eric Xu said Huawei's sales revenue for 2019 was likely to reach 850 billion yuan (US\$121 billion) - up roughly 18 percent from the previous year. Though he said "business remains solid", the figure was lower than a previous forecast of US\$125 billion. In a New Year's message to employees, Xu said the US government was in the midst of a "strategic and long-term" campaign against the company that would create a "challenging environment for Huawei to survive and thrive".

"Survival will be our first priority" in 2020, said Xu, the current chairman under the company's rotating leadership scheme. He said Huawei would need to "go all out" to build up its mobile services ecosystem - its answer to Google apps and services - to "ensure that we can keep selling our smartphones in overseas markets". A bright spot was its smartphone business, posting "robust growth" with 240 million units shipped in 2019.

Huawei has faced obstacles and suspicion from the US and other countries wary of its close relationship with the Chinese government. US intelligence chiefs state flatly that the firm cannot be trusted and its equipment is a threat to national security - an accusation the company has dismissed. But in a boost to the company, India's telecom minister said late Monday that Huawei will be allowed to take part in trials for the rollout of 5G services in the huge Indian market next month.

"We have taken the decision to give 5G spectrum

for trial to all the players," India's telecom minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said late Monday. He acknowledged that Huawei, the global leader in telecom networking equipment and a major player in India's smartphone market, would be among the companies taking part in the trials expected to start next month. With 451 million monthly active mobile Internet users, India is second behind China in the world Internet users rankings, according to the Internet and Mobile Association of India.

Founded in 1987 by former People's Liberation Army engineer Ren Zhengfei, Huawei was dragged into the spotlight a year ago when Ren's daughter, senior Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, was arrested in Canada at the request of the United States. Washington wants to put her on trial for allegedly lying to banks about violating Iran sanctions. Her extradition hearing begins on January 20.

### 'A difficult year'

The backlash against Huawei has only grown since Meng's arrest. Washington has banned US companies from selling equipment to Huawei, locking out the smartphone giant from access to Google's Android operating system. Xu said Huawei expects to remain on the US entity list in 2020, adding that the world's number two smartphone maker will not grow as rapidly as it did in the first half of 2019. "It's going to be a difficult year for us," he said.

The US move against Huawei has come amid a wider trade war between Washington and Beijing, and analysts say the mini deal reached between the two countries will not help the company. "Pressure on Huawei will continue in the foreseeable future even if US-China trade tensions de-escalate," Kenny Liew, an analyst at Fitch Solutions, told AFP. "Continued pressure is also aimed at ratcheting up the pressure on US allies to drop the Chinese sup-



SHANGHAI: This file photo taken on June 26, 2019 shows people visiting a Huawei stand during the Mobile World Congress (MWC 2019) introducing next-generation technology at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre (SNIEC). —AFP

plier from their networks," Liew said, noting that Huawei will increasingly rely on its domestic market to drive growth.

European telecommunications operators including Norway's Telenor and Sweden's Telia have also passed over Huawei as a supplier for their 5G networks as intelligence agencies warned against working with the company. Australia and Japan have meanwhile taken steps to block or tightly restrict

the firm's participation in their rollouts of 5G. Earlier this month, Prime Minister Boris Johnson also strongly hinted that Britain would follow suit.

But other nations have not shut the door on Huawei. Germany has resisted pressure to exclude the company from supplying technology for its 5G infrastructure, with Chancellor Angela Merkel saying Berlin would insist on stringent security requirements without banning individual companies. —AFP

## Facebook fined \$1.65m by Brazil

BRASILIA: Brazil on Monday fined Facebook \$1.65 million for improperly sharing users' data in a case linked to the global Cambridge Analytica scandal. Facebook engaged in an "abusive practice" by allowing data from 443,000 users in Brazil to be unduly available to developers of the application "This is Your Digital Life," according to the Ministry of Justice.

That application - a psychological survey - collected personal data from millions of Facebook users worldwide, which were then transferred to British consultancy Cambridge Analytica and used without consent in political campaigns, such as the one that gave Brexit a victory in Britain and Donald Trump a win in the 2016 US presidential election. Brazilian authorities began investigating after reports that users in the country could also have been victims of data misuse.

Facebook estimated in 2018 that data from 87 million users were shared with Cambridge Analytica.

But on Monday it said in a statement that there was "no evidence user data in Brazil was transferred to Cambridge Analytica" and that it was looking at its legal options in this case. "We have made changes to our platform and restricted the information accessible to app developers," a Facebook spokesperson said. Brazil's Ministry of Justice maintains that Facebook did not adequately inform its users "about the consequences of the default privacy settings", especially in relation to the data of "friends and friends of friends."

Facebook has 10 days to appeal the decision and one month to pay the fine, according to the Brazilian government. In July, US regulators imposed a record \$5 billion fine on Facebook for not protecting the personal data of its users. Britain and Italy are among countries which also fined Facebook in connection with the Cambridge Analytica scandal. —AFP

## Uber sues California over gig-economy labor law

SAN FRANCISCO: Ride-hailing giant Uber and delivery company Postmates have filed a lawsuit against the state of California, claiming a new law that would treat gig-economy freelancers as employees is unconstitutional. The legislation, due to go into effect today, would mean that under certain conditions independent contractors are classified as employees and granted the minimum salary and health insurance benefits that entails.

This would include drivers for both Uber and Postmates. "Plaintiffs bring this lawsuit to protect their constitutional

rights and defend their fundamental liberty to pursue their chosen work as independent service providers and technology companies in the on-demand economy," said the lawsuit filed on Monday.

Uber warned earlier this year that it would oppose any change of status for its drivers, which will cost the company extra in social security costs. In the suit, Uber and its co-plaintiffs argue the law targets independent service providers while exempting direct salespeople, travel agents, construction truck drivers and commercial fishermen.

"There is no rhyme or reason to these nonsensical exemptions," it said. Uber and its American rival Lyft have each put aside 30 million dollars to organize a referendum, allowed under Californian law, to replace the legislation with a compromise on social rights that has been put before the state Governor.

Drivers are divided between those



who want the same security as employees and those who want the flexibility of being able to choose the hours they work. The gig economy has given driv-

ers "opportunities to earn money when and where they want, with unprecedented independence and flexibility," the lawsuit said. —AFP

## China's factory activity grows as easing trade spat revives demand

BEIJING: Manufacturing activity in China expanded for a second straight month in December as seasonal demand and signs of progress in trade talks with Washington boosted factories' output and order books. China's official Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) was unchanged at 50.2 in December from November, the National Bureau of Statistics said yesterday, slightly higher than the 50.1 expected in a Reuters poll of analysts.

It also remained above the 50-point mark that sepa-

rates monthly growth from contraction.

The better-than-expected readings suggested some recovery in the world's second-largest economy this month. Production rose at the fastest pace in over a year while growth of total new orders was only a notch lower than a recent high hit last month. While the upbeat indicators show the economy ending 2019 on a firmer footing than initially expected, there are deeper concerns such momentum may not continue next year. "The extended strength in the official manufacturing PMI certainly looks positive for markets, but we believe this may not be sustainable, and the economy has yet to hit the bottom," Nomura analysts said in a note after the data.

Still, the stability seen recently prompted Nomura to revise up its gross domestic product forecasts for the fourth quarter to 6.0 percent from 5.8 percent.

Zhao Qinghe, a senior statistician with the statistics bureau, attributed the PMI resilience to increasing demand and production ahead of the Lunar New Year

holiday, which falls in late January.

Production for sectors such as the textile, pharmaceutical and auto and telecom equipment industries stood at relatively high levels. The survey also showed a boost in firms' willingness to stock up inventories in order to meet production need ahead of the holidays.

### Improving demand

The PMI aligns with other recent signs of strength with profits at China's industrial firms growing at the fastest pace in eight months in November, data showed last week. Growth in industrial and retail sectors also beat expectations in November as government support propped up demand. It also coincides with signs of improvement in Sino-US trade talks, which have boosted global investor confidence and helped Chinese manufacturers book new orders from abroad, even though a final deal is yet to be inked. New export orders, in particular, rose for the first time since May 2018 in December. —Reuters

## EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

### ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.797
Indian Rupees	4.265
Pakistani Rupees	1.970
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.671
Nepali Rupees	2.662
Singapore Dollar	226.620
Hongkong Dollar	39.042
Bangladesh Taka	3.551
Philippine Peso	6.011
Thai Baht	10.245
Malaysian Ringgit	77.724

### GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.094
Qatari Riyal	83.523
UAE Dirham	789.864
Bahraini Dinar	807.490
UAE Dirham	82.795

### ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	22.350
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.965
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.221
Tunisian Dinar	110.510
Jordanian Dinar	428.780
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.193

### EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	303.900
Euro	342.340
Sterling Pound	400.540
Canadian dollar	233.950
Turkish lira	51.640
Swiss Franc	316.230
US Dollar Buying	296.600

### Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	303.550
Canadian Dollar	233.270
Sterling Pound	399.695
Euro	341.620
Swiss Franc	296.480
Bahrain Dinar	807.250
UAE Dirhams	83.050
Qatari Riyals	84.285
Saudi Riyals	81.840
Jordanian Dinar	429.420
Egyptian Pound	18.943
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.669
Indian Rupees	4.255
Pakistani Rupees	1.957
Bangladesh Taka	3.546
Philippines Peso	5.977
Cyprus pound	18.060
Japanese Yen	3.790
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.665

Malaysian Ringgit	75.120
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	43.935
Thai Bhat	11.150
Turkish Lira	51.450
Singapore dollars	224.556

### BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.391207	0.405107
Czech Korune	0.005370	0.014670
Danish Krone	0.041464	0.046464
Euro	0.332857	0.346557
Georgian Lari	0.105461	105461
Hungarian	0.000936	0.001126
Norwegian Krone	0.030390	0.035590
Romanian Leu	0.054162	0.071012
Russian Ruble	0.004889	0.004889
Slovakia	0.009076	0.019076
Swedish Krona	0.028440	0.033440
Swiss Franc	0.307256	0.318256
Australian Dollar	0.204422	0.216422
New Zealand Dollar	0.198023	0.207523
Canadian Dollar	0.227293	0.236293
US Dollars	0.299800	0.304350
US Dollars Mint	0.300300	0.304350
Bangladesh Taka	0.002940	0.003741

Chinese Yuan	0.042189	0.045689
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036946	0.039696
Indian Rupee	0.003577	0.004349
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002711	0.002891
Korean Won	0.000252	0.000267
Malaysian Ringgit	0.0702233	0.076223
Nepalese Rupee	0.002620	0.002960
Pakistani Rupee	0.001321	0.002091
Philippine Peso	0.005894	0.006194
Singapore Dollar	0.230068	0.230068
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001316	0.001896
Taiwan	0.010004	0.01018
Thai Baht	0.009795	0.01345
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013

### Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.799958	0.808000
Egyptian Pound	0.018906	0.021647
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000199	0.000259
Jordanian Dinar	0.422645	0.431645
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000101	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021137	0.045137
Omani Riyal	0.784226	0.792110
Qatar Riyal	0.082819	0.083651
Saudi Riyal	0.079953	0.081253
Syrian Pound	0.001288	0.001508
Tunisian Dinar	0.105154	0.113154
Turkish Lira	0.044565	0.054410
UAE Dirhams	0.082108	0.082934
Yemeni Riyal	0.000988	0.001068

## Business

# Russia and Ukraine finalize gas transit deal just before deadline

## Bulgaria chooses Turkish route for Russian gas

**KIEV:** Moscow and Kiev on Monday signed a five-year agreement on the transit of Russian gas to Europe via Ukraine, finalizing months of difficult talks just ahead of a New Year deadline.

The current deal between the two ex-Soviet countries expired yesterday and ties between them have been shredded since Moscow annexed Crimea in 2014 and supported a separatist insurgency in eastern Ukraine. Presidents Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky discussed the deal by phone and congratulated each other ahead of New Year's celebrations, a sign that their relations could be on the mend. The gas deal "creates a positive atmosphere for solving other bilateral problems," the Kremlin said in a statement.

About 18 percent of the European Union's annual natural gas consumption comes from Russia via Ukraine, which put pressure on EU officials to help broker the deal.

"Ukraine has signed a five-year transit contract," Zelensky announced in a late-night post on his Facebook page, nearly two weeks after a provisional deal was reached. A wide range of documents and contracts were involved, and together formed "a package deal which has re-established the balance of interests," Alexei Miller, the boss of Russian gas giant Gazprom, was cited as saying in a statement. The documents were signed after five days of non-stop talks. Gazprom is expected to ship at least 65 billion cubic

meters (2.3 trillion cubic feet) of natural gas via Ukraine next year, and at least 40 billion per year from 2021 to 2024, said Zelensky, from which Kiev would earn "more than seven billion dollars".

### 'Great news' for Europe

The agreement should prevent a repeat of so-called gas wars that previously disrupted supplies and in some years caused real energy problems in EU member states. EU Commission vice president in charge of energy Maros Svecovic called the deal "great news for Europe's energy security" on Twitter, while German Chancellor Angela Merkel thanked Russia and Ukraine.

"Continued gas transit via Ukraine... is a good and important signal for ensuring our European security of gas supply," she said. Last year, Gazprom supplied Europe with 200.8 billion cubic meters of natural gas, about 40 percent of which passed through Ukraine for roughly three billion dollars in transit fees. Russian President Vladimir Putin said earlier this month that Moscow wanted to keep some gas flowing through Ukraine, despite having built several pipelines to Europe since the current deal was agreed a decade ago. The new agreement comes days after Gazprom paid \$2.9 billion to Ukraine's Naftogaz to settle a long-running dispute over transit fees that had blocked the deal. Meanwhile, Russia is pursuing work on the

Nord Stream 2 project that is to be completed by the end of next year and would double gas shipments to Germany. The United States has long opposed the 9.5-billion-euro (\$10.6-billion) project and the US Senate voted last week to levy sanctions on companies working on it. Washington believes the pipeline will give Russia too much influence over security and economic issues in western Europe.

Transit problems for Russian gas began after the fall of the Soviet Union when independent Ukraine took control of the pipeline infrastructure. Several crises followed, with Russia using gas supplies to put pressure on Ukraine by cutting them repeatedly in 1992, 1993 and 1994. The last gas crisis disrupted supplies to Europe in 2010.

Bulgaria said Monday it would take delivery of crucial Russian gas supplies from January via the TurkStream pipeline that runs under the Black Sea and avoids Ukraine. "We have finalized with Gazprom a change of entry point for deliveries," which would become the Stradja 2 site on the Turkish-Bulgarian border. Energy Minister Tememoujka Petkova said in a statement that referred to the Russian gas giant. The move should lead to 70 million leva (35 million euros, \$39 million) in savings on transit taxes paid to Romania for gas that had first come through Ukraine, and a five percent decrease in the price of Russian gas, the minister said.

Bulgaria is almost entirely dependent on



The Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline is one of several Russia is developing to Europe. — AFP

Russia for natural gas supplies and the TurkStream pipeline that is scheduled to begin operations in January is expected to provide 2.9 billion cubic meters (101 billion cubic feet) per year. In January 2009, an interruption in gas supplies via Ukraine left Bulgaria stranded, and the country has begun to diversify its sources, launching a pipeline via Greece to tap into gas supplies

from the Caspian Sea. It is also building a link from the TurkStream line to deliver Russian gas to Serbia. On December 20, US President Donald Trump signed off on US sanctions against companies that take part in building the Nord Stream 2 and TurkStream pipelines, which US officials believe will give Russia increased leverage over European allies. — AFP

## Tea producers in Kenya turn over a new leaf as prices stumble

**NYERI, Kenya:** In a humming factory in Kenya's highlands, tea is hand-plucked from the fields, cured and shredded into the fine leaves that have sated drinkers from London to Lahore for generations.

But Kenya's prized black tea isn't fetching the prices it once did, forcing the top supplier of the world's most popular drink to try something new. In the bucolic hills around Nyeri, factory workers are experimenting with a range of boutique teas, deviating from decades of tradition in the quest for new customers and a buffer against unstable prices.

Like the bulk of Kenya's producers, they've been manufacturing one way for decades—the crush, tear and curl (CTC) method, turning out ultra-fine leaves well suited for teabags the world over. Now however, between conveyor belts whizzing tons of Kenya's mainstay CTC into heaving sacks, huge rollers also gently and slowly massage green leaves under the watchful eye of workers, all freshly trained in the art of what is known as orthodox tea production.

The end result—a whole leaf, slow-processed variety, savored for its complex tones and appearance—is still being perfected at Gitugi, a factory in the foothills of the Aberdare Range that has been trialing these teas since June. It has been costly shifting into orthodox, and a cultural change for workers and farmers, said Antony Naftali, operations manager at Gitugi, in Nyeri some 85 kilometers (52



NYERI: In the bucolic hills around Nyeri, factory workers are experimenting with a range of boutique teas, deviating from decades of tradition in the quest for new customers and a buffer against unstable prices.

miles) north of Nairobi. But the risk was necessary: prices for stalwart CTC at auction nosedived 21 percent in 2018-2019 compared to the prior financial year, underscoring the urgency to diversify and extract more from every tea bush. "We have relied for so many years on traditional CTC. But the price has dropped. We want to reduce the pressure... but also, to explore this new market," Naftali told AFP.

### Market turmoil

Even since prices have recovered somewhat, any fluctuations are still keenly felt in Kenya, the world's biggest exporter of CTC. Tea is a staple drink in Kenya, though, unlike other major producing countries, it consumes far less than it exports. The humble cuppa is a pillar of the economy: one in 10 Kenyans depends on the tea industry, according to the Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA), which represents 650,000 smallholder farmers by selling and marketing their tea.

The poor returns this year sparked

angry protests on estates, and tea companies registered losses.

Part of the problem is oversupply. Higher prices in recent years spurred investment in tea planting, resulting in Kenya's best-ever haul in 2018 — at 493 million kilos (1,086 pounds). But Kenya also has long relied on too few buyers, shipping 70 percent of its tea to just four markets.

Its top three customers—Pakistan, Egypt and Britain—have all seen a weakening of their currencies in recent times, making tea imports pricier. Other big buyers—Iran, Sudan and Yemen, chief among them—have struggled to make payments. "Our key markets are in turmoil," Lerionka Tiampati, KTDA chief executive, told AFP. "When you cannot control the price, then there's not very much you can do. But what we are doing is we are trying to diversify the product."

### Reading the leaves

Orthodox production opens doors to markets where whole leaf, bespoke teas

and custom infusions are rewarded with higher prices, says Grace Mogambi, KTDA's manager of specialty products, who has travelled the globe to learn what drinkers want. Studying samples in Gitugi's cupping room, Mogambi reels off the qualities desired by discerning tea drinkers: Russians like whole leaves, Germans prize tips, Saudis demand jet black and Sri Lankans dislike stalks. "Consumer taste preferences are changing. Drinkers are becoming more aware of the type of tea they prefer," said Mogambi, clad in a white laboratory coat, before swirling a mouthful of tea and ejecting it into a spittoon.

"If I'm spending more money on a cup of tea, I prefer given characteristics to be present."

But orthodox and specialty lines represent only a tiny fraction of Kenya's exports, and critics say the KTDA—which accounts for 60 percent of the country's tea production—has been slow to adapt. The board decided in 2000 to launch an orthodox range but, by the end of 2019, just 11 of its 69 factories were expected to be producing teas other than CTC. Some like Kangaita, a factory at the southern flank of Mount Kenya, have been cultivating purple teas—a rare speciality unique to the region.

Other craft varieties include white premium, a loose leaf packaged in deluxe pyramidal teabags.

These appeal also to younger tea drinkers, a growing market demanding something other than run-of-the-mill black tea. "Youthful tea drinkers are definitely looking for wellness, and other health benefits in tea," said Gideon Mugo, chairman of the East African Tea Trade Association.

Major brands outside the KTDA have been targeting the youth segment.

Kericho Gold produces a line of "attitude teas" packaged in bright boxes, including one for "love" and another marketed as a hangover cure. — AFP

## Euro and pound inch up as growth optimism cheers investors

**LONDON:** The euro and the British pound rose as the dollar weakened yesterday as investors saw global growth improving next year, with the United States and China due to finally sign a Phase 1 trade agreement this week. The US currency had maintained its strength over the course of the year as investors saw the US economy outperforming the rest of the world.

In thin volumes on the last day of the decade, currencies overall were more volatile than many expected, with the trade-sensitive Australian dollar, Chinese yuan and Scandinavian currencies all rising to their highest levels in weeks. Sterling hovered around the two-week high it hit on Monday against the dollar, though the possibility of a 'no-deal' Brexit at the end of 2020 kept any gains subdued.

Still, analysts did not attribute the moves to any major particular developments. "I can't see much reason for the movement in the FX market except end-year position squaring, or just being careful and cutting positions ahead of the New Year's holiday and the start of 2020. As a result I wouldn't draw any big conclusions from it," said Marshal Gittler, currency analyst at ACLS Global.

Chinese Vice Premier Liu He will visit Washington this week to sign a Phase 1 trade deal with the United States, the South China Morning Post reported on Monday. White House trade adviser Peter Navarro said on Monday the trade deal would likely be signed in the next week, but that confirmation would come from President Donald Trump or the US trade representative.

Investors' appetite for risk helped drive the euro up 0.1 percent to \$1.1206, close to the 4-1/2-month high of \$1.1221 reached on Monday. Signs that the euro zone economy may be stabilizing have lifted the single currency in recent weeks as investors unwound short positions, though the currency has shed 2.2 percent of its value against the dollar in 2019.

Latest CFTC data shows that hedge funds held \$9.16 billion of euro shorts, far less than the \$14.84 billion seen in May. The US dollar was weak across the board, though over the course of the year, the index that tracks the dollar against a basket of six currencies has risen by half a percentage point.

MUFG analysts saw a "bearish technical development for the US dollar that signals an increasing risk of further weakness ahead". "Weakness in the US dollar towards the end of this year has coincided with the renewed expansion of the Fed's balance and the paring back of pessimism over the outlook for global growth," they said. Versus the Japanese yen, the dollar fell to a near three-week low of 108.625 yen and was last down 0.2 percent.

Against the Chinese yuan, it shed 0.2 percent to 6.9674 in the offshore market after dipping to a 2-1/2-week low of 6.9630, as strong Chinese economic data helped boost the Chinese currency.

The Australian dollar rose to a five-month high of 0.7310 versus the US dollar, making it the best performing major currency overnight, according to MUFG. The New Zealand dollar, however, "remains the stand out performer of the last quarter, surging nearly 8 percent over the past three months, largely on the back of more positive sentiment about global trade", MUFG analysts said.

Scandinavian currencies also strengthened against the greenback following all-time lows seen this year on the back of global growth fears sparked by US-Chinese trade disputes. The pound was up 0.3 percent at \$1.3144, close to the \$1.3150 high seen on Monday, and a notch stronger against the euro at 85.41 pence. Sterling has gained nearly 3 percent against the dollar and 5 percent versus the euro this year, jumping to as high as \$1.35 recently after Prime Minister Boris Johnson's overwhelming win in a parliamentary election, which eliminated a measure of uncertainty. — Reuters

## White House adviser says China trade deal signing expected soon

**WASHINGTON:** The White House's trade adviser on Monday said the US-China Phase 1 trade deal would likely be signed in the next week, but said confirmation would come from President Donald Trump or the US Trade Representative, White House trade adviser Peter Navarro, in an interview on Fox News, cited a report that Chinese Vice Premier Liu He would visit this week to sign the deal, but did not confirm it.

"Washington has sent an invitation and Beijing has accepted it," the South China Morning Post (SCMP) on Monday quoted a source as saying. Representatives for the Office of the US Trade Representative and the White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the report, which said the Chinese delegation was likely to stay in the United States until the middle of next week. China's Ministry of Commerce and its Foreign Ministry both declined to comment yesterday on the SCMP report.

"Never believe reports on anonymous sources. Get it from President Trump or ... (US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer)," Navarro told Fox. "We'll probably have a signing on that within the next week or so - we're just waiting for the translation," he added. Hopes for a US-China trade deal helped keep world stocks positive on Monday, although neither side has

released many specific details of the agreement, and no text has been released yet.

Navarro said the deal would be made public "as quickly as possible," and that he did not expect any snags to hold it up. "Basically you need to get it translated into the Chinese and double-checked so both versions match," he added.

The 86-page agreement includes details on intellectual property, "a good start" on forced technology transfers and "some good language on currency manipulation," Navarro said. Trump first announced plans for the initial trade pact in October, and US and Chinese negotiators have spent weeks finalizing the so-called Phase 1 deal, which comes in lieu of the massive trade agreement that the world's two largest economies had initially sought.

Lighthizer this month said representatives from both countries would sign the pact during the first week of January. Last week, Trump told reporters he and Chinese President Xi Jinping would eventually have a signing ceremony for the agreement. Trump gave no further details, but said the deal was done and being translated. Days earlier, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the deal was finished but was undergoing a technical review. — Reuters

## Britain says will raise minimum wage by more than 6% in 2020

**LONDON:** Britain's national minimum wage will rise by more than 6 percent next year, taking it to 8.74 pounds (\$11.49) an hour, the government announced yesterday. The move puts Britain on track to meet its target for the minimum wage to reach 60 percent of median earnings by 2020, it added.

"Hard work should always pay, but for too long, people haven't seen the pay rises they deserve," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said in a statement.

Britain's unemployment rate has fallen to its lowest since the 1970s and employment recently hit a record high, despite the minimum wage rising by more than a quarter since 2015 to now stand at 8.21 pounds an hour for those aged 25 and over.

The rise to 8.74 pounds is due to take place on April 1. Minimum pay rates for younger workers will also increase by between 4.6 percent and 6.5 percent, depending on their age, the government said. The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) said: "Raising wage floors by more than double the rate of inflation will pile further pressure on cash flow and eat into training and investment budgets.

"For this policy to be sustainable, government must offset these costs by reducing others - and impose a moratorium on any further upfront costs for business." Britain's minimum wage was introduced under Labor



LONDON: Britain's unemployment rate has fallen to its lowest since the 1970s and employment recently hit a record high, despite the minimum wage rising by more than a quarter since 2015 to now stand at 8.21 pounds an hour for those aged 25 and over.

Prime Minister Tony Blair in 1999, and rose relatively modestly following the annual advice of a committee of academics, trade unionists and business representatives.

In 2015, faced with complaints about stagnant living standards, Conservative finance minister George Osborne said he wanted to raise the minimum wage for over-25s to 60 percent of median earnings by 2020 - implying bigger annual increases. The Resolution Foundation, an anti-poverty think-tank, said in May that Britain should slow the rate at which it increases its minimum wage to avoid the risk of low-paid workers being priced out of a job during the next recession. Johnson pledged to raise the minimum wage to 10.50 pounds an hour by 2024 during the run-up to his landslide election victory on Dec. 12. — Reuters

## Business

# There's no longer a trade-off between comfort, design and performance

## Huawei Freebuds 3 users do not experience difficulty with any pressure

**KUWAIT:** The personal stereo went on sale in 1979 and arguably changed the music industry forever. No longer were listeners confined to a static location; they could indulge their musical passions wherever - and just as importantly, whenever - they wanted to. Consumers were willing to forgive the low-quality musical reproduction of cassette tapes, the large clunky players and often appalling quality headphones simply to have the freedom of choice.

Fast forward 40 years and there are far fewer challenges facing consumers who want to listen to their music libraries, podcasts, audiobooks or favorite radio stations on a portable device. Digital technologies have alleviated many of the issues around reproduction quality while nearly every smartphone on the planet provides a perfectly passable player for all but the most dedicated of audiophiles. Arguably the only part of the portable audio mix where consumers are still challenged with quality of experience is in their choice of headphones or earphones.

Why Huawei FreeBuds 3 is open-fit design with active noise cancellation?

The open-fit design of Huawei FreeBuds 3 are much more comfortable for extended periods of use even with ANC enabled, ensuring users don't experience difficulty with any pressure.

In-ear earphones will squeeze with the ear canal, and if it is worn for a long time, produce the feeling of ear swelling and earache; the open-fit earphones is obviously superior to the former in terms of comfort meeting the needs of users wearing for a long time.

Previously it's only been possible to deliver ANC with full over-the-ear or in-ear headsets that limit the scenarios they can be used in...as anyone that's tried to fall asleep on an airplane while using them will attest. Prolonged use can be uncomfortable and they can look bulky and mess up hair. Due to the open-fit design not producing a sealed effect in the

same way as the in-ear design, it must process the changing ambient sound while also cancelling the noise. Users can still hear ambient sound when wearing the earphones. The open-fit design also needs to accommodate different ear shapes and ways that the earphones are worn, which requires complex parameters for the earphones to satisfy the noise cancelling needs of different users.

Huawei is a company renowned for identifying consumer challenges and developing technological solutions to solve them that also redefine consumer expectations. Take the amazing Huawei 30 Pro smartphone, widely considered to be one of the best phone on the market for photography, a device that redefines what's possible from a smartphone camera. Or take the latest flagship handset the Huawei Mate 30 Pro; a smartphone that can shoot amazing low-light photos and videos, turning amateur snaps into high-quality content. With both of these devices consumers can achieve results they previously never thought possible from mobile technology.

Huawei's commitment to R&D and leadership in smartphone innovation has led to the development of the Huawei Freebuds 3, the world's first open-fit Active Noise-Cancelling (ANC) Bluetooth earphones that also offer true wireless stereo (TWS).

### What did Huawei do to achieve it?

Designed based on user behavior in different usage scenarios - travelling, commuting, at home listening to music, at work taking voice calls etc. - the ANC technology in a semi-open-fit earphone design allows users to enjoy a clear and comfortable audio experience, even in a noisy environment.

Using a combination of cutting-edge design, in-house chip development and complex AI algorithms, the Huawei Freebuds 3s solve the problem of how you make earphones that look good, sound amazing, offer ANC technology



and crucially are comfortable to wear for extended periods in all usage scenarios. In order to deliver the best possible experience, Huawei undertook a great deal of real-life ear canal experiments to really understand user needs and expectations. Alongside the preferences mentioned earlier around style and fit, posture and usage habits were also taken into account. Huawei analyzed the noise signal data in many scenarios, it then classified and categorized signal characteristics and completed in-depth algorithm training and parameter optimization - based on the most frequent scenarios, such as when users are in an airplane, subway, office, or coffee shop - to ensure users can enjoy optimal noise cancelling performance in day-to-day life.

### The DNA of Huawei Audio products

Most earphones will adopt a dual microphone noise reduction method to reduce the interference from the environment. Huawei goes one better with its bone voice sensor - using exclusive Huawei technology - which uses the vibration of the head to better distinguish a user's voice from background noise. The bone sensor's noise cancellation is



another Huawei's exclusive innovation and its effect is leading the industry's dual microphone noise cancellation offering.

Huawei's aerodynamically designed wind cancellation microphone duct can effectively reduce wind noise. When wind passes through the Huawei patented air tunnel, most will be blocked by the bottom of the tunnel, effectively reducing noise caused by the friction between the wind and microphone. Without the wind tunnel design, wind from all directions will directly contact the microphone and generate noise, affecting the call quality.

These innovations make the Huawei Freebuds 3 one of the most compelling earphone propositions on the market today and certainly the world's first true wireless stereo earphone with ANC in an open-fit design. The open-design element is important as

many users report a preference for this style when using earphones for a prolonged period of use. Audio technology has come a long way in a relatively short space of time and the pace of innovation is unlikely to slow down given consumer appetite for new ways to enjoy content on the move. The Huawei Freebuds 3 are the pinnacle of Huawei's audio technology and its flagship audio product. With a stated mission to dream of the impossible and then go and create it, Huawei will continue to play a leadership role in this sector, helping consumers to work smarter and enjoy their leisure time with more immersive and seamless experiences. Technological innovations like ANC play an important role in this vision; helping to protect hearing, improve voice calls for mobile working and deliver better audio experiences.

## Angola freezes assets of Santos' daughter in graft probe



Isabel dos Santos, Chairwoman of Sonangol, speaks during an event in London. —Reuters

**LISBON/JOHANNESBURG:** An Angolan court has ordered the freezing of assets held by former president Eduardo dos Santos' daughter, Isabel, her husband and a business associate as part of a corruption probe, a copy of the order seen by Reuters shows. The asset freeze follows an injunction application by the government, which is seeking to recover around \$1 billion of funds that it says it is owed by Isabel dos Santos and her associates.

It is one of the highest-profile moves in an anti-corruption drive launched by President Joao Lourenco, who ended dos Santos' nearly 40-year grip on power when he became head of state in 2017. Isabel dos Santos, who owns stakes in companies including telecoms firm Unitel and financial firms, has denied wrongdoing during her father's time in office. "I would like to leave a message of tranquility and confidence to my teams," she tweeted on Monday. "We will continue, every day, in every business, doing our best and fighting for what I believe in for Angola. The road is long, the truth will prevail. United we stand stronger."

Ranked as Africa's wealthiest woman by Forbes, Isabel dos Santos chaired the state oil company Sonangol - a crucial pillar of Angola's oil-dependent economy - before being sacked by Lourenco in late 2017. The court order, dated Dec. 23, said the asset freezes applied to Isabel dos Santos, her husband, Sindika Dokolo, and M-rio Filipe Moreira Leite da Silva, chairman of Banco Fomento Angola (BFA).

It freezes their personal bank accounts in Angola, as well as their stakes in Angolan firms including Unitel, BFA and ZAP MEDIA. Reuters was not immediately able to reach dos Santos, Dokolo or da Silva for comment yesterday. The order said the central bank would be responsible for ensuring that no funds leave the personal bank accounts of the three accused. The boards of directors of the companies subject to the asset freezes are responsible for ensuring no profits are transferred to the accused directly or through intermediaries, until a court makes a further ruling. —Reuters

## Here is how you can have fun with the Huawei nova 5T

**KUWAIT:** The mobile phone industry evolved from basic devices that can make calls on the go to 'smartphones' with access to emails and web browsing. However, today smartphones are much more than that, packing powerful hardware and stylish designs. But that doesn't mean you can't have fun with it and with the new Huawei nova 5T, your options are only limited by your imagination. Here is how you can have fun with Huawei's latest smartphone.

Strike a pose and the 5AI cameras will do all the magic

The Huawei nova 5T houses 5AI powered cameras, which is divided into a quad camera setup at the back, which includes a 48MP HD lens, 16MP Ultra-Wide angle lens, 2MP macro lens and a 2MP bokeh lens, and a powerful 32MP AI selfie superstar camera upfront (more on that later). The best thing about having such a powerful setup with AI is that you can take stunning pictures as easy as point and click. Want to take a picture while camping, or a wide angle shot of the beach or even a close-up shot of your favorite jewelry? It is all possible by just pointing your camera at it and hitting the shutter button. What's even better is that the camera's AI system will identify what you are trying to take a picture of, be it a scenic shot, a historic building or even your pet, and make sure that the results are perfect. You can even take stunning profile pictures of your friends with rich bokeh effects, making



them go green with envy of what you can do with your smartphone.

On the other hand, if you are one of the creative folk, you can get your director cap on and shoot videos that are on par with the work of a professional. Not only are you going to get stunning results, you can add fun effects like AI Portrait color which keeps your subject in full color while everything else is greyed out, or even stylish slow motion effects shot at 960fps.

### Selfies galore!

Now who doesn't like taking a selfie? The only ones who don't are those who don't like the end result of a grainy selfie that does not even resemble their faces. With the HUAWEI nova 5T, each selfie you take will look so good, that you can just upload it directly into your social media profile and then you can enjoy watching the likes and comments come in. Thanks to the 32MP Selfie Superstar lens and powerful on-board AI, each

failed to germinate in many areas," the World Food Program (WFP) said in a statement. "Forecasts of continuing hot and dry weather in the weeks ahead signal another poor harvest in April, putting lives and livelihoods at risk."

Output for the staple maize fell 50 percent to 900,000 tons this year, according to official data. The government has said it plans to import 800,000 tons to make up for the deficit. Facing soaring prices for seeds, fertilizer and chemicals, some farmers have reduced planting during the summer cropping season that started in November, farmers' unions said. A majority of Zimbabweans live in rural areas and survive on farming. But the southern African nation has only had one year of normal rainfall in the past five, according to WFP officials.

WFP says it needs \$200 million in the first half of next year to assist 4.1 million Zimbabweans.

Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube has said the government will spend \$133 million next year on subsidies for maize meal to keep the price of the most consumed food affordable.



selfie you click is fine tuned to perfection, even in low-light conditions. The Enhanced AI beautification feature will also ensure you look your very best in every photo.

### Social media - all day, every day

Once you have your pictures and videos taken, kick back and start uploading or browsing your favorite social media platform. With the Huawei nova 5T's Kirin 980 processor and 8GB of RAM, you can enjoy a smooth social media experience like never before, while the large 3750 mAh battery will give you more than enough power to browse without having to worry about recharging. Recharging is not a challenge either, as the 22.5W Huawei SuperCharge will recharge your phone back up to 50% in just 30 minutes.

### Gaming or movies - enjoy it all

Another advantage of powerful hardware is the unprecedented performance.

Mobile gaming is the new fad these days and be it a casual game or a graphic intensive racing title, the Huawei nova 5T can ace it all. While the powerful hardware, boosted by GPU Turbo 3.0 promises smoother performance, the large battery ensures longer gameplay, no matter how intense your gaming sessions are.

If gaming is not your thing, the Huawei nova 5T is also perfect for watching movies. With its 6.26 inch All-View FHD+ display and Huawei Histen 6.0 with virtual 9.1 channel surround sound, you now hold a mini theatre in your hand. To top it all off, the Huawei nova 5T is also a smartphone that you have fun by simply showing it off. The phone's stylish design comes in three attractive colors to choose from, Black, Crush Blue and Midsummer Purple, complete with a trendy new logo. With its stylish designs and trendy colors, the Huawei nova 5T guarantees an overall exciting experience.

## UN warns of another poor harvest in Zimbabwe next year

**HARARE:** The United Nations warned yesterday that Zimbabwe faced another poor harvest in 2020 because of patchy rains, compounding problems for millions of people already grappling with a drought and the worst economic crisis in a decade. Soaring inflation, shortages of foreign exchange, fuel and electricity have brought back memories of the hyperinflation of a decade ago, amid criticism that President Emmerson Mnangagwa has failed to turn around the economy.

"This season's rains are again late and inadequate, with planted seeds having



HARARE: The United Nations warned yesterday that Zimbabwe faced another poor harvest in 2020 because of patchy rains, compounding problems for millions of people already grappling with a drought and the worst economic crisis in a decade.

The economic crisis has led to growing political tensions, with police clamping down on dissent, leading to opposition

claims that Mnangagwa is reverting to the harsh tactics seen under the late Robert Mugabe's rule. —Reuters

Travel



# Why wouldn't you travel more in 2020 when there are so many benefits of traveling?!

Everyone keeps saying how important it is to travel. So what's all this fuss about? Why do people travel and love travelling?

More importantly: why should we travel more?

The benefits of traveling are not just a one-time thing: traveling changes you physically and psychologically. Having little time or money isn't a valid excuse. You can fly for cheap very easily. If you have a full-time job and a family, you can still travel on the weekends or holidays, even with a baby.

Here are some of the main benefits of traveling. And I'm sure that once you get started, you'll find some more yourself!

## 1. Traveling improves your health

From cutting down on stress, to lowering your chances of developing a heart disease, the health benefits of traveling are huge. You may stay sitting on a chair all day long at the workplace: including some walking to your trip is sure to make your body feel better. For some people, wandering abroad is even a cure for depression and anxiety. Of course, it's not a foolproof cure, but it might help you feel better, both physically and psychologically.

Traveling more is likely to have a tremendous impact on your mental well-being, especially if you're no used to going out of your comfort zone. Trust me: travel more and your doctor will be happy. Be sure to get in touch with your physician, they might recommend some medication to accompany you in your travels, especially if you're heading to regions of the globe with potentially dangerous diseases.

## 2. Traveling disconnects you from your daily life

This is extremely related to my previous point. We tend to be so caught up in our daily lives that sometimes by simply sticking around we may cause more harm than good. Your boss is taking over your life? Kids are driving you mad? Your parents are trying to make you live the life they want? How long do you think you can handle this pressure before you burst and everything falls apart?

Sometimes it is best to take a step back, take a deep breath and take go that Tower Bridge selfie. In all seriousness, travel is not a bad option - it is the most natural way of inducing the feeling you miss someone or that you are missed. The trick is to leave with a bit of preparation to avoid making a mistake during your journey. Plus, if you're flying, you better start thinking about booking your tickets sooner than later.

## 3. Traveling makes you smarter

Get used to picking up new words in a different language every time you travel and you will see improvements in your brain capacities, as Dan Roitman wrote in the Huffington Post. If only this, start getting familiar with travel jargon. Even more than "just" languages, traveling helps you learn about yourself. You might run into challenging situations where you need to be resourceful and think differently. I'm sure that you will develop a new set of skills that you didn't suspect you had within you.



## 4. Traveling improves your understanding of other cultures

Why we travel may differ from one person to another, but people travelling always develop empathy and a deeper understanding of other cultures.

Being more understanding and tolerant about a culture different than ours is part of being smarter, but I consider it as a benefits of traveling in itself. There is a quote by Saint Augustine, which goes "The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page". You could think of it this way: if you read what's in the news or watch the news on TV and don't question it, you're missing on a ton of information. You might think that it makes you smarter and more aware of the world, but it's the exact opposite: it narrows your mind to a unique and biased perspective.

Sure, you probably feel comfortable where you are, but that is just a fraction of the world! If you are a student, take advantage of programs such as Erasmus to get to know more people, experience and understand their culture. Dare traveling to regions you have a skeptical opinion about. I bet that you will change your mind and realize that everything is not so bad abroad.

## 5. Traveling makes you more interesting

I have no doubt that you're quite the conversationalist. That being said, including a few stories from abroad is likely to grant you even more attention. Mentioning something that most people aren't familiar with or bring a new perspective is always a good way to shine in a social situation. No need to write a whole travel essay, just discuss what you've seen and where you've been: people who are accustomed to their daily life will travel with your words.

During my trip to Egypt, my Airbnb host and I went out for dinner. He had been to some many different places, the conversation lasted all night long, and I wasn't bored for one minute.

If you're not yet an Airbnb user, use this link to get a few free credits and check out this post on how to get started.



Who do you think people want to listen to: the guy who spent his vacations at home doing some gardening and reading the newspaper, or the one who spent a week in Cuba, driving an old American car, swimming with dolphins and tasting deliciously spicy food? I know which story I want to hear about...

## 6. Traveling allows you to try amazing food

Speaking of food, I bet you're one hell of a chef and your home meals are delicious. But there is no such thing as trying a typical local dish from another country. Don't trick yourself into going to the Sushi shop next door: you don't know what sushi tastes like until you've been to Japan. As you travel, you discover the real thing, and discover that it's usually very different from what you're used to.

Eating local food in a new country is an entirely new experience. All the flavors are different. Here me out: I'm French and I love our local recipes. You do to. But let's not kid ourselves: some change would be more than welcome in our daily diet. If only because we're naturally curious. Some food bloggers travel thousands of kilometers for a specific dish! The least you can do is travel to the

next region and try something new.

## 7. Traveling makes you feel like an adventurer

Despite the fact that the world has never been as well connected as today, there are still places that are little known to the average tourist. Setting up a list of places you want to visit is extremely motivating. You have something tangible to go after. I'm currently working on my own bucket list, and I think I'll never see the end of it, with all these amazing destinations.

The benefit of traveling to a new place is that it forces you to face the unknown and think differently. You don't need to go spend a month in the jungle! If you live in a large city, just going on a hike over the weekend will make you feel different. Adventures require novelty, so get out of your comfort zone. It might be scary, but in retrospect, you'll see it as the best decision you ever made!

## 8. Traveling expands your (real) social network

Believe it or not, social networks was once like a real thing - in real life. Crazy, I know. One of the main reasons why I love

traveling is that I believe that establishing connections and building a network abroad is one of the smartest things you can do in today's world. It is sometimes hard to build long-lasting relationship with the people you meet abroad, but it doesn't mean it's not worth meeting new people!

Take this example: I've spent last year's New Year's Eve in Tanzania. I slept for two days at the flat of an Egyptian expat. I met him on Couchsurfing, once of the best ways to find cheap accommodation when you travel. Now, a year later, this guy invites me to his wedding in Egypt! How amazing is that?! Some connections you make over your travels are surprisingly strong.

## 9. Traveling creates lifetime memories

My grandfather was an amazing storyteller and he used to tell me stories of the trips he made when he was younger. One of my favorites is how he tried eating with chopsticks in China for the first time. He regretted not traveling more as a young man. Years later, he still remembered everything in details: because traveling made a real impression on him. And it probably will on you too.

No matter how insignificant it may seem, the fact that you've had an experience abroad, something that was out of the ordinary, creates a memory that you will remember for a long time.

I think that creating those memories is why many people keep traveling.

## 10. Traveling makes you love your home even more

"The magic thing about home is that it feels good to leave, and it feels even better to come back". You will truly understand the meaning of those words by Wendy Wunder, only upon your return home. On the one hand, it would seem that you're back where you started, same setting, same people, same problems. Yet you're not the same - you're new, full of new knowledge and ideas!

I know that I was getting bored after living my whole life in the same place. I needed to get out, I need a change of scene. I was focusing only the negative: how there isn't much to do around, how you always meet the same people, how nothing changes. Now, when I come home, I'm glad about all of this and I see only the positive.

## Final Words On the Benefits of Traveling

I hope that this travel article makes you want to travel more in 2020. As you travel, you realize that the world is a much better place than what you can see on TV when watching the news.

There is a quote by Mark Twain that I love: "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do." Cliché as this may sound, the money you spend on travel, is an investment in yourself. Travel doesn't make you feel as bad for spending money.

And one last benefit of traveling: it might provide some money when your flight is disrupted! Did you know that you could get up to 600€ in compensation when your flight is delayed by at least 3 hours or cancelled?



Health & Science

# China probes mystery pneumonia outbreak amid SARS fears

BEIJING: Authorities are investigating an outbreak of viral pneumonia in central China amid online speculation that it might be linked to SARS, the flu-like virus that killed hundreds of people a decade ago. There were 27 cases of "viral pneumonia of unknown origin" reported in Wuhan, in central Hubei province, the city's health commission said in a statement.

Seven patients were in a critical condition, while the others were stable and two could be discharged soon, the commission said. Initial lab tests have found that there was no "apparent human-to-human transmission" and that no medical staff were infected, the statement said. "Investigation of the cause of infection is ongoing," it added.

All patients have been quarantined and their

close contacts are under medical observation, according to the commission. Most of the patients worked at a seafood market in the city, it said. News of the mystery pneumonia outbreak led to speculation online that it might be linked to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, a highly contagious respiratory disease.

"A number of health officials in Wuhan said that the cause of the current outbreak is not clear, and it cannot be concluded that it is the SARS virus as rumored online," the official newspaper People's Daily said on its Weibo microblog. "Other severe pneumonia is more likely," it said. A team of experts from the National Health Commission were dispatched Tuesday to Wuhan and are "currently conducting relevant inspection and verification work."

state broadcaster CCTV reported. An emergency notification issued Monday by the Wuhan municipal health committee urged hospitals to offer treatment and report cases in a "timely manner." The World Health Organization (WHO) criticized China for under reporting the number of SARS cases following the outbreak in 2003. SARS killed 349 people in mainland China and another 299 in Hong Kong in 2003.

The virus, which infected more than 8,000 people around the world, is expected to have originated in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong, according to WHO. China sacked its then health minister Zhang Wenkang for the poor handling of the crisis in 2003, several months after the first case was reported. WHO announced that China was free of SARS in May 2004. — AFP

## DR Congo Ebola death toll 2,231 to date: Agency



BUTEMBO: In this file photo, health workers carry a coffin containing a victim of Ebola virus on May 16, 2019 in Butembo. — AFP

BENI: A total of 2,231 people have died out of 3,373 declared cases of Ebola in the current epidemic in the DR Congo, according to the agency overseeing the response, health officials said. Deadly unrest in the fragile state has hampered the fight against the disease during the latest epidemic, which broke out on August 1, 2018, with the eastern provinces of North Kivu and Ituri particularly badly hit.

Both areas, beset by violence for two decades, have seen repeated attacks on Ebola health workers by dozens of armed groups as well as on health sites set up to treat victims. More than 200 civilians have been killed in the troubled east since November in clashes blamed on the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a militia group of Ugandan origin which officials blame for a string of massacres in recent weeks.

Health authorities meanwhile said Sunday that 341 suspected Ebola cases were being investigated, a day after the Multisectoral Committee for Epidemic Response (CMRE) monitoring the disease unveiled its latest batch of data Saturday. The current epidemic is the tenth overall and the second deadliest on record since a 2014-16 outbreak struck west Africa, killing more than 11,300. — AFP

## Romanian woman dies after 'igniting' during hospital op

BUCHAREST: A woman has died after being set on fire during a hospital operation in Romania, the health ministry said Monday, in a case which has cast a spotlight on the ailing health system. The pancreatic cancer patient died Sunday after suffering burns to 40 percent of her body when surgeons used an electrical scalpel despite her being treated with an alcohol-based disinfectant.

Contact with the flammable disinfectant caused combustion and the patient "ignited like a torch," lawmaker Emanuel Ungureanu said on his Facebook page, citing medical staff at the capital's Floreasca urgent care

hospital. A nurse threw a bucket of water onto the 66-year-old Romanian to prevent the December 22 fire from spreading. The health ministry vowed to investigate the "unfortunate incident."

"The surgeons should have been aware that it is prohibited to use an alcohol-based disinfectant during surgical procedures performed with an electric scalpel," deputy minister Horatiu Moldovan said. The victim's family said the medical staff had spoken of an "accident", but declined to offer details. Despite some improvements due to increased funding, Romania's hospital system still suffers from dilapidated equipment and a shortage of doctors, and finds itself at the heart of repeated scandals. In a 2015 nightclub fire that killed 64 people — 26 on site and 38 others later — a former health minister stands accused of having delayed, and even blocked, the transfer of burn victims abroad. They subsequently died in ill-equipped Romanian hospitals. An inquiry is still ongoing. — AFP

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**Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad**  
Surgery Department  
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo - Rectal Surgeon

مسشفى دار الشفاء  
Dar Al Shifa Hospital  
Tele:1802 555

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Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

**DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM**  
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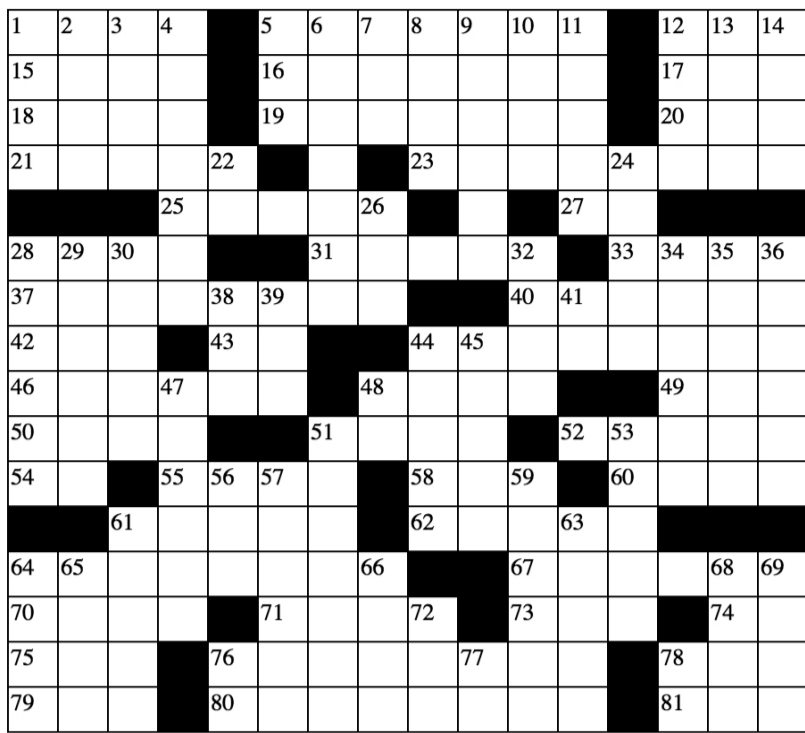
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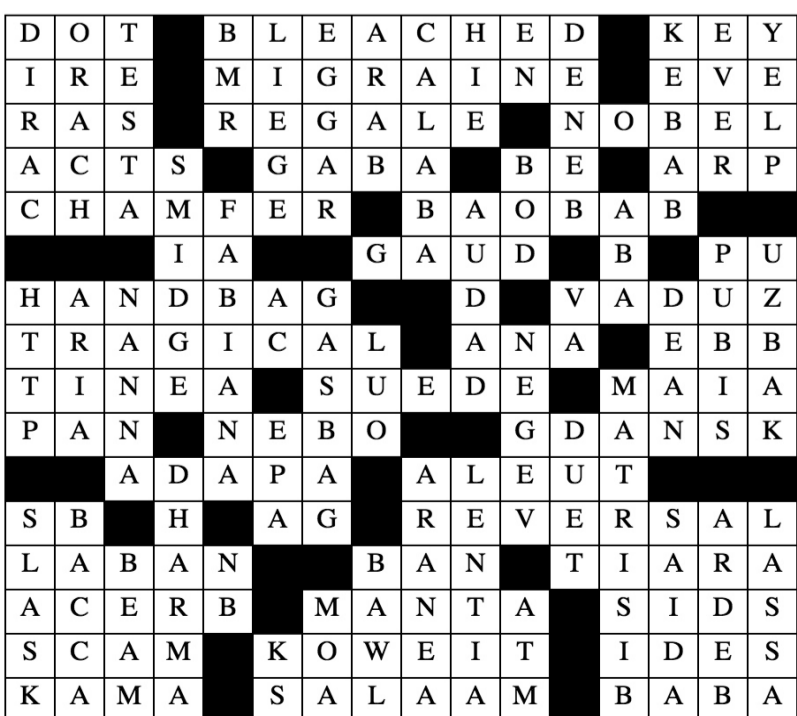
1. A loose and crumbling earthy deposit consisting mainly of calcite or dolomite.
5. A bowling pin of the type used in ninepins (or in England) skittles.
12. The network in the reticular formation that serves an alerting or arousal function.
15. A mythical Greek hero.
16. Region of northwestern Italy on the Ligurian Sea.
17. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
18. Of or relating to the Isle of Man or its inhabitants or their language.
19. A contagious skin infection caused by the itch mite.
20. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
21. An anti-TNF compound (trade name Arava) that is given orally.
23. Nativeness by virtue of originating or occurring naturally (as in a particular place).
25. (anatomy) Of or relating to the ilium.
27. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
28. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
31. A Russian prison camp for political prisoners.
33. An endorsement.
37. A payment of money sent to a person in another place.
40. Having short a smooth or spirally ridged shell with thick usually toothed outer lip and toothed operculum.
42. One of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
43. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
46. 1 species.
49. An undergarment worn by women to support their breasts.
50. (Scotland) A slope or hillside.
52. Clearly apparent or obvious to the mind or senses.
54. A Loloish language.
55. Offering fun and gaiety.
58. God of the earth.
60. Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
62. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
64. Someone who prefers negotiations to armed conflict in the conduct of foreign relations.
67. A member of an Algonquian people who lived west of Lake Superior.
70. In a competent capable manner.
71. Marked by lack of intellectual depth.
73. Having undesirable or negative qualities.
74. Before noon.
75. A pass between mountain peaks.
79. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
80. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
81. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.

DOWN

1. Informal terms for a mother.
- Slightly open.
- Type genus of the Ranidae.
- Being eight more than seventy.

5. A caustic detergent useful for removing grease.
6. A Bantu language spoken by the Chaga people in northern Tanzania.
7. One of the most common of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
8. Conduit consisting of a long hollow object (usually cylindrical) used to hold and conduct liquids or gases.
9. A genus of Scolopacidae.
10. A German art song of the 19th century for voice and piano.
11. (of pain or sorrow) Made easier to bear.
12. East Indian cereal grass whose seed yield a somewhat bitter flour, a staple in the Orient.
13. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
14. A fraudulent business scheme.
22. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
24. The Oceanic language spoken by the Maori people in New Zealand.
26. A passage with access only at one end.
29. Sudanese sorghums having white seeds.
30. Naked freshwater or marine or parasitic protozoa that form temporary pseudopods for feeding and locomotion.
32. Any of various small biting flies.
34. A knapsack (usually for a soldier).
35. An antibiotic (trade name Erythrocin or E-Mycin or Ethril or Ilosone or Pediamycin) obtained from the actinomycete Streptomyces erythreus.
36. Saudi Arabian minister of petroleum who was a central figure in the creation of OPEC (born in 1930).
38. A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
39. The bill in a restaurant.
41. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
44. Of or relating to Iraq or its people or culture.
45. Income (at invoice values) received for goods and services over some given period of time.
47. (law) A gift of personal property by will.
48. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
51. Of or relating to or located at the base.
53. (of language) Transparently clear.
56. Used of a single unit or thing.
57. A mobile mass of muscular tissue covered with mucous membrane and located in the oral cavity.
59. African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
61. South African plant widely cultivated for its showy pure white spathe and yellow spadix.
63. A genus of Platalea.
65. Very dark black.
66. A large oven for firing or burning or drying such things as porcelain or bricks.
68. A baton used by a magician or water diviner.
69. Type genus of the Amiidae.
72. The cry made by sheep.
76. A unit of power equal to 746 watts.
77. The ratio of the circumference to the diameter of a circle.
78. The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

If you aren't already into real estate, gardening, or interior decorating, Aries, today you might discover a talent for one or all of these fields and decide to pursue it. You might have it in mind as a possible future source of income, and therefore you could consider looking into getting some formal training in the field. Which one you choose, if any, is of course up to you. Consider them all carefully and then decide which is best.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your energy and enthusiasm for life should be operating at a very high level today, Taurus. You may therefore want to get together with some of your friends, and might even organize an impromptu social event of some kind. Exciting news and stimulating conversation should keep your mind busy for a long time. At some point you'll want to work off some of that physical energy, perhaps by taking a brisk walk or another kind of workout. Enjoy your day.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

A chance to make some extra money could come today through someone you know slightly, Gemini, perhaps from a social event you both once attended. You might not be totally familiar with the type of work involved, but today your mind is sharp and so you'll probably pick it up quickly. The only downside is that you could work harder than you need to, and therefore there's a danger of tiring yourself out. Take care of yourself.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

A social event or group meeting could ignite your enthusiasm about new goals, Cancer. These goals may involve giving you a chance to use your creative talents as well as enjoy the companionship and camaraderie of your fellow group members. Therefore, whatever events are scheduled today might all prove to be both satisfying and enjoyable for you. Don't hesitate! Move on ahead, do something worthwhile, and enjoy yourself.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Today, Leo, you might begin work on a project that you've wanted to do for a long time. This may be career related or personal, but either way it should advance you in whatever direction that you want to go. The only downside is that you might be a bit too hard on yourself and far too critical of your work. Try to be objective and view your own work as fairly as you would view the work of others.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Today, Virgo, you're expanding your horizons. You and a friend could plan a vacation that you're really excited about. It could involve a trip by air, perhaps across the ocean. The trip is mainly for pleasure, but it probably involves a place you've always been interested in and are anxious to see, so it's an educational trip as well. You have a lot to look forward to. Make the most of it and have fun.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Some good news may reach your ears via the grapevine regarding your career. This might involve a raise in salary, Libra, or it could be new benefits, new profit sharing plans, or anything that may involve investments or money that comes your way above and beyond a paycheck. Contracts or other legal papers that are executed today should definitely work in your favor, so if you've been putting off signing any, do it today!



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

A new and exciting potential love relationship could pop into your life today, Scorpio. This is apt to be the kind of instant attraction that sets your nerves tingling and your blood boiling! Whether or not you decide to pursue this attraction, of course, depends on your situation, but whatever you decide, you're likely to enjoy feeling the thrill of it today. Therefore, make sure you look your best when you go out! You'll be glad you did.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Today, Sagittarius, you should be feeling especially energetic and enthusiastic. Therefore, this is a great day to start a new enterprise, perhaps involving your home, or just about any kind of life enhancement. More than one opportunity could present itself to you. One could entail creative activities and the other might be more mundane. Undoubtedly, whether you decide to take both or only one, you're going to be busy for a while. Work hard!



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Plans for a party or group gathering of some kind could take up much of your time and energy, Capricorn. You might have a lot of letters to write, phone calls to make, or other communications to take care of, but this is likely to prove to be a great excuse for getting in touch with your friends. Today could prove to be a kind of party-before-the-party, which is right up your alley. Enjoy your day!



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Though you might wake up today feeling a little feverish, Aquarius, as the day progresses you'll be your old self again. You should be putting a lot of effort into work, particularly mundane chores and tasks that you'd rather not do. Get them out of the way and then move on to projects that interest you and can fire your ambition and motivation. Work hard in the morning and enjoy the rest of the day.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This is a great day to start any project that concerns writing, acting, or speaking, Pisces. Your creative energies should be flowing freely and abundantly today, and you should enjoy the rush of new ideas that keep popping into your head. A number of stimulating conversations with close friends should keep your energies churning. Expect to spend a lot of time on the phone, or perhaps in the car dropping in on these friends. Enjoy your day!

Wordsearch Puzzle

Summer Olympics

Find and circle all of the Summer Olympic events that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.

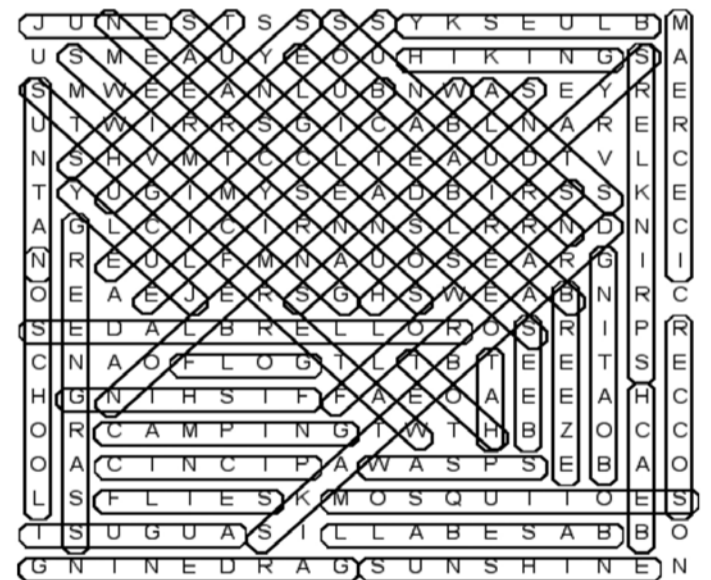
Note: Similarly named events are hidden separately. For example, SWIMMING and SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING do not overlap.



- ARCHERY
- ATHLETICS
- BADMINTON
- BASEBALL
- BASKETBALL
- BEACH VOLLEYBALL
- BOXING
- CANOEING
- CYCLING
- DIVING
- EQUESTRIANISM
- FENCING
- FOOTBALL
- GYMNASTICS
- HANDBALL
- HOCKEY
- JUDO
- MODERN PENTATHLON
- RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS
- ROWING
- SHOOTING
- SOFTBALL
- SWIMMING
- SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING
- TABLE TENNIS
- TAEKWONDO
- TENNIS
- TRAMPOLINING
- TRIATHLON
- VOLLEYBALL
- WATER POLO
- WEIGHTLIFTING
- WRESTLING
- YACHTING

Yesterday's Solution

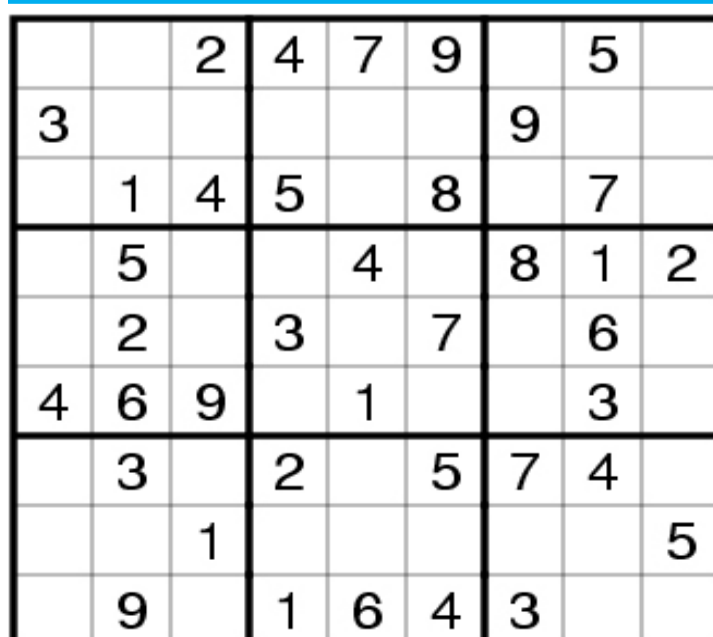
Summer



- ANTS
- AUGUST
- BARBECUE
- BASEBALL
- BEACH
- BEEES
- BICYCLE
- BLUE SKY
- BOATING
- BREEZE
- CAMPING
- FISHING
- FLIES
- FLOWERS
- GARDENING
- GOLF
- GREEN GRASS
- HAT
- HIKING
- HOLIDAYS
- HOT
- ICE CREAM
- JULY
- JUNE
- MOSQUITOES
- NO SCHOOL
- PICNIC
- ROLLER BLADES
- SANDALS
- SKATEBOARD
- SOCCER
- SPLINTICE
- SPRINKLERS
- SUNBURN
- SUNGLASSES
- SUNSCREEN
- SUNSHINE
- SUNTAN
- SWEAT
- SWIMMING
- U V RAYS
- WASPS
- WATER FIGHTS
- WATERMELON

The hidden message is: SUMMER VACATION

Daily SuDoku



easy

Yesterday's Solution



hard

# Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1, 2020



New Year's Eve fireworks erupt over Sydney's iconic Harbour Bridge and Opera House during the fireworks show early today. — AFP photos

## Smoky Sydney kicks off New Year parties with fireworks

Smoke-choked Sydney ushered in the New Year with a huge fireworks display, kicking off celebrations for billions around the world and ringing in the new decade. Australia's largest city usually puts on a dazzling display of pyrotechnics over the glittering harbor, but this year's celebrations have been overshadowed by calls to cancel the fireworks as devastating bushfires rage across the country. Toxic smoke haze has shrouded Sydney for weeks and a petition to cancel the event out of respect for fire victims attracted more than 280,000 signatures.

Fireworks displays were scrapped in Australia's capital, Canberra, and Sydney's western suburbs due to elevated fire danger and extreme weather conditions. Critics wanted Sydney to use the Aus\$6.5 million (\$4.5 million) spent on the display to fight bushfires ringing the city, but officials say the event is worth Aus\$130 million to the economy and cancelling it would not help those impacted by the fires. "We have committed to harnessing the enormous power of the event to raise more money for drought- and fire-affected communities," Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore said.

More than 100,000 fireworks lit up the skyline for the hundreds of thousands of spectators thronging the city center. Crowds were warned to take care as strong winds gusted in the harbour, forcing the cancellation of a boat display that would have blasted water into the sky.

### Celebrations amid upheaval

As the clock ticked past midnight, major cities in Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas embraced the celebrations, but in many places the festivities were marked by turmoil and political upheaval. After more than six months of near-daily demonstrations, Hong Kong ushered in 2019 with a series of pro-democracy rallies planned for New Year's Eve. Protesters formed human chains that stretched across busy shopping streets and through residential neighborhoods.



A woman poses for a picture in front of a 2020 luminous sign after midnight during a countdown event to mark the New Year in central Seoul today.

In Paris, 250,000 to 300,000 people usually gather on the Champs-Élysées to welcome the New Year, but turnout suffered amid a gruelling transport strike that has spelt weeks of misery for commuters. Midnight in London was marked by the chimes of Big Ben, which has been silent during a long restoration, as traditional fireworks are set off over the Thames for the last new year before Brexit. It follows a year of political wrangling that led to the resignation of Prime Minister Theresa May and culminated in Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson pledging to leave the European Union on January 31.

In Moscow, President Vladimir Putin delivered his annual New Year address, 20 years after he was elevated to the presidency by Boris Yeltsin's shock resignation in his 1999 end-of-year speech. Russia celebrated the new decade over several time zones, with Muscovites flock-

ing to the center of the capital for fireworks over the Kremlin.

### Looking to 2020

As partygoers embraced the festivities, attention will turn to 2020 and whether it will be as tumultuous as the previous year, which saw an explosion of demonstrations as people demanded an overhaul of entrenched political systems and action on climate change. The protests in Hong Kong, sparked by a now-abandoned bill to allow extraditions to the authoritarian mainland, have since morphed into a popular revolt against Beijing's control.

The city's biggest crisis since the former British colony's return to Chinese rule in 1997 appears set to spill over in 2020, with protesters already preparing the year's protest schedule and the government showing no sign of backing down. Anti-government protests also



A man plays with his child during the last sunset of the year at Lhoknga beach of Aceh province yesterday.

swept Latin America, North Africa and the Middle East in 2019, including mass demonstrations that brought down leaders in Lebanon, Algeria, Sudan and Bolivia.

Climate change sparked rallies worldwide calling for action, initiated by Swedish teen activist Greta Thunberg, as temperatures soared above records, Iceland lost its first glacier to climate change, and Venice was swamped by flooding not seen in decades. US President Donald Trump again dominated headlines in 2019, culminating in his historic impeachment by the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives on two counts of abuse of office and obstruction of Congress. The Republican-controlled Senate is unlikely to convict Trump in a trial expected to begin in January but the controversy over claims he pressured Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden, a rival in his 2020 re-election bid, will linger until the November poll. — AFP



Revellers take a selfie while arriving for a New Year countdown party outside a shopping mall in downtown Bangkok yesterday.



A Yemeni woman checks a decoration with large numbers for the year 2020 installed at a shop in the southern coastal city of Aden yesterday.



Youths jump for a picture during the last sunset of 2019 in Karachi yesterday.

# Grown from necessity: Vertical farming takes off in ageing Japan



This photo taken on Nov 12, 2019 shows lettuce growing in a facility that uses vertical farming techniques in Kyoto. — AFP photos

The nondescript building on an industrial site near Kyoto gives little hint to the productivity inside: 30,000 heads of lettuce grow here daily, under artificial light and with barely any human intervention. This "vegetable factory", using the latest vertical farming techniques, is part of a trend born out of necessity in Japan, where traditional farming faces a double threat from the ageing population and migration towards the cities.

With the average age of a farmer in Japan at 67 and few candidates to replace those dying out, the country has been forced to become a pioneer in so-called vertical farming. Globally renowned firms such as Panasonic, Toshiba and Fujitsu have tried their hand - converting old semi-conductor production lines with varying levels of success.

One of the few companies to turn a quick profit, Spread produces 11 million heads of lettuce annually from its latest factory in Kyoto, a vast sterile area where the vegetables are stacked on shelves several metres high. Machines shift the lettuces



Employees work along a sorting and packing line at the facility.

around the factory to areas where the light, temperature and humidity are ideal for that stage of growth. The process works without soil or pesticide, and only a dozen or so humans are employed to collect the lettuce at the end.

Other countries have employed vertical farming techniques - notably in Denmark and the United States -

but Japan's population crisis means the farmers are dying out, with question marks over how the world's third-biggest economy will feed itself. "Given the lack of manpower and decline in agricultural production, I felt a new system was needed," Shinji Inada, Spread's boss, told AFP.

Spread has taken some time to make the process nearly fully automated: an older factory in Kyoto still employs several dozen humans to move the lettuce - a "difficult task", admits one staff member. But the advantages are clear: "We can produce in large quantities and at a stable rate all year round, without being affected by temperature changes," said Inada. "The other benefit is that we have few losses because our products are preserved for longer," added the vegetable tycoon.

#### 'Sustainable agriculture'

Inada said the firm initially experienced some difficulty in selling the lettuce, but they have now grown a good brand by producing consistent quality at a consistent price - in a

country where prices vary considerably depending on the season. Spread's lettuce are found on supermarket shelves in Kyoto and the capital Tokyo and Inada has grand expansion visions to move production closer to where the vegetables are consumed.

The firm is building a factory in Narita near Tokyo and is eyeing further afield to countries where the climate is not suited for such agriculture. "We can easily export our production system to very warm or very cold climates to grow lettuce," said Inada. But is this system environmentally friendly? Inada said he hesitated before launching the concept over this very question but finally reasoned the pros outweighed the cons. "It's true that we use more energy compared to production using the sun, but on the other hand our productivity is higher over a similar surface area," he said.

The system allows the firm to produce eight crops of lettuce per year, irrespective of the season. Spread also uses significantly less water than traditional agricultural methods. "I believe we are contributing to a sustainable agriculture for our society," claims Inada. Japan already has around 200 lettuce factories using artificial light but the majority of these are small-scale but according to specialist consultancy group Innoplex, such factories will double in number by 2025.

And other companies are jumping on the smart-agriculture bandwagon, with Mitsubishi Gas Chemical building a factory in northeastern Fukushima that will produce 32,000 heads of lettuce daily. Nor is it just lettuce: Tomatoes and strawberries grown by computer under artificial light are on their way to a table near you. — AFP



Employees work along a sorting and packing line at the facility.



An employee inspects lettuce.



An employee boxes packed lettuce at the facility.

## Ugandan walkers plant trees to keep the climate fit

A group of soaked walkers waited under a bridge for the heavy rain to stop so they could continue their trek to plant trees in a town about 150 km from Uganda's capital. Over the previous two days, the Walkers Association of Uganda had covered about a third of the distance on foot to their destination in the eastern district of Kamuli. On its regular outings, the group - not your average bunch of fitness fanatics - raises awareness about climate change and plants trees on stopovers at schools, markets and factories, as well as denuded land and roadsides.

"For us, walking is not just a form of physical exercise - it is a tool we use to advocate against climate change," said Geoffrey "Walker" Ayeni, 41, a member of the group since 2007. In 2017, the association decided to add climate activism to its goals. The move came after 30,000 people were displaced by floods in the east of the country, some of them hit by landslides in the Mountain Elgon region along the Kenyan border.

In March 2016, Uganda had recorded its highest

temperatures in decades at close to 38 degrees Celsius, according to the national meteorological authority, followed by a long dry spell. "I couldn't just sit and watch," said Ayeni. He kicked off the campaign by walking almost 320 km alone, from Kampala to Kapchorwa in eastern Uganda, to draw attention to climate change. Along the way, he delivered petitions to district governments, calling for environmental protection.

"I felt like it was our moral duty to do something; to move across the country and tell people about climate change and encourage them to adopt healthy practices like tree-planting," said Ayeni, clutching his beaded walking stick in the colors of the Ugandan flag.

#### 'Alarming' tree loss

As climate change takes a toll globally with more extreme weather and rising seas, researchers say one cost-effective solution is to plant trees. In July, scientists at the Switzerland-based Crowther Lab said the best way to keep climate change in check would be to replant destroyed forest areas the size of the United States, which could capture two-thirds of the carbon humans have emitted since pre-industrial times.

In East Africa, communities are already experiencing the adverse effects of a warming planet, with erratic and extreme weather becoming common. Deforestation adds to the dangers, as tree loss disrupts local rainfall cycles and slopes become unstable. In the past 25 years, Uganda has lost an average of 122,000 hectares of forests every year due to large-scale tree-cutting for

timber and charcoal-burning.

Civil society groups have blamed a lack of government capacity to coordinate and enforce preventive policies, as well as insufficient funding to monitor and protect forests. "The rate at which trees are being cut down is alarming. As activists, we can't just sit and wait for the government to step in," said Ayeni. In northern Uganda, a major hub for charcoal production and home to endangered tree species like shea and Afzelia africana, local groups are naming and shaming key players involved in the lucrative charcoal business.

The walkers, meanwhile, have a target of planting a million "symbolic tree saplings" each year on their quarterly expeditions of up to two weeks, with the aim of encouraging local communities to embrace the effort themselves. The group has 50 members from all walks of life - civil servants, business people and students - who work on a voluntary basis, backed by donations from well-wishers.

As well as tackling climate change, they also address gender issues, such as promoting girls' education, said member Grace Santa Achan. In the early days, the group focused more on making people aware of climate change and forest loss than planting trees because of the tricky logistics of carrying saplings and tools. But in 2017 they approached the environment ministry, asking it to provide seedlings. "Since that time, we don't have to worry about carrying seedlings because we are supported by every (district) environment office," said Achan.

Florence Grace Adongo, director of water resources management at the Ministry of Water and Environment, said working with the group was a cost-effective approach. "Before it was hard to reach out to every community because we had a problem with inadequate manpower," she said. "But now this group is able to reach out to the people on the grassroots for us." In Nakasongola and Luwero districts, for example, the walkers planted between 80 and 100 "symbolic" trees in each place, spurring communities to plant thousands more, she noted.

#### Branching out

The walkers are becoming well-known and are often showered with gifts on their travels by local communities, including retailers, pedestrians and street vendors. Next March, during national environment week, the group plans to walk about 270 km to Mbarara district in the southwest to "save" the River Rwizi, whose water level has dropped alarmingly. Trees will be planted along its buffer zones to help restore water catchment areas that have been damaged by sand mining and human encroachment on the land. The group is also planning to go further afield, walking some 1,700 km south to Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania's commercial hub on the Indian Ocean, in Nov 2020. "This problem affects all of us," said Ayeni. "That is why we want to cross borders and spread our word." —Reuters

Lifestyle | Decade in Review



This Feb 3, 2009 image obtained from NASA shows the Hazardous Processing Facility at Astrotech in Titusville, Florida, as NASA's Kepler spacecraft is placed on a stand for fueling. — AFP photos

# CRISPR, gravity waves, water on Mars: A decade of discoveries

From finding the building blocks for life on Mars to breakthroughs in gene editing and the rise of artificial intelligence, here are six major scientific discoveries that shaped the 2010s - and what leading experts say could come next.

### Are we alone?

We don't yet know whether there was ever life on Mars - but thanks to a small, six-wheeled robot, we do know the Red Planet was habitable. Shortly after landing on August 6, 2012, NASA's Curiosity rover discovered rounded pebbles - new evidence that rivers flowed there billions of years ago. The proof has since multiplied, showing there was in fact a lot of water on Mars - the surface was covered in hot springs, lakes, and maybe even oceans.

Curiosity also discovered what NASA calls the building blocks of life, complex organic molecules, in 2014. And so the hunt continues for signs that Earth-based life is not (or wasn't always) alone. Two new rovers will be launched next year - America's Mars 2020 and Europe's Rosalind Franklin rovers, looking for ancient microbes. "Going into the coming decade, Mars research will shift from the question 'Was Mars habitable?' to 'Did (or does) Mars support life?'" said Emily Lakdawalla, a geologist at The Planetary Society.

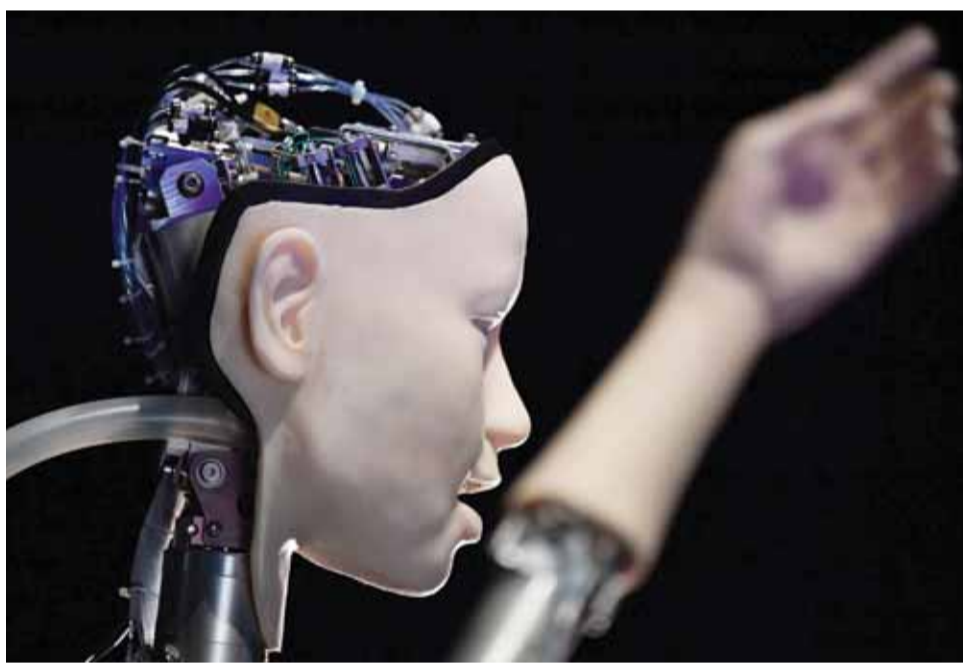
### Einstein was right (again)

We had long thought of the little corner of the universe that we call home as unique, but observations made thanks to the Kepler space telescope blew apart those pretensions. Launched in 2009, the Kepler mission helped identify more than 2,600 planets outside of our solar system, also known as exoplanets - and astronomers believe each star has a planet, meaning there are billions out there. Kepler's successor TESS was launched by NASA in 2018, as we scope out the potential for extraterrestrial life.

Expect more detailed analysis of the chemical composition of these planets' atmospheres in the 2020s, said Tim Swindle, an astrophysicist at the University of Arizona. We also got our first glimpse of a black hole this year thanks to the groundbreaking work of the Event Horizon Telescope collaboration. "What I predict is that by the end of the next decade, we will be making high quality real-time movies of black holes that reveal not just how they look, but how they act on the cosmic stage," Shp Doeleman, the project's director, told AFP.

But one event from the decade undoubtedly stood above the rest: The detection for the first time on Sept 14, 2015 of gravitational waves, ripples in the fabric of the universe. The collision of two black holes 1.3 billion years earlier was so powerful it spread waves throughout the cosmos that bend space and travel at the speed of light. That morning, they finally reached the Earth. The phenomenon had been predicted by Albert Einstein in his theory of relativity, and here was proof he was right all along.

Three Americans won the Nobel prize in physics in 2017 for their work on the project, and there have been many more gravitational waves detected since. Cosmologists meanwhile continue to debate the origin and composition of the universe. The invisible dark matter that makes up its vast majority remains one of the greatest puzzles to solve. "We're dying to know what it might be," said cosmologist James Peebles, who won



In this file photo taken on May 15, 2019, an AI robot titled "Alter 3: Offloaded Agency," is pictured during a photocall to promote the forthcoming exhibition entitled "AI: More than Human", at the Barbican Centre in London.

this year's Nobel prize in physics.

### Welcome to the CRISPR era

Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR) - a family of DNA sequences - is a phrase that doesn't exactly roll off the tongue. But the field of biomedicine can now be divided into two eras, one defined during the past decade: Before and after CRISPR-Cas9 (or CRISPR for short), the basis for a gene editing technology. "CRISPR-based gene editing stands above all the others," William Kaelin, a 2019 Nobel prize winner for medicine, told AFP.

In 2012, Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer Doudna reported that they had developed the new tool that exploits the immune defense system of bacteria to edit the genes of other organisms. It is much simpler than preceding technology, cheaper and easy to use in small labs. Charpentier and Doudna were showered in awards, but the technique is also far from perfect and can create unintended mutations.

Experts believe this may have happened to Chinese twins born in 2018 as a result of edits performed by a researcher who was widely criticized for ignoring scientific and ethical norms. Still, CRISPR remains one of the biggest science stories of recent years, with Kaelin predicting an "explosion" in its use to combat human disease.

### Immunotherapy to the fore

For decades, doctors had three main weapons to fight cancer: surgery, chemotherapy drugs, and radiation. The 2010s saw the rise of a fourth, one that was long doubted: Immunotherapy, or leveraging the body's own immune system to target tumor cells. One of the most advanced techniques is known as CAR T-cell therapy, in which a patient's T-cells - part of their immune system - are collected from their blood, modified and reinfused into the body.

A wave of drugs have hit the market since the mid-2010s for more and more types of cancer including melanomas, lymphomas, leukemias and lung cancers - heralding what some oncologists hope could be a golden era. For William Cance, scientific director of the American Cancer Society, the next decade

could bring new immunotherapies that are "better and cheaper" than what we have now.

### Meet the relatives

The decade began with a major new addition to the human family tree: Denisovans, named after the Denisova Cave in the Altai Mountains of Siberia. Scientists sequenced the DNA of a female juvenile's finger bone in 2010, finding it was distinct both from genetically modern humans and Neanderthals, our most famous ancient cousins who lived alongside us until around 40,000 years ago. The mysterious hominin species is thought to have ranged from Siberia to Indonesia, but the only remains have been found in the Altai region and Tibet.

We also learned that, unlike previously assumed, Homo sapiens bred extensively with Neanderthals - and our relatives were not the brutish simpletons previously assumed but were responsible for artworks, such as the handprints in a Spanish cave they were credited for crafting in 2018. They also wore jewelry, and buried their dead with flowers - just like we do. Next came Homo naledi, remains of which were discovered in South Africa in 2015, while this year, paleontologists classified yet another

species found in the Philippines: A small-sized hominin called Homo luzonensis.

Advances in DNA testing have led to a revolution in our ability to sequence genetic material tens of thousands of years old, helping unravel ancient migrations, like that of the Bronze Age herders who left the steppes 5,000 years ago, spreading Indo-European languages to Europe and Asia. "This discovery has led to a revolution in our ability to study human evolution and how we came to be in a way never possible before," said Vagheesh Narasimhan, a geneticist at Harvard Medical School.

One exciting new avenue for the next decade is paleoproteomics, which allows scientists to analyze bones millions of years old. "Using this technique, it will be possible to sort out many fossils whose evolutionary position is unclear," said Aida Gomez-Robles, an anthropologist at University College London.

### AI levels up

Machine learning - what we most commonly mean when talking about "artificial intelligence" - came into its own in the 2010s. Using statistics to identify patterns in vast datasets, machine learning today pow-

ers everything from voice assistants to recommendations on Netflix and Facebook. So-called "deep learning" takes this process even further and begins to mimic some of the complexity of a human brain.

It is the technology behind some of the most eye-catching breakthroughs of the decade: from Google's AlphaGo, which beat the world champion of the fiendishly difficult game Go in 2017, to the advent of real-time voice translations and advanced facial recognition on Facebook. In 2016, for example, Google Translate - launched a decade earlier - transformed from a service that provided results that were stilted at best, nonsensical at worst, to one that offered translations that were far more natural and accurate.

At times, the results even seemed polished. "Certainly the biggest breakthrough in the 2010s was deep learning - the discovery that artificial neural networks could be scaled up to many real-world tasks," said Henry Kautz, a computer science professor at the University of Rochester. "In applied research, I think AI has the potential to power new methods for scientific discovery," from enhancing the strength of materials to discovering new drugs and even making breakthroughs in physics, Kautz said.

For Max Jaderberg, a research scientist at DeepMind, owned by Google's parent company Alphabet, the next big leap will come via "algorithms that can learn to discover information, and rapidly adapt and internalize and act on this new knowledge", as opposed to depending on humans to feed them the correct data. That could eventually pave the way to "artificial general intelligence," or a machine capable of performing any tasks humans can, rather than excelling at a single function. — AFP



In this image obtained from NASA, the Curiosity Mars rover took this selfie on May 12, 2019 (the 2,405th Martian day, or sol, of the mission). To the lower-left of the rover are its two recent drill holes, at targets called "Aberlady" and "Kilmorie".



In this file photo taken on March 8, 2019, a lab tech handles blood after it passed through a laboratory centrifuge before genetically modifying a patient's immune cells at a production laboratory unit of the Paoli-Calmettes Institute (IPC) overall cancer care center in Marseille, France.

## French chef loses Michelin lawsuit over star demotion

A French court yesterday rejected a lawsuit brought by a star chef seeking to force the prestigious Michelin restaurant guide to hand over its reasons for stripping his restaurant of a third star just a year after he won it. The court in Nanterre, outside Paris, said in a verdict obtained by AFP that Marc Veyrat had offered no "proof showing the existence of any damage" caused by guide's demotion of his Maison des Bois in the Alps to a two-star rating in Jan 2019.

The shock demotion came just 12 months after Veyrat's remarkable comeback after years of personal struggles, with the furious showman chef accusing the Michelin inspectors of making a "mistake". He wanted the court to force Michelin to hand over its judging notes - a ruling that could have opened the world of fine dining by opening the door to lawsuits from other disgruntled chefs.

Veyrat, 69, had sought a symbolic one euro in damages, not least over his claimed depression after losing the star, but the court said he had not provided any documented proof of his losses. The showman chef, known as much for his ubiquitous black Savoyard hat as his "botanical" creations from local herbs and produce, had already said he had no need of any Michelin accolades. "I really don't need them," Veyrat told AFP

shortly before the ruling, saying business was up seven percent over the past year. "Even between Christmas and New Year's Day, we're fully booked. We've never been this busy," he added. "At this rate, I wish they'd take away all my stars!"

### Cheddar cheese?

Veyrat's stunning return to the world's restaurant firmament in January 18 was hard won, coming nine years after he was forced to stop cooking because of a skiing accident, and three years after his restaurant was destroyed in a fire. After his demotion, he demanded a meeting with Michelin's international director Gwendal Poullennec, who had been named just a few months before the 2019 listings.

The chef said he was told a scallop's texture was "cottony" - Veyrat says it was in fact a dish of local fish - and accused of using English Cheddar cheese in a souffle. "I have a lot of respect for Michelin in France... but they made a mistake in my case, and they need to recognize it," Veyrat told AFP.

Michelin's lawyers denounced the lawsuit as an abuse of the legal system by a "narcissistic diva" and demanded €30,000 (nearly \$34,000) in damages and compensation. "It's a question of respecting the freedom of criticism and opinion in our country," Michelin's



In this file photo taken on Feb 5, 2018, French chef Marc Veyrat celebrates after being awarded the maximum three Michelin stars during the Michelin guide award ceremony at La Seine Musicale in Boulogne-Billancourt near Paris. —AFP

lawyer Richard Malka told AFP last week.

That claim was rejected by Veyrat's lawyer Emmanuel Ravanas, who said the chef has long since grown accustomed to being judged severely over his pricey creations. "We're not here to forbid criticism, we want to check that criteria exist and that they have been applied correctly," he told the court. "You don't have the right to write whatever you want using the

excuse of freedom of expression," he said.

The self-taught Veyrat has spent most of his life cooking in his home village of Manigod, 1,600 m up the Alps near Annecy. Just days before the November hearing, Veyrat was named one of the 10 immortals of haute cuisine by the rival French Gault & Millau guide, alongside legends like Alain Ducasse and Guy Savoy. —AFP

## New book smashes taboo in #MeToo era

A prominent French author who has never made any secret of his preference for sex with adolescents is at the center of a firestorm as a former partner publishes a book describing the lasting trauma of underage intercourse over three decades ago. For many, the debate over the behavior of writer Gabriel Matzneff, 83, is long overdue, given the essayist and commentator had described in sometimes lurid details his experiences with underage teens in his published work.

In the book "Consent", Vanessa Springora, 47, now a leading publisher, describes how she was seduced at the age of 14 by Matzneff, then aged 36 years her senior, and how this left lasting scars. Its publication tomorrow comes as France is coming to terms in the age of #MeToo with a settling of scores after decades of what is seen by some, but not all, as an overly permissive attitude towards sexual exploitation of women and pedophilia.

In one of the most prominent recent cases, French actress Adele Haenel accused film director Christophe Ruggia of constantly harassing her from the age of 12 to 15. She has since filed a complaint against him. And the



Gabriel Matzneff

controversy has intensified around French-Polish film director Roman Polanski, a fugitive from US justice since 1978 after admitting to statutory rape of a 13 year-old, after he brought out his new film "An Officer and a Spy". There is also increasing scrutiny over the French artist Paul Gauguin's relationships on the Polynesian island of Tahiti with adolescent girls who feature in his paintings.

### 'Document and falsify'

Matzneff has over the years spoken at length in TV shows and written about his predilection for teens. In the mid 1970s, he published a well-known but notorious essay called "Les Moins de Seize Ans" ("Those Less than 16"). But Springora is the first per-



A woman holds the book "Le Consentement" by French writer Vanessa Springora in Paris yesterday. — AFP photos

son to go on the record to describe her experiences with him. "As if his passage through my life had not devastated me enough, he now has to document, falsify, record and etch forever his misdeeds," she writes in the book. "How to admit that you have been abused, when you can't deny giving consent? When did you feel desire for this adult who hastened to benefit from it? For years, I will also struggle with this notion of the victim."

Matzneff has denied any wrongdoing and in a statement to the Parisian newspaper on Sunday denounced "such unjust and excessive attacks", claiming that his relationship with Springora had been one of "beauty".

Ahead of the book's publication, French ministers have rounded on Matzneff, saying that his literary reputation should not protect him from the consequences. "Having a literary aura is not a guarantee of impunity, I send all my support to all the victims who have the courage to break the silence," said Culture Minister Franck Riester.

In France it is against the law to have a sexual relationship with anyone under the age of 15. Adrien Taquet, the minister at the health ministry charged with protecting children, hailed Springora for speaking out so long after the events and expressed hope it would encourage other women to join her. "I would like that the end of the silence, the end of impunity... does not stop here," he told Europe 1 radio.

### 'Not the right words'

The controversy has also renewed attention on extraordinary television footage from 1990, when the prominent French literary commentator Bernard Pivot, hosting his chat show "Apostrophes", lets Matzneff talk unchallenged about his sexual exploits. "Why are you specialized in the schoolgirls and young chicks?" asks Pivot with an amused tone. "I prefer to have in my life people who are not toughened up and who are more kind," Matzneff replies. The only dissenting voice comes from Canadian writer Denise Bombardier, who furiously interjects: "I think I am living now on another planet... Mr Matzneff seems pitiful." — AFP



## German opera great Kupfer dies aged 84

One of the world's most celebrated opera directors, Germany's Harry Kupfer, has died at the age of 84 in Berlin, his agency confirmed yesterday. In a career spanning 44 years, Kupfer worked at opera houses across Germany and was chief director of Berlin's iconic Komische Oper for more than two decades. Born in 1935, Kupfer studied in Leipzig and first worked in then-communist East Germany. But he rose to fame in 1978 with a production of Richard Wagner's "The Flying Dutchman" at the world-renowned Bayreuth festival. He took the reins at the Komische Oper three years later in 1981.

A student of Komische Oper founder Walter Felsenstein, Kupfer staged works by Mozart and Wagner and oversaw two world premieres at the opera house before bowing out in 2002. He returned to Bayreuth in 1988, staging Wagner's "Ring of the Nibelung" alongside Argentine-Israeli conductor Daniel Barenboim. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Kupfer cooperated with Barenboim again on an ambitious project to stage one Wagner opera a year over the course of a decade at the Berlin State Opera. He continued to work until right up to his death, directing around the world and staging Georg Friedrich Handel's Poro in a triumphant return to the Komische Oper earlier this year. — AFP

## 10 celebrities who used star power for good in 2019

Celebrities were out in force in 2019 to lend their names and star spotlights to causes ranging from homelessness to climate change and indigenous rights. Here are 10 celebrities who took a stand during the year to make a positive impact:

- 1. Ellen Page** - Hollywood actress and "Juno" Oscar nominee directed her first film in 2019 spotlighting "environmental racism" and the plight of indigenous communities in her native Canada. The movie featured communities battling to stop the construction of a new dump and pushing for the cleanup of a contaminated waterway.
- 2. Helen Mirren** - Oscar-winning British actress hit out against the "exponential rise in homelessness" across the globe as she took part in a charity appeal to sleep outdoors for a night in winter. Known for playing "The Queen", Mirren said the global scourge of homelessness was

"becoming much too big" and encouraged people to do more to support rough sleepers.

- 3. Kim Kardashian** - The reality star and influential trend-setter used a trip to her native Armenia this year to support the global climate youth movement headed by activist Greta Thunberg. The "Keeping Up With the Kardashians" star also made waves in 2019 for supporting reform of the US criminal justice system and winning clemency for incarcerated women.

- 4. Sting** - The British rocker was awarded an international prize for his work to protect the Amazon rainforest and its indigenous inhabitants, where the battle over land became more deadly this year. The musician, along with his wife, were recognised for their charitable foundation, the Rainforest Fund, which supports indigenous people.

- 5. Elif Shafak** - The Turkish-British author called for more to be done to prevent the destruction of cultural property during war, from museums to libraries, in order to preserve communities. The novelist said "turbulent" political times called for extra protection of physical property and cultural heritage during conflicts.

- 6. Jaden Smith** - US rapper and actor Jaden Smith urged young people rallying to fight climate change to engage their parents. The 21-year-old son of actors Will

Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith joined mass youth-led protests that took place in cities around the world imploring world leaders to confront the climate crisis.

- 7. Ken Loach** - The British film director made headlines in 2019 when he released his film "Sorry We Missed You", which warned of the "extreme exploitation" of workers by big tech firms. The 83-year-old said such business models could be called slavery and urged companies to look at the human impact of the gig-economy.

- 8. Cyndi Lauper** - The US singer was awarded a United Nations' social justice prize for her work to end LGBT+ youth homelessness. Best known for her '80s-era pop hits, Lauper said LGBT+ rights were human rights.

- 9. Zoe Saldana** - Hollywood actress, who starred in blockbuster movies "Avatar" and "Star Trek", spoke out in May in support of women's equal rights. The US actress urged Hollywood to dismantle old-fashioned stereotypes to inspire global audiences.

- 10. Gareth Thomas** - The former rugby international sports star's decision to come out as HIV-positive this year made him a role model for millions of people living with the virus. The former Wales captain said he hoped his decision to post a video on Twitter would lead to greater public understanding of the issue. — Reuters

## PC Dummy: Police deploy mannequins to deter traffic offenders

Dummy police are the newest recruits to law enforcement in India's southern city of Bangalore where authorities have adopted an unusual tactic to fight traffic offenders. Mannequins dressed up as traffic officers - complete with hats, white shirts and fluorescent vests with police insignia - are being placed at major intersections in the hope they will prompt drivers to observe the rules. Some even wear sunglasses and face masks.

With eight million cars plying the notoriously busy roads in a tech hub renowned for its traffic snarls, police say they don't have enough flesh and blood officers to man all the junctions. "The idea is not to scare anybody, the idea is to increase the compliance," city police commissioner Bhaskar Rao told AFP. "There are 44,000 junctions in the city but traffic lights are fixed in (only) about 450



In this photo taken on Dec 16, 2019, motorists ride past a mannequin dressed up as traffic police at an intersection in Bangalore. — AFP photos

junctions, the rest of it is manned manually or not managed at all."

He added that officers use a "hide and seek" tactic - swapping the mannequins with actual police - to keep drivers on their best behavior. Bangalore, dubbed as the Silicon Valley of India, is home to an estimated 13 million people. An average of two people die

every day on the roads of the megalopolis with 4,283 crashes reported from January to November this year, many blamed on drink-driving, speeding and drivers ignoring traffic signals. There were 50,457 cases of reckless driving and another 57,394 for drink-driving this year, official figures show.

The model officers have received a mixed



reaction from commuters about whether the dummy ploy would work, with some locals praising police for thinking outside the box. "It's a general human mentality that when you see a policeman, you have fear in your heart, 'Oh I am doing something wrong, I will not do it,'" said clothing company director Vijay Shekhar. Others were more skeptical.

Businessman Rohit Kamalkar said the scheme wouldn't work in a country like India where rules are flouted with impunity. "We do not follow rules even when they (police) are real (so) how would it work when they are not moving and running after us?," tech consultant Sapan Agarwal added. — AFP

# Classifieds

Wednesday, January 1, 2020

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## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Fair and Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 42 km/h with a chance for rising dust over open areas.

**BY NIGHT:** Cold and Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 35 km/h

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 31/12/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	20 °C	17 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	13 °C			
ABDALY	21 °C	11 °C			
BUBYAN	18 °C	12 °C			
JAHRA	22 °C	13 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C			
SALMIYAH	19 °C	17 °C			
AHMADI	19 °C	16 °C			
NUWAISIB	22 °C	12 °C			
WAFRA	22 °C	11 °C			
SALMY	23 °C	11 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	01/01	Rather cool and Cloudy to partly cloudy	18 °C	11 °C	NW	12 - 35 km/h
Thursday	01/02	Fair and Partly cloudy	19 °C	10 °C	VRB	06 - 22 km/h
Friday	01/03	Fair and Partly cloudy to cloudy	20 °C	12 °C	SE	10 - 32 km/h
Saturday	01/04	Fair and Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	24 °C	14 °C	NE-NW	15 - 38 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:18
Sunrise	06:42
Zuhr	11:50
Asr	14:41
Sunset	17:00
Isha	18:22

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	23 °C
MIN. Temp.	09 °C
MAX. RH	94 %
MIN. RH	55 %
MAX. Wind	SE 32 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

## Hospitals

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

## Clinics

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

**NOTICE**  
 December 29, 2019

Mr. Ashok Gosala son of late Mr. Danaiah Gosala, Indian National, resident of H.No. 8-1, Nayak Nagar, Kothur, Mahabubnagar, Pin: 509228, Telangana, India and Ms. Baby Jean Palmer Fernandez, Daughter of late Mr. Lorenzo Fernandes, Philippines national, resident of 18 Imperial St., Vista Verde Executive village, Cainta, Rizal, Philippines, both presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If you have any objection to the proposed marriage, you should file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rules within thirty days from the date of this letter. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in) / letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22533315, 00965 - 22533125).

(Ranveer Bhatti)  
 Second Secretary (Cons) and Marriage Officer.

Embassy of India, Kuwait.  
 Email: cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in

**CHANGE OF NAME**

Older name: Jummal Mustafakhan Hamzakhan, new name: Jummal Mustafa Hamzakhan. Passport No. Z2402486. (C 5601)

I, **Jayan** Abraham, father of Bennett Jayan Abraham holder of Indian Passport No. S7937159 issued at Kuwait on 26/07/2018, permanent address of Panayara Thekkathil House, Enathu P.O.,

Sharing accommodation for Filipino ONLY Farwaniya block 4, near Big Jamiya, available on December 25, Contact 55571873. 1-1-2020

**EMERGENCY 112**

Automated enquiry about the CIVIID card is **1889988**

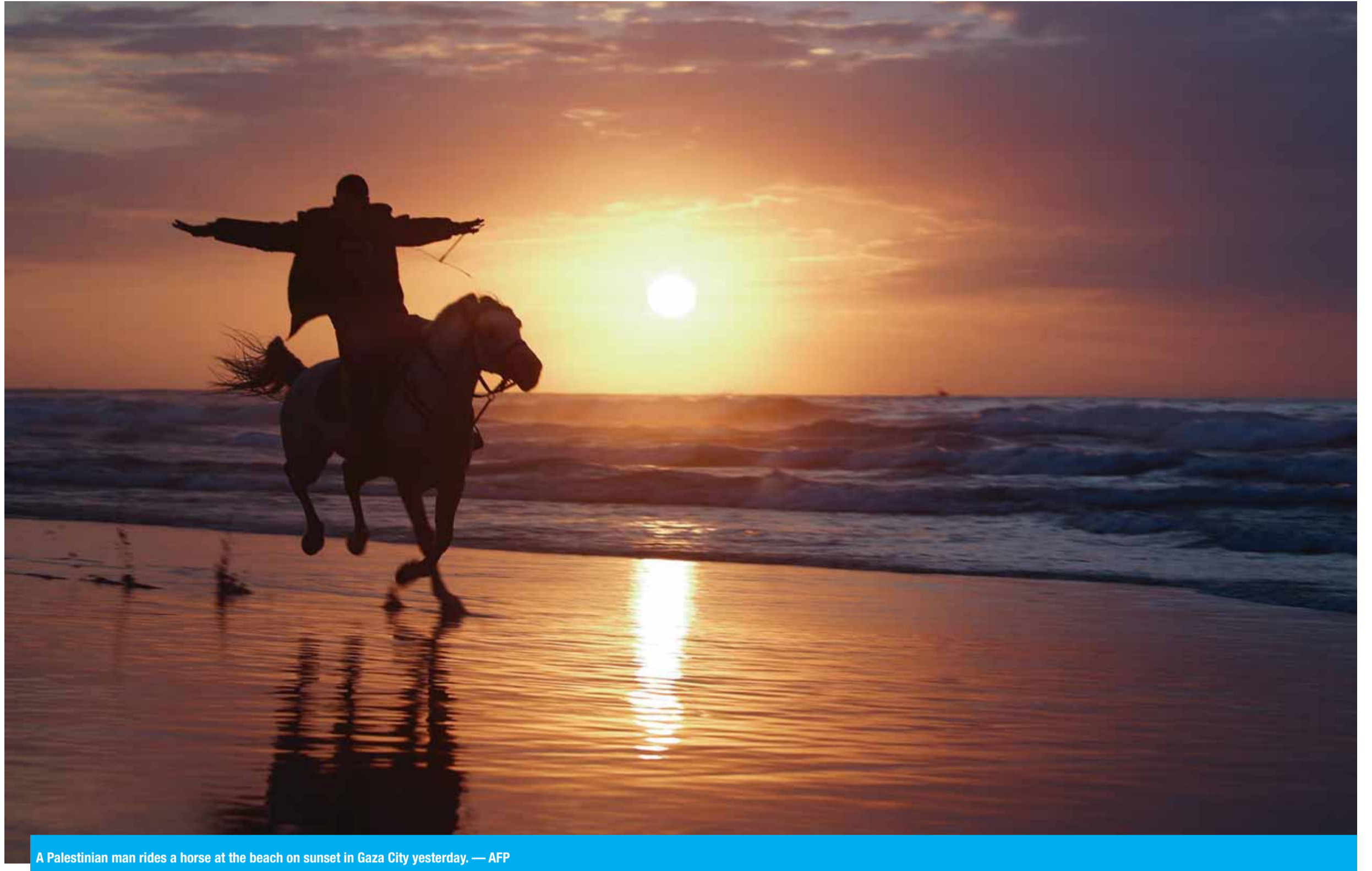
For labor-related inquiries and complaints: **Call MSAL HOTLINE 128**

## Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page ([www.kuwait-airport.com.kw](http://www.kuwait-airport.com.kw))

### Flight Schedule

**DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION**

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 1/1/2020				Departure Flights on Wednesday 1/1/2020			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
FEG	441	Asyut	00:05	AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	JZR	713	Sohag	00:10
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	MSC	412	Asyut	00:15
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	MSR	615	Cairo	00:30
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	FDB	072	Dubai	00:30
KAC	102	London	00:50	BBC	044	Dubai	00:40
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	FEG	342	Sohag	01:05
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	JZR	723	Alexandria	01:05
MSR	618	Alexandria	01:35	IGO	409	Delhi	01:10
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	JZR	1758	Kochi	01:10
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	THY	773	Istanbul	01:50
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	DLH	625	Frankfurt	01:50
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	417	Manila	02:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	285	Dhaka	02:00
KAC	414	Bangkok	02:40	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00
THY	1404	AYT	02:45	JZR	111	Doha	02:10
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	MSR	619	Alexandria	02:35
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:50	THY	765	Istanbul	02:50
JZR	402	Lahore	02:55	KKK	1269	Istanbul	02:55
KAC	156	Istanbul	02:55	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
RJA	648	Amman	03:05	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:10
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	UAE	854	Dubai	03:30
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00
NIA	1604	Luxor	03:10	OMA	644	Abu Dhabi	04:05
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	NIA	1404	Sohag	04:10
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:00	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:20
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	KAC	1735	Cairo	04:40
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	RBG	1152	Alexandria	05:00
RBG	1153	Asyut	04:10	JZR	1077	Doha	05:00
ETH	3424	Bahrain	04:15	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:00
KAC	796	Madinah	04:25	MSR	575	Sharm el-Sheikh	05:00
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	KAC	502	Beirut	05:10
JZR	1738	Cairo	04:45	KAC	303	Mumbai	05:15
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:50	KAC	103	London	05:20
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	ETH	3425	Addis Ababa	05:45
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	THY	1465	Istanbul	06:00
IGO	1759	Delhi	05:10	FDB	070	Dubai	06:00
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	IGO	1765	Delhi	06:10
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	RBG	216	Sohag	06:15
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	THY	771	Istanbul	06:30
RBG	215	Sohag	05:35	GFA	212	Bahrain	06:50
UAE	873	Dubai	05:40	RJA	649	Amman	07:00
KAC	552	Cairo	05:45	UAE	874	Dubai	07:10
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	KAC	167	Paris	07:15
BAW	157	London	06:10	JZR	121	Dubai	07:15
JZR	708	Luxor	06:15	KAC	113	Doha	07:30
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	KAC	176	Rome	08:00
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:00
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	JZR	211	Jeddah	08:00
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	BAW	156	London	08:00
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:05	IGO	1767	Mumbai	08:10
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	JZR	151	Mashhad	08:15
KAC	358	Kochi	07:25	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	539	Sharm el-Sheikh	08:50
JZR	724	Alexandria	07:50	KAC	501	Beirut	08:50
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:00	KAC	545	Cairo	08:50
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	KAC	561	Amman	08:55
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	KAC	613	Bahrain	09:00
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	KAC	117	New York	09:05
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	KAC	511	Mashhad	09:05
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	QTR	1085	Doha	09:10
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:15
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC	671	Dubai	09:15
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:15	KAC	157	Istanbul	09:35
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	KAC	773	Riyadh	09:40
GOW	061	CNN	09:30	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	JZR	731	Cairo	09:45
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	UAE	856	Dubai	09:50
JZR	410	Delhi	09:50	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55
SYR	341	Damascus	10:00	OMA	642	Islamabad	10:00
AKB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	KAC	101	London	10:05
KAC	213	Bahrain	10:40	IRA	664	Shiraz	10:15
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	GOW	062	CNN	10:30
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	QTR	1071	Doha	10:30
KIS	6032	Mashhad	11:00	KAC	617	Doha	10:40
JZR	1736	Cairo	11:05	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40
JZR	114	Doha	11:10	FDB	056	Dubai	10:40
IGO	1755	CNN	11:30	SYR	342	Damascus	11:00
NIA	1405	Sohag	11:30	JZR	221	Riyadh	11:20
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	AXB	890	Mangalore	11:20
KIS	6032	Mashhad	11:45	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
TBZ	6605	Mashhad	11:55	JZR	305	Istanbul	11:45
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	MEA	405	Beirut	11:55
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	KIS	6033	Mashhad	12:00
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:30	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:05
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30				
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:30				



A Palestinian man rides a horse at the beach on sunset in Gaza City yesterday. — AFP

## Scores trapped in Australia by...

Continued from Page 1

surf clubs, said Shane Fitzsimmons, commissioner of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service. "In the majority of these cases, we're being told that people will be sleeping over at these clubs," Surf Life Saving Australia's Steven Pearce told ABC. "We'll have instances of 500 people or more trying to sleep in and around our surf clubs."

Around 4,000 people were trapped on the foreshore in the town of Mallacoota, where towering columns of smoke turned the sky pitch black and nearby fires caused waves of "ember attacks". Authorities said later yesterday that Mallacoota and a nearby town remained cut off, but the life-threatening fire front had finally passed. "I understand there was a public cheer down at the jetty when that was announced," said Steve Warrington of the Country Fire Authority.

In some places yesterday's blazes were so intense, the smoke so thick and the dry lightning storms precipitated by the fires so severe that aerial reconnaissance and water-bombing had to be halted. The situation was scarcely better in inland rural communities, where countless more people were displaced and forced into makeshift camps.

Hundreds of "anxious and stressed and traumatized" people were gathered at Bega's showgrounds, said 44-year-old Beck Walker, who had been holidaying with her

husband and two young sons when they heard sirens warning them to evacuate before dawn. "We had to pack up and leave straight away," she told AFP. "It was pretty scary because the sky was red... By 7:30 am we thought it was still night because the sky had turned black."

Australia's defense minister Linda Reynolds said helicopters, aircraft and naval ships would be sent to the region. The military is expected to conduct damage assessments and potentially provide those displaced with food, shelter and electricity and even evacuation. More back-up has been requested from firefighters in Canada and the United States.

Australia's unprecedented bushfires have been burning for months, but the latest in a series of heatwaves and high winds have wrought new devastation. The crisis has also hit cities like Sydney and Melbourne, home to several million people. On Monday, around 100,000 people were urged to flee five Melbourne suburbs as the blaze bore down on homes just 16 km from the center of Australia's second-biggest city.

Sydney was again shrouded in toxic bushfire haze yesterday. City officials said Sydney's New Year's Eve fireworks would go ahead, but a similar event has been cancelled in Canberra and several regional towns. A Rural Fire Service spokesman said a 28-year-old volunteer firefighter - whose wife was due to give birth in May - died Monday in New South Wales when a "fire tornado" picked up an eight-tonne truck "and flipped it over". A 63-year-old man and his 29-year-old son died in the devastated town of Cobargo in the latest spasm of destruction yesterday. Ten others, including two volunteer firefighters, have been killed so far this fire season. — AFP

posters reading: "Parliament should oust US troops, or else we will."

Others carried banners with Trump's face crossed out. They scrawled "No to America!" and "Soleimani is my commander" on the embassy walls, referring to a leading commander in Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps and Tehran's pointman for Iraq, Major General Qasem Soleimani. Among those at the protests were Iraq's National Security Adviser Faleh Al-Fayyadh - who is also the head of the Hashed - and other top Hashed officials.

Some Hashed figures drew parallels between yesterday's attack and the hostage crisis at the US embassy in Tehran in 1979. The US embassy in Iraq is already operating at a fraction of its full diplomatic staffing after the State Department pulled out non-essential employees in May. US ambassador Matthew Tueller has been outside Iraq for two weeks on holiday but other staff were present and had not been evacuated, a diplomatic source told AFP. The US shut down its consulate in the southern port city of Basra last year after indirect fire it blamed on Iran-backed factions. It still operates a consulate in the northern Kurdish city of Arbil.

Iraq had long feared being caught in the middle of escalating tensions between its two main allies, the United States and Iran. But now it appears ties between Washington and Baghdad are fraying fast, with Abdel Mahdi's government threatening to summon the US ambassador. Dozens of lawmakers also called on the government to review an agreement allowing the US troop deployment, saying the strikes amount to a violation of sovereignty that renders the pact obsolete.

The United States, meanwhile, accused Iraq of failing to "protect" US interests in the country. US defense officials have told AFP that pro-Iran factions now pose a greater threat than IS because of the repeated rocket attacks. "This may well be the low point of US policy in Iraq," said Iraq expert Fanar Haddad of Singapore University's Middle East Institute. "That the national security adviser, MPs, a former minister and head of one of the most powerful parliamentary blocs are involved speaks volumes about the failure of US policy and the nature of the Iraqi state they helped create," Haddad said. — Agencies

## Ghosn flees to Lebanon from...

Continued from Page 1

"I have not fled justice - I have escaped injustice and political persecution," said Ghosn, who vowed to communicate "freely" with the media "starting next week".

It was not clear how he managed to leave Japan, as his bail conditions barred him from exiting the country he had been held in since his sudden arrest in Nov 2018 sent shockwaves through the business world. He and his lawyers have repeatedly voiced fears over the impossibility of a fair trial in Japan and have called for the case to be thrown out, citing missteps by the prosecutors' office.

Lebanon said the fallen car mogul had entered the country "legally" at dawn on Monday. "There are no measures that warrant taking steps against him or prosecuting him," the country's General Security apparatus said in a statement. Ghosn cannot be sent back to Japan because there is no extradition agreement between the two countries, a Lebanese judicial source told AFP.

Lebanese media reported Ghosn had flown by private plane from Turkey to Lebanon, where his parents were born and where he spent most of his childhood after arriving there as a toddler. A source in the Lebanese presidency said Ghosn had entered the country with a French passport and his Lebanese identity card. "He is in Lebanon in his house with his wife," a family friend told AFP. "He is very happy. He is free."

Many Lebanese view Ghosn as a symbol of their country's large diaspora and a prime example of Lebanese entrepreneurial genius and were shocked by his arrest. But in Tokyo, the unexpected turn of events sparked questions about how he gave authorities the slip. His Japanese lawyer Junichiro Hironaka said he was "dumbfounded" by the news and confirmed that lawyers were still in possession of Ghosn's passports.

Public broadcaster NHK cited a foreign ministry official as saying: "He was not supposed to leave the country. Had we known about it beforehand, we would have reported that to proper law enforcement authorities." The Japanese government has not commented publicly on Ghosn's flight. But Taichiro Motoe, a lawmaker from Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's ruling Liberal Democrat Party (LDP), said the news had come as a "shock" and called for "swift and effective" improvements.

France said it was unaware of Ghosn's plans to flee and had no information about the circumstances. "As Mr Ghosn is a citizen, like anyone else he is not above the law," the state secretary at France's economy and finance ministry, Agnes Pannier-Runacher, told France Inter radio. Lebanon's MTV television reported that Ghosn was

## Filipino FM wants 'head' of woman...

Continued from Page 1

worker Jeanelyn Padernal Villavende at the hands of her Kuwaiti employer," he said in a statement. "The case is a clear violation of the agreement signed by both Kuwait and the Philippines in 2018 that seeks to uphold and promote the protection of the rights and welfare of our workers in the Gulf state," the DOLE chief added.

At the same time, Bello urged for the immediate resolution of the death of the household service worker. "The department looks forward to the swift resolution of the case and that justice will be served to Villavende and her family," he said. The DOLE head also assured

smuggled to the airport in Japan in a musical instrument case belonging to a band that had been booked to perform on New Year's Eve. But a member of his entourage denied the report.

At Ghosn's gated villa in the Achrafieh neighborhood of Beirut, a handful of police and private security personnel stood guard yesterday. A man who identified himself only as his English neighbor walked by to leave a card, with the words "Carlos, welcome home!" written inside. It was not immediately clear if Ghosn was at the address. "It's a good thing that at last he's out of being locked up for something which he may or may not - probably not - have done," said the neighbor.

Ghosn's sudden departure was nearly as dramatic as his arrest at a Tokyo airport. Prosecutors stormed his private jet and whisked him off to a Tokyo detention center where he spent more than 100 days in spartan conditions far removed from his sometimes extravagant lifestyle. He eventually won bail, striding out of the detention center disguised in a workman's uniform complete with mask and cap in an apparent bid to fool the world's media camped outside.

Then one morning in April, he was rearrested on another set of charges just days before he was due to give a hotly anticipated news conference. He released a video apparently pre-recorded in which he accused "backstabbing" Nissan executives of a "conspiracy". Later that month, he was released again on bail - this time leaving in a business suit - and he had been in Tokyo ever since preparing for his trial in "combative" mood, according to his lawyers.

He stands accused of two counts of under-reporting his salary to the tune of 9.23 billion yen (\$85 million) from 2010 to 2018, deferring some of his pay and failing to declare this to shareholders. Prosecutors also allege he attempted to get Nissan to cover around 1.85 billion yen in personal foreign exchange losses during the 2008 financial crisis. The fourth charge against him is that he allegedly transferred millions from Nissan funds to a dealership in Oman, from which the executive supposedly skimmed off \$5 million for his personal use.

He has consistently denied all charges against him, saying they are a "plot" by Nissan executives to get rid of him because they feared he was moving the Japanese firm to a closer tie-up with Renault. In the meantime, Ghosn has lost the business empire he was once lauded for creating. Sacked from Nissan and Mitsubishi Motors, he resigned from Renault - the third firm in the uneasy car alliance he forged.

Ghosn began his career in 1978 at tyre maker Michelin. In 1996, he moved to Renault where he oversaw a turnaround that won him the nickname "Le Cost Killer". After Renault sealed an alliance with Nissan in 1999, Ghosn used similar methods to revive the ailing brand, leading to business superstar status in Japan, blanket media coverage and even a manga comic book on his life. — Agencies

that assistance will be provided to the family of the Filipino worker. "The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration will provide burial and livelihood assistance, as well as scholarships to the family members of Villavende," Bello added.

In Feb 2018, the Philippines imposed a total deployment ban on Kuwait after authorities found inside a freezer the body of domestic helper Joanna Demafelis, who was killed by her employers. The ban was lifted three months later after Manila and Kuwait signed an agreement on the protection of overseas Filipino workers. The employer of Demafelis was later found guilty of murder.

In May 2018, another maid died at the hands of her employer. Constanca Dayag, 47, was reportedly found with her body covered in bruises and with a "cucumber" inside her private parts, according to the Philippine media. She was rushed to the Sabah Hospital but was declared dead on arrival. — Agencies



## Sports

# WADA better positioned to wipe out drug cheats, chief says

## Handpicked Russian athletes will be able to participate in the competitions

**MONTREAL:** Outgoing WADA President Craig Reedie says the Russian doping scandal shows that clean sport is under attack, but the anti-doping organization now has the tools to better weed out drug cheats. Taking stock of his six years at the helm of the World Anti-Doping Agency, the 78-year-old Briton insists the group is "stronger" than ever as it faces the "unprecedented" challenge of the doping crisis in Russia.

"Considering the last six years in particular, I am especially pleased to see how WADA responded to the challenges it faced since 2014, in particular the Russian doping crisis," he said in his end-of-term message.

The crisis, he recalled, led to the creation within WADA of an "intelligence and investigations" service, which played "a decisive role" in the recent decision to exclude Russia from major world sports

competitions for falsifying anti-doping data. The Russian anti-doping agency RUSADA announced Friday that it has challenged the exclusion. Ultimately, it will be up to the Court of Arbitration for Sport to rule on the matter, said Reedie, whose term officially ends Tuesday.

"Throughout this process WADA has shown it has the will, the expertise and the legal tools to stand up effectively to this unprecedented level of cheating and corruption," he said.

WADA decided on December 9 to ban Russia from participating in major international events for four years, including the 2020 and 2022 Olympic Games and the 2022 World Cup.

Only handpicked Russian athletes will be able to participate in the competitions, but under a neutral flag and without the national anthem being played.

WADA estimated that Russia had

"manipulated" the data of the Moscow anti-doping laboratory which were transmitted to it at the beginning of the year, an umpteenth rebound in a scandal which started with the revelation in 2015 of an institutional doping practiced since 2011 and involving senior officials, secret agents and trafficked urine vials.

The significant extent of state-sponsored doping in Russia, notably between 2011 and 2015, was revealed in an independent report by sports lawyer Richard McLaren, released in 2016.

The issue has dealt a colossal blow to the status of post-Soviet Russia as a major sports power after hosting events such as the 2013 World Athletics Championships, the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi and the 2018 World Cup.

The Sochi Games later became notorious for the number of doping violations by prominent Russian athletes. — AFP



**LAUSANNE:** File photo taken on December 9, 2019 World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) President Craig Reedie attends a press conference in Lausanne following a meeting of the WADA executive committee which banned Russia from global sporting events including the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics after accusing Moscow of falsifying data. — AFP

## Ex-All Blacks coach now Sir Stephen Hansen but insists he's still Steve

**WELLINGTON:** Former All Blacks coach Steve Hansen became Sir Stephen yesterday, receiving a knighthood in the New Zealand New Year's honours list, but insisted he was still "plain old Steve".

Although Hansen fell short in his bid to guide the All Blacks to a third consecutive World Cup this year, losing to England in the semi-finals, the award citation noted his outstanding contribution to rugby union.

The straight-talking coach with a wry sense of humour spent eight years as an assistant under Graham Henry, who was also knighted after winning the 2011 World Cup, and then eight years in charge.

During his time at the helm, the All Blacks won the 2015 World Cup, finished third in 2019, were World Rugby's team of the year five times, won the Rugby Championship six times and retained the Bledisloe Cup, played annually against Australia, in all eight years.

Hansen told Television New Zealand he had feelings of "immense pride, hum-

bleness" when informed of his knighthood and paid tribute to his wife and the players he has worked with.

"I'll be forever grateful for the talent we've been able to coach, and grateful for the awesome management and back up staff that we've had. You can't do this by yourself, so this honour's very much theirs as well," he said.

But while grateful to be awarded the honour, the idea of being called "Sir Stephen" did not sit well with him. "I'm just plain old Steve, and that's how I'd prefer to be called going forward too."

Hansen, who grew up wanting to be a jockey and started his working life as a policeman, said coaching was something he never thought he would be good at but he wanted to give something back to the sport he had played.

"I just loved playing the game, I got a lot out of it as a player and I felt a duty to go back and give something back to it. Coaching, for me, was the obvious thing," he said.

Kieran Read, who retired as All Blacks



Steve Hansen

captain after the recent World Cup, praised Hansen's man-management in his recently-released autobiography "Straight Eight".

"Steve was not without his idiosyncrasies of course. He could be deviously manipulative when he wanted to be, painfully cryptic too, and needed his people to know that ultimately he was in charge," Read wrote.

"For all that, though, there was an awful lot of softness underneath, and we could tell that he genuinely cared about all his players in a way that Graham

(Henry) could never fully express."

Since taking over as head coach in 2012, Hansen fashioned an impressive 86.9 percent winning record from 107 Tests with 93 victories, four draws and 10 losses.

Hansen said it was a record he was "extremely proud of" and the semi-final loss to England should not define the All Blacks under his watch. The outgoing New Zealand Rugby chief executive Steve Tew was made an officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit, another of the country's top honours. — AFP

## England ready to support scrapping five-day Tests



**CENTURION:** File photo shows England's Rory Burns (L) plays a shot during the third day of the first Test cricket match between S Africa and England at Centurion. England yesterday supported calls for four-day Tests that could help ease the strain on players' busy schedules. — AFP

**LONDON:** Five-day Test matches could become a thing of the past from 2023 after England supported calls to cut them by a day, according to yesterday's Daily Telegraph. A spokesperson for the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) told the British newspaper that four-day Tests could help ease the strain on players' busy schedules.

"We believe it could provide a sustainable solution to the complex scheduling needs and player workloads we face as a global sport," they said. "We're definite proponents of the four-day Test concept, but cautiously so, as we understand it's an emotive topic for players, fans and others who have concerns about challenging the heritage of Test cricket."

The ECB's comments come a week after Kevin Roberts, the chief executive of Cricket Australia, said mandatory four-day tests were "something that we have got to seriously consider".

Four-day Tests have been sanctioned since 2017 by the sport's global governing body the International Cricket Council (ICC), but only outside of their inaugural World Test Championship. In order for four-day Tests to replace the five-day format from 2023, when the new ICC broadcasting rights cycle begins, it would need to be approved by the ICC's cricket committee in 2020 and then voted through by the chief executive's board, which is made up of representatives from member nations.

"One of our top priorities is to underpin a healthy future for Test cricket while we continue to build accessible ways for new fans to enjoy our sport," added the ECB spokesperson. "We are strongly behind a thorough and considered consultation where all opinions are explored."

Tony Irish, the head of FICA, the global players' association, said he feared extra days gained from scrapping five-day Tests would be used to fill them with other forms of cricket.

"It would take pressure off the schedule but our concern would be that the ad hoc way the schedule currently works and that countries would simply plug in more cricket into the time freed up," he told the Daily Telegraph.

"If introduced, it therefore has to be part of a more coherent structure. "In the past, many players have been against a change to four days but it would also be important for players to understand any benefits of time freed up."

"Unfortunately, with the ICC there is a history of introducing these types of changes in an unstructured way. "That would need to change if there is to be any player buy-in." Figures published by the Telegraph suggest the percentage of Test matches annually that have gone to the fifth and final day have declined from 66 percent in 2014 to 33 percent this year. — AFP

## Wales' Webb delighted to return home to Ospreys nest

**LONDON:** Wales scrum-half Rhys Webb expressed his "relief" after rejoining Welsh club Ospreys on a two-year contract from next season following his departure from Top 14 outfit Toulon.

The 31-year-old — who had signed a two-year deal in 2018 with Toulon which had an option of an extra season — had suffered numerous injuries and increasing competition from France half-back Baptiste Serin.

However, it was largely the fact his family failed to settle in France and returned to Wales that persuaded him to call it a day and return to the team with whom he had spent a decade prior to his move abroad.

"It was difficult to be away from my family and young children," Webb told the Ospreys website.

"I have loved my time in Toulon but it's a relief to come home to the Ospreys, it's where my family are, where I was brought up, and where rugby all started for me."

"To return to play for my home region again is just really special for me and I am so grateful for the opportunity to be able to do that again." Webb made his Ospreys debut in March 2008 and played 154 times for the south Wales outfit. His 39 tries puts him fourth on the Ospreys all-time try-scorer list.

The move will also permit Webb to try and reignite his Test career which had seen him win 31 Welsh caps — and two British & Irish Lions appearances in the drawn series with New Zealand in 2017.

Due to new rules introduced by the Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) in 2017 those players moving abroad could only be considered for the national team if they had won at least 60 caps. — AFP



**LONDON:** File photo taken on July 04, 1995 British Prime Minister John Major leaves No. 10 Downing Street in London with his wife Norma. John Major dodged going to the Atlanta 1996 Olympics to stay in London and watch cricket instead, newly declassified files showed yesterday. — AFP

## British PM Major skipped 1996 Olympics to watch cricket

**LONDON:** British prime minister John Major dodged going to the Atlanta 1996 Olympics to stay in London and watch cricket instead, newly declassified files showed yesterday.

Major weighed up the pros and cons of going to the Games, with his advisors pushing him to attend, insisting he had "street cred" in sport and it would make for great pictures of him in "relaxed, jacket-off mode".

But the cricket-loving premier stuck to his guns and missed seeing Britain's only gold medal — to watch England lose to Pakistan instead in the first Test at Lord's. The files were released after 23 years in the vaults at the National Archives.

Major seemed keen on Atlanta when the idea was raised in February 1996 and flight plans were drawn up. In a memo to Major on June 7, his private secretary Rachael Reynolds said she understood he was thinking of going to Lord's rather than Atlanta and "it would

be a pity" if he missed the Olympics. The adviser told him US president Bill Clinton, South African president Nelson Mandela and French president Jacques Chirac were all going, and "even the King of Finland is turning up!" The draft programme would have seen him witness oarsmen Steve Redgrave and Matthew Pinsent win Britain's only gold medal of the Games.

### 'STREET CRED'

In a further memo to Major on June 19, Reynolds said decision time was fast approaching and spelled out the advantages and disadvantages.

"You will be very tired at the end of July," she wrote, of the negatives. "It is a long flight and the weather will be hot in Atlanta. "Second, you will miss the Lord's Test and you are unlikely to be able to pick up a satellite channel in America which carries cricket."

As for the advantages, she said it would likely be his last chance to

attend an Olympics as prime minister, and there might be "snide remarks" if he did not show up to support the British team. "Some of the best pictures we see of you are in relaxed, jacket-off mode and there would be plenty of opportunity for that," Reynolds insisted. "You cannot do too much of associating yourself with winners." She said Major was strongly linked with sport in a way "no other politician" was and "you should capitalise on this".

"I do think it is worth doing, if you can bear it. You have established your street cred in this area so well, it would be a pity to miss an opportunity which only comes up every four years." In the end, Reynolds wrote to the British Olympic Association on June 28, telling them: "The prime minister has decided that his programme at the end of July is too heavily committed for him to be able to travel to Atlanta." Pakistan beat England by 164 runs. — AFP

## Sports

# Managers who like Moyes returned for second spell at the same club

**LONDON:** David Moyes returned to manage Premier League strugglers West Ham for a second time on Sunday. West Ham fans who hope Moyes can save them as he did in a six month spell in the 2017-2018 season may not be encouraged as AFP Sports picks out three other managers who had two spells at the same club with mixed results:

## JOSE MOURINHO (CHELSEA)

His first spell from 2004-07 justified the never shy Portuguese handler's self-anointed 'Special One' status. Two Premier League titles — they never lost a home league game in his first spell — an FA Cup and a League Cup as well as two Champions League semi-finals had Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich grinning from ear to ear. However, his relations with Abramovich soured and he walked out in September 2007 when he dared the Russian to sack him following a brief exchange in a corridor when he had been told the team had to improve. Chelsea came calling again in 2013 after a disappointing spell at Real Madrid and initially Mourinho's magic touch continued delivering another Premier League title in the 2014/15 campaign. However, the following season things fell apart from the start and having lost the dressing room he was sacked in late December — hours after hosting the squad's Christmas lunch — with the Blues having lost nine of their 16 league matches. "There obviously seemed to be a palpable discord between manager and players and we felt it was time to act," opined technical director Michael Emenalo.

## NEIL WARNOCK (CRYSTAL PALACE)

The combative Englishman — who slightly belies that image by penning poetry in the rare moments he is not in a club's dug out — needed that trait to battle

through a turbulent three year stay (2007-2010) in the second tier Championship which resulted in the 'Eagles' entering administration. Warnock had said this would be his final managerial role and guided them to the 2007/08 play-offs. However, he went back on his promise to hang up his tracksuit and left ailing Palace — who had been docked 10 points for being placed in administration — in March 2010 to take over another struggling London club QPR. The administrator of the club claimed Warnock had said he 'lacked the stomach for the fight' which the manager dismissed as rubbish.

Back came Warnock in August 2014 with Palace in the Premier League but he failed to last through to 2015 being dismissed in December with the club in the bottom three. The by then 66-year-old took the sacking philosophically: "I've watched seven episodes of Downton Abbey in the last few days — you miss out on things like that ... things are not all doom and gloom."

## KEVIN KEEGAN (NEWCASTLE)

The former England striker enjoyed iconic status both in Liverpool and then Newcastle as a player. His appointment as manager in 1992 was greeted with delight by the fans and this enthusiasm was reflected eventually on the pitch as through several wise acquisitions including rising star Andy Cole he guided Newcastle back to the top tier. A third-placed finish followed in the 1993/94 season but it is the '95/'96 title race which remains embedded in Magpies fans memories as they let slip a 10 point lead and lost out to Manchester United. The pressure appeared to get to Keegan, who lost his cool live on TV with a tirade aimed at United manager Alex Ferguson: "I would love it if we beat them! Love it!". Despite being dubbed 'King Kev' during this spell by fans he resigned out of the blue in January 1997 months after signing home-



**LONDON:** File photo shows Tottenham Hotspur's Portuguese head coach Jose Mourinho (L) shakes hands with Brighton's English manager Graham Potter during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Brighton and Hove Albion at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London. — AFP

town boy Alan Shearer for a then world record fee. "It was like losing a family member," commented the chairman at the time Freddy Shepherd.

The King returned from exile in a surprise move in

January 2008 but it all quickly soured largely due to disagreements with controversial owner Mike Ashley. Keegan's gripe was a lack of funds for transfers, and he walked out in September 2008. — AFP

## South Africa coach Boucher remains a fighter

**CENTURION:** During a playing career of 147 Test matches, Mark Boucher had a reputation as a fighter, always prepared to take on a challenge.

It's a character trait which looks likely to continue in his new career as South Africa's head coach. It was a "great feeling" to be in a winning Proteas dressing room after the first Test against England on Sunday, seven years after his playing career ended prematurely with a freak eye injury ahead of a Test series in England in 2012.

"Just watching the guys walk in, there were a couple with lumps in their throats. It means a lot for them to win a game of Test cricket," he said. But it was only a beginning. "There's still a lot of work to be done for the rest of the series."

Boucher gave two indicators of his coaching philosophy when he discussed wicketkeeper-batsman Quinton de Kock and fast bowler Kagiso Rabada, in both cases stressing a preference for taking the fight to the opposition.

De Kock's first innings of 95 turned the match in South Africa's favour. In the second innings he hit three sixes off England's fast bowling hope Jofra Archer in a brief but spectacular statement of intent. Rabada took seven wickets in the match despite seeming to struggle for rhythm and consistency. Boucher approved of De Kock's seemingly cavalier batting style. "I'm all for counter-punches on the type of wicket we had. If you just hang around there to try and bide your time you are probably going to get a good one that gets you out. The English bowled really well in the first innings until Quinny came along. (Then) they maybe changed their lines and lengths, which was good for us because of the pressure we put on them."

Of the second innings assault, Boucher said: "You can have one Quinny in your side, you probably can't have eleven. You don't want to hold a guy like him back because he can take the game away from the opposition very, very quickly."

Boucher's attitude towards Rabada was similarly straightforward. "It's just about getting him into the game. Sometimes as individuals you feel like you're under a bit of pressure and you start worrying about your action and where you are putting the ball," he said.

"Sometimes you have to forget about your technique and get into a bit of a fight out there. The goal was to try to get him into the game and let his natural instinct take over."

Dealing with practical player issues is just one part of Boucher's job. He will soon have to deal with a uniquely South African problem - that of the racial composition of the team.

There were seven white players in the eleven at Centurion, while Rabada was the only black African. Although Cricket South Africa's board is effectively dysfunctional following the upheavals which resulted in Graeme Smith being made interim director of cricket and Boucher head coach, official policy remains that over a season there should be an average of six players of colour, including at least two black Africans, in the national team. Meeting the targets has been complicated by injuries to batsman Temba Bavuma and fast bowler Lungi Ngidi, with the latter ruled out of the series. Bavuma missed Centurion because of a hip injury and the discussion about bringing him back into the side may be deferred until after the second Test, starting in Cape Town on Friday, because Boucher said the player was still feeling pain. — AFP

## Moreno happy to be 'number one' at Monaco after Spain split

**MONACO:** Robert Moreno was unveiled as the new coach of Monaco on Monday, admitting his bitter bust-up with Spain boss Luis Enrique had paved the way for him to become "number one".

Moreno, 42, takes over at 2004 European and 2017 French champions Monaco after Leonardo Jardim was sacked for the second time. However, he arrives at the Ligue 1 outfit having been accused of "disloyalty" by Enrique.

Moreno was previously Spain assistant coach but was promoted to the top job after Enrique resigned to

take care of his nine-year-old daughter Xana, who died in August of cancer. "I had nine extraordinary years at his side," said Moreno on Monday.

"But that is all in the past. Today is my presentation as Monaco coach. I have coached since I was 14 and obtained my UEFA licence at 25.

"I always wanted to become the number one. This is the start of that stage," added Moreno who guided Spain through qualifying for Euro 2020 in the absence of Enrique. He arrives at the Russian-backed principality club with the team in seventh place in Ligue 1 and 17 points behind leaders and defending champions PSG.

Jardim, who took Monaco to the league title in 2017, was fired at the weekend, just over a year since he was previously sent packing.

Moreno said he had been considering a range of offers since his acrimonious November departure from the Spanish national team. "The Monaco project had the best guarantees and conditions," he said after signing a deal until June 2022.

"I knew that I wanted to work at a high level and I wanted a project that matched this desire. Coming here means growing as a coach and a person." — AFP



Maria Sharapova

## Sharapova accepts Brisbane wildcard

**SYDNEY:** Former world number one Maria Sharapova will return to tournament action at the Brisbane International next month after being awarded a wildcard to play in the Australian Open warm-up.

The 32-year-old Russian, who last played a competitive match in the first round of the US Open in August, has dropped to 133rd in the world after a season in which a long-standing shoulder injury restricted her to eight tournaments.

The five-times Grand Slam champion will join current world number one Ash Barty, Naomi Osaka and Karolina Pliskova in a strong field at the Queensland Tennis Centre from Jan. 6-12. "It's a fresh start after a tough last season," Sharapova told Australian Associated Press yesterday.

"There were a lot of ups and downs, there were times when I was ready but the shoulder wasn't. But I

have had a fairly good off season and I am motivated to compete. At this point in my career when I have that feeling, it's a good sign."

Sharapova has been troubled by shoulder problems throughout her career and the current issue required surgery early last year with lingering problems hampering her throughout the 2019 season.

"To be fair when I was younger I never saw myself playing past 30," she added.

"But I still feel there is a lot in me to give. I still have a lot of fire in me and I am big competitor. As long as the shoulder stays healthy and my body allows me to, I hope there is a lot of time left for me."

Sharapova's lowly ranking means she will also need a wildcard to get directly into the main singles draw for this year's Australian Open, which begins on Jan. 20.

"While it is about results for me, it is more about how I feel day to day, making sure my shoulder holds up, but I am definitely up for that test," she said. Sharapova won her third major title at Melbourne Park in 2008 but also tested positive for a banned substance at the tournament in 2016 and served a 15-month suspension from the game. — Reuters

## SPORTS SNIPPETS

### Lemar sustains thigh injury

**MADRID:** Atletico Madrid attacker Thomas Lemar, who has been linked with a move away from the club, has suffered a thigh injury, the La Liga outfit said yesterday, without noting the length of his absence. Lyon and Arsenal are reportedly interested in signing the 24-year-old World Cup winner during the upcoming transfer window. Lemar has scored three goals in 64 appearances since Diego Simeone signed him from Monaco in 2018 for 72 million euros (\$80 million). Fourth-placed Atletico host Levante in La Liga on Saturday in their first match after the winter break

### N Korea pulls out of women's 2020 soccer

**SEOUL:** North Korea has withdrawn its women's soccer team from the final round of 2020 Tokyo Olympics qualifiers being staged in South Korea in February, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has said. The AFC said yesterday the North had sent a letter informing it of its withdrawal from the tournament and that global governing body FIFA was also aware of the decision. The two Koreas remain technically at war after the Korean War ended in a truce and not a peace treaty, and while there was a flurry of sports diplomacy between the neighbours last year ties have again cooled over stalled negotiations over the North's nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. "The AFC can confirm that DPR Korea Football Association sent an official letter to withdraw from the Women's Olympic Football Tournament 2020 Asian Qualifiers Final Round," the AFC said in an emailed statement. The third round of group stage matches for the qualifying tournament will be held from Feb. 3-9 in South Korea and China.

### Guentzel exits with injury

**NEW YORK:** Pittsburgh Penguins leading scorer Jake Guentzel left Monday night's game against the visiting Ottawa Senators in the third period after crashing into the end boards. Guentzel went hard into the boards at the end of a play on which he scored his 20th goal of the season and 200th point of his career. He favored his right arm or shoulder as he headed to the locker room. Guentzel's goal, at 6:55 of the third, gave the Penguins a 5-2 lead. His goal and two assists gave him 43 points for the season. Earlier Monday, Guentzel was named Pittsburgh's representative for the All-Star Game.

### Kendricks out for playoffs

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Seattle Seahawks linebacker Mychal Kendricks will miss the postseason after tearing his ACL in the team's regular-season finale, coach Pete Carroll said Monday. Kendricks sustained the injury after making a tackle on a 49-yard reception by Kyle Juszczyk during the third quarter of Sunday's 26-21 loss to the San Francisco 49ers. The 29-year-old Kendricks recorded 71 tackles, three sacks and one interception in 14 games this season for the Seahawks, who will visit his former team, the Philadelphia Eagles, for Sunday's NFC wild-card meeting. Rookie third-round pick Cody Barton is expected to receive an increased workload in place of Kendricks. A second-round pick in 2012, Kendricks spent his first six seasons with the Eagles and helped them defeat the New England Patriots in Super Bowl LII. In 103 career games (91 starts), Kendricks has 549 tackles, 19 sacks, seven forced fumbles and four interceptions.

Sports

# Arsenal against United recalls brighter times for faded giants

Manchester United have not won a league title since seven years

**LONDON:** At the start of this decade, clashes between Arsenal and Manchester United were still potentially title-deciding affairs, but when the pair meet on New Year's Day at the Emirates they will have more modest goals in mind.

United have not won a league title since Alex Ferguson's final season in charge seven years ago, while Arsenal have to go back to 2004 for the last time they raised the Premier League trophy, during the reign of Arsene Wenger.

Both clubs entered this season hoping to finish in the top four, but while Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has guided United to fifth place, just a point off the Champions League spots, Arsenal languish in 12th, 11 points behind fourth-placed Chelsea after their home defeat to Frank Lampard's side on Sunday.

Arsenal's poor form led to the dismissal of their Spanish manager Unai Emery and the arrival of his compatriot, former Gunners midfielder Mikel Arteta.

Having left his role as Pep Guardiola's assistant at Manchester City, Arteta is talking big despite beginning with a draw at Bournemouth before Sunday's loss.

"We are the biggest football club in England, and we have to play a little bit with that arrogance, that belief," Arteta told Sky Sports, urging the club's fans to make the Emirates a fortress again.

"This stadium has to create fear again. I used to hate

coming here as an opponent, and we need to use that power. The opponent must be uncomfortable playing here," he said.

"It was incredible to play here as an Arsenal player. It's one of the most beautiful, exciting stadiums in the world. When this crowd gets going, and you feel them right behind the team, it's an incredible place," he added.

United head to London on the back of wins over Newcastle and Burnley, and with French forward Anthony Martial and England's Marcus Rashford having struck five times in those games.

French midfielder Paul Pogba is expected to be part of the United squad for the clash with the Gunners as he continues his return from a three-month injury absence.

Runaway leaders Liverpool host Sheffield United on Thursday, looking to maintain their unbeaten run and 13-point advantage over second-placed Leicester City.

Brendan Rodgers' Foxes are at Newcastle, while third-placed Manchester City have a tricky test at home to Everton, who have won both their games since appointing Carlo Ancelotti as their new manager.

David Moyes begins his second spell as West Ham United manager, following the dismissal of Chilean Manuel Pellegrini, when the Hammers host fellow strugglers Bournemouth. — Reuters



**LONDON:** File photo shows Arsenal's Gabonese striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang does a somersault as he celebrates scoring the opening goal during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Chelsea at the Emirates Stadium in London. — AFP

## Eyes turn to Premier League relegation dogfight

**LONDON:** Liverpool appear to have the Premier League title wrapped up with a 13-point advantage over second-placed Leicester but the fight to avoid relegation looks like being a down to the wire tussle. Just nine points separates ninth-placed Crystal Palace and third from bottom Aston Villa.

Here AFP Sport picks out three pivotal matches in today's action:

### ARTETA NEEDS TO GET GUNNERS FIRING

The old adage 'too good to go down' should apply to Arsenal, who have been a fixture in the top tier since 1919/20. However, they are just six points above the drop zone and new boss Mikel Arteta would probably have preferred an easier opponent than Manchester United as he bids to win his first game after a draw and defeat in his opening two matches in charge.

The United attack will be licking their lips at the thought of giving the weak Gunners defence a thorough test with goalkeeper Bernd Leno and defenders Skhodran Mustafi and David Luiz far from reliable. Arteta will want to see more of what his side produced in the opening half hour of the 2-1 defeat by Chelsea if they are to avoid a fifth successive home loss in all competitions — their present run of four is their worst since 1959.

"Individual errors cost you games but I can't fault the effort, commitment and for putting in place what we practised," said Arteta. However, with confidence at a low ebb defeat for Arsenal on Wednesday and victory for third from bottom Aston Villa at Burnley would suck them deeper into the relegation battle.

### HAMMERS PRAY MOYES DELIVERS IN SECOND COMING

David Moyes may not be welcomed back universally by West Ham fans but if the 55-year-old saves them from relegation for a second time like he did in the 2017-18 season, before being dispensed with, then all will be forgiven. A home game for the side fourth from bottom against Bournemouth, who are just a point above them in 16th, represents a seemingly ideal first challenge.

However, their home form has been as woeful as Arsenal's with four successive defeats — equalling their worst run in the Premier League since November 2005 — and it would not be a surprise to see Moyes energise their attack by selecting both Michail Antonio and Sebastian Haller.

The Cherries have largely escaped attention in their terrible run — just one win in nine — but the pressure may begin to mount on Eddie Howe with a defeat. "It feels great to be home," said Moyes. "I feel like I've got unfinished business."

### WATFORD'S REVIVAL FACES STERN WOLVES TEST

Nigel Pearson engineered a remarkable rescue act for Leicester in the 2014-15 season — at the time they were only the third side to escape the drop having been bottom at Christmas — arguably laying the foundations for their even more miraculous title win the following campaign.

The 56-year-old — who was relieved of his duties prior to the league winning season — could be on course to do the same for second from bottom Watford. Their third manager this term has guided them to two wins and a draw in four matches since taking over.

This new found confidence was reflected in easing to a 3-0 win over third from bottom Aston Villa on Saturday — scoring two of their goals after they had been reduced to 10 men — and this will be a much needed weapon when they host Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Wolves arrive sitting pretty in seventh place and on the back of an impressive win over champions Manchester City and considered unlucky to have lost to Liverpool on Sunday.

Pearson for his part will be looking for more of the same of what he witnessed against Villa: "We showed good intensity. We showed incredible unity on the pitch and bench. We have to make sure that remains high on our agenda — to keep the players together." — AFP

## City clash will be good barometer of Everton's progress

**LONDON:** Manchester City will provide a test of how genuine Everton's revival is, Carlo Ancelotti yesterday, despite the Premier League champions' shaky campaign. Everton coach Ancelotti, 60, has guided Everton to two wins in his first two matches in charge since replacing Marco Silva, who was sacked in early December after they slipped into the bottom three.

However, Ancelotti — one of only three managers to have won the Champions League three times — says City will provide a more realistic barometer on where Everton stand despite the welcome wins over Burnley and Newcastle.

"Against City this is a fantastic test to see where we are at," Ancelotti said at his pre-match press conference. "They are a really strong team but we can have confidence to do our best."

"I think at this moment it is good to have this kind of test," Ancelotti, who in his previous stint in England won the domestic double with Chelsea in the 2009/10 campaign, said City remained a formidable opponent even if their defence of the league title has gone awry and trail leaders Liverpool by 14 points.

"Maybe City aren't at the same level as last year but they still remain a fantastic team with fantastic players and a fantastic manager," he said. "It will be really tough to compete with them, but we need to have the confidence to compete and to be focused on our football. "We don't have to look too much to the opponent because they are really strong so it's better to be focused on our idea of football." Ancelotti, a two-time

## Ibrahimovic set for AC Milan presentation

**MILAN:** Swedish star Zlatan Ibrahimovic will be officially presented as an AC Milan player on January 3, the Italian club confirmed on Monday. Ibrahimovic returns to the side on a six-month deal, promising to help rescue the struggling Serie A outfit's season.

The 38-year-old will undergo his medical tomorrow and will hold his first press conference the following day. "AC Milan announces that Zlatan Ibrahimovic's press conference is scheduled for Friday January 3rd at Casa Milan at 10 am." (0900GMT)," they said in a statement.

The six-month deal is reported to be worth around 3.5 million euros (\$3.9 million) plus bonuses, with the option of a further year. It will mark the Swede's second stint with Milan, seven years after he left for Paris Saint-Germain.



Carlo Ancelotti

European Cup winner as a player with the outstanding AC Milan side of the late 1980's and early 90's, heaped praise on City manager Pep Guardiola, who he replaced as Bayern Munich manager when the Spaniard left to take over City in 2016.

"Pep is a fantastic manager," said Ancelotti. "We've met some times, not a lot in games, but I have a really good relationship (with him) and a lot of respect for him. "He is a genius; he's always tried to do something special on the pitch." — AFP

He played for the Rossoneri from 2010-2012 scoring 56 goals in 85 appearances and helped the club win their 18th and last league title in 2011. One of the most successful clubs in the world, AC Milan are 11th in the table just seven points above relegation.

"I'm coming back to a club I hugely respect and to the city of Milan I love," the former Sweden forward said after the announcement of his return. "I'll fight together with my teammates to change the course of this season. I will do everything to make it happen."

Milan have come up short in their attacking options with just 16 goals in 17 games so far this term. Ibrahimovic left Los Angeles Galaxy last month after a two-year stay having scored 52 goals in 56 games, allowing to sign with another side for free.

He had previously won three league titles with Inter Milan, and two with Juventus, which were revoked following the match-fixing scandal. Milan's first game after the winter break will be at home against Sampdoria on January 6.

Ibrahimovic started his career at Malmo in his native Sweden. He went on to play for Ajax, Juventus, Inter, Barcelona, Milan, PSG and Manchester United, winning trophies with all these clubs but never the Champions League. — AFP



Zlatan Ibrahimovic

## Rooney gets starting nod from Derby boss

**LONDON:** England's record goalscorer Wayne Rooney will make his debut for second-tier Derby against Barnsley tomorrow, the club's manager Phillip Cocu confirmed. Rooney, 34, joined Derby as a player-coach from MLS side DC United but has been ineligible to play for his new side until January.

"If a player with the qualities, career and the experience of Rooney (is available) you have to be very happy and glad he is here," said Cocu after Monday's 2-1 home win over Charlton in the Championship.

"He's fit, he can start but he will need a few games. Expectation will be high when he starts playing but we have to give him a few games to build up his minutes and get in the team. "So maybe not perfect from the start but it's important he will get in the team as soon as possible so we get a certain shape in our team."

Rooney's debut can't come soon enough for Derby. Their win on Monday moved them into 17th place in English football's second-tier. However, they are still nine points shy of the play-off spots and 21 behind the two automatic promotion places.

On Monday, teenage midfielder Jason Knight scored his first goals in professional football to give Derby the three points, ending a run of seven games without a win. Victory came despite the Rams playing most of the match a man down after Krystian Bielik was sent off for a crude challenge on Conor Gallagher.

Knight put Derby ahead in the 10th minute at Pride Park when he forced the ball in at the back post only for Bielik to see red soon afterwards. But 10-man Derby still doubled their lead 13 minutes from time when Knight scored his second following a cross from Max Bird.

Charlton ensured a nervous finish for the home side when the south London club pulled a goal back seven minutes from time thanks to Lyle Taylor's successful penalty, awarded after Curtis Davies brought down Gallagher in the box. —AFP

Live		Matches on TV
		(Local Timings)
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Burnley FC v Aston Villa	15:30	beIN Sports
Brighton & Hove Albion v Chelsea FC	15:30	beIN Sports
Newcastle United FC v Leicester City	18:00	beIN Sports
Southampton FC v Tottenham Hotspur	18:00	beIN Sports
Watford v Wolverhampton Wanderers FC	18:00	beIN Sports
Manchester City v Everton FC	20:30	beIN Sports
West Ham United v Bournemouth FC	20:30	beIN Sports
Norwich City v Crystal Palace FC	20:30	beIN Sports
Arsenal FC v Manchester United	23:00	beIN Sports HD 2

**25** Ex-All Blacks coach now Sir Stephen Hansen but insists he's still Steve

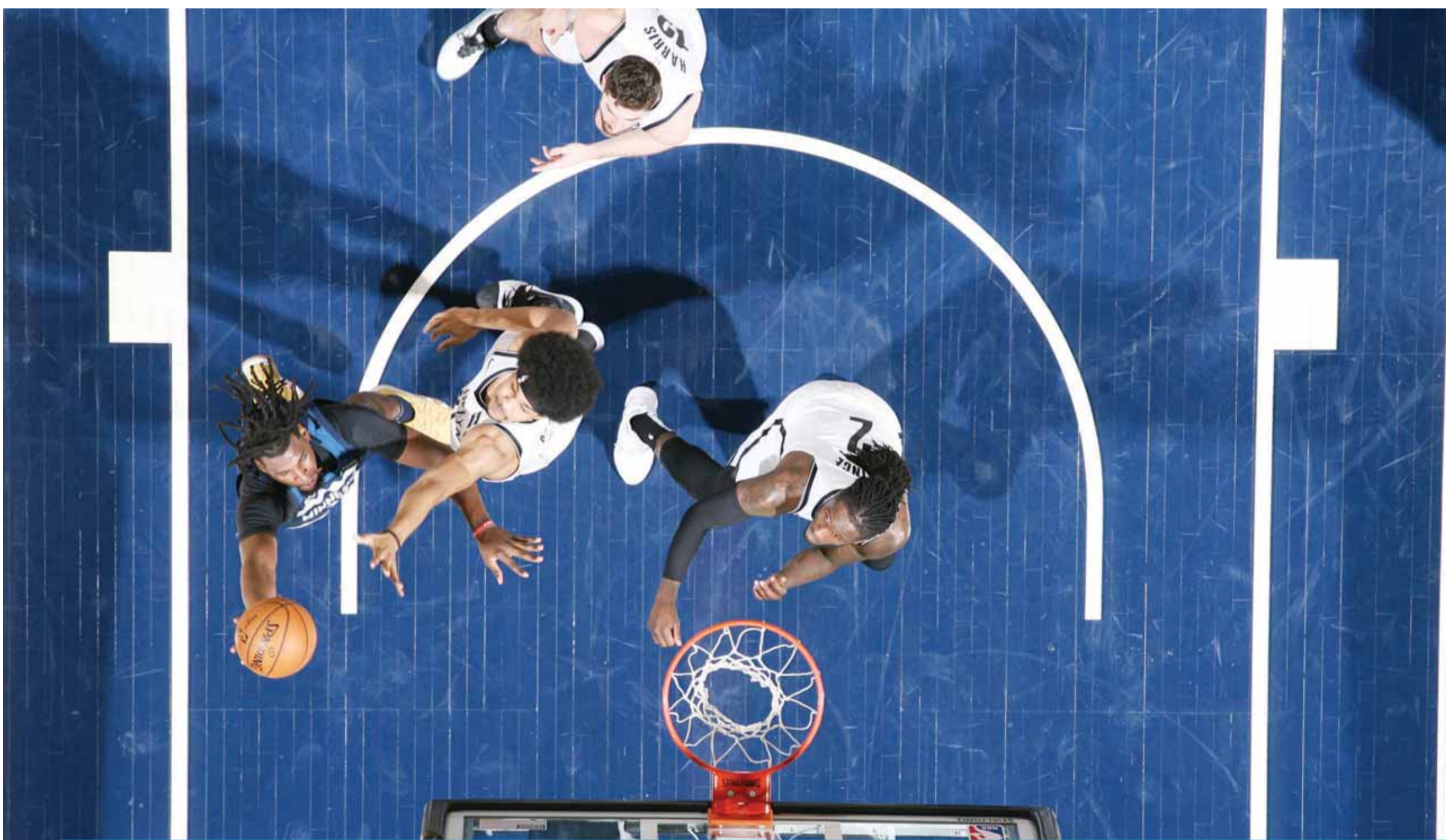
**26** Sharapova accepts Brisbane wildcard

**27** Ibrahimovic set for AC Milan presentation



## Wolves down Nets in overtime

McRae, Mathews help Wizards surprise Heat



MINNEAPOLIS: Naz Reid #11 of the Minnesota Timberwolves shoots the ball against the Brooklyn Nets at Target Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. — AFP

**MINNEAPOLIS:** Shabazz Napier scored eight of his season-high 24 points in overtime as the Minnesota Timberwolves snapped a nine-game home losing streak with a 122-115 victory over the Brooklyn Nets on Monday night in Minneapolis. Rookie Jarrett Culver added a career-high 21 points for the Wolves, who made 7 of 10 shots in overtime and shot 40.4 percent overall. Keita Bates-Diop added 15 points, and Robert Covington contributed 14. Minnesota's Gorgui Dieng collected 11 points and 20 rebounds while starting in place of Karl-Anthony Towns (sprained left knee) for the seventh straight game. Spencer Dinwiddie led all scorers with 36 points on 12-of-31 shooting for the Nets, who blew a five-point lead in the final two-plus minutes of regulation and lost their third straight game.

**WASHINGTON WIZARDS 123 - MIAMI HEAT 105**

Jordan McRae scored 29 points and Garrison Mathews added 28 points to help host Washington cool off Miami, which entered the day with the league's longest active winning streak at five games. Ian Mahinmi added a career-high 25 points —

including 2 of 3 on 3-pointers — for the Wizards. Jimmy Butler led the Heat with 27 points, and Bam Adebayo added 14 points and a game-high 14 rebounds. The Wizards, who entered the game having lost nine of 11 games, took control in the second quarter when Mathews had 20 points. Washington overcame the absences of seven injured players, most notably two-time All-Star shooting guard Bradley Beal (sore right knee), who leads the team in scoring (27.8 points) and assists (6.7). Beal had played 194 consecutive games before missing the past two contests.

**ATLANTA HAWKS 101 - ORLANDO MAGIC 93**

Brandon Goodwin scored a career-high 21 points and helped Atlanta come back from an 18-point deficit to end its 10-game losing streak with a road win over Orlando. Goodwin, playing only his fifth game of the season on a two-way contract, shot 7-for-11 from the field, 3-for-4 of 3-point attempts, and had six assists. His previous best was five points. Atlanta's Alex Len added 18 points and 12 rebounds, Kevin Huerter scored 19, and rookie

De'Andre Hunter scored 16.

**MILWAUKEE BUCKS 123 - CHICAGO BULLS 102**

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 23 points and grabbed 10 rebounds in his return from a back injury, and Milwaukee cruised to a win at Chicago. Khris Middleton finished with a team-high 25 points for Milwaukee, which won its third straight game. Guard Eric Bledsoe returned from a right leg injury and scored 15 points in 16 minutes of limited action. Bulls guard Zach LaVine scored a team-high 19 points despite missing 16 of 23 shots. Lauri Markkanen added 18 points on 6-of-12 shooting, including 5 of 9 from 3-point range, and Wendell Carter Jr. contributed 10 points and 11 boards.

**PHOENIX SUNS 122 - PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS 116**

Devin Booker registered 33 points, seven assists and six rebounds to help Phoenix rally past host Portland and end an 11-game, head-to-head losing streak. Kelly Oubre Jr. made a career-best seven 3-pointers while scoring 29 points, and Ricky Rubio recorded 18 points and 13 assists for Phoenix. The

Suns trailed by 19 after one quarter but outscored the Trail Blazers 39-27 in the decisive fourth quarter. Damian Lillard had 33 points and seven assists, and CJ McCollum contributed 25 points and six assists for Portland, which lost its fourth straight game. Hassan Whiteside recorded 16 points, 22 rebounds and three blocked shots for the Trail Blazers.

**UTAH JAZZ 104 - DETROIT PISTONS 81**

Donovan Mitchell scored 23 points, and Utah overcame a sluggish start to pull away from Detroit in Salt Lake City. Jordan Clarkson, playing in his third game since being acquired from Cleveland, supplied 20 points off the Utah bench. Bojan Bogdanovic contributed 17 points, and Rudy Gobert racked up 13 points, 19 rebounds and three blocks for the Jazz, who have won three in a row and eight of nine. Derrick Rose led Detroit, which has lost seven of its past eight, with 20 points off the bench. Andre Drummond had 15 points, 13 rebounds, five steals, three blocks and three assists but also committed seven turnovers. Svi Mykhailiuk contributed 15 points, and Christian Wood added 11 points and nine rebounds. — Reuters

## VAR only for 'clear and obvious' mistakes

**LONDON:** The Video Assistant Referee (VAR) should only overturn on-field decisions when there has been a "clear and obvious" error, according to one of football's leading international rules officials.

VAR has proved highly controversial since it was introduced into the Premier League this season. A particular source of concern has revolved around offside calls. Last weekend saw Norwich, Brighton, Sheffield United, Wolves, Brighton and Crystal Palace all have goals disallowed by marginal VAR rulings amid doubts over whether the available technology is accurate

enough to make such fractional calls.

Players and managers have also questioned whether the system should not be used to reverse an on-field decision that appears correct to the naked eye, a view that received support on Monday from the general secretary of the International Football Association Board (IFAB) — the sport's ultimate rule-making body.

Lukas Brud, while not addressing specific incidents in English football, said IFAB guidance advises VAR should only be used to correct clear errors also applied to offside. "Clear and obvious still remains — it's an important principle," Brud said in comments reported by the British media.

"There should not be a lot of time spent to find something marginal. "If you spend minutes trying to identify whether it is offside or not, then it's not clear and obvious and the original decision should stand," he added.

Wolves captain Conor Coady was frustrated when his side were denied what seemed a legitimate equalis-

er just before half-time against runaway league leaders Liverpool on Sunday when Pedro Neto's effort was chalked off because wing-back Jonny was deemed to be offside in the build-up.

Wolves eventually lost 1-0 at Anfield and Coady told the BBC afterwards: "A lot of people are going to tell me that they have come to the right decision and they might have. But what is it, an amputee that's offside, or a toe, or something like that?"

Meanwhile Sheffield United manager Chris Wilder was annoyed after VAR denied his side a goal against champions Manchester City — the fifth time it has happened to the Blades this season.

"Yet again we had another goal disallowed by VAR," he said. "That's about eight or nine over the weekend, this is not a situation helping the game." Even City manager Pep Guardiola, whose side won 2-0, said VAR was "a big mess", with the former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss adding: "Hopefully next season it can do better."

But the introduction of VAR into Scottish football cannot come quickly enough for Glasgow giants Rangers. Sunday saw Steven Gerrard's side win 2-1 away to arch-rivals and reigning champions Celtic as they moved to within two points of the Scottish Premiership leaders.

Gers boss Gerrard's lone criticism of referee Kevin Clancy centred on the official not sending off Celtic defender Christopher Jullien in added time in an incident that saw Rangers striker Alfredo Morelos see red for a second yellow card.

Rangers managing director Stewart Robertson, while insisting he was not criticising referees, said Monday the pace of the modern game made it "extremely difficult to make split-second calls with the degree of certainty required".

He added: "We believe the introduction of VAR would help referees enormously and reduce the number of wrong decisions which sometimes have a dramatic effect on the outcome of matches." —AFP